

Submission on the Draft 10 Year Strategic Plan for Early Learning: He taonga te tamaiti



15 March 2019



**Kia eke ai te hunga taitamariki
ki ngā rangi tūhāhā**

Summary of Barnardos' recommendations on the Government's draft 10 Year Strategic Plan for Early Learning

Barnardos welcomes the Government's development of He taonga te tamaiti, the draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning 2019-29 (the Draft Plan). Barnardos strongly supports the aspirations of the vision statement of the 10 year strategic plan: *"New Zealand's early learning systems enables every child to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive in settings that support their identity, language and culture and are valued by parents and whānau."* This vision statement captures the core principles that children are recognised as taonga, and are rights holders. Prominence being given to the aspects of a *good life*, and experiences where children are supported to express and engage with their *identity, language and culture* aligns with Barnardos' organisational strategic vision of an *Aotearoa New Zealand where every child shines bright*.

Barnardos advocates strongly that the Government seek cross party buy-in on the final outcomes of this consultation, and set in place a series of jointly agreed principles that enable the early learning sector to have a secure platform to build on. We believe that it is important that successive Governments recognise and commit to the importance of quality and equitable early learning for all children.

Barnardos supports the provision of quality, equity and enabling parent choice across all early learning settings. These elements are vital to providing excellence in early learning, and support the needs, rights and wellbeing of all children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Barnardos welcomes the Government's decision to move from Care and Education, to Early learning. We believe this significantly repositions the perspective onto the children, placing them at the heart of their own holistic growth and development, rather than the adults 'providing' Care and Education to the children. This also recognises that "In Māori tradition children are seen to be inherently competent, capable and rich, complete and gifted no matter what their age or ability."¹

Overall, Barnardos agrees with the aspiration of the five goals outlined in the Draft Plan, as well as a number of the 23 recommendations:

- a. Barnardos agrees with the recommendations in Goal 1 – *Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards*. However, we strongly urge the Government to put in place more detailed and adequate funding plans that demonstrate a commitment to the investment needed over time to enable the recommendations to be successful. (Funding for child places, Disability and Learning Support, disadvantage, infrastructure changes, resource management, Kaiako PLD and pay equity) See our detailed discussion at pages 10-11.
- b. Barnardos agrees with the recommendations in Goal 2 – *Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive*. However, with regard to recommendation 2.3, we strongly encourage the Government to give further consideration to supporting existing service providers who already demonstrate success in the delivery of wrap-around services in the Early Learning sector. By doing so, this will help accelerate the delivery and intent of the Government's commitment to lifting the wellbeing of

¹ Te Whāriki (2017) p.12 "A curriculum for all children".

all New Zealanders (including through the forthcoming 'Wellbeing Budget'), and in particular the wellbeing of children. *See our detailed discussion at pages 11-13.*

- c. Barnardos agrees with the recommendations in Goal 3 – *Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning*. However, we advocate that, as a matter of urgency, recommendation 3.4 is made a top priority for the Minister and Ministry of Education, and that a comprehensive and funded workforce strategy be developed in conjunction with Goal 1 and Goal 2. We recommend that this strategy is developed in partnership with the early learning sector, Māori and other key stakeholders. *See our detailed discussion at pages 13-14.*
- d. Barnardos agrees with the intent of Goal 4 – *Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse*. However, we do not agree with recommendation 4.3 and 4.6. Barnardos believes that high quality examples do currently exist within the sector, and Government should utilise these service providers to support and develop an early learning ecology that contributes to children thriving, and living a good life in all-day early learning settings. In addition, with regard to recommendations 4.4 and 4.5, we encourage the Government to consider an equitable platform across all funding models. This will ensure, and support, fair outcomes for all children regardless of the service type they participate in. *See our detailed discussion at page 15.*
- e. Barnardos agrees with the intent of Goal 5 – *The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve*. However, we recommend that the Ministry of Education incentivises for collaboration and places a focus on accelerating innovations that demonstrate success for all children. We encourage the Government to work on a cross-agency basis with all relevant Government agencies, to secure a cohesive and supportive wrap-around ECE environment, supported by best practice and research from a diverse range of existing and new sources. *See our detailed discussion at page 16.*

With regard to phasing, Barnardos' encourages the following changes to the phasing of the recommendations:

- a. Goal 1 – *Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards*. We recommend that recommendations 1.1 and 1.3 move into the medium and long term implementation timeline. The success of these two recommendations is highly reliant on the development of the workforce supply strategy, which as noted above, Barnardos urges the Government to prioritise.
- b. Goal 2 – *Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive*. We recommend that recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 fit within the short-term category of phasing, and that recommendation 2.2 moves out to medium-term. Ensuring equity funding supports children who need it the most, in ways that will work for them, and investing in wrap-around social services are critical elements that further support the need to place adequate focus on lifting the wellbeing of children in and reducing child poverty.
- c. Goal 4 – *Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse*. We recommend that recommendation 4.1 shifts to an immediate priority. There is evidence in the market of oversupply of provision in a number of geographical locations.

Section One | Introduction and General Position Statement

Introduction

1. This submission is made to the New Zealand Government as part of the Government's consultation process on He taonga te tamaiti – Every child a taonga, the Draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning 2019-29 (the Draft Plan). This consultation is part of the Government's broader education reform programme and part of Kōrero Mātauranga – the Education Conversation. This submission outlines Barnardos' position, responses and recommendations regarding the five goal areas set out in the Draft Plan.
2. Barnardos is New Zealand's leading children's not-for-profit organisation doing more for Kiwi kids.² We provide high quality early learning experiences available for all children 0-5 through Barnardos Early Learning Services;³ we serve and support children and their families and whānau every day through Barnardos Child and Family Services; and we advocate for the rights and well-being of all children in Aotearoa, driving and shaping systemic change that positively impacts their lives.
3. Barnardos has been providing high quality Early Learning Services in Aotearoa New Zealand since 1978. This submission is informed by insights and knowledge drawn from our extensive experience working with children and their whānau in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, this submission is informed by our technical expertise supporting children and their whānau through both our centre-based and home-based early learning services, which are provided around Aotearoa New Zealand. Our provision of early learning is holistic, supporting children to thrive and develop through play, social and emotional learning, curiosity for the natural world around them, and learning that prepares them for life and later education.⁴ Barnardos also recognises that parents, caregivers and whānau are children's first teachers, and we develop strong relationships with family and whānau through our early learning services. We agree with the statement from a leading expert in this area that "a consistently responsive and nurturing relationship between the child and its caregiver encourages a secure attachment and facilitates the development of future relationships throughout the child's life, while providing a secure foundation for learning."⁵ This submission is underpinned by Barnardos' guiding principles: Kotahitanga; Kaitōkiritanga; Māiatanga; Ata Whakarongo; and Mahi Tōtika.
4. To inform this submission, we have also asked Barnardos Early Learning teachers, educators and staff what they think about the Draft Plan, and Barnardos Early Learning staff have been given the opportunity to contribute to a survey and to attend engagement sessions directly with the Ministry of Education. Recognising the impact that the Draft Plan once finalised will have on children, parents, family and whānau as those who early learning services serve directly, we have also engaged with parents and whānau in Barnardos Early Learning services to ensure they are

² See for further information on Barnardos: <https://www.barnardos.org.nz/>

³ See for an overview of Barnardos Early Learning: <https://www.barnardos.org.nz/what-we-do/early-learning-and-childcare/>

⁴ As outlined in the Barnardos Early Learning Philosophy.

⁵ Tim Moore et al, for the Centre for Community Child Health, *The First 1000 Days: An Evidence Paper – Summary* p.6, available at: <https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/CCCH-The-First-Thousand-Days-An-Evidence-Paper-Summary-September-2017.pdf>

aware of the Government's proposals, and to seek their views and ideas on the recommendations. These have also helped to inform this submission and are referred to throughout.

5. Barnardos' work with children is based on a commitment to every child in Aotearoa New Zealand shining bright. This includes every child being able to experience a positive start in life, regardless of their family circumstances or background. Ensuring children's equal access to early learning and care has always been a central part of our organisation, given the critical value of quality early learning and care for children's development, their positive childhood, and their lifetime outcomes.
6. One of the great strengths of Barnardos is the combination of our Advocacy, Early Learning Services, and Child and Family Social Services that we provide for children and their whānau. We see the whole child, and in all our work we are focused on the fact that all children exist within the context of family and whānau. We are based in the community and support a community-led approach to development. Our work contributes to positive, tangible change and development that creates long-term sustainable outcomes in the individual lives of children and their families and whānau, as well as their wider communities.
7. Through Barnardos' tailored early learning and care, children are supported from their very first years of life to shine bright, and to develop an understanding of themselves and the world they are a part of. Scientific evidence shows that children's early years are crucial for later positive lifetime outcomes,⁶ and early learning is an important part of fostering this healthy development for all children.⁷
8. Barnardos welcomes the overall direction of the Draft Plan and the focus on raising quality and ensuring equity, while maintaining parent choice. However, we take the position that in a number of respects, there is room to further strengthen the Draft Plan, keeping the needs, rights and wellbeing of children front-of-mind and also drawing on our perspective as a not-for-profit provider of early learning services.
9. Barnardos values the opportunities it has had to engage with the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education to date through Kōrero Mātauranga, including specifically in relation to He taonga te tamaiti. This submission builds on those earlier engagements - with a particular focus on how Barnardos believes the Draft Plan will support all children and families in Aotearoa through early learning opportunities, and how the Draft Plan can be further strengthened, so that early learning is supported as effectively as possible to help all children in Aotearoa shine bright from their first years of life.

The importance of the first 1000 days and early learning and care for all children

10. Barnardos notes the wealth of research that now exists and provides an evidence base regarding the importance of the first 1000 days for all children in their lives. This is a time of rapid biological and neurological development and the environments in which development takes place in the first 1000 days are critical –

⁶ See, e.g. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Harvard Center on the Developing Child, *The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood*, 2010, available at: <https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Foundations-of-Lifelong-Health.pdf>

⁷ Ibid, p.18.

be they within the home between the child and their parents or caregivers, or in other settings such as out-of-home early learning settings. Ensuring children in their first 1000 days are supported to develop through ‘serve and return’ interactions is crucial, and the role of caregivers and those who are around children in their first 1000 days play the most important role in supporting this development.⁸ We note that the initial framework for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy currently under development clearly recognises this, and we encourage Government to take such a view more widely on a cross-agency basis to inform Government’s broader policy programme. As a recent report on the importance of the first 1000 days states:

“The first 1000 days is also a sensitive period for the brain and central nervous system; a time window during which the effect of experience on brain development is remarkably profound and can strongly shape the neural circuits. This particular form of developmental plasticity is known as *neuroplasticity*, and refers to the biological capacity of the central nervous system to change structurally and functionally in response to experience, and adapt to the environment.

Two central mechanisms underlie this adaptation process: epigenetics (whereby the ‘genes listen to the environment’) and synaptic pruning (whereby the ‘brain listens to the environment’). In both cases, developmental experiences and the social context in which they occur have the capacity to become biologically embedded (that is, have the capacity to alter human biological and developmental processes), with lifelong impacts on health and other outcomes.”⁹

11. Alongside this, Barnardos notes that the importance and role of early learning in all children’s lives is now well-recognised internationally, and it is essential that New Zealand keeps pace to ensure that our early learning sector is delivering the best possible learning and care experiences for children, and in ways that work for their family and whānau. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states in its recent working paper *The Power and Promise of Early Learning*:

“The first five years of children’s lives are critical to their development. During this period, children learn at a faster rate than at any other time in their lives, developing cognitive and social and emotional skills that are fundamental to their future achievements throughout childhood and as adults. These skills are also the foundation for general well-being – laying the groundwork for how individuals cope with successes and setbacks, both professionally and in their personal lives.

Strong early learning experiences provide young children with opportunities to enjoy exploring their own interests and growing capabilities. High-quality interactions with other people as well as with spaces and materials support children’s development as happy and healthy individuals both in the present and for the future. Effective early learning positively predicts well-being across a range of indicators in adulthood, including general well-being, physical and mental health, educational attainment and employment.”¹⁰

⁸ See: Harvard Center on the Developing Child, *Serve and return*, available at:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/>

⁹ Tim Moore et al, for the Centre for Community Child Health, *The First 1000 Days: An Evidence Paper – Summary* p.6, available at: <https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/CCCH-The-First-Thousand-Days-An-Evidence-Paper-Summary-September-2017.pdf>

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Shuey and Milos Kankaras for the OECD, *The Power and Promise of Early Learning*, OECD Education Working Paper no.186, at [2]-[3], available at:

The importance of investment and ensuring linkages with the Government's wider policy programme

12. At the outset, Barnardos makes two observations which we believe will be critical to the success of any final 10 year strategic plan for early learning in Aotearoa New Zealand.
13. Firstly, to support eventual final proposed reforms to early learning under the Draft Plan to have long-term, sustainable impact, we strongly encourage Government to review the level of required infrastructure and investment that is needed to support the early learning sector to be truly effective for children and their families and whanāu. For example:
 - We encourage discussion across Government agencies, to help improve workforce planning and support the creation of a teaching workforce that is resilient, creative, adaptable and collaborative;
 - We encourage improved targeted funding to support the attraction and retention of high quality teaching into the ECE sector, that will also lift the level of support for tamariki who face learning challenges;
 - We would welcome a detailed assessment of the frontline resourcing required in key functional areas of the Ministry of Education, to help support sustainable change to occur in the sector, and
 - We encourage further dialogue on the amount and range of ECE funding required for parents; funding amounts and funding types must better reflect the modern workforce of both today and tomorrow, alongside changing caring responsibilities across society.

As the OECD states, “Parents have immense responsibility for their young children, but Governments can do much to promote well-being in early childhood. (...) Among the most direct policy levers available to Governments for strengthening early learning are in the realm of early childhood education and care”¹¹

14. Secondly, Barnardos emphasises the crucial importance of ensuring that the final version of He taonga te tamaiti reflects and is interconnected with other key Government reform in education and social policy, and considers and reflects interlinkages with other aspects of Government's policy programme. In this respect, Barnardos believes the following initiatives must be taken into account in the final version of He taonga te tamaiti and its implementation, to ensure alignment, consistency and a joined-up approach across different policy settings:
 - Disability and Learning Support Action Plan (Barnardos' submission on the draft version of this Plan was made in October 2018);

<http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP%20%282018%2922&docLanguage=En>

¹¹ Elizabeth A. Shuey and Milos Kankaras for the OECD, *The Power and Promise of Early Learning*, OECD Education Working Paper no.186, at [11], available at:

<http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=EDU/WKP%20%282018%2922&docLanguage=En>

- Review of Home-based Early Childhood Education – Proposals for change adopted by Cabinet in February 2019 (Barnardos made a formal submission through this Review in September 2018);¹²
 - Tomorrow's Schools Review;
 - Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L);
 - The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, currently under development as a legislative requirement under the Children's Act 2014 (Barnardos made a formal submission on the draft outcomes framework in December 2018); and
 - Government's commitment to and focus on child poverty reduction and improving child wellbeing under the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 (Barnardos contributed to shaping this legislation during 2017/18).
15. Barnardos also notes that importance aspects to take into account in the process of revising He taonga te tamaiti, should include:
- ensuring a broader joined-up approach across current welfare system reform;
 - supporting initiatives in Māori development and the partnership with Māori within Te Titiri o Waitangi;
 - disability support and inclusion,
 - investment in the health system e.g. mental health
16. With respect to Barnardos view that the Draft Plan must be underpinned by a joined-up approach across Government agencies, we also wish to emphasise our support for the recognition given in the Draft Plan to children being “recognised as taonga and as rights holders”.¹³ We encourage Government to reflect in the final version of He taonga te tamaiti the linkages between the Plan and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Incorporating the child rights framework into the Plan more explicitly would help to ensure a holistic approach for all children. We recommend that the Child Impact Assessment Tool¹⁴ is utilised to guide this work as it is finalised. We also draw attention to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No.7, implementing child rights in early childhood.¹⁵ In particular, we note the following statements, which Barnardos believes are important to take notice of as the final version of He taonga te tamaiti is developed, in order to ensure the commitment to recognising every child as a taonga and rights holder is adequately underpinned:
- “Young children's earliest years are the foundation for their physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and developing competencies”¹⁶
 - “The Committee interprets the right to education during early childhood as beginning at birth and closely linked to young children's right to maximum development (art. 6.2). Linking education to development is elaborated in article 29.1: “States parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to: (a) the development of the child's personality, talents and mental

¹² See: <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Consultations/R-2-1190212-Cab-Paper-Review-of-Home-based-Early-Childhood-Education-Proposals-for-Change-Redacted.pdf>

¹³ New Zealand Government, *He Taonga te tamaiti, Every Child a Taonga, Strategic plan for early learning 2019-29, draft for consultation*, 2018, p.20.

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/resources/child-impact-assessment.html>

¹⁵ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 7, implementing child rights in early childhood*, CRC/C/GC/7/Rev.1, 20 September 2006.

¹⁶ Ibid, at [6](e).

and physical abilities to their fullest potential”. General comment No. 1 on the aims of education explains that the goal is to “empower the child by developing his or her skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence” and that this must be achieved in ways that are child-centred, child-friendly and reflect the rights and inherent dignity of the child (para. 2).¹⁷

- “The Committee recommends that States parties support early childhood development programmes, including home- and community-based preschool programmes, in which the empowerment and education of parents (and other caregivers) are main features. States parties have a key role to play in providing a legislative framework for the provision of quality, adequately resourced services, and for ensuring that standards are tailored to the circumstances of particular groups and individuals and to the developmental priorities of particular age groups, from infancy through to transition into school. They are encouraged to construct high-quality, developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant programmes and to achieve this by working with local communities rather by imposing a standardized approach to early childhood care and education. The Committee also recommends that States parties pay greater attention to, and actively support, a rights-based approach to early childhood programmes, including initiatives surrounding transition to primary school that ensure continuity and progression, in order to build children’s confidence, communication skills and enthusiasm for learning through their active involvement in, among others, planning activities.”¹⁸
- “In light of article 29 and the Committee’s general comment No. 1 (2001), the Committee also recommends that States parties include human rights education within early childhood education. Such education should be participatory and empowering to children, providing them with practical opportunities to exercise their rights and responsibilities in ways adapted to their interests, concerns and evolving capacities. Human rights education of young children should be anchored in everyday issues at home, in childcare centres, in early education programmes and other community settings with which young children can identify.”¹⁹

17. At this point, we further note the Government’s commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, including the commitment to SDG target 4.2, “Ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development.”²⁰ Connected to this it is important to note the OECD’s finding that “high-quality early childhood education and care brings a range of social benefits to individuals. These include better health, reduced likelihood of individuals engaging in risky behaviours and stronger ‘civic and social engagement. (...) These individual benefits also lead to broader benefits to society through spill-over effects.”²¹

¹⁷ Ibid, at [28].

¹⁸ Ibid, at [31].

¹⁹ Ibid, at [33].

²⁰ See: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

²¹ OECD, *Investing in high-quality early childhood education and care*, p.4, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/48980282.pdf>

Section Two | Barnardos' responses to the Government's proposed goals and recommendations

Goal 1: Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards

Barnardos' responses to Government's recommendations 1.1. – 1.7

18. Barnardos strongly welcomes the focus on ensuring quality of early learning. As the OECD has stated, "Early childhood education and care needs to be of sufficient quality to achieve beneficial child-outcomes and yield longer term social and economic gains. Research shows that poor quality ECEC provision can have lasting detrimental effects on children's development."²² Barnardos supports the recommended move towards improved adult:child ratios for infants and toddlers (recommendation 1.1).
19. However, Barnardos recommends that the Government further commits to providing excellent adult:child ratios as below, over and above the Ministry proposals. This will ensure the high quality provision that is needed to support the stated vision of the plan. This supports the International comparison for ratios (Annex 3 p48 Draft Plan).

Ratio	Under 2 years	2 years	3 years and over
Current	1:5	1:10	1:10
MoE Proposal	1:4	1:5	1:10
Barnardos' recommendation	1:3	1:5	1:8

Barnardos recommends that the Government considers regulating a key-teacher methodology of care for infants under 2 years old, as this is critical to providing secure and consistent relationships for the very youngest children in the sector. (See point 10 and 11). We urge the Government to provide an effective level of additional investment to fully support cross-agency (Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education) supported transitions from ECE to school and between ECE providers.

Barnardos acknowledges that priority needs to be given to ensuring a secure and quality supply of teachers to support these recommendations, and that funding would need to be phased over the 10 year period. We therefore urge the Government to consider phasing the required investment towards excellent ratios across all settings of early learning, key-teacher methodology for centre based services, and high quality teachers across all settings, by focusing on improved funding for services with high proportions of children from disadvantaged background, and those services with high levels of Learning support and Disability needs. Prioritised funding incentives for these services to provide excellence, would support the challenges of recruiting suitably capable and experienced teachers in these services, providing stable infrastructures and resources, and enable providers to support children to confidently express and engage with their identities, languages and cultures.

²² OECD, *Investing in high-quality early childhood education and care*, p.7, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/48980282.pdf>

20. Barnardos supports the need for further discussion regarding the mechanisms to enable the shift from 50% to 80% qualified and certificated teachers-funding rates in centres by 2022, and the regulating of 100% qualified and certificated teachers, as well as the mechanism to achieve consistent salaries and conditions for teachers working in teacher-led services, across the sector. Barnardos is keen to participate in these discussions and encourages the Government to give clarity to which type of provision is to be considered as Teacher-led services.
21. Barnardos supports the need for advice regarding group size. For our Early Learning Centre setting, we would welcome participation in discussions to enhance Government's understanding of the impacts of any change in advice around group size, with particular focus on supporting the approach of Tuakana Teina, the design of physical environment, number of adults needed, heating, noise and other key aspects of the physical environment. It is also important to align all future recommendations with the Government recommendations Home-Based settings.
22. Barnardos supports the proposal to gazette the full framework of Te Whāriki, whilst acknowledging the need to continue to enable services to develop a curriculum that recognises the unique context of the service. Gazetting the learning outcomes of Te Whāriki must provide the ability for services to be culturally responsive and support the bi-cultural nature of ECE in New Zealand. We believe it is important to recognise the diversity of learning philosophies within the current ECE sector, that enable the delivery of high quality early learning.
23. Barnardos supports the authorisation to expand concept, thus ensuring that providers meet expectations prior to expansion.
24. Barnardos supports the increase to the monitoring of services, and as made clear in our early submission on the Review of Home-Based early learning, we support the intent of the Review of Home-Based early learning to give the Education Review Office the power to enter homes where Home-Based ECE is being delivered. However, we urge the Government to deliver and uphold improved and more consistent models of evaluation and review of services across, all settings, regions and providers.

What we heard about Goal 1 from parents and whānau in Barnardos Early Learning

- Our parents and whānau noted that having better conditions for teachers is seen to be a good thing, and will encourage teachers to stay or come back to the profession if they have left.

What we heard about Goal 1 from Barnardos Early Learning teachers and educators

- Our teachers and educators indicated that all of the recommendations supported quality outcomes for tamariki, and they expressed that in particular, lower and regulated ratios are a key driver of quality.

Goal 2: Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive

Barnardos' responses to Government recommendations 2.1 – 2.3

25. Barnardos strongly welcomes and the focus on equity in the Draft Plan. We believe this is particularly important given the significant body of evidence that shows a strong correlation between experiences of poverty and exclusion in the first 1000 days of life and adverse health and wellbeing outcomes later in life.²³ Barnardos supports the need for the Government to ensure that the additional funding allocation mechanisms are appropriate and reaching the children who need additional funding the most, to support them in their development and wellbeing. The current Equity and Targeted funding supports Barnardos strategic goal “Supporting the needs and rights of the tamariki/children of Aotearoa New Zealand”. We encourage the Government to engage with the ECE sector as part of the review of the funding mechanisms, to ensure any changes acknowledge the three separate needs of Deprivation, Disability and Learning support, and meet the diverse needs of all children.
26. Barnardos strongly urges the Government to put in place a prioritised focus and investment for Disability and Learning support throughout ECE, to match that of compulsory schooling and complementary to the Disability and Learning Support Action Plan. We believe that there is a critical need for cross-agency Government engagement (See 18) to ensure the provision of secure and consistent relationships for children in the ECE sector. Furthermore, consistency across ECE, as well as continuity of provision into school, is paramount to successful long-term outcomes for all children.
27. Barnardos encourages the Government to consider a mechanism that would enable all funding to follow the child. This would support parent choice within the diversity of the ECE sector and the diversity of different family forms present in Aotearoa New Zealand society, i.e. including grandparents who are fulltime or part time caregivers for their grandchildren. It is important that early learning services can meet the diverse needs of all children. Creating barrier free access to support and financial assistance for children who need it most is vital to improving outcomes for all children.
28. We are well-placed and keen to participate in and contribute to the discussion around the co-construction of additional tools to support learning and well-being, and encourage the Government to consider including a wide spectrum of service providers in this forum.
29. Barnardos strongly encourages Government to acknowledge those providers who already demonstrate success in the delivery of wrap-around services in the Early Learning sector. This is an area we have specific experience in. Barnardos takes a

²³ As discussed in Tim Moore et al, for the Centre for Community Child Health, *The First 1000 Days: An Evidence Paper – Summary* p.12, available at: <https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/CCCH-The-First-Thousand-Days-An-Evidence-Paper-Summary-September-2017.pdf> The study authors also note that “Moreover, research shows that while children from high income families with developmental delays are likely to catch up to their peers in later life, children of low income families are much less likely to do so and in fact, the gap between them and their more affluent counterparts is likely to grow exponentially.” (p.12).

holistic approach to supporting children and their whānau. Wherever possible, we draw connections between our services and seek to work more as one, based on Kotahitanga, one of our organisational Guiding Principles. A prime example of this is happening in the context of high deprivation through our Te Korowai Mokopuna service,²⁴ which delivers social services through our early learning centres to some of New Zealand's most disadvantaged children and their whānau in South Auckland. A recent external evaluation of Te Korowai Mokopuna by Malatest International shows that it is highly effective in supporting positive change for children and their whānau, the majority of whom experience poverty, multiple disadvantage and complex needs as a daily reality. We are ready to contribute to Government's stated commitment to wrap-around services in the early learning sector by sharing our best practice that is in place, and to work with Government on creating further opportunities to integrate successful programmes in diverse communities. Something that is clear from the recent evaluation of TKM undertaken by Malatest International is that our model is ready to be scaled up and developed in other communities around New Zealand, however, we need to partner with others, such as Government, in order for this to be realised.

What we heard about Goal 2 from parents and whānau in Barnardos Early Learning

- Our parents and whānau noted that the Government should support parent choice and should work to create an equitable funding system that supports barrier free access to support, and provide financial assistance for children who need it most, which will also support the dignity and inclusion of children, and ensure all children can have a good life.

Our parents and whānau also advocate that early learning provision caters for the diverse family forms present in Aotearoa New Zealand society, i.e. including grandparents raising grandchildren, and is able to cater to the various needs of diverse family forms in ways that best work for them and their children, grandchildren and mokopuna.

What we heard about Goal 2 from Barnardos Early Learning teachers and educators

- Our teachers and educators indicated that they support equitable funding for all children, and not to be driven to put young children "in boxes" to obtain more funding.

Goal 3: Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning

Barnardos responses to Government recommendations 3.1 – 3.4

30. We support the Government's proposal for improved and consistent working conditions in the Early Learning sector, and welcome the exploration of existing employment and regulatory frameworks to support this. Barnardos encourages the Government to consider alongside this exploration, what investment will be needed to ensure that working conditions support the challenges of recruiting and retaining suitably capable and experienced teachers in services, with high proportions of

²⁴ Te Korowai Mokopuna is funded in partnership between Barnardos and Save the Children New Zealand, with additional funding from the Tindall Foundation.

children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will also support the vision that quality is raised for children. (See 18)

31. Barnardos advocates for strong Government investment to improve teacher supply. Moreover, we advocate that this needs to deliberately interplay with the workforce strategy for Tomorrow's Schools and we strongly urge the Government to consider a whole-of-sector approach. We suggest that this approach could help support teachers to transition more easily between ECE, Primary and Secondary education. A cohesive strategy across the whole of the education sector is critical to coherent consistency in teaching and learning for all children. We encourage the Government to consider working with Initial Teacher Education providers to develop a range of pathways for student teachers, including funded in-post options, as well as free graduate courses in Education. To secure a steady supply of quality early-learning teachers from diverse backgrounds over the next ten years, Barnardos recommends consideration be given to mechanisms that attract suitable candidates, particularly Māori and Pacific people. Strengthening the range of flexible training delivery options which accommodate various lifestyles, will support this.
32. We welcome the Government's proposal to strengthen Initial Teacher Education, develop continued development for newly graduated teachers, and to utilise the Teaching Council of New Zealand in supporting quality provision of student placements. This will help to provide the support a developing workforce to have the skills to succeed and provide quality outcomes for all children.
33. As a matter of urgency, Barnardos calls on the Government to improve professional learning and development across ECE. We believe this will be a significant contributor in supporting the recruitment and retention of teachers in the profession. We particularly encourage the Government to ensure alignment with these proposals and the finding within the Review of Home-based, specifically, to enhance requirements on all home-based service providers to provide health and safety training and professional development for home-based educators.
34. Barnardos urges the Government to recognise the connections between high quality PLD, teacher appraisal, Teacher Certification, Internal Evaluation, and the Education Review Office, as ways of developing services, leaders and teachers, and improving outcomes for children. We advocate that the Government continues developing a structured, cohesive programme for the ongoing development of services and teachers in ECE, supported with sufficient, good quality and strategically placed PLD providers, acknowledging the challenges of the Kāhui Ako model for the majority of ECE settings.

What we heard about Goal 3 from parents and whānau in Barnardos Early Learning

- Our parents and whānau noted that improving consistency and levels of teacher salaries was positive – if it's good for teachers, it's ultimately going to be good for children. Parents believe that if Government wants teachers to stay in the profession, it needs to incentivise and linkages also to be made to the important role teachers play in helping to shape the future leaders of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- They also strongly recognise the specific skillset needed to work with children in their early years, versus children who are older, and it is viewed by parents as being both hard but important work.

What we heard about Goal 3 from Barnardos Early Learning teachers and educators

- Our teachers and educators indicated that more money needed to be invested in the workforce to maintain and attract kaiako, acknowledging that it will be good for the Government to have a plan to improve this.

Goal 4: Planning ensures that provision is valued, sufficient and diverse

Barnardos' responses to Government recommendations 4.1 – 4.6

35. As a matter of urgency, we strongly urge the Ministry of Education to introduce of a process to determine whether a new early learning service is needed and whether a provider is well-placed to expand and grow new quality ECE services.
36. We support the proposal to centrally or outsource support of stand-alone community-owned services where the governance and management would benefit from assistance. We strongly encourage Government to give careful consideration to using existing high quality service providers who already demonstrated success in the delivery of Governance and Management support, and those with the infrastructure to support employment, financial and compliance management. We recommend that the Ministry of Education also seeks to mirror the proposed governance model for Boards of Trustees, recommended within the Tomorrow's Schools Review 2018.
37. Barnardos advocates for equitably applied funding models that ensure and support equal access to resources by all types of early learning across all contexts, and with the focus on enabling positive outcomes for all tamariki, families and whānau.
38. Barnardos does not support the investment in recommendations 4.3 and 4.6 at this point. Rather, we suggest that Government funds will be better utilised supporting the other recommendations as a priority. We encourage the Ministry of Education to engage and work with existing providers to strengthen their ongoing investment in an Early Learning ecology that contributes to a good life for all children and tamariki. There are already examples of best practice and high quality provision, which draw on multi-agency approaches (OT, MOH, MOE, MSD), and we urge the Government to consider these as exemplars.

What we heard about Goal 4 from parents and whānau in Barnardos Early Learning

- Our parents and whānau support the idea of providing better support for governance and management of community owned services. They did not support the notion that ECE should be allowed to generate profit.
- Parents and whānau were uncertain about the idea of state-owned early learning services – and came up with the idea that it would be better to increase funding to community services that have expertise and experience, so they can reach and support more communities in need of early learning services. This is seen to be a way to make Government funding go further. Also need to ensure these kinds of services are all around Aotearoa New Zealand in communities in need.

What we heard about Goal 4 from Barnardos Early Learning teachers and educators

- Our teachers and educators acknowledged the challenges of working in competition with other providers.

Goal 5: The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve

Barnardos responses to Government recommendations 5.1 – 5.3

39. Barnardos welcomes the development of the innovation hubs within existing provider services. We encourage the Ministry of Education to seek ways to strengthen and support robust Internal Evaluation and Teacher Inquiry, utilising this data to inform best practice models within our curriculum framework of Te Whāriki. We encourage the Ministry to test and analyse these innovative inquiries, supporting and enriching them with research partners such as the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, New Zealand universities as well as international expertise.
40. We encourage a cross-government agency funding model to support research that considers the wider social factors that impact children within the early learning sector. Barnardos suggests consideration be given to the concept that the leadership of research projects be shared with organisations. It would be an advantage to commission research that brings a Te Ao Māori or Pacific lens. As mentioned in point 33, we advocate that the Government work alongside and continue to develop a structured, cohesive programme for the ongoing development of services and teachers in ECE, supported with sufficient, good quality and strategically placed PLD providers.
41. Barnardos supports strengthening of the Kāhui Ako to include a larger percentage of ECE services, acknowledging the shortfalls of the model for the majority of ECE settings. We recognise how transitions within ECE, through to Primary and onto Secondary impact on children's capacity for learning and we urge the Government to seek ways to increase genuine collaboration across the sector.

What we heard about Goal 5 from parents and whānau in Barnardos Early Learning

- Our parents and whānau suggested that rather than new research hubs, the focus from Government should be on supporting data to be able to be gathered and better understood so that it can be influential into Government policy and to help drive innovation.

What we heard about Goal 1 from Barnardos Early Learning teachers and educators

- Our teachers and educators support the ongoing collaboration through strengthening access to Kāhui Ako.

Conclusion

Barnardos welcomes a number of the Government's proposals, as these have the potential to benefit tamariki and their whānau in their early years and beyond.

The Government's proposals reflect many of the themes Barnardos has discussed during earlier consultation phases, to ensure the quality of early learning provision.

Barnardos' submission draws on our decades of experience in delivering quality early childhood education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our submission reflects insights from a range of Barnardos staff and educators, alongside our parent and whānau community. We remain available to contribute to this important work over the coming months as a final version of He taonga te tamaiti is developed.

Contact details for anything relating to this submission

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