



19 December 2019



Dear 

Thank you for your writing to the Ministry of Education on 1 November 2019 to request the following information:

- *I understand the Education Ministry has a unit or team known as the “assessment and monitoring team” which conducts unannounced visits to early childhood services. I am interested in what this group does, what it has found in its visits and what action the ministry has taken as a result.*
- *Can I please have any internal reports produced this year that provide an overview or summary of the team’s work (for example a report to senior managers summarising the team’s work over a six or 12-month period).*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I am partially releasing four documents in response to your request. These are detailed in **Table 1**. Some information has been withheld under Section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act. Additionally, we have provided a summary of our findings and actions as a result, allowable under section 16(1)(e) of the Act. See attached.

The Provider Assessment Group (PAG) was established in 2017. It is focused on improving the overall quality of Early Childhood Education (ECE) delivered in the sector, and to better monitor a sector that is growing rapidly. The team are currently primarily focused on home-based providers in Auckland, as a region with almost half of ECE services.

They focus on providers demonstrating behaviour that indicates potential non-compliance with funding requirements. The team conducts unannounced visits of these provider’s sites and assesses compliance in safety checking and funding matters. The team will also follow up if other issues are apparent.

Since its establishment, the PAG has cancelled eight licences (two in 2018 and six in 2019) and suspended 15 licences. The suspension period is for 30 days and provides the service an opportunity to demonstrate compliance with the breaches identified. Where services are unable to demonstrate compliance these licences are issued with an intention to cancel notice and given 10 working days to provide a satisfactory explanation for their non-compliance.

The Ministry, and the PAG specifically, is focused on improving quality and supports services to meet their obligations. Of the 15 licences assessed by PAG in 2019, all were suspended for non-compliances with only two services subsequently demonstrating compliance and receiving ongoing monitoring.

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The PAG is not the only avenue the Ministry has for monitoring and improving the quality of ECE. Each region has staff who not only assess applications for new providers but also follow up when issues are raised. In 2019 to date the Ministry has cancelled 80 licences and suspended 32 licences of which PAG was directly responsible for 6 and 15, respectively. By influencing a change in provider behaviour the PAG has saved an estimated \$5.2 million in claimed ECE subsidy funding.

Please note the 2017 PAG Benefits Realisation in Appendix 1 "Improvements in service compliance" was carried out by the precursor to PAG.

Under section 28(3), you have the right to refer this response to an Ombudsman. You can do this by emailing info@ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katrina Casey', written over a vertical line that extends downwards from the signature area.

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

Table 1.

	DATE	TITLE	RESPONSE
1	16 May 2019	<i>Update for the SE&S Management team on the Provider Assessment Group</i>	Partially released. Some information withheld under section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act.
2	15 July 2019	<i>Update on the Provider Assessment Group</i>	Partially released. Some information withheld under section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act.
3	18 September 2019	<i>Provider Assessment Group resourcing change request</i>	Partially released. Staff names in organisational graphic withheld under section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act.
4	11 November 2019	<i>Status Dashboard of PAG Home Based Assessments</i>	Partially released. Withhold unpublished ECE providers being assessed i.e. ongoing under section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act. Findings and outcomes provided in summary form, as allowed under section 16(1)(e) of the Act. See below.

Summary of findings and Ministry response.

Early Childhood Service 1

Under assessment – no findings or action available to date.

Early Childhood Service 2

Following an assessment of the documentation provided to PAG, there were serious concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation for all children’s workers, including police vetting, and issues with implementing regulation 44 (1)(d). The service provider was informed of the licence suspension. The service provider submitted evidence of compliance to meet the conditions of the suspension. Due to minimal outstanding non-compliances an extension was granted to the suspension with a new deadline for compliance set.

Early Childhood Service 3

We made one office visit and several home visits to this service. Our assessment of safety checking of children's workers, police vetting of other adults and compliance with Reg 44 1(d) found several non-compliances.

The service has been suspended. Evidence of compliance of the conditions of suspension was submitted. Following reassessment of the submitted evidence the decision was made to notify the service of an intention to cancel.

Early Childhood Service 4

Following an assessment of the documentation provided to PAG, there were concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation for all 19 children's workers, including police vetting, and issues with implementing regulation 44 (1)(d). The service provider was informed of the licence suspension. The service provider submitted evidence of compliance to meet the conditions of the suspension.

Following the reassessment of the evidence submitted as a condition of the suspension, a recommendation has been made to issue an intention to cancel.

The service was informed of the intention to cancel their licence and they submitted representation against this notification which is being reviewed by the Ministry.

Early Childhood Service 5

Following an assessment of the documentation provided, there were serious concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation for children's workers and issues implementing regulation 44 (1)(d).

The service provider was informed of the licence suspension and was asked to provide evidence of compliance to meet the conditions of the suspension.

The service provider submitted further evidence, and the assessment of this evidence still demonstrated non-compliance. The service provider was issued an intention to cancel notice. There were no further submissions made by the service and they were subsequently informed of the cancellation of the licence. No appeal was received following notification of the cancellation. The Gazette notice is currently being finalised.

Little Genius (47208)(47334) - Early Childhood Service 6

Both services were suspended from 28 June 2019 due to serious concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation of all children's workers and implementing regulation 44 (1)(d). The service provider was asked to provide evidence of compliance to meet the conditions of the suspension.

The service provider resubmitted documentation. The service provider was notified of the intention to cancel. The service provider did not submit any representation. The service provider was subsequently notified of the cancellation of both licenses.

No appeal was made against the decision to cancel the licence. The cancellation gazetted on 31 October 2019.

Aroha (46724)(47074) - Early Childhood Service 7

Both services were suspended from 9 March 2019 due to serious concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation of all children's workers and implementing regulation 44 (1)(d). We issued the service provider with an intention to cancel letter. The service provider engaged Chen Palmer for representation and requested an extension of time to submit additional evidence.

Following a review of the summary of evidence, and advice from Legal Services and Crown Law, PAG notified the service provider on 11 June 2019 of the decision to cancel their two licences. No response was received, and the licence cancellation was gazetted on 8 July 2019.

Early Childhood Service 8

Following an assessment of the documentation provided, there were concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation for all children's workers, including police vetting, and issues with implementing regulation 44 (1)(d), reg 47 (1) (a) and Reg 28 (1) (a) and Reg 28 (1) (b). The service provider was informed of the licence suspension.

The service provider was asked to provide evidence of compliance to meet the conditions of the suspension. Following reassessment of the evidence provided, the recommendation was made for an intention to cancel notice to be issued.

The service provider contacted PAG requesting further information regarding the children's workers who had not been adequately safety checked, which PAG responded to.

The service provider submitted representation against the intention to cancel. The letter informing the service of the licence cancellation and responding to the representation is currently being drafted by National Office.

Early Childhood Service 9

Following an assessment of the documentation provided, there were serious concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation for all children's workers, including police vetting, and issues with implementing regulation 44 (1)(d). The service provider was informed of the licence suspension. The service provider submitted evidence on 17 October 2019. Following assessment of the evidence a recommendation was made to revoke the suspension and reclassify the licence back to full.

The service was advised of the revocation of their suspended license and the reinstatement back to a full licence. They will continue to be monitored following the reclassification.

Early Childhood Service 10

All four licences were suspended due to serious concerns identified regarding the absence of safety checking documentation of all children's workers and implementing regulation 44 (1)(d). The service provider was required to submit evidence and provided evidence to meet the conditions of the suspension. The service provider received a letter of Intent to Cancel all four licenses and submitted the representation.

Three of the four licenses were reclassified as Provisional. Licences one, two and three, have been recommended to be cancelled due to non-compliance with the conditions of the provisional licence and this is currently with National Office for consideration.

License four was reinstated back to a Probationary license, which has now expired. The service provider has been notified of this.