



# Briefing report

## Education Review Office (ERO): Update on ERO’s development of approaches to external evaluation in early childhood services

Date	12 November 2020
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M20-39
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
<b>Associate Minister of Education with responsibility for the Education Review Office</b>	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>note</b> ERO is rolling out its new approach to quality evaluation in centre-based services.</li> <li>b) <b>note</b> ERO is trialing a new approach to Assurance Reviews in Home Based Early Childhood Services.</li> <li>c) <b>note</b> ERO is developing a resource to support internal evaluation in services that aligns internal and external evaluation with a focus on improvement.</li> <li>d) <b>note</b> ERO would like to formalise the requirement for all services to have a quality improvement plan linked to its quality framework.</li> <li>e) <b>note</b> ERO has proposed that its powers be extended so that it can immediately direct services to address key health and safety concerns that it identifies in the course of a review of an early learning service.</li> <li>f) <b>note</b> the package of resources – (1) Te Ara Poutama, (2) Ngā Rāpupuku – the Indicator Poster and (3) The Akarangi Quality Evaluation Judgement Rubric attached to this briefing.</li> <li>g) <b>agree</b> to forward a copy of this briefing with the package of resources to the Minister for Education.</li> <li>h) <b>agree</b> to discuss this paper with Officials.</li> <li>i) <b>note</b> that this briefing is recommended for proactive release.</li> </ul>	



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):  
Update on ERO's development of  
approaches to external evaluation  
in early childhood services***



Comments:

**Minister's Office to complete**

Noted

Seen

Approved

Referred to:

Date signed by Minister:

Our Ref: M20-39

12 November 2020

**Hon Jan Tinetti**  
**Associate Minister of Education**  
**with responsibility for the Education Review Office**

## **Update on ERO's development of approaches to external evaluation in early childhood services**

### **Purpose**

1. This Briefing Note informs you about the work ERO is doing to update its approach to external evaluation in early childhood services (Education and care services, kindergartens and Playcentres).
2. This Briefing Note also provides detail on our new approach to Akanuku | Assurance Reviews in Home Based Education and Care Services.

### **Background**

3. ERO continues to work to ensure that every early childhood service is a great place to learn, has excellent teaching and contributes to the success and wellbeing of every learner. We want all services to be on a pathway of ongoing sustained improvement.
4. Ngā Ara Whai Hua – Quality Framework for Evaluation and Improvement and Te Ara Poutama – the indicators of quality, are core to a high performing service and system and are at the heart of ERO's ongoing methodology work programme in early childhood services.
5. Ngā Ara Whai Hua enables ERO to take a differentiated approach to review and evaluation with services that responds to their context, regulatory status and/or previous ERO reporting history. The three differentiated approaches are; Akanuku | Assurance Reviews, Akarangi | Quality Evaluations and Akamatua | Evaluating Excellence and Innovation.
6. Akanuku | Assurance Reviews assess whether a service meets and maintains the regulatory standards and licensing criteria. Services consistently meeting these requirements is fundamental for children's safety and wellbeing, and is an integral element of the quality framework.
7. Akarangi | Quality Evaluations focus on the extent to which services have the learning and organisational conditions (as expressed in the indicators of quality) to support equitable outcomes for all children (as expressed in the outcomes in *Te Whāriki*). This approach also incorporates and reflects the up-to-date research about what matters most in the provision of high-quality education and care.

8. The implementation of Akarangi | Quality Evaluations was delayed until October 2020 due to Covid19 lockdown conditions nationally, and then again regionally. A phased implementation, initially with English medium stand-alone centre-based services, is underway. During this period, we are taking an educative role as services grow their understanding of Ngā Ara Whai Hua, the Quality Framework for Evaluation and Improvement and Te Ara Poutama.
9. ERO is testing Akanuku | Assurance Reviews in home-based education and care services. A trial is planned during November and December 2020.
10. In response to *The Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) sections 624 and 625* and as part of Akanuku | Assurance Reviews, ERO will resume visits to a sample of educator homes. The sample will be selected by ERO. The purpose and focus of these visits will be to assess aspects of the licensing criteria in relation to premises and facilities and health and safety regulatory standards.
11. ERO is planning to transition other home-based education and care services that meet regulatory standards onto our new Quality Framework from the commencement of 2021.
12. We are refining and further developing our approach to review and evaluation of those services who are part of a Governing Organisation or Corporate Entity, following a successful trial with selected organisations in 2018. We continue to consult with and involve representatives of these umbrella organisation in developments through our external stakeholder group meetings. ERO has informed these groups of recent changes to the Education and Training Act related to their context.
13. In August 2020, the changes to the Education and Training Act 2020 clarified the powers for the Education Review Office (ERO) to enter, inspect and obtain information from early learning service providers' parent entities. Section 435A of the Act provides ERO with the power to obtain from parent entities of early learning services for which ERO has oversight responsibilities, any relevant information relating to the ECE service provider.
14. We are also working with representatives of Playcentre Aotearoa to refine our approach to review and evaluation in English medium parent-led services.
15. We have also previously raised with the Minister of Education ERO's desire for stronger powers to be able to direct services to address core issues of health and safety as opposed to our current more limited role of only recommending that a service address a specific concern.

### **Why have we changed**

16. The methodology changes have been driven by a range of factors:
  - Some new services, and some existing services not maintaining licensing requirements.
  - The new research and evidence base about what matters most for children's learning and the refresh of *Te Whāriki* (the early learning curriculum in 2017).
  - ERO's data of overall sector performance related to services meeting their health and safety obligations and the middling state of performance that ERO finds in the majority of New Zealand services in terms of quality of curriculum, teaching and learning.
  - The increased emphasis on quality identified through the Early Learning Services Action Plan.
  - Changes in the ECE sector including growth, ownership structures, high turnover of teachers and participation rates.

17. In response to these factors, ERO is strengthening its role in terms of accountability, and its support for services to be on a pathway of ongoing improvement as outlined in the Quality Framework with the differentiated approach to review and evaluation, matched to each services context.

### Key Features

18. ERO's shift to more collaborative and participatory evaluation and supporting services continuous improvement.

19. We retain our strong emphasis and commitment to equity and excellence for Māori tamariki and all learners. Reflecting and honouring Māori concepts that underpin Ngā Ara Whai Hua and the metaphors woven through this framework in evaluating quality and improvement in services.

20. Champion evaluation, both internal and external as the engine room that drives improvement.

21. Ngā Akatoro (domains) and Ngā Rāpupuku (indicators) are used to support clarity about what are the services areas of strength and development; and the most important things to focus on to make the most difference for children. ERO and services will use the indicators as the 'common currency for making judgements about the quality'.

22. ERO's Quality Evaluation Judgement Rubric is used to help determine where a service is at, and the actions for improvement to move along the quality pathway/continuum. The wording of the judgements has been selected to convey a sense of services potential for growth and improvement.

#### Ngā Akatoro | Domains and Outcomes for learners



23. The evaluation reports which ERO are producing through this new approach are more concise, than has been the case recently. There is not an overall judgement. Judgements are made in relation to outcomes for learners for each domain in the framework. There is a short context section, a succinct findings section and tailored improvement actions.

#### What we are aiming for:

24. A collaborative approach, where we work with early childhood services to strengthen their systems, plans and practices through evaluation:

- a. A tailored approach: understanding early childhood services individual context, culture, strengths and improvement actions.
- b. A targeted approach: for the approach to be fit for purpose for individual services and those who are part of a governing organisation or corporate entity.
- c. An evidence-informed approach: that focus on what matters most from research and practice that makes the biggest difference to learner outcomes.
- d. A supportive and collaborative approach: working with services to improve the quality of early childhood education through effective internal and external evaluation.
- e. It is ERO's expectation that centre-based early childhood services embed the new quality framework into their annual planning cycle and that this is reflected in a quality improvement plan embedded within the services annual plan.

25. In respect of this last element we would like to talk with you further about how we might formalise this requirement through the review of the Early Childhood Education Regulations.

### **What doesn't change**

26. Our role and function remain unchanged and encompasses accountability (including compliance with legal requirements), educational improvement and knowledge generation.
27. We retain our strong emphasis and commitment to equity and excellence for Māori tamariki and all learners.
28. ERO continues to work to ensure that every early childhood service is a great place to learn, has excellent teaching and contributes to the success and wellbeing of every learner.

### **Stakeholder approach and messaging**

29. All centre-based services have received a package of resources – (1) Te Ara Poutama, (2) Ngā Rāpupuku – the Indicator Poster and (3) The Akarangi Quality Evaluation Judgement Rubric. These have been attached to this briefing. The expectation is that services will use these in their internal evaluation and planning for improvement.
30. In addition, we are finalising a resource for early childhood services to use as part of their approach to improve the quality of provision. This resource will align internal and external evaluation and support services to use the *Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most* to focus their improvement efforts on the actions that will make the most difference for children's learning. A resource to support services improvement planning is also being finalised.
31. We have presented to a range of early childhood sector groups across the country using online platforms and also face-to-faced delivery to share this approach and gain feedback and insights from the sector. ERO has received positive feedback from engagement with sector groups to date. The few services we have worked with undertaking Akarangi | Quality Evaluations are positive about this evaluation process and enhanced levels of involvement in the evaluation process.
32. We will work closely with Home Based Education and Care Services during the implementation of Akanuku | Assurance Reviews. We are planning for further engagement with representatives of Governing Organisations and Corporate Entities.
33. ERO is updating the information on our public website outlining our approach to review and evaluation in early childhood services. ERO is planning a multimedia approach to share information with the sector.

### **Recommendations**

34. It is recommended that you:
- a) **note** ERO is rolling out its new approach to quality evaluation in centre-based services. **noted**
  - b) **note** ERO is trialing a new approach to Assurance Reviews in Home Based Early Childhood Services. **noted**

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|---|-----------------------|
| c) <b>note</b> ERO is developing a resource to support internal evaluation in services that aligns internal and external evaluation with a focus on improvement.  | <b>noted</b>          |
| d) <b>note</b> ERO would like to formalise the requirement for all services to have a quality improvement plan linked to its quality framework.   | <b>noted</b>          |
| e) <b>note</b> ERO has proposed that its powers be extended so that it can immediately direct services to address key health and safety concerns that it identifies in the course of a review of an early learning service. | <b>noted</b>          |
| f) <b>note</b> the package of resources – (1) Te Ara Poutama, (2) Ngā Rāpupuku – the Indicator Poster and (3) The Akarangī Quality Evaluation Judgement Rubric attached to this briefing.                                   | <b>noted</b>          |
| g) <b>agree</b> to forward a copy of this briefing with the package of resources to the Minister for Education.   | <b>agree/disagree</b> |
| h) <b>agree</b> to discuss this paper with Officials.   | <b>agree/disagree</b> |
| i) <b>note</b> that this briefing is recommended for proactive release.   | <b>noted</b>          |



Nicholas Pole  
**Chief Executive**

NOTED/APPROVED



Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education**  
 with responsibility for the Education Review Office

20 / 11 / 20