

Strategic Plan for Home-based Early Childhood Education Services

Introduction

The Teachers' Refresher Course Committee (TRCC) agreed that a strand of its Wellington course *Whakawhanaungatanga – Creating and Maintaining Relationships* in September 2008 would be devoted to a working group to develop a strategic plan for home-based early childhood education (home-based ECE). A cross-section of people involved in home-based ECE met for two days on 20 and 21 September; they were supported in their strategic work by Dr Anne Meade (facilitator) and Liz Everiss (writer).

Working group members were:

Stacey Dunn	Home Grown Kids
Clare Grace	Easy Mind
Kathryn Hart	Tauranga Regional Free Kindergarten Association
Penelope Janes	Barnardos New Zealand
Robynn Kopua	Wellington Nannies College
Amanda McIntosh	Amanda's
Raewyn Overton-Stewart	PAUA Early Childhood Homebased Care Service
Carol Stovold	Quality Kidz
Grace Todd	Linmark Educational Services
Jane Couch	Hutt Family Day Care

Aims of the working group

The aims of the working group were to:

1. develop a strategic plan to address the unique issues of home-based ECE services and fill gaps in *Ngā Huarahi Arataki/ Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002);
2. agree on a cohesive, stepped plan that would generate a sense of ownership amongst the home-based ECE sector, and would be achievable;
3. commit to ongoing advocacy and involvement in the progress of a strategic plan.

Environmental scan

Discussion of the environment indicated that families would continue to seek home-based ECE in years to come, and in increasing numbers. Home-based ECE is especially suitable for babies and toddlers under age three years, given the neuroscience findings on the importance of attachment-based relationships in the first three years of life. The home-based ECE sector is adaptable and is able to respond quickly to changes in population and birth rate. In rural areas provision of home-based ECE is more efficient than high-capital centre-based services, despite higher coordinator costs. However, there is a need for home-based ECE to improve responsiveness to Māori and immigrant families and educators.

The policy environment has the greatest impact on home-based ECE. Funding for the sector is inequitable, with home-based ECE still on pre-Pathways to the Future funding models. The 20 hours free ECE policy has been challenging throughout the ECE sector, including home-based. Any employment model changes for educators would have significant implications for the home-based ECE sector.

There are few recognised pathways for home-based educators to gain qualifications, and many existing Diploma/ Degree in Teaching (ECE) programmes do not include home-based ECE in a genuine and meaningful way. The ECE qualifications required of coordinators need to include courses that equip them for their role of educating adults and supporting the provision of ECE in home-based settings.

Values

The work of the strategic working group was based on the following values:

- the interests of children and families are paramount;
- high quality service provision;
- authentic learning experiences;
- relationships are key;
- appreciation of the special features of home-based ECE;
- fairness and equity for all sections of the ECE sector.

The strategies

The strategic goals drafted by the working group are linked to the goals of *Ngā Huarahi Arataki/ Pathways to the Future* (Ministry of Education, 2002). The plan proposes ten strategies for home-based ECE.

Goal One: Increase participation in quality home-based ECE services

Strategy	Action
Facilitate the establishment of home-based ECE services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide grants and practical assistance to community-based networks in their initial phase of establishment, particularly iwi groups, Pasifika groups, and networks in rural locations and areas of low participation. [Ministry of Education] 2. Consider ECE network provision to ensure reasonable and realistic distribution of home-based ECE services. [Ministry of Education]
Expand the home-based ECE sector.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Facilitate workforce expansion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removal or relaxation of the tertiary education provider cap; • review of the funding model (standard and quality funding) with a focus on the best impact on provision and access; • review of the current models of employment/ self employment for home-based educators; • investigation of the coordinator role to suit a range of ethnic and cultural communities. [Ministry of Education, NZ Home-based ECE Association, Home-based ECE Providers] 4. Support existing home-based ECE services to include clusters of educators within Māori, Pasifika and immigrant language communities. [Ministry of Education, NZ Qualifications Authority] 5. Include educators' own children who are not currently counted as participating in ECE. [Ministry of Education] 6. Investigate how to provide home-based ECE outside standard working hours without prohibitive additional costs. [Ministry of Education] 7. Introduce measures to recruit and retain home-based coordinators and educators, such as pay parity, and a more efficient police check process. [Ministry of Education, NZ Police] 8. Support alliances between home-based ECE services and other ECE services to meet changing family life styles (eg Playcentres and home-based ECE services). [Ministry of Education, NZ Home-based ECE Association, Early Education Federation] 9. Increase funding for children under 2 years of age in home-based ECE services. [Ministry of Education]

Strengthen and sustain vulnerable and high-cost home-based ECE services, eg in rural areas and for communities with languages other than English.	10. Allow privately owned home-based ECE services to access equity funding. [Ministry of Education]
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Goal Two: Improve quality in home-based ECE services

Strategy	Action
Ensure robust home-based ECE services with effective leadership and support for coordinators and educators, to establish and maintain whakawhanaungata nga.	<p>1. Provide mentoring and induction initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for new home-based ECE services and induction for new coordinators; • development and promotion of recruitment, induction, coaching and mentoring processes for coordinators and educators; • professional development for coordinators in effective mentoring and working with adults; • development of professional learning communities to provide coordinators with collegial support; • accessible and relevant leadership programmes for coordinators; • funding and resourcing that enables time for coordinators to have supervision and professional discussions; • links between providers through professional development options, such as Ministry of Education Kei Tua o te Pae professional development contracts; • information for coordinators and educators to foster effective educational leadership focused on children's learning. <p>[Ministry of Education, Initial Teacher Education Providers, Professional Development Providers, NZ Home-based ECE Association, Home-based ECE Providers]</p> <p>2. Retain educators by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • including coordinators and educators in education sector pay parity and funding decisions; • reviewing remuneration and employment/ contractual conditions for educators; • reviewing and developing performance appraisal information specific to the sector; • implementing practices and providing resources that meet the requirements of educators, parents and children; • continuing discussions with the New Zealand Teachers Council to ensure that provisionally registered teachers who are working as home-based educators can gain full teacher registration, and educators with full registration can maintain their registration status. <p>[Ministry of Education, Department of Labour, Home-based ECE Providers, New Zealand Teachers Council]</p>
Provide for participation in training and professional development for coordinators and educators.	<p>3. Provide grants to support home-based educators' access to ECE training and extend the incentive grant to include level 5 courses for home-based educators. [Ministry of Education]</p> <p>4. Provide incentives for tertiary education providers to deliver pre-Diploma level training for home-based educators that are flexible, accessible and relevant. [Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission]</p>

	<p>5. Encourage tertiary education providers to provide qualifications that are appropriate for home-based ECE co-ordinators such as a graduate certificate or advanced diploma with an adult teaching/ mentoring focus (eg specialist role information, working in homes, communication skills, working as an adult educator). [Tertiary Education Providers]</p> <p>6. Ensure tertiary education providers include home-based ECE content in their Diploma/ Degree in Teaching (ECE) programmes. [NZ Home-based ECE Association, NZ Teachers Council]</p> <p>7. Provide Ministry of Education funded professional development options nationwide for home-based educators. [Ministry of Education]</p> <p>8. Ensure all home-based educators have opportunities for relevant professional development. [Home-based ECE Providers, Ministry of Education]</p>
Provide research and resources to foster informed practice.	<p>9. Support the availability of translation services for home-based networks with immigrant educators to facilitate communication by and with speakers of other languages. [Department of Immigration, Department of Internal Affairs (Office of Ethnic Affairs)]</p> <p>10. Undertake research on structural aspects of home-based ECE, including network size. [Ministry of Education, NZ Council for Educational Research]</p> <p>11. Encourage participation and support of home-based ECE services in the Centres of Innovation programme. [Ministry of Education]</p> <p>12. Provide resources and publications specific to home-based settings, such as DVDs and books, and distribute sufficient numbers for all home-based educators. [Ministry of Education, Learning Media]</p> <p>13. Develop information for supporting parents. [Ministry of Education Team-Up, Ministry of Social Development]</p>
Review home-based ECE regulations and criteria to ensure the strategic goals can be achieved.	<p>14. Undertake a short-life working group project with coordinator and educator representation to review regulations and criteria that may impede attaining the strategic goals. [Ministry of Education, NZ Home-based ECE Association, Home-based Sector Representatives]</p>

Goal Three: Promote collaborative relationships

Strategy	Action
Build collaborative relationships within the home-based ECE and wider ECE sector.	<p>1. Encourage all home-based ECE providers to have regular network meetings, possibly in Ward clusters. [Ministry of Education, NZ Home-based ECE Association]</p> <p>2. Develop systems for the dissemination of information to providers about the home-based sector, including relevant developments and policies. [NZ Home-based ECE Association]</p> <p>3. Disseminate information on home-based ECE research and issues to relevant government departments. [NZ Home-based ECE Association]</p> <p>4. Maintain and strengthen current collaborative relationships. [NZ Home-based ECE Association]</p>
Collaborate with Māori, Pasifika and other community groups.	<p>5. Provide practical assistance and advice to home-based ECE services wanting to establish Māori and Pasifika and other community home-based ECE settings. [Ministry of Education]</p>

Facilitate collaboration with government agencies.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Make home-based ECE visible and recognised when the Ministry of Education engages in cross-government agency ECE policy and programmes, and work with local authorities. [Ministry of Education] 7. Ensure that issues drawn to the attention of the Ministry of Education or to other agencies, such as the Education Review Office, Work and Income, Ministry of Social Development, and Immigration, are dealt with in a timely fashion. [Ministry of Education] 8. Investigate the development and provision of pathways for teacher education and qualifications for home-based educators, via a project involving government agencies, NZ Teachers Council, and a home-based ECE sector reference group. [Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, NZ Teachers Council, NZ Qualifications Authority]
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Supporting strategies

1. Develop an effective communication and media strategy to raise the profile and understanding of home-based ECE in order to increase participation in quality home-based ECE and enhance collaborative relationships. [All stakeholders]
2. Review home-based ECE funding to ensure it effectively supports the implementation of the strategic goals and strategies fairly and effectively, using reference group representatives from the home-based ECE sector. [Ministry of Education, NZ Home-based ECE Association, Work and Income]
3. Develop a cohesive and incentivised qualifications framework for home-based educators which encourages educators to participate in learning and qualifications opportunities which enhance the provision of quality home-based ECE. [Ministry of Education, NZ Home-based ECE Association]