

Certification criteria for playgroups

[Section 10 of the Education and Training Act 2020\(external link\)](#) defines a playgroup as a group that meets on a regular basis to facilitate children's play and in respect of which—

- a. no child attends for more than 4 hours on any day; and
- b. more than half the children attending on any occasion have a parent or caregiver present in the same play area at the same time; and
- c. the total number of children attending on any occasion is not greater than 4 times the number of parents and caregivers present in the same play area at the same time.

Playgroups include Puna Kōhungahunga, cultural playgroups and community language playgroups.

Playgroups are certificated in accordance with the Education and Training Act 2020 under the [Education \(Playgroups\) Regulations 2008\(external link\)](#), which prescribe minimum standards that each certificated playgroup must meet. Certification criteria are used to assess how playgroups meet the minimum standards required by the regulations.

For each criterion there is guidance to help playgroups meet the required standards.

The publication of the [criteria on its own can be downloaded as a PDF\[PDF, 1.1 MB\]](#) and printed.

The certification criteria were last updated in September 2022.

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- [2008 Regulatory Framework](#)
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- [Playgroup Funding Handbook](#)
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Curriculum

18 Curriculum standard

The curriculum standard requires the service provider for every certificated playgroup to—

- (a) plan for, provide, and review an education programme that is consistent with any curriculum framework prescribed by the Minister that applies to certificated playgroups; and
- (b) provide positive guidance to children attending the playgroup in order to support children's learning.

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Curriculum criteria

Criteria for curriculum:

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- [C2 - Behavioural management](#)

C1 Curriculum consistent

Criteria

Curriculum criterion 1

A range of learning opportunities and experiences for children are planned for and provided that:

are consistent with any prescribed curriculum framework that applies, and
are reviewed by the group and amended as necessary at least every 12 months.

Documentation required

You will need to provide a plan outlining the variety of learning experiences and play opportunities the playgroup will provide. Examples of planning documentation can be found in [Appendix 3](#).

Rationale/Intent

This criteria makes sure what happens at playgroup is in line with the early childhood curriculum [Te Whāriki](#). Reviewing

experiences and opportunities is a way of doing this.

A documented plan provides playgroups with information about the learning experiences and opportunities available to children during sessions. It is a starting point for playgroups to make sure they are providing a variety of experiences for children to choose from and support children's particular learning interests. Documented plans will also provide information to help playgroups regularly review what is happening in sessions at least once every 12 months.

This criteria recognises that:

activities, opportunities, events and experiences provided at playgroup are ways through which children's learning and development occurs

learning experiences include those that are thoughtfully planned as well as those that grow out of a child's interest or a particular situation

providing a range and variety of opportunities allows children to revisit familiar experiences and learning and engage with new or unfamiliar ones

the relationships and the environment that children experience have a direct impact on their learning and development. Adults who are involved in children's learning are part of this.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Curriculum framework

The curriculum framework is based on [Te Whāriki](#), which is Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document. The vision in Te Whāriki is for all children "to grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging, and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society". This vision is the foundation for the opportunities, activities, events, experiences and interactions that occur in early childhood settings, including playgroups.

Te Whāriki provides the structure for everything that happens in a playgroup including the way in which it happens. The early childhood curriculum framework consists of the four principles - Ngā Kaupapa Whakahaere and five strands - Ngā Taumata Whakahirahira of Te Whāriki. The framework describes in broad terms what is seen as important learning for children as well as the kinds of environments in which this learning can occur.

Having your playgroup education programme consistent with the curriculum framework means the principles and strands of Te Whāriki can be seen in what is provided, how it is provided, the way adults and children engage with each other and with the experiences, activities, events and routines that happen at playgroup.

The principles of Te Whāriki

Your playgroup curriculum will be based on the four principles of Te Whāriki. The four principles are: Empowerment/Whakamana; Holistic Development/Kotahitanga; Family and Community/Whānau Tangata;

Relationships/Ngā Hononga.

Empowerment / Whakamana – in this principle children are empowered to learn and grow by encouraging and allowing them to make choices and take responsibility for their own learning.

Holistic Development / Kotahitanga – this principle recognises that all learning is interwoven and occurs within the context of experiences that are relevant and meaningful to children's everyday lives.

Family and Community / Whānau Tangata – this principle recognises that children live and grow as members of families and communities and these groups influence their early learning experiences. Family and local community values and aspirations are incorporated into playgroup sessions by respecting differing viewpoints and fostering family and community involvement.

Relationships / Ngā Hononga – this principle recognises that children learn through interacting with the people, places and things in their environments. Playgroups can help with this by providing a wide and interesting array of people, places and things for children to interact with.

The five strands of Te Whāriki

The five strands of Te Whāriki, Well-being/Mana Atua, Belonging/Mana Whenua, Contribution/Mana Tangata, Communication/Mana Reo and Exploration/Mana Aotūroa, give more direction to the experiences children have in a playgroup environment.

They are the five key areas of learning and development in early childhood education. A curriculum that focuses on these five areas gives children the opportunity to experience environments where:

Well-being / Mana Atua – they are physically and emotionally safe and they learn about keeping themselves and others physically and emotionally safe and well.

Belonging / Mana Whenua – they and their families feel that they belong and they learn the routines, customs, regular events and accepted behaviours that are associated with being a member of a community or group.

Contribution / Mana Tangata – everyone is treated fairly and contributions are valued and they learn about valuing themselves and working with and alongside others.

Communication / Mana Reo – using language and a range of other communication tools (such as books, art, dance, drama, mathematics, movement, music) from children's own cultures, from New Zealand's Māori heritage and from other cultures is promoted and valued and they learn about communicating and being creative and expressive in a range of different ways.

Exploration / Mana Aotūroa – they can actively explore, try new skills and experiences, and practice using familiar skills, knowledge and attitudes to help them make sense of their world and how things work. They gain confidence in their own bodies and themselves as learners, thinkers, explorers, problem-solvers, dancers, singers, builders, friends, carers and much more.

C2 Behavioural management

Criteria

Curriculum criterion 2

Appropriate rules and behavioural boundaries are consistently and positively applied.

Documentation required

A procedure for providing positive guidance to children that reflects the group's agreed methods for behaviour management.

Rationale/Intent

The criteria ensures that children receive consistent, sound and positive guidance about ways of behaving at playgroup.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Getting on with others, managing your own impulses and understanding what are seen as appropriate behaviours are fundamental areas of learning for children. Adults in playgroups have an important role to play in providing children with consistent, sound and positive guidance as they relate to, communicate and interact with the people, places and things in their environments.

Adults may find it difficult to know if they should deal with conflict between other people's children or just deal with their own child. It is a lot easier if the group has talked together about what types of behaviour they want to encourage and how they will respond when they see challenging behaviours and has written something down about what they decide. It is important to remember that any responses and interactions should maintain both an adult's and a child's self respect.

A playgroup's positive guidance procedure may include statements on:

appropriate positive guidance strategies which use praise and encouragement and give the child respect and dignity
inappropriate practices, such as inflicting physical or verbal punishment, isolating children, labelling children with derogatory words or shaming them

a process for reviewing the positive guidance provided by the group.

The procedure could be displayed at the playgroup and pointed out to new parents and/or included in information packs. It is also a good idea to provide relevant reading material in the playgroup's adult library. Procedures should be reviewed on a regular basis so new families have the opportunity to contribute to their development.

The four principles in the curriculum framework provide a strong foundation for the ways in which adults can guide children's behaviour. Contact your local Ministry of Education advisor for advice on ways to do this.

Resources

For helpful tips and strategies for parents and caregivers about behaviour management visit the

Children's safety and well-being is paramount. This criteria specifically addresses the interactions, responses and relationships that occur during playgroups. Other criteria, such as [MA3](#), all parents sharing responsibility for the safety and supervision of all children attending playgroup, [HS 9](#), protecting children from the detrimental behaviour of any persons under the influence of alcohol or other substances, and [HS10](#), protecting children from exposure to inappropriate written, visual or electronic material on sessions are also underpinned by a focus on children's health, safety and well-being.

Premises and facilities

20 Premises and facilities standard

(1) The premises and facilities standard requires the service provider for every certificated playgroup to operate from premises that are:

- safe and that provide sufficient space, facilities, and equipment to support the learning of children attending the playgroup and maintain their health and well-being; and
- available for use by other groups in the community; but
- not used as a private dwelling.

(2) Subclause

- does not prevent a playgroup from operating from a part of any premises set aside for the exclusive use of the playgroup, (for example, a particular room in a building) if another part or parts of the same premises are open to use by other groups in the community.

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- [Premises and facilities](#) - Criteria and guidance PF1-PF8
- [Equipment guidelines](#) - Information

Premises and facilities criteria

Criteria for premises and facilities:

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- [PF2 -Infant toddler safe space](#)
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PF1 Design and layout of premises

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 1

The design and layout of the premises supports the provision of a variety of activities and experiences with regard to the age and number of children attending.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria makes sure the design and layout of the premises enables children to have access to a wide range of experiences.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Playgroups meet in a variety of different premises, e.g. church halls, marae, community rooms, or school sites. Think about how spaces can be used to give children a range of different activities and experiences to choose from and support adults to play with the children.

It is important that the space is attractive, interesting and fun, as this will help the children:

feel safe and secure

feel more confident being involved in activities

be more interested and so they are more likely to be involved in their own learning

choose their own learning activities at every opportunity by providing opportunities for positive social interactions and learning through relationships.

You can use furniture such as tables, couches or moveable shelves, cushions, mats – whatever you have – to create different areas of play in the space you have available. For instance child-sized tables and chairs can be used for different play activities (such as dough, collage or puzzles) and mats can be used to set up block play or book reading.

During a playgroup session it may be necessary to reset or refresh play materials and equipment so that they are appealing to other children. If a child has created something purposefully then it may not be necessary to reset the resources they have used rather just refresh the area without affecting the creation. This means children can revisit their creations at a later time.

Talk to your ECE advisor about the best way to do this in your playgroup.

Things to consider

Do the equipment and facilities reflect the culture and purpose of the playgroup?

Do the premises fit the playgroup's needs?

What storage facilities are available?

How do you manage setting up and packing away if premises need to be cleared for use by other groups after each session?

PF2 Infant toddler safe space

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion

There are safe and comfortable spaces for infants, toddlers or children not walking to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up, learn to walk, and be protected from more mobile children.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria is intended to ensure the safety of infants and toddlers and to support their exploration, development and learning.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Playgroups give children of all ages the chance to work and play together.

When children of different ages are together in the same space, it is very important that the environment is set up to allow infants and toddlers to explore and play safely. This can be done in ways that let them be part of the playgroup community and learn alongside other children while making sure they are safe and able to move without restrictions or limitations.

For more information about making your space safe visit the [ACC website\(external link\)](#).

Cushions or low barriers around a carpeted area can provide a space for babies or toddlers.

Some playgroups may choose to provide an infant specific area. Talk to your local Ministry of Education advisor about

different ways to do this.

PF3 Variety of equipment

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 3

A variety of furniture, equipment, and materials is provided that is appropriate for the learning and abilities of the children attending.

Documentation required

An equipment inventory maintained to at least show equipment purchased with Ministry of Education funds.

Rationale/Intent

The criteria is intended to ensure that children attending playgroups have access to a wide range of suitable and safe equipment and materials.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Children learn by interacting with people and with their environment. The furniture, equipment, and resources you provide will influence their learning and the way they view themselves and others. Your choice of furniture, equipment and resources can help you to meet the curriculum standard.

View the Ministry's basic [equipment list for playgroups](#).

Think about how the furniture, equipment, and resources provided at your playgroup:

- reflect the Māori culture of Aotearoa New Zealand
- makes all cultures feel welcome
- encourage written and spoken language
- avoids limiting children based on their gender or ability
- supports parents and caregivers' aspirations for their children's learning
- reflects the playgroup's philosophies and aims
- can be used to allow children to explore attitudes and feelings
- allows children to play individually, in groups and with others
- allows children to make choices and be involved in planning and problem solving
- encourage and support a variety of learning possibilities.

Consider a balance between natural products and man-made equipment and materials. Quality is an important consideration when you are choosing equipment and materials. Think about the following in relation to the equipment you use:

How useful is it?

Can you store it?

Can it be cleaned easily?

Is it safe?

Is it sufficient for the numbers and ages of the children?

Does it encourage children to play?

Will it stand the 'test of time' – is it durable?

Is the furniture comfortable for adults as well as children?

Although plastic products can be cheaper and easy to clean, they may not last as long or have the same aesthetic appeal as products made from natural materials. Buying quality materials at the start will save money in the long run.

The type and quantity of furniture, equipment, and materials will differ from one playgroup to another. Children should be able to access equipment and materials that support their interests, skills and abilities.

Display materials in boxes, containers or baskets and group similar materials together so that children can quickly choose between them. Label containers clearly so that adults know where to put equipment. When setting up a playgroup session, create areas for the different activities and interests of the children, and set them up so children can move easily from one activity to the next.

Things to consider – outdoor equipment

When you are thinking about the type of outdoor equipment to provide for children, keep in mind that the outdoor area at your playgroup does not serve the same function as a public playground. Equipment will need to engage and challenge children for greater periods of time and be flexible enough for children to construct their own learning. Flexible, moveable equipment allows children choice and control over how their learning environment is set up. Moveable equipment also encourages co-operation between children, and provides opportunities for problem solving.

Documentation required

The documentation required for this criteria is an inventory. An inventory is a list of items owned by the group. For easy use the inventory can be divided into areas: e.g. furniture, books, indoor equipment, creative play, music, outdoor equipment, kitchen equipment.

Groups should check their inventories regularly – at least annually. Lost or broken equipment needs to be recorded as part of an inventory check and follow-up action noted.

An example of an inventory list can be found at the bottom of this page.

If a playgroup closes they will need to identify equipment purchased with Ministry of Education funds. The inventory can be used to maintain a record of these purchases.

An up-to-date inventory can help you when you are buying new equipment.

You may need to keep track of equipment for insurance purposes. It is useful to check with the owner of the playgroup venue to see if playgroup equipment is covered by their insurance policy.

Insurance is a specialised topic. Each playgroup will have different insurance requirements and you should seek independent legal advice about yours, particularly for matters relating to public liability. Playgroups can undertake their own risk assessment to guide their insurance decisions. The following questions can be useful starting points for discussion:

What are possible/potential occurrences at playgroup that could result in loss/damage/injury? Can we mitigate against these through Health and Safety policies and practices?

What is the value of the playgroup equipment? How much would it cost to replace?

What is the potential for significant damage or loss?

Downloads

[Playgroup Asset Inventory \[DOC, 44 KB\]](#)

PF4 Toilet/hand washing facilities

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 4

There is a toilet and hygienic handwashing and drying facilities suitable for the use of children attending.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria is intended to ensure that there are hygienic handwashing, drying and toileting facilities for children

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

The buildings that playgroups meet in may not have toileting and handwashing facilities designed for young children. If children can't easily use these facilities by themselves parents and caregivers will need to help them.

The following may make it easier for children to use these facilities:

A moveable step, and/or a toilet seat insert can be helpful for young children learning to use the toilet. They can also be easily removed when an adult needs to use the toilet.

Paper towels or individual hand towels are more hygienic than a single communal towel.

Liquid soap (rather than a communal bar of soap) can be less messy and is more hygienic.

Careful supervision is necessary for young children if there are hot taps in the bathroom to prevent scalding. Older children can be taught about hot water safety.

If the hand basins are too far away from your main meeting room and you want the children to wash their hands (after painting, or before eating, for example), you might consider using a soapy flannel (that you rinse after each child has used it) or wet wipes. Do not provide a single container (like a bucket or basin) filled with water for all the children to use as this is not hygienic.

PF5 Nappy change facilities

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 5

Where children wearing nappies attend, there is a space (away from the play space and any food preparation areas) available for changing nappies.

Rationale/Intent

The intent of this criteria is to ensure the health, safety and well being of children is maintained.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Think about the space available in your building for nappy changing.

Things to consider

To make nappy changing space as safe, comfortable and hygienic for everyone as possible, consider the following:

Will the playgroup provide a changing table or mat for everyone at the playgroup to use, or will the group agree that each person brings their own portable mat if needed?

Where is the most hygienic place to change nappies?

How are babies kept safe from other children while they are being changed?

How do parents and caregivers keep the area/mat/change table clean between nappy changes?
What about hand washing afterwards for parents and caregivers? Would hand sanitisers be useful?
It is important that nappies are not changed in any part of the building that is used for food preparation.

Talk with your local MOE advisor about the best way to manage nappy changing at your playgroup.

PF6 First aid kit

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 6

There is a first aid kit containing basic first aid supplies for minor injuries that may occur at the group. The kit is:

easily recognisable and readily accessible to adults and
inaccessible to children.

Rationale/Intent

The intent of this criteria is to make sure there are adequate provisions for the treatment of minor injuries and that the first aid kit is accessible to adults but inaccessible to children.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

A first aid kit needs to be readily available to adults at the playgroup, but not children – you will need to consider where to store your kit.

The size and contents of your kit will depend on how big your group is, where you meet, and how far away you are from professional medical assistance in an emergency. In most cases, a basic pre-prepared kit will be sufficient (you can get them from chemists or supermarkets), or you can have a look at the [first aid kit contents required for licensed services](#).

It is important to keep the first aid kit well stocked so that it is always ready to use when needed. Check the kit regularly (once a month is a good idea) to make sure used items or items past their expiry date are replaced. Giving someone the job of maintaining the first aid kit is a good way of making sure this task is not forgotten. Or, you could share the responsibility around – draw up a roster with the dates of when the first aid kit checks need to happen, and put different parents and caregivers and caregivers' names beside them.

PF7 Outdoor activity space

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 7

If any outdoor space is used by the playgroup, it is either:

enclosed by structures and/or fences and gates that are maintained so that children cannot leave the premises without an adult's help: or
systems are in place to ensure children's safety while outside.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria aims to keep children safe by ensuring that measures are in place to secure the outdoor environment.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Giving children the opportunity to play outside (if a suitable area is available) can increase their chances of having a range of different experiences. If children are playing outside at playgroup, you will need to make sure they are safe. Adequate fencing allows parents and caregivers to be more involved in their children's play rather than concentrating on supervising the edge of the area (so that children don't leave unsupervised).

It can be helpful to write down a list of 'outside supervision rules' to let all the parents and caregivers know what they need to do when they are outside with children.

Children's safety should always come first. If fencing is less than ideal, (eg a wire fence that children could easily climb through, or a very low wooden fence), or non-existent, you need to consider how easy it is for children to reach potential hazards (such as roads, rivers, or animals) and decide how best to address these concerns. If permanent fencing is not possible, temporary fencing that is put up and taken down each time the playgroup meets could be considered.

Playgroups should work with their MOE advisor to find satisfactory solutions.

PF8 Opportunities for active play

Criteria

Premises and facilities criterion 8

If outdoor space is not available, alternative arrangements are made to provide children attending with opportunities for gross motor (physically active) play.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria is intended to make sure children can benefit from engaging in physically active play when no outdoor area is provided.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

An outdoor area is not a requirement for certification of a playgroup; however, being active and physically healthy is important for a child's well being.

Children gaining confidence in, and control of their bodies, and developing an understanding of how to keep physically healthy, is an important aspect of learning which playgroups are required to support.

You will need to think about how you can provide children with other opportunities for 'large muscle' play if your group doesn't have access to outdoor space.

Visit [the Sport NZ website\(external link\)](#) for more ideas.

Some ideas to consider:

Furniture or equipment can be set up indoors to make small challenge courses for children.

Have some throwing and catching games with soft balls or small bean bags.

Sand and water play can be brought inside (with some careful planning and supervision).

Think about how children can move freely without hurting each other. If children are climbing or sliding or jumping make sure that there is enough cushioning on the floor for safe landing.

Equipment guidelines

The Ministry of Education resource [Learning Environments for Playgroups](#) has information on planning appropriate play activities to support the learning of the children in your group. The following suggestions for equipment will help your group establish a broad-based play programme.

Choosing equipment

Toys and equipment selected for use in playgroups should be:

- safe and durable (check for sharp edges, small parts that may break off, and non-toxic durable paint)
- washable and hygienic
- appropriate for the children's ages and levels of development
- of interest to the children in the group.

Some equipment, such as puzzles, will have specific uses, while some will be chosen for their flexibility of use, e.g. blocks that can be used to build roads, houses or form patterns. Children will also need equipment available to help them develop new skills or practice newly established ones, e.g. scissors, balls.

Children learn through all their senses, so select some play items that encourage the use of smell, touch, sound and vision.

How much equipment will you need?

Numbers of each item will depend on the size of your group. The list below gives suggested items but not recommended numbers, as this will be different for each group. Consider the age and the developmental stage of the children as well as the size of your group when buying equipment.

Safety

- For children under 3 years, all equipment should meet the [Product Safety Standards \(Children's Toys\) Regulations 2005\(external link\)](#).
- There should be no parts smaller than a ping-pong ball, no sharp or rough edges and no parts that are easily broken off.
- Real electrical appliances, such as toasters, should not be used in children's play.
- Children should always be supervised at play, both indoors and outdoors, and especially where there are carpentry tools or water play.
- All products and natural materials used with children should be non-toxic. Beware of poisonous plants and seeds. Small seeds, e.g. wheat, can also be dangerous if children put them up their noses.
- Scissors should be child-sized and have rounded ends.
- Polystyrene should not be used in playgroups. **It can block airways and doesn't show up in x-rays.**
- Fixed outdoor equipment should meet the requirements of current New Zealand Standards (contact Standards New Zealand for up to date information), have soft-fall surfacing installed beneath it and be checked and maintained **regularly**.
- All playgroups require a first aid kit.

Storage

It is important that your valuable playgroup equipment is stored safely, especially if you are using a community building. A locked cupboard with shelving inside can be useful if no larger space is available, but must be attached to the wall for safety in earthquakes.

As your stock of outdoor equipment grows it could also be useful to purchase a lockable outdoor shed.

Named containers (e.g. labelled 'sandpit toys') such as cartons, boxes or plastic laundry baskets can be used for holding resources and to make packing and unpacking easier. Heavy items should not be stored on high shelves in

case of an earthquake.

Display

Items for children's use are best displayed at children's height for easy visibility and reach. Shelves or shallow boxes on castors can be useful for both storage and display. Books and puzzles can be displayed on sloping shelves at children's height. Some flat display areas (e.g. low tables) will be needed for science and nature.

Work spaces

You will need some low tables and chairs for children to sit at while working at collage, etc. A carpet square is a versatile work area for reading, blocks, puzzles, etc.

Provision for infants and toddlers

Very young children need a safe, warm place (rug, carpet square or cushions) to play away from the main play area but where they can still see and be seen.

All equipment for infants and toddlers should be washable.

Younger children will be unable to wait for turns or to share equipment so it is realistic to provide several of each item, (e.g. spades in sandpit), if you have several toddlers in your group.

“Collected” equipment

Items (e.g. cartons, fabric, bottle tops) can be collected at home for use in collage and junk play, but be aware of safety. Many natural materials can be collected from beaches and other areas and be used in your group.

Other issues

Each playgroup should be equipped to provide a range of activities at each session.

Activities and equipment should reflect the cultures of Aotearoa New Zealand and the children in the group.

For more information about areas of play in a broad based programme, refer to [Learning Environments for Playgroups](#).

In this section

- [Equipment lists](#)

Equipment lists

The following lists give suggestions for basic equipment in each area of play. Refer to your local Ministry of Education Early Childhood Advisor for more information.

- [Family and dramatic play](#)
- [Exploratory play](#)
- [Constructive play](#)
- [Physically active play](#)
- [Books and language](#)
- [Music and movement](#)
- [Creative play](#)
- [Manipulative play](#)
- [Other equipment](#)
- [Parent resources](#)

Family and dramatic play

Dough

- dough
- a range of utensils, e.g. rolling pins, shape cutters, garlic press, pots and pans, durable plastic cutlery and scales

Dough can also be used with natural materials or collage items for creative play.

Family play

- small table and chairs
- tea set
- stove
- sink or bowl for dishes
- dolls, dolls bed, bedding
- prams, pushchairs
- ironing board, iron, brooms
- telephones, cash register

Dramatic play

- dress up clothes, e.g. doctor, police, fire-fighter, animal suits and other unisex costumes, ballet costumes, overalls, hard hats, cultural costumes and fabrics
- accessories such as hats, scarves, belts, bags, shoes
- mirror (safety glass or filmed, fixed to wall)
- accessories for shop, office, medical play etc

See under books/language/music for ideas for music and dance.

Provision for infants and toddlers

- soft toys and dolls
- small prams and pushchairs (well-balanced so do not tip easily)
- baskets for carrying things

Exploratory play

Science

- magnets and a collection of items to test for magnetism
- magnifying glasses
- bug catchers or insect viewers
- scales, prisms
- collection of natural materials to classify and investigate e.g. shells, leaves, stones, feathers, bark
- Sets of high quality plastic creatures e.g. domestic animals, dinosaurs, sea creatures
- circuit board or collection of electrical components
- provision for growing indoor plants, seeds, bulbs, etc
- a 'feely box' of assorted items for children to experiment with
- materials for mixing (e.g. oil and water)
- science books

Live animals (insects, frogs, spiders, etc) should be observed with care and returned to their natural environment as soon as possible.

Water

- water trough or plastic bowls
- sieves, funnels, boats, measuring beakers, jugs
- pumps and waterwheels
- plastic tubing, bottles, sponges
- items for floating and sinking (wood, stone, cork, shells, etc)
- bubble-making shapes and mix

Equipment from other areas can also be used with water e.g. dolls and dolls clothes for washing, brushes for painting with water, tea set for washing.

Provision for infants and toddlers

- a collection of different textured items for children to touch, taste and feel. **Ensure items are non-poisonous and larger than a ping-pong ball to avoid choking.**
- use fabrics of different textures (lace, hessian, fur, linen) to make balls, rugs etc for babies to play with
- provide a SHALLOW bowl of water and items for babies to splash and play with.

Constructive play

Blocks

- multiple unit blocks (plain wooden blocks cut to specific sizes)
- smaller blocks (could have smaller coloured blocks or Duplo)
- small and large cars, trucks and trailers
- plastic animals and people
- road signs (could be homemade)

- pieces of wood, card, fabric

Provision for infants and toddlers

- wooden or plastic hammer board

Sand - outdoors

- sandpit and cover
- shade in summer
- tap/hose for water
- a selection of buckets, spades, shovels, rakes
- scoops, funnels, sieves
- trucks, diggers, graders, etc
- PVC pipes and guttering, planks of untreated wood
- natural materials, e.g. rocks, tree trunks, leaves, shells, flax
- driftwood, small planks

Sand - indoors

- tarpaulin for the floor
- trough for sand and / or water
- dune sand (this can be purchased by the sack from hardware shops and stored in a bucket).
- equipment to fill, pour and sieve, e.g. bottle funnels, cups, water / sand wheels, spoons and small spades
- dustpan and brush

Junk

- large cardboard or wooden boxes
- old curtains, bedspreads
- cable reels, tree stumps
- steering wheels, tyres
- planks of wood

Carpentry

- a sturdy workbench at child's waist height
- vices attached to ends of bench (left hand and right hand) or G clamps
- trolley or shelves for storage of wood, tools and accessories
- soft untreated wood in a variety of shapes and sizes
- hammers – light weight, adult sized
- variety of nails, magnet to pick up nails
- saw, small – ensure it is sharp
- good quality hand drill and bit, screws, screwdriver
- pliers (to hold nails with)
- sandpaper and block

- ruler and carpenter's pencil
- accessories, e.g. bottle tops, pieces of leather, fabric, card, vinyl, PVA glue, paint, rubber bands, cotton reels, natural materials

NB: It is important to use **real, well maintained**, adult tools that work properly when children use them.

This activity is more suitable for older children and should **always** be closely supervised.

Physically active play

General

- movable equipment (e.g. planks, reels, boxes, ladders, tyres, tunnels)
- swings
- slide
- hessian or old sheets for tunnels, houses
- covered mattress for rolling and tumbling
- space to run
- balls in a range of sizes, ropes, hula hoops
- trolleys, push and pull along toys, wheelbarrows

Any fixed outdoor equipment should meet current [New Zealand safety standards](#)

Copies of safety standards can be purchased from [Standards NZ\(external link\)](#)

Provision for infants and toddlers

- indoor/outdoor baby swing
- soft balls
- push and pull along toys
- baby gym
- textured rugs and cushions for infants to crawl over

Books and language

Books

- bookshelves or display case
- chair or sofa where adults can sit with young children
- carpet square or floor cushions
- range of picture books to suit different ages, including:
- story books
- nursery rhymes/fairy stories
- poetry/rhyme and finger plays
- colours/numbers/shapes/size
- science and nature
- New Zealand stories

- Maori stories
- stories from other cultures
- special topics, e.g. visit to hospital, new baby
- books which reflect children's day to day lives, e.g. farming
- books which reflect children's special interests, e.g. horses, dinosaurs
- books which show males and females in non-traditional roles
- puppets (displayed), wall friezes, pictures (at children's height)

Provision for infants and toddlers

- board, cloth and plastic books
- picture books with simple text
- mobiles

Music and movement

General

- display board for instruments
- tape deck and tapes
- song books/charts
- a selection of musical instruments, e.g. drums, bells, tambourines, shakers, maracas, clappers, cymbals, wood blocks
- a selection of dancing accessories, e.g. scarves, bell wrist bands, streamers, poi

Provision for infants and toddlers

- rattles
- squeaky toys

Creative play

These activities can be done on easels, table tops or the floor.

Painting

- aprons
- drying rack or line and pegs
- easels
- paints (powder or liquid tempera & pallet)
- plastic paint containers
- brushes of different sizes, rollers, and other items for printing & painting
- a selection of paper, cardboard and natural materials for painting on
- formica squares, sheets of plastic or table tops for finger painting

Drawing

- paper of different size, texture, colour
- crayons
- plain and coloured pencils
- chalk
- felt tip pens
- rulers

Clay

Purchase clay from Playcentre shops, quality toy shops or local potters association. Detail the sort you want e.g. white, red, brown, smooth or gritty.

- bucket with lid for storage
- hessian (to work clay on)
- cutters (wire or fishing line)
- sponges (to keep clay moist)
- a selection of natural materials

Collage

- glue (polycell and PVA), containers and brushes
- variety of cardboard and paper
- scissors and snips that cut properly, sellotape, string, stapler
- variety of boxes, cartons and tubes
- variety of materials e.g. wool, fabric, natural materials, old cards, egg cartons, crepe paper, cellophane, magazines, glitter, corks etc.
- Messy play
- use a trough, trays on a table or, if on the floor, use a tarpaulin.
- ingredients to make play materials e.g. cornflour, luxflakes. Polycell paste
- hand beaters, bowls, scrapers
- buckets for handwashing
- aprons
- towels

Refer to Learning Environments for Playgroups for recipes.

Manipulative play

General

- carpet square or table and chairs
- a range of picture puzzles to suit different ages, from simple one piece puzzles with knobs to the more complex
- geometric and serrated puzzles
- form, fraction and shape boards
- collection of items for sorting by type, colour, size (natural materials such as stones, leaves, shells are good)
- items for matching e.g. socks, shells, stones, leaves

- threading materials (ensure items for threading are too large to fit in a film canister - young children may choke on anything smaller)
- posting and nesting boxes
- games such as dominoes, picture lotto, patterning
- screwing activities e.g. nuts and bolts, plastic jars and lids
- interlocking block sets e.g. Duplo / Lego / Mega blocks

Provision for infants and toddlers

- baby 'activity boards'
- cradle gym or hanging frame with interchangeable objects
- stacking toys
- Duplo / Primo
- simple posting boxes
- simple inset puzzles with knobs
- rattles

Other equipment

In addition to children's play equipment the group may need the following:

Kitchen equipment

- adult cups, teaspoons etc
- electric jug
- containers for tea, coffee, milo, sugar
- plastic children's cups
- tea towels (wash regularly)
- cutlery, vegetable knife/peeler
- container to store this equipment (named and mouse proof)

Cleaning items

- broom
- mop, bucket
- cloths
- cleaning agents (ensure stored safely out of children's reach)
- bowl for children's handwashing (if needed)
- hand towels (wash regularly)

Preparation equipment

- large bowl for mixing dough, finger paint
- saucepan or electric fry pan for cooked dough
- spoons, spatula, egg-beater or whisk
- storage containers for flour, cornflour etc.

Parent resources

Provide a range of books for parents on such topics as:

- behaviour management
- children's development
- parenting
- health and safety
- music and play ideas.

The Ministry of Education also has a range of pamphlets available for parents.

Further help

Contact your local Ministry of Education advisor for more information on any of the above areas.

Health and safety practices

21 Health and safety practices standard

The health and safety practices standard requires the service provider for every certificated playgroup to take reasonable steps to—

- (a) maintain good health and safety practices at the playgroup; and
- (b) ensure all practicable steps are taken to eliminate, isolate, or minimise hazards to children attending the playgroup; and
- (c) ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to deal with fires, earthquakes, and other emergencies.

Relevant health and safety forms and checklists for playgroups are available to download from this page.

In this section

- [Health and safety](#) - Criteria and guidance HS1-HS12

Health and safety criteria

Criteria for health and safety:

In this section

- [HS1 -Premises maintained and hygienic](#)
- [HS2 -Emergencies](#)
- [HS2A -Safe Assembly Areas](#)

- [HS3 -Securing furniture](#)
- [HS4 -Emergency drills](#)
- [HS5 -Food hygiene](#)
- [HS6 -Room temperature](#)
- [HS7 -Hazard management](#)
- [HS8 -Smoking](#)
- [HS9 -Alcohol and other substances](#)
- [HS10 -Inappropriate material](#)
- [HS11 - Child protection](#)
- [HS12 - Incident notification to the Ministry of Education](#)

HS1 Premises maintained and hygienic

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 1

Premises, furniture, furnishings, fittings, equipment, and materials are kept safe, hygienic, and maintained in good condition.

Rationale/Intent

The intent of this criteria is to keep children safe.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Equipment should be safe and suitable for its purpose and the age of children using it.

Any furnishing or fittings not fit for purpose should be removed from play areas until remedial action can be taken. Items can then be repaired or replaced as soon as possible. If your playgroup is in rented premises talk to your landlord about who is responsible for repairing or replacing furniture, furnishings, and fittings.

Hard surfaces should be kept clean and equipment or toys should be kept hygienic. Toys and materials that children put in their mouths should be cleaned at the end of each day with hot soapy water or put in a washing machine/dishwasher depending on the toy.

Nappy changing areas should be cleaned and disinfected after every nappy change.

More information can be found in the resource [Nga Kupu Oranga: A health and safety resource for early childhood](#)

[services\(external link\).](#)

Bleach as a Disinfectant

The Ministry of Health does not recommend any particular cleaning product, as this depends on the purpose and use. However, hydrogen peroxide and bleach are both effective sanitisers and may be used for some purposes. Some cleaning and sanitising products are more or less effective on some bacteria/viruses/soils etc. The product being used must be effective and used in line with manufacturer guidance. Contact your local office of the public health service for site-specific advice.

It is recommended that ECE services use bleach as a disinfectant when responding to recent outbreaks of diseases caused by micro-organisms (germs) such as giardia, cryptosporidium and salmonella. Many of these germs are resistant to most disinfectants. Bleaches contain sodium hypochlorite, the chemical which kills bacteria and viruses. Bleach used must be at least 2% hypochlorite. Supermarket bleach is labelled between 2-5% sodium hypochlorite. Bleach solutions must be made fresh daily to remain effective.

A bleach solution may also be the most suitable to disinfect the nappy changing area, toilets and sinks. To work properly the solution needs to:

Be used on a surface free of dirt/organic material

Be a strong enough concentration i.e. 0.1% (see table below). If there is visible contamination, then use a stronger 1:10 solution.

Be sprayed and left on for enough time to kill the bugs before wiping away (ideally 30 minutes contact time)

The solution should be disposed of at the end of the day. Made up chlorine solutions are often kept in spray bottles – the bottle needs to be cleaned daily as dirty hands touch it.

How to make up a 0.1% bleach solution.

STRENGTH ON BOTTLE	BLEACH (ML)	WATER (ML)	TOTAL (ML)
1%	100	900	1000
2%	50	950	1000
3%	33	967	1000
4%	25	975	1000
5%	20	980	1000

‘Eco’ or ‘natural’ cleaners

There has been an increased interest in the use of ‘green’, ‘eco’, ‘organic’ or ‘natural’ cleaning products in ECE settings. Be aware that many of these products are suitable only for ‘cleaning’ surfaces by removing dirt, grease and

grime, and not for 'disinfecting' surfaces to kill disease causing germs.

HS2 Emergencies

Criteria

There are a written emergency plan and supplies to ensure the care and safety of children and adults at the playgroup. The plan must include evacuation procedures for the playgroup's [premises](#) that apply in a variety of emergency situations. If there is an approved Fire Evacuation scheme for the building in which the playgroup operates, the evacuation procedures must be consistent with that scheme.

Documentation required

A written emergency plan that includes at least

An evacuation procedure for the premises.

A list of safety and emergency supplies and resources sufficient for the age and number of children and adults at the playgroup and details of how these will be maintained and accessed in an emergency.

Details of the roles and responsibilities that will apply during an emergency situation.

A communication plan for families and support services.

Evidence of review of the plan on an, at least, annual basis and implementation of improved practices as required.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria aims to ensure the safety of children in an emergency and also that adults have the necessary knowledge and supplies to deal with any emergency situation.

Amended May 2015

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Despite the fact that your playgroup may only meet once or twice a week, emergencies can occur at any time and playgroups, like all other ECE services, must be ready to respond appropriately.

The written emergency plan must cover all emergency situations relevant to the location of the playgroup such as fire, earthquake, tsunami, flood, storm, volcano, landslide etc. The plan has a broader scope than just fire evacuation.

The written emergency plan should include at least:

An evacuation procedure for the premises.

A list of safety and emergency supplies and resources sufficient for the age and number of children and adults at the

service and details of how these will be maintained and accessed in an emergency.

Details of the roles and responsibilities that will apply during an emergency situation.

A communication plan for families and support services.

Evidence of review of the plan on an, at least, annual basis and implementation of improved practices as required.

The building where your playgroup meets may already have an evacuation procedure. Buildings like churches or community halls, and libraries are generally required to have an approved evacuation scheme under fire legislation. Talk to the building owners about this so that your playgroup can be part of any evacuation drills or planning. You will need to regularly practice emergency evacuations/drills so that every adult and child knows what they can expect and need to do in an emergency.

Adults running your playgroup should be able to confidently and knowledgeably:

talk about the procedures without needing to refer to any documentation.

identify the roles that they and others will play during an emergency drill.

describe how children (walking and non-walking) will be managed during an emergency drill.

describe how they will deal with any unexpected circumstance that arises during an emergency drill – ie respond to questions such as "how will you manage if several of your 3-4 year olds refuse to walk independently from the building?".

The National Emergency Management Agency have a [What's the Plan Stan website\(external link\)](#) which focuses on helping children prepare for an emergency and a special section which aims to support adults to develop children's knowledge, skills and attitudes to respond to and prepare for an emergency.

It may be more difficult to evacuate children from centres that are not at ground level in the event of a fire. Fire evacuation schemes need to identify ways to mitigate this. We recommend reading the [Guidance for ECE Services - Evacuation from High Rise Buildings \[PDF, 394 KB\]](#).

Things to consider

What type of emergencies might occur in your area and what will you need to do if they occur?

Do you have access to torches or emergency lighting?

Do you have a cell phone to make an emergency call?

Are the safety procedures in the building being maintained?

What processes does the building owner have for maintaining the Civil Defence kit and emergency drills?

Where is your list of emergency contact phone numbers?

What information is available from your local council about emergency procedures?

How do playgroup members find out about the emergency procedures?

How do you ensure that sufficient essential resources such as nappies, food, water and essential medical supplies are available?

Where is your local civil defence meeting place?

HS2A Safe Assembly Areas

Criteria

Designated assembly areas for evacuation purposes outside the building keep children safe from further risk.

Rationale/Intent:

The criterion aims to uphold the safety of children by ensuring that assembly areas do not place children in further danger - on a main highway for example. The criterion is also based on the assumption that a safe assembly area is more likely to result in regular drills being carried out.

Amended May 2015

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Although it is important there is a place for people at the playgroup to go to when a fire breaks out, it is just as important to ensure that this place does not put children or adults in further danger from other hazards. This can be a challenge for some playgroups because of the layout of their premises and proximity to main roads, carparks, waterways etc. Young children often behave erratically when scared or distressed, and adults need to reduce stress (for themselves, as well as for the children) in these situations as much as possible.

Talk with [local Ministry of Education playgroup certification staff](#) and [Fire and Emergency New Zealand\(external link\)](#) personnel about the best options for your particular situation.

Things to consider

Selecting an appropriate assembly area should also take into account where vehicles and personnel might be when they are responding to a fire.

The place chosen should be checked to ensure children or adults will not be trapped in an area from which they can't escape if the fire should spread. For instance, in an area surrounded by high walls or fences with no exit other than through the fire area.

The use of portable orange netting, cones and walking ropes can be useful for keeping children together while moving and once they have reached the final place of safety.

Ideally any equipment needed should be stored near the exits from the building to avoid the need to retrieve it from more distant storage areas when evacuating the building in an emergency.

Consideration should be given as to how will children will be kept warm and dry if evacuation takes place during wet or windy weather. Playgroups may be able to make some arrangement with a nearby business or other organisation to assist with this.

A "grab bag" ready near the building exit to take when playgroups evacuate to an assembly area should be provided. In addition to emergency supplies and medication, this could include books or other items that can be used to engage children's attention while at the assembly point.

If adults suspect that during the process of exiting or re-entry to a building to secure items poses further risk to their own lives or the lives of others then they should not do so.

HS3 Securing furniture

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 3

Positive steps are taken to prevent injury to people and damage to property resulting from unsecured heavy furniture, fixtures and equipment falling.

Intent/Rationale

This criteria aims to ensure adults and children are kept safe from harm.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

In all areas of the playgroup premises, large and heavy items of furniture and equipment and appliances must be secured to the structure of the building. Smaller appliances such as stereos or microwave ovens can be secured with industrial velcro.

Lighter things such as books and blocks can also cause injury if they fall on children. These can be held on shelves by wire or a short chain connected to the shelf with a metal eye or hook.

See Things to Consider for securing furniture that may need to be moved frequently.

Lockable castors should be used to prevent trolleys or shelving on wheels from moving around. Think about weight distribution on free standing shelves.

Things to consider

When securing these items, the following guidelines will be useful:

Always fasten to the structure of the building. Studs are fine, but wallboards may be too weak.

Make sure that the fastenings you use are strong enough to hold the weight of the heavy object. What will happen if it gets bounced up and down?

When you can, try to fasten objects near the top rather than at the bottom. If you cannot, then the fastenings at the bottom will need to be very strong. This is because of the leverage effect when something topples (a fridge for example).

Connections that are easy to unclip and re-clip allow you to move furniture when you need to. You can place fastening points at several places around the walls (in some buildings).

A short chain on the furniture connected to a metal eye on the wall, by means of a carabena, D-bolt, or similar, can be a good system. This means you can change your furniture around, and still have secure fastening for the heavy objects.

HS4 Emergency drills

Criteria

[Adults providing education and care](#) are familiar with relevant emergency drills and carry these out with children on an at least three-monthly basis. Emergency drills are practised.

Documentation required:

A record of emergency drills carried out and evidence of how evaluation of the drills has informed the annual review of the playgroup's emergency plan.

Rationale/Intent

The criterion aims to uphold the safety of children by ensuring that:

adults at the service have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to deal with emergency situations; review of the service's emergency plan and evacuation procedures occur annually; and children are familiar with, and confident in, responding to emergency procedures.

The intention of this criteria is to ensure that adults and children have the knowledge to respond safely in an emergency.

Amended May 2015

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Research has shown that the factor that most contributes to reducing injuries and fatalities during any emergency evacuation is regular practice. This ensures that any coordinators and parents are familiar with procedures and that children also become familiar and comfortable with what is expected of them.

Regular practice will also ensure that any equipment that will be relied on in an evacuation will be subject to regular checks, for example, any special equipment that might be used to assist in the evacuation of the non-walking children. It is also recommended that the adults have a range of strategies available to manage any children whose behaviour

has become disturbed during the evacuation.

The following activities will support you in ensuring that all adults are familiar with the evacuation procedures:

Evacuation procedure briefing for all parents.

Including emergency plans and procedures as a regular agenda item for meetings.

Communication with parents and families, via noticeboards and in newsletters.

It is important that the children are familiar and comfortable with the evacuation procedures. In addition to participation in regular trial evacuations, familiarity with emergency responses can be included as appropriate in the playgroup's programme.

Playgroups are expected to have emergency drills at least every three months. Evacuation drills should be organised to test a variety of emergency situations and scenarios. For example, practising both earthquake drills and fire evacuation drills, and practising evacuation via alternative exits if these are available. You should aim to hold your trial evacuations at times when you have typical numbers of children, of varying ages, and adults at the playgroup. Consider also the timing of evacuations and whether or not attending parents will be notified in advance. Holding unannounced evacuations at challenging times (e.g. during morning tea time) may be inconvenient but will give you greater assurance that your procedures are effective.

It may be more difficult to evacuate children from centres that are not at ground level in the event of a fire. Fire evacuation schemes need to identify ways to mitigate this. We recommend reading the [Guidance for ECE Services - Evacuation from High Rise Buildings \[PDF, 260 KB\]](#).

Documentation Guidance:

You need to keep records of the emergency drills.

You should review your emergency plans and evacuation procedures at least once a year. Records of each trial evacuation should be used to inform that review. If any changes are required to your evacuation procedures, these should be noted promptly in your evacuation plans and any other documentation and notices updated. Remember also to communicate to all staff, family and others if you have made any changes.

Things to consider

An example of an emergency drill to practise is the earthquake drill.

For earthquake drills the safest response for adults and children is likely to be the use of the 'turtle' position. A person in this position has their body tucked up with their knees and forehead on the floor, and their hands covering the back of their neck. This position provides maximum protection for the face, internal organs, and the most important area of the spinal column.

HS5 Food hygiene

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 5

Any food is prepared, served, and stored hygienically.

Rationale/Intent

The criteria aims to ensure hygienic food practices are maintained for the safety of children.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Basic food hygiene is important to avoid outbreaks of food-borne illness at Playgroups.

A Playgroup should provide enough fridge space to store chilled foods – including milk and yoghurt provided by parents for infants and children.

Under [The Food Act \(2014\)\(external link\)](#), education and care services including playgroups that undertake minimal food handling (e.g. where very limited food is provided (cut fruit, biscuits etc) and where children bring their own lunchboxes) are only subject to the basic requirement to ensure food is safe and suitable.

The Ministry of Primary Industries has developed some [Food Safe guidance\(external link\)](#) including a Food Safety Factsheet, as well as providing [tips for food safety\(external link\)](#). Check out also [food safety rules on MPI website.\(external link\)](#)

HS6 Room temperature

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 6

The premises are kept at a comfortable temperature while children are attending.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria aims to uphold the well being of children.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

It is recommended that rooms used by children are kept at a comfortable temperature no lower than 18°C at 500mm above the floor while children are attending.

The World Health Organisation recommends a minimum indoor temperature of 18°C.

Having the building too warm could lead to lethargy in children and adults.

Things to consider

If you think your heating is inadequate discuss heating options with the building owner. You might like to think about taking turns in winter to come in earlier and get the heaters going (or maybe there is someone else in the building who will do this for you?) so that the rooms have heated up to 16°C when the rest of the group come in.

HS7 Hazard management

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 7

Equipment, premises and facilities are checked on every day of operation for hazards to children. Hazards to the safety of the children are eliminated, isolated or minimised.

Consideration of hazards must include but is not limited to:

cleaning agents, medicines, poisons, and other hazardous materials

electrical sockets

heating appliances

hazards present in kitchen or laundry facilities

foreign materials (e.g. glass, animal droppings), equipment faults, vandalism, and dangerous objects

the condition and placement of equipment

poisonous plants; and

bodies of water (such as pools or water troughs).

Rationale/Intent

The purpose of this criteria is to ensure that environmental hazards are regularly checked and addressed.

Amended May 2015

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

A key aspect of promoting health and safety of everyone at the playgroup is hazard management. A hazard is any activity, situation or substance that can cause harm. Harm can be injury, illness or both.

As playgroups may share the venue with other groups, the hazard checklist needs to be tailored to the venue, especially areas and items that are shared – e.g. toilets, kitchen, power points and fixed furniture and equipment.

A [sample list of potential hazards \[DOC, 156 KB\]](#) is available as a starting point. Any hazards found should be documented and eliminated, isolated or minimised. Hazards in the playground are of particular concern in playgroups.

Supervision

Supervision is an essential component of hazard and risk management in a playgroup. Supervision must be active and focussed.

The type of supervision required depends on the layout of the premises, activities being undertaken, equipment being used, the ratio of adults to children, and the number, ages and needs of children.

Direct, close and constant supervision by parents, caregivers and educators will be required if an activity includes an element of risk. For example, climbing, cooking, using ropes, cords or tools of any kind or activities near water.

Ensuring children do not have unsupervised access to hazardous equipment such as ropes, cords and tools is a key aspect of supervision. Access to any hazardous equipment must be closely monitored.

Parents, caregivers and educators should guide children on how to use equipment appropriately and safely.

Knowing children's interests and abilities will assist parents, caregivers and educators to anticipate children's play. Anticipating what children might do next will help parents, caregivers and educators support children if challenges or difficulties arise, and intervene if there is potential danger. To ensure risk is minimised or eliminated, parents, caregivers and educators should guide children's behaviour and approach to play when necessary.

If an activity poses a risk, parents, caregivers and educators will use their judgement to ensure that the right kind of supervision can be provided. If close supervision cannot be provided for an activity which requires it, then parents, caregivers and educators should encourage children to modify their activity, or defer it until the appropriate level of supervision can be provided.

Parents, caregivers and educators should have regular conversations about how play is supervised in their own setting.

Health & Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA)

If your playgroup has any paid workers, then you will have obligations under the HSWA [Additional guidance about the HSWA\(external link\)](#) is available for early learning services.

Information to help you meet this criterion

Your hazard and risk management system is likely to be made up of three main processes:

- Documented daily hazard checks – inside and out
- Documented playground safety checks – possibly 4 times per year
- Regular hazard review – although your hazard register should be updated whenever new information comes available, it is useful to have a formal review, perhaps on an annual basis.

Below are some additional sources of information for support around hazard and risk management:

Things to consider

Consider a sequential approach to hazard and risk management. For example:

- Identify hazards and risks.
- Assess the likelihood and impact of identified risks.
- Respond to hazard or risk – what will be done, when, by whom?
- Monitor and review hazard and risk management system and practices.

Issues to consider in developing a hazard and risk identification and management system to ensure hazards are assessed and addressed in an ongoing way are:

- How hazards and risks will be identified?
- How processes for updating the identification of hazards and risks on a regular basis will be updated?
- If a hazard is identified, how it will be eliminated, isolated or minimised? When will it be done? Who is responsible for this?
- What opportunity is there for parents, caregivers and educators to contribute to hazard and risk management systems, processes and practice?
- How will visitors to the service be informed about identified hazards?
- How is the maintenance of premises and equipment documented, managed and budgeted for?
- How are maintenance issues communicated to the person in charge or governance committee for any repairs or replacement?
- How are the service's hazard and risk management checklists reviewed and used to inform the service's management and practice, eg supervision, maintenance, repairs?

HS8 Smoking

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 8

No person on the premises smokes or vapes in any area which is available for use by children or for food preparation while children are present.

Rationale/Intent

The purpose of this criteria is to protect children's health and well being from the impact of smoking.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

All areas of the premises accessible to children, both indoors and outdoors, must be 100% smoke/vape-free.

Parents should never smoke or vape at the playgroup while children are attending the service.

You will need to think about a process for parents to manage situations where an adult present at the premises wishes to smoke or vape. This will include the outside area when children are present.

It is a good idea to include this requirement in a parent information pack.

HS9 Alcohol and other substances

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 9

No person on the premises uses, or is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that has a detrimental effect on their functioning or behaviour during the playgroups' hours of operation.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria aims to uphold the safety and well being of children.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

It is a good idea to have a policy and process in regard to alcohol and other substances for volunteers, parents and visitors to the playgroup.

Your policy should be developed in conjunction with your community so there is a shared understanding of what actions a service may take. Your agreed process should be included in a parent information pack.

Your policy should cover:

What would your playgroup community do if a parent or caregiver arrived to drop off or collect a child or they intend to stay and they were under the influence of alcohol or any other substance?

What would you do if a visitor arrived and they were under the influence of alcohol or any other substance?

HS10 Inappropriate material

Criteria

Health and safety criterion 10

All practicable steps are taken to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material (for example, of an explicitly sexual or violent nature).

Rationale/Intent

The criteria aims to uphold the safety and well being of children by ensuring that pornographic or violent material (written, visual or electronic) is not available to children.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

When playgroups meet in buildings that are also used for other purposes or by other groups, it is possible for children to be exposed to inappropriate or disturbing material. Posters, magazines, pamphlets, etc, that are intended for adults might be disturbing or inappropriate for young children.

Assessing material

Censor classifications can be used as a guide, however you should preview or listen to material to check for suitability before sharing it with children.

What **may** be regarded as not objectionable under the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act may, nevertheless, be inappropriate and harmful to children given the impact of the medium in which the publication is presented and the age of the children to whom the publication is available.

Use of computers, iPads etc

Supervising children using computers or iPads at your playgroup is essential. If your playgroup has access to the internet (either for use with the children or in an office) you should consider password protection and the use of parental locks.

Exposure to objectionable material may occur inadvertently through normal and legitimate searching activities or by unsolicited email delivery.

Things to consider

What can children see or hear when they are at the playgroup?

What kinds of images can children see in magazines and other print materials available for collage activities (e.g. 'sealed sections' and photo spreads appearing in some women's magazines)?

How would adults respond when children bring inappropriate material from home?

Do children have access to the internet when at the playgroup? If so:

Consider the use of software programmes available to support safe searching techniques

Parents should be aware of safe searching techniques and provide information to children on how to react and deal with unsolicited, inappropriate material.

Netsafe, the Internet Safety Group, has developed Acceptable Use Policy templates for ECE Services, and Parents/Caregivers. The templates may be downloaded from Netsafe.

HS11 Child Protection

Criteria

There is a written child protection policy that meets the requirements of the Children's Act 2014. The policy contains provisions for the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect, and information about how the service will keep children safe from abuse and neglect, and how it will respond to suspected child abuse and neglect.

The policy must be reviewed every three years.

Documentation required:

A written child protection policy that contains:

provisions for the service's identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect;

information about the practices the service employs to keep children safe from abuse and neglect; and

information about how the service will respond to suspected child abuse and neglect.

A procedure that sets out how the service will identify and respond to suspected child abuse and/or neglect.

Intent:

Child protection policies support children's workers to identify and respond to vulnerability, including possible abuse and neglect.

Guidance

Playgroups must have a child protection policy that meets the Children's Act 2014 requirements.

The policy must:

contain provisions on the identification and reporting of neglect and abuse, and
be written, and
be reviewed every three years.

To be helpful, the policy should contain definitions of neglect and abuse so that adults can apply these consistently when needed.

We've published a guide to help you navigate the child protection policy requirements set out in the Children's Act 2014. [Download the guide.](#)

Documentation guidance:

The [Safer Organisations, Safer Children \[PDF, 1.1 MB\]](#) publication provides advice on good practice to help organisations draft high quality child protection policies and review their procedures.

The guidelines include a review tool to help services identify gaps in current policies, information about what to include in a new policy, as well as example policies including a policy used in an early childhood education setting.

The policy needs to be consistent with advice provided by Oranga Tamariki that can be found in the publication called "[Working together to support tamariki, rangatahi and their family/whānau\(external link\)](#)".

Adults at the Playgroup require guidelines on:

the signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect
roles and responsibilities around record keeping and reporting
responsibilities to children
limitations of their role.

The Ministry of Education, alongside Te Rito Maioha Early Childhood New Zealand and Safeguarding Children, have developed a digital child protection resource specifically for the early learning sector. See the instructions below to access the resource.

Go to **Education Learning Management System** using the following link

Select **Login with ESL**

Select **Catalogue** from the top menu

Search for ***Child Protection***

In order to access child protection training you are required to have an Education Sector Logon (ESL) as there is a formal acknowledgment of completion. To get an ESL account, please contact your organisation's ESL Delegated Authoriser.

If you would like to know more about having an Education Sector Login (ESL) to access the Education Learning Management System please refer to - [Education Sector Logon \(ESL\) | Applications & Online Systems\(external link\)](#)

If you need assistance creating an ESL account, please ring the Education Service Desk on 0800 422 599 or email them on service.desk@education.govt.nz

HS12 Incident notification to the Ministry of Education

Criteria

Where there is a serious injury or illness or incident involving a child while at the playgroup, the service provider must notify us as soon as practicable after the event.

Guidance

After the incident has been managed on site (e.g. first aid provided, parents notified, any other agencies notified if required), it is recommended that you then call your [local Ministry office](#) to inform them of the incident. Then you should send them a copy of the notification.

Once notified, we will follow up with the service to ensure any recommended actions are put in place.

Management and administration

22 Management and administration standard

(1) The management and administration standard requires the service provider for every certificated playgroup to ensure that-

- (a) the playgroup is effectively managed in accordance with good management practices; and
- (b) the playgroup is managed in a collaborative way with the parents and caregivers involved; and
- (c) appropriate written procedures and records are developed, maintained, and made available when appropriate.

(2) All written procedures and records required by subclause (1)(c) must be made available by the service provider for inspection-

- (a) at any reasonable time on request by a parent or member of the family or caregiver of a child attending the playgroup;
- (b) at any time on request by any person exercising powers or carrying out functions under Part 26 of the Act.

(3) Subclause (2) does not limit any rights of access conferred by law to any document referred to in subclause (1)(c).

In this section

- [Management and administration](#) - Criteria and guidance MA1-MA6
- [Funding](#) - Funding
- [Closing a playgroup](#) - Information

Management and administration criteria

Criteria for management and administration

In this section

- [MA1 - Statement of operation](#)
- [MA2 - Parent involvement](#)
- [MA3 - Group supervision](#)
- [MA4 - Information shared](#)
- [MA5 - Enrolment records](#)
- [MA6 - Safety checking](#)

MA1 Statement of operation

Criteria

Governance Management & Administration criterion 1

An agreed statement about the operation of the playgroup is available for people to read.

Documentation required

An agreed statement of group aims and information outlining:

the group's philosophy

days and times of operation

the role of adults

costs such as fees or donations, and

contact numbers for people seeking information about the group.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria is intended to provide parents and caregivers with information about the operation of the playgroup.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

A statement giving parents and caregivers key information about your playgroup does not have to be complicated – as long as the main points are covered, you can make it as simple or detailed as you want. The following types of things should be included.

The group's philosophy/kaupapa

This is the section of your operation statement where you explain the purpose of your group and what you want it to achieve for children and their parents and caregivers. This will include the shared beliefs and values that are important to parents and caregivers in the playgroup. Every statement of philosophy will be different but you might want to include:

the purpose for setting up the playgroup
what you want to achieve day-by-day
what values are really important for your playgroup.

An example of one playgroup's philosophy is: "We believe children should have the opportunity to meet and play with other children in their community."

Some playgroups may have more specific purposes like promoting language and cultural values.

Days and time of operation

Include a statement about when and where the group meets.

Role of adults

Adults need to know:

the ground rules for attending playgroup sessions
the positions of responsibility playgroup needs to be managed effectively
what is involved in these positions and how they are filled.

Costs such as fees or donations

Think about the costs to run the playgroup. Some playgroups are run by koha or donations, some have a regular fee and others are free. It must be clear to parents and caregivers how much it will cost them to attend playgroup.

Contact numbers for people seeking information about the group

It is useful to include phone numbers for key people who can be contacted for information about the playgroup. Make sure this is kept up-to-date and is somewhere easy to find. Make it clear if the phone number is for the playgroup premises or for the key contact people. Think about specifying a time when these people can be contacted.

Playgroups must provide the Ministry of Education with name and address for a funding contact person, and keep them informed when changes occur. This is the person that funding claim forms and other information are sent to.

You will need to think about how you make your statement of operation available for people to read. Some playgroups put their statement of operation up on the wall while others provide parents and caregivers with written information (on a pamphlet or newsletter) when they first come to playgroup so they know what to expect.

A statement giving parents key information about your playgroup does not have to be complicated - as long as the main points are covered, you can make it as simple or detailed as you want. Some playgroups put their statement of operation up on the wall for all parents and visitors to read, while others provide parents with written information (on a pamphlet or newsletter) when they first come to playgroup so they know what to expect.

Downloads

MA2 Parent involvement

Criteria

Governance Management & Administration criterion 2

Parents and caregivers of children attending are given opportunities to discuss the group's operation and be involved in decision making.

Documentation required:

A record of the opportunities provided for participation by parents and caregivers in decision making, including any meetings held and the decisions made.

Rationale/Intent

The intent of the criteria is to involve parents and caregivers in the operation of the playgroup.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

There will be a number of approaches to making sure parents and caregivers can be involved in making decisions about the playgroup's operation and in the decision-making process.

Some of these will be more formal as in the case of regular monthly meetings and others will be less formal as in meeting over a shared meal or coffee. As well, you may want to display information on notice boards or use surveys and questionnaires to gain information.

You are required to keep a record showing you have provided opportunities for parents and caregivers to contribute to decision-making processes. If meetings are held, recording attendance and decisions and then providing minutes of the meeting could be considered a record. If surveys or questionnaires are used, keep a copy of the collated responses and how you have provided feedback to group members about any actions taken.

MA3 Group supervision

Criteria

Governance Management & Administration criterion 3

All parents and caregivers at the playgroup share responsibility for the safety and supervision of all children attending.

Rationale/Intent

This criteria aims to ensure children attending without a parent or caregiver are supervised and supported.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

A key feature of playgroups is the high ratio of adults to children.

Read about the Ratio Standard (Regulation 19) which requires that more than half of the children attending on any occasion have a parent or caregiver present in the same play area at the same time; and the total number of children attending on any occasion is not greater than 4 times the number of parents and caregivers present in the same play area at the same time. There is an expectation that the adults attending playgroup are all collectively responsible for the children at playgroup and engage with the children's activities.

Some things that your group will need to consider:

What is our playgroup's policy on parents and caregivers staying?

Do we expect all parents and caregivers to stay all the time?

What can adults do when they are at playgroup?

How do parents and caregivers nominate a caregiver?

How do we ensure there are sufficient adults in any one area to at least meet the minimum ratios standard and for meaningful interactions?

Having a roster of jobs can be helpful for the day-to-day running of a playgroup. A roster lets everyone know who is doing what and helps a playgroup session run smoothly.

Download an example of one playgroup's roster and job descriptions below.

Downloads

MA4 Information shared

Criteria

Governance Management & Administration criterion 4

Information is shared with the parents and caregivers of children attending, including:

financial information about the group's operation; and
information received/sought from relevant agencies or services.

Rationale/Intent

The criteria aims to ensure that parents and caregivers are well informed about the playgroup's financial management and have access to other information like other community and service agencies.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

The Playgroup Funding Handbook sets out the conditions on which funding payments are made to playgroups. You can download this from the bottom of the page.

Financial information about the group's operation needs to be shared with parents and caregivers to assist the playgroup in making budget decisions and provide transparency and accountability. This includes keeping good financial records and having these available for anyone to see.

Information to parents and caregivers can be provided in different ways such as parent information sheets, newsletters

or on a notice board.

Playgroups have access to a range of organisations that support families, like Plunket, Barnardos, MSD, REAP, local schools, councils and community networks such as churches. Information from these organisations could be made available to parents and caregivers.

MA5 Enrolment records

Criteria

Governance Management & Administration criterion 5

Enrolment and attendance records are maintained for children attending.

Documentation required:

1. Enrolment records, showing at least:

child's name, gender and date of birth
parent's home address and phone number
emergency contact phone number
ethnicity (including iwi affiliations as appropriate).

2. Attendance records, showing at least the child's full name and days attended.

Rationale/Intent

Well maintained enrolment and attendance records provide evidence for community and Crown funding.

They are also an indicator of good management and administration practices necessary to ensure the safety of the children attending.

Guidance

Any examples in the guidance are provided as a starting point to show how services can meet (or exceed) the requirement. Services may choose to use other approaches better suited to their needs as long as they comply with the criteria.

Your playgroup will need to develop a system to make sure enrolment and attendance records are maintained and reviewed.

Attendance records must be marked daily for safety reasons and in order to keep accurate records for funding claims.

It would be useful to develop a practice of reviewing enrolment and attendance records regularly and filing enrolment records of children who have left or have not attended for a considerable period of time.

Doing this every few months can help identify who is still part of the group. Your group may want to develop this as part of a roster system. For example every second month you could check enrolment records against roll books. You may also want to phone parents and caregivers who are longer attending to enable you to maintain accurate records.

Below are some examples of an enrolment form and attendance record. The examples include mandatory requirement. You could consider adding information, changing the layout, wording, titles etc to suit your own playgroup.

The Ministry of Education collects information annually from all playgroups about hours of operation, and age, ethnicity and gender of children attending. This annual statistics form (RS61PG) is sent out to playgroups in June each year. Accurate enrolment and attendance records will make it easier to complete this form.

Downloads

MA6 Safety Checking

Criteria

[PAID WORKERS ONLY]

Before a person is employed or engaged as a children's worker, as defined in the Children's Act 2014, a safety check as required by that Act must be completed.

A detailed record of each component of the safety check must be kept, and the date on which each step was taken must be recorded, including the date of the risk assessment required to be completed after all relevant information is obtained.

These records must be kept by, or available to, the service provider as long as the person is employed or engaged.

Every children's worker must be safety checked every three years. Safety checks may be carried out by the employer or another person or organisation acting on their behalf.

Documentation required:

- A written procedure for safety checking all children's workers before employment or engagement of the worker commences that meets the safety checking requirements of the Children's Act 2014.

- A record of all safety checks and the results.

Intent:

Consistent robust safety checking helps assess whether people might pose a risk to children.

Guidance

Paid supervisors or coordinators working in Playgroups are required to be safety checked to meet the requirements of the Children's Act 2014. Safety checking should be part of a recruitment process for all roles that involve contact with children.

The following links take you to more detailed guidance for safety checking and two tools that can assist you in completing this process – a list of actions to support you through the steps and a spreadsheet for collating your documentation of the checks.

[Safety Checking General Guidance](#)

[Tools and Resources](#)

Who needs to be safety checked?

The Children's Act 2014 specifies who needs to be safety checked. You can read this in [section 23 of the Children's Act 2014\(external link\)](#).

In Playgroups, only paid supervisors or coordinators need to be safety checked. Volunteers, for example parents attending with their children, do not need to be safety checked.

The safety check must be completed by the employing organisation (which may be the Playgroup itself). The Playgroup needs to confirm that the safety check has been completed if the safety check has been done by the employing organisation.

Components of the safety check

Full requirements for safety checking are set out in the [Children's \(Requirements for Safety Checks of Children's Workers\) Regulations 2015\(external link\)](#).

Safety checking includes the collection and consideration of a range of information about the person.

A safety check is made up of 7 components:

- verification of identity (including previous identities)
- an interview
- information about work history
- referee information
- information from any relevant professional organisation or registration body
- a New Zealand police vet
- a risk assessment.

The risk assessment involves an evaluation of all information collected to assess if there is any risk to the children's safety. For example, is a driving offence relevant to the requirements of the role or going to pose a risk to children? Would this information mean you should or shouldn't employ or engage the person? You must take into account the guidance we have provided in your risk assessment.

The publication [Safer Recruitment, Safer Children \[PDF, 2.4 MB\]](#) provides best practice guidance and [Children's worker safety checking under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 \[PDF, 1.2 MB\]](#) provides advice for organisations

interpreting and applying the safety checking regulations.

A safety check of a **new children's worker** requires all 7 components to be completed.

A safety check of an **existing children's worker** requires the following 4 of the 7 components to be completed:

1. verification of identity (including previous identities),
5. information from any relevant professional organisation or registration body,
6. a New Zealand police vet, and
7. a risk assessment.

An existing children's worker is someone you have continuously employed since before 1 July 2015.

Periodic rechecking of all children's workers requires the following 4 of the 7 components to be completed:

1. that the person hasn't changed their name and if so reconfirmation of their identity,
5. information from any relevant professional organisation or registration body,
6. a New Zealand police vet, and
7. a risk assessment.

The Ministry has prepared flow charts which explain the checks that must be completed on adults in specific roles.

Certificated teachers

Playgroup supervisors/coordinators who hold a current practising certificate will be police vetted by the Teaching Council as part of issuing and renewing the person's practising certificate.

If the Teaching Council has issued or renewed a practising certificate, they will have considered them to have a satisfactory vet. Playgroups can choose to rely on this or carry out their own police vet.

More information is available on the [Police Vetting page](#).

The employing organisation must carry out all of the other components of the safety checking process for certificated teachers.

It must also:

meet the teacher in person

check a primary identification document

check a specified form of photographic identification

check that the name on the practising certificate matches the name on the person's identity documentation

check the Teaching Council's online register () for the latest updates to the teacher's registration and practising certificate status

undertake a risk assessment.

When do people need to be safety checked?

You **cannot** employ or engage a person as a new children's worker until the safety check has been completed.

Playgroups / employers cannot rely on a safety check done by a different employer (either current or previous) as the check was not done on their behalf. They must carry out all of the components themselves.

After 1 July 2018 you **cannot** continue to employ an existing core children's worker until the safety check has been completed.

After 1 July 2019 you **cannot** continue to employ an existing non-core children's worker until the safety check has been completed.

Periodic rechecking must be done every 3 years.

Umbrella organisation carrying out safety checks

If an organisation (for example a church or the Salvation Army) doing the safety checks is the employer for staff at multiple playgroups, then any of their playgroups can use the children's workers who have been safety checked by that employer.

Relying on safety checking completed by another organisation on your behalf

Where some or all components of the safety check have been completed by another organisation on a service's behalf, the playgroup or employing organisation is responsible for confirming that these components have been completed, and that a full safety check has been done.

If the playgroup chooses to rely on a safety check completed on their behalf, we recommend that they:

Seek permission from the person who is being safety checked for the information to be shared. Permission could be sought by the person or organisation completing the safety check **before** it is undertaken, or by the playgroup prior to requesting the information.

Prior to the safety check, obtain confirmation from the person or organisation that they are undertaking the safety check on your behalf.

Obtain in writing from the person or organisation completing the safety check that they have done this to the standard set out in the Children's Act 2014.

Complete the identity check and risk assessment for all children's workers, even if these have already been completed by another person or organisation.

Keep records about the safety checking of children's workers they engage or employ.

Responsibility for safety checking always rests with the employing or contracting organisation. This means playgroup should exercise due diligence when relying on checks undertaken by others. Things to consider include:

How long ago the safety check was done

The purpose of the safety check that was done (for example what role).

Workforce restriction and core worker exemption

The Children's Act 2014 introduces a new children's workforce restriction, which prohibits Playgroups from employing

or engaging people with a specified offence as core workers, unless they hold a Core Worker Exemption.

A specified offence means an offence identified in [Schedule 2 of the Children's Act 2014\(external link\)](#).

Individuals prohibited from being employed or engaged in a core worker role under the workforce restriction can apply for a [Core Worker Exemption\(external link\)](#).

Employers will be able to confirm whether a person holds a Core Worker Exemption.

Short-term emergencies

Playgroups may employ a children's worker they have previously police vetted and whose vet is current, without completing the remaining components of the safety check, to manage short-term emergencies.

If a Playgroup considers that an emergency or unexpected situation has arisen that increases risks to children, they may engage or employ a children's worker to reduce those risks without completing all components of the safety check, for up to 5 consecutive working days, as long as the employee has a current police vet.

However, in the interests of children's safety, we recommend that Playgroups begin the full safety checking process as soon as possible in an emergency or unexpected situation.

Screening service for early learning service owner operators who are children's workers

A screening service is available to undertake safety checks for specified groups of children's workers.

This service has been established to provide third party safety checks for children's workers in the health, education and social development sectors who are self-employed or sole-practitioners.

In the education sector, this screening service has been approved for early learning service owner-operators.

Anyone who works with children must be safety checked.

You may choose to use this approved screening service, but you are not obliged to do so. You can conduct your checks through another service.

There is a cost to applicants for this service. To find out more, go to [CV Check\(external link\)](#).

Documentation guidance:

Under [Section 39\(3\) of the Children's Act 2014\(external link\)](#), service providers are required to be able to provide details on any safety check done on a person and their work history including:

- how their identity was confirmed, and
- all information provided during the safety check, and
- the risk assessment, and
- the date or dates on which the person was engaged or employed by the organisation, and

the nature of the work the person was/is engaged in.

Evidence of all children's worker safety checks must be kept for at least as long as the children's worker is employed or engaged, then securely destroyed. All information must be provided to the Ministry of Education, or any other relevant agency, on request.

The result of the safety check is confidential and the service provider and only those staff delegated with responsibilities that would require them to access the information should be able to do so.

Information needs to be stored appropriately. Typically, screening information will be kept on a person's personnel file. Files should be stored in a secure location with access only available for appropriate staff.

Once information is no longer required to be retained, it must be securely destroyed.

Funding

The [Playgroup Funding Handbook](#) provides further clarification of the changes associated with the introduction of the Education (Playgroups) Regulations 2008 which came into force on 1 December 2008.

Licence-exempt and certificated playgroups now need to meet the same funding rules and requirements to be eligible for funding. Differences in the amount of funding available to Licence-exempt and certificated playgroups remain in recognition of the quality assurance provided by the certification process.

Playgroups recognised as Licence-exempt prior to 1 December 2008 must continue to meet the definition of a playgroup published in the Education Gazette on 15 February 1991 to remain eligible for funding. Playgroups established after 1 December 2008 must hold a current interim or full certificate to be eligible for funding.

Closing a playgroup

1. All remaining funds received from the Ministry of Education must be returned.
2. All equipment purchased with ministry funding must be returned to us. It is therefore very important that clear financial records and equipment inventories are kept.

The dispersal of group-owned assets (money and equipment) should be decided by remaining members of the group, in consultation with your Ministry of Education early childhood advisor.

If your group no longer meets Ministry of Education funding criteria but wishes to continue meeting it may be possible to retain the use of equipment and existing funds. Please discuss this with your Ministry of Education early childhood advisor.

Appendix 1 - Supporting the children on session

Criteria

The parent's role is that of a learning guide for their children. The best learning opportunities will be achieved when adults support children in following their own interests by:

joining them and sharing in their play;
using open-ended questions e.g. how, why, what do you think..?;
thinking aloud, when working on problems together adults can share their thoughts and show how they go about solving problems;
helping children develop their interests through play;
recognising and respecting the child's key interests;
helping their child put their ideas into practice without taking over;
asking open-ended questions of the children when guiding their learning;
giving children positive feedback and showing real interest in their play;
adding interest to children's play by participating with them, talking with them and contributing extra resources;
providing a wide range of equipment and resources to use in many different ways;
giving help to use resources correctly;
helping children make friends and socialise with other children and adults;
setting up the environment to reduce the potential of conflict;
using language that encourages discussion, thinking, negotiation and humour;
recognising that sometimes children will play and learn successfully by themselves and at other times adult contribution will be needed to extend the play;
enlist children's help with decision making by giving them choices, e.g. 'Shall we have playdough or clay today?';
introducing chants, rhymes, songs or music if appropriate; and helping the children to develop the language of social interaction, negotiation and inquiry.

Some playgroups use a newsletter or wall chart to encourage parents to follow these guidelines and take responsibility.

In order to support children in this way, adults need to be present with their children in the various play areas and available to work with them. Parents know their children best, including their strengths and interests. Playgroup is an ideal place where parents' useful home practices can be supported and where children can experience positive learning outcomes with each child learning in his or her own way and at their own pace. The programme offered must provide opportunities for infants, toddlers and young children to maximise learning.

Making sense of what is happening

The group might want to think about how the children are progressing at playgroup. Group members might ask themselves some questions in relation to each child's progress:

What is the child interested in now?
What are they learning now?
What is the child good at?
Are they struggling with anything?
How do we know this?
What can we do to help this child progress?

The answers that come from exploring these questions will guide the way the group offer learning experiences and support the child's play on session. Adults might ask the child about their learning:

What did you enjoy doing today?

How did you learn that?

What did you like about learning this?

Did you need help with anything?

What do you think you'd like to learn about next time?

The adults might then balance this information from the child with what they see on session. It is very important that adults are interacting with children, noticing what activities the children are interested in and participating in their learning. The adults on session can then discuss how to extend play at the next session

Appendix 2 - Characteristics of Infants, Toddlers and Young Children

Introduction

*Children experience the world with their whole being
body, spirit, energy, minds, hearts, compassion, tears,
laughter, anger, pride,
learning, understanding, love and soul.
Children play, grow and feel the world around them'¹*

(R Keeler, 2008)

1 Keeler, R., (2008). Natural Playscapes: Creating outdoor play environments for the soul. Redmond, WA: Exchange Press.

Infants

Infants – Birth to about 18 months

Infants are learning to anticipate events, make sense of their worlds and communicate their needs in these early months of life. They learn through touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste in exploration of their everyday environments, and through interactions with adults and other children in environments that are safe yet provide sensory stimulation.

'Experiences' grow the brain of our infants. These 'experiences' are through playful exploration.

Infants learn by having a variety of safe, everyday objects that stimulate their senses. Play in natural environments or with natural materials (nature), provide rich opportunities for exploring. Warm sun on faces, squishy mud between toes, the smell of mint in the garden! Our senses gather information about the world around us and how it works

In a particular approach to working with infants, called heuristic play, infants who are old enough to sit up comfortably on their own and reach for objects are given free access to everyday items stored in a container or basket. Adults stay with and watch the infant while they explore, without taking over. Infants can focus for long periods of time, sitting alongside a basket and choosing from a range of materials, exploring their space and texture by mouthing, banging, handling and waving.

At other times infants need adults to talk with them, anticipate their interest, actions and requirements as well as provide new opportunities and experiences.

Special activities for infants might include:

batting/grasping/kicking, use scarves, toys that roll and mobiles;
infant 'peepo', use net curtains, boxes, mirrors and scarves;
for pulling up, use towel rails attached to wall, steps and couches;
use an empty paddling pool to create a play pit, use balls, washable scarves and ribbons; and
a cosy quiet area, use pillows, curtains and soft toys
sensory objects to touch, taste, shake, smell, bang, push, prod, and look at

Infants need a safe, interesting and calm place to explore and adults or other children to play, interact and talk with them. While young infants will generally stay in one place, older infants are mobile – so infants at playgroup need large enough spaces to explore safely. Premises need to be able to be easily cleaned and kept hygienic.

Young infants like to practise body movements – they do this best while lying on a firm, cushioned surface. Make sure there are cushions or comfortable matting for young infants to lie on, and give them opportunities to explore objects with their hands and mouths by having suitable equipment nearby. Infants spend a great deal of time looking up towards the ceiling, walls and lights, so put some interesting mobiles or pictures/posters on the walls and ceilings to stimulate their learning, and have comfortable seats or couches in the infant area for adults to sit and hold infants or for breastfeeding.

Mobile infants love to explore, so allow plenty of room for them to move. Provide small, safe challenges with different levels to encourage learning, such as low steps or risers – or the group could use couches, large boxes, mattresses and piles of cushions.

Sitting comfortably on their own is in reference to not 'propping' your infant up with pillows or cushions to sit. It is better to wait until he/she gets to the sitting position 'by themselves, when they are ready, in their own time'; that is, when their back and neck is strong enough to support this sitting position.

Toddlers

Toddlers – about 1 to 3 years

Toddlers explore in different ways they are energetic and on the move. Often their desires are ahead of their language and their physical abilities.

Toddlers' main interests include putting objects in and out of containers of all kinds, selecting, matching, sorting,

loading, dumping, and noting the differences between objects. There is no right or wrong way to use the materials, but lots of items are needed, enough for each child to have their own set. Toddlers have lots of energy and love to act out their experiences. Providing a special area and equipment for this type of activity is important. Space for toddlers needs to:

- have a good choice of suitable activities;
- encourage play with others as toddlers become more social; and
- be big enough for large-muscle activities such as running and jumping.

It's important to remember that older children sometimes don't consider the needs or safety of younger children in rough-and-tumble play. So, consider having barriers to protect younger children in mixed-age groups.

Special activities for toddlers:

- transport area – cars, trucks, aeroplanes, boats and trains;
- hauling, moving, loading, dumping area – wheelbarrows, buckets and trolleys;
- sounds exploration area – drums, shakers, bells, rattles, tambourines, cymbals and xylophone;
- blocks, bottles and balls area – paper bag blocks, wine cask (empty) blocks, soft blocks, bottles, cardboard tubes, beach balls, tennis balls, pompoms, beanbags and skittles;
- family play area – telephones, dolls, blankets, boxes, cups and kitchen utensils, purses, hats, shoes and gloves;
- 'let's work' area – brooms, sweeping, dustpan and brush, hammering, washing and raking;
- 'let's get creative' area – big crayons and colouring pencils, paper, pavement chalk, paper and paint; and
- 'let's move' area – ramps, boxes, planks, ladder, large cardboard box to crawl through, carpet squares for stepping, cushion mountain and inner tubes.

Young children

Young Children – about 2½ years to 5 years

Young children are learning at a very fast rate. They are learning language skills, developing opinions and interests and coping with change as well as learning about themselves and their abilities. Children at playgroup need space that:

- is organised but challenging;
- has plenty of safe and appropriate equipment;
- has a quiet area for stories, puzzles or similar; and
- is well set up so adults can interact with children and respond quickly to their needs.

As young children make sense of their world through active exploration and interaction it is important to give children real and authentic experiences with quality objects and materials.

Plastic equipment, while cheap, easily accessible and attractive to children, is often poor imitations of real objects. For example, a plastic hammer, plastic spanner and plastic carpentry bench have little educational value for carpentry play. By using a real hammer or spanner successfully, a child can learn a lot of carpentry skills as well as gain useful knowledge about these objects and their uses. With adult support, children will also learn about important issues relating to the safe use of real equipment.

Appendix 3 - Planning

Criteria

Planning and providing for a range of learning experiences and opportunities

For playgroups, the educational programme is made up of all the things that are happening for children while they are attending playgroup. This will include:

- how the environment is set up
- what equipment is provided
- all the experiences, activities, events and routines that happen
- interactions that occur between all the people in the group.

Playgroups that are meeting the curriculum requirement will plan for and provide:

- a warm, safe, secure, predictable, interesting and stimulating environment
- a range of equipment and resources that invite exploration, stimulate thinking, include the familiar and the unfamiliar, and reflect the dual cultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand
- warm caring relationships, prompt responses to children's needs, and interactions and responses that build positive relationships with people, places and things, draw on children's interests and capabilities and encourage children to try things out and revisit experiences
- a variety of play opportunities to encourage learning
- opportunities for children to make decisions.

Each playgroup will do things in ways that best suit the values, beliefs and interests of their own children, families, and the resources available in the setting and local community.

Downloads

Strategy

What you provide, what you do and how you do it

The play materials and experiences that are available in the playgroup provide ways in which the ideas in the principles and strands of Te Whāriki can occur. For instance children's health and well-being can be promoted through the rituals and routines associated with food; children can learn about their own and other cultures through interacting with a range of culturally diverse dolls, musical instruments, books and pictures; they can develop understandings about concepts such as size, shape and volume by experimenting with water and different sized containers.

Some groups use the following types of play as a starting point to make sure they provide a variety of equipment, experiences and opportunities:

family and dramatic play - so children can act out and make sense of their everyday experiences (using equipment such as clothes and hats for dressing up, kitchen equipment such as stoves, pots, and dishes and props associated with familiar jobs such as doctors, fire service, supermarket, farming, cooking)

creative play - so children can express their ideas and feelings and experiment with a range of creative materials such as paint, playdough, music, collage to create new things (using equipment such as paints, paper, playdough, clay, glue and collage materials, musical instruments)

exploring language, literacy and communication - so children can become familiar with and expert at expressing their ideas and feelings and communicating with others in a variety of different ways (using equipment such as books, music, storytelling, writing and drawing tools)

physically active play - so children can develop strong and healthy bodies and know how to use them (using equipment such as large outdoor climbing equipment, ladders, boxes, swings, indoor mats, bean bags, large pieces of material, trolleys to push and pull, balls)

constructive play - so children can see how things fit together and learn about shapes and sizes (using equipment such as blocks, boxes, junk materials for large construction, carpentry)

exploratory play - so children can learn about how the environment and how things link together (using equipment such as water, sand, magnets, rulers, as well as equipment noted above)

manipulative play - so children can develop their fine motor skills (using equipment such as puzzles, threading, items to stack and sort).

The way the experiences and opportunities associated with these types of play are made available to children, and the ways that adults interact and respond to children as they play should reflect the principles and strands of Te Whāriki.

For instance, books read in a comfortable, light and quiet space can promote a healthy attitude to reading in a child. Having books available for children to choose means they are able to take control over when and what books they use and also means children can see words and pictures in print and realise that these 'symbols' have meaning and can be used to express ideas. Reading can help settle an unhappy child. The materials that are provided are only one way in which the principles and strands can happen.

All children benefit from a programme that reflects the dual cultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand. This would include aspects of Māori language and culture.

While the activities, resources, experiences, events and routines that occur, or are available during playgroup are important, the principles and strands of Te Whāriki come to life through the interactions, responses and relationships that occur between children and children, children and adults, and adults and adults during playgroup.

Questions to help playgroups plan what happens and how they happen.

At the end of each session (or at some other regular interval – e.g. each month)

What learning have I noticed? (What have particular children been practising, trying hard to master, trying for the first time, doing in different ways or with different materials?)

What has happened that has made me think/wonder about/want to know more about?

What do we want to carry forward? Try more of? Try in different ways? Build on?

Do we need to do some things differently?

Documentation required

Playgroups are required to document a plan outlining the learning experiences and play opportunities they will provide. A plan provides a starting point for playgroups. It provides a summary of the experiences and opportunities available to children during sessions.

A plan will also help the playgroup to review their sessions - at least once every 12 months. Plans can take a number of forms and be documented in different ways.

Some groups might choose to document what is happening at playgroup by writing about particular experiences, opportunities, activities or events that have captured children's attention and interest during each session. A large blank sheet of paper displayed on a wall can work well – this can be added to each session so a growing picture emerges of what and how children are learning. Other groups might choose to record the same information in a daily diary. Photos with brief descriptions about what is happening are an easy way to document children's learning and progress. They can also be displayed and provide opportunities for children to talk about what they did and what they learnt with others.

The [Kei Tua o te Pae](#) exemplar resource booklets provide a rich array of examples of documentation of children's learning.

Some examples of planning documentation are available to download on the Overview tab

1, 2, and 3 are examples of planning statements – they describe how the group will ensure that what is provided is consistent with the curriculum framework.

4, 5, 6, and 7 are examples of templates or frameworks of varying degrees of detail and complexity for groups to record what experiences and opportunities have been/will be provided on a weekly, monthly or term basis.

Whatever method you decide to use it is important to remember that you need to pay attention to how, where and when experiences and opportunities are provided and how children engage with them. You will also need to pay attention to the impact of those experiences on the children, and the ways in which adults have responded to and supported children's learning.

References

View the Ministry's
Get ideas about
Learn about and the
Find out what .

Reviewing

Reviewing the learning opportunities and experiences

Playgroups are required to review the experiences and opportunities planned for and provided at playgroup at least every twelve months. Reviewing these will help you to make sure they are consistent with the curriculum framework.

Reviewing the educational programme can be done in different ways and each playgroup will determine how best to do this for themselves. Many groups will find it useful to review what is being provided on a more regular basis than once a year. Talking at monthly meetings about what is or has been working well, and what you might want to do differently is a good starting point for regularly reflecting on how well your playgroup is working for its members.

Your MOE advisor can provide you with advice about how to undertake a review. However you decide to undertake a review, the following big picture questions are important:

What do we want to know? (eg Do the environment and our interactions encourage children to actively explore? Are we protecting the health and well being of the youngest children in our playgroup?).

What are we doing now?

How satisfied are we with what is happening now?

What do we want to introduce, continue with, adapt or abandon?

Start by reminding yourself about what it is you are trying to achieve (go back to Te Whāriki and your playgroup philosophy statement) and decide on an aspect that you want to review.

Decide what information you need – and how you might go about getting it. Focus on the children – what are they interested in? What do they keep going back to? What do they spend a long time at? What do they concentrate on?

Think about information you already have on hand that you can use such as documented plans, photos, daily diaries, meeting minutes.

Gather the information, then make sense of the information you have gathered – what does it tell you about what is working well and what is not?

Decide on what actions need to be taken, how they will happen and who will be involved.

Appendix 4 - Tessa Learns about Physics

Tessa pushing her buggy outside

Today at Playgroup Tessa put a baby in the dolls buggy and pushed the buggy outside onto the deck. Then she carefully turned the buggy round and tried to push it back inside. She pushed as hard as she could but the buggy just wouldn't roll over the small step leading back into the playroom.

Undaunted by this set back Tessa stepped back then stepped forward pushing hard. When this didn't work she lifted the handle of the buggy which lifted the back wheels off the ground. With the back wheels in the air she tried again to push the front wheels over the entrance. When this failed she seemed rather perplexed as she looked closely at the wheels and thought about the problem.

Then with an air of determination she lifted the handle as high as she could leaning way back and when all 4 wheels were off the ground she carried the whole buggy inside. Puffing from the exertion Tessa dropped the buggy as soon as she was inside. Then she quickly pushed it around in a circle and straight back outside onto the deck where she circled round for another run at the entrance.

Once again she experimented with a straight push with all 4 wheels on the ground and with a half lift with the back wheels raised. When these techniques failed again she tried bending her knees and making herself lower then pushed from this squatting position. Then in frustration she performed the full lift leaning way back and carrying the buggy through the door again.

Tessa continued to push the buggy outside and back in over and over and over again. She invested a huge amount of effort and energy in the straight push, the half lift and the squatting push over and over again. Eventually she rocked the buggy in frustration and as she pushed down on the handle the front wheels lifted and it slid inside. Success at last!

As quickly as she could Tessa circled back outside and rocked the buggy till the front wheels lifted and once again it slid inside. One of the adults said "Wow that really works Tessa when you push down on the handle the front wheels lift up" After discovering the tricky mathematical concept of leverage and perfecting this new skill Tessa left the buggy after a grand total of 16 trips in and out of the playroom.

Glossary

For the purposes of these criteria:

'Group' means a playgroup.

'Parent' means:

- the person (or people) responsible for having the role of providing day to day care for the child; and
- may include a biological or adoptive parent, step parent, partner of a parent of a child, legal guardian or member of the child's family, whanau or other culturally recognised family group.

'Premises' means the land and buildings (or parts of buildings) used by the playgroup.

'Procedure' means a particular and established way of doing something.

'Records' means information or data on a particular subject collected and preserved.

'Regulation' means a regulation under the Education (Playgroups) Regulations 2008; and

'Service Provider' means the person or persons who operate the playgroup.