Minutes

Early Learning Regulatory Review
Sector Advisory Group – Workshop on Network Planning

Date	Wednesday 7 April 2021, 11:00am – 3:30pm
Venue	Mātauranga House, 33 Bowen St., Wellington
Chair	John Brooker, Group Manager, Education System Policy
Attendees (Ministry)	Siobhan Murray, Senior Policy Manager, ECE Policy, ESP Elspeth Maxwell, Manager, ECE Operational Policy and Design, SE&S Megan Hutchison, Lead Adviser, ECE Operational Policy and Design, SE&S Sam Johnston, Senior Advisor, ECE Operational Policy Design, SE&S Kirsty Macdonald, Senior Policy Analyst, ECE Policy, ESP Carlee Simmonds, Principal Adviser, SE&S Joel Gapes, Senior Adviser, ECE Operational Policy and Design, SE&S Matt Amos, Policy Analyst, Funding Policy, ESP Natasha Kuka, ECE Policy, ESP Richard Joblin, Chief Adviser, Education System Investment, ESP
(Members)	Sarah Alexander, CEO, ChildForum Catherine Bell, Senior Policy and Engagement Advisor, Te Rito Maioha Fiona Hughes, Deputy CEO, BestStart Educare Shelley Hughes, NZEI Jo Lambert, General Manager, Barnardos Emma Norrie, Area Manager, Evolve Education Group Peter Reynolds, CEO, Early Childhood Council Raewyn Overton-Stuart, Manager Director, PAUA Andrew Philipps, CEO, Provincial Education Arapera Royal Tangaere, Kaihere Kaupapa Kounga, Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust Esther Tinirau, Te Kōhanga Reo Calmar Ulberg, CEO, Counties Manukau Kindergarten Association Cathy Wilson, Executive Officer, Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand Pauline Winter, General Manager, CEO Auckland Kindergarten Association Jill Bond, CEO, New Zealand Kindergartens
Apologies	Thomas Tawhiri, General Manager, Playcentre Aotearoa Timothy Wong, CEO, Evolve Education Group,

Note: These notes capture the themes of the discussion and key points made during the workshop. They do not necessarily represent a shared view of the group and there may be differing perspectives on some points. They are not intended as comprehensive minutes of the meeting.

Introduction

- Ministry outlined the meeting purpose: to provide an opportunity to input into the design and implementation of the new network management function.

Proposals

- The Ministry outlined the five main proposals that would be the focus of discussion across the day:
    - Factors that are important to the design and implementation
    - Process: setting up a new centre or network
    - Preapplication: the matters the Minister must take into account
    - The new process for the pre-application stage
    - The extension process.

Factors

The Ministry presented a range of factors that could guide the design and implementation of the network management policy. Members were asked to discuss if these are the right factors to guide the design and whether there was anything missing.

Discussion and feedback:

- SAG were generally supportive of the factors put forward. Some argued some of the terms need to be defined. Other factors suggested included: outcomes for children and whānau should be prioritised, and environmental impacts. It was also suggested Te Tiriti o Waitangi should be presented first.

Process: setting up a new centre or network

The Ministry sought to understand from providers perspective the process for setting up a new centre or network.

Discussion included:
- SAG indicated there wasn't a clear linear model for setting up a new centre or network. The process depends on a range of matters, including affiliation to a wider organisation.
- Members noted the influence of developers who may identify the site, centre numbers etc. The provider may have limited influence over these matters.
- Information to inform inception is taken from information counts, census (though this can be problematic due to poor data), Gapmaps. Information is used to ensure services there is a need for a new service (by looking at whether there are other services nearby and population information). How many people attend and from where differs depending on where the service is located (city vs rural).
- Home-based networks grow organically and are harder to plan. Word of mouth is important.

Pre-application matters that the Minister must take into account

Participants were asked to describe:

- What do each of the aspects (the demography of the area, the needs of the communities in the area, the needs of the children in the area, and the availability of services in the area with different offerings, for example, the provision of te reo Māori) mean to you?
- What do you already take into account before applying for a licence?

- What data do you already rely on?

Discussion included:

- The needs of children and communities are really hard to know (hospitals and teen parent units are exceptions to this). Demographics and other services have more specific data. Also, the needs can change through the changing circumstances of the community (for example, gentrification). Needs aren't necessarily fixed. They can be flexible and mould to fit the circumstances.

- It's almost financially impossible to build for an education and care service for fewer than 70 children.

- In assessing the demography of the area, the data spectrum is large. Some people don't collect data. Others have very sophisticated systems. GapMaps, consultants, ed counts, Census area unit (this can be expanded). However, this takes a certain level of market experience. And demographic info is hard for small single owner services.

- Other considerations include the size of area (distance to travel to centre), the transient nature of population, growth in population eg housing development, availability of other ECE services, stay home vs working partners, whakapapa.

- The needs of the community in the area could be seen in a range of things including:
  - Pacific communities
  - Māori for Māori
  - Extra learning support
  - Ethnic/cultural responsiveness
  - How the service will cater for the needs of children/whānau & their learning support needs
  - Connection to support services for whānau
  - Meeting needs of parents
    - Single
    - Both working
  - Sessional vs drop in
  - Makeup of area eg shift work (dairy farms), seasonal workers
  - Opening hours
  - Proximity to workplaces.

- The availability of services in the area with different offerings included considering the Number of services in the area, teacher availability and supply, track record of providers – are they quality, Māori medium pathway, and philosophies (how to articulate that and what it looks like).

The needs of the children in the area could mean considering:
- Age range, infant & toddlers
- Connection to whānau
- Whakapapa
- Quality outcomes for children
- Teacher supply to meet cultural and language needs
- Learning support requirements
- Linkages to kura and primary transitions
- Ease of safe access for Tamariki
- ECE in the workplace
  - Breastfeeding
  - Easily visit child
  - Strong connections between parent, whānau + service

National and/or regional statement

Participants were asked to discuss the risks and benefits of having a national and/or regional statements and what information should be included in the statements.

Discussion included:

- The SAG were generally supportive of the national and regional statements.

- What the Ministry/the Minister sees as the vision for ECE in the future. The need for guidance to the network planning structure itself and a clear statement from the Ministry noting where services are needed and are not needed.

- The scope of the statements - If you can add children to your service (or change your licence) will this process affect you? If there are several services like this in an area the addition of children could have a wider affect. Similar if you were to improve your facilities you might want to then increase capacity.

- There will likely be a surge prior to any changes occurring then a drop off after the changes have been made.

- Māori medium pathways, other language provisions need consideration.

- There is a risk that government prefers (or is perceived to prefer) large providers as they could find the process easier to manage.

- How often the statements would be reviewed and the source of the data (which would have to be transparent)

- National or regional statements need to:
  o Provide clear MOE decision criteria
  o Have transparency of data
  o Continue sector engagement to get the framework right
  o Need to be current, eg reflect population movement

- Risks with national/regional statements include:
  o Things could change
  o Could look like Ministry favouring large providers who are better placed to use this information
  o Prevents entry of small providers?

Extension process

Participants were asked in what other circumstances would they see there being a need to apply for an extension and what should the threshold be for an extension to be granted.

Discussion and questions included:

- The SAG were generally supportive of a high threshold for extensions.

- Will pre-approvals be made public?

- How far through an investment should a person have to go before they are declined? The further through the process you are the more money has been spent.

- A possible scenario is a developer gets a pre-application approval then sells the right to step in and become service provider at a later stage (provided the service provider passes the fit and proper test).

- What happens if the service provider changes?

- What happens if you get to the end and you are approved but then you decide not to go ahead with the service? Are there any consequences for wasting time?

- During the process what would be the requirement to keep the Ministry up to date on what is occurring?

- In the worst-case scenario, a service took three years to develop.

- Will past pre-applications impact upon current pre-applications?