

Early Childhood Service Education Review Report: Wellington Early Intervention Centre

Education reviews in early childhood services focus on the factors that contribute to positive outcomes for children. We work with early childhood services to identify their strengths and the areas they need to review and develop. Early childhood services take part in the review process and are expected to make use of the findings to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

1 Evaluation of the Service

How well placed is the service to promote positive outcomes for children?

The Wellington Early Intervention Centre continues to be well placed to promote positive outcomes for children and their families.

Context

This service, known as the Wellington Early Intervention Trust (WEIT) is a centre-based early intervention service. It is contracted by the Ministries of Education and Health to provide therapy and teaching programmes for preschool children within the greater Wellington region. The Board of Trustees employs a service coordinator and an administration officer to assist with the coordination of day-to-day operations.

Children with special needs attend the centre once a week with a family member. They benefit from a range of professional therapy, assessment and interventions in small group or individual sessions. The service employs a team of trained therapists, teachers and education support workers. Children receive early intervention teaching, speech-language therapy, music therapy and physiotherapy.

Educators, therapists and families together establish practical goals, strategies and programmes to develop new skills that can be continued in the home and community. The WEIT team liaises closely with early childhood services and oversees the work of the education support workers.

The centre has low staff turnover and a positive reporting history with ERO. Staff have responded to the recommendations of the September 2008 ERO report.

Review Findings

The Trust's philosophy is clearly evident throughout the service. It focuses on early intervention that:

- uses a strengths-based approach
- recognises and respects the diverse needs and cultures of families
- provides strong support and advocacy for families.

Teachers and therapists have positive, sensitive and responsive relationships with children. They develop strong supportive partnerships with parents and whānau. Parents are active participants in their child's learning and development. Adults and children have fun as part of the learning process.

Effective strategies are used by teachers and therapists to engage children. Learning in literacy, numeracy, oral language and social competencies are effectively integrated throughout the programme. Routines are consistently implemented and reinforced with visual timetables to give

children a sense of security. When appropriate, staff effectively support children to deal with the unknown. Children are provided with regular feedback that acknowledges their efforts and successes.

Supportive transitions into schools and early childhood centres are a key feature of the service, and review contributes to ongoing improvements. Transitions are well planned for, effective partnerships are established and children's sense of belonging and success in their new environment are given priority.

Children's strengths and needs are known and well communicated through the highly skilled assessment practices of teachers and therapists. Individual plans are developed by the team in consultation with families and other professionals.

Teachers and therapists are reflective and collaboratively critique their practice within a staff culture of trust and strong relationships. They engage in discussion and debate that challenges and informs improvement of practice. Education support workers are well-supported through programmes of induction, supervision and appraisal.

The centre has developed links with appropriate community groups, including iwi organisations, to support and develop partnerships for promoting success of Māori children, as Māori. Teachers and therapists have increased the use of Māori words and songs in their programme. They build sound relationships with the parents and whānau of Māori children. They have a focus on developing and maintaining strong partnerships with whānau so that staff know what parents want their children to learn.

A committed group of past and current parents make up the board and they bring a range of skills to their roles. Governance policies and procedures provide clear guidelines and are systematically reviewed. The service coordinator knowledgeably leads a collaborative and improvement-focused team. Strong links have been built with external agencies, services and schools.

The service coordinator has led the team in developing self-review practice. The current model is based on the Ministry of Education's Specialist Service Standards and includes regular feedback from various agencies with connections to the centre. The outcomes are used to inform improvements to practice and are shared with the parent community and board.

Key Next Steps

The board of trustees should ensure that the service coordinator is appraised annually and includes regular input from an appropriate professional.

2 Legal Requirements

Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

Before the review, the staff and management of Wellington Early Intervention Centre completed an *ERO Centre Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legal obligations related to:

- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management and administration.

During the review, ERO looked at the service's systems for managing the following areas that have a potentially high impact on children's wellbeing:

- emotional safety (including positive guidance and child protection)
- physical safety (including supervision; sleep procedures; accidents; medication; hygiene; excursion policies and procedures)
- suitable staffing (including qualification levels; police vetting; teacher registration; ratios)
- evacuation procedures and practices for fire and earthquake.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements.

3 Next Review

When is ERO likely to review the early childhood service again?

ERO is likely to carry out the next review in three years.

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