



News Update – 19 May 2019

EVENTS/MEETINGS/SEMINARS/CONFERENCES

What makes a good Life? Children and Young people's views on wellbeing.

When: 20 May 2019 – 10.00 am to 11.30 am

Where: Old Government Buildings, Lecture Theatre 3, WELLINGTON

Children and young people are experts in their own lives, and have lots to say about what wellbeing means to them and changes they want to see to improve their wellbeing. Between September and November last year, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Voices Team of Oranga Tamariki collaborated to hear the views of over 6000 children and young people through a combination of online surveys, face to face interviews and focus groups. This presentation by Donna Provoost, Director of the Strategy, Rights and Advice team at the Office of the Children's Commissioner, will share some key insights from this engagement.

The findings have been included in the drafting of New Zealand's first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, and are useful for a range of work across policy, practice and everyday interactions with children and young people

RSVP for this event

Donna Provoost joined the Children's Commissioner in March 2012. She leads work across a range of activities to support better outcomes for New Zealand children, including providing advice on children's rights and child-centred policy, collecting and sharing the voices and views of children, and advocating for the best interests of children and young people.

OMEP WELLINGTON CHAPTER – Monthly Meeting - MAY

When: Monday 29 May 2019

Time: 6.00pm – 7.30pm

Where: Te Rito Maioha - Early Childhood NZ, 191A Thorndon Quay, WELLINGTON

Practical tools for working with children in gallery spaces

Gallery spaces can be intimidating at the best of times, let alone navigating them with a group of young children. It is, however, extremely important for young children to have positive experiences within gallery spaces if they are to feel that they have a place within the art world later in life. Children have rights as cultural citizens and need to be able to feel that they have as much right to visit art museums and galleries as adults do. *Te Whāriki* encourages teachers to provide learning opportunities for children to develop familiarity with the arts from a range of cultures, and museums and galleries can be an excellent resource for this work.

Presentation by: Maisie Chilton Tressler and Lisa Terrini

Maisie Chilton Tressler is a teacher at Tai Tamariki kindergarten located at The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

Lisa Terreni is a senior lecturer in the Early Childhood and Primary degree programmes at the Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

Universal Developmental Surveillance for Autism in Infants and Toddlers

SEMINAR EVENING

The Social Attention and Communication Study (SACS)

When: 5 June 2019 – 6.30 to 7.30 pm

Where: Maclaurin Lecture Theatre, LT102 at Victoria University, (Kelburn Campus), WELLINGTON

To book: <https://book.autismnz.org.nz/SACS>

Cost: \$25

For more information: Email: jarah.vandermeer@autismnz.org.nz

Phone: 021 190 6070

Presentation by: Dr. Josephine Barbaro, Senior Research Fellow and Psychologist at the Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre, La Trobe University, Australia.

This presentation will outline the 14 years of research behind the SACS, and how it can be implemented to facilitate the early identification of children on the autism spectrum.

It will also discuss the development of ASDetect – the world’s first evidence-based early detection mobile app for autism.

The Best Place in the World to be a Child

What do strong and supportive communities look like from a child’s perspective and how well are we doing?

When: Thursday 6 June 2019 - 12.00 to 1.45

Where: Grand Ballroom, Rydges Hotel, Cnr Featherston and Bunny Street, WELLINGTON

This event will be presented by **Professor Sharon Bessell (Crawford School of Public Policy)** and moderated by **Professor Jonathan Boston (Victoria University of Wellington)**.

12.00-12.30pm: Registration & light refreshments

12.30-1.45pm: Seminar

Please RSVP by Tuesday 4 June 2019.

Link to details and registration is here: <https://www.anzsog.edu.au/education-events/search/the-best-place-in-the-world-to-be-a-child-tl?searchword=bessell+wellington>.

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand 2019 Conference

When: 6–8 July 2019

Where: Waipuna Hotel, AUCKLAND

The conference speakers will inspire and rejuvenate your spirit as well as give you concrete examples of things that will help you in your important work with the children in your care. There will be time to reflect on the art of being a Montessori Teacher as well as the aims and ideals that brought us into this amazing field.

To register: <https://www.confer.nz/manz2019/>

Christian Early Childhood Education Association of Aotearoa Thrive Hui

THRIVE CECEAA Hui Christchurch 3rd and 4th of August

THRIVE CECEAA Hui Auckland 10th and 11th of August

For more information: <https://www.ceceaa.com/>

NOTICES

Are you developing an innovative practice in your school or ECE centre?

Bright Spots Awards provide:

- Up to \$30,000 to support the development and implementation of the innovation
- Expert hands-on support and participation in a specially-developed 18-month professional learning programme run by The Education Hub

Please feel free to distribute this information across your networks. Please note that the awards are open to Kaiako in Kōhanga Reo and Playcentres, not just to teachers in teacher-led ECE services.

The Education Hub Bright Spots Awards support teacher-led innovation in New Zealand schools and early childhood centres.

Successful applications will receive up to \$30,000 in funding to support the design and implementation of their innovation in Year 1. The funding may be used for teacher release time throughout the year, to fund specialist support, or to cover costs directly related to the innovation. Additional funding may be applied for to support further development in Year 2. Awardees will also receive expert hands-on support from the Education Hub and the chance to participate in an eighteen month professional learning programme.

More information, including the application form, is available at www.theeducationhub.org.nz/brightspots.

BUDGET 2019

CPAG Nationwide Post Budget Event Series - MAY 31

WELLINGTON Post Budget Breakfast - 31 MAY - 7.15 am

Please [RSVP here](#) & more detailed information is [HERE](#)

Venue: The Boat Shed

Minister Carmel Sepuloni to present the 2019 budget & answer questions.

Speakers: Dr Ganesh Nana: Executive Director and Chief Economist at BERL, Lee Tuki: Lee is President of the Public Health Association of New Zealand, Kāhui Hauora. Tumatani

MC - Dr Nikki Turner: Nikki is a CPAG's Health Spokesperson.

AUCKLAND Post Budget Brunch - 31 MAY - 11.30 am

RSVP [here](#) & more detailed information is [HERE](#)

Download the event poster [here](#) and

Time: 11.30 am (Networking from 11am, Brunch from 11.30am, speakers start at 12.00pm).

Venue: Mt Eden War Memorial Hall, 487-489 Dominion Road, Mt Eden.

Tickets: \$10 low income, \$20 middle income and \$30 high income.

Speakers: Alan Johnson: Previously a Salvation Army Policy Analyst and CPAG housing spokesperson, Professor Peter O'Connor: University of Auckland Education and Social Work & CPAG education spokesperson, Dr Sarah-Jane Paine: senior lecturer for University of Auckland Te Kupenga Hauora Maori. MC - Dr Hinemoa Elder.

MC: Dr Hinemoa Elder

Livestreaming of Auckland event will be available from 12pm on Friday 31st May.

Visit our [CPAG FB page](#) for more details on the day or make sure you're on the [Daily Blog home page](#) where it will be live streamed to.

CHRISTCHURCH Post Budget Breakfast - 31 MAY -7.15am

For more details here & RSVP here.

Time: 7:15am-9:00am

Venue: Villa Maria College, 21 Peer Street, upper Riccarton

Tickets: \$5 unwaged, \$10 waged

Guest Speakers: Associate Prof Mike O'Brien is an Associate Professor at the School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work at the University of Auckland and CPAG's spokesperson on welfare and social security issues.

More local speakers TBA.

Thousands more teachers for schools

From: Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education – 2 May 2019

The Government is pumping more resources into addressing the long term challenge of teacher shortages in our schools by training or supporting 3280 additional teachers over the next four years, Education Minister Chris Hipkins announced today.

Among initiatives in today's package, more Kiwis will be incentivised into the teaching profession with scholarships contributing to the fees and living costs of students.

Budget 19 funds 2480 additional trainee teacher places through:

- 1860 TeachNZ scholarships - fees and living costs for trainees studying in hard to staff subject areas,
- 300 Teach First NZ places to recruit graduates and professionals into low decile secondary schools where they teach while completing a postgraduate teaching qualification,
- 240 places in a new employment-based teacher education programme for secondary teachers, and
- 80 Iwi-based scholarships.

It also supports 800 more beginning teachers into their first roles through the National Beginning Teacher Grant (400) and the Voluntary Bonding Scheme expansion (400).

"Our commitment towards thousands of additional teachers will be a shot in the arm to our schools. Children, parents and teachers will all benefit from the influx in teachers and the Government's commitment to addressing the long term issue of teacher supply," Chris Hipkins said.

"Schools are crying out for more teachers and we are delivering. More teachers will help with the quality of teaching and education our children receive. It will improve kids' wellbeing.

"We're investing more funding in this Budget to get more teachers in front of classrooms than National managed over its entire nine years in office.

"The number of New Zealanders enrolling in initial teacher education (ITE) plummeted by about 40% under the National Government.

"That's why we're creating financial incentives for ITE providers to increase the enrolment of ITE students and ensuring funding committed to teacher training cannot be used for other fields of study.

"The funding also supports strengthened Teaching Council requirements that will improve teaching quality such as the increased length of student placements in schools and are expected to lead to better preparation of graduating teachers

"In planning for the future, we're anticipating more students in Māori-language education. There's currently a shortage of teachers skilled in te reo Māori and we'll be partnering with iwi to design and pilot regional scholarships, which will support Māori students to train and remain in the profession.

"This is a Government that is funding more teachers to help deliver better education. These changes sit alongside our other investments in schools.

Education Workforce Strategy

The Government is also looking well ahead to what will be needed in our education workforce of the future – through the development of an Education Workforce Strategy, in partnership with the sector, Chris Hipkins said.

“A group of respected sector leaders has co-designed a vision, and is developing a strategy for the whole of the education workforce. This will define the unique role of the teacher and other key roles, technology and support systems likely to be required in the future, out to the year 2032. This vision is being [released](#) by the Ministry today.

“It will also map out what career pathways are needed for the education workforce - to ensure our young people continue to have access to a world-class education, and learn the skills they need in the digital world of today and the future,” Chris Hipkins said.

The Budget package:

INITIATIVES	4 YEAR '000
Development of more employment-based ITE for Secondary	11,677
Teach First NZ for Secondary Schools	16,201
Funding to support ITE providers to meet new and strengthen Teaching Council requirements (SAC)	24,572
Returning New Zealand and overseas Trained Teacher Recruitment support for Secondary and Primary Teachers	5,850
Overseas Relocation Grant for Secondary and Primary Teachers	6,580
Finders Fee for Secondary and Primary Schools	2,400
Expanded TeachNZ scholarships Fund for Primary and Secondary	13,259
Expanded Bilingual Education Award for Primary and Secondary	720
Co-design of Iwi Based Scholarships Programme for Primary and Secondary	800
National Beginning Teacher Induction Grant for Secondary and Primary Schools	4,000
Voluntary Bonding Scheme Expansion	4,200
Reach and Engagement to implement Teacher Supply Initiatives	2,300
Analysis and Evaluation	2,440
	\$ 94,999

GOVERNMENT POLICY and LEGISLATION

CPAG welcomes WEAG recommendations to ensure dignity for all

From: Child Poverty Action Group – 3 May 2019

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) welcomes today’s release of the long-anticipated report from the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG): **Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand.**

The report shows the depth of the analysis that the group has undertaken in its consideration of improving support for people in Aotearoa who, in times of stress, illness and precarious incomes, rely on the welfare system for their families’ wellbeing needs.

"It’s a remarkable endeavour with some really encouraging recommendations, particularly in terms of the report’s emphasis on dignity, income adequacy and assistance to provide each individual the opportunity to participate fully in society," says Associate Professor Susan St John, CPAG’s Economics spokesperson.

"We are particularly pleased to note a vast cultural and philosophical shift around the purpose and intent of welfare, away from the current punitive regime that has become the tragic norm, and toward one that is based on compassion, kindness and empathy."

"The focus on meeting individual needs, rather than simply ticking boxes will go a long way to minimise the stresses we know that people who regularly interact with Work and Income (WINZ) experience," says St John.

CPAG prepared 17 practical recommendations toward having Welfare Fit for Families in the 21st century, and is pleased to note that the WEAG report has considered many of the problems CPAG has highlighted.

Among the WEAG recommendations are solutions to make the system less punitive, especially for families where there are dependent children, as well as solutions for improving income adequacy, through increasing payments, thresholds and reducing abatements, as well as indexation. CPAG welcomes these recommendations, which require urgent implementation.

"The need to remove all sanctions applied to people who have children is imperative, and we are pleased to see the recommendation for assisting parents who receive Sole Parent Support payments into work when their youngest child turns six, as opposed to three."

"The rules around relationships as recommended by WEAG will mean a better way forward for single parents who re-partner, but there is still work to be done to ensure that our welfare policies better reflect the nature of the modern relationship."

"We are pleased to note also that the WEAG report addresses improving disability allowances, and administration hurdles for those who receive the Supported Living Payment.

While CPAG welcomes the majority of the report, we are disappointed that the report's projected impacts on the numbers of children in poverty are less than the ambitious goal of eradicating child poverty altogether.

The report projects that it will reduce the number of children currently living in households with less than 50% of before housing costs (BHC) median equivalised income, by 45,000 (or 40%).

CPAG remains very concerned about the impacts for those who are living with incomes far beneath the very lowest poverty line, who are likely to be supported by a main benefit.

CPAG has also taken a different approach to the WEAG group on the Accommodation Supplement that will be outlined in an upcoming report from CPAG.

"The report's focus on housing is commendable, as it reinforces the negative impact that the current lack of affordable housing options has on the family income, but there are deep inadequacies within the Accommodation Supplement that among other problems, feed market price increases," says St John.

It is important to note that this is CPAG's initial reaction to the report released today, which is 209 pages to digest. A subsequent and more detailed analysis from CPAG will be circulated in due time.

The Minister of Social Development, Hon. Carmel Sepuloni expressed that work towards making improvements to the welfare system had been started since in her Government's first term with changes within Work and Income (WINZ) offices, and that a three-to-five-year plan would be developed for implementation of many further changes.

Minister Sepuloni's pre-Budget announcements signaled a start, but were unremarkable, and did not signal the courageous, transformational change that CPAG and many others had hoped for from a "Wellbeing Budget".

Associate Professor Mike O'Brien, Social Security Spokesperson for CPAG says that the increase in earned income thresholds for benefit abatement rates, especially as it is implemented over a long period of time, is minimal and not nearly close to being adequate.

"We can't see how this makes it any easier for people on main benefits to obtain sufficient work to help them into better positions, or improve their incomes in the short term," says O'Brien.

CPAG said this threshold should be at least \$150 per earning adult.

Associate Professor O'Brien says that Increasing main benefit payments and substantially should be an immediate response to the need that is now, along with preventing exacerbated hardship caused by Section 70A sanctions.

"Waiting until 1 April 2020 to repeal this harsh sanction, as the Minister has stated will be the case, means that it will have almost been a full three years from the first time the action was promised," says O'Brien.

"If there is to be a three-to-five-year work plan towards the Government being able to achieve the WEAG group's aims, then we would like to see that plan as soon as possible, and it should involve adequate consultation.

"We are looking to Budget 2019 for policies that reflect the WEAG report, as children cannot wait for years to come for improvements in their lives," says O'Brien.

"The first of the announcements concerning Welfare are timid at best. We hope that Budget 2019 will yield a more fruitful way forward for our most vulnerable people.

"The longer people wait, the more debt they will accrue just to meet their day-to-day needs, and the more expensive the job of reducing poverty will become."

New data on benefit sanctions show fairer treatment of those in need

From: CPAG – 1 May 2019

CPAG welcomes the latest data on benefits from the Ministry of Social Development, which shows the number of sanctions tracking down significantly compared to previous years.

“At last we are seeing a less punitive approach to the enforcement of benefit obligations. These sanctions have caused unacceptable harm especially when families and their children were affected,” says Associate Professor Susan St John, CPAG’s Economics spokesperson.

The latest data show that sanctions imposed on Sole Parent Support recipients have been reduced over the past year by more than half, while the total number of sanctions imposed on those who receive a welfare benefit has been reduced by 30 per cent. Cancelled or suspended benefits, which leave families bereft of income entirely and likely to fall into homelessness have been reduced overall by 41 per cent.

“Sole parent families whose primary source of income is a welfare benefit are among those who are suffering the worst of poverty and who have seen the least benefits from any of the recent changes to Working for Families,” says St John.

“They are likely to have constant reliance on other top-ups from food banks and hardship grants, and should never have their benefits cut in the first place, whether or not stringent obligations have been met.”

CPAG Social Security spokesperson Mike O’Brien says that applying the removal of a basic need, treating it as a privilege, is willful systemic abuse.

“Sanctions are based on a false premise that somehow they will change adult behavior change while children bear the brunt. Punishing the children by removal of their livelihood is not a way to encourage parents into having better situations - inevitably it makes a difficult situation much worse,” says O’Brien.

“There is no evidence that sanctions work - in fact there is evidence to the contrary which CPAG has cited previously. Given the importance attached to evidence-informed policy, why then do we continue to apply sanctions?”

CPAG says it is high time the welfare system lived up to its original intent and purpose of ensuring the health and wellbeing needs of communities in Aotearoa-New Zealand are met consistently.

“It would be good to think that a steady decline in the number of sanctions means that the Government is ready to make some serious, transformational changes to our Social Security Act for the better,” says St John.

“We look forward to the report from the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) due to be made public this Friday, and hope that the Government acts swiftly upon the group's recommendations.”

CPAG is hopeful that the Government’s Wellbeing Budget 2019 will prioritise welfare reforms that will aid in reducing poverty for children and families, especially those most affected, including the abolishing of sanctions that increase poverty and negatively impact on children’s lives.

As part of a campaign calling for "Welfare fit for Families", CPAG has set out 17 practical recommendations to improve the lives of thousands of children whose families are reliant upon the welfare system to meet their basic needs. These recommendations formed the basis of CPAG's submission to the WEAG group in November 2018.

Moratorium on disposal of records relevant to Royal Commission on abuse in care

From: MoE Bulletin – April 2019

On 28 March 2019, the Chief Archivist revoked the authority to dispose of all records held by public offices that may be relevant to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions.

Early learning services are not subject to the same record-keeping requirements as schools. However, the Royal Commission has indicated that “the same expectation” of preservation of records applies to faith-based institutions and “all other bodies involved in providing care”. This description would cover early learning facilities.

The Ministry strongly advises early learning facilities to ensure that relevant records are not disposed of for the duration of the Royal Commission’s Inquiry. Find out more about how this affects your service on education.govt.nz.

Cohort entry to apply only to children aged 5 and over

From: MoE Bulletin – April 2019

It is proposed that from 1 January 2020, schools can adopt and enforce a cohort entry policy, after consultation with their communities. Children will be able to start in 2 groups per term, either on the first day of term or at a mid-point during a term. The policy can only apply to children over 5 years of age. Children can start in groups up until they turn 6 years of age, after which school enrolment is compulsory.

Read more about the Bill's proposals on education.govt.nz.

Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand keen to see bipartisan approach to early childhood education sector

From: Te Rito Maioha/ECNZ – 3 April 2019

Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand is keen to see the current government foster bipartisan support for the proposed reform of the early childhood education sector (see [submission](#)).

'If New Zealand governments, now and in the future, can commit to sustained investment in early childhood education, that investment will bring dividends in the decades to come,' says Te Rito Maioha Chief Executive, Kathy Wolfe.

'The timeframe for implementation of the proposals in the draft Early Learning Strategic Plan is the next ten years and beyond. That's why it is imperative that the current government gets bipartisan support from the Opposition for the changes.

'Experience shows us that if this is not achieved, the ECE sector is vulnerable to a reversal of policy direction. This is likely to have a negative impact on the provision of early childhood education, just as it has done over the past decade.'

Ms Wolfe says that in its [submission](#), Te Rito Maioha supports many of the recommendations in the draft plan, especially those that address issues the early childhood sector has been asking the government to pay attention to for nearly a decade.

'We believe that having more qualified teachers, better teacher to child ratios and smaller group sizes are a must if young children are to receive the best start possible to their education,' says Ms Wolfe.

'However, these objectives will never be achieved if early childhood teacher salary and conditions are not improved, including parity with their primary and secondary school colleagues.

'There must also be more support for ongoing professional learning and development, which is another area where primary and secondary school teachers are far better off.'

Ms Wolfe says Te Rito Maioha would have liked to have recommendations that reinforce early childhood education as an essential part of the New Zealand education system, which is integrated for our tamariki aged 0-18.

'There seems to be a disconnect between the Early Learning Strategic Plan, and the recommendations of the Tomorrow's Schools review, for example.'

RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS/ARTICLES/RESEARCH/REPORTS

Beating bullying before it begins – addressing bullying in ECE

Bullying is a difficult topic to broach in early childhood settings, but experts agree it could be the opportune time to prevent bullying behaviours from developing.

By Rachel Helyer Donaldson.

From: Education Central – 17 May 2019

This week's Bullying-Free NZ Week and today's Pink Shirt Day aims to help raise awareness about bullying and its serious consequences, with a particular focus on reducing bullying in New Zealand schools. But what about bullying

at day care, nursery or kindergarten? Can pre-schoolers even be described as bullies and is it right to be putting these labels on children so young?

Just over a third of New Zealand children have experienced bullying or been picked on by other children at some stage by the time they were four, according to the University of Auckland’s current longitudinal study [Growing Up in New Zealand](#).

For one in 10 kids, this experience has been a part of life since they were two years old. The study involves nearly 7,000 children born in 2009 and 2010.

[Bullying occurs when one child holds power over another child](#). This can include grabbing, hitting, saying hurtful things and excluding. Although it’s not always the case, bullying generally involves targeting the same child or children repeatedly, with the intention to hurt or scare them.

Dr Sarah Alexander, senior researcher and chief executive of ChildForum says she gets a “mixed reaction” when she talks to early childhood education (ECE) teachers about children bullying.

While many teachers are “very aware” of bullying and the types of situations that can lead to bullying, there are others who, she says, “strongly deny that under-fives can be bullies or be bullied”.

“[They] argue with me about how wrong it is for me to even raise this possibility because bullying is a school issue and that, in early childhood, no child should be labelled.”

But Alexander says it’s still crucial for teachers to confront the issue. “I reply that we need to discuss behaviour and it’s not about labelling, it’s about being aware of bullying and supporting children to learn before such behaviour really sets in.”

ECE experts agree that it’s important to distinguish between labelling a child and their actions.

“Should a young child be called a bully?” asks [My ECE](#), an independent advice website. “No. At a young age behaviour is developing and labelling any child as a bully should not be done. Behaviours that resemble bullying should not be seen to be okay.”

In Invercargill, a group of early childhood educators for the home-based childcare service, Just Four Kids, say pre-schoolers are still getting to grips with what is appropriate behaviour, but that it is important to deal with any negative social conduct.

“Children in this age group are learning social skills and competency,” says Just Four Kids early childhood education director Suzy McNatty.

“During the early years they learn what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. The early years is an important time for us to educate our children that bullying is not okay. We need to teach them empathy, respect, honesty and kindness.”

“It is not bullying but learning social cues and social competencies through problem solving,” says ECE educator Michelle. “I wouldn’t call a child a bully. I would describe a child as having a strong preference for something.”

“It’s appropriate to teach children right from wrong and how to treat others,” says Nicola, while her colleague Gillian adds: “Children are learning social skills and this should be supervised by adults.”

“Bullying is unacceptable in any form,” says Katrina Casey, the Ministry of Education’s deputy secretary for Sector Enablement and Support. “The best way to prevent bullying is to adopt a whole school approach that emphasises student and staff wellbeing and values diversity.”

The early childhood education curriculum Te Whāriki includes a strong focus on social and emotional learning, she says. But the Ministry has also developed a resource book, *He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting Social and Emotional Competence in ECE*, for kaiako in early learning services on enhancing children’s social and emotional competence and supporting children to engage and learn.

The resource book includes an extensive range of strategies that kaiako can use, she adds, and will be available later this year.

Meanwhile the Ministry’s anti-bullying campaign [Oat the Goat](#) is a digital story aimed at tamariki aged four to seven. It focuses on the power of kindness and can be used as a starting point for a conversation about the choice children have when they see someone being bullied.

Back in Southland, Just Four Kids uses positive guidance strategies to overcome negative social behaviour, says McNatty.

“We encourage the child to respond positively while being role modelled acceptable behaviour. If the same values are modelled at home, we see a vast improvement in showing positive social interactions.”

ChildForum has also looked at bullying among teachers within the early childhood education sector. Last year, it released a report that found [one-third of ECE teachers and supervisors had been bullied over a 12-month period](#). The number of bullying incidents reported by teachers had also risen by 25 per cent within three years, since ChildForum’s previous survey.

ECE settings where bullying is taking place among teachers could be harming children, too, by stifling any conversation about bullying-type behaviour among under-fives, says Alexander.

“It can be difficult to be open and honest about bullying within early childhood, when adults themselves may be experiencing bullying or be bullying their workmates or staff.

“Stressful workplace environments can be a climate of fear and difficulty speaking up, and not to mention the negative impact on children of seeing [or] overhearing bullying among adults.”

Alexander says she would like to see the Ministry of Education tackle bullying at the early childhood level, alongside the focus and funding it is already putting into schools. The Ministry is a member of the cross-sector Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG), which is behind Bullying-Free NZ Week.

“We should be working at where it can start: in early childhood with children when they are young. There should be training and workshops on workplace bullying for ECE leaders and managers. And importantly the Minister of Education and the Ministry of Education in their stewardship of the ECE sector need to be getting involved and address issues of ECE teacher wellbeing.”

In an emailed response Casey says: “Early learning service providers operate independently of the Government and make operational decisions within the legislative parameters that apply.

“Educators are not employed by the Ministry, but we would expect a responsible employer to address any workplace bullying issues appropriately. The [Health and Safety at Work 2015](#) outlines everyone’s key roles and responsibilities.”

Shouting to be heard: the worrying effects of noise in early childhood education services

Susan Bates raises concerns about the potentially damaging effects of the high noise levels in many early childhood education centres in New Zealand and asks: what is being done about it?

From: Education Central – 13 May 2019

I had a conversation with a four-year-old girl in Wellington Library. I asked her:

‘Do you like your day care?’

She said, ‘Sometimes I cry.’

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘Because ... it’s it’s so noisy I can’t hear my brain.’

I have been in many centres, where, especially at mat times, children are sitting with their hands over their ears. They move their play areas as far from speakers as they can get, sometimes to doorways, but of course they are moved out of them. Children on the autism spectrum are constantly upset. I have observed that some children’s normal speaking voice has become shouting at all times because that is what they have had to develop in order to be heard.

Noise is a serious problem in New Zealand ECE, but it has been left without adequate attention by either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health, or WorkSafe. Massey University research showed that 43% of children in full-day centres were exceeding the noise dose for hearing damage. That’s potential hearing damage when you are learning to talk, in an environment where it’s hard to hear. Far from the best start in life, or an advantage from ECE, it’s damaging children from the start. It’s hard for teachers to hear in excessive noise too. You know how hard it can be to ‘tune in’ to someone else’s two-year-old. How can teachers do it well in the middle of

excessive noise? In a 2017-18 ECE teacher health survey with over 700 respondents, more than half of the respondents said that their centre was too noisy.

The Ministry of Education needs to remedy this as a matter of urgency

Young children exposed to constant noise are compromised in their hearing and their health. There is currently little research in the area of neural-auditory pathway development in children, and because of this, ECE needs to be erring on the side of caution. Currently, the space regulations are poor and there is no limit on group sizes of children in ECE.

Noise is associated not only associated with hearing damage, but as we all know it has emotional and social effects. Adults and children can be emotionally upset by noise, and feel worn down. It's a cause of stress. More vulnerable children with hearing sensitivities or difficulties, those with emotional dysregulation or speech issues are particularly at risk in noisy environments.

Children's language development is severely compromised in noise. Particularly for infants, those for whom English, as the primary language of care in most cases, is not their home language. There are also those who already have genetic or developing language difficulties. These noisy environments are likely to be harming them.

Teachers working in excessive noise are also risking health, hearing and mental well-being. Research shows that adult patience and sensitivity to others is diminished when noise is a constant annoyance in the workplace. My own research has shown an increase in teacher injury and illness, and a decrease in teacher sensitivity to children in ECE rooms which are often too noisy. Noise is a factor in environmental chaos. The detrimental effect of environmental chaos on child development is well-researched.

What about workplace health and safety law?

The levels measured by Massey University are a breach of employment law (Health and Safety at Work Act 2015), and this is in state-funded care and education for children. The exposures exceeded the 85dB averaged 8-hour noise dose limit, adjusted for the frequency response of human ears (normally tagged as 'L_{Aeq}'). Worksafe states that noise over 85 dB L_{Aeq}, and peak events over 140dB L_{peak} are harmful to adults. International guidelines state that very young children (babies, toddlers) should be in environments where the noise levels are no higher than 55 dB (L_{Aeq}), Infants have a different response to frequencies compared with adults, and listening for them requires a lot of cognitive effort, especially when there is a range of background sounds at varying levels. Older pre-school children should not be in environments which exceed 65 dB(L_{Aeq}). This is slightly higher than the level of normal adult conversation. Where noise is likely to be harmful, WorkSafe requires the noise to be isolated or minimised, or hearing protection should be worn. What this says is that in many of the environments tested by Massey, the children and teachers should have been wearing hearing protection to comply with law. That's crazy of course. The answer is to reduce the noise.

There are some government guidelines with regard to noise in ECE, such as providing quiet spaces for children (difficult to impossible in many rooms), and being aware of the numbers of children likely to be in a space. These are vague, provide no thresholds and are rarely monitored or enforced.

Research indicates that one of the most effective ways to reduce noise is to reduce group sizes. There is also a need for building design that moves away from hard, echoing surfaces to softer environments, away from classroom or office-like environments to something more home-like. After all, these are children's living spaces. We also need monitoring systems that provide information on noise levels to both the ECE centres and the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education – a lack of action on complaints about noise

Both the alarming results of child and teacher noise exposure measurements, and other recommendations from Massey University on hearing loss in ECE teachers, appear to have been largely ignored by the Ministry of Education.

As an advocate for children's well-being and teachers' working conditions, I have made four complaints to the Ministry of Education in relation to noise in ECE. Two of these complaints came through our Facebook page,

Teachers Advocacy Group, where ECE teachers and others in the ECE sector can anonymously bring concerns about their workplaces. Two came from my own working experience, reinforced by colleagues. The level of response to these appeals for help were:

1. No response at all.
2. Acknowledgment, but no practical help or monitoring (left for the centre to sort out with no measurable guidelines to work to).

3. Very delayed response (many weeks) before acknowledgement and some action.
4. Denial that there was a problem, despite a teacher's clearly expressed concern.

The first complaint was in relation to a centre that had numerous problems. I advised the regional office and it took months for any action to be taken. When I finally got a response (after two requests, many weeks apart) there was no mention of the noise issue at all. The noise problem in that centre was serious.

In the second situation, a centre was told by Ministry of Education to sort out its noise problem, but was not given any guidelines or thresholds to work to. An administration person in that centre noted there were no measurable regulations for ECE noise (other than hearing damage thresholds), but they contacted a Professor in Environmental Health for advice. The centre also pointed out that the Ministry of Education expectations were unhelpful, as the centre (a small community centre) could spend a lot of money and not solve the problem, if the problem and solutions were not sufficiently identified.

The third example was a centre I worked in, which was so noisy I doubted I could cope until lunchtime. I consulted with other staff and informed the regional office. Several weeks later I was told that no-one had been to investigate because they wanted to go on a rainy day to get the full effect, and it hadn't rained. I pointed out that I had not worked there on a rainy day, and that the noise was almost unbearable. When Ministry of Education investigators finally went, they admitted that they recognised the problem immediately, not only in the older children's room, but in the infant room as well. The Ministry of Education required that furnishings be installed to mitigate the noise problem. This intervention should have occurred weeks earlier. Were the Ministry of Education requirements enough to protect them, and was any note made of particularly vulnerable children in that environment?

The fourth complaint came from a teacher who had added 'Please Help' in her message to me about the noise in her centre. The Ministry investigated and said that the noise level had been measured and deemed to be 'normal' and that a Noise Management Plan was in place. I was informed further, that the manager was continuing to take readings and they were also 'normal'. **What is 'normal'? The Massey University research showed hearing damage level noise to be 'normal' in their sample of centres.** I responded to this investigator that as a researcher currently working on noise in ECE, I would be interested to know what the Ministry deemed 'normal' and what a Noise Management Plan looked like. I have received no response.

Teachers, children and their parents rely on the Public Service to behave in ethical and effective ways. That means effect and accountable responses from the Ministry of Education to deal with health issues affecting children and teachers. It means acknowledgement of faults in regulations and processes. The Ministry of Education admits there are no 'hard' guidelines governing noise in ECE.

It would have been so much better if the complaints had been taken seriously, and the teachers treated with respect. Transparency and an acknowledgement of the scale of the problem would go a long way towards solving the problem of noise in early childhood education.

As teachers, advocates and researchers in ECE, we are hopeful that sufficiently robust relationships will be created between us and all Ministries and government agencies to improve conditions in this sector for teachers, carers and children, particularly for the very young. Imagine how much better it could be.

In defence of play: why imagination is key in early childhood education

ECE researcher Kelly Warren says the emphasis needs to change from focussing on young children acquiring formal learning behaviours to fostering social and emotional skills.

From: Education Central – 13 May 2019

As parents, we will do absolutely anything to protect and prepare our children for life. There is a sense of pressure and responsibility when it comes to our children's success and it is our primal instinct to equip them with as many resources as possible to ensure success.

In helping our children become literate, we often hear parents leaning towards the idea that teaching their children to read and write before they start school will ensure academic success – it is something we have heard for years but as an early childhood educator and mother I can assure you we have this wrong.

For most children, reading and writing are formal learning behaviours that are best left until the age of seven.

This is backed by longitudinal studies and research on brain development which shows the frontal cortex, which is associated with numeracy and literacy, is not something we move into until the age of seven.

It was only just recently that Nathan Mikaere-Wallis, researcher and educator stated:

“Pushing 3 to 7 year olds towards early reading, writing or maths will not improve their long-term chances of success. Instead, it’s far more important to foster positive social and emotional skills.”

In a world driven by technology and speed, it is more important than ever before that we start supporting our children’s need for down time. Giving them opportunities to be bored, for just ‘being’, and simply playing.

It is silly to think that we have to defend our children’s right to play (real play, not activities directed by adults), but here I am defending it again, even though it’s backed up by current developmental theory and research.

So, the question remains. How can I give my child the best head start at school? It is all about fostering imagination and providing our children with opportunities to develop it for themselves when they are very young.

As parents and educators, we can take some steps to inspire our children’s imagination and creativity:

1. Spend time outdoors engaging with nature
2. Allow lots and lots of time for unstructured/undirected play
3. Encourage art activities that nurture your child’s creative expression (rather following prescriptions and conforming)
4. Ask open-ended and thought-provoking questions “What do you think would happen if?”
5. Engage in verbal activities – riddles, rhymes, silly games, “I spy”
6. Tell stories to your child – get them to tell you stories!
7. Limit screen time
8. Give them basic tools to play – basic house hold items and natural/generic materials (forget the fancy plastic toys and keep it simple and open ended). The more passive the item the more creative your child can be.
9. Allow for plenty of down time – time to be BORED!
10. Give them the freedom to explore the world around them. Provide opportunities for our children to actively use their senses as part of their exploration of the world. This is as simple as playing in a pile of wet leaves, smelling a flower, feeling a pile of cut grass, listening out for dogs barking.

Kelly Warren has a Master of Education, is an early childhood teacher and programme developer for [New Shoots Children’s Centres](#). Kelly has just finished her first book called “Take Another Look” (a re-write of the 70s classic, which was first authored by Pat Penrose).
