



Learning in a Covid-19 World:

# How early childhood education services helped children and their whānau

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has caused significant disruption to early childhood education, with early childhood education services having to quickly adapt to changing requirements and periods of uncertainty. During lockdown, services had to transition to supporting children to learn from their homes. After lockdown, they had to support children to return to services and continue their learning in a Covid-19 world.

The Education Review Office interviewed 400 services across the country from June through to August 2020 to understand how they responded. The research found that there were significant challenges for early childhood services to overcome and that services had risen to the challenge:

- enabling even young children to learn remotely
- adopting new teaching practices, in particular a step change in the use of digital technology
- supporting whānau with broader needs.

This short research excerpt shares the key findings and examples of good practice of how early childhood education services across New Zealand have responded to Covid-19.

## Services enabled young children to learn remotely through connecting with their parents and whānau

*Highlights included:*

- Nine out of 10 services said they were able to provide some form of distance teaching and learning for children during lockdown.
- A third of services reported that the increased interaction with parents and whānau strengthened learning partnerships.

“We feel that we have developed a deeper connection with parents and partnerships are more connected with them than before the lockdown.”

Service leader

## Services have made rapid changes to their practices to meet the needs of children

### Highlights included:

- 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.
- 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.
- Relationships with whānau have strengthened and can support learning going forward.

"We did a video showing them [children, parents and whānau] what the transition would look like, how children will be brought into the service and the new routine – showing children that kaiako will take your bag, give it a spray, and would greet the child on the porch rather than being brought inside by mum."

Service leader

## Services went above and beyond to support children, whānau and staff

### Highlights included:

- Eight out of 10 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.
- A fifth of services said they actively supported their vulnerable families by providing emotional support and assisting in the provision of food.

"We were quite well prepared so as soon as they made the call [to go into lockdown] – we had packs made up with paper, pens and hot cross buns."

Service leader

This summary is an early release from this research. ERO will release the full findings from its *Learning in a Covid-19 World* research programme early in the new year. This will include the impact Covid-19 has had on children and the practical actions early learning services can take in 2021 to support children, whānau, and kaiako with the ongoing challenges of Covid-19.



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