

The NZ Parent's Guide to Childcare & Education Services (Birth to 6 Years)



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Helping you make the best childcare decision

ISBN: 978-0-473-51547-8

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Making a Start to Getting Your Ducks in Row

Choosing an early childhood service is an important decision and you may not always find the right one for your child straight away.

For me, as a mum, a good service is one in which I know my child will be happy, learning, safe, healthy, provided with a great environment for friendships, play and relaxation. When I look at the adults or teachers what I look for is enthusiasm, warmth, energy, genuine interest in my child and my child's world, ability to connect at a personal level with my child, and a knack of knowing just what to say and do at the right moment to promote my child's learning.

As a parent, you need to feel comfortable with your choice and that your child will feel secure and be well looked after at the service you pick.

To ensure this happens, it is important to do some thorough research before making your final decision.

No one buys a car without doing some homework, so why don't parents do some homework when selecting childcare? Well now you can with the help of this Guide.

The basic information you need is brought together in this Guide to save you time and help you to get all your ducks in a row.

The Guide provides what you need to know to help you make your choice and be able to ask the right questions about your early childhood service. A checklist for choosing a service is included to further help you in forming your own opinions.

The general risks and benefits to children of participating in early childhood education (ECE) are explained in the Guide. As you think ahead as to how to get the most out of using ECE being aware of this information will help you in planning to reduce or control any risks and maximise any benefits.

After doing your homework, whatever decision you make will be the best decision at the time, given your circumstances, your child's characteristics and needs, and what services are available in your area.

Things can change, or your child's needs or family size or budget might change, so never be afraid to revisit your choices.

Keep the Guide and continue to refer to it throughout your child's early years. Some of the information may not be relevant to your situation right now, but might be later.



What is Early Childhood Education and Early Learning?

When you hear or read the phrase ‘early childhood education’, take it that it includes ‘childcare’. ‘Early childhood education’ is used interchangeably with ‘childcare’ because all services must provide both care and an educational programme. ECE is about the teaching and care of children.

‘Education’ is the process of facilitating learning, for example, through teaching, discussion, and providing new experiences. ‘Early learning’ on the other hand does not require that teaching take place or an educational programme is provided. Early learning can occur anywhere and anytime. Early learning achievements may for example be when a child says their first word, makes a friend, and shows they have learnt to play co-operatively.

Personal Options for Childcare and Early Learning

You may decide to:

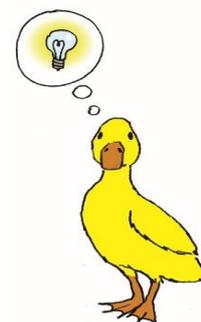
- Be a stay-home parent
- Have your child cared for by a family member e.g. grandparent
- Arrange shared care with another family or neighbour at each other’s places e.g. on Mondays and Tuesdays Lucy is cared for by Aroha’s dad at Aroha’s house, and on Thursdays and Fridays Aroha is cared for by Lucy’s mum at Lucy’s house.
- Take your child to work with you. This option may suit people who run small businesses and have flexibility to schedule breaks, or work in places where a young baby and a cot is welcomed. It is law in NZ that employers must provide appropriate facilities and breaks for women who want to breastfeed at work.
- Employ a nanny.
- Pay a person to care for your child at their home.
- Make use of community play groups such as music and movement groups (parents/ caregivers stay and there is usually a donation or small charge)

What Children Need

As they grow every child’s basic needs are:

- love and security,
- new experiences and stimulation (including play and language),
- recognition,
- achievement, and
- responsibility.

When considering different options, keep the basic needs of every child in mind along with what will suit your child best in terms of age, individual characteristics, and personality, etc.



Who Provides Early Childhood Education?

Early childhood teacher

An early childhood teacher is a person who holds at least a recognised teaching qualification (in birth to 6 years or birth to 8 years) that is at Level 7 on the NZ Qualifications Framework. The teaching qualification is typically a three- or four-year degree or another qualification/s that is assessed to be equivalent.

Kaiako

The Ministry of Education uses the Māori word 'Kaiako' to describe all qualified teachers, teacher-aides and any other adults including parents who have responsibility for the care and education of children in an ECE service.

Educator

The term 'educator' is used in the home-based ECE sector to describe the person who provides education for children in their care. The term 'educator' is used regardless of whether the person might also be a qualified early childhood teacher.

Service Providers

When there are three or more children (not being the children of the person providing the care) under the age of six, the service must become licenced with the Ministry of Education under the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008. Any person, organisation, business, or company can operate an ECE service, providing it is approved and licensed by the Ministry of Education.

The Licensing System

The Ministry of Education is the licensing authority. It inspects and checks that a new service complies with regulations and if approved then the Ministry issues it with a life-time licence. The Ministry does no further licensing checks.

The ECE sector operates on a high trust model. There is no annual Warrant of Fitness system for ECE services. Following a serious or fatal incident, parent complaints, or a referral from the Education Review Office (not a regulatory body) the Ministry may, if it chooses, do a full or partial licensing inspection. It may then downgrade the service's licence, suspend, or cancel the licence.

All services must display their licence in a prominent place such as on the parent noticeboard or in the reception or entrance area. If you can't see it, or are not shown a copy, ask so you can check what the current status of the licence is.

Annual lists of the names of services found to have breached minimum standards by the ministry and had their licences downgraded are online at www.myece.org.nz

ECE Services

Education and Care Centres go by many different names including kindergarten or free kindergarten, preschool, daycare, creche, nursery school, and learning centre. You will find centres in various places: urban and rural areas, in the suburbs, in some inner-city commercial buildings, on school grounds, and near major arterial roads.

- Some are mega services, licensed for up to 150 children, while others have a smaller enrolment size and may provide a more intimate or family-like care situation.
- The educational philosophy centres emphasise can differ e.g. Montessori, Rudolf Steiner, Reggio Emilia and Pikler.
- Some are bilingual early childhood centres or cater for an ethnic community or group.
- Some have a religious foundation.
- There are centres that are community-based and managed by a parent committee or community-board.
- There are also centres which are owner-operated, run by private trusts, or are commercial for-profit operations.

Te Kōhanga Reo centres operated by the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust Board are unique in providing not only ECE but also a Māori-led way of preserving the language, passing on the culture, and supporting all whanau members.

Playcentre is a parent-led early education service. Playcentres are community-based places, and family and child centered. Parents and caregivers are involved in their child's learning and a bonus is that if they wish they can undertake Playcentre training courses, gaining both knowledge and a qualification.

Home-based licensed ECE services employ visiting teachers who supervise educators who care for up to 4 children in their own home, or a nanny or au pair in the family home.

Hospital-based ECE services are for children under the age of 6 who are staying in the hospital and receiving hospital care.

Early intervention centres provide support and an education service for infants and young children with significant disabilities or whose developmental progress is at risk. Special needs may include, for example, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, developmental dyspraxia, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and brain injury.

A Sample of Concerns Parents Can Have When Deciding to Use ECE or Not

**What are my lowest
cost options?**

**My biggest fear is that our language
and family culture will be
undermined by putting our
child into the mainstream
education system early**

**Are there services that
provide year-round long hours
of care?**

**I want my child to receive
individual attention where
I take him and not be just
a number**

**Can I find a way to remain
well-connected with my child?**

**I don't want to leave my
baby with someone
not known to us**

Costs and Financial Assistance

Fees and charges

We are not charged when it's closed statutory holidays and term breaks. This is just as well because I can't work and earn during those times"

"When my child turned three, we were asked if we wanted to sign up for the 20-Hours ECE and told it would mean a discount, so that we would pay about \$80 for 21 hours of care. But I was under the understanding 20 hours was fully subsidised and any charges for add-ons were optional?"

ECE services can set their own fees policy. But families have a right to question fees and any other charges. In addition, the Ministry of Education also sets some rules, especially around what families can be charged when a service is receiving 20-Hours ECE funding for children 3 years and older. Services cannot charge fees for any hours covered by the 20-Hours ECE. Services can get up to 30 hours of funding for every child not on the 20-Hours scheme. If the child is already on the 20-Hours ECE funding, then the service can claim up to an additional 10 hours of funding from the ministry. (Current funding rates can be found at:

<https://www.myece.org.nz/funding-and-government-grants>)

Different services have different charges, such as penalties if you are late picking up your child, so it pays to carefully check what you are agreeing to pay before you sign the enrolment form! To learn more about funding rules and various fees and charges go to <https://www.myece.org.nz/costs-subsidies-funding>

If your service is community-based and not-for-profit, don't be surprised to be asked for donations of money and time, such as to help with running a cake stall or to join a working bee. Government funding and revenue from parent fees and grants may not always be enough to pay all teachers a professional wage/salary, ensure above minimum high teacher-child ratios, and pay for new projects and resources.

Financial assistance

You may be eligible for a WINZ Childcare Subsidy for up to 9 hours a week if you are not in paid employment, are studying or training. The subsidy is also available for up to 50 hours a week depending on household income levels, if you are in paid employment, in training, are ill or disabled, caring for a child in hospital, or caring for a child for whom you get a disability allowance. Find out more about the subsidy and the eligibility requirements at: www.myece.org.nz/financial-assistance-families-can-get/88-winz-childcare-subsidy



Beginning your Search

“I will consider one day of childcare a week when she is 18 months. The number of carers per child will be the most important factor as I can see the importance of personal attention”

“If you know that a centre supports breastfeeding and you had to go to work, you would think that’s cool I can carry on breastfeeding. I never thought one of the questions to ask when choosing an ECE service could be ‘how do you feel about breastfeeding?’. If I had another child, I would be asking that question”

To begin your search for a service, see the ECE Directory at www.myece.org.nz You may also have noticed services located near where you live, or on the way to work or near your workplace. Look these ones up in the Directory to find details.

You could phone first and make an appointment to visit. This can be a good idea if you don’t know what hours the service operates. If the service is home-based the visiting teacher or coordinator will need to first interview you and arrange times that suit you both to visit educators in their own homes.

The best centres are often what we call – “open door services” – they have nothing to hide and are staffed above minimum requirements for child supervision, so there will almost certainly be someone available to talk with you and show you around.

Try to physically visit at least four different ECE services with your child so you have a basis for comparison. Watch and consider your child’s reactions to the people and environment in each service.

If you are not satisfied with any service (or there are no vacancies at the service you like) then visit some more services or consider looking into different types from those you are currently focused on – e.g. look into home-based ECE if you are not satisfied with any centre, or vice versa.

On the next page is a Checklist. Take the Checklist with you when you visit services.

If you would like more copies a PDF is available at:

<https://www.myece.org.nz/ece-checklist-for-quality/232-service>

After visiting some services and completing the checklist for these services, you may find it helps your decision-making process to talk over your findings with family members and friends for their opinions.



My ECE Checklist

	Service 1:	Service 2:	Service 3:	Service 4:	
PRACTICAL CONCERNS, HEALTH AND SAFETY, AND RIGHTS					
	Tick or cross	Tick or cross	Tick or cross	Tick or cross	Comments and observations
Is the service a place that I feel comfortable and at ease in?					
Is my child showing a liking for the service during our visit?					
Are the hours suitable?					
Can I change hours if I need to?					
Does the cost meet my budget?					
Have I got information on all extra costs? (e.g. absence fee, late pick-up charge, materials fee, etc.)					
Is it in a convenient location?					
Is it in a safe location and position?					
Is it able to support and help my child's interests, special abilities, and disabilities?					
Is it able to support and protect my child's health?					
Do I see evidence that parents and caregivers are not prevented or discouraged from visiting and staying with their child when they wish?					
Is the service breastfeeding-friendly?					

Does the service work under the Code of Ethical Conduct for Early Childhood Services? (see p. 20 of this Guide)					
Is the Code of Children's Rights in ECE followed by the service? (for a copy see p.14 of this Guide)					

QUALITY ESSENTIALS

There are not too many babies or children for my child to feel lost in the crowd					
Close supervision of every child is provided, and for each child there is at least one adult who knows what the child is always doing					
There is laughter, fun, and an atmosphere where every child can feel accepted and respected					
Affection is shown toward the children (<i>kindness and cuddles</i>)					
There is lots of talking, discussion, and building of shared memories between adults and children					
The adults hold expectations for children's learning and development					
Noise levels are not high and are safe for children's ears					
There is high attention to correct hand-washing and hygiene practices					
Children's interests, personality and family values are known and appreciated by those teaching and caring for them					
There is heaps of play space inside and outside for the number of children					

There is always something on offer for the children, so more choices and less down-time (<i>less: passive watching, aimless wandering, sitting in front of screens, and travelling and sitting in vehicles</i>)					
Children's personal privacy and space is respected, such as when using the bathroom or wanting to play in peace without interruption					
There is variety of different play areas and materials on offer for the children. Children can also engage in adult work such as gardening and cooking.					
The teachers / carers really want to be there and love their work					
The adults are well trained in young children's care, development, and learning (ECE degree or diploma qualified). This is especially important if it is not a parent-led service					
The adults engage in professional learning and ongoing further education					

I still need to ask one or more of the services questions about:

The service I have found to be the best so far and that meets my requirements is:

What makes up Quality ECE

The Formula for Remarkable Quality Early Childhood Education and Care

1. Not too many babies and children.
2. Lots of laughter, fun, cuddles and affection – supporting every child to feel included and valued.
3. Adults provide close supervision and always know what each child is doing.
4. There's lots of talking, discussion, and building of shared memories.
5. Adults hold expectations for children's learning and development.
6. There is heaps of play space inside and outside.
7. There are a variety of play areas and materials, with opportunities also for children to learn about adult work e.g. cooking and gardening.
8. Safe noise levels are maintained.
9. High attention is given to correct hand-washing and hygiene practices.
10. Children's interests, personality and family values are known, appreciated and responded to.
11. There's always something on offer, so more choices and less down-time (less: passive watching, aimless wandering, and screen-time).
12. Children's personal privacy and space is respected, such as when using the toilet or wanting to be left alone to play uninterrupted.

And add to this...

13. Adults who are well supported and are recognised for their knowledge and commitment (e.g. through pay that reflects their training and skills).
14. Adults who are well trained and qualified in early childhood education (unless children's parents are providing the care and education).
15. Adults who engage in ongoing learning and seek out information and resources to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching, methods of care and response to the individual needs of children and families.

Equals...

A quality early childhood service that is truly remarkable!

“Children will positively thrive in a remarkable quality early childhood education service. You know it has been good for their child when parents/caregivers are still recommending it highly years after their child has left to start school.

This is the level of quality that every childhood service should aim for and achieve”.



Author: Dr Sarah Alexander, ChildForum, NZ.

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The My ECE Code of Children's Rights in Early Childhood Education and Care

Every infant, toddler and young child has rights as users of early childcare and education services (as made plain by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1992 and the New Zealand Human Rights Act 1993).

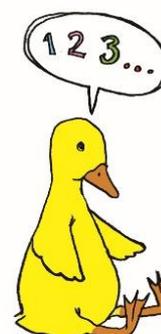
10 Rights

1. To be enabled wherever possible to receive care exclusively or primarily from parents, family and whānau.
2. To experience early education and childcare that is of the highest standard.
3. To receive skilled care and learning opportunities appropriate to meeting needs and personal choices.
4. To have continuous, meaningful, and caring relationships with the adults responsible for them in the childcare/early education programme that includes supportive relations with parents, family and whānau.
5. To be kept safe from harm, including protection from child abuse, bullying, and risks to health.
6. To have privacy respected.
7. To be included regardless of size, special ability, or disability and be supported to exercise independence and develop self-esteem.
8. To be treated with respect including being involved in all decisions affecting them by receiving information in a way that is understandable, having opportunities to express views, ask questions and receive truthful responses.
9. To receive positive guidance free from coercion and discrimination.
10. To complain if necessary and have complaints as put forward by parents/caregivers taken seriously.

* Check for any updates and download more copies at:

<https://www.myece.org.nz/code-of-rights-for-children>

An early childhood service that respects children and honours their rights will tell you of their commitment to this. You may see a link to this Code on the service's website, be given a copy of the Code when you enrol your child, and a copy of the Code may be displayed on the service's parent noticeboard.



The Benefits and Risks of ECE for Children

All children need a safe and caring home environment. Quality early childhood education can go some way to helping to make up for a poor home environment.

When there is a combination of both a good home and a quality ECE environment, this will make the biggest difference in the life of a child.

If the provision of ECE enables a child's family to enjoy a higher income then this too may help to give the child greater opportunities and chances in life.

Benefits of ECE

As a result of attending ECE research suggests that children may show:

- Improvements in their language, maths, and reading ability.
- Higher achievement at school.

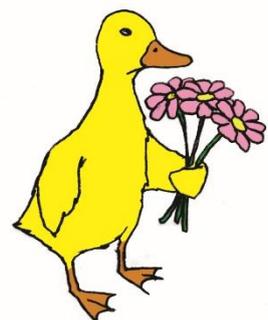
All children may experience these outcomes, but the children most likely to show the greatest gains from participating in ECE are those who come from poor or disadvantaged home backgrounds.

Some points of caution

1. The quality of the early childhood service matters. Quality includes whether staff have a high level of training in early childhood education and small group or class size.
2. The benefits of participation 'wash out' overtime as the child grows older.
3. Attending ECE for 12 or 15 hours can benefit a child's learning outcomes as much as attending 40 hours a week. It is the experience of participating that matters most and not the amount of time spent. Here are a couple of analogies:

Having a lovely, warm, relaxing bath is nice and can be good for you too. But, spending hours and hours in the bath could get uncomfortable and not be so mentally or physically good for you. Also, what might you miss out on doing if you stay in the bath for longer than you really want or need to?

What's your favourite tasting ice-cream? Hokey pokey? Well here's one hokey pokey ice-cream. Here's another one. Delicious, nice, and good for you, isn't it? I will give you another ice-cream every hour today, the next day, and the day after, and the day after that. Does it still taste so delicious and feel so good? Maybe, you are not experiencing any increased benefit from having more and especially from having so much more.



Some risks

Research shows that the more time children are in ECE in the first three years the greater the risk that their mothers will become emotionally distant and less sensitive to them.

Also, children who attend ECE are more likely to:

- Be more anxious.
- Show problem behaviour including aggression.
- Get sick more often and need antibiotics for treatment. *(Breastmilk has been shown to be a protective factor. Children who were breastfed as infants are less likely to get sick and need antibiotic treatment when attending ECE)*

Think about what you could do to reduce any possible risks and maximise the potential benefits. For example:

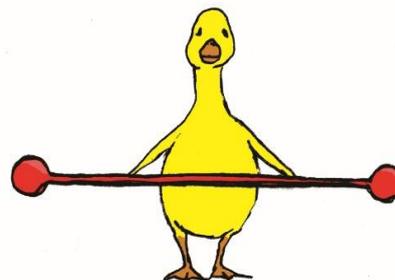
- Are you able to organise your schedule to spend 5 – 10 minutes at the service with your child every day to share in what your child is doing and maintain a positive attachment relationship?
- If your child is old enough to wash their own hands, have you taught and reinforced good handwashing?

What groups of children are perhaps more resilient to the negative effects of group care when it is of poor or low quality?

- Children from higher socio-economic and advantaged backgrounds.
- Children who have had a healthy start to life and are in good health.

What children are perhaps most likely to have greatest difficulty adjusting to being in ECE?

- Children with a sensory integration disorder.
- Children with physical and developmental disabilities and children with an emotional behavioural disorder *(if the service does not have appropriate facilities and enough trained staff to support children with their individual needs and social and learning challenges).*



Education Curriculum: Te Whāriki

Te Whāriki is the name of the [national education curriculum](#) that every licensed ECE service is expected to implement.

It might seem that children are “just playing”, but Te Whāriki helps to ensure that children are getting support to develop the foundation skills for learning. The curriculum document sets out expectations, required capabilities, and goals for supporting children’s learning. The dispositions to taking an interest, being involved, persisting with difficulty, challenge and uncertainty, expressing a point of view or feeling, and taking responsibility are all important.

Children are viewed as individuals and if a service is successfully implementing Te Whāriki then you will not see a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.

Teachers and home-based educators must assess children’s learning and follow their individual progress and interests.

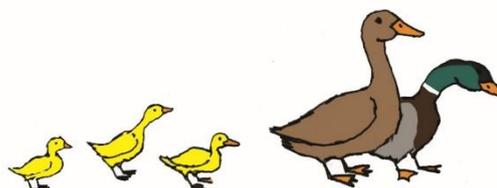
Check the documentation on your child's learning at the service.

- Do the learning stories, observations and other assessments and planning show a good understanding of your child?
- Do the adults know your child well through talking with and engaging in observations about your child’s learning, and learning about your child’s background, interests and developing skills?
- Are they helping your child to continue to develop and extend on these areas?
- Are you invited to contribute and provide feedback, and involved in setting goals?

Key Teacher / Primary Caregiver

A [primary caregiver](#) or key teacher is important for your child to have in ECE. To receive quality care, and especially if your child is attending for more than a few hours every day, your child needs to form a secure attachment with someone in the setting.

One or two teachers will be allocated to be your child’s primary caregiver/s. They will have responsibility for your child’s overall well-being within the group. Primary caregiving enables quicker, smoother, and more efficient communication between the service and you, and gives you a main point of contact on any matter to do with your child. And, your child will then have a dependable adult friend to watch over them from day one!



Preparing for Take Off

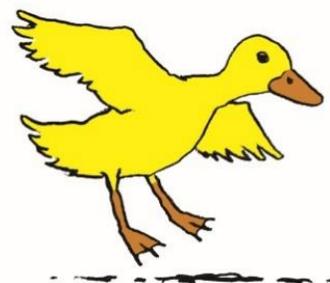
“The service she is booked in for has a good reputation so I am hopeful it will be positive. I’m scared though”

“It was hard to leave him with strangers initially. But he really enjoys going, so the decision is easy now”

You may need to:

- Organise a lunch box, extra or different play clothes, sunhat, a spare car seat to leave at the service if your partner or nanny or other person will be doing pick-ups or drop-offs. Are there other things you need to get too?
- Name your child’s clothes, shoes, baby bottles, etc.
- Check if your child has had all recommended vaccinations for their age.
- Talk with your employer about the possibility that for the first week or two at least you may need flexible work hours to help settle your child in.

Make a list of the things you will need to do. Planning ahead will make the transition a lot easier for both your child and you. Go to the [My ECE](#) website for articles with lots of helpful tips and advice on settling your child in, how to handle the ‘dreaded drop off’, and how to tell if your child is truly happy and settled in well.



Looking Out for Your Child

What happens after you have dropped your child off and when you are not there? Do you really know what goes on?

Have conversations with other parents. Also, occasionally vary your drop-off and pick-up times, and join your child for lunch, so you can see what the service is like normally and in its natural state when it is not expecting you or other parents or visitors to be present.

How might you tell if things are not going well?

- You may pick up clues from your child. Listen to your child. Notice changes in your child’s mood and responses to different people and other children.
- High staff turnover is a potentially big clue that all is not well at the service.
- Angry voices or bullying can indicate that all is not well at the service.
- Teachers who have lost personal interest in their work may become unenthusiastic and lethargic, which in turn impacts on the quality of care children receive and their learning.

- Perhaps mistakes are being made more than once, such as forgetting to give a child their prescribed medicine.
- Policies and procedures may not be up to scratch. Here are two examples:
 - Food that is of high choking risk is given to infants and toddlers, such as raw apples and popcorn.
 - There is a child who is a serial biter and nothing is being done to address the child's behaviour and protect other children.

Speaking Up When Something is Wrong

Informing the Police

Do not hesitate to contact the police for advice or to report, if you believe a child has been, or is likely to be, harmed. This includes sexual abuse, emotional and physical harm.

Making a complaint to your ECE Service

To make a complaint to your service there is a standard complaint form you can use. This form is available online and can be downloaded and printed from:

<https://www.myece.org.nz/making-a-complaint>

Making a complaint to the Ministry of Education

Every early childhood service is legally required to display (or provide) a copy of its Complaints Procedure and it must state the contact details for the relevant regional office of the Ministry of Education.

It is best to make the complaint in writing - and you can do this by sending an email to the Ministry of Education. That way there is a record and proof that you have made a complaint should you not hear back or see no action or changes at the early childhood service. Contact the Ministry of Education and ask for an update should you feel that an unreasonable amount of time has gone by and you have not heard back. If you are not satisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with, then complain again. It is your right to be listened to and to have your complaint adequately investigated.

If you are worried about making a formal complaint to the Ministry of Education, My ECE can do this on your behalf and keep your name private. Find out more on how to report a service in confidence by going to:

<https://www.myece.org.nz/report-early-childhood-education-service>



The Code of Ethical Conduct for Early Childhood Services

The standards of practice all early childhood services should uphold are outlined in this Code of Ethical Conduct. It is voluntarily embraced by early childhood services and provides a resource for responsible decision-making and action.

The Code acknowledges that New Zealand is party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Te Tiriti o Waitangi is acknowledged as New Zealand's founding document that defines the obligations and responsibilities of early childhood services in relationship with Māori.

Standards

1. AN ETHIC OF CARE

Early childhood services care for and care about children. The significance of caring and relationship both as an educational goal, and as a fundamental aspect of what the service does is recognised.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW AND MAINTENANCE OF SOCIAL COHESION

Early childhood services observe standards consistent with the law and maintenance of social cohesion for the well-being of all its members.

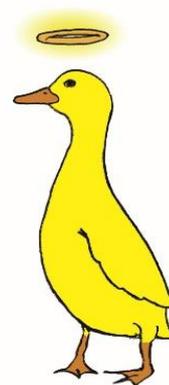
3. PROFESSIONAL APPROACH

Early childhood services operate in strongly professional ways.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Early childhood services accept they are accountable and maintain a climate of openness and transparency.

See the guidelines that go with these standards: <https://www.myece.org.nz/code-of-ethical-conduct>



It's a Feeling... Knowing it is Right

Here are some of the things people have said about their choice of ECE:

“When arriving from out of town to spend time with our mokopuna, the teachers are very welcoming, manaaki and aroha very much in evidence. The current programme plan was explained and how our mokopuna strengths and interests were leading the teachers into the ongoing activities for the tamariki. Tino pai to mahi, and thanks for knowing our boy so well!!”

“We consider the kindergarten to be an outstanding centre, extending the children in a caring, safe environment with exceptional staff and small class sizes. The team of staff have a true passion for early education, instilling a real love of learning in the children and providing continuous feedback to parents. We were very sad to see our children leave the kindergarten but knew they left fully prepared for school, both academically and socially”

“It's hard to predict when you're in the middle of those busy pre-school years what an amazingly positive impact Playcentre will play in your life. I treasure my years learning alongside my children at Playcentre and our family continues to be part of this amazing community through our children's school years. And on top of all that the Playcentre is lucky to have a beautiful outdoors setting of gardens and native bush, plus a recently renovated interior making it a real pleasure to be in”

“I put my children into home-based education because I believe that they need structure and routine just like they would if they were at home. My children have formed close relationships with the other children who are now like siblings. The educator is amazing! I have formed a strong relationship with her and often ask for guidance. I truly believe that my children are such cool kids and that has a lot to do with her, helping me raise them”

“My wife and I are so extremely pleased with the level of care and attention our daughter receives at the centre. The staff are super-friendly and so supportive. They made our daughter feel at home from day one and their communication is reassuring. The family-feel you get and caring nature of all the staff there is truly amazing. She has the best time there, and they regularly go out on trips and special activities away from the premises.”



About My ECE

My ECE provides parents and the public of Aotearoa NZ with straightforward information on early childhood education (ECE). My ECE supports parents and caregivers to form their own opinions when choosing an early childhood service.

The My ECE website includes a directory of early childhood education services. Parents and caregivers are provided the opportunity to give positive and negative feedback, by adding their comments and ratings – which in turn supports other families to form their own opinions.

My ECE recognises that the perspective of parents and caregivers on the safety and quality of ECE is important. While a service may be claimed by its owner to be high quality, or by the Ministry of Education or the Education Review Office, what matters also is how parents, whanau, and children experience it.

The Author

Dr Sarah Alexander is a highly qualified early childhood teacher and a former university academic in child development and educational psychology.

She is an international expert in the field of ECE and has researched, published, and spoken extensively on issues of how to define, measure, and improve quality.

Dr Sarah has five children (three girls and two boys) and so from a parenting viewpoint she is familiar with the joys and tribulations of relying on early childhood education.



Dr Sarah knows what bad childcare is like and wants no child to experience early childhood education and care that is harmful. Her interest in increasing transparency and accountability around childcare and the quality of ECE led to the formation of My ECE.

As the Chief Executive of ChildForum, a national early childhood organisation, Sarah works closely with and supports early childhood service providers, teachers, educators, parents and ECE researchers across NZ.