



A guide to learning in a Covid-19 world:

# Supporting early childhood learners into 2021

We know that Covid-19 has had a huge impact on you, your early childhood education service and other services across NZ. In 2020, you had to deal with new challenges and develop innovative ways to support your children.

Last year was tough and you had to go above and beyond to meet the needs of your children and whānau. With this being said, the impacts of Covid-19 are likely to still be felt this year – and ERO would like to help you to support your children during this difficult time.

To do this, we talked to leaders and kaiako in a wide range of services in 2020 to find out about the challenges they had to overcome in responding to Covid-19 and the lessons learnt in supporting children, parents, whānau, and kaiako. From talking to everyone, we have produced an in-depth report on the impact of Covid-19 on early childhood education. This short guide for early childhood education leaders and kaiako draws from the full report to help you:

- understand the impact of Covid-19 on early childhood education
- share strategies adopted by services to respond to Covid-19
- identify practical actions for you and your service to consider to continue to support children, parents, whānau, and staff in a Covid-19 world.

We hope you find this guide useful to reflect how far you have come in responding to Covid-19 and to provide you with some ideas about what you could do to support your service in 2021.

## What we found from talking to early childhood education services in 2020 about the impact of Covid-19

The key findings from our *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Early Childhood Education* report, which you may find interesting, are set out below.

Despite services being busy last year responding to Covid-19, we are grateful for the time given to us by leaders and kaiako. Their experiences and insights are at the heart of what we have learnt. You can find the full report on the impact of Covid-19 on early childhood education services, along with a short summary of the findings, on ERO's website.

### What we learnt about children in early learning services

Learning remotely is possible for young children if you connect with their parents and whānau.

- Nine out of ten services said they were able to provide some form of distance learning for children during lockdown.

You will have strengthened the learning relationships you have with parents and whānau.

- A third of services reported that the increased interaction with parents and whānau supported children's learning.

You may have struggled to connect with children and whānau who have limited access to digital tools.

- 17 percent of services identified that it was challenging to support learning during the lockdown for children whose whānau did not have access to the internet or a digital device.

Some of your children and whānau may still be feeling anxious about coming to your early childhood education service.

- In more than a quarter of services, whānau were nervous about their children returning to onsite education and care following lockdown.

**What we learnt about parents and whānau**

Keeping in regular connect with your parents and whānau during these difficult times is important.

- 84 percent of services reported having regular contact with parents, whānau and children over the lockdown.
- Services tailored the way they communicated to best suit the needs of whānau.

**What we learnt about your staff**

Covid-19 may have been hard on your staff.

- One in three services said their kaiako were experiencing anxiety and that this was related to the uncertainty created by the changing Covid-19 situation, job security and their own health.

**What we learnt about the strategies services put in place**

- Covid-19 has accelerated the use of digital technologies in early childhood teaching and learning. Leaders and kaiako want to build on this moving forward.
- Relationships with whānau have strengthened and can support learning going forward.
- Many services have developed or reviewed their pandemic plans.
- New health and safety processes have been established and there has been an increased focus on keeping healthy.

See Part 1 in the *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Early Childhood Education* report for more information about the impact on student wellbeing engagement and learning.

**How can you continue to support your children this year?**

Here are some actions for you to consider to continue to support your children, kaiako, and parents and whānau.

1. *Reflect on 2020* – identifying what worked well for your service and what challenges emerged and how to address these.
2. *Prepare* – having a pandemic plan in place and staying up to date with information shared by government organisations.

3. *Establish clear channels for sharing information* – sharing relevant, timely and clear information with kaiako, parents and whānau.
4. *Encourage innovative approaches for how your curriculum content is delivered* – encouraging kaiako to share creative and innovative approaches that can be used to support learning in different situations.
5. *Plan to support remote learning* – establishing good routines for online learning, outlining expectations for staff participation and considering how this can be supported.
6. Involve parents and whānau in reviewing how well the curriculum meets their child's needs and use this to inform ongoing developments.
7. *Monitor your own wellbeing and check in with your staff* – communicating with staff, considering tools that can support staff wellbeing and drawing on support networks to support your own wellbeing.

See Part 2 in the *Learning in a Covid-19 World: The Impact of Covid-19 on Early Childhood Education* report for more information about the ongoing challenges for centres and Part 3 contains more information about the practical actions listed above.

**Where else can you go for help?**

- [Ministry of Education COVID-19 Information and Advice](#)
- [Ministry of Education Child Wellbeing and Participation Portal](#)
- [New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#)
- [Healthy Active Learning](#)
- [Te Whāriki Online](#)