



Tēnā koutou katoa

Welcome to the first edition of *What Matters Most* for 2025.

Our 2025 evaluation programme is well underway, with our team enjoying reconnecting and engaging with services and governing organisations across the motu.

Our reviews of early childhood services and governing organisations continue to be focused on quality learning experiences for children while still being vigilant about the safety and care of our youngest learners.

Quality early childhood education is essential for enhancing children's learning and developmental outcomes. Our reviews are designed to support continual improvement to lift the quality of education and care.

Quality services are those where children receive high levels of emotional support, where teachers and educators foster active relationships with children, parents and carers, and where teachers and educators work as a team to deliver intentional teaching that is responsive to the individual needs of the child.

We review approximately a third of all early childhood services each year. We see that a considerable proportion of services need more support to lift the quality of education and care. Last year, we reported that 64% of standalone early childhood services we reviewed were below the threshold for quality, and improvement is still needed to realise equitable outcomes for children. By working closely with leaders through our review programme, over time we expect to see an increase in the overall quality of service provision and outcomes for children.

The good news is that standalone services say that our reviews are having a positive impact. In our 2023/24 post review questionnaires, leaders told us our work with them has helped them to understand what they need to do next to lift the quality of education and care, and that there is greater focus on improving learner outcomes.

- 88% of services said the evaluation process supported them to identify the actions they need to take to improve quality within the service.

- 79% of services indicated that they are making decisions about how to improve learner outcomes because of ERO's contribution to their improvement journey.

- 78% of services said the evaluation helped them to be more intentional about what they can do to improve learning for children in relation to the outcomes in Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum.

Governing organisations told us that our evaluation process will help or has already helped to develop internal evaluation capability and capacity. This includes engaging governance and management in quality improvement planning for their organisation and individual services. Our evaluation process also helps to improve the organisational conditions to enhance learning conditions for children in their services.

We encourage standalone services and governing organisations to complete the Post Review Questionnaire following a review. This valuable feedback helps us to understand what's working well and what we can do to improve our evaluation approach.

In today's newsletter, you'll find further information about our focus on safety checks of staff, our timeframes for checking errors of fact before we confirm a report, and reviews we undertake with short notice.

We welcome feedback from you at any time, please email us at info@ero.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi
Shelley Booyesen
Deputy Chief Executive
Review and Improvement



What's in this newsletter:

- Shelley Booyesen is our new Deputy Chief Executive for Review and Improvement Services
- Farewell Pat Davey
- Introducing Dr Lisa Oldridge, Acting Director ECE
- Post Review Questionnaires
- You can watch the PRIM video on our website
- ERO focus: safety checking of staff
- Notification of an ERO visit
- Responding to errors of fact and publishing timeframes
- Reviews at short notice
- Our evidence website and social media

Shelley Booyesen is our new Deputy Chief Executive for Review and Improvement Services

We are pleased to share that Shelley Booyesen has been appointed Deputy Chief Executive for Review and Improvement Services, responsible for the programme of evaluation work in early childhood education services and schools across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Shelley's name will be familiar to many, with more than 20 years' experience in ERO. During that time, Shelley has evaluated early childhood education services, primary and secondary schools across the country, and was a pivotal part of our Pacific review programme team in Niue and Samoa.

Shelley has a wealth of experience, having held leadership roles in methodology development, internal evaluation of ERO programmes, professional development, and evaluation capability building with schools. Shelley also spent time in the Ministry of Education on secondment and worked as ERO's portfolio/private secretary to the Minister of Education, including managing the Early Childhood Education portfolio during that time. Most recently, Shelley was Director Schools.

Shelley has a deep understanding of our mahi across early childhood services, schools and kura. She has had an unwavering commitment to seeing improved outcomes for all learners and closing the equity gap.

Farewell Pat Davey

Pat Davey, Director ECE, has made the decision to retire from ERO after 25 years as part of the ERO whānau.

Pat's ERO journey began in Ōtepoti Dunedin as a Review Officer. She later became a manager and was appointed Director ECE in 2023.

Pat is a doyen of the early childhood sector, devoting much of her career to our youngest learners. Prior to coming to ERO, Pat worked in a wide range of roles, including in all-day centre-based services, as a kindergarten head teacher, and as a service provider for centre-based and home-based education and care. She has also worked as a contractor for professional development, undertaken some occasional lecturing and research in family day care and given conference presentations in New Zealand and internationally.

Those who have been lucky to work closely with Pat will know that she is an authentic, approachable and inspiring leader, always keeping children at the heart of the matter.

Dr Lisa Oldridge is Acting Director ECE while we undertake a recruitment process.

Introducing Dr Lisa Oldridge, Acting Director ECE

Tēnā koutou katoa

Ko Lisa Oldridge toku ingoa

Nō Whanganui-a-Tara ahau

Kei Te Arotake Mātauranga ahau mahi ana.

Dr Lisa Oldridge has stepped into the role of Director ECE following Pat Davey's departure.



Lisa has more than 25 years' experience in the early childhood sector, including working as a teacher, head teacher, distance educator and lecturer.

Lisa joined ERO in 2010 as a Review Officer and became a manager in 2023. While at ERO, Lisa has reviewed a diverse range of early childhood services across the country and has contributed to several of ERO's national reports for early childhood, as well as spending time on secondment to the Ministry of Education Early Learning team to support the implementation of Te Whāriki in 2017.

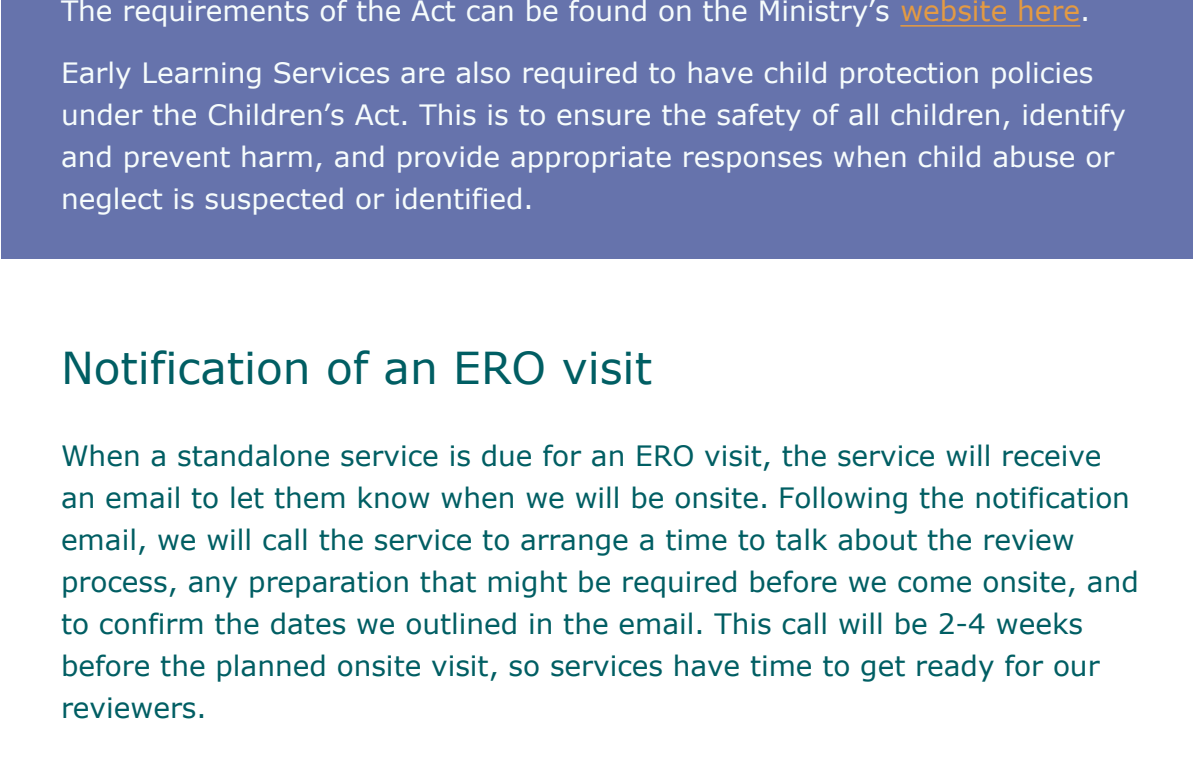
Lisa is based in ERO's Wellington office and leads our team of early childhood reviewers who are located across the country.

Post Review Questionnaires

We welcome feedback! Following an ERO review, we will send the service or the governing organisation a link to a Post Review Questionnaire (PRQ) along with the confirmed report.

We encourage leaders to help us to improve by filling out the PRQ and telling us about their experience with ERO. Feedback through the PRQ helps us to know more about our review process, what's working well and where we can do better.

You can watch the PRIM video on our website



Our Pre-Review Information (PRIM) video is now on our website for standalone service leaders and staff to watch at a time that suits them before a review begins. The video replaces our pre-review meetings for standalone services we are intending to visit, meaning leaders and staff can view the video at a time convenient to them, and revisit the information as needed.

The video can be found [here](#) on our website, and a link to it is included in the notification letter services receive when they are notified of a review.

We will continue with pre-review information meetings for governing organisations as required.

ERO focus: safety checking of staff

Our early childhood education reviews include verifying that staff working in services have been properly safety checked. When ERO is onsite, services may notice that we spend considerable time ensuring that all steps have been correctly followed when staff safety checks are undertaken.

The Children's Act 2014 requires all children's workers in early learning services to undergo safety checks, including police vetting and risk assessment, before starting work, with rechecks every three years.

This includes:

- all service providers, service owners, managers, head teachers and persons responsible
- all teachers, including relief teachers (independent or from an agency)
- all other staff who have regular contact with children
- all coordinators and educators in home-based services
- all students working in your service as part of their educational or vocational training, including school students
- staff employed by other organisations who work at your service such as early intervention teachers.

The requirements of the Act can be found on the Ministry's [website here](#).

Early Learning Services are also required to have child protection policies under the Children's Act. This is to ensure the safety of all children, identify and prevent harm, and provide appropriate responses when child abuse or neglect is suspected or identified.

Notification of an ERO visit

When a standalone service is due for an ERO visit, the service will receive an email to let them know when we will be onsite. Following the notification email, we will call the service to arrange a time to talk about the review process, any preparation that might be required before we come onsite, and to confirm the dates we outlined in the email. This call will be 2-4 weeks before the planned onsite visit, so services have time to get ready for our reviewers.

We will email you to notify you of an ERO visit

We will call you about your review 2-4 weeks before we visit

ERO visits your service to undertake a review

Responding to errors of fact and publishing timeframes

We are making some adjustments to our report timeframes, meaning reports will be published on our website more quickly.

Standalone services and governing organisations will have ten working days to respond to errors of fact after they have received an unconfirmed report, and the final report will be published five working days following confirmation.

Reviews at short notice

From time to time, we may receive a concern or complaint about an early childhood service. This includes information shared with us by the Ministry of Education or members of the public. We take these matters seriously, particularly when this could impact on the health, safety or wellbeing of children.

In response to serious concerns or complaints arising that relate to children's safety and welfare, ERO's Deputy Chief Executive Review and Improvement Services may direct ERO to undertake a comprehensive review of the service. Services will receive a two-week notification for a review at short notice. When a review is called under short notice, no deferral will be granted.

The findings of our review will be published on our website.

Our evidence website and social media

You can access our national evaluation and research team's insights, reports and guides at www.evidence.ero.govt.nz.

We also regularly share news, links, and sneak peeks through our dedicated research social media accounts. Look for 'Te Ihuwaka Education Evaluation Centre' on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

For more information about ERO and our mahi please visit ero.govt.nz
To be added to our mailing list for this newsletter, please email us at ricomms@ero.govt.nz

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