

Briefing report

**Education Review Office (ERO):
Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood
Education: what matters most, August 2019**

Date	16 August 2019
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M19-33
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee

**Minister of
Education**

Action sought

It is recommended that you:

- a) **note** the attached *Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood Education: what matters most, August 2019* document.
- b) **note** that ERO intends to publish the draft indicators for consultation on its website.
- c) **note** that ERO is developing a new approach to evaluating quality in centre-based services that uses the quality indicators to make judgements about the learning and organisational conditions that support equitable outcomes for all children.
- d) **agree** to further discussions about how we embed a focus on quality improvement and the potential to establish the requirement of a Quality Improvement Plan as part of a service's internal evaluation, planning and quality improvement cycle.

Deadline



Attachments:

*Education Review Office (ERO):
Indicators of Quality for Early
Childhood Education: what matters
most, August 2019*

Minister's Office to complete

Noted

Seen

Approved

Referred to:

Date signed by Minister:



Comments:

Our Ref: M19-33

16 August 2019

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood Education: what matters most, August 2019

Purpose

1. This briefing informs you about the work ERO has undertaken to update and refresh its quality indicators for evaluation and improvement in centre-based early childhood services (Education and care services, kindergartens and Playcentres).¹
2. The draft document *Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood Education: what matters most, August 2019* is enclosed with this briefing.

Background

3. ERO has updated its indicators of quality as part of a wider programme of methodology review and development. This work programme includes the development of *Ngā Ara Whai Hua: Quality Framework for Evaluation and Improvement in Centre-based Early Childhood Services* as an overarching framework that sets out ERO's different approaches to review and evaluation.
4. The framework is ERO's response to the highly variable quality in the sector. It provides the scope to undertake Assurance Reviews in services where the focus needs to be on compliance with regulatory standards and Quality Evaluations where the focus is on ongoing, sustained improvement.
5. ERO briefed you on Assurance Reviews on 27 February 2019 prior to the trial of this approach. The trial is now complete, and we have moved into the implementation phase. Assurance Reviews focus on getting the foundations right in those services that have been recently fully licenced; those previously 'not well placed' or 'requiring further development' or those where there has been a change of ownership resulting in changes to licensing status.
6. Research tells us that the early years are a critical time for young children's learning and development, particularly for the youngest children (birth to three-year olds). We know from our system-level evaluations that quality across early childhood services is highly variable and this impacts on the extent to which children experience meaningful opportunities to learn and develop. These evaluations highlight the dimensions of pedagogical

¹ This does not include Kōhanga Reo.

leadership, teacher knowledge and capacity to develop powerful learning partnerships as key factors impacting on quality.

7. The draft quality indicators focus on what is most important in supporting children to be confident and capable learners and include examples of effective practice for improvement. They address a gap in our system in terms of setting clear expectations for high quality provision. We believe that quality as described through these indicators goes a long way in addressing many of the concerns that the Early Learning Ministerial Advisory Group raised about the quality of our system.

Indicator development

8. The development of the draft indicators began in late 2017 and included engaging with an Academic Experts Panel² to critique the existing indicators and provide a commentary on the indicators that reflected up-to-date research about what matters most in the provision of high quality early childhood education and care. ERO built on the work of the Academic Experts Panel in developing a new set of quality indicators.
9. Subsequent feedback from panel members indicates a high level of agreement with the draft indicators. The panel's comments highlight the comprehensive nature of the indicators and the clarity with which they reflect the research and evaluation evidence about what matters most in the provision of high quality early childhood education.

Improving quality

10. The quality indicators focus early childhood services and ERO evaluators on the things that matter most in contributing to children developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, dispositions and working theories that support lifelong learning.
11. We intend the quality indicators to become the basis by which quality is evaluated across the system, by ERO through its external evaluation process and by services through robust internal evaluation. The indicators could also serve as a guide for parents to assess the quality of the service they choose for their child to attend.
12. We seek your support in promulgating the indicators as the foundation by which quality is evaluated in the sector. As a research-based platform for internal and external evaluation they will provide support for services to develop and implement strategies aimed at improving service quality.
13. To embed this approach in the system and within the practices of each and every service, we propose that services to be required to have a "Quality Improvement Plan". Such a plan would clearly set out the actions being taken to improve and enhance practice in relation to the indicators of quality and would be assessed as part of a service's three-yearly (or less) external review cycle by ERO.

² Dr. Lesley Rameka; Dr. Kate Thornton; Dr. Alex Gunn; Maria Cooper and Ali Glasgow.

14. In this our external evaluation approach would focus on the quality of service's internal evaluation and the impact of improvement actions for children and their progress towards the learning outcomes in *Te Whāriki* as well as informing future actions with a focus on sustained improvement.
15. In order for these quality improvement processes to become widespread we would like to discuss your views on embedding ERO's quality indicators as an integral part of a legislative requirement for sound internal evaluation, planning and quality improvement in early learning services, including development of a Quality Improvement Plan.

Next Steps

16. We will be consulting on the draft indicators with the wider early childhood sector from mid-August until the end of November 2019. At the same time, we will engage in a process of internal consultation with ERO reviewers.
17. A key mechanism for consultation will be an online survey. We will look for opportunities to socialise the indicators and seek feedback from key stakeholders including the Early Childhood Advisory Committee and through presentations and workshops at sector conferences and hui.
18. We plan to develop a range of products for different audiences, including a resource for parents and whānau that provides examples of what the indicators look like for their child in an early childhood setting.
19. We will trial the use of the indicators in a new approach to evaluating quality in centre-base services (Quality Evaluations) to ensure they are fit for purpose. We will brief you on this approach in late September 2019 once the design and development work has been completed.

Recommendation


20. It is recommended that you:
 - a) **note** the attached *Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood Education: what matters most August 2019* document. **noted**
 - b) **note** that ERO intends to publish the draft indicators for consultation on its website. **noted**

c) **note** that ERO is developing a new approach to evaluating quality in centre-based services that uses the quality indicators to make judgements about the learning and organisational conditions that support equitable outcomes for all children.

noted

d) **agree** to further discussions about how we embed a focus on quality improvement and the potential to establish the requirement of a Quality Improvement Plan as part of a service's internal evaluation, planning and quality improvement cycle.

agree / disagree



Nicholas Pole
Chief Review Officer

NOTED / APPROVED



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

3 / 9 / 19