

Starting a centre-based ECE service

Click on the links below for information on starting a centre-based licensed early learning service.

Contents

[Administration records](#)

[Annual plan](#)

[Applying for a licence](#)

[Checklist for renovating an existing building or building a new service](#)

[Designing and building your new ECE service premises](#)

[Designing and building – step-by-step guide](#)

[Designing your early childhood service to comply with the licensing criteria](#)

[Early childhood education and care regulations](#)

[Fees and funding](#)

[Furniture, fittings and equipment](#)

[Governance and management roles and responsibilities](#)

[Health and safety standards and emergencies](#)

[Managing your service](#)

[Philosophy statement](#)

[Playgrounds](#)

[Preparing for staff employment](#)

[Preparing policies, procedures and processes](#)

[The Early Learning Information \(ELI\) System](#)

[Roles and responsibilities in a centre-based education and care service](#)

[Suggested equipment for licensed ECE services](#)

[What is an early childhood education and care centre?](#)

Administration records

Using this resource

All businesses keep records of tax, finances, management decisions and so on.

The following list of administration records aims to help you to develop records required to comply with:

Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008

Health (Infectious And Notifiable Diseases) Regulations 1966.

(See [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) and [Health \(Infectious and Notifiable Diseases\) Regulations 1966](#).)

Where possible, links are also made to the requirements of the ECE funding system. It is recommended that you read the [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook](#) as you develop your records, to ensure they comply with funding requirements.

The examples included in this resource can be downloaded as Word documents and changed as needed. The examples include mandatory requirements. Consider adding information or changing the layout, wording, titles and so on to suit your service.

Services are required to keep enrolment records and attendance records for 7 years ([licensing criterion GMA 10](#) and [licensing criterion GMA 11](#)). It is a good idea to keep other records such as accidents, illnesses and excursions for Education Review Office audits.

Administration records – list

Please note the following:

The title of each record below is a guide only. The required content could be set out under different titles, or grouped differently.

All content is required (unless otherwise stated).

The content that is only required by the Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook only applies if you claim government funding.

If in any doubt about requirements, check the actual wording in the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#), [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008](#) and [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook](#).

ECE services must keep the following administrative records:

1. Enrolment form

The enrolment form is a written agreement between a parent or guardian and your service that a specific child will attend your service at specific times (or on a casual basis). The form must include at least the following:

Child's full name and their home address or addresses (GMA10).

Child's date of birth. You must sight a copy of the birth certificate of each new child permanently enrolled in your service so the Ministry of Education can allocate a national student number for each child.

Iwi affiliation if applicable.

Privacy statement.

The name and address (if the address differs from the child's) of at least one person who has custody of the child, or has been nominated by a person with custody of the child, and the place or means by which this person can be reached while the child attends the service (usually this would be a phone number) (GMA10).

Details of how at least one parent or guardian can be contacted while the child attends the service (GMA10).

The names of people who should be consulted if the child is ill or injured.

Emergency contact (GMA10).

Custody arrangements – including the names of people authorised to collect the child and, if there are legal issues, the names of those forbidden to have access or access is subject to conditions. Copies of appropriate court orders are useful to sight or keep (GMA10).

Details of the child's doctor or medical centre (GMA10).

Details of any chronic illness from which each child suffers, and of any medication the child has to take (GMA10).

Details of the child's immunisation status.

Date the child commenced attendance at the service and their finish date.

The days and times each child is expected to attend, and details of any later changes to the agreement, signed and dated by at least one parent/guardian (keep a paper copy).

For permanent enrolments, attestation by the child's parent/guardian of the hours the child is enrolled at another service (including none if appropriate).

For casual enrolments, attestation by the child's parent/guardian that the child is not enrolled at another service for the time the child will be attending the service casually, and an indication that the child will be attending on a casual basis, signed and dated by at least one of the child's parents/guardians.

An attestation declaration for '20 Hours ECE' funding must be completed and signed for each child receiving 20 Hours ECE funding. The attestation declaration must be attached to the enrolment agreement. Please note: 20 Hours ECE funding must not be claimed for a child until the service has received a completed and signed

Attestation Form.

If the service is offering 20 Hours ECE funding, details of Optional Charges.

Information on when the service is open and if the child will attend on statutory holidays or during school term breaks.

A signed declaration that indicates whether the educator who will be providing education and care for the child is a member of that child's family.

This is required for funding purposes.

If the service transports children to and from the service, information about the transport arrangements.

A dated signature of at least one parent/guardian to attest to the accuracy of the enrolment record.

A dated declaration by the service provider to ensure the form has been checked and the relevant sections completed.

(See [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook, Chapter 6](#))

Note: It is crucial that you also refer to the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, \(Regulation 47, Centre-based Licensing Criteria GMA9\)](#) and [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook, chapters 6 and 11](#). The handbook includes important additional information about record keeping – for example, staffing records, and ECE qualifications. The handbook also includes examples of records required for funding purposes in [appendix 2](#). An example enrolment form can be found in the [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook](#).

2. Fees record

Refer to the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47, Centre-based Licensing Criterion GMA10](#) and [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook, chapter 6](#).

This includes:

the level of fees and other charges to be paid and the conditions of payment (available to parents); and
the name of the child for whom fees and other charges are paid, the amount paid and the period of attendance covered.

Publish the fees to be charged for attendance at the service (whether as actual fees, a range of fees, or a maximum fee) so that families are adequately informed. Services are also required to provide written information letting parents know about the amount and details of the expenditure of any Ministry of Education funding received.

Providing written information to parents on the above requirements as outlined in criterion GMA2 could take a variety of forms including as part of a parent induction pack, newsletters, a website, a fees schedule or annual reports.

Many services develop regular reporting processes including providing an annual report. Often monthly financial reports are made available. This is a good way to provide information to parents on a regular basis.

3. Attendance record, sign in and out book, and roll

[Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook, section 6-3](#)

The attendance record shows **all** of the following:

Separate sections or columns for children aged under 2 and for children aged 2 and over.

The first and last names of each child, clearly identified.

Days and times of **actual** attendance for each child.

A record of any absence, with an 'a' when a child does not attend at a time for which they are enrolled.

Notes and explanations about attendance, such as when a child is away sick or has attended for more/less hours than they were enrolled.

Attendance registers that have been marked by staff on a twice-daily basis (or once a day for services that operate only one session). Services **must** also keep evidence (for example, a signed attendance register) that a parent/guardian of each child has regularly examined and confirmed the attendance record. This needs to be completed once a week for all-day teacher-led centre based services or once a month for sessional teacher-led and parent/whānau led services.

4. Accident, incident or illness record

This shows:

the child's name

the date, time and description of the accident, incident or illness

actions taken and by whom, and

evidence that parents have been notified/informed.

Refer to the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, \(Regulation 46, centre-based licensing criterion HS25 and licensing criterion HS27\)](#).

5. Medicine record

This should show the following:

Details of any medication a child has to take while attending the service.

Details of all medicine (whether prescription or non-prescription) given to the children while at the service, the occasions on which it was administered, who administered it, and by whose authority. Parents need to acknowledge these details. Adults who administer medication need training or information relevant to the task. A record of this information or training needs to be kept.

See [Centre-based Licensing criteria HS28](#).

Note: Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 (regulation 46, [centre-based licensing criterion HS28](#)) require that medicine is not given to a child unless it is given by a doctor or ambulance officer, by the parent of the child, or with the written authority of a parent/guardian.

6. Food record

A record of all food served to children while they are participating in the service (other than that provided by parents for their own children). This needs to record the type of food provided. The record must be kept and be available for inspection for 3 months after the food is served. Refer to Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 (regulation 46, [Centre-based Licensing Criterion HS19](#))

7. Other documentation

See [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47](#) and [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008, GMA2](#)

Services must ensure that parents are advised how to access the following:

The service's current licence certificate.

The full names and qualifications of each person counting towards regulated qualification requirements.

A procedure people should follow if they wish to complain about non-compliance with the regulations or criteria. This should include the option to contact the local

Ministry of Education office and should provide the contact details.

A copy of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, and the Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008.

A copy of the most recent Education Review Office report regarding the service.

Services must also:

Document a hazard identification and management system that includes consideration of all hazards to children and to adults. See **Centre-based licensing criterion HS12**.

Provide written information that lets parents know how they can be involved in the service and about any planned reviews and consultation.

(See [Centre-based licensing criteria HS12](#), [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47](#) and [Centre-based licensing criteria GMA3](#))

It is recommended that services make their policies, management plans and meeting dates easily accessible.

Annual plan

An annual plan is an important part of the smooth operation of an ECE service. An annual plan is required to meet the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 47](#) and [licensing criterion GMA8](#).

What is an annual plan for?

An annual plan provides a method for tracking the progress of some of the key tasks your service needs to complete regularly, as well as specific 'one off' projects. For some projects you will need to develop much more detailed time lines identifying 'who, what, when'.

Download an example annual plan

The [example plan](#) [DOC, 57 KB] has been designed for you to use and change to suit the needs of your service. Alternatively, you could make your own.

An annual plan allows you to easily tick items off as you go and check progress – for example, at monthly management meetings. You can ensure that tasks are spread over the year and in the right order.

Remember this is not an exhaustive plan and the headings may or may not suit your service; it is designed to give you some ideas only.

Applying for a licence

Probationary licence + application form

You need a licence to run a centre-based early learning service. Read about the application process below.

Planning

Before you start, do some research. Look through our information to find out everything from what our requirements are to how you can design and build your service. Doing some research will help you make a plan and decide how to carry it out.

[Information for starting a centre-based ECE service](#)

You should also look at the Education Counts website to get an idea of how many and what types of early learning service are already in your area, to assess demand.

[Education Counts information about early learning services](#)

Talk to us

Once you have done your research, contact your local Ministry office to talk to us. We will also explain more details about the application process and answer any questions you may have.

Talking to us gives your application the best chance of being successful.

[Find your local Ministry office](#)

Application form and fee

Complete the application form [EC1 - start a centre-based service](#) [PDF, 640 KB]

There is a non-refundable **application fee** of \$2,817.50 (including GST).

Other documents

The form asks you to provide additional documents related to your service management, staffing, building, and curriculum.

For some of these documents, you will need to contact other organisations. For example, contact your local Council for documents relating to the Resource Management Act 1991 and Building Act 2004 (there is more information on the form). You can access a copy of the early childhood facilities — Playground Equipment and Surfacing Handbook from Standards NZ at <https://www.standards.govt.nz/>

Statutory declaration

You will need to declare that the information you have provided is true, and sign it in front of an authorised witness.

[More information about statutory declarations and authorised witnesses](#)

How to send us your form

You'll need to print the form. Scan and email or post your completed form (along with other required documents) to your [local Ministry office](#). You may like to keep a copy for your personal records.

If we need more information

If we need more information from you, we will contact you and ask you to provide it to us within 10 days.

Visit to your proposed centre

If you meet the requirements on the application form, we will contact you to make a time to visit your proposed centre.

Before we arrive, set up the centre as if it's ready for children to attend. For example, the building works should be completed, the education programme ready, furniture and equipment installed, and administrative systems in place. Make sure the service provider contact person, and any other staff you want to be there, can be there when we visit.

We will look at all aspects of your centre, including:

- the building
- the children's resources
- teaching qualifications and ratio requirements
- health and safety considerations
- governance and management considerations.

We may take notes, photos, or other evidence to support our assessment.

For a full list of the areas we will check, and other documents you will need to provide, see the centre-based EC3 assessment tool. If you don't have this, ask your [local Ministry office](#) for a copy.

How long does it take?

We will do our best to make a decision about whether your application is successful within 30 working days of receiving it.

We need all information before we can start assessing your application.

If your application is successful

If your application is successful, we'll email or post you a licence. The licence shows details about your service, such as the hours children may attend and the number of children you are allowed to have.

You must display your licence at your service for parents and visitors to see.

Full licence

A full licence assessment must be carried out by the Ministry within 12 months of gaining a probationary licence. During the full licence check, the Ministry of Education will assess policies, practices and curriculum implementation in action.

Checklist for renovating an existing building or building a new service

The checklist below is designed to help you consider a range of issues when renovating an existing building or choosing a site and building a new service.

Climate

Consider wind direction and wind chill factor in the proposed outdoor area.

Will sun get into the building and onto the section?

Will there be some shaded areas? What trees are there?

Refer to the [Sunsmart Schools guidelines for shade](#).

Road access

Is there potential for safe parking, safe access and disabled persons access?

Are there suitable safe places outside the building that can be used as assembly areas for staff and children during an emergency evacuation? Care should be taken that the location and nature of the assembly areas keep children safe from harm.

Site elevation

Is the site relatively level, to ensure direct access from indoor to outdoor play areas and usable outdoor space?

Resource Management Act consent

Check with your local council to ensure you understand all Resource Management Act 1991 requirements before purchasing a section or building.

Health issues

Check the building for hazards such as lead-based paint and asbestos.

Check the site for any potential hazards – for example, leachate, long-life spray, chemical storage or methane gas build up in landfills.

Contact your regional public health organisation for advice on health issues.

Indoor space

Check the ability of the existing building or building plans to meet the minimum requirements for licensing. Some of the things you will need to think about are:

a space for undisturbed rest or sleep

office and staff space

bathroom, toilets and nappy change area

disabled toilet

disabled persons access (including slopes, width of doors and passageways)

kitchen that is inaccessible to children without adult assistance or supervision

locker area/storage of children's belongings

a welcoming arrival area

the ability to see children easily from inside when they are outdoors

separate dining (desirable)

at least 2.5 square metres (+10%) of play space per child

the ability to provide a range of educational activities

the ability to provide a safe and stimulating environment for the children who may attend

generous amounts of storage for resources

sanitary facilities

art preparation and clean up area.

The **premises and facilities licensing criteria** provide more details on these requirements.

Outdoors

Check the ability of the existing outdoor space or building plans to meet the minimum requirements for licensing. Some of the things you will need to think about are:

good drainage in all weathers

sufficient area of safety surface

large open areas

a variety of surfaces, including grass and hard surfaces

easy visibility

smooth indoor-outdoor flow

at least 5 sq m of activity space per child

the ability to provide a range of educational activities.

The [premises and facilities licensing criteria](#) provide more details on these requirements.

Areas that work well together

Consider the following:

Keep children's sleep rooms away from main play areas. These can be noisy. Sleep rooms should not be in cold or very hot locations.

Offices can work well near the entrance area (to see visitors arrive, etc).

Centrally located kitchens work well.

Double doors that open directly to the outdoor area ensure a good flow.

Infant and toddler areas work well close to their sleep area, nappy change area, and with direct access to the outdoors.

Infant and toddler areas work better if located close to a kitchen area, or have their own kitchenette (for warming bottles, etc).

Main play areas should be directly alongside the outdoor area.

Consider covered roofing and verandahs between the indoors and outdoors for wet day activities. You may also want to consider shelter from prevailing winds.

If you're renovating, check with your architect to find out which walls are load bearing. Consider removing walls with no purpose.

There may be costs in the setting up stage. However, a well-designed environment, which assists with good supervision, will allow teachers to work more effectively with children in the years to come.

The Ministry of Education may require extra staffing in hard-to-supervise buildings or premises. This may result in extra cost in the long term.

Designing and building your new ECE service premises

Choosing the site

You need to give consideration to the environment that you are choosing for your service. Things like noise, air quality, traffic, surrounding use of properties and soil contamination are important elements to think about.

In addition, if you are considering operating from premises that will be above ground floor, there are a number of additional factors to consider such as access to outdoor space and emergency evacuation. We recommend you review the information for centres not at ground level and the [Guidance for Service Providers - Evacuation Plans for ECE Services in High Rise Buildings](#) [PDF, 394 KB] which provide comprehensive guidance on developing evacuation plans for services above ground floor.

We also recommend that you consult as soon as possible with your [local Ministry of Education office](#) and also the [New Zealand Fire Service](#) if your service will be above ground floor.

Resource management and code compliance certificate

Resource management consent

[Licensing criterion PF3](#) requires the premises to conform to any relevant bylaws of the local authority and the [Building Act 2004](#). Resource consent allows a person or group to operate a licensed centre on particular premises. The environmental effects of having an ECE service in the neighbourhood will be considered before resource consent is granted. Sometimes resource consent has to be publicly notified. Consents can be declined or have conditions attached (for example, a higher fence or off street parking may be required).

If conditions attached to your resource consent limit the full operation of your ECE service (for example, a condition that puts limitations on the times that the outdoor area can be used), your service may not comply with the regulations and therefore could not be licensed.

Before you invest large sums of money designing your service, it is strongly recommended that you find out about resource consent.

The cost of resource consent varies depending on your location and the amount of work your particular circumstances will require.

Common issues that are considered are off street parking and noise. Some local governments require there to be one car park for each staff member and one for every 10 children. Requirements may depend on the availability of parking in the general area.

Noise and traffic are often a concern to neighbours. You should not 'over promise' on solutions. Instead, focus on how you can best manage the negative impacts of your service on your neighbours. Develop mitigation strategies that you are prepared to follow through. For example, you should not agree that children will not play outside after 3pm. This type of condition is likely to limit the full operation of your ECE service and, as a result, your service may not be granted a licence. Instead you might propose that a screen of plants be used to absorb noise, and that the amount of concrete in the playground will be reduced and all bikes will have rubber wheels.

It is a good idea to have parking space for parents to drop off and pick up children at the front of the centre, and put a gate (such as a swimming pool gate) between the car park and the centre. If parking is required, disabled parking will need to be designated.

For more information on resource consents read [A beginner's guide to resource and building consent processes](#) by the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

It is also important to talk to your council about the resource consent process in your area. Council officials can:

help you work out whether you will need a resource consent

explain how to go about talking with people who might be affected by your project

explain how to prepare an assessment of environmental effects – they might also tell you to visit the regional council; and

process your consent.

Code compliance

Code compliance ensures that the centre complies with the [Building Act 2004](#). Anyone building a new centre or carrying out alterations has to get a building consent before work starts, and then a code compliance certificate when the work has been completed.

Compliance schedule/warrant of fitness

A copy of the Building Statement of Fitness or Building Warrant of Fitness (issued by the local council) must be forwarded to the Ministry of Education before your centre can be licensed. If one is not required, the Ministry of Education will need confirmation of this.

A building (except a single residential building) with any fire safety systems (for example, alarms) or other specified systems such as lifts must have a Compliance Schedule and annual Warrant of Fitness (Building Act 2004).

A Compliance Schedule sets out the required inspection, maintenance and reporting systems for the equipment. The building owner is responsible for obtaining the Compliance Schedule and annual Warrant of Fitness and ensuring all necessary inspections, maintenance and reporting are done. A Warrant of Fitness will be issued every 12 months after this. A copy must be on public display in the building.

Disabled persons' access

New buildings used by the public must be accessible for disabled people and have suitable toilet facilities. To achieve access, a ramp may be required. Often these facilities also have to be included in any significant alterations on existing buildings.

Consider the following:

Build at ground level, if possible, because this will allow easy access for children and their families – including people with disabilities.

It may be worthwhile investing money to level a non-level site. Major problems and costs can result from a centre being off the ground. For example, ramps are needed for ease of access into the building and out to the playground. Ramps are costly and often inhibit visual supervision between the indoor and outdoor space. Ramps or steps are harder for young children to negotiate (especially en masse!) than level ground. If a long 'zigzag' ramp is needed to provide a low enough gradient (1:12), it is a good idea if it is built from the side of a deck (rather than to the middle) so it doesn't inhibit visual supervision between the indoor and outdoor areas, and doesn't create a 'running ramp' for children who do not have physical disabilities and could use alternative access. Ramps can create congestion/flow problems if they are the only access for all children.

You'll find more useful information on resource consents in the publications area of the [Ministry for the Environment website](#).

Health report and Fire Service approval

At this step, the Building Code compliance and your policies, procedures and processes need to be completed so other authorities can complete their assessments.

Health report

We suggest contacting the health protection officer (HPO) and making an appointment with them to visit to carry out an early childhood education centre authority report (health report). You can search for regional HPOs at your local public health service on the [Ministry of Health website](#) or in the white pages.

The health report is required documentation that needs to be completed before the Ministry of Education can grant you a probationary licence to operate.

The assessment visit must be carried out when the centre is 'ready for children', that is when all resources, furniture and equipment are set up for both indoor and outdoor play.

The Ministry of Health's [Ngā Kupu Oranga Healthy Messages](#) provides useful information.

Fire Service approval

Under the Fire and Emergency New Zealand Regulations 2018, the final date by which a building owner must make an application to the Fire and Emergency New Zealand for approval of an evacuation scheme for a new building is the earlier of 30 days after:

the code compliance certificate has been issued for the building, or
the date on which the building is first lawfully occupied.

You can make an application to the Fire and Emergency NZ for approval of your scheme as soon as you can complete all the required questions under the Application for Evacuation Scheme Approval which is available on the [Fire and Emergency NZ website](#). The website also includes a guide to completing applications, and an example of a completed application for approval of a scheme for a childcare facility.

It is the building owner's responsibility to provide and maintain an evacuation scheme that reflects the use and occupancy of the building. Since the obligation to maintain an evacuation scheme is an ongoing one, changes to the building may trigger a requirement for the building owner to notify the National Commander of Fire and Emergency NZ, and the building owner may need to review the evacuation procedures and apply to Fire and Emergency NZ for approval of a new evacuation scheme. In addition, if you have questions before you make your application, you can call the Fire and Emergency NZ Fire Information Unit on 0800 347 346 or [email questions](#).

If your service is in a building with other tenants, you need to be aware that the fire evacuation scheme approved by the Fire and Emergency NZ applies to the whole building and all tenants, and is the responsibility of the building owner. It does not just apply to your service.

In addition to having an approved fire evacuation scheme (to comply with licensing criterion HS4), you must demonstrate compliance with [licensing criterion HS7](#), which requires a documented evacuation procedure specifically for the early learning premises that covers all emergency situations such as fire, earthquake, tsunami, flood, etc. This procedure has a broader scope than just fire evacuation and must be consistent with the overarching Fire and Emergency approved fire evacuation scheme. The evacuation procedure required for compliance with HS7 is the responsibility of the service provider.

It may be more difficult to evacuate children from centres that are not at ground level in the event of a fire. Your fire evacuation scheme will need to identify ways to mitigate this. We recommend you read the Ministry's [Guidance for ECE Services – Evacuation Plans for ECE Services in High Rise Buildings](#).

It is imperative that applications for approval of fire evacuation schemes be made well in advance of the time of the proposed date of opening or changes at your service.

Please read the following section before completing your application for a fire evacuation scheme.

Before you start to complete the fire evacuation scheme application, you should visit the [Fire and Emergency NZ website](#) for online evacuation schemes.

The Ministry of Education cannot provide a licence to open a service until the fire evacuation scheme has full approval and is signed off by Fire and Emergency NZ.

Legislation provides for Fire and Emergency NZ having 20 working days from receipt in which to make a decision on your application. The decision made will be to 'approve the application', 'not to approve the application', or, if only minor changes are required, to 'request further information'.

Should your application not meet the standards required or more information is needed, a notification will be sent to you, advising the area/s that

need clarification or more information.

If only minor changes are required, the Fire and Emergency NZ decision date will be extended by a further 10 working days for a final decision to be notified.

If the application is 'not approved', you will have 20 working days to make the required changes and resubmit the application. When the Fire and Emergency NZ receives the amended application it has a further period of 20 working days in which to make its decision

See the [guidance for fire evacuation schemes](#)

Food provision

Under the Food Act 2014 (the Food Act) and Food Regulations 2015, if you provide food at your ECE centre or kōhanga reo, it must be safe and suitable. The Food Act applies to anyone who provides food as part of their business. It requires people to provide food that is safe and suitable to eat.

Depending on what type of food you provide, you may need to register and operate under a Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) [National Programme level 2](#).

Working with a national programme is the way that lower-risk food businesses operate under the Food Act. There are 3 levels of national programmes, which are based on the food safety risk of the activities a business does.

All national programmes require:

- record keeping to show that you're selling safe food
- registration of business details with your local council
- one or more visits from a verifier recognised by MPI.

Exempt services that are not required to operate under a national programme include:

Home-based ECE services

Centre-based ECE services and kōhanga reo who undertake minimal food handling only, for example provide cut fruit, crackers and spreads, packet biscuits

where food preparation is part of the curriculum, i.e. baking and cooking done with children

where food is donated or brought by families to share

where children bring a lunchbox

To find out if the type of food provision you intend to offer at your ECE centre or kōhanga reo is subject to National Programme 2, you can use the MPI [Food Safety Rules tool](#).

If your ECE service is exempt from National Programme 2, you still need to ensure that any food at the service is safe and suitable. MPI have resources available on [food safety](#).

If your ECE centre or kōhanga reo is subject to National Programme 2, you must register with your local Council. You need to register once you have received your Probationary licence.

Before registering, you will need to select a verifier and contact them for confirmation (in the form of a letter) that they will verify your food operation. If your verifier is your local Council then you will not need the confirmation letter. A list of verifiers is available on the [MPI website](#).

Get an application form from your local TA and complete and submit it

Pay the application fee directly to your local TA

Steps to follow are outlined on the [MPI website](#).

If you run several ECE centres, then you can complete a multi-site registration with MPI. If you intend to do this, contact MPI at 0800 00 83 83 or email info@mpi.govt.nz to discuss your circumstances.

Once you have registered your ECE centre(s) and have been operating for approximately one month, your chosen verifier will arrange a time to visit. There will be a charge for this initial verification visit.

Code compliance

When building work is complete, ensure you apply to your local council for a Compliance Schedule and, if required for your service, a Schedule of Fitness. Code compliance ensures that the completed building complies with the [Building Act 2004](#). A code compliance certificate must be issued to you before the Ministry of Education can grant you a probationary licence to operate.

Useful links

National Poisons and Hazardous Chemicals Information Centre

For urgent information requests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, telephone 0800 POISON (0800 764 766).

For non-urgent information between 9am and 5pm, week days only, telephone +64 3 479 7227.

Civil Defence

The Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management has published a best practice guide: [Early Childhood Education Services Emergency Planning Guidance](#).

Designing and building – step-by-step guide

We suggest you work through the following steps:

1. Develop indoor and outdoor plans in consultation with your architect, teachers, community and your local Ministry of Education office.

Read the early childhood service design guide section for design ideas for everything from bathrooms to sandpits.

Read the renovating an existing building or building a new service section for a checklist to help you consider a range of issues when renovating an existing building or choosing a site and building a new centre.

2. Contact your regional health protection officer (HPO) and discuss your indoor and outdoor plans with them. You can search for your regional HPO using the Ministry of Health website. HPO's may provide a 'new centres pack' that will provide valuable information.
3. Think about whether or not you will provide food to the children attending. Under the Food Act 2014, centres providing food service to pre-school children may be subject to the Ministry for Primary Industries' [National Programme 2](#). This may impact on the layout of the kitchen and [laundry facilities](#) at your centre.
4. Ensure that building plans comply with the Building (Forms) Regulations 2004, as well as relevant sections of the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008. Looking at the licensing criteria for your service type will be helpful as it provides more detail about the standards required to meet the regulations.
5. Before plans are finalised, contact your local Ministry of Education office for feedback. Apply for resource consent (if you haven't already)

and a building consent. You must have building consent and resource consent before commencing work on the building.

6. When you have building consent and resource consent, we suggest you employ a project manager and tradespeople (if you haven't already). It is recommended that you always use tradespeople and professionals who are licensed building practitioners.

[Ministry of Health website](#)

[Building \(Forms\) Regulations 2004](#)

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#)

[Contact your local Ministry of Education office](#)

[Licensed building practitioners](#)

[Ministry for Primary Industries](#)

Other resources: Standards, books, articles, videos

Standards

The [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services criterion PF5](#) require all licensed ECE services to comply with applicable New Zealand standards.

Standards New Zealand has developed a guide for playground owners and operators of supervised early childhood facilities: [Supervised Early Childhood Facilities – Playground Equipment and Surfacing Handbook](#) (SNZ HB 5828.2:2006).

Books

Ceppi, G., & Zini, M. (eds.) (1998). *Children, spaces, relations: Metaproject for an environment for young children*. Milan, Italy: Reggio Children.

Dudek, Mark. (2001). *Kindergarten architecture: Space for the imagination*. London: E. & F.N. Spon. ISBN 0419245200.

Greenman, J., & Stonehouse, A. (1997). *Prime times: A handbook for excellence in infant and toddler programs*. South Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman. ISBN 0582876494.

Greenman, J. (2005). *Caring spaces, learning places: Children's environments that work*. Redmond, WA: Exchange Press. ISBN 0942702336.

Ministry of Health. (1997). [Ngā Kupu Oranga Healthy Messages: A health and safety resource for early childhood services](#).

Olds, A.R. (2000). *Child care design guide*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing. ISBN 0070474494.

Christie, T., & Christie, R. (2004). *Childspaces: Design source book for early childhood environments*. Wellington: Childspace Early Childhood Institute, 2004.

Post, J., & Hohmann, M. (2000). *Tender care and early learning: Supporting infants and toddlers in child care settings*. Ypsilanti, Mich.: High/Scope Press. ISBN 1573790907.

DVDs and videos

Ministry of Education. (2001). [Empowered to learn: Whakamana ki te ako: Te Whāriki for infants and toddlers](#). [Video/DVD and teacher's handbook]. Te Whāriki: Policy to practice, 3. Wellington: Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2001). [Empowered to learn: Whakamana ki te ako: Te Whāriki for young children](#). [Video/DVD and teacher's handbook]. Te Whāriki: Policy to practice, 2. Wellington: Learning Media.

Designing your early childhood service to comply with the licensing criteria

The Ministry of Education administers the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#). Please make sure you read and understand the criteria listed. If you need clarification on the interpretation of specific requirements, contact [your local Ministry of Education office](#).

Bathrooms, nappy change and body wash facilities

Bathrooms – general

Bathrooms need not be institutional. Aim to create a home-like setting. Ideas include using:


warm colours

attractively framed mirrors above the sink(s)

framed children's art work displayed sparingly (without 'over doing' visual stimulation)

posters and signs (used thoughtfully).

Bathroom



Toilet doors

[Licensing criterion PF22](#) and [licensing criterion PF20](#)

When designing your bathroom area, talk to your local territorial authority and regional health authority about requirements. For example, the Building Code requires privacy in toilets and licensing criterion PF22 requires at least one toilet for use by children is designed to provide them with some sense of privacy. There are multiple ways that this can be achieved.

Some communities prefer to have toilet doors, while others would rather not.

Children's need for privacy needs to be balanced with adequate supervision and hygiene. Everyone is likely to have a different view about how this is best achieved. It is a good idea to think about your community's values, the age range of the children attending and safety issues.

If you decide not to have toilet doors, and the service is used by other groups (for example, an after school care group) when your service is not operating, consider having one toilet with a full door (that can be latched back during the ECE session).

If you decide not to have toilet doors, the toilets can be arranged with partitions so children feel some sense of privacy. For example, children will feel more exposed if the toilets face the entrance door, than if they are arranged 'side on' to the entrance door.

Half doors and walls are another option. They provide privacy and yet still allow visibility into toilets. Solid surfaces are easier to clean.

Half doors at entrances to bathrooms can also be problematic if they are too high. Toilets and hand washing facilities are designed and located to allow children capable of independent toileting to access them safely without adult help.

Toilets

[Licensing criteria PF18 to PF23](#)

Child-sized toilets are preferable, but adult toilets are acceptable if a step is provided.

Wall hung toilets can make cleaning the floor underneath much easier because there is no join between the toilet and the floor surface.

Adequate supervision is important. Depending on the layout of the service, an adult-high viewing window into the bathroom area will ensure privacy and also allows for discreet supervision.

A 1.2 metre wall divider between children's toilets gives some privacy, as does positioning toilets side on from the main door.

A disabled person's toilet may 'double' as the adult toilet. Adult toilets must have walls that provide complete privacy. Disabled access toilets must meet certain specifications in terms of size and facilities.

Hand basins

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 46](#) and [licensing criterion HS13](#)

Water that children access can't be hotter than 40°C. However, if water is stored in a hot water cylinder, the cylinder's thermostat must be set to at least 60°C, to prevent legionella bacteria from growing in the pipes. An anti-scald, or tempering, valve must be used unless infinity gas is available.

An anti-scald valve is a thermostatically controlled device to maintain the required temperature, regardless of incoming hot and cold water temperatures. Once it has been adjusted to a warm temperature, it can be locked to prevent accidental or unauthorised re-adjustment.

Long stainless steel troughs that have 3 or 4 warm water taps can be easier for 3 or 4 children to use, easier to clean and easier to manage than 3 or 4 individual sinks.

If the height of hand basins/troughs is between 550 and 600 mm from the floor for older children, and 450 to 500 mm from the floor for young children, they are likely to be easily reached. (If children need to use steps, the bathroom area will have unnecessary clutter and hazards.) Consider the age range of the children who will attend. It is a good idea to check the height you plan to put your sinks at with some 'real' children!

There are taps available that turn themselves off, with a lever that is easy for children to operate. Taps of this type prevent water from being left on and are available from most plumbing outlets.

If you prefer that children use taps that 'turn', it's a good idea to ask the plumber to limit the amount of 'turn' to 180 degrees. This will ensure that children don't keep turning a tap the wrong way in an effort to turn it off – eventually giving up!

Liquid soap is recommended because it reduces the spread of infection. It should be easily accessible for each child using hand wash facilities.

Although not required by the regulations, it can be very helpful to have extra hand wash facilities in main play areas. If children can easily wash hands after messy play, supervision is eased and congestion in the bathroom reduced. It can also be very handy to reduce congestion in the bathroom area before meal times. Whether this is a good idea will depend on the service's overall layout, arrangement of groups and children's age ranges.

Warm water encourages children to wash their hands – just think of how you feel on a cold winter's day!

Hand drying

[Licensing criterion PF21](#)

Ask your local health authority for information about recent research and new products. Knowledge in this area is always evolving. For drying hands, paper hand towels reduce the spread of infection. This is because they are individual and disposable. You can purchase child-sized towels to limit wastage.

Some services choose to use individual cloth flannels for hand drying. These should only be used once before washing.

Note: Some companies provide the paper hand towel and liquid soap dispensers free of charge if you use their products.

Nappy changing area

[Licensing criterion PF25](#)

Nappy change facilities must be provided to ensure the services is inclusive of older children who still require nappies. Parents who visit with their child will feel more welcome if there are adequate facilities for the child.

Many folding nappy changing tables are designed for domestic use. They can be very unstable and are not suitable for use in ECE services environments. The nappy changing table needs to have a non-porous, easily cleaned surface.

A solid unit can be made soft on top by using a small mattress that is covered in a non-porous material (for example, a nappy change pad).

You may wish to purchase a unit that has steps, a non-porous, soft surface on top, and storage below. Steps allow children to climb up to the table independently and help to prevent adult back injuries. This is an important occupational safety and health (OSH) consideration.

Adequate supervision is important. Depending on the layout of the service, a viewing window into the nappy change area may ensure children, and adults who are changing nappies etc can be easily seen. This safeguards children and staff from child abuse or accusations of abuse.

Some commercially available nappy disposal systems contain the smell of used nappies very effectively.

Alternatively, positioning a small 'door' (for example, 0.5 x 0.5 metres) in the wall by the changing table can provide a good way to dispose of nappies, if the area immediately outside is not used by children. A 'chute' can be created between the 'door' and an outdoor rubbish bin.

Shelving in the nappy change area should allow staff to easily reach children's nappies etc. Small individual baskets that can be placed on, or near, the changing table work well if they are stored in 'cubbies' or open shelves. Any cleaning products (for example, bleach solutions) must be inaccessible to children.

Body wash facilities

[Licensing criterion PF26](#)

See the hand basins section above for comments about water temperature.

Consider issues of access when deciding where to place a shub or sink. When washing a very soiled child, easy access to both the shub and water is vital.

The Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 (regulation 45, criterion PF26) require services to have facilities suitable for washing soiled children. Children may be very dirty from play, or may have been sick or have diarrhoea. A shub with a handheld shower hose or a bath suitable for the washing of soiled children provide good facilities.

If a service only caters for infants or toddlers, a shub at bench height (approximately 800 mm from the floor) is a good idea. This works well if it is incorporated into a large nappy changing bench (see above section).

Washing facilities at floor level can work well for older children, for example, a floor-mounted shub with a shower hose. An alternative is to have a sloping, textured, floor with a drain – similar to that used in disabled shower areas.

A shub, or very large sink that is set into a large nappy changing bench, is good for washing infants and toddlers who have had diarrhoea or been vomiting. It allows easy movement between the bench and shub and makes it easy for adults to be close to the child.

A pull-out spray sink mixer (like the kitchen vegetable cleaning type) has flexibility that makes it easy to clean around a sink or shub, or to wash a

baby. It is on an expanding hose which slides back into a sleeve when not in use. This is a clean arrangement because the hose doesn't lie unused in the bottom of the sink. This facility can double as the areas for adults to wash their hands in after nappy changing.

Any shower similar to a domestic shower may be difficult for staff to help children without getting wet themselves. A handheld shower attachment may help with this.

A bath may not be as safe for very young children because adults cannot hold infants securely unless they get in with them. Trying to hold babies in residential type bathtubs can also create back problems for adults.

Kitchens and laundries

Kitchens

[Licensing criterion PF17](#)

A half door with a latch will help to ensure that the kitchen is inaccessible to the children (unless they are accompanied by an adult). Be aware that the 'lift out' style barriers that some services use may create a tripping hazard. This is because adults in a hurry step over them rather than lifting them out.

If a large centre is being designed with separate areas for infants and toddlers, it is a good idea to have a kitchenette in the infant area for the storage of bottles and heating of food. Ensure that you manage any hazards to children created by such facilities.

Alternatively a moveable riser with a wide solid surface could be placed in front of the bench when children are helping with cooking. This will allow them to reach the bench safely.

If your service does not have a dishwasher and washes dishes in the sink, the water used in this sink must be at least 60°C.

For early childhood education services subject to the Food Act 2014 and the Food Regulations 2015.

Food Regulations 2015 regulation 46

The design and construction of the place must enable food to be safe and suitable by ensuring there is adequate space for the food activities being carried out.

The design and construction of the place ensures that dirt, fumes and other contaminants are excluded and pests are prevented from entering and remaining in the kitchen.

The design and construction of the place provides easy access for cleaning and maintenance.

Food Regulations 2015 regulation 57

There is adequate ventilation (either natural or mechanical) to minimise airborne contamination of food and remove fumes, smoke, steam and vapours.

Laundries

Many items at ECE services need prompt, regular washing – for example, kitchen laundry, bibs, dress-up clothes, baby toys, towels and cloths used for art and messy play.

Having a washing machine and drying facilities on site has benefits. Linen can be cleaned promptly. This is very useful if children are sick, wet a bed, etc.

It is a good idea to have a door leading directly from the laundry to the outside area so staff can access the washing line without walking through the

centre.

For early childhood education services subject to the Food Act 2014 and the Food Regulations 2015.

Food Regulations 2015 regulation 61

If the laundry facilities are not separate from the kitchen, they must be designed so that laundry activities and products do not contaminate food.

Floor spaces and surfaces

A well-designed ECE service needs space for different types of indoor play, including individual and group activities, messy play, dramatic play, quiet space, eating, sleeping, etc.

Because the interests of children of different ages differ (for example, older babies are often interested in taking things apart and learning to crawl up and over things, while older children can be more focused on building things and putting things together (such as complicated block play or puzzles)), much of the equipment that supports key areas of play will also differ.

When designing areas of play, consider ways to provide enough space to ensure children can explore their interests without disturbing each other's 'work'.

Indoor activity area – floor space

[Licensing criterion PF6](#) and [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 schedule 4](#)

While more space is desirable, you must ensure that at least the regulated standard of indoor activity space is met. The minimum indoor activity space is 2.5 square metres per child. This space is computed clear of all furniture, fittings, fixed equipment and stored goods, and excluding passageways, toilet facilities, staff rooms, specific sleeping areas for children under 2, and other areas not available for play. Measurements will be made by the Ministry of Education during your probationary licensing visit.

Infants and toddlers need enough space to ensure there are safe floor surfaces to lie on, crawl on and practice walking. Adjustable barriers, risers, shelf units and other furniture can be used to create discrete safe spaces for infants to explore.

Separate infant and toddler areas are one way of ensuring services provide space, equipment and resources that best support their learning. It can also ensure that they are part of a relatively small group for at least part of their day. Research has found this to be very important for young children. These spaces can be provided in mixed age services through careful furniture placement.

If a centre is catering to a large age range, more space may be needed to support a range of learning opportunities and adequate quiet space.

Floor surfaces

Floor surfaces should be easy to clean and suitable for the activities being undertaken. Well maintained wooden, particle, cork or vinyl floors are most suitable in an area used for messy play, and in dining areas, while carpet is better in a book or block area. Consider how much time children spend on the floor when choosing a floor type.

It is good for infants to have the opportunity to explore a range of texture. A range of mixed flooring types may be one way to provide this.

Vinyl that extends a little way up the wall is easier to clean, and is more hygienic over long periods of time because it eliminates joints at the edge of the floor. Your local territorial authority may require you to have vinyl in the toilet and kitchen areas that extends 75 mm up the wall, to ensure that you comply with the Building Code.

It is a good rule of thumb to have about two-thirds hard surface and one-third carpet in the children's indoor play area. This is because a lot of messy

play – such as paint, clay and water – is transported to other areas.

Mats are useful because they can be removed for cleaning and can be moved within the centre to reorganise the learning environment from time to time. There are some very effective semi-permanent tapes that attach a mat to the floor. This helps to ensure mats do not become a hazard.

You may want to consider under-floor heating, especially in centres catering for infants and toddlers.

Staff areas and resource space

An ECE service will need space to store a large amount of equipment and resources. Teachers generally use different resources to support children's changing interests over time. Large numbers of art, dramatic play, science, music equipment, books and puzzles need to be stored while smaller amounts are on display for children's use and self-selection.

Good storage is important so that equipment won't fall in an earthquake and so that the environment is aesthetically attractive to adults and children. Stacked clutter does not represent a well planned, effective learning environment.

Other items that may need storage space include beds, bedding, prams and buggies, car seats, highchairs and linen. General rule of thumb – you can never have too much storage space!

Teachers also need space to clean art materials, make paint, etc. It usually works well if this area is close to where art materials are stored. A large bench and sink at adult height – similar to a very large kitchen sink – works well for cleaning art materials. This should be separate from food preparation areas and the cleaner's sink, for hygiene reasons.

Services that enrol infants and toddlers need to pay particular attention to sterilising play equipment regularly (such as puzzles, musical instruments – everything goes in little children's mouths!). Consider how this can be easily done when you design your building. Space that allows teachers to soak equipment in an antibacterial solution and then drain works well. You might also consider installing an industrial dishwasher (or dish drawer) for this purpose.

Refer to the bathrooms section and the kitchen and laundries section for more details on sinks, taps and water temperatures.

Staffroom

Staff space or spaces should allow teachers to take breaks, heat food, make hot drinks, store professional development reference material and children's records, and carry out non-contact duties.

You should consider making some staff areas out of sight of the children to assist teachers using the staff area on non-contact time, or for lunch breaks to take a restful break.

Office space is necessary for those involved in centre administration.

If an office is positioned near the entrance to the centre, parents/visitors can make enquiries when they enter and before their child has seen them. This can make it easier for parents and teachers to focus on important (and sometimes confidential) conversations.

Try not to fill your staffroom or office with junk! Get good shelving or storage organised and have good rubbish collection for the rest!

Sleep rooms, rest areas and sick (isolation) rooms

[Licensing criteria PF29 to PF31](#) and [licensing criteria PF32 and PF33](#) (for sessional services and all-day services)

Furniture and items intended for children to sleep on (such as cots, beds, stretchers, or mattresses) must be of a size that allows children using them to lie flat, and are of a design to ensure their safety.

If they are to be used for more than one child over time, they need to be securely covered with or made of a non-porous material (material that does not allow liquid to pass through it) so that they are protected from becoming soiled, are easily cleaned and are not a suffocation hazard to children.

Sleep areas for very young children

[Licensing criterion HS10](#)

If a sleep room is positioned close to the infant and toddler play space(s), it's easier for teachers to regularly check children. A viewing window between a sleep room and a main play area (or other area where adults will be) can also make supervision easier, as long as it is not treated as a substitute for regular, physical checks that are required.

If sleep rooms are located near quiet parts of the outdoor play area, it will be easier for children to go to sleep, and stay asleep.

Consider having more than one room for cots. Children need undisturbed rest and this is very difficult to provide for a child if other children are unsettled.

At least one cot to every 2 children is needed, to ensure children are able to have undisturbed rest or sleep when they need it. However, this may not be enough and the right number will depend on how long children attend and their ages. It's advisable to allow plenty of space so that more cots can be added if needed. Child-sized stretchers may be suitable for older toddlers.

The space between cots needs to allow adults to easily check on children, ensure they are not too hot or cold, and check their breathing.

Allowing plenty of space between sleeping children will enable good air flow, which limits cross infection and children disturbing others.

Remember to allow space within the sleep rooms for door opening, storage and adult supervision (for example, an armchair for an adult) when you are estimating the space you will need.

It may be useful to work out the size of a cot (or similar) using the scale of your floor plan. Ensure that the plan shows doors and windows, then 'map it out' to see how the cots could be organised, and if more space is needed.

Cots should be sturdy, easily wipeable and allow good air flow. For example wooden, well painted cots are easy to wipe clean, sturdy and allow air flow. All cots need to meet New Zealand Safety Standards. Be aware that cots that are very low to the floor can create back problems for teachers.

If multilevel cots are used, ensure that children who sit or stand when they wake have room to do so. Children who can pull themselves to a standing position should not be placed in the top cot for safety reasons. Hint: In case of evacuation, have one cot by the door on lockable castors. In an emergency, several children can be put in this cot and quickly wheeled to safety. Check ventilation requirements with your local health protection officer.

You can find additional guidance for multilevel cots in [licensing criterion PF29](#).

Sleep areas for older children

Older children who need to rest during the day will need a quiet space away from other children. This can be a separate room or a quiet part of the play space.

There must be space down the length of the mattress/cot to allow for adult access.

Vinyl covered mattresses, stretchers, sleeping mats or child-sized beds work well for these children.

As with the younger children, it is also important to allow space between sleeping children to prevent cross infection.

If children are using marae-style sleeping arrangements, remember to still use individual linen for each child and ensure that there is adequate space between children to minimise cross infection and disturbance.

Linen and bedding

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF31](#)

Clean bedding (such as blankets, sheets, sleeping bags, and pillowslips) must be provided for sleeping or resting children that is sufficient to keep them warm.

Linen can be washed after every use, or stored separately with the child's name on it and washed as required. Some services make cloth bags or use blankets with name tags to store each child's linen. This prevents cross infection.

Locating stored mattresses and bedding near the sleep area will make it quicker and easier for teachers and children to get ready for sleep and rest times.

Never store bedding on mattresses.

Sleep supervision

You must make regular physical checks of sleeping children.

Adequate supervision is important. As with bathrooms, depending on the layout of the service, a viewing window into the sleep area helps supervision. Large viewing windows that are about 700 mm above the floor allow teachers to easily supervise sleeping children and allow adults to be seen.

Sick (isolation) area

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF27](#)

All ECE services need an area (away from where food is stored, prepared, or eaten, and a safe distance from other children) for sick children to rest. These children need to be able to lie down comfortably and be supervised. Consider how your centre design can best accommodate this need.

Note: This area cannot be the under 2 year old sleep room because this room needs to remain available for the children needing sleep or rest.

Separate linen, and a vinyl sheet that can cover a two-seater couch in a staff area or quiet corner, may be suitable.

Storage space

Children's lockers

Allow plenty of space for children's belongings. Consider how you can provide children with access to their belongings that allows them to take some responsibility for their things, including choosing what to wear throughout the day. It is important to remove anything that may be harmful to children, for example medicines.

Think about places for storage of infants' things. Infants' lockers are often placed near the nappy changing area so that spare clothes are close by. Nappies and other items are often put in individual baskets or shelves right next to the nappy change area. This makes it easier when changing nappies, but also means that anything inappropriate for young children is removed from the bag (for example, nappy cream).

Storage for equipment and materials

[Licensing criterion HS6](#)

Think about placement of storage facilities in areas that will be easy to access and minimise congestion.

Plenty of storage space will be needed for all sorts of equipment and resources – such as paper, paint, spare puzzles, books, science equipment and so on. It's a good idea to include a large storage/resource room in your plans.

It is also important that resources can be easily accessed to support children's learning. Consider building cupboards or storage boxes in the main play areas for this purpose. If high shelving is used, you will need to ensure that any stored equipment can't fall in an earthquake. Having a thin piece of wood, Perspex or some netting placed in front of equipment in open shelves can help prevent it from falling.

Remember to provide sufficient storage for moveable outdoor equipment. Storage will work best if shelving, hooks and boxes (etc) are planned for

particular equipment – as you might find in a well planned domestic tool shed. In a large storage shed, finding things can be made much easier with a Clearlite roof – especially if electricity is not available.

Storage for cleaning agents etc

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF28](#)

Lockable cupboards in kitchen and laundry areas are good places to keep hazardous materials. &
A locked cleaner's cupboard that has a sink as well as chemicals means less likelihood of contamination.

All centres must have first aid supplies that comply with **Appendix 1** of the licensing criteria. Supplies must be stored in a way that is easily recognisable and accessible for adults, but inaccessible to the children.

For early childhood education services subject to the Food Act 2014 and the Food Regulations 2015.

Food Regulations 2015 regulation 59

There must be places for storing cleaning products and equipment so they don't contaminate food or surfaces used to prepare or store food. Cleaning products must be appropriately labelled if decanted into different containers so they are not used in food.

Lighting, ventilation, acoustics and heating

Lighting and ventilation

[Licensing criterion PF12](#)

Lighting must be appropriate to the activities offered or purpose of each room.

Check the lighting requirements in the Building Code.

Consider if additional windows or skylights are required.

Clothes dryers should be vented to the outdoors.

Bathrooms, nappy change areas and laundries need to be well ventilated. If these rooms are internal, mechanical ventilation is required. Seek advice from your local health or building authority.

Sleep areas must be well ventilated to allow air to circulate so that old air can exit and fresh air can enter. At least 2 openings are usually needed to achieve this. Take advice from your local health authority.

See [Building Code](#).

Acoustics

[Licensing criterion PF12](#)

Acoustic absorption materials may be necessary to reduce noise levels that may affect children's learning or well-being.

Noise levels are higher in large open play spaces with high ceilings and unbroken hard surfaces.

Carpeted areas, soft furnishings, acoustic tiles and complex shapes can all help reduce noise. Complex shapes may include mobiles, wall and ceiling hangings, and soft furnishings arranged to break up spaces.

Heating

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF12](#)

Heating needs to be of a safe and effective means to heat rooms used by children to a minimum temperature of 16 degrees.

Ceiling heaters or wall-mounted fan heaters placed above floor level (that is, higher on the wall) are safe and appropriate for ECE services because they are out of the children's way. Also, if they are not at ground level they don't use up space that could be used for equipment display, couches, etc. Infrared heaters are good for heating large rooms such as church halls.

Heat pumps are very efficient and cheap to run. They can also provide air conditioning in the summer. Extra fan heaters can be helpful because they heat a room quickly.

Oil-filled column heaters are good in sleep rooms, if space allows, but must be guarded and secured for earthquake safety. They should also have a thermostat to prevent overheating. Ensure the plug is out of reach or permanently wired in.

Under-floor heating can be a very good solution, especially for infants and toddlers who spend so much of their time on the floor.

Ceiling fans help circulate heat and work well when combined with fan heaters or under-floor heating.

Water-filled radiators (school heaters) need guards around them to protect children. They usually have only limited temperature control.

Night stores can be a useful additional heat source. They should also be guarded.

Heaters with fuel reservoirs (for example, kerosene or gas bottles) or electric bar heaters are dangerous in ECE centres because of the risks associated with fuel reserves.

Think about capturing natural heat from the sun, for example double glazing and window positions. These decisions can save money as well as be aesthetically pleasing.

Electrical sockets, telephones and first aid supplies

Electrical sockets

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 46](#) and [licensing criterion HS12](#)

Equipment, premises, and facilities must be regularly checked for hazards to children. This includes electrical sockets that should be either out of reach of children, adequately shielded or of a suitable design to limit danger to children. New buildings have 'safety' electrical sockets which are safe even if unguarded. Because children may not have these 'safety' sockets in their own homes, some people consider it prudent to shield all sockets, to prevent confusion that could create dangers for children at home. Discuss your situation with your local Ministry of Education office.

Ideally, some sockets in a new building should be installed high up (about 1.4 metres above the floor), so electrical items such as CD players can sit on shelves without the cords causing clutter. Bear in mind that when sockets are set low, display units and couches can obstruct some of them.

First aid supplies

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF28](#)

You need to have a first aid kit that complies with appendix one of the licensing criteria and is easily recognisable and readily accessible to adults but inaccessible to children. First aid kits should be obvious to people in an emergency. People usually expect to find a first aid kit in a bathroom or kitchen area. Some injuries (such as bad grazes) will be best treated near water, so that excess dirt can be removed easily. The kitchen may be less appropriate for storage because adults may be tempted to dress a wound on the sink bench or near food preparation areas.

Many companies sell large cabinets that have safety latches and can be attached to the wall out of children's reach. Having at least one fixed

cabinet will ensure a supply of basic first aid equipment stays in a predictable place and can always be found. Some first aid kits are designed to be easily removed from the wall in case of emergency.

It is a good idea to also have a 'grab bag' or backpack that contains essential first aid equipment to take to the accident site if necessary. Some centres also use this type of bag for taking on excursions or outings. Remember to ensure that it is inaccessible to children when not in use.

Telephone

[Licensing criterion PF11](#)

Your service needs to have a telephone on which calls can be made to and from the service.

Portable phones can be very useful when staff are outdoors or busy in different parts of the centre that are not near the main phone.

Cell phones are useful for outings, providing an alternative emergency number for parents and are useful if the centre needs to be evacuated. In an emergency, time will be saved if families' contact numbers are preset into the mobile phone.

Centres not at ground level

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF13](#)

Outdoor space has to be directly connected to the indoor activity space and can be easily and safely accessed by children.

The New Zealand Fire Service, your local public health authority and the Ministry of Education should be consulted in the early stages of planning so that issues relating to access to outdoor play areas, evacuation plans, and other safety and quality considerations can be discussed – and solutions identified – before renovation or building begins.

You should consider higher fencing where major hazards exist (such as a fall from a building). Consider building fencing at least 1.8 metres high. Solid fencing will reduce noise. Windows in solid fences can be built to create interest for children and let in light and so on.

You need to take particular care in developing evacuation procedures for centres above ground level.

Read the Guidance for Service Providers – [Evacuation Plans for ECE Services in High Rise Buildings](#). [PDF, 260 KB]

See the [New Zealand Fire Service](#) website.

Fences, gates, windows and handrails

Fences

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF13](#)

Outdoor activity space needs to be enclosed by structures and/or fences and gates designed to ensure that children are not able to leave the premises without the knowledge of adults providing education and care.

Height and aesthetics

Fences of less than 1.2 metres high are unlikely to be high enough to prevent children from climbing over them. A safer height is 1.5 metres, and 1.8 metres may be desirable if older children (that is, 4 year olds) attend. When deciding on the fence height, consider:

How many adults will be able to be outside with the children at any time

Whether the layout of the outdoor space creates any barriers to supervision

how equipment is likely to be placed and whether moveable equipment could create hazards in the future (for example, if children shift equipment closer to a fence)

the surrounding environments – paddocks, a busy road or bodies of water offer different ‘attractions’ and hazards for children

fencing that allows the children to see out to the world around them – swimming pool fencing is one way to provide this opportunity, and windows can be inserted in solid fences to allow children to look out and community members to see in and interact with children (discuss your situation with staff from your local Ministry of Education office and regional health authority)

resource consent issues that may dictate the height and construction of the fence – solid fencing reduces noise transfer from the centre to any neighbours

adding windows, framed mirrors and areas suitable for painting (for example, a large piece of light coloured Formica) that can create interest, make spaces feel larger and utilise space effectively

having a small gap of 5 mm between each paling that allows wind to flow through rather than build up and come over the top of a solid fence.

General tips

If horizontal supports are on the outside, children won't be able to use them to climb over the fence. If the fence is already built, a fillet on the horizontal rail or covering the area between the rails may prevent children from climbing.

If using a hurricane pipe and wire fence, consider using the wire that is 25 mm across the diamond. This is a smaller size than normal, but children can easily climb the 60 mm size. The pipe needs to be secure at the top and bottom.

Gates and doors

Swimming pool gates with high safety locks and springs that close the gate automatically are well designed to meet ECE services' needs. A swimming pool gate also allows staff to see who is coming into the centre. A large wooden gate with high locks makes it hard to see if a person in a wheelchair is trying to get in. However, if it is very noisy or polluted outside the gate, a solid gate with a window may be a solution.

It is a good idea to have a gate between the car park and the entrance door. This contains children in a safe area if a door is left open by mistake. It also ensures that strangers are not provided direct access to the play area.

Consider how parents are going to come into the building. If they come into the building first, rather than through the playground, staff can then monitor the arrival and departure of children and visitors to the centre.

Consider how large pieces of equipment or materials are going to be brought into the centre – for example, a ride-on mower or a load of sand. It is a good idea to install a gate wide enough for a trailer to give access to the sand area.

The New Zealand Fire Service usually recommends that there are at least 2 outward opening doors from the inside of a centre to the outside. This allows people to get out easily in case of fire. Also, you need to consider how children will get out of the playground to a safer space in the event of a fire.

Take advice from your local Fire Service, or visit the [New Zealand Fire Service website](#).

Windows

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 45](#) and [licensing criterion PF7](#)

Windows or other areas of glass accessible to children need to be either made of safety glass, or covered by an adhesive film designed to hold the glass in place in the event of it being broken, or effectively guarded by barriers that prevent a child striking or falling against the glass.

Sliding windows are a good idea for opening onto a deck or ramp. The protruding edge of windows that open outwards can create a hazard.

Children should be able to see outside through most windows. If windows are placed 500 to 600 mm above the floor, older children will be able to

see out and display units can still be positioned up against the wall. Consider setting some non-opening windows at a very low height to create interest for infants and toddlers.

Windows should have safety catches where they are a potential hazard to children. The older type of window that slides up and down (sash window) should have a bolt that holds the window when it is open at approximately 200 mm. This is to ensure that the window does not accidentally drop down on a child, causing injury.

Handrails

Consider providing handrails at child height.

The Building Code does not require decks or steps under one metre to have handrails. However, because ECE services are designed for young children's use, it is advisable to have balustrades surrounding decks. An alternative is to have very wide steps (platforms) surrounding a deck. If wide enough, these will prevent children from falling far.

Where balustrades are installed ensure they do not allow entrapment of body parts and are high enough that means children are not able to sit or climb on them. The space between balustrades should not be greater than 100 mm.

Platforms that are 'deep' (that is, 350 to 700 mm) and 'low' (that is, 100 to 110 mm) are an appropriate alternative to steps for infants and toddlers who do not 'walk' down steps (but tend to crawl or climb down). Such platforms may not require handrails. Take advice from your local building authority.

Early childhood education and care regulations

Licensed early childhood education (ECE) and care centres are required to comply with the regulatory standards and criteria set out in the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) and [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008](#).

The guidance provided with each criterion is a starting point to show how services can meet the requirements.

A licensed early childhood education and care centre is eligible to receive government funding, and must comply with the Ministry of Education funding rules in order to do so.

The quality of the education and care provided by the service is also reviewed regularly by the [Education Review Office](#).

Service providers can talk to their local Ministry of Education office to request the licensing assessment tool for centre-based ECE services or find out more about early childhood regulations and criteria.

Fees and funding

[20 Hours ECE](#) affects the way a service receives funding for 3, 4 and 5 year olds and the fees that can be charged for some children.

You cannot charge an extra fee for an enrolled child who is receiving 20 Hours ECE. Fees can be charged for additional hours of enrolment outside of 20 Hours ECE.

Usual enrolment fees or waiting list fees can be charged for children who will be using 20 Hours ECE at your ECE service. These fees must apply to all children, not just those receiving 20 Hours ECE. You must also ensure that these fees do not prevent children from accessing 20 Hours ECE.

Parents can be asked to pay optional charges for hours claimed as 20 Hours ECE. Donations may also be requested.

There are different kinds of early childhood administration software available to assist with the management of fees, subsidies, etc. These can be purchased from individual private companies.

Furniture, fittings and equipment

1. You will need to consider what will be the appropriate learning and teaching equipment and resources for meeting the curriculum standards in the regulations, and for:

- your philosophy
- the range of children who will attend
- your community
- actively acknowledging the unique place of tangata whenua in the programme
- meeting regulated standards.

Visit other ECE services and discuss with teachers the choices available for particular equipment.

2. Make a list of equipment you plan to get. Many suppliers have catalogues and price lists available.
3. Ensure that play equipment complies with New Zealand Safety Standards, for example the [Supervised Early Childhood Facilities – Playground Equipment and Surfacing Handbook \(NZS 5828.2:2006\)](#).
4. Order all indoor and outdoor equipment (including tables, beds, display units, etc). Allow enough time for delivery and set up so that your service will be ready for the Ministry of Education’s licensing visit. Please note that the centre must be 'ready for children' before the Ministry will visit the site. This includes outdoor playgrounds being ready for use.

Governance and management roles and responsibilities

Management group

If a management group has been elected, the members need to be people with an interest in the service, who will be able to attend meetings regularly, assist with decision making and help manage the service. The management group is formed at the annual general meeting and includes:

a representative from the teaching team who has the most responsibility for the day-to-day running of the service – usually the ‘person responsible’ (electing a teacher to the management group is not advisable because of the conflict of interest – see appendix one)

the contact person/licensee

parents/whānau and community representatives who are elected at the annual general meeting.

Depending on the size of your service, your management group will have between 5 and 8 members.

Governing group or board

A governing board may be elected from:

parents and whānau
the community
stakeholders
secretary
treasurer
and includes the contact person.

The size of your governing board is set out in your constitution or trust deed. The size that works best is between 5 and 8 people.

Secretary

The secretary takes minutes at meetings, deals with correspondence, keeps files and ensures the roll is kept up to date.

Treasurer

The treasurer needs to be familiar with the Ministry of Education funding details.

The treasurer ensures that the financial records are kept up to date and accurate, and manages income and banking, makes payments, keeps the cash book up to date, reconciles bank statements and issues receipts. The treasurer will be responsible for balancing the cash book and bank reconciliations. The treasurer organises the financial records to be audited.

Responsibilities of governing

What is governing?

Governing is the responsibility for the long-term health and prosperity of the service. It includes:

designing and putting into words a vision of what your service will be like in the future
making sure your service will provide high quality early childhood education for children in 2 years, 5 years, 10 years and beyond
long-term projects or issues rather than day-to-day matters.

A job description for governing

When you govern, you need to be always asking yourself, "Is what I am doing going to make the service better in the future?"

The job of governing includes:

setting the direction for the service
setting performance targets
developing and following through on policies
making sure the service has the capacity by way of staff, equipment and money to do all the things you would like it to do
exercising control by measuring performance against the targets you have set
understanding what risks the service might incur and having a plan to minimise them
regular reporting.

In your governing meetings, you must ensure that you:

exercise a 'duty of care' (this is defined as "the standard of care which an ordinary man might expect to take on his own behalf")

act honestly

do not use your position for advantage (your responsibility is to the service and you must not try and gain a personal benefit)

comply with legislation

comply with the Ministry of Education's requirements

act in the best interests of the service at all times.

What are you responsible for when you govern?

Governing includes such things as:

making sure the service provides quality education for the children so that families will choose your service;

making sure your service meets the needs of families, both now and in the future, the community, staff, the Ministry, the Education Review Office and other interested parties;

meeting all your responsibilities on time and at all times;

defining the purpose, values/beliefs and aims of the service;

developing written policies and procedures;

preparing and reviewing the statement of philosophy;

reviewing progress and responsibilities as described in the long-term plan; and

ensuring your service keeps families and the community informed and involved.

Term of office

Usually the members of the governance group will be elected at the annual general meeting but in some services established by an umbrella organisation they may be appointed.

Good practice is to elect each member of the governing group for a term of 2 years with a right to be elected for another term of 2 years. It is usual to elect half the number of the group one year and another half the following year. This provides continuity from one year to the next in the long-term planning done by the governing group.

Who should attend governing meetings?

Governing meetings are for those elected or appointed to provide governance. Parents/whānau or other interested people who may attend do not automatically have speaking rights and are not entitled to vote.

Stakeholders

Those elected to govern are representing the parents/whānau and also to others who have an interest in the success of the service – the stakeholders.

For most services, the following is a sample list of stakeholders:

Parents/whānau

The community which the service operates within

Ministry of Education

Education Review Office

Staff and contractors

Children

Suppliers to the service

Neighbours

Owners of the home or building from which the service operates

Child, Youth and Family Services

Inland Revenue Department

Other government agencies

Local/district/regional authority

Funders and sponsors

The church or other 'umbrella' group

It is important for the governing group to review its list of stakeholders each year to make sure it is up to date. The governing group should agree which stakeholders are the most important.

Meeting with stakeholders

The governing group should meet with stakeholders each year. The meeting might only take 20 to 30 minutes but can provide valuable information for the governing group about the future of the service.

The governing group might plan to meet with one of the important stakeholder groups every second or third governing meeting. The stakeholder group should be provided with the long-term plan prior to the meeting.

Communication with stakeholders

Good quality and frequent communication with stakeholders helps to keep everyone involved and up to date.

Some stakeholders need frequent communication, some not so often.

Health and safety standards and emergencies

[Regulation 46 of the Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) outlines the health and safety requirements with which all early childhood education service providers, including home-based service providers must comply. These requirements relate to:

- promoting the good health and safety of the children enrolled in the service
- preventing accidents and the spread of infection
- keeping the premises, facilities and equipment used on those premises in good repair, maintained regularly, and safe and free from hazards, and
- procedures to deal with fire, earthquakes and other emergencies.

See the section on writing policies for help with developing policies and procedures related to health and safety.

For all premises used for the provision of centre-based education and care, service providers must ensure that there are documented procedures for:

- the hygienic laundering of linen used by the children or adults
- the changing (and disposal if appropriate) of nappies
- dealing with emergencies – the procedure must be consistent with national or regional Civil Defence guidelines
- evacuation of the premises
- monitoring children's sleep
- identifying and managing hazards
- responding to suspected child abuse and having a process for the prevention of child abuse – documents must be consistent with Child, Youth and Family or New Zealand Police guidelines.

In addition service providers must also keep:

- records of emergency drills carried out with children
- records of excursions
- evidence of parental permission for any travel by motor vehicle
- records of all food served to children while they are participating in the service (other than that provided by parents for their own children)
- records of all injuries, incidents and serious illnesses that occur, and the records of written authority from parents for the administration of medicine and records of all medicine given to children left in the care of the service
- records of training and/or information provided to adults who administer medicine to children.

Refer to the [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008](#) for more detailed information regarding these requirements.

Although the service provider is responsible for ensuring that these health and safety standards are complied with, it is likely to be the coordinator who works alongside the educator to develop effective and appropriate procedures, systems and practices.

Civil Defence has a range of checklists and pamphlets; information in the checklists and pamphlets can be used to ensure that procedures are relevant to the threats in the local area, including an emergency planning guide called [Early Childhood Education Services Emergency Planning Guidance](#).

Educators will need to ensure they have enough supplies and a civil defence procedure outlining how they will access appropriate help and support in emergencies. Parents and families will need to be told where the local Civil Defence centre is in case there is a need to evacuate the centre.

The following are useful resources to support coordinators and educators to comply with the health and safety standard in the 2008 regulations.

Resources

- The Ministry of Health's [Ngā Kupu Oranga Healthy Messages](#) is a useful health and safety resource.
- The [New Zealand Fire Service](#) website has information to support the development of emergency procedures.
- Contact your local council for emergency planning information that relates specifically to the area in which your service is located.

Managing your service

Managing is doing the day-to-day things at the service so your long-term plan is achieved. As an example, if you are buying some new books for the children, you are managing.

When you are managing, it is important to make sure you hear and respond to the views and concerns of the coordinator and the educators. It is important the management group does not take over or interfere with the educators' responsibilities.

Every service is different. In some big services there can be separate governance and management groups. In smaller services there is often one group that is responsible for both governing and managing.

Managing includes such things as:

- making sure the regulations are met on a daily basis
- preparing budgets and financial accounts
- implementing the goals and policies
- buying and looking after resources
- making sure families and the community are up to date with what is happening with the service.

The governance group is responsible for developing and reviewing the service's policies. The management group will be responsible for developing and implementing procedures that bring the policies to life. It is important that the management group knows that it is its responsibility to ensure the efficient administration of the service, accurate financial accountability, and the funding received is used towards achieving the goals of the service.

Philosophy statement

The statement of philosophy tells everyone who works or comes into your premises what is special about your service and what you want to achieve.

The 2008 regulations require you to develop and display a statement of philosophy. It needs to be easy to understand by everyone involved in your service and clearly displayed.

What would you put in a statement of philosophy?

Every statement of philosophy will be different but you might want to include:

why you set up the service

what you want to achieve day by day

what values are really important for your service and community.

Here are some examples:

"Our educators will be well trained and have regular professional development."

"At our service the values of our culture are taught."

"Parents will be encouraged and given opportunities to share in the life of the service."

Who is responsible for the statement of philosophy?

Everyone involved at the service should have the opportunity to contribute to preparing and reviewing the statement, including:

parents/whānau
educators
coordinators
the service provider.

Preparing or reviewing the statement of philosophy

The management group or governing board is responsible for writing a draft statement of philosophy. This should be circulated to as many stakeholders as possible to get their opinion. This can be done through a meeting or by doing a survey; whatever method is best for your stakeholders.

Their ideas and comments should be included in the final statement before it is circulated again. It may be necessary to go back to each of the groups to make sure that everyone is happy with the final statement of philosophy. Statements of philosophy do not have to be long but they do need to be clear about why the service exists and what it stands for.

The statement of philosophy should be reviewed each year and the annual general meeting is a good time to do this. It's a good idea to give a copy to those involved a week or 2 before the meeting so they can think about whether changes are needed.

Giving a 'close-off' date for suggested changes keeps the review on track and means the refreshed statement can be presented at the annual general meeting.

Playgrounds

[The Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) require ECE centres to have premises and facilities that support safe and healthy practices. The licensing criteria for ECE services aim to uphold the safety of children by ensuring that all items, equipment, furniture, materials and surfacing used in the service is of a standard that is considered safe.

Criteria related to playground safety:

- PF5 – centre-based ECE services
- PF5 – ngā kōhanga reo
- PF3 – hospital-based ECE services
- PF11 – home-based ECE services
- PF7 – playgroups

It is the responsibility of service providers to demonstrate that the playground structures, equipment and surfacing are safe and meet the relevant criteria. Ministry of Education licensing staff complete an inspection of each ECE service's playground equipment and surfacing as part of the licensing assessment process.

If there are concerns, the service provider may be asked for additional evidence such as a certificate of compliance that shows the equipment and/or surfacing comply with the New Zealand standard for playground equipment and surfacing, NZS5828:2015. In some cases the service provider may be required to have a comprehensive inspection of their premises and facilities completed. This would need to be completed by an appropriately qualified expert such as an engineer or qualified playground safety inspector.

Note: Those offering an inspection or assessment service (especially for detailed inspections or compliance checks) should be able to produce evidence of relevant qualifications and training in inspecting against NZS5828:2015.

Purchasing and installing playground equipment and surfacing

Before purchasing new equipment or safety surfacing, service providers should ensure that the product has been tested against the specifications of NZS5828:2015 and the manufacturer can supply a certificate of compliance for that product.

ECE services should check with any potential manufacturer/supplier that a certificate of compliance is available before purchase (for example a certificated manufacturer may have added a new piece of equipment to its range since certification and the new product may not comply with NZS5828:2015).

Newly installed playground equipment or safety surfacing must have a certificate of compliance to show that it is installed according to the manufacturer's instructions. These may be asked for during the licence assessment process.

Standard for playground equipment and surfacing

The New Zealand standard for playground equipment and surfacing is NZS5828:2015 Playground equipment and surfacing. Copies of NZS5828:2015 are available for purchase from [Standards New Zealand](#). This standard is aimed primarily at manufacturers and installers of playground equipment, so is written in technical language.

Constructing a sand area

It is not compulsory to have a sand area in your service, but if you do decide to have one this information will guide you through the process.

Drainage, edging and the 'look'

The area dug out for the sand should be up to 600 mm deep.

It is a good idea to create an edge, to clearly separate the sand from the surrounding soil. Tanalised posts can work well, or line the sides with marine ply.

Consider how you want children to access the sand area, particularly children with disabilities or very small children. Also consider how natural you want it to look.

You can create edging up to 200 mm above the ground to contain the sand without obstructing most children's access. However, you may decide to design the sandpit without a raised edging so that children can crawl into it.

Tussocks and large rocks provide an attractive natural barrier between the sand area and other activities. If rocks are used, ensure that the area on their other side is not close to climbing equipment or activities where children are prone to fall – such as bike tracks.

Line the bottom of the pit with 300 mm of scoria if there is no stormwater drain. If a drain is available, scoria is needed to contain it.

Cover the scoria with a layer of filter cloth, mud matting or shade cloth. Water can drain through but the children cannot dig up the scoria.

Add approximately 500 mm of sand. Dune sand is a fine grain sand good for making sandcastles. East Coast sand is also a good option because it is not too light and won't fly about in the wind. It is a white grain of sand.

Covers, seating and shade

The [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) (regulation 46, [criterion HS12](#)) requires that equipment, premises, and facilities are regularly checked for hazards to children. These hazards can include dangerous objects and foreign materials. Sand areas should be covered after the last session each day, or raked and inspected for animal droppings and dangerous objects before children arrive each morning. It is a good idea to talk with other ECE services about covers that they have found useful. If covered, covers should be easy to remove, allow the sand to 'breathe'

and allow rain in to clean the sand.

Consider building a seat around part of the sand area. Any corners should be rounded off.

A suitable sun shade should be provided. It is a good idea to talk with other ECE services about the pros and cons of various sun shade solutions. Consider natural shade options like trees also.

Size and position

The sand area is a very important area of play and will be well used. Consideration of size and position should be well thought through. A warm position that is easily supervised is recommended.

In terms of sand pits, bigger is generally better.

Storage and other considerations

Consider having a tap close by so water can be added to sand.

Provide a storage area close to the sand for equipment. If possible, children should be able to select their own equipment. Good storage will help this process and save teachers' time.

Consider having a decking platform for extended play such as the water trough, water spouting or dramatic play near the sandpit.

Preparing for staff employment

Research shows that teacher training and qualifications have a positive impact on learning outcomes for children.

As a condition of licensing, staff in the position of 'person responsible' as set out in the [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) are required to be appropriately qualified. More information on qualification for early childhood education teachers can be found on the [TeachNZ website](#).

Under Part 31 of the [Education Amendment Act 2015](#), staff in the position of 'person responsible' must also be registered. The teacher registration regulations are administered by the [Education Council](#)

Teacher registration and certification ensures the quality of teachers. Newly graduated provisionally certificated teachers must be supervised and supported through an advice and guidance programme once they begin teaching in an ECE service.

Read about [employing ECE staff](#).

To employ teachers for your ECE service

Create a staffing schedule to help you decide how many teachers you will need, and for what hours you will need them. This should be based on anticipated enrolments. This process will also help you decide how many of these staff must be qualified teachers.

Decide what other staff will need to be employed (for example, cleaner, administration staff, manager, cook, head teacher).

Develop job descriptions. It may be useful to look at job descriptions from other ECE services, where possible.

Decide what salary rates and conditions you will offer. It may be useful to find out about salaries paid and conditions offered in other ECE services in your area. (See 'Help with employment issues' below.)

Every employee must have a written employment agreement. It can be either an individual agreement or a collective agreement. Decide

what form the draft employment agreement between staff and the service will take.

Develop employment documentation such as policies and procedures.

Advertise for staff.

Formalise the employment agreement between staff and the service prior to employment.

Look at [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 47](#) and [licensing criterion GMA 7](#) for what is required.

Refer to advertisements in the [Education Gazette](#) to help you. Consider employing at least one teacher prior to opening.

Help with employment issues

The [Employment Relations Service](#) website has information to support human resource management. This includes templates for letters to appoint staff, fact sheets, employment agreement guides and help calculating parental leave for your employed staff. There is also an 'Ask a question' feature.

[Inland Revenue](#) is a good starting point for finding out about obligations and entitlements concerning tax.

[The Education Council's website](#) provides information about the process of teacher registration.

The [Human Rights Commission](#) website provides information about equal opportunities, including a discrimination and complaints guide.

The [New Zealand Home-Based Early Childhood Education Association](#) provides information of current news and events relating to home-based education as well as tax, ACC and insurance obligations. Members have access to a tax calculator, newsletters and a discussion forum among other things.

The [New Zealand Education Institute \(NZEI\)](#) is a union that negotiates collective employment agreements on behalf of many early childhood education teachers. As a condition of receiving higher levels of government funding, teachers must be paid at a rate that is at least as high as the lowest step on their 'consenting parties early childhood collective agreement'.

[Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand](#) provides members with information and advice on industrial issues, including management handbooks and other resources.

The [Early Childhood Council](#) provides members with information and advice on industrial issues, including a range of resources.

The [Children's Action Plan website](#) helps you in identifying, supporting and protecting vulnerable children.

Staffing schedules

Staffing schedules support the smooth operation of an ECE service. They ensure that it is clear when staff are responsible for children and when they can take lunch breaks or 'non-contact' planning time, etc. Draft schedules should be developed by newly established services to work out:

how many staff will be needed overall to ensure compliance with the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 (schedule 1);
what hours each shift will need to cover; and

which shifts will need to be filled by registered teachers to ensure compliance with the Education (Registration of Early Childhood Services Teachers) Regulations 2004.

[See qualification requirements.](#)

[See Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 \(schedule 1\)](#)

You should also note that the [Ministry of Education's Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook](#) requires records to be kept to show actual staffing levels and child attendance (as opposed to planned staffing levels). Your staffing schedule could be designed so that it can also be used as a staffing record for the purposes of funding. You can find an example in [appendix 2 of the funding handbook](#). Some software providers have packages available to assist services.

Minimum adult to child ratios and first aid

The [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 \(schedule 2\)](#) set out how many children can attend with certain numbers of adults ([adult to child ratio](#)).

The Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008 also require there to be at least one staff member at the centre (at all times children are attending) who either [holds a current first aid certificate](#), is a registered medical practitioner, is a nurse with a current practising certificate, or is a qualified ambulance officer or paramedic (see [licensing criterion HS25](#)).

The number of certificated teachers your ECE service needs

The [Education \(Registration of Early Childhood Services Teachers\) Regulations 2004](#) require, in teacher-led services, the person acting as 'person responsible' to be a registered teacher.

The [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) (regulation 44 (1) (d)) require a 'person responsible' to supervise children, or the staff by whom the children are supervised, at all times.

[Read more details about qualification requirements](#)

Developing a schedule

Developing schedules is quite tricky and you may need to try lots of versions before you find one that suits your service.

Use the [example schedule](#) [DOC, 955 KB] as a guide and carry out the following steps:

Step one

Fill in the number of children (over 2 or under 2) that you have planned will be at the service every half hour (right hand column). Note that, at the start and end of the day, there are often fewer children attending. If this is the case, fewer adults may be needed at these times.

Work out how many adults you will be required to employ for the number of children (every half hour) and write this number in the planned staff column.

Alternatively, write in the number of adults your service will need if you want fewer children per adult than is required by the regulation (note that you can have more adults working with children than required, but not the other way around).

Shade the boxes to show when each adult will actually be working with the children.

Count across the columns to ensure there are at least as many adults working as the number planned.

Check that at least one 'person responsible' is on the premises supervising the adults and children at all times.

Step 2

Check each adult:

has adequate breaks (for example, lunch)

is not working for too long each day; and

has time to plan for children's learning and curriculum delivery.

Job descriptions

Job descriptions are statements written to describe the:

position title

duties/key tasks

primary responsibilities, including intended outcomes of key tasks

qualifications and experience required for the position

personal professional qualities and skills

position relationships, such as to whom the person is responsible, and to whom they relate

a date that the job description was prepared – this is a good way to track when it needs updating

names and signatures of the key people involved in its preparation and a review date.

(**Note:** see the [Human Rights Act 1993](#) to ensure there is no discrimination in items listed in the person specifications.)

Job descriptions clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of a specific job, helping to promote positive relationships within a team of staff.

They help to:

clarify the role and expectations of employees;

decide how work is allocated or delegated;

develop appraisal processes and procedures;

set goals; and

identify professional development needs and guide career developments.

The best job descriptions do not limit employees but enable them to use their experience, grow their skills and develop their ability to contribute within their organisation.

A staffing and appointments policy and the process adhered to should document the process for developing and changing a job description.

Suggested headings for job description

Position

Introduction (including a description of the organisation)

Profile (of the successful applicant)

Responsible to

Primary responsibilities of the position

Key tasks

Date prepared

Signed

Review date

Resources

[Guide to hiring for employers](#): This is a resource designed by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment to provide employers with

information on good practice when recruiting and hiring employees, including information on job descriptions.

[CommunityNet Aotearoa](#) provides practical 'hands on' resources to help organisations to get started and develop good practice in the voluntary sector environment.

Preparing policies, procedures and processes

We suggest you do the following:

1. Read the licensing criteria booklet that applies to your service type to identify which policies are required.
2. Write drafts of documentation required for licensing and other policies, procedures and processes you think would be useful. If your service is part of an umbrella organisation it may require additional documentation or have examples you can adapt.
3. Consider how you will ensure that your service operates in accordance with the regulations and licensing criteria, and have documentation to reflect this.
4. Contact your [local Ministry of Education office](#) to have a New Centre Licensing pack, which includes the probationary licence application (EC/1C), sent to you. It is helpful to have the form at this stage as some of your documentation of policies, procedures and processes need to be submitted as part of the application. The other policies, procedures and processes will be looked at later, on site, when your service is visited by the Ministry of Education as part of the licensing process.

Why have policies?

Policies identify agreed processes and procedures that ensure:

key legislative requirements are met;

those involved in the service have a shared understanding of agreed processes and procedures so that these are consistent, safe and appropriate; and

those involved in the service have the opportunity to discuss policy and suggest change through regular review processes.

(See [regulation 47](#), [criterion GMA4](#)).

What is required?

The [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) apply to all licensed services. The regulations require services to formulate certain policies, processes and procedures.

Read the regulations to clarify what is actually required and from there determine what policies you will need. An ECE service's policies will reflect its individual philosophy, values and style of operation. ECE services also need to develop their own policies and procedures to meet other legislative requirements.

Are policies legally binding?

Policies are not legally binding. They reflect an individual ECE service's agreed practice, and can be reviewed and changed by the service. Staff, parents and others in the service may agree to follow the service's policy (and any future changes to policy) when they are employed or when their child is enrolled.

In this way they become binding to those staff and parents, and the service could dismiss an employee or cancel an enrolment if a policy is not followed. A court of law could not do the same because it only deals with breaches of regulations or law.

Can we copy from other services?

Policies from other ECE services can give you good ideas to think about as you write your own. However, do remember that all services and communities have different structures, beliefs, values and expectations. It is important that your policies are relevant to your service. If you don't like a policy you already have, discuss it and change it.

Your policies should work for you!

Writing policies

Wherever possible, develop policies before you need them and be prepared to introduce new policies and procedures when the need for this arises. Consultation with staff and parents will help to ensure your policies and procedures are robust and realistic for implementation on a daily basis.

Most policies include:

- a rationale (a reason for having the policy)
- objectives (what you hope to achieve through the policy)
- procedures that clearly describe the actual practices that will occur
- how the policy will be implemented
- when the policy should be implemented
- who is responsible for its implementation
- when the policy is planned to be reviewed.

If your policy is not working well, consult with staff, contractors and families and change it! The content of your policies belongs to your service.

A regular review process (see [regulation 47](#), [criterion GMA4](#)) where those involved in the service have the opportunity to discuss policy and suggest changes will ensure your policies and procedures are always relevant to your service.

Policies

Personnel policy

To read upfront:

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47](#)

[Licensing Criteria for Centre-based Education and Care Services, GMA6.](#)

The [Employment Relations Service](#) has information to support human resource management that service providers may find useful. This includes templates for letters to appoint staff, fact sheets, employment agreement guides and help calculating parental leave for your employed staff. There is also an 'ask a question' feature.

[The Education Council](#) provides information about the process of teacher registration.

The [Human Rights Commission](#) provides information about equal opportunities, including a discrimination and complaints guide.

The [New Zealand Educational Institute \(NZEI\)](#) is a union that negotiates collective employment agreements on behalf of many early childhood teachers. As a condition of receiving government funding, teachers must be paid at a rate that is at least as high as the lowest step on NZEI's 'consenting parties collective agreement'.

[Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand](#) provides members with information and advice on industrial issues, including management handbooks and other resources.

The [Early Childhood Council](#) provides members with information and advice on industrial issues, including a range of resources.

[Inland Revenue](#) is a good starting point for finding out about obligations and entitlements concerning tax.

Settling and transition policy

Transitions to, within and from a service can be stressful times for children and their families. To make these transitions positive and successful experiences, it is important that a teaching team has developed policy and procedures that are based on knowledge of children, and current educational theory and practice. These resources and further reading may assist with development of the policy and practice.

[Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa](#) – early childhood education curriculum (especially strands one and 2).

[Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning](#) – early childhood exemplars.

Health and safety policy

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 46](#)

The Ministry of Health's website has a resource called [Ngā Kupu Oranga Healthy Messages](#). It is a health and safety resource for early childhood services and is available to download.

Your [local Health Protection Officer \(HPO\)](#) will be able to give you useful information that complements Ngā Kupu Oranga.

In general, HPOs make a report to the Ministry of Education advising whether or not they consider an ECE service to be compliant. The Ministry of Education makes the final decision about whether or not to grant a licence.

The Ministry of Health's website also has up-to-date [information on immunisation](#).

The Ministry of Civil Defence website has a resource called [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) Services Emergency Planning Guidance](#).

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's [WorkSafe website](#) has a range of resources to help, including 'tools' such as self-assessment sheets for health and safety matters and forms you can use, through to information about managing hazards for small businesses. Look under 'Tools & resources' then 'Health and safety templates'.

The [New Zealand Fire Service website](#) has a range of information about fire safety and schemes.

Legislation can be accessed on the [New Zealand Legislation website](#).

Curriculum assessment and planning policy

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 43](#) and [licensing criteria C1–13](#).

[Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa \(1996\)](#) – early childhood education curriculum.

[Kei Tua o te Pae: Assessment for Learning](#) - early childhood exemplars.

Child protection policy

[Regulation 46\(1\)\(a\) of the Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) requires that services take all reasonable steps to promote the good health and safety of children enrolled in the service. [The Children's Act 2014](#) and the licensing criterion HS31 also require all centre-based services to have a child protection policy.

Read more about these requirements and the Ministry's accompanying guidance in the [centre-based licensing criteria and guidance](#).

Communication policy

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47](#), and the [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services, GMA1 to GMA3](#), set out the minimum standard of communication that should be communicated to parents and how they can access information about their child.

Positive guidance policy

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 43](#) Criterion C10

The [He Māpuna te Tamaiti](#) publication is also useful.

Complaints policy

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47](#), and the [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services, criterion GMA1](#), require services to inform parents of the procedure to follow if they wish to complain about non-compliance with the regulations or criteria.

You can find information about the complaints process for parents and whānau on our [Parents website](#).

Financial policies

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008 regulation 47](#)

[Licensing criterion GMA 3 and licensing criterion GMA 9](#)

[Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook](#)

The [Working for Families website](#) has information about assistance families can get with childcare costs. Assistance is provided to families through Work and Income and Inland Revenue.

[Inland Revenue](#) is a good starting point for finding out about obligations and entitlements concerning tax. You can also download tax forms that staff will need to complete.

[Business.govt.nz](#) provides information about its free national business information and referral service for small and medium businesses.

[Community Net Aotearoa](#) is a practical resource to help organisations get started and to develop good practice in the voluntary sector environment.

Fees policy

See [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008, regulation 47](#), [Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services, criterion GMA2](#), [Early Childhood Education Funding Handbook](#))

The Early Learning Information (ELI) System

The Ministry of Education's [Early Learning Information \(ELI\) System](#) collects and stores information on enrolment and attendance in early childhood education (ECE) for approximately 180,000 children throughout Aotearoa.

The ELI System improves the ability of the Ministry and the ECE sector to exchange information electronically and will enhance the quality of information on participation in ECE.

The Ministry uses ELI System information for educational monitoring, reporting and research, and the development of new initiatives.

ELI Information Requirements Licensed ECE services, unless specifically exempt, need to return specific information through the ELI System.

Roles and responsibilities in a centre-based education and care service

The [Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Regulations 2008](#) define three distinct positions of responsibility in a centre-based ECE service: service provider, contact person and person responsible.

A **service provider** is a body, agency, or person who or that operates the centre.

- The service provider is the holder of the licence and is legally responsible for meeting regulatory requirements
- An application for a licence made on behalf of a service provider must be made by a fit and proper person to be involved in the management of the service as described in the regulations.

The **contact person** is a person nominated by the service provider to represent its management, and this person's name is displayed on the Certificate of Licence. The contact person must:

- be able to respond to the Ministry of Education as soon as practicable on any issue relating to licensing;
- have authority to act on behalf of the service provider; and
- reside locally.

A person will generally be considered to 'reside locally' if they live within the geographical boundaries serviced by the local Ministry of Education office. Contact your local Ministry of Education office if you are unsure whether the contact person would meet this requirement.

The Person responsible

The person responsible:

- is one or more persons nominated for the purpose by the service provider, and
- is directly involved in, and primarily responsible for, the day-to-day education, care, comfort, health and safety of the children, and
- must supervise the children, and the adults providing education and care, at all times while children attend the service, and
- must hold an early childhood education or primary teaching qualification recognised by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand for registration purposes, and
- must hold a current practising certificate.

There must be one person responsible for every 50 children.

Suggested equipment for licensed ECE services

Overview

This information has been designed to help you develop a high-quality care and education environment for children aged zero to 6 years.

Diversity is encouraged and this list can be adapted to accommodate an individual focus or philosophy – such as a language group, Montessori or Rudolph Steiner centre. However, a similar variety, quality and quantity of equipment will be required to meet Ministry of Education licensing requirements.

Many other items of equipment could be added to this list.

The principles of [Te Whāriki](#) underpin all that we do in early childhood education. When providing an enriched environment for children, we must ensure the principles are at the centre of our planning.

When selecting equipment for a mixed age centre, it is essential to consider the 3 broad age groups (as described in Te Whāriki):

Infants – birth to 18 months

Toddlers – one to 3 years

Young children – from 2 years 6 months to school entry age

Safety, size and durability are key issues to consider when choosing material, equipment and resources. Ask the following questions:

How long will it last with daily use by 20 or more children?

Is it non-toxic? What type of paint has been used to colour it?

Does it have rounded edges to prevent cuts etc?

Is it safe for babies? Could a baby swallow it?

Is the size appropriate for a child's hand or foot etc?

Is it easily cleaned?

The Ministry of Education is able to provide you with information and practical advice about equipment purchases. However, all the equipment in the world will not make up for quality adult interaction with children.

We trust you will find this a valuable resource that will help you provide a quality early childhood education experience for young children.

Te Whāriki

The aspiration statement and the 4 principles of [Te Whāriki](#) underpin all that we do in early childhood education. When providing an enriched environment for children, we must ensure the principles underpin any decisions.

It is vital that educators take opportunities to extend children's thinking and encourage children to have a perception of themselves as explorers – competent, confident learners who ask questions and make discoveries.

Relating equipment to the principles and strands of Te Whāriki

When providing an enriched environment for children, we must ensure that the principles and strands of Te Whāriki are at the centre of our planning decisions.

Principles

Empowerment/whakamana – the early childhood curriculum empowers the child to learn and grow.

Holistic development/kotahitanga – the early childhood curriculum reflects the holistic way children learn and grow.

Family and community/whānau tangata – the wider world of family and community is an integral part of the early childhood curriculum.

Relationships/ngā hononga – children learn through responsive and reciprocal relationships with people, places and things.

Well-being/manā atua – the health and well-being of the child are protected and nurtured.

Belonging/manā whenua – children and their families feel a sense of belonging.

Equipment and resources should reflect Māori tikanga and language

Equipment and resources reflect the cultures in the local community

Contribution/manā tangata – opportunities for learning are equitable, and each child's contribution is valued.

Resources should reflect differing attitudes and feelings that will help children to accept other people who are different from themselves.

Equipment should encourage children to solve conflicts in a peaceful way and will develop positive and constructive attitudes to competition.

Communication/manā reo – the languages and symbols of children's own and other cultures are promoted and protected.

A range of resources that support and promote communication are available:

Books, language, talking, storytelling, puppets, listening and Māori resources

Papatūānuku/natural materials stones, bark, shells, etc

Written language – te reo Māori visually seen, numbers, waiata, etc

Equipment and resources to support creative expression in areas such as art, music, dance, construction

Greeting each person in their language

Visual resources

Music and instruments from other countries

Fantasy play – dress-up clothes, eating utensils, etc

Puzzles and books

Resources from support agencies for families to access

Opportunities for emerging literacy

Equipment, furniture and layout to support conversations, for example cushions, sofas, mat/carpet

Exploration/mana aturoa – the child learns through active exploration of the environment.

The following equipment and resources could be available to children:

Books and storytelling props

Puzzles and manipulative equipment

Blocks

Materials that foster creativity

Dough and clay

Dramatic play resources

Sand

Water

Natural materials (for example, stones, bark, shells), animals, and science resources (for example, magnifying glasses, magnets, microscope, experiment books), etc

Carpentry equipment and resources that promote physically active play resources (for example, cardboard, blankets, wood) that enable large constructions such as huts, boats, etc Paper, pens, rulers, etc

Papatūānuku/natural materials

ICT equipment

Equipment lists

In an environment that provides opportunities for choices, planning and problem solving, children have access to, and can easily obtain, a variety of tools and resources.

When selecting equipment for children, it is essential to consider the 3 broad age groups (as described in Te Whāriki):

Infants – birth to 18 months

Toddlers – one to 3 years

Young children – from 2 years 6 months to school entry age

Safety, size and durability are key issues to consider when choosing material, equipment and resources to purchase or enable children to access.

Ask the following questions:

How long will it last with daily use?

Is it non-toxic? What type of paint has been used to colour it?

Does it have rounded edges to prevent cuts etc?

Is it safe for babies? Could a baby swallow it?

Is the size appropriate for a child's hand or foot etc?

Is it easily cleaned?

The following lists provide some ideas of equipment that services may include in their 'resources library'. This enables educators to have access to extra equipment to extend children's thinking and learning. Diversity in equipment is encouraged and these lists can be adapted and extended to accommodate an individual focus or philosophy. Many other items of equipment could be added to the lists.

Suggested equipment for children who are over 2 years old

This is a suggested list which is by no means exhaustive. Your resources and equipment will grow according to the interests and passions of your children and community.

[Books and storytelling](#)

[Equipment](#)

[Manipulative](#)

[Creativity](#)

[Painting](#)

[Music](#)

[Dramatic play](#)

[Dough](#)

[Clay](#)

[Blocks](#)

[Carpentry](#)

[Nature and science/exploratory](#)

[Sand area](#)

[Water play](#)

[Active play](#)

[Adult education](#)

[Information and communication technologies](#)

Books and storytelling

Furniture

Display units should be low so that children can see and select their own books. Shelves could be sloping with a lip to allow books to stand up. Provide cushions and/or a soft sofa.

Equipment

A selection of at least 30–50 books, including:

traditional stories

New Zealand stories

cultural stories

nursery rhymes

poetry and songs

make-believe

stories of people in real life situations

gender roles, such as boys caring or girls having adventures

large books for shared group stories.

Props for storytelling including:

puppets
magnetic stories and boards
story CDs

Manipulative

Furniture

A suitable display unit for puzzles or similar, preferably with sloping shelves with a lip so that children can see the puzzles and choose them. Cardboard puzzles won't last long, they cannot be cleaned effectively and should not be considered permanent equipment. Puzzles should reflect biculturalism and gender equity and be of varying degrees of difficulty.

Equipment

Equipment should include a range of resources:

Knob puzzles
Picture puzzles
Shapes
Geometrics
Posting box
Threading
Peg boards
3-dimensional
Maths games, including natural materials such as shells and stones

Creativity

Furniture

Large table and seating
Storage unit

Equipment

A wide range of resources that could be used for creating should be provided. This is likely to include:

glue pots
glue brushes of assorted sizes
variety of glue – PVA, Polycell
children's scissors
left-handed scissors
adult scissors
staplers, large roll of sticky tape/masking tape and dispenser ball of string

felt pens
crayons
pastels
children's thick pencils
rulers
non-toxic colouring in a range of colours
glitter and containers
hole-punch
collage materials: material scraps and natural materials (leaves and seeds).

Painting

Equipment

Easels
Aprons
Non-spill paint pots
Assorted paint brushes
Different coloured non-toxic paint
Paint palette
Rollers
Drying rack
Newsprint/large and small sheets of paper

Music

Furniture

Storage unit – consider shelves, hooks, baskets or boxes

Equipment

Sound can be made from almost anything. Consider the use of natural materials in this area too, for example, stones to bang together.

CD player/stereo
Variety of CD's/music albums, for example children's, Māori, classical, contemporary
Music and song books
Variety of musical instruments
Coloured scarves and ribbons
Sandpaper blocks
Poi
Tititorea (sticks)

Dramatic play

Furniture

Unit for storing dress-up clothes

Stove

Child size bed/suitable sleeping unit

Room dividers/screens

Sink unit

Small table with 2 chairs

Mirror

Equipment

Props to allow the dramatic play area to become a shop, a garage, a wharenui or any other environment the children are interested in exploring.

Children's dress-ups covering both genders, like:

occupational

animal

cultural

fantasy

Tea set and pots and pans

Cooking utensils – for example, a variety of spoons, bowls, whisks, chopsticks

Dolls – male, female, ethnic

Dolls' clothes

Dolls' pram or stroller

Dolls' bed

Telephone

Iron and ironing board

Clothes line

Bed linen

Variety of medical play equipment

Dough

Interesting designs can be made in dough using everyday items like cotton reels and corrugated cardboard.

Furniture

One table and seating

Stove

Equipment

Cutters

Rolling pins

Pounders

Knives and forks

Garlic crushers

A variety of cooking equipment – for example, pots, pans, patty pans, etc

Clay

Equipment

Hessian or canvas

Nylon string for cutting clay

Water container

Sponges

A variety of clay tools

A variety of natural materials

Blocks

Furniture

Large storage unit

Large carpet square or carpet

Equipment

Full set of multiple blocks

A variety of small coloured blocks

Set of interlocking blocks

Plastic or wooden vehicles

People

Vehicle station

Animal set

Large truck

Extra items like dolls and blankets added to this area can change the play in many ways.

Carpentry

Furniture

One large carpentry table

Storage trolley or containers

Note: An adult should always supervise this equipment.

A range of real equipment including:

Screwdrivers

Hammers

Vice

G clamps

Children's sized saws

Pliers

Carpentry pencil

Tape measure

Containers for PVA and brushes

Hand drill

A variety of soft wood (untreated timber)

A variety of nails - flat top are best

A variety of collage equipment – for example, leather, sheepskin, bottle tops, string and sandpaper

A variety of screws

Nature and science/exploratory

Furniture

Display table

Storage unit

Equipment

Reference books

Magnifying glasses

Insect viewers

Assorted magnets (for example bars, u-shaped, strips)

Range of items to use with magnets

Mirror (non-breakable)

Scales

Plants

Variety of living things (fish/animal/insect/bird)

Variety of natural materials/Papatūānuku, for example shells, seeds

Variety of gardening equipment (including spades, trowels, potting mix, plant pots, etc.)

Sand area

Large well-drained sand area

Shade provided

Water available

Equipment

Equipment sufficient for the number of children attending.

Spades (graded sizes)

Buckets

Scoops

Rakes

Set of scales

Sieves

Sand shapes

Sand digger

Vehicles

Polythene

Variety of natural materials

For more information, check out the section on constructing a sand area.

Water play

Equipment

Large water trough and other smaller containers for different activities

Pouring items – for example, buckets, jugs, bottles, and watering cans

Water wheels

Hoses – various sizes and lengths

Funnels

Aprons

Water pump

A variety of pipes and plastic guttering

A variety of items for floating and sinking

Active play

Provided by either a fixed item of equipment or moveable equipment such as ladders, planks, tyres, cable reels, swings, and slides. Moveable equipment provides greater flexibility and offers greater opportunity for children to be independent and creative. It must have safety surfacing underneath if it's over 600 mm in height.

Equipment

Ladders

Planks

Wooden boxes, variety of sizes and heights

Tyres (not steel belted)

Balls

Hessian – large sheets

Ropes – several

Wheeled vehicles – for example, trikes, trolleys, ride-ons, large trucks, wheelbarrow, etc

Hula hoops

Adult education

Range of parenting books

Activity idea books

Health information

Māori dictionary

Notice board

Information and communication technologies

Digital camera

Video camera

Computers: laptop, desk top, software

Suggested equipment for children who are under 2 years old

This is a suggested list which is by no means exhaustive. Your resources and equipment will grow according to the interests and passions of your children and community.

[Furniture](#)

[Books and storytelling](#)

[Manipulative](#)

[Collage](#)

[Painting](#)

[Music](#)

[Dramatic play](#)

[Dough](#)

[Blocks](#)

[Nature and science/exploratory](#)

[Sand area](#)

[Water play](#)

[Active play](#)

[Information and communication technologies](#)

[Adult education](#)

Furniture

One two-seater soft-sided couch

Depending on the number of infants in the centre you may need to consider providing more seating for adults to use when breast or bottle feeding.

Equipment

Tri-pillow

Crawling mat/squabs and cushions

Platforms, ramps and risers

Rattles

Sets of stacking toys

Activity sets

Push- and pull-along toys

Interactive/open-ended items and objects that can be put together, taken apart and safely explored in the mouth

Avoid providing only one type of material (for example, plastic). Provide a large variety of weights, sizes, shapes and textures. Everyday objects can be used.

Note: If the under 2 year olds are in a separate area, the equipment and resources below could also be included.

Books and storytelling

Furniture

Display unit, as in the over 2 list

Soft sofa or cushions

Equipment

Books that cover the list below and are suitable for the age group:

Hard covered

Traditional stories

New Zealand stories

Cultural stories

Nursery rhymes

Poetry and songs

Make-believe

Stories of people in real life situations

Puppets

Manipulative

Furniture

As described in the over 2 list

Equipment

Knob puzzles

Easier puzzles: 2 to 8 pieces

Manipulative equipment – for example, posting box, pegboards, and stacking equipment

Collage

Furniture

As in the over 2 list

Equipment

Glue pots and brushes

Children's scissors suitable for the age group

Adult scissors

Large roll of sticky tape/masking tape and dispenser

Crayons

Non-toxic colouring, range of colours

Glitter and containers

A variety of paper

A variety of junk and natural materials

Painting

Equipment

Easels: double-sided

Aprons

Non-spill paint pots

Assorted paint brushes

Different coloured non-toxic paints

Rollers

Drying rack

Large roll of newsprint/paper in a variety of sizes

Music

Storage

Music instrument stand/storage unit

Equipment

CD player/stereo

Music and song books

Range of instruments

Coloured ribbons and scarves

Sound toys

Dramatic play

Furniture

As in the over 2 list, except for room dividers

Equipment

Children's dress-ups suitable for age range

Tea set

Pots and pans

Dolls – male, female and ethnic

Dolls' clothes

Dolls' pram and stroller

Telephone

Full length unbreakable mirror

Dough

Furniture

One table with at least 4 chairs

Stove

Equipment

Dough cutters

Rolling pins

Pounders

Plastic knives and forks

Garlic crushers

A variety of cooking equipment, for example pots, pans, patty pans, etc.

Blocks

Furniture

As in the over 2 list

Equipment

Multiple blocks

A variety of small coloured blocks

A variety of interlocking blocks

Plastic or wooden vehicles

Vehicle station

People

Animal sets

Nature and science/exploratory

Furniture

As in the over 2 list

Equipment

Environment for animals, fish, insects, birds

Tactile display, for example items to smell, touch, see

Insect-viewing glasses

A variety of natural materials/Papatūānuku – for example, shells, seeds

Plants

Sand area

Large well-drained sand area

Shade provided

Equipment

Spades

Buckets

Scoops

Rakes

Sieves

Vehicles

Variety of natural materials

For more information, check out the section on constructing a sand area.

Water play

One water trough or paddling pool

Supervised water available

Equipment

Pouring items – for example, buckets and jugs, bottles and watering cans

Water wheels

Water pump

Hoses – various sizes and lengths

Funnels

Aprons

A variety of items for floating and sinking

Active play

Can be provided by either a fixed item of equipment or as movable equipment, such as a slide, planks, ladders, tyres

Must have safety surfacing underneath

Equipment

Balls

Wheeled vehicles, for example, trikes, trolleys, ride-ons, push-alongs, wheelbarrow

Various sized planks and ladders

Various small boxes, variety of sizes and heights

Swings

Information and communication technologies

Equipment

Digital camera

Video camera

Digital microscope

Computers: laptop, desk top, software, Skype

Adult education

Equipment

Range of parenting books

Activity idea books

Health information

Maori dictionary

Notice board

What is an early childhood education and care centre?

An early childhood education and care centre is defined in the Education and Training Act 2020 as “premises used regularly for the education or care of 3 or more children (not being children of the persons providing the education or care, or children enrolled at a school being provided with education and care before or after school) under the age of 6 —

- by the day or part of a day; but
- not for any continuous period of more than 7 days.