



Impact of Covid-19 on the Early Childhood Education Sector in Aotearoa New Zealand: Challenges and opportunities

Initial findings from a survey of managers

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	1
Snapshot of key findings	3
Strategic planning	3
Teaching and learning	3
Enrolments and attendance	4
Staffing	4
Funding	4
Conclusion	5
Introduction	6
Policy context	6
Funding	6
Government role in planning and provision of ECE	6
Government actions and MOE support for ECE during the Covid-19 pandemic	7
Methodology	9
Response rate	9
Age groups catered for	10
Analysis	10
Findings	11
Strategic planning	11
Teaching and learning	12
Staff and educator meetings and professional practice opportunities	12
ICT tools and communication with families/whānau	12
Distance learning opportunities for children	13
Enrolments and attendance	14
Staffing	14
Funding	15
Conclusion	18
Implications	19
References	21
Appendix 1: Survey of managers	23

SNAPSHOT OF KEY FINDINGS

This report presents a picture of the initial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on ECE services from the perspectives and experiences of managers from education and care services, kindergarten associations, playcentre regions and homebased services. The survey was distributed on 15 June 2020 after the first wave of Covid-19, when New Zealand had just moved to Level 1. It covered the period March to June, as New Zealand moved through Lockdowns 4 and 3, and Level 2 to Level 1. During this period, ECE services continued to receive the main form of government funding, the ECE Funding Subsidy, even when services were closed and there were no or fewer children attending. ECE services were also eligible for the government Wage Subsidy if they met criteria for loss of expected income and faced laying off staff or reducing hours. Some applied for rent reductions and small business loans.

Invitations to complete the survey were emailed to managers using contact details sourced through the Ministry of Education Directory of ECE services on the Education Counts website. In total, there were 1,084 open invitations. One hundred and fifty-six managers completed more than 83 percent of questions, the benchmark for inclusion of data. The response rate was 17 percent overall.

Responses were received from eight kindergarten association managers responsible for 202 kindergartens, three playcentre regional managers responsible for 166 playcentres, four homebased managers responsible for 54 homebased services, and 141 education and care service managers responsible for 197 education and care centres. The latter included seven who identified as “other” for example a language immersion service and an early intervention service. In total, the number of services managed was 619.

Managers reported the following:

Strategic planning

- Strategic/action plans were developed by most services, and prioritised people (communication with families, staff wellbeing), environment (hygiene, health and safety, property) and processes (routines and processes for opening).

Teaching and learning

- All kindergartens and playcentres, 86 percent of education and care centres, and 75 percent of homebased services held staff/educator meetings during Lockdowns 3 and 4.
- All managers provided professional practice opportunities during Lockdowns, except for a small percentage of education and care centre managers (2%).
- Email, telephone and Facebook were the most common forms of communication with families, with online learning and engagement platforms, social media and physical packs also used. Most used more than one method. Common communication topics were about COVID-19-related explanations (95%), returning to ECE (94%), learning, advice and home activities (89%) and health and welfare (87%).
- A wide variety of distance learning opportunities were offered for children during Lockdowns 3 and 4, and most managers reported their services provided several opportunities.
- Many managers offered direct support for families/whānau, including delivery of food vouchers, and brokered social, health and financial support for families who needed it during Lockdowns 3 and 4 and into Level 2.

Enrolments and attendance

- Fifty-five percent of managers said their services opened for children in Lockdown 3, with 80 percent of these saying only “a few” children attended then.
- When Level 2 was reached, 47 percent had a staggered return for children. In the first week of Level 2 (week of 18 May 2020), a third of services had only “some” or “a few” children returning, while 63 percent had “most” returning. Only five percent said “all” returned.

Staffing

- Excluding playcentre, who were not able to open in Lockdown 3, a varying distribution of numbers of staff returned in Lockdown 3 ranging from all, most, some, to a few.
- Main reasons for staff not returning were in descending order: vulnerable dependents in the household (50%); health (42%); no demand/centre closed (37%); anxiety about returning to the service (32%); age (19%).
- Twenty-five percent of managers said their staff were only partially paid during Levels 3 and 4 Lockdowns. All kindergarten management, 74 percent of education and care management and 50 percent of homebased management reported permanent staff were fully paid. These differences were related to ownership, with 95 percent of community-based service management reporting full payment of staff, compared with 63 percent of privately-owned service management.
- Casual workers were disadvantaged in that they were not eligible to be counted for the Wage Subsidy.

Funding

- During the Lockdown, all Ministry of Education ECE funding continued to be paid, based on predicted enrolments. The MSD Childcare subsidy fees was not paid and services were urged not to charge parents fees.
- Many ECE service managers applied for Covid-related funding. Overall, 72 percent of ECE managers applied for the government Wage Subsidy, and of these most (90%) said they paid the subsidy to all staff. Most managers (92%) also topped up the Wage Subsidy under Lockdowns 3 and 4. Some applied for a rent reduction (16%) and some applied for an interest free loan for small businesses (16%). None of the kindergarten managers applied for the Wage Subsidy, but 77 percent of education and care managers and 75 percent of homebased managers did.
- ECE managers reported facing financial pressures, especially education and care and homebased services managers. While over a third of managers (38%) rated their financial position as about the same as before Covid-19, 48 percent rated it as “somewhat worse” or “much worse”.
- The most frequent difficulty was meeting costs of wages/salaries (19%), followed by staff employment conditions (13%), and fixed costs (13%). Kindergarten association managers were the only group not reporting difficulties in meeting these costs. Thirty-nine percent of managers reported they were using their financial reserves.

- Despite continuing to receive Ministry of Education funding, and accessing the Covid-19 Wage Subsidy, small business loans and potential rent reductions, many managers reported reducing permanent staff employment conditions. Overall, actions taken were reducing staff hours (24%), not filling vacancies for permanent staff (22%), not paying casual relievers (14%), making permanent staff redundant (6%), and reducing staff pay (5%). Education and care and homebased managers were the only group reporting changes to permanent staff employment conditions, while kindergarten association and education and care management reported not paying casual relievers.
- Fifty-six percent of managers reported lower enrolments or fewer children in the short term and 55 percent predicted these would be a problem in the long term.

Conclusion

Early childhood education acted as a crucial service during the Covid-19 pandemic, supporting essential workers in the education and care of their children and many families in home learning opportunities and advice. Staff development and wellbeing was another focus. Strategic plans were developed across key areas of ECE service operation and innovative distance methods were used to communicate with families and staff. The new understandings, strategies and ways of communicating have potential to become a valuable resource for any future pandemic planning and for ECE service use on an ongoing basis.

Early childhood education services, particularly community-based services, played a pivotal role in brokering social, health and financial support for families who needed it. In these respects, ECE services were operating as integrated services, a model that involves ECE services in co-ordinating access to education, health and community services. This integrated service model has been shown internationally to be highly valued by families in offering a “one-stop-shop” for family support, and is worth developing as part of a planned approach to provision.

The sustainability of services has been highlighted as many ECE services coped with financial pressures. Teachers and educators have been differentially impacted, with some losing pay and employment conditions. Casual workers have been particularly affected. Inequalities in access and quality that have been enduring features of this sector over more than three decades and were made possible through a neoliberal and market approach to ECE, have been brought into focus.

The survey findings raise unanswered and critical questions about why some managers in education and care and homebased services reduced permanent staff pay, make some permanent staff redundant and reduced staff hours despite continued receipt of the ECE Funding Subsidy, access to the government Wage Subsidy and small business loans, and access to potential rent reductions. There is an urgent need to address the government’s aim to deter for-profit entrepreneurs and “[turn] the tide away from private profit-focused provision” (Hipkins, 2018, p. 4), and to “develop a mechanism that promotes more consistent and improved teacher salaries and conditions in the early learning sector” (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 24).

Now is a good time to rethink the purpose of ECE, to redefine ECE as a public good, and to plan, fund and support it accordingly. Action to plan provision of public and community-based ECE, including integrated ECE within communities, and from the basis of a shared vision based on democratic ideals, and attention to “competent systems” of management would be productive of new ways of thinking about positive change.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) services have played a crucial role in supporting workers, families and children through the COVID-19 pandemic. Homebased educators supported essential workers through providing education and care for their children during Lockdown 4; and many teacher-led services were open for some children during Lockdown 3. The needs for social distancing, public health and safety measures and restrictions on ECE attendance changed teaching and learning in ECE services and their operation. ECE services needed to find innovative ways to communicate with children and families, offer learning opportunities and support. The purpose of this survey was to gather information about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE sector, based on the experiences and perspectives of ECE service managers in kindergarten associations, homebased services, education and care services and playcentre regions. The findings are intended to support the ECE sector in decision-making, inform government officials and government, and provide information for families and the public. The survey was distributed online on 15 June 2020 through the Early Years Research Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato. It was developed in discussion with sector representatives by Linda Mitchell, who is Professor in Early Childhood Education at the University of Waikato, Clare Wells, formerly CEO of New Zealand Kindergartens and now independent consultant, and Trisha Meagher-Lundberg a researcher and qualified ECE teacher. Edith Hodgen undertook the statistical analysis.

Policy context

Funding

Funding was a significant issue for managers during the Covid-19 Lockdowns and Levels. The various forms of government funding administered by the Ministry of Education for ECE are set out in the Ministry of Education Funding Handbook (Ministry of Education, 2018). Here we describe only the main forms of funding from government and private sources. The ECE Funding Subsidy for licensed ECE services is calculated according to service type, child age (under two and over two), hours of enrolment, and, in teacher-led services, percentage of qualified teachers. Other targeted forms of Ministry of Education Funding are 20 hours ECE, Targeted Funding for Disadvantage and Equity Funding. Another main source of government funding is the WINZ Childcare Subsidy (Work and Income New Zealand, 2020a) described as a “payment to help with the costs of childcare”. It is paid directly to services and is intended to offset fees for eligible families. Parental fees are a private source of funding. There are no caps on the level of fees that can be charged.

Government role in planning and provision of ECE

The government has no direct role in planning and provision of ECE services (with the exception of the Correspondence School, which includes ECE). New services can be established and receive child-based government funding without having to show that they would meet community needs or be sustainable. Community-based and private (for-profit) services each play a role in provision. Over the years, this situation has led to an inequitable patchwork of provision, with oversupply and undersupply in different areas, and provision of some services that are not well matched to the needs and preferences of families and communities (Department of Labour and National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, 1999; Early Childhood Education Project, 1996; May & Mitchell, 2009). Internationally, the 2006 OECD study of 20 countries (OECD, 2006) noted that a reliance on privatised provision of early childhood education will almost certainly lead to inequities in provision in poorer communities because

commercial providers are reluctant to invest in such communities. “Turning the tide away from a privatised, profit-focused education system” was identified by Minister of Education Chris Hipkins (2018, p. 4) in the Terms of Reference to Aotearoa New Zealand’s Strategic Plan for Early Learning as a key educational policy issue in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Government actions and MOE support for ECE during the Covid-19 pandemic

On 25 March the New Zealand government announced a Lockdown 4. All New Zealanders were to stay ‘in their bubble’ with physical distancing, no travel and only essential services and businesses to open. Businesses could apply for the Wage Subsidy if the service income fell below 30 percent compared to the same time the previous year¹.

From early January 2020 until 19 May, the Ministry of Education published special editions of *He Pānui Kōhungahunga/Early learning Bulletins* to inform the sector of COVID-19-related information, events and changes. The following information is sourced from these bulletins (Ministry of Education, 2020c).

On 25 March ECE services closed for five weeks. However, the government organised licensed home-based services to provide childcare for essential workers. A Special Bulletin on 25 March (Ministry of Education, 2020b) outlined provision for essential workers who were unable to access childcare. They could use one of three licensed home-based childcare providers for in home care to children (aged 0–14). A government initiative paid caregivers \$25 per hour with care conducted in one household ‘bubble’ only. The Ministry of Education ECE Funding Subsidy was to be paid through to 30 June; while the Childcare subsidy was stopped as the government was working on the expectation no fees would be charged. For home-based services there must be a first aid qualified adult present at all times while children are attending. Anecdotally, one of the government-contracted providers contacted ECE organisations seeking teachers with this required qualification to provide homebased care.

The government Wage Subsidy was available to both privately owned and community-based early childhood services. In addition, privately owned early childhood services could apply for the Small Business Cashflow (Loan) from 12 May through to 31 December 2020. This was introduced to support businesses and organisations struggling because of loss of actual or predicted revenue as a result of COVID-19. They must have 50 or fewer full-time-equivalent employees. Eligible businesses and organisations are entitled to a one-off loan. Loans are interest free if repaid within one year. The maximum amount loaned is \$10,000 plus \$1,800 per full-time-equivalent employee (Work and Income New Zealand, 2020b).

When the government announced the move to Lockdown 3 on 28 April, ECE services were able to open with a restricted role. All children who could stay at home should stay at home. Those services which opened for children of essential workers were clustered, with one service in three open. Home-based services resumed for a maximum of four children. Playcentre and playgroups remained closed. All children were to have access to distance learning, either through services using video meetings or phone contact, or government initiatives, e.g., a TV education channel was launched, packs were sent out to children enrolled in services receiving Targeted Funding for Disadvantage.

¹ Employers and sole traders could apply for the Wage Subsidy before 10 June 2020, to support them if they were impacted by COVID-19 and faced laying off staff or reducing hours. The majority of New Zealand employers adversely affected by COVID-19 were eligible to apply. State Sector organisations including Crown Entities, schools and tertiary institutions were not eligible with the exception of kindergartens, early childhood centres and NGOs. Businesses must have experienced a minimum 30% decline in actual or predicted revenue over the period of a month, or 30 days, when compared with the same month, or 30 days, last year, and that decline was related to COVID-19. The COVID-19 Wage Subsidy paid eligible services a flat rate of \$585.80 per week for every full-time employee, and \$350 per week for every part time worker (before tax), paid upfront in one lump sum to cover twelve weeks

The move to Level 2 was announced on 11 May with all early learning services to open on 14 May. Services had until 18 May to prepare to receive children, including working with communities to transition children back. Home-based visiting teachers could be met online until June when in-person visits would be required. The government announced an increase (2.3%) to the ECE funding subsidy to improve the pay of qualified teachers. In January 2021 a further increase (1.6%) in funding is to be made to help meet cost pressures. In addition, application for the Wage Subsidy was extended until September and the small business cashflow (Loan) scheme was extended from 12 May to the end of 2020.

At alert Level 1 on 8 June the government announced a return to business as usual for ECE services with good hygiene practices, including extra cleaning, and people who are unwell staying away a priority.

METHODOLOGY

A management survey was developed in discussion with ECE organisations and piloted with three ECE experts. The survey was made applicable to kindergarten association management, education and care service management, playcentre management and homebased service management. We sought information about the characteristics of the services and their management structures, and about responses and actions during Lockdowns 3 and 4, and Level 2. Information included:

- strategic responses developed by services;
- teaching and learning, communication with families and wider support offered families;
- enrolments and attendance;
- staffing during Lockdown 3; and
- funding, including ratings of financial position, funding-related applications and actions, any problems experienced in the short term, and anticipated impacts in the longer term.

The survey ended by asking for comments or additional information about the effects of COVID-19 on the service or on the provision of ECE generally, and seeking names of respondents prepared to respond in a follow-up interview. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix 1.

The survey was set up and distributed using Qualtrics survey platform. Invitations to complete the survey were emailed to people in management positions in kindergarten associations, playcentre regional managers, education and care centres and home-based services. Contact details were sourced through the Ministry of Education Directory of ECE services on the Education Counts website (Ministry of Education, 2020a), as well as through kindergarten associations themselves. Respondents were asked to complete the survey if they were in a management position and knew about the operations of their service. Only one survey was completed for each management contact.

The research had ethical approval from the Division of Education University of Waikato Research Ethics Committee. Respondents were given the opportunity to opt out in the email invitation.

Response rate

In total 1,116 invitations were sent to people in early childhood management positions across New Zealand. Thirty-two either opted out or had incorrect emails, leaving 1084 open invitations. Two hundred and seven people opened the survey, with 187 submitting responses. Of these 187 respondents, 156 completed more than 83 percent of questions, the benchmark for inclusion of data. The response rate was 17 percent overall.

Responses were received from eight kindergarten associations, three playcentre regional managers, four homebased services, although two managers of kindergartens also managed homebased services, and 141 education and care service managers. The latter included seven who identified as “other” for example a language immersion service and an early intervention service.

Fifty-four percent of respondents identified as managers/directors/CEOs, 28 percent as owners, and 18 percent as professional leaders or coordinators, head teachers or office holders. Overall, those in management positions represented 619 individual early childhood services. Six respondents managed more than one type of service, for example kindergarten and homebased services.

Table 1: Number and percent of services managed by service type

Management by service type	Number of services managed	Percent of services managed
Kindergarten associations (<i>n</i> = 8)	202	33
Playcentre regional managers (<i>n</i> = 3)	166	27
Education and Care managers (<i>n</i> = 141)	197	32
Homebased managers (<i>n</i> = 4)	54	8
Total	619	100

Age groups catered for

The majority of early childhood services in this study catered for children aged two to five years of age. Seventy-five percent catered for children under two years of age, and almost 20 percent enrolled children six-years-old. Only one service had just one age group enrolled; with most having four or more age groups in their services.

Analysis

The questionnaire used in this survey took on average 15-minutes to complete. Many of the questions asked were in the form of closed questions with boxes to tick. Answers to open-ended questions and comments were categorised and coded. Frequencies of the answers are reported, and these have been cross-tabulated by service type. Responses to questions on staffing and funding have been cross-tabulated for kindergarten and education and care according to whether these were community-based or privately owned. Playcentre were not included because of their different funding arrangements and staffing regulations.

FINDINGS

Strategic planning

In general, ECE service managers organised quickly in response to Covid-19. Almost half the managers reported setting up a response team and 90 percent of managers developed a strategic plan for Lockdowns 4 and 3, and for Level 2.

Of those managers whose services had a strategy, the most common areas for strategic planning at Lockdown 4, were planning for communication with families, (93%), planning for staff wellbeing (83%), and planning for distance learning (73%). These continued to be common areas for planning in Level 3, with hygiene (83%), property (81%) and processes/routines (81%), having increased planning focus at this Level. This increased focus is understandable, since all services except parent/whānau-led services were able to open at Level 3, and services would need to prepare for opening. By Level 2, strategic plans had been developed by most services in many areas. Figure 1 shows the total percentage of managers whose services had developed a strategy in each area at any Level.

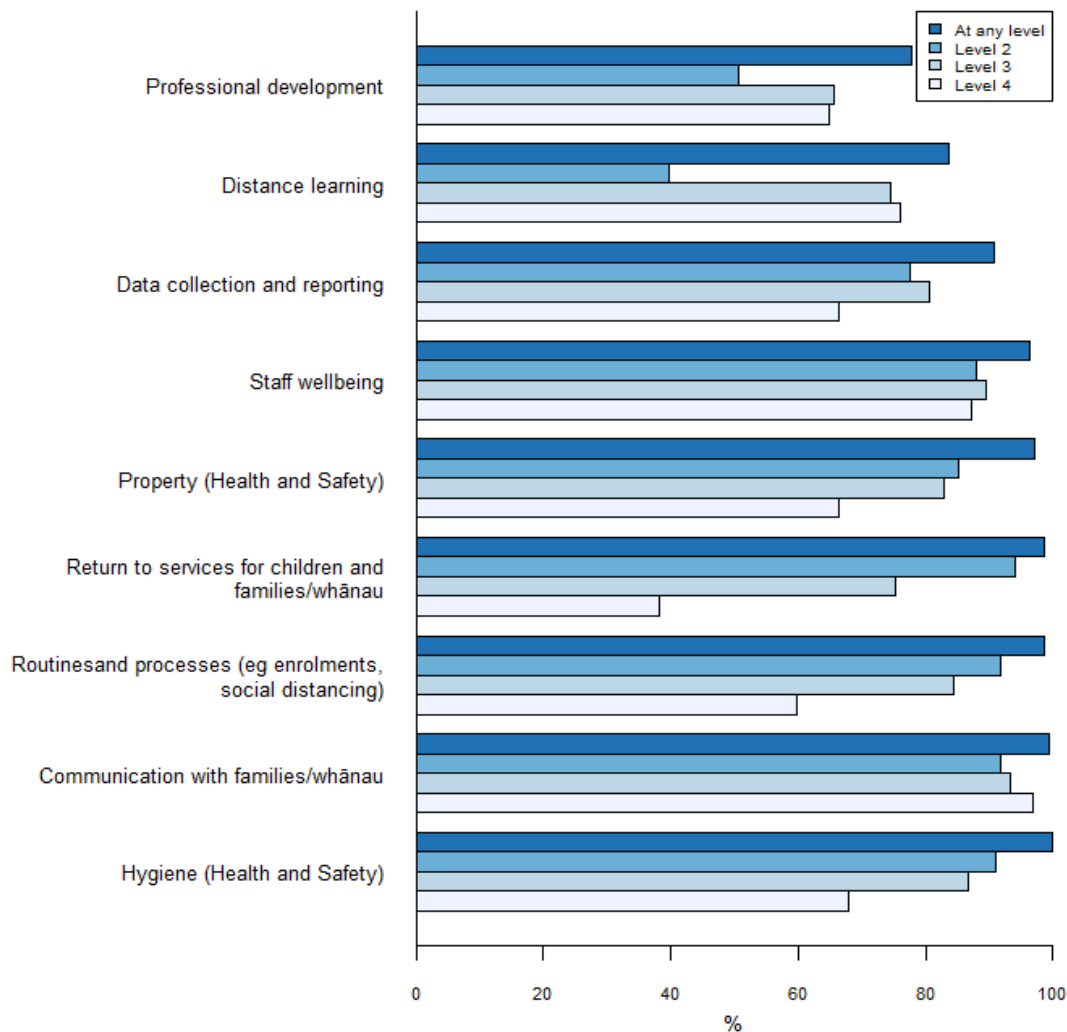


Figure 1: Percentage of managers whose services* had developed a strategic plan by planning areas (n = 156)

*This figure includes only the 90 percent of managers whose services that had developed a strategic plan in any area.

These findings indicate a wealth of potential valuable understanding that could be a resource for pandemic planning and service use. On the other hand, it would be interesting to find out how services where those 10 percent of managers who did not make strategic plans fared. These issues will be followed up in interviews.

Teaching and learning

Staff and educator meetings and professional practice opportunities

Most managers reported their services (87%) held staff or educator meetings via online platforms during Lockdowns 3 and 4, including all kindergartens and playcentres. A quarter of homebased and 14 percent of education and care centre management did not hold staff or educator meetings.

The most common frequency for staff or educator meetings was weekly (45%), followed by twice a week (18%) and fortnightly (16%). Eleven percent of managers reported on shifting arrangements according to stages of Lockdown.

All services provided professional practice opportunities during Lockdowns, except for a small percentage of education and care centre management (2%). Of these, most common were opportunities for team meetings (73%), professional learning and development (71%), and planning (63%). There were some sector differences in opportunities offered. Most kindergarten associations (80%) provided PLD opportunities compared with 70 percent of education and care, 67 percent of playcentre and 50 percent of homebased services. Most playcentre managers offered opportunities for learning about government policy, compared with a third overall.

ICT tools and communication with families/whānau

We asked managers to choose from a list, ways in which they communicated with families and whānau during Lockdowns 3 and 4. Email, telephone and Facebook were most common.

Table 2: Means of communication with families/whānau

Means of communication with families/whānau	n = 1.56 (%)
Email	131 (84)
Telephone/text	113 (72)
Facebook	109 (70)
Online learning platforms, including StoryPark	101 (65)
Online engagement platforms	89 (57)
Social media apps	50 (32)
Other (physical packs were listed)	3 (2)
No communication	0

Most (97%) used more than one method, suggesting that managers tailored their communications to the needs of families.

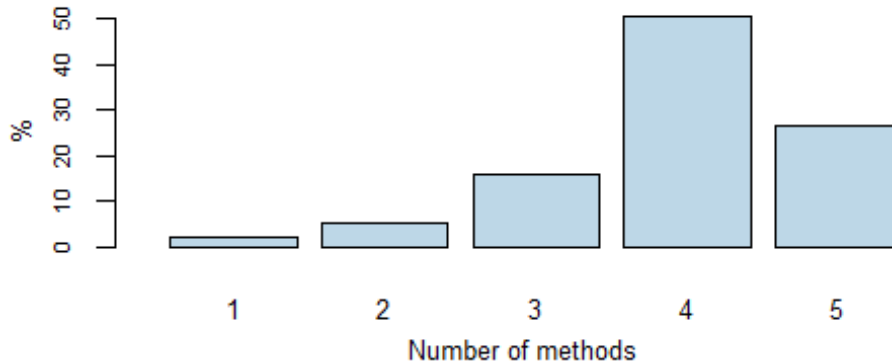


Figure 2: Number of methods managers used to communicate with families/whānau

Almost all management communicated with families about COVID-19-related explanations (95%) and returning to ECE (94%). Other common topics were links to learning, advice and home activities (89%) and health and welfare (87%). Webinars on anxiety/stress were offered by some (27%).

Seventy-six percent of management indicated that they offered support for families in other ways, including ‘brokering’ support for what families needed (54%), connecting families with social services (31%), and with support organisations (31%), and providing practical support, such as food vouchers, clothing (5%). Some used Equity Funding and Targeted Funding, and accessed Community Grant funding for this support.

Distance learning opportunities for children

Managers reported on a wide variety of distance learning opportunities that were offered for children during Lockdowns 3 and 4, and most provided several opportunities.

Table 3: Distance learning opportunities during Lockdowns

Type of distance learning opportunity	n = 156 (%)
Information/advice for activities at home	127 (81)
Story-telling	113 (72)
Physical activity ideas	94 (60)
Singing time	89 (57)
Mat Times	86 (55)
Cooking	86 (55)
Science	77 (49)

Expressive arts	68 (44)
Children connecting online	67 (43)
Connecting while on walks/ outdoors	66 (42)
Other	3 (3)

Some managers recorded Māori/Pasifika/Cultural as a category under “other”. However, since Te Whāriki is a bicultural curriculum, we expected these opportunities to be included in many activities.

Enrolments and attendance

We asked whether the managers’ service/s supported children’s attendance during Lockdown 4 and whether it opened for children during Lockdown 3. Twenty percent said they did support attendance in Lockdown 4, and 55 percent opened for children in Level 3, with 80 percent of these saying only “a few” children attended then.

When Level 2 was reached, 47 percent had a staggered return for children. In the first week of Level 2 (week of 18 May 2020), a third of services had only “some” or “a few” children returning, while 63 percent had “most” returning. Only five percent said “all” returned.

Staffing

In this section, we report on responses from management in teacher-led services only, since the questions were about staff in paid employment who deliver the education programme. Many playcentres have volunteers working as educators. As well, playcentres were not able to open for children during Lockdown 3. Excluding playcentre, questions on staffing were answered by 130 respondents.

We asked managers how many staff were able to work at the service with children during Lockdown 3. Figure 3 shows a reasonably even distribution of answers around the categories “a few”, “some” and “many”. Only 13 percent marked that all staff worked at this time.

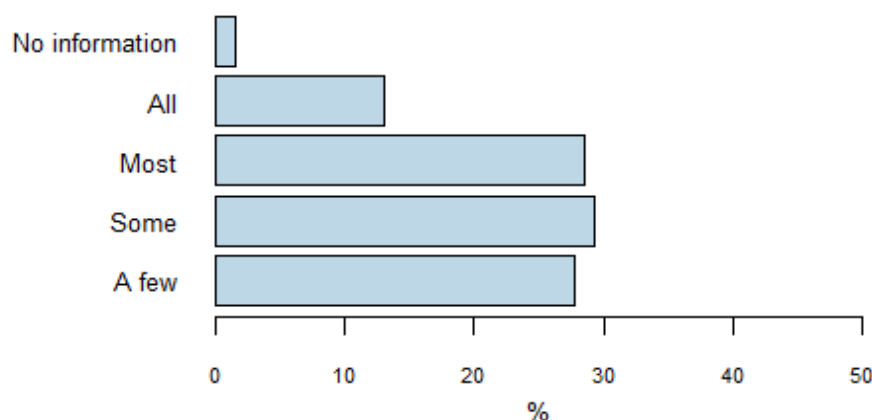


Figure 3: Managers’ ratings of proportion of staff working with children at the ECE service during Lockdown 3 (n = 130)

Seven percent ($n = 9$) employed relievers during Lockdown 3, and one private education and care manager employed untrained relievers in positions of responsibility.

Managers were asked to mark from a list the reasons for staff to stay at home during Lockdown 3. In descending order of frequency, these were:

- vulnerable dependents in the household (50%);
- health (42%);
- no demand/ centre closed (37%);
- anxiety about returning to the service (32%);
- age (19%);
- other (5%).

A very small number said that all worked from home or all worked on-site.

Notable, is the finding that 32 percent of managers marked “anxiety about returning to the service” as a reason for staff not returning. This aligns somewhat with the findings from the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Health and Wellbeing Survey where 39 percent of respondents were worried about the risk of getting COVID-19 at the beginning of April 2020.

Only 74 percent of managers said their staff were fully paid during Lockdowns 3 and 4, with 25 percent partially paid. One did not answer. These differences were related to ownership, with 95 percent of community-based service management reporting full payment of staff, compared with 63 percent of privately-owned service management. All kindergarten managers, 74 percent of education and care management and 50 percent of homebased managers reported staff were fully paid.

Funding

Government funding is a key source of income for ECE services. Most managers reported receiving the Ministry of Education ECE Funding Subsidy (96%) and 20 hours ECE (95%) pre-Covid-19, and 71 percent received the MSD Childcare Subsidy. A smaller percentage received Ministry of Education Targeted Funding for Disadvantage (41%) and Equity Funding (39%). During the Lockdown, all Ministry of Education funding continued to be paid, based on predicted enrolments. The MSD Childcare subsidy fees was not paid and services were urged not to charge parents fees.

We asked managers what forms of Covid-19 related funding they had applied for. The most common was the Wage Subsidy. Overall, 72 percent applied for the Wage Subsidy, and of these most (90%) paid the subsidy to all staff. Most organisations (92%) also topped up the Wage Subsidy under Lockdowns 3 and 4. Some applied for a rent reduction (16%) and some applied for an interest free loan for small businesses (16%). None of the kindergarten managers applied for the Wage Subsidy, but 77 percent of education and care managers and 75 percent of homebased managers did. Looking at the other sources of income, three percent of education and care managers applied for none (all the rest applied for at least one), with only a total of six applying for two, seven percent of education and care managers and four percent of homebased managers.

Many ECE services were facing financial pressures at Level 2 of Covid-19. While over a third of managers (38%) rated their financial position as about the same as before Covid-19, 48 percent rated it as “somewhat worse” or “much worse”. Only eight percent rated it as “better” or “much better”. A higher percentage of education and care service managers (50%) and home-based managers (50%) rated their financial position as “somewhat worse” or much worse” compared with 33 percent of playcentre

and 12 percent of kindergarten association managers. Education and care and homebased managers that operate a full day are more reliant on parent fees. In addition, kindergarten associations receive a higher funding rate to match their staffing costs.

Managers were asked to mark from a list which, if any, financial difficulties they were currently experiencing. The most frequent difficulty was meeting costs of wages/salaries (19%), followed by staff employment conditions (13%), and fixed costs (13%). Kindergarten association managers were the only group not reporting difficulties in meeting costs of wages/salaries, staff employment, or fixed costs. Thirty-nine percent of managers reported they were using their financial reserves.

Managers were asked to mark from a list which, if any, employment actions they needed to make because of the impact of COVID-19. The most common were reducing staff hours (24%) and not filling vacancies for permanent staff (22%). Other actions were not paying casual relievers (14%), making permanent staff redundant (6%) and reducing staff pay (5%). Table 4 below shows there were service-type differences in these practices in teacher-led services, with education and care and homebased management making changes to permanent staff employment conditions. A critical question is why these actions were deemed necessary when these managers received Ministry of Education funding, many reported receiving the Wage Subsidy, and some received rent reductions and a small business loan. The only action taken by a percentage of kindergarten management (50%) was to not pay casual relievers, who are not on a permanent payment schedule or guaranteed ongoing employment. Education and care service management also reported not paying casual relievers.

Table 4: Staff employment actions taken because of the impact of Covid-19

Staff employment measures	Kindergarten <i>n</i> = 8 (%)	Education and Care <i>n</i> = 141 ^{**} (%)	Homebased <i>n</i> = 4 ^{***} (%)	Playcentre <i>n</i> = 3 ^{****} (%)	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Not applicable	4 (50%)	66 (47%)	1 (25%)	2 (67%)	73 (47)
Reduce staff hours	0	35 (25%)	2 (50%)	0	37 (24)
Not fill vacancies for permanent staff	0	32 (23%)	1 (25%)	1 (33%)	34 (22)
Not pay casual relievers	4 (50%)	17 (12%)	0	0	21 (14)
Make some permanent staff redundant	0	10 (7%)	0	0	10 (6)
Reduce staff pay	0	6 (4)	2 (50)	0	8 (5)

^{*}*n* = 8 kindergarten associations managing 202 kindergartens

^{**}*n* = 141 education and care managers managing 197 education and care centres

^{***}*n* = 3 playcentre regional managers managing 166 playcentres

^{****}*n* = 4 homebased managers managing 54 homebased services

Managers were asked to mark which of a list of problems were experienced by their service in the short-term related to reopening. Over half the service managers reported lower enrolments or fewer children (56%) and cleaning costs (51%) as problems. Other frequently marked problems were “coping with uncertainty” (31%), higher costs with new Health and Safety requirements (24%) and lack of reserve funds (17%).

Similar to the short-term, in the long-term, lower enrolments/fewer children was the highest rated predicted problem (55%). But 29 percent predicted return to lower levels of pre-Covid-19 funding would be a long-term problem, followed by lack of reserve funds (28%) and staffing difficulties (25%).

CONCLUSION

This report presents a picture of the initial impact of the Coronavirus on ECE services from the perspectives and experiences of managers from education and care services, kindergarten associations, playcentre regions and homebased services, at the time when New Zealand had moved to Level 2, and ECE services were all able to open. It also offers a retrospective snapshot of the actions taken during Lockdowns 4 and 3, and managers' views of issues in the short and long term.

Most managers reported that services were very quick to develop strategic or action plans that were adapted to needs at each Covid-19 Level, starting from Lockdown 4. The plans prioritised people (communication with families, staff wellbeing), environment (hygiene, health and safety, property) and processes (routines and processes for opening). The strategic plans and the processes used in their development offer a potentially valuable resource to draw on in another pandemic or resurgence of Covid-19, or currently for the small percentage of ECE managers who did not develop a strategic plan. In a small qualitative study of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for ECE services in Sweden, Norway and United States, Pramling Samuelsson et al. (2020) pinpointed the need felt by teachers for "more thorough advanced planning in preparation for future crisis situations" (not paginated). In the next phase of our research, involving interviews with management and teachers, exemplars of strategic plans and planning processes will be gathered and documented.

Another very positive finding was the role played by ECE services during the Lockdowns 4 and 3 and into Level 2, in providing care and education for children. Andrew Gibbons, speaking at the Quality Public Education Coalition Forum on 16 May 2020, described the care provided for the children of essential workers by homebased educators as work done in "solidarity" with the country and workers, contributing to the national aims and efforts to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. "Solidarity" with families and children continued during Lockdown 3, support being offered through face-to-face and online learning and advice, and through the role particularly community-based ECE services played in brokering social, health and financial support for families who needed it. In these respects, ECE services were operating as integrated services, a model that involves ECE services in co-ordinating access to education, health and community services. It has been shown to be beneficial for all participants when working from an empowerment framework that is responsive to local issues and needs (Clarkin-Phillips, 2012; McLoughlin, 2016; Wong & Press, 2012). In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the role played by ECE services in this respect showed some managers were quickly willing and able to respond to family needs at this time. Adherence to the principles of Te Whāriki (Ministry of Education, 2017), particularly to the principles of Family and Community and Holistic Development are foregrounded in their actions.

Staff meetings and professional practice opportunities offered by all kindergarten association and playcentre managers and most education and care and homebased service managers indicates a commitment to staff understanding and support that was consistent with many Covid-19 strategic/action plan priorities placed on people. But the outliers, the small percentage of education and care and homebased service managers who did not offer these opportunities, are of concern during a period when people's wellbeing was at risk. Our survey showed almost a third of managers marked "anxiety about returning to the service" as a reason why staff did not return to work during Lockdown 3, a finding that was consistent with April results from the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Health and Wellbeing Survey that 39 percent of participants were worried about the risk of getting Covid-19.

In teacher-led services, education and care and homebased managers reported greater severity of financial pressures than did kindergarten managers. Education and care and homebased managers also pinpointed difficulties in meeting fixed costs, wage/salary costs and costs of staff employment, whereas kindergarten managers did not. Repercussions have flowed into employment actions. Only 75 percent

of managers in education and care and homebased services reported that they fully paid their staff, 25 percent of education and care managers and 50 percent of homebased service managers reported that they reduced staff hours, and a small number made permanent staff redundant. Reducing hours of work was highlighted in recent media commentary about the publicly listed company Evolve, where it was reported that following lower attendance rates because of Covid-19, Evolve had “offered teachers new contracts stating that hours of work will be between 20 and 40 hours a week, with a guaranteed minimum of only 20 hours” (Collins, 2020c). The union led a successful campaign to prevent these illegal contracts. All kindergarten associations fully paid permanent staff.

Financial issues require deeper analysis, since all education and care and homebased services continued to receive the ECE Funding Subsidy, many accessed the government Wage Subsidy, some applied for rent reductions and a few applied for small business loans. Recent media commentary has questioned the amount one provider received in the Wage Subsidy (Edmunds, 2020). “The Wright Family Foundation, which runs BestStart, among others, claimed \$26.9 million in subsidies, of which \$25m was for the childcare chain, which has 260 centres around the country. That is more than the amount claimed by SkyCity, The Warehouse and Fisher & Paykel Appliances.” A critical question is why reductions were made to staff employment conditions when these levels of financial support were available and being taken up.

Managers have concerns about the future, especially around enrolment numbers in the short and long term. Recent information from MSD shows a drop in childcare subsidies from 22,353 at the end of June 2019 to 15,631 on June 30 2020 (Collins, 2020a). It is not clear whether this drop is because of parents losing their jobs, working at home, finding alternative arrangements for their child because of fears about Covid-19, or other reasons. It may be short term or longer term. Variability in enrolments and therefore in funding puts ECE services at risk of being unsustainable, and of lowering spending on features that support services to provide good levels of quality, such as qualified staffing, professional development and resources. Financial stability is needed to ensure that staffing and service viability is not compromised. The ongoing effects of the Covid-19 pandemic raise considerable challenges for managers operating under a business model in a highly competitive, marketised environment. In the next section, we argue that now is the time to make structural and policy changes to ways in which ECE is provided, funded and supported.

Implications

ECE managers were highly responsive in addressing the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. They reported on development of strategic and action plans across areas as diverse as new methods for communicating with families, distance learning for children, staff wellbeing and professional development, and the ECE environment being made safe for children’s return. The new understandings and resources could be a valuable resource for any future pandemic planning and ECE service use.

The survey findings bring into focus critical problematic issues that have been highlighted in the sector for many years and were outlined as issues to be addressed in the Early Learning Action Plan (Ministry of Education, 2019). The market approach to funding and provision of ECE services has allowed any ECE service that meets licensing requirements to become established. Generous government funding subsidies have encouraged the growth of for-profit ECE services in the education and care and homebased sectors, and led to oversupply in some areas and undersupply in others (May & Mitchell, 2009; Mitchell, 2019; Neuwelt-Kearns & Ritchie, 2020). The need for planned provision is particularly pressing now, with many ECE service managers reporting loss of enrolments and predicting changed patterns of enrolment and attendance in the long term. In the short term, this has led already to an even greater level of competition between private providers over costs they charge for childcare, as Collins

reported in a recent New Zealand Herald article. “Childcare centres are offering big discounts for new customers as centres open up in fast-growing suburbs just as demand falls due to Covid-19” (Collins, 29 June, 2020b). The Early Learning Action Plan has set as an aim “Early learning services are part of a planned and coherent education ecosystem that is supported, accountable and sustainable” (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 32). It is crucial to act now to develop a national system of planned provision of ECE in every community as a matter of urgency.

In an unpublished paper submitted to the Early Learning Strategic Plan Working Group as suggestions for discussion, Linda Mitchell and Helen May offered a picture of what a planned network might look like:

A planned approach to provision would build a coherent network of ECE services in every community, while ensuring responsiveness to needs and efficiencies, since duplication of services would be prevented. A new ECE service would take different forms in response to local contexts and the needs of children and families. Its value base would be constructed through discussion and consultation and include a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the principles and strands of Te Whāriki. It would have competent financial systems and democratic governance structures that enable full participation in decision-making by its ECE community. It would empower, support and provide conditions for participants to develop as a critically reflective community. (May & Mitchell, 2018)

The findings of the survey reinforce the value of integrated ECE services, with ECE acting as a hub in which ECE is provided alongside access to inter-disciplinary teams and services. Planning provision, including integrated ECE, within communities and from the basis of a shared vision based on democratic ideals, and attention to “competent systems” (Urban et al., 2012, p. 515) would be productive of a new way of thinking and an inspiration for positive change. It would enable early childhood centres to be conceptualised as public and community organisations playing an important role in fostering a democratic society.

The survey findings raise unanswered and critical questions about why some managers in education and care and homebased services reduced permanent staff pay, made some permanent staff redundant and reduced staff hours despite continued receipt of the ECE Funding Subsidy, access to the government Wage Subsidy and small business loans, and access to potential rent reductions. These findings point to an urgent need to address the government’s aim to deter for-profit entrepreneurs and “[turn] the tide away from private profit-focused provision” (Hipkins, 2018, p. 4), and to “develop a mechanism that promotes more consistent and improved teacher salaries and conditions in the early learning sector” (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 24).

Early Childhood education has been shown to be an essential service during this Covid-19 pandemic. Inequalities in access and quality that have been enduring features of this sector and were made possible through a neoliberal and market approach to ECE have been intensified through the Covid-19 pandemic. Now is an ideal time to rethink the purpose of ECE, to redefine ECE as a public good, and to plan, fund and support it accordingly.

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Appendix 1: Management survey: Impact of COVID-19 on ECE sector

Kia ora, talofa lava, kia orana, malo e lelei, ni sa bula vinaka, taloha ni, and warm greetings, Early childhood services have played a crucial role in supporting workers, families and children through the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns have also changed teaching and learning in ECE services and their operation. The purpose of the survey is to gather information about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Aotearoa New Zealand ECE sector. The data will be used to support the ECE sector in decision-making, inform government officials and government, and provide information for families and the public.

The survey is being conducted by the Early Years Research Centre, University of Waikato. The survey has been developed in discussion with sector representatives by Linda Mitchell, who is a Professor in Early Childhood Education at the University of Waikato, Clare Wells, formerly CEO of NZK and now independent consultant, and Trisha Meagher-Lundberg a researcher and qualified ECE teacher. Only the research team have access to individual responses; nothing that can identify you or your organisation/service will be used in any publication or presentation of the survey results. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey on the Impact of COVID -19 on the ECE sector. This survey will take around 30 minutes to complete.

Who should fill in the survey?

This survey is applicable to kindergarten associations, education and care centre management, playcentre associations and homebased service management. We have offered to share this survey with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust and support them to develop their own survey if they wish. Please complete the survey if you are in a management position and know the operations of your service. Only one survey per service should be completed. You may consult with others if you are not sure how to answer any questions.

Thank you for participating in our study.

About the person filling in the survey

Q 1. What is your role (Tick one only)

- Owner (1)
- Manager/Director/CEO (2)
- Professional leader/senior teacher/coordinator (3)
- Supervisor/head teacher (4)
- Playcentre office holder (5)

About the ECE service/s

Q2. What type is/are your services? (Tick all that apply)

- Kindergarten (1)
 - Education and Care centre (2)
 - Playcentre (3)
 - Homebased service (4)
 - Te Kura (Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu) The Correspondence School (5)
 - Other (please specify below) (6)
-

Q 3. How many service/s do you manage? (Please write the number in each text box for all that apply.)

- Kindergarten (1) _____
- Education and Care centre (2) _____
- Playcentre (3) _____
- Homebased service network (4) _____
- Te Kura (5) _____

Q 4. Which age groups do your service/s cater for? (Tick all that apply)

- Under two years (1)
- Two years (2)
- Three years (3)
- Four years (4)
- Five years (5)
- Six years (6)

Ownership of the service

Q 5. What is the ownership of the service/s? (Tick one only)

- Privately owned (e.g. company, partnership, private trust) (1)
- Community owned (e.g. incorporated society, trust, govt dept, local authority, public education institution) (2)

Q 6. Is this service part of an umbrella organisation? (Tick all that apply)

- Yes, a private business (1)
- Yes, a community organisation (2)
- Yes, a kindergarten organisation (3)
- Yes, a playcentre association (4)
- Yes, a home-based network (5)
- No, we are a stand-alone service (6)
- Yes, other (Please specify below) (7)

Other umbrella organisation: _____

COVID-19

Q 7. Prior to, or during Level 4 Lockdown, did your organisation set up a response team?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 8. Did your organisation develop a strategy/action plan for your service?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 9. Please indicate for which level and in which area (Tick all that apply)

Hygiene (Health and Safety) (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Property (Health and Safety) (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Staff wellbeing (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Routines and processes (eg enrolments, social distancing) (4)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Communication with families/whānau (5)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Data collection and reporting (6)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Professional development (7)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Distance learning (8)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)
Return to services for children and families/whānau (9)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 4 (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 3 (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Level 2 (3)

Teaching

Q 10. Did your organisation hold staff or educator meetings during Lockdowns 3 and 4?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 11. How often were these held? (Tick one only)

- Twice a week or more (1)
- Weekly (2)
- Fortnightly (3)
- 3 weekly (4)
- Monthly (5)
- Other (Please specify below) (6)

Other _____

Q 12. Did your service staff or educators meet informally during Lockdowns 3 and 4 (e.g., through zoom)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 13. How often did they meet? (Tick one only)

- Twice a week or more (14)
- Weekly (15)
- Fortnightly (16)
- 3 weekly (17)
- Monthly (18)
- Unknown (19)

Q 14. What ICT tools did staff, or educators, use to communicate with each other during Lockdowns? (Tick all that apply)

- Online engagement platforms (video meetings-Zoom/google meet/Microsoft teams, webinars, YouTube, intranet, websites) (50)
- Social media apps (Instagram, Twitter, What's App, Messenger) (57)
- Facebook (58)
- Email (59)
- Telephone/text (60)
- Other (Please specify below) (61)

Other ICT tool _____

Q 16a. If any, what sorts of professional practice opportunities for staff, or educators, did your organisation provide during Lockdowns 3 and 4? (Tick all that apply)

- Appraisals (1)
 - Professional learning and development (2)
 - Planning (3)
 - Self-review/internal evaluation (4)
 - Assessment (5)
 - Whole centre/service review (6)
 - Team meetings (7)
 - In depth conversations around practice (8)
 - Unpacking government policy initiatives (9)
 - Other (Please specify below) (10)
 - No opportunities provided (12)
- Other professional practice opportunities provided _____

Q 16b. What sorts of professional practice opportunities did staff, or playcentre educators, engage in during Lockdowns 3 and 4? (Tick all that apply)

Appraisals (1)

- Professional learning and development (2)
 - Planning (3)
 - Self-review/internal evaluation (4)
 - Assessment (5)
 - Whole centre/service review (6)
 - Team meetings (7)
 - In depth conversations around practice (8)
 - Unpacking government policy initiatives (9)
 - Other (Please specify below) (10)
 - No opportunities provided (12)
- Other professional practice opportunities provided _____

Q 17. How did your organisation communicate with families/whānau during Lockdowns 3 and 4? (Tick all that apply)

- Online engagement platforms (video meetings-Zoom/google meet/Microsoft teams, webinars, You Tube, intranet, websites) (1)
 - Online learning platform e.g. Storypark, Educa (2)
 - Social media apps (Instagram, Twitter, Whats App, Messenger) (3)
 - Facebook (4)
 - Email (5)
 - Telephone/text (6)
 - Other (Please specify below) (7)
 - No communication (9)
- Other communication tool: _____

Q 18. What did your organisation communicate with families/whānau about, during Lockdowns 3 and 4? (Tick all that apply)

- COVID 19-explanations about rules and requirements e.g. social distancing, bubbles (1)
 - Health and welfare (2)
 - Links to learning, advice, and ideas for activities to do at home (3)
 - Webinars on anxiety/stress (4)
 - Returning to ECE (5)
 - Other (Please specify below) (6)
- Other things communicated about _____

Q 19. What other ways did your organisation support families/whānau during Lockdowns 3 and 4? (Tick all that apply)

- Connected families/whānau with support organisations e.g. local foodbanks, budget advice (1)
 - Connected families/whānau with social service organisations e.g. Whānau Ora/other social service agencies (2)
 - Accessed community grant funding to support families/whānau e.g. with grocery vouchers (3)
 - Used Targeted or Equity Funding to support families/whānau e.g. with grocery vouchers (4)
 - Asked families/whānau what support they would like and brokered support (5)
 - Other (Please specify below) (6)
 - No other support provided (8)
- Other ways families/whānau were supported
-

Q 20. If any, what distance learning opportunities for children did your service/s provide during Lockdowns 3 and 4? (Tick all that apply)

- Mat times (1)
 - Story telling (2)
 - Information/advice for families/whānau on learning activities to do at home (3)
 - Singing time (4)
 - Expressive arts (5)
 - Science related (6)
 - Cooking (7)
 - Physical activity ideas (8)
 - Connecting with children and families/whānau whilst undertaking walks, outdoor activities etc. (9)
 - Connecting children with each other using online platforms such as Zoom (10)
 - Other curriculum areas (Please specify below) (11)
- Other curriculum areas _____

Enrolments and attendance

Q 21. Did your service/s support children's attendance in level 4 of Lockdown?

- Yes (13)
- No (14)

Q 22. Did your service/s open for children during Level 3 of Lockdown?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 23. How many children attended during Level 3 overall? (Tick one only)

- A few (1)
- Some (2)
- Most (3)
- All (4)

Q 24. When New Zealand reached level 2, did your service/s have a staggered return for children?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 25. Around how many children returned in the week starting 18 May 2020? (Tick one only)

- A few (1)
- Some (2)
- Most (3)
- All (4)

Staffing

Q 26. Around how many staff in your service/s were able to work during Level 3 of Lockdown? (Tick one only)

- A few (1)
- Some (2)
- Most (3)
- All (4)
- Not applicable (5)

Q 27. Around how many staff in your service/s were able to work **at the service/centre** during Level 3 of Lockdown? (Tick one only)

- A few (1)
- Some (2)
- Most (3)
- All (4)

Q 28. Did your service/s employ relievers during level 3 of Lockdown?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 29. Did your service/s employ untrained relievers in positions of responsibility?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 30. Around how many staff in your service/s worked at home during level 3 of Lockdown? (Tick one only)

- A few (1)
- Some (2)
- Most (3)
- All (4)

Q 31. What were the reasons for staff to stay at home during Level 3 of Lockdown? (Tick all that apply)

- Age (1)
- Health (2)
- Vulnerable dependents in the household (3)
- Anxiety about returning to the service/s (4)
- Other (Please specify below) (5)

Other reasons for staying home _____

Q 32. Were staff in your service/s paid during Level 3 and 4 of Lockdown? (Tick one only)

- Yes, fully paid (1)
- Yes, partially paid (2)
- No (3)
- Not applicable to this service (4)

Q 33. Did casual relievers continue to be paid?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Not applicable (3)

Funding

Q 34. What kinds of government funding does your service usually receive (I.e., pre-COVID-19)? (Tick all that apply)

- ECE Funding Subsidy (1)
 - Equity Funding (2)
 - Targeted Funding for Disadvantage (3)
 - 20 hours ECE (4)
 - MSD Childcare subsidy (5)
 - Other (Please specify below) (6)
-

Q 35. Please rate your service's financial position currently? (Tick one only)

- Much better than before COVID-19 (1)
- Somewhat better than before COVID-19 (2)
- About the same as before COVID-19 (3)
- Somewhat worse than before COVID-19 (4)
- Much worse than before COVID-19 (5)
- Not sure (6)

Please comment briefly on the financial position you indicated

Q 36. Is your service currently experiencing any of the following financial difficulties? (Tick all that apply)

- Difficulty meeting fixed costs such as rent/mortgage and utilities (7)
- Difficulty meeting wage/salary costs (8)
- Difficulty meeting costs of staff employment conditions (9)
- Not sure (10)
- None of the above (11)

Q 37. Is this service using its financial reserves to help with financial difficulties (Tick one only)

- Yes (1)
- Not yet (2)
- No financial reserves to use (3)
- Not experiencing financial difficulties (4)

Q 38. Did your organisation apply for the wage subsidy for staff in your service/s?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Does not apply (3)

Q 39. Around how many staff received this? (Tick one only)

- A few (1)
- Some (2)
- Most (3)
- All (4)

Q 40. Did your organisation top up the wage subsidy under levels 3 and 4 of the Lockdown period?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q 41. Has your organisation used or applied for any of the following sources of income? (Tick all that apply)

- Applied for interest free loan for small businesses (2)
- Asked for a rent reduction (3)
- Charged fees during Level 4 lockdown (4)
- Charged non-attending families/whānau fees during level 3 lockdown (5)
- None of these (6)
- Other (Please specify below) (7)

Other sources of income _____

Q 42. Have you needed to do any of the following because of the impact of COVID-19? (Tick all that apply)

- Reduce staff pay (8)
- Not pay casual relievers (9)
- Make some permanent staff redundant (10)
- Not fill vacancies for permanent staff (11)
- Reduce staff hours (12)
- Not applicable (13)

Q 43. Which of the following problems did your organisation have in the **short term** (related to re-opening) after your service was able to resume or re-open their pre-COVID operations? (Tick all that apply)

- Staffing difficulties such as re-employing, retaining or attracting new staff (10)
- Costs specifically associated with re-opening (11)
- Higher costs associated with COVID-19 health and safety requirements, e.g., group size, social distancing (12)
- Cleaning costs (13)
- Lower enrolments/fewer children (14)
- Return to less adequate pre-COVID government funding (15)
- Lack of reserve funds (16)
- Coping with uncertainty e.g., what to tell staff and parents, accessing information and advice (18)
- None of the above (17)

Q 44. Which of the following impacts do you anticipate **in the longer term** (up to six months) after services resume their pre-COVID operations? (Tick all that apply)

- Staffing difficulties such as re-employing, retaining or attracting new staff (8)
- Higher costs associated with COVID-19 health and safety requirements e.g. ratios, social distancing (9)
- Lower enrolments/fewer children (10)
- Higher enrolments/more children (14)
- Return to less adequate pre-COVID government funding (11)
- Lack of reserve funds (12)
- Coping with uncertainty e.g., what to tell staff and parents, accessing information and advice (15)
- None of the above (13)

Q 45. To conclude the survey, if you have any comments or additional information about the effects of COVID-19 on you or on the provision of ECE generally, please include it here.

Q 46. We would like follow up on the information provided in this survey by interviewing a sample of respondents who are happy to talk in more depth about their responses.

Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview of up to 30 minutes?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If yes, please write your preferred contact details here

Name (1) _____

Email (2) _____

Contact phone (3) _____