

Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most

Feedback on the draft indicators of quality

ERO is updating its indicators for evaluating quality in centre-based early childhood services. We are interested in your feedback on these draft indicators by the end of November 2019.

1. What is your position or role?

RPH delivers population and personal health services in the greater Wellington region. Our geographical area of service delivery spans Hutt Valley, Capital & Coast and Wairarapa DHBs. We deliver a range of population and personal health services, aiming to improve the health of communities throughout the greater Wellington region. In particular we focus on achieving equitable health outcomes for Māori, Pacific peoples, tamariki and young people, low income whānau and other groups facing complex challenges.

As a Public Health Unit (PHU) we are charged with protecting the health of our resident population. One of our work programmes is with early learning services (ELS), and we provide health reports to our region's Ministry of Education senior advisors for licensing new and under-performing ELS. We support more than 500 ELS across our region, which includes providing support to manage outbreaks of infectious disease, developing rigorous health and safety policies, and designing advice to create environments that support health and wellbeing.

2. How useful are the draft indicators?

- Not useful
- Somewhat useful
- Useful
- Very useful

Comments:

We **strongly recommend** that the draft set of indicators for early childhood education include '**Safe healthy environments**' to ensure that ELS support the emotional, physical and mental wellbeing of tamariki. This is discussed further in question 4 below.

3. How could the indicators be more useful?

Comments:

A planning regime for reviewing the indicators should be built in with a recommended time period of 3-5 years.

4. Are there any indicators you would have expected to be included that are not there?

- Yes

- No

Comments:

RPH **recommends** the inclusion of **'Safe healthy environments'** indicators for the health and wellbeing of our tamariki and the environment in which they learn.

Adverse ELS environments increase the risk of health and developmental problems over the short and long-term [1]. The early childhood curriculum framework – Te Whāriki [2] – sets out a vision of children as confident learners and communicators, healthy in body, mind and spirit. The current indicators could be strengthened to support this goal, by including indicators that monitor the physical environment to ensure it is a safe and healthy environment for children.

The Early Childhood Environment Study [1] found high CO₂ levels in sleep rooms due to poor ventilation, poor heating designs and low compliance with minimum standards [3][4]. Having indicators that monitor the environment would mean that ELS could be monitored regularly and ensure they remain healthy and safe for children.

RPH is available to meet to discuss potential indicators that could be used to support the healthy environment for ELS. We would also welcome the opportunity to talk with you about increased provision of public health resource to sufficiently meet the demand for high quality monitoring of early learning services.

[1] Garner, Andrew S., et al. "Early childhood adversity, toxic stress, and the role of the pediatrician: translating developmental science into lifelong health." *Paediatrics* 129.1 (2012): e224-e231. (<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/129/1/e224.full.pdf>)

[2] <https://education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/ELS-Te-Whariki-Early-Childhood-Curriculum-ENG-Web.pdf>

[3] <https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Licensing-criteria/Centre-based-ECE-services/ECE-Licensing-Booklet-Early-Childhood-June2018.pdf>

[4] <http://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/running-an-ece-service/the-regulatory-framework-for-ece/licensing-criteria/centre-based-ece-services/premises-and-facilities/general/pf12-heating-lighting-noise-and-ventilation/>.

5. What support might you need to use the indicators in your internal evaluation processes for improvement?

Comments:

In our experience the lack of a rigorous monitoring framework has resulted in services neglecting their premises and adopting poor health and safety practices, increasing the risk and impact of illness in those services and their communities.

Currently, Public Health Units have no regulatory requirement for implementing a formal visiting programme of ELS. After initial registration, we only visit the ELS again if there is a request from the Ministry of Education (MoE) to complete a 'special' health report. These requests are generally to visit ELS that are under-performing academically, have little or no governance structure and there are concerns about the physical environment. During visits to these services we have found physical environments neglected and low teacher morale. Services that require 'special' health report visits are generally in areas of high deprivation and often children attending these services are amongst the most vulnerable. In our experience, these ELS have been through monitoring and review processes by the Education Review Office (ERO), which would have been a great opportunity to pick up health and safety issues before they got too severe and report back to Public Health Units.

Earlier this year RPH submitted to MoE on the *Draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning 2019-2029*, we have attached the link to this submission and would like to draw your attention in particular to section 1.7, which looks at increased monitoring of services. In section 1.7 RPH stated that it strongly supported the development of a rigorous monitoring programme including unannounced visits by MoE and ERO and recommended that public health is included in this monitoring programme. (See <http://www.rph.org.nz/resources/submissions/2019-03rphsubmission-earlylearning-strategicplan.pdf>)

6. Did you find the introductory information, framing and context at the beginning of the document useful?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

Nil

7. Did you find the layout of the content easy to use?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

Nil

8. Do you have any other comments?

Comments:

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with someone from ERO to discuss how we can support the development of this work. Please contact Jackie Mayne (Jackie.mayne@huttvalleydhb.org.nz).

Note: Page 6 – No macron re 'whānau' - For parents and whanau, the indicators:

Note: Page 8 – there are translations available with the exception of ‘whai’ - to follow, chase, pursue, look for, search for, court, woo, aim at, pursuit.

Ngā - plural, more than one

Ara - pathway, route, direction

Hua - significant, outcome, result

RPH’s earlier submission on *Draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning 2019-29*:

<http://www.rph.org.nz/resources/submissions/2019-03rphsubmission-earlylearning-strategicplan.pdf>

Link to *Taonga Moko*puna video series: <http://www.rph.org.nz/taonga-mokopuna>