

# Survey of Kindergarten Provision

Results of a 2010 Survey of New Zealand  
Kindergartens Inc. Kindergarten Associations

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New Zealand Kindergartens Inc (NZKI) initiated the idea of a survey of NZKI associations to document the nature of current kindergarten provision and explore changes that have occurred in this decade. Clare Wells, NZKI Chief Executive, has supported the process throughout. She brought together association representatives to help identify issues, provided access to participants and offered valuable advice and feedback at all stages. The opportunity to attend the NZKI conferences to report our progress, receive feedback from association representatives and report our findings was very much appreciated.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the findings from a 2010 survey of 28 of the 29 New Zealand Kindertartens Inc (NZKI) kindertarten associations. The survey examined the nature of kindertarten operation in 2010. It explored the extent and reasons behind any changes made during the period 2005 to 2010. In 2005 a new early childhood education (ECE) funding formula was developed that was responsive to the main costs of ECE provision. This resulted in substantial increases in the levels of funding. In 2007, *20 hours free ECE*<sup>1</sup> for three- and four-year-old children was offered to teacher-led services. These initiatives provided incentives and opportunities for kindertarten associations to review their traditional sessional hours of operation and explore different types of service provision. The findings of this survey provide baseline information about New Zealand kindertarten operation for possible future comparisons.

The Government Budget of 20 May 2010 announced cuts to ECE funding that came into effect for kindertarten associations from 2011. This survey was completed in July 2010 and association views of the likely impacts of these budget cuts have been sought.

## Key findings

It was evident that associations viewed the developments made possible by the funding initiatives as overwhelmingly positive. They described changes that improved the quality of their ECE services, enabled them to respond better to community need, enhanced the professionalism of staff, reduced the financial and administrative burdens of local committees and improved accessibility, participation and affordability.

## Kindertarten licensing

The type of licence that a kindertarten holds does not necessarily define the way the kindertarten operates. Kindertartens may hold an all-day licence but operate on a sessional basis, providing the opportunity for some children to attend sessions of longer than four hours duration.

- There has been a shift away from traditional sessional kindertarten licensing with only 14 associations (50 percent) administering 39 sessional licensed kindertartens (11 percent of the total sample).
- All associations now have kindertartens with all-day licences, which number 320 out of a total 361 kindertartens (89 percent).
- Fourteen associations no longer include any kindertartens holding a sessional licence (50 percent).
- Association managers made it clear that they intend to continue to review licensing and that a further reduction in sessional licensing is likely.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequently renamed *20 hours ECE*

## Kindergarten operation

- The length of time children attend services has been extended. This applies to both sessional and all-day licensed kindergartens.
- Traditional sessional licensed kindergarten operation has decreased and a further reduction is indicated.
- Four distinct models of all-day license provision have developed:
  - extended sessional—morning session in excess of four hours, may/may not offer separate afternoon session;
  - extended sessional with an option to attend all day—morning session in excess of four hours and separate afternoon session. Offers some children the option to remain and attend both sessions;
  - school day—predominantly five or six hour days, 40–43 weeks per year, in line with school terms; and
  - full-day—seven hours or more per day, more than 43 weeks per year.
- The school day model is the most common all-day licensed model. It is offered by 26 of the 28 associations and accounts for 161 out of the total 320 all-day licensed kindergartens (50 percent).
- Extended sessional operation is the next most popular model with 21 associations offering this type of operation in 122 kindergartens (38 percent of all-day licensed kindergartens).
- Extended sessional operation with the option for some children to attend all day and full-day provision remain relatively restricted.
- Although traditional sessional operation has decreased, an overview of both sessional and all-day licensed kindergarten models of operation reveals that sessional provision continues to account for the majority of kindergarten operation. Overall 191 kindergartens continue to offer some type of sessional kindergarten (53 percent of the total sample).
- Kindergarten remains affordable with no fees for families accessing *20 hours ECE* and low fee levels for the few not accessing this funding or enrolled for more than 20 hours per week.
- Group sizes have reduced and adult:child ratios have improved.

## Non-centre-based services

- Six associations have diversified into the provision of non-centre-based services such as home-based ECE and parenting services.
- Two associations provide mobile kindergartens to service rural and isolated areas.
- Four associations provide management or professional support contracts for external organisations.

## Management and governance

- The structure of many associations has developed into a more business-like model in which roles, responsibilities and the expertise required have become more specific and services more centralised.



- Professional support and professional development opportunities have been enhanced with more teaching and learning advisors, more specialist staff and increased teacher release time available.

## Funding

- The revised funding formula introduced in 2005 increased ECE funding and linked funding to the main costs of provision. Higher rates of funding were provided for services that held an all-day licence. This initiative enabled kindergartens to move to all-day licensing and maintain or improve funding. It provided the opportunity for associations to extend their hours of operation and respond to community needs.
- *20 hours ECE*, implemented in July 2007, has enabled associations to provide free provision for three- and four-year-old children.
- Equity Funding has enabled associations to create equity between services. They have used the funding to employ specialist staff and provide resources and environments that reflect their communities and cultural context.
- Associations did not perceive the Child Care Subsidy to be a significant source of funding. Most associations do not charge fees so therefore the Child Care Subsidy is not relevant.
- Association managers commented that the changes in funding policy had provided reliable and predictable funding, at a reasonable rate, enabling them to budget and make long-term plans. Funding has been used to improve staffing, environments and equipment, develop curriculum initiatives and improve provision and participation.

Overall the findings of this study demonstrate that the changes in funding policy between 2005 and 2010 have enabled associations to improve the quality and responsiveness of the services they administer. The extent of change has been significant. Association managers report that outcomes for children, families, teaching and learning have been positive.

The 2010 Government Budget announced significant cuts to ECE funding effective from 1 February 2011. The top two bands of ECE funding available to all-day-licensed, teacher-led services employing 80 to 100 percent registered teachers were removed. Kindergarten associations were all to be affected. Association managers commented that the cut in funding was significant and would impact negatively. All managers stated that they would retain 100 percent registered teachers. Expenditure would be reduced mainly through reductions in professional development and support, deferring non-essential maintenance, raising voluntary donations or optional charges, increasing hours of operation and reducing specialist and additional staffing. It may be that reliance on the Child Care Subsidy will increase. There are likely to be further challenges for associations in the immediate future as Government ECE policy is currently under review.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

New Zealand kindergartens have traditionally operated on a sessional basis. Older children attended sessions five mornings per week and younger children attended sessions three afternoons per week. During non-child contact afternoons pre-admission playgroups were common and teachers engaged in planning, preparation and parent work. Kindergartens are located in a range of communities throughout New Zealand and some rural or isolated areas are serviced by visits from mobile kindergartens.

Changing societal, family and work patterns and the expansion of the options available in the ECE sector, however, impacted on kindergartens. A 2007 national survey of ECE provision (Mitchell, 2008) found that parental demand for services for children under five years of age had increased and the need for flexible, all-day provision was evident.

Kindergartens received a kindergarten specific sessional funding rate that was higher than, and not available to, other ECE services. This higher funding rate recognised the cost of salaries for employing only registered teachers. It meant, however, that kindergartens would receive a lower rate of funding if they moved to operate for longer than their traditional sessional hours. This provided a strong incentive for associations to retain their traditional sessional model of operation.

Two significant events in recent years have altered this situation and provided opportunities for kindergarten associations to review their hours of operation. The first of these events was in April 2005 when a revised early childhood funding system was implemented.

This revised system was structured to recognise the actual costs of ECE provision and was described as applying a “cost drivers” approach. It was based on Ministry of Education research that showed that employment of qualified teachers, daily hours of operation and the age of children attending are key determinants of the cost of ECE. Under the revised system of funding, teacher-led services<sup>2</sup> that employ a higher proportion of registered teachers receive a higher hourly rate of funding (Ministry of Education, 2007). Services catering for children under two years of age receive a higher rate than those catering for children over two. All-day services (more than four hours ECE) are funded at a higher rate than sessional services. The revised funding rates are available to both community and privately owned centres.

The revised funding formula offered kindergarten associations (which employ only registered teachers) the opportunity to diversify their traditional sessional model of provision. There was an incentive to consider extending hours of operation to qualify for all-day licensing as this would enable kindergartens to access a higher rate of funding.

The second significant event for kindergartens occurred in July 2007 with the implementation of *20 hours ECE* (initially termed *20 hours free ECE*). This scheme provided a higher rate of funding for 20 hours per week for children aged three and four years accessing teacher-led services. ECE services were not able to charge compulsory fees for the hours claimed, although parents could agree to pay an optional charge or voluntary donation on top. ECE services, both private and community owned, were able to choose whether to “opt in” to the scheme.

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<sup>2</sup> A teacher-led service is one where one or more qualified teachers are responsible for the overall programme in the service. They are required to have a person responsible who is a registered, ECE qualified teacher and meet the Government teacher registration targets.

Until 1990 kindergartens were forbidden under regulation from charging a fee. Since then most kindergarten associations had held fast to a philosophy of not charging fees. They had predominantly asked for voluntary donations from parents rather than a fee and in some areas payment was infrequent or non-existent. This new guaranteed funding for *20 hours ECE* per week offered reliable, secure and significantly increased income for kindergarten associations. As early as July 2008, 100 percent of kindergartens were offering *20 hours ECE*. Kindergartens have always made up the highest percentage of eligible services offering *20 hours ECE* with all their services having enrolments in the scheme (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Two additional early childhood funding sources are available to ECE services. Equity Funding is administered by the Ministry of Education and is for services meeting equity criteria. The Child Care Subsidy is administered by the Ministry of Social Development and is for individual families meeting income and paid employment/study criteria. Both of these initiatives have restrictions on eligibility.

In combination, these funding developments meant that ECE funding had increased almost fourfold from \$306,688k to \$1,147,931k from 2002 to 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2011b).

These funding developments were intended to support improved quality, increased participation and enhanced collaboration with parents, schools and outside organisations. They provided ECE services, including kindergarten associations, with sufficient, secure and predictable funding. The need for higher funding levels linked to costs and predictability of funding had been advocated by the ECE sector for many years (Early Childhood Education Long Term Strategic Plan Working Group, 2001; Early Childhood Education Project, 1996). Associations could now make accurate financial forecasts and plans. They were freed from financial constraints to make decisions about how kindergartens would operate and respond to community need and the incentive of additional funding for longer hours of provision. Many associations have reviewed their hours, staffing and operation accordingly.

The survey was completed by associations in July 2010, soon after the release of the 2010 Government Budget. This budget announced substantial cuts to ECE funding that would take effect in February 2011. The cuts would remove the two top levels of all-day ECE funding for services operating all-day licenses (those levels for services that employ more than 80 percent registered teachers) and so reduce kindergarten funding. An all-day licensed kindergarten previously receiving \$12.73 per child per hour would receive only \$11.12 per child per hour from 1 February 2011. This amounts to a reduction in funding of \$1.61 per child per hour or 13 percent. Sessional licensed kindergarten rates have fared slightly better and sessional kindergartens may retain the previous rate of \$7.49 per child per hour (this rate applies only to kindergartens).

Kindergarten associations voiced strong concern about the impact of these cuts and at the time of the survey were considering how they would manage on reduced funding. The survey sought associations' views on what the impact of the reduction in funding might be and what changes they might make in the light of the 2010 Budget.

Chapter 2 describes the research methodology for the study.

In Chapters 3 to 8 the findings are examined, and linked to previous research where this is available.

Chapter 9, Conclusion, provides an overview of findings, discusses developments to date and identifies key issues and challenges.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is the first significant survey of the responses of kindergarten association managers to the incentives and opportunities offered by the funding changes of the last six years. It provides baseline data for future studies and comparisons. The survey accesses much present-day information but also seeks to incorporate historical aspects and association views on possible future developments. The research questions were:

1. How do kindergartens operate in 2010?
2. What has changed in the operation of kindergartens since the introduction of the 2005 funding formula and *20 Hours ECE* in 2007? What are the reasons for any change?

The survey asked kindergarten associations what services they currently provide and the extent of significant changes made during the last five years.

An initial proposal was formulated in consultation with NZKI. Ethical approval was gained from the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. The Faculty of Education, University of Waikato supported the study and provided a research grant.

### Sample

Kindergarten associations are incorporated societies that are regionally based and responsible for kindergarten provision in their respective areas. They operate as separate entities under two separate umbrella organisations nationwide. The NZKI is an umbrella group that represents 29 of New Zealand's 33 kindergarten associations.

NZKI associations are responsible for more than 430 kindergartens attended by approximately 30,000 children. NZKI associations employ about 1450 registered teachers and 600 support staff. They are responsible for ECE services throughout the country. Associations range in size from two one-kindergarten associations to an association responsible for 63 services (NZKI, 2010; NZKI, 2011).

The questionnaire was mailed to association managers in all 29 associations in early July 2010 (some weeks after the release of the Government's 2010 Budget). The timeframe for returns was extended to November 2010 in order to maximise the response rate and incorporate feedback about the cuts in funding announced in the 2010 Government Budget.

Responses were received from 28 associations. One association did not participate because staff and board members were occupied working with the kindergartens affected by the 2010 Christchurch earthquake.

Some managers involved administrative and/or professional staff in the completion process. Not all associations were able to answer every question but overall, the response rate and quality of contributions was consistently high.

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed after consultation with representatives of NZKI associations who identified key aspects for inclusion. The draft questionnaire was sent to two associations to

pilot and their feedback was incorporated in the final version. Clare Wells (NZKI Chief Executive) commented on the draft and assisted with terminology and definitions. The final version contained 55 questions—some sought quantitative responses and others sought qualitative responses.

The questionnaire started by asking for general association information—what services were provided and whether these had changed during the period 2005–2010. Questions about centre-based ECE provision were divided into two categories that were determined according to the type of licences held ie. whether each kindergarten held a sessional or all-day licence. This meant that information about changes in licensing and changes in operation were able to be analysed. However, it should be noted that licensing alone cannot be relied on to explain operation. Some kindergartens hold an all-day licence but operate sessionally, providing sessions of a duration of slightly more than four hours. This qualifies them for an all-day licence and a higher funding rate. These kindergartens fall under the all-day licence definition of this report and are counted under the all-day licence section. A range of models of all-day licensed operation are identified and explained.

The information sought from sessional and all-day kindergartens was identical and encapsulated the number of each type of service provided, demographic information about the children attending, what financial contributions were sought and the hours/days children attended. Associations were asked a series of questions to ascertain whether there had been significant changes to specific aspects of this provision during the period 2005–2010.

The subsequent sections of the questionnaire concerned the diversification of association services into the provision of non-centre-based services (such as home-based ECE, parenting services and mobile kindergartens) and the contracting out of expertise. The purpose of these sections was to establish to what extent this aspect of association provision had developed, what services were being provided and if there was demand for this type of provision.

The final sections of the questionnaire sought information about association management and governance and the impact of specific funding changes. Association managers were invited to share their views on changes during the period 2005–2010 and comment on future changes in the light of the 2010 Budget cuts to ECE funding.

The questionnaire used in this study is available from the authors on request.

## **Analysis of data**

The amount of time required to complete the questionnaire varied according to association size and the accessibility of records. Responses were more complex for associations that were responsible for a large number of services and/or those which provided a variety of services.

Many of the questions posed were closed questions with boxes to tick. Frequencies of the answers are reported, and these have been considered in relation to association size. Answers to open questions and comments were categorised and analysed under key themes. Aspects or items of interest were examined.

### 3. PROFILE OF ASSOCIATIONS AND THEIR SERVICES

Traditionally kindergarten associations have predominantly provided sessional kindergarten services within their geographical regions. Most kindergartens operated three hour sessions each morning for older children and two and a half hour sessions for younger children on three afternoons per week. This sessional model of operation constituted associations' core responsibility. Some associations provided mobile kindergartens that serviced rural and isolated areas but these were few and only available from 1976 (Davison & Stevens, 1997).

A body of international research evidence, reviewed by Mitchell, Wylie, and Carr (2008) shows that good quality ECE is closely related to structural features of staffing that include staff:child ratios, staff qualifications, staffing stability (low turnover), and professional development. These structural features of quality provide "facilitating environments" for teaching and learning approaches that support children's learning and development:

Qualified teachers are likely to draw on their knowledge and experience of children and pedagogy to offer the kinds of cognitively challenging adult-child interactions that are linked with gains for children. The NICHD ECCRN study (2002) using structural equation modelling, found a mediated path from structural indicators of quality (teacher qualifications and staff:child ratios) through process quality to cognitive competence and caregiver ratings of social competence. These authors suggest that "more caregiver training may lead to better interactions between children and adults, while lower ratios may lead to more interactions" (Mitchell et al., 2008, p. xv)

Historically kindergartens have measured up well to most of these quality indicators. Kindergarten associations have insisted on employing only qualified teachers. Professional support provided by "senior" teachers has been a feature. However, large group sizes of as many as 45 children often resulted in ratios of one teacher to 15 children. Traditionally kindergartens have been criticised for these poor ratios and large group sizes.

Our survey enabled us to analyse changes to both the operation of kindergartens and structural features of quality.

#### **Sample characteristics and types of services**

The associations included in this sample ranged in size from two one-kindergarten associations to an association which administered 63 services. Most associations provide a range of models of kindergarten operation and it was rare for associations to report a standard model across the association. This meant that there was variety in the hours and times available in kindergartens in each association.

For the purposes of this study data was collected according to the type of licence held—sessional or all-day licences. Sessional licensed kindergartens are those that hold a sessional licence and operate in the traditional sessional manner with sessions of less than four hours duration.

All-day licensed kindergartens are those that hold an all-day licence. The criterion for receiving an all-day licence (and the higher rate of funding that accompanies it) is that some children are able to attend for more than four hours daily. Within this all-day category there are four distinct

models of operation. These models have been termed extended sessional, extended sessional with all-day option, school day and full day.

- Extended sessional kindergartens have a morning session in excess of four hours duration. They may or may not offer an afternoon session.
- Extended sessional with all-day option kindergartens have a morning session in excess of four hours and a separate afternoon session. Some children are offered the option to attend all day.
- School day kindergartens operate predominantly five or six-hour days, 40–43 weeks per year in line with school terms.
- Full day kindergartens offer seven hours or more per day over more than 43 weeks per year.

It is evident that many kindergartens continue to operate on a sessional basis but hold an all-day licence. There is a clear distinction between licensing and operation and for the purposes of this study, kindergartens are categorised firstly by the type of licence they hold and then for all-day models, according to the definitions listed above.

## Licensing and services provided

Twenty-eight associations responded to the questionnaire. They provided a total of 361 kindergarten services including two mobile kindergartens. Fourteen of the 28 association managers who responded reported that they administered some kindergartens that hold sessional licences. It is significant that 14 associations no longer had any kindergartens with sessional licences as this has historically been associations’ core business. In total the 14 associations had 39 kindergartens with sessional licences. In comparison all associations had kindergartens with all-day licences and these totalled 320 services. This indicated a distinct move towards all-day licensing with the associated higher rate of funding and improved adult:child ratios.

Associations have begun to offer a range of new services. These new or emerging services include home-based ECE, parenting support and the contracting out of management and professional expertise. Some association managers commented that they also provide occasional professional development and supervise teacher registration for other ECE services. No association managers reported that they offer integrated services at this stage<sup>3</sup>. However, we did not define integrated services within the questionnaire and it may be that managers did not understand the nature of these.

**Table 1: Number of associations (n = 28) and type of service**

Sessional kgn n (%)	All-day kgn n (%)	Home- based ECE n (%)	Parenting n (%)	Management professional services contracts n (%)	Playgroups n (%)	Mobile kgn n (%)
14 (50%) 39 kgns	28 (100%) 320 kgns	2 (7%)	3 (11%)	4 (14%)	6 (21%)	2 (7%) 2 mobile kgns

<sup>3</sup> Integrated services offer wider services for families in addition to ECE services for children.

It appears that some services previously provided by associations have declined. Mobile kindergartens are an example of this. Mobile kindergartens involve teachers travelling to a number of rural or isolated areas with a range of equipment and resources and running kindergarten sessions for young children and their families. They provide ECE services in areas in which few other ECE services are available. In 2010 only two mobile units were operating (one in each of two associations) as compared to the nine recorded as servicing rural and isolated areas in 1980 (Kennedy, Ratcliff, & Henry, 1990).

The data gathered in this study portrays a very different image of kindergarten and kindergarten operation today. The traditional sessional licence is less common now than the all-day licence and its associated higher rate of funding, which became available in 2005. The findings indicate a definite move towards increasing the length of time children attend.

## Change and collaboration

All association managers reported that they had made some change to the services they offer during the previous five years. Every association has changed the hours of operation of some services during this period. Nine associations have opened a total of 14 new kindergartens and two associations have closed one kindergarten each. Four association managers commented that they have taken other existing ECE services under their umbrella and one association has rebuilt a kindergarten on a nearby school site.

**Table 2: Changes made by associations (n = 28) in service provision 2005–2010**

Extended hours of operation n (%)	Opened new kgns n (%)	Closed kgns n (%)	Taken over existing ECE services n (%)	Provided new non-centre-based n (%)	Provided contract services n (%)	Parent support & development n (%)	Collaboration with other services n (%)
28 (100%)	9 (32%)	2 (7%)	4 (14%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	4 (14%)	11 (39%)

The development of non-centre-based services (aside from the mobile kindergartens described previously), the contracting out of services and provision of parenting services all commenced within this five-year period.

Eleven association managers reported that they were working in collaboration with other organisations, and one described a collaborative relationship in the process of development. The organisations that associations were collaborating with included iwi and Pasifika groups, church groups, health agencies and other ECE services. Some associations were involved in a number of collaborative ventures.

## Overall comments

The profile of kindergarten associations and the services they provide is changing. This is evident in all associations. In 2010 some associations no longer have traditional sessional licensed kindergartens and all associations now provide services that qualify for an all-day licence. All associations have made changes to the hours of operation of services and it is



common for associations to have kindergartens offering a range of hours and times. Associations have expanded and diversified the range of services they provide and are working in collaboration with other organisations.

The reduction in the number of mobile kindergartens may have implications for children and families in isolated and rural areas and is an aspect that may benefit from further examination.

## 4. SESSIONAL LICENSED KINDERGARTENS

Sessional licensed kindergartens are those that hold a sessional licence. They operate sessions of up to four hours duration. Fourteen association managers reported that amongst them they administered 39 sessional licensed kindergartens. There was little variation in the models of traditional sessional provision. The most common model consisted of five morning sessions with separate afternoon sessions on three days per week (36 kindergartens). This reflects traditional sessional kindergarten provision. The remaining models offered either four afternoon sessions (one kindergarten) or no afternoon sessions (two kindergartens). Only one association had opened a sessional kindergarten (it converted to an all-day licence shortly after opening). One sessional kindergarten had closed since 2005.

### Financial contribution

Most associations asked for no financial contribution from families accessing *20 hours ECE* and attending sessional kindergarten (11 associations). Associations that did seek a financial contribution suggested a voluntary donation or optional charge. This ranged from 50c per hour to \$2 per hour. One association suggested \$30 per term.

Families who were not accessing *20 hours ECE* were charged a fee by all but one association. Associations commented that this applied to a very small proportion of children and the majority of associations charged less than \$2.50 per child per hour. Overall these fees ranged from \$1 to \$4 per hour.

### Children enrolled

Eleven of the 14 associations operating sessional licensed kindergartens reported that the overall number of children enrolled in kindergarten had decreased since 2005. The reasons given for this were varied. The shift from sessional provision and conversion to all-day licensed provision was highlighted by six associations as a key reason for the decrease in the number of children attending sessional kindergarten. In addition, within sessional kindergartens, some associations had chosen to reduce group size. Competition from alternative providers and regional demographics were other factors that contributed to the decrease.

Three associations reported no change in the number of children enrolled in sessional kindergarten. No associations reported an increase in the number of children enrolled.

The number of three, four and five-year-old children enrolled in sessional kindergarten has decreased but the number of two-year-old children has increased in five kindergartens. This was attributed by one association to their temporary policy of no fees for two year olds and by another to the fact that it has one centre with an under-two licence which children continue to attend when they turn two. A general decrease in demand combined with the need to maintain full rolls and competition from other services were noted as resulting in younger children being admitted by five associations.

## **Sessional hours**

Only one association had made no changes to the hours of sessional kindergarten provision. This association has one kindergarten operating the traditional model of three-hour sessions five mornings per week and two and a half-hour sessions on three afternoons per week. The association commented that this kindergarten was moving to an all-day licence as of January 2011.

The remaining 13 associations reported that they have extended the length of some sessions. The most common method for extending the length of session was to hold four-hour sessions, particularly on Wednesday and Friday mornings when teachers have non-child contact afternoons. Thirty-six of the sessional licensed kindergartens had extended the length of some, if not all, of their morning sessions to four hours. Associations operated sessional kindergartens for between 40 and 43 weeks per year.

When asked if they planned any further changes to their sessional kindergarten provision, 11 association managers responded that they planned to move all their sessional licensed kindergartens to all-day licences (26 kindergartens). Two of the remaining three associations were considering a change and only one association stated that they had no plans for change at this stage. The associations that were considering change voiced a concern that extending hours may “cut down overall participation” because fewer children would be able to attend. These plans indicate a further potential reduction in traditional kindergarten provision.

These findings demonstrate clearly that the number of traditional sessional kindergartens has diminished. In addition associations that continue to provide sessional licensed kindergarten are extending the length of some morning sessions and the majority have indicated that they intend to continue to extend sessions and will convert to all-day licences. The weeks of the year sessional kindergartens operate correspond roughly with school terms.

## **Group size, adult:child ratios and waiting lists**

Most associations that provide sessional kindergarten have not altered group sizes (11 associations). One association has reduced group size in some but not all of its kindergartens. Managers in the two associations that have reduced group size commented that low roll numbers and association-wide decisions to improve adult:child ratios were behind the reductions.

Adult:child ratios for sessional kindergarten remained unchanged at one teacher to 15 children in 11 associations. Two associations had improved ratios to one teacher to 10 children in a uniform move across the association. One association had improved ratios in some but not all of its kindergartens. Association managers commented that improved ratios were made possible by increased funding through receipt of *20 hours ECE*.

The data with regard to the number of children on sessional kindergarten waiting lists was less clear-cut. Five associations reported that the number of children on all sessional waiting lists had decreased whilst another five associations reported that their waiting lists had increased. Two association managers reported no change in their waiting lists and two reported mixed responses with some waiting lists increasing and others decreasing.

The mixed findings about the number of children on waiting lists appears to reflect a variety of circumstances affecting local communities. The reasons provided by associations for decreased waiting lists included fluctuating community demographics, competition from other ECE providers and the failure of sessional provision to meet the needs of working parents. The

reasons for increased waiting lists were attributed to a number of factors including a decrease in the number of afternoon session places available, more kindergarten-aged children in the area and, in one region, to increasing unemployment that made sessional options more attractive.

## **Overall comments**

A decrease in the provision of traditional sessional licensed kindergarten is evident and a further reduction in this provision is likely, according to the comments made by association managers. Most associations intend to further review this provision in 2011. Only one sessional kindergarten has opened during the last five-year period and this was promptly converted to an all-day licence. The length of morning sessions has increased in virtually all associations.

The cost of sessional kindergarten remains fairly low. There is no charge for families accessing *20 hours ECE* and for the few families not accessing this scheme, the charge is mostly less than \$2.50 per child per hour.

The number of sessional kindergarten services has decreased as has the number of children aged three to five years attending. However, there is an increase in children aged two years attending these kindergartens. For the families of these children the cost is attractive when compared to other services for children of this age. According to managers, lowered demand combined with a desire to maintain full rolls (and funding) and the establishment of services for children two years and under means that more spaces are now available for younger children in sessional kindergartens.

Group sizes and adult:child ratios remain relatively unchanged in sessional kindergarten provision. The mixed findings on the length of waiting lists appear to reflect the diversity of circumstances in local communities.

## 5. ALL-DAY LICENSED KINDERGARTENS

All-day licensed kindergartens are those that hold an all-day licence. To qualify for an all-day licence some children must be able to attend for a period of more than four hours duration. As explained earlier some kindergartens hold an all-day licence but operate on a sessional basis, providing sessions of slightly longer than four hours duration (mainly in the morning). This is often followed by shorter afternoon sessions on certain days of the week. These services hold an all-day licence and for the purposes of this study are counted as all-day licensed kindergartens. There is a range of models within the all-day licensed category and these will be explained in more detail.

All 28 associations in the sample provided all-day licensed kindergarten of some type and there was a total of 320 all-day licensed kindergartens. Fourteen associations provided only all-day licensed kindergartens and had no sessional licensed kindergartens. Eleven new all-day licensed services were established during the previous five-year period and none have closed. The growth of all-day licensed kindergartens was largely attributed to associations converting sessional licensed kindergartens to all-day licences. All 28 associations had kindergartens that had done this. Another factor that contributed to the growth of these kindergartens was associations taking over existing all-day licensed services. One association had taken three existing services under their umbrella and another had taken two.

### Financial contribution

Eighteen associations asked for no financial contribution for attendance from families accessing *20 hours ECE*. Four associations asked for a suggested voluntary donation or optional charge of between 10c and \$2 per child per hour.

Four associations asked for an optional charge for any hours in excess of those covered by *20 hours ECE* and this was either \$1 or \$2 per child per hour. Two further associations asked for a voluntary donation of either \$20 or \$30 per term and another association had an optional charge of \$10 for children's profile books.

Families who were not accessing *20 hours ECE* were charged a fee by the majority of associations (25 associations). The amount of this fee ranged from \$1 to \$7 per child per hour and as for sessional licensed kindergartens, associations commented that this applied to very few families. Most commonly the fee was between \$2 and \$4 per child per hour. Some associations charged differing amounts according to a number of factors. These amounts varied according to set criteria; for example one association charged no fee for children aged under two years, another charged a lesser fee for children aged under three years whilst a third association charged a higher rate for full-day than for school day attendance.

### Children enrolled

Associations reported mixed findings about the number of children enrolled in all-day licensed services since 2005. More associations had fewer children enrolled than in 2005 (15 associations). Ten associations had more children enrolled. Two associations reported no change.

Many of the 320 all-day kindergartens had converted from sessional licensed services. Association managers that reported fewer children enrolled often commented that they had converted from two sessions per day to one group of children staying for an extended session or school day, and this had reduced the overall number of children catered for.

Association managers commented that kindergartens that moved to an all-day licence but retained extended sessional operation were required to meet the improved 1:10 adult child ratio in order to satisfy the criteria for an all-day licence. Most had reduced group size to meet this requirement. This was another factor that contributed to a decrease in the number of children enrolled. Competition from other ECE services and the decision made by some families to opt for part-time enrolment were other factors that impacted negatively on the number of children enrolled.

Association managers that reported an increase in the overall number of children enrolled often commented that they had opened new centres. Another factor that contributed to increased numbers of children enrolled was that the extension in hours responded better to community needs and this resulted in increased numbers of children enrolling.

The number of children aged two years attending has increased in 11 kindergartens and decreased in two kindergartens. One association commented that they had a temporary policy of “no fees” for two year olds, which was attracting younger children. Another association commented that they have established a new centre specifically for children aged two years and under. These factors contributed to the increase. On the other hand the move from two sessions daily to one has raised the start age in some kindergartens. There was little overall change reported in the numbers of three, four and five-year-old children.

## **All-day hours**

All association managers reported that they have made changes to the hours of all-day licensed provision in the last five years. Only three associations reported that they administered individual services that had not altered their hours. This applied to one or two services for each association and included new services and also services that had recently come under the association umbrella.

The most common change to the hours of provision was to move from the traditional sessional model and extend the length of the day. All 28 associations have some services that have made this change.

Only four associations reported that they have all-day licensed kindergartens that have reduced the length of the day; in total this affected 13 kindergartens. The reduction was mainly a result of either shortening the afternoon session to accommodate longer morning attendance or removing the afternoon session due to reduced demand. One full-day operation reduced its opening hours.

Association responses reveal that all-day licensed kindergarten provision falls into four distinct models. The table below explains each model and shows the number of associations and the number of kindergartens offering each model.

**Table 3: All-day kindergarten models**

Model	Definition	Number of associations	Number of kindergartens
School day	Predominantly five or six hour days, 40–43 weeks per year in line with school terms	26	161
Extended sessional	Morning session in excess of four hours, may/may not offer separate afternoon session	21	122
Extended sessional with an option to attend all day	Morning session in excess of four hours and separate afternoon session—offers some children the option to remain and attend both sessions	6	30
Full day	Seven hours or more per day, more than 43 weeks per year	3	7

As shown above the *school day model* was offered by all but two associations (26 associations) and in 161 kindergartens. There is variation between the hours offered within this model. The “basic” school day model involves five/six-hour attendance on five days per week and 14 associations provide this option. Also common is a version in which children attend for five to six hours on four days of the week and for a shorter period (in excess of four hours) on the other day of the week. The shorter days are often Wednesday and Friday, which were traditionally non-child contact times for teachers. School day models operate between 40 and 43 weeks per year which relates closely to school terms.

The *extended sessional* model offered by 21 associations in 122 kindergartens is most commonly characterised by five morning sessions of longer duration than four hours and three afternoon sessions of two hours. Some kindergartens offer only the morning session and this appears to be based on community demand. This type of provision closely resembles the traditional sessional operation but services hold an all-day licence and access all-day rates of funding.

Six associations offer children the choice between *extended sessional* and *all-day* attendance by allowing some children to remain and attend both morning and afternoon. This option is often restricted to older children; 30 kindergartens offer this model.

As demonstrated in the table above *full-day provision* remains relatively restricted with only three associations offering more than seven hours daily over 43 weeks per year. One association has five services that provide 10 hours daily over 48 weeks per year. An additional association provides 10 hours daily but for only 42 weeks per year. There are seven kindergartens offering this model.

Association managers frequently commented that the extension in hours was in response to community need and/or caused by diminishing rolls and waiting lists. It was also common for associations to comment that community response was positive and that demand increased after the extension in hours.

These findings demonstrated a significant level of change in all-day licensed kindergartens hours across all associations. An increase in the length of time children are able to attend kindergarten is evident as is an increase in all-day licensing and operation. The influence of traditional sessional kindergarten remains strong with only seven associations offering no

sessional models. Sessional kindergarten is therefore available in most associations (albeit the sessions are somewhat longer). In total 152 of the 320 all-day licensed kindergartens offer sessional provision (48 percent).

The popular school day model continues to link kindergartens to education and school operation whilst maximising funding, responding to community needs and improving structural aspects of quality through improved ratios and operating with smaller groups of children. The establishment and incorporation of existing full-day services under association umbrellas shows that associations are diversifying their services and responding to a range of community demands.

## **Group size, adult:child ratios and waiting lists**

All 28 association managers reported that group sizes have changed. Twenty-seven reported that they have smaller groups of children in all-day licensed kindergartens than in 2005. For 21 associations this reduction in group size applied to all of their services. Six associations administered some services that had not experienced a change in group size.

There were only four services (in two associations) in which group size had increased. One association commented that this was because the number of children had “dropped considerably” prior to moving to an all-day licence but following the extension of hours “maximum rolls” were able to be achieved. The other association reported that the services were “under capacity” prior to the alteration in hours.

Association managers commented that the move to an all-day licence with improved adult:child ratios was the catalyst for the reduction in group size. Kindergartens that had previously operated under sessional licences often had group sizes of up to 45 children with three teachers. Services that previously operated with a group size of 30 were more likely to report no change to group size.

The required adult:child ratio for all-day services is more stringent than those applied to services with a sessional licence. For example, a sessional licence requires a ratio of one adult to 15 children for children over two years of age whilst an all-day licence requires a ratio of one to 10. As many of the all-day licensed services have converted from sessional licences, these kindergartens were required to improve their adult:child ratio to meet licensing requirements.

All associations have improved adult:child ratios in some services. Twenty-four associations have improved ratios in every one of their all-day licensed kindergartens. The remaining four associations have few services that have not made improvements. Overwhelmingly associations commented that these ratios had improved to meet the all-day licence requirements. One association manager commented:

All-day licences meant that we could afford to drop the ratio to 1:10—the best thing that ever happened to kindergarten!

This sentiment was expressed by other associations, who explained that the funding gained by moving to an all-day licence enabled them to improve adult:child ratios.

The data with regard to the number of children on all-day kindergarten waiting lists was mixed.

- Eight associations reported mixed responses with some waiting lists increasing and some decreasing.
- Seven associations reported that they had more children on all their waiting lists. These associations commented that *20 hours ECE* (especially if coupled with free



attendance above the 20 hours), increased birth rates and the improved hours offered contributed to this growth. The reduction in spaces available due to conversion from sessional to all-day provision and reduced group sizes were key contributors to longer waiting lists.

- Six associations recorded fewer children on all waiting lists due to local demographics and competition from other ECE services.
- Four associations recorded no change and three associations were unable to provide data.

Local circumstances often featured in the reasons for these increases and decreases: young families moving to particular areas, rural decline and farm consolidation were mentioned.

## **Planned changes**

Sixteen associations plan to make further changes to all-day licensed kindergartens. Some association managers commented that they intended to review services in response to community need. A strong theme to emerge was the further extension of hours. Services that operated for shorter hours on some days were most likely to change. One association manager stated with regard to these services:

Families have said that they prefer longer days once they see it in action.

More extended sessional services with options for some children to remain and attend both sessions, six-hour sessions for rural services and moving extended sessional to day provision featured in association plans. Some associations intended to increase the days of operation in 2011 in response to the 2010 Budget announcements.

## **Overall comments**

The provision of all-day licensed kindergarten has increased and further review and extension of hours is planned by associations. Many traditional sessional services have extended to all-day licensed operation, associations have taken existing all-day services under their umbrella and a number of new all-day services have been established.

The cost of all-day services remains fairly low. There is no fee for families accessing *20 hours ECE* and suggested voluntary donations or optional charges are fairly low. Families not accessing *20 hours ECE* are mostly charged a fee of between \$2 and \$4 per child per hour.

The findings about the number of children attending all-day services are mixed. For services that moved from providing for two groups of children per day to providing for one, the number of children enrolled has reduced. Likewise if group size has been reduced to meet improved ratio requirements, fewer children may be attending. However, improved responsiveness to community need, the increased number of services available and positive community reaction have resulted in increased numbers of children attending in some areas. The number of children two years of age and under has increased.

A range of all-day licensed models is available. On the face of it the most common model is the school day model. This model reinforces the traditional educational relationship between kindergartens and schools and means that kindergarten operation continues to coincide with school terms.

However, closer examination of the models confirms that the influence of the traditional sessional model of operation remains strong. When the number of kindergartens offering extended sessional is combined with the number of kindergartens offering extended sessional with an all-day option, they total 152 kindergartens—a total that is not far behind the 161 recorded school day kindergartens. Addition of the already documented 39 sessional licensed kindergartens to this total confirms that sessional provision continues to account for the majority of kindergarten operation. This overview of both sessional and all-day licensing reveals that 191 kindergartens continue to offer sessional kindergarten. This represents 53 percent of the total sample.

A decrease in group size and improvement in adult:child ratios is demonstrated in virtually all associations. These developments correspond well with structural quality indicators.

There are mixed findings about the length of waiting lists for all-day licensed services. Waiting lists have generally increased for services that have moved from sessional to all-day provision and for services that have reduced group size. However, diverse circumstances in local communities continue to impact on and determine demand.

## 6. NON-CENTRE-BASED ECE SERVICES

Non-centre-based services are defined in this report as ECE services administered by associations that operate in alternative locations. They include home-based ECE, parenting services and mobile kindergartens. Six associations offered non-centre-based services. Only one association offered more than one type of non-centre-based service. This association offered home-based ECE and playgroups.

### Services provided

Two associations provided home-based ECE. One of these associations reported that there was some unmet demand in this area and that they planned “expansion in the number of educators”. The other association however, commented that their home based service had

struggled to get established—too much competition, recession has meant reduced demand.

This service was closing in September 2010.

Two associations provided parenting services. One was provided through a Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) contract and the other through a Strategies for Kids Information for Parents (SKIP) contract. Both associations indicated that there was some unmet demand for these services.

Two associations provided one mobile kindergarten each. These mobile kindergartens visited a range of sites and operated on a sessional basis. One association manager indicated that there was unmet demand for this service whilst the other reported that their current provision satisfied demand. Both associations commented that they review sites constantly and change venues to meet community needs. One professional services manager commented when asked that the mobile kindergartens were expensive to operate, physically demanding on staff and that funding was affected by small group sizes and seasonal work patterns.

### Overall comments

The main focus of association service provision remains on centre-based provision. Some associations have diversified into non-centre-based services with mixed success. Their comments reflected a cautious approach. Whilst some demand is indicated for home-based ECE and parenting services, only one association had plans for expansion. Mobile kindergartens appear to be a diminishing resource for rural and isolated areas with their operation being regarded as expensive and their funding unpredictable. Only two associations provided this service in 2010. This finding reinforces the advocacy from the ECE sector (Early Childhood Education Long Term Strategic Plan Working Group, 2001; Early Childhood Education Project, 1996) that a funding formula linked closely to the actual costs of service provision is needed to ensure equitable provision for all communities.

## 7. MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACTS

Four associations provide management or professional support contracts for external organisations. These contracts utilise the expertise of association personnel.

### **Services provided**

The reported contracts let by associations are for professional support and professional development. Four associations contract out these services. Two of these associations contracted senior teachers or their equivalent to provide professional support and development for teachers in one or two smaller kindergarten associations. One association planned to expand this contracted work but stated that “cuts in funding from February 2011 have stymied this”. The other association’s three-year contract was due to finish at the end of 2010.

The other two associations provided professional development for other ECE providers. One association worked as part of a Ministry of Education contract in collaboration with another provider. This association also provided mentoring for registering teachers from other ECE services. Associations did not perceive that there was strong demand for these services and only one association manager commented that they planned any changes to the provision of management and professional services contracts. That change was the termination of the professional services contract described above.

### **Overall comments**

As with the provision of non-centre-based services, associations are adopting a cautious approach to contracting out services. The reduction in ECE funding in February 2011 may well impact on the ability of ECE services to provide or pay for contracted services and this developing area of association provision may be curtailed. Reportedly, some associations have contracts to provide support such as payroll services to other associations.

## 8. MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The size and shape of associations, their structure, roles and responsibilities reflect the changing environment in which they operate. In earlier times (prior to 1989) kindergartens and kindergarten associations received considerable direct support from the Department of Education via regional Education Boards. Education Boards provided a range of services for associations including property maintenance and equipment and resource provision. The move to a Ministry of Education in 1989 involved the devolution of some of these responsibilities. In 1992 the bulk funding of kindergartens resulted in associations becoming responsible for teacher salary payment and a number of other aspects of kindergarten provision (Davison, 1997). Many associations contracted out services such as payroll and property maintenance to outside agencies but throughout these periods a significant amount of support, often based on parent voluntary work, remained necessary in order for kindergartens to operate.

The way that associations are managed and governed in 2010 revealed a number of developments since 2005.

### **Association staff and role**

Twenty-six out of the 28 associations reported that there had been changes in the responsibilities of association staff since 2005. Factors commonly listed by associations were

- growth in the role, responsibilities and hours of work of management personnel;
- associated growth in administrative roles;
- centralising operations;
- growth in senior teacher numbers and professional support and development responsibilities;
- increased human resources responsibilities as teacher numbers increase;
- increased asset development, property management and maintenance responsibilities;
- increased financial and accounting requirements;
- increased recording and reporting requirements;
- a need for ICT and systems expertise; and
- the creation of marketing roles.

Only six associations stated that there had been no change in association staff responsibilities. These associations were mainly small associations that administered less than seven services.

Most associations were centralising operations and taking on roles previously undertaken by parent volunteers and teachers. Associations reported that this centralising of operations had significant financial implications. They reported funds being able to be applied more efficiently, for example, accessing “group deals” for utilities and everyday expenses. Associations also commented that this centralisation enabled them to provide equitable funding between kindergartens, reduced teaching teams reliance on local committee decisions and enabled them to run “tighter budgets”, providing kindergartens with more certainty about funding. Many associations, in particular larger associations, were taking back the management of payroll, accounting and financial processes that were previously contracted out. Additional staff were being employed to fill specialised positions.

It is evident that association size and employment responsibilities have increased overall. Association managers were very clear in describing these changes and the similarity in responses was remarkable. Typical comments included:

In-house pay-roll became feasible with the dramatic increase in employees.

Twenty hours ECE and the introduction of fees means more accounts receivable, more marketing, more professional development and support with more teaching and registration support. We've employed more senior teachers, a new chief financial officer and new operations manager.

We've taken on fee administration, financial reporting and recording for kindergartens and some centralised bill payment (hence the need for two extra administration staff).

## **Teaching and support staff**

Association managers reported that in 2010 they employed more teachers, more administration staff in services, more teacher aides, more professional teaching and learning support staff and more specialists.

Twenty-four association managers stated that the number of teachers they employed had increased since 2005 (the remaining four associations did not respond to this question). The number of teachers employed by associations ranged from four to 320 teachers. These changes reflect national trends for all kindergartens: 2,464 teachers were employed in kindergartens in 2010 compared with 1,782 in 2005 (Ministry of Education, 2011c). This represents a 38 percent increase in teachers over this time, which is far more than the 2 percent increase in the number of kindergartens. The improvements that associations have made to adult:child ratios is clearly reflected in these figures.

The employment of part-time administration support staff in services has increased. Fifteen of the 18 associations providing this type of support in 2010 reported they have employed more staff in this role since 2005. The number of administration staff employed by associations ranges from one part-time employee in a small association through to 53 in a large association.

There is also some growth in the number of part-time teacher aides employed with slightly more associations increasing the number of these positions. Twenty associations employ teacher aides with the number employed by each association ranging from one to 32. Ten association managers commented that they employ more teacher aides now than in 2005. It is likely that there is some similarity in role between the teacher aide and administration support positions and although the job titles may differ the roles may be similar. When these roles are reviewed in combination there is only one association that does not employ either teacher aides or administration support staff in services. This is a small association administering three services.

Twenty-four associations employ professional teaching and learning advisors. Most associations refer to these staff as senior teachers although other titles are used. The four associations that do not employ teaching and learning advisors are all small associations administering less than seven services. The number of teaching and learning advisors has increased since 2005 in 12 associations and this may well relate to the increased number of teachers employed.

Specialist staff were employed by three associations. Two of these associations employed kaimahi Māori and the third employed itinerant teachers. It is notable that two associations employed a total of 10 centre-based trainees/in-training teachers (over and above their "ratioed" registered teachers) and the move to all-day licenses and full-day provision has led some associations to employ cooks to cater for children's meals.

## Management and governance

When asked if the desired level of expertise of association board members had changed since 2005, association managers responded that there was an overall increase in the expertise desired. Increased financial, business, marketing, management and governance expertise were valued. Increased expertise in communicating and consulting with families was desirable and an understanding of culture and ethnic diversity, whilst valued, was perceived as slightly less important.

**Table 4: Increased levels of expertise desired of board members by associations (n=28)**

Financial n (%)	Business n (%)	Marketing n (%)	Management n (%)	Governance n (%)	Understand cultural & ethnic diversity n (%)	Communication & consultation with families n (%)
15 (54%)	16 (57%)	14 (50%)	14 (50%)	15 (54%)	11 (39%)	13 (46%)

## Overall comments

The findings of this survey demonstrate that association roles, responsibilities and structures have continued to change in the last five years. Their responsibilities have increased as associations centralise and take over administrative tasks that were previously less complex, less onerous and carried out by teachers and parent committees. This centralising of operations has provided significant financial benefits. The number of personnel associations employ has grown with teachers, support staff and administrative position numbers increasing. The employment of in-kindergarten administrative assistants and teacher aides is now commonplace and specialist staff are being employed to fulfil specific needs. Associations now seek increased levels of financial and business expertise on their boards. It is apparent that medium to large associations in particular now operate in a professional manner and as sizeable businesses.

## 9. THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC FUNDING INITIATIVES

Associations responded unanimously that their budgets had increased since 2005. When questioned about the impact of specific ECE funding initiatives, they responded positively to each initiative and described a range of improvements that they attributed to the changes.

### **2005 revised funding formula**

The revised funding formula in 2005 provided a range of funding rates based on the percentage of ECE qualified staff and introduced two separate rates of funding—a sessional rate and a higher all-day rate. These rates were available to all services and replaced the previous sessional rate by which kindergartens were funded. A full description of this policy is detailed in the introductory section of this report.

Associations were positive about the impact of this policy. They commented that it was more realistic funding. The revised formula provided recognition of the high employment costs associations faced and associations believed that it addressed the “actual costs of employing 100 percent trained and registered teachers”.

The other significant impact of this revised funding formula was that it offered associations choices about the way that kindergartens operated and some options about the rate of funding that they accessed. One association commented that this funding “made the all-day licensed kindergarten viable”.

As has been demonstrated in previous sections of this report, all the associations that responded to the survey have taken the opportunity to do this and all 28 associations now provide all-day licensed services.

The higher rate of all-day funding has enabled associations to address issues that were of concern. It made it possible to

- meet community demands for longer hours of attendance;
- reduce group size; and
- improve adult:child ratios.

### **20 hours ECE**

The positive impact of the introduction of *20 hours ECE* in 2007 was highlighted by all association managers. Twenty-eight managers responded that this initiative improved the financial sustainability of their services. Twenty-six reported that *20 hours ECE* reduced the level of fundraising required. Twenty-four reported that it reduced the level of voluntary donations required. Association managers commented that *20 hours ECE* provided increased, reliable and predictable income and they were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of this initiative. The comments below typify the responses to this funding initiative:

It made a huge impact financially!



Its great for all families and kindergartens.

*20 hours ECE* enabled us to change our service to be more truly responsive to community needs.

A wide range of improvements were attributed to this change in funding policy. The boost in income and the security of income it brought enabled associations to budget and make long-term plans.

### Staffing improvements

- Professional support and professional development increased.
- More teachers, teacher aides and administrative assistants were employed.
- Group sizes reduced.
- Adult:child ratios improved.

### Curriculum initiatives and special projects

- Innovative curriculum initiatives were pursued.
- Purchase and upgrading of ICT resources was undertaken.
- Fundraising was targeted for specific projects rather than meeting basic operating expenses.

### Environment and equipment improvements

- Deferred maintenance was completed.
- Resources and equipment were upgraded.
- Outdoor play areas were developed.

### Increased participation and improved provision

- New services were established catering for more children.
- Enrolments and attendance increased as voluntary donations were no longer required.

### Equity provisions

- Equitable funding was made available for all services in the association

Associations highlighted the beneficial impacts of *20 hours ECE* on the quality of teaching and learning, environments, resourcing and participation.

Significantly increased ability to run quality services—more teachers, better conditions, development of property and environment and more resources.

We have been able to improve staff:child ratios which in turn ensures improved opportunities for learning.

Twenty hours ECE has been a great bonus for families—it has taken the pressure off financially so children aged three and four have been able to take part in ECE regardless of income.

These findings are similar to those found in an NZCER survey of parents and managers soon after *20 hours ECE* was implemented (Mitchell, 2008). There were indications that *20 hours ECE* had enabled some children to attend ECE who would otherwise have missed out. *20 hours ECE* had also been accompanied by varying changes in participation, predominantly more regular participation and children attending for longer hours, but there were also some reductions in enrolments where services had changed their operation.

## Equity funding

Equity Funding became available to licensed community-based ECE services in March 2002. It was intended to reduce educational disparities between groups that are under-represented in ECE, reduce barriers to participation and support services to raise the level of educational achievement. There are four components to Equity Funding and services must meet one or more component to qualify.

- Low socio-economic communities.
- Special needs and non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Language and cultures other than English.
- Isolation.

The amount of Equity Funding received is based on a scale and paid either as an add-on to the hourly rate or monthly, depending on the qualifying criteria (Ministry of Education, 2011a).

Associations reported that this funding assisted them to

- employ additional and specialist staff in specific areas;
- purchase culturally appropriate equipment and resources that communities might not otherwise afford;
- develop play areas;
- enhance environments to ensure that they better reflect the community; and
- offer children and whānau opportunities that might not otherwise be available.

Twenty-three associations specifically detailed positive outcomes for children and families from Equity Funding. These are similar to findings of an evaluation of the initial uses and impact of Equity Funding (Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, 2006).

## Child Care Subsidy

A Work and Income NZ (WINZ) Child Care Subsidy is available to some families to assist with the cost of childcare for children aged under five years of age. The subsidy is only available when fees are charged. It is based on income and paid directly to the early childhood service. From 2004 to 2010 the amount paid increased and income eligibility expanded (Mitchell, 2008). However, in September 2010 the income thresholds were reduced and inflation adjustments were removed.

Association managers' responses to questions about the impact of this subsidy were muted. Few associations charge fees and so this subsidy is rarely available to kindergarten parents. Ten associations made no response when asked what impact the Child Care Subsidy had on their service and nine associations reported that it made no significant impact. Three associations stated that very few parents need to access it as they accessed *20 hours ECE* or did not need to pay a fee. Only three association managers commented that this subsidy enabled families who

could not afford to pay a fee to attend. The ability of families to access this subsidy may become more crucial if more associations move to charge fees or if fees were to increase.

## **Overall comments**

Associations have utilised changes in funding policy to transform their operation. Associations have developed from what were basically small-scale organisations reliant on high levels of voluntary input and supporting traditional sessional ECE provision into businesslike organisations, responsible for significant sums of money and the provision of a diverse range of ECE services. Increased, secure and predictable funding has enabled associations to increase the number of teaching and support staff, improve ratios and group size and provide more professional support and development. It has enabled associations to enhance environments and resources and purchase up-to-date equipment and technology. Deferred maintenance has been addressed and the modernisation of kindergarten buildings has been possible. Greater equity between kindergartens and improved community responsiveness has been provided. Associations have taken the opportunities offered by changes in ECE funding to address issues of poor ratios and large group size. Barriers to participation such as cost have been largely addressed. The changes associations have implemented have improved the variety, flexibility, accessibility, participation and the structural quality of ECE provided.

## 10. OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Associations were questioned about the outcomes for children and families as a result of the changes since 2005. All associations reported positively on developments over this period of time. Their responses fell broadly into four categories.

### **Quality**

Associations responded that the reduction of adult:child ratios to a one to 10 level alongside a reduction in group size has made a significant difference to the quality of ECE. They commented that the “richness, depth and length of interactions” with children were enhanced. The level of resourcing and the range and appropriateness of equipment have been improved and environments have been upgraded to reflect communities’ and children’s particular needs. The equitable spread of developments was noted by numerous associations and encapsulated in comments such as this.

Equity of income across kindergartens means the same high quality resources, equipment and learning environments for all children.

### **Teaching and learning**

Associations commented that increased opportunities and the ability to release teachers to attend professional development contributed to a motivated and up-to-date workforce. Increased professional support and the employment of specialist and itinerant teachers also enhanced outcomes for children. The employment of administration assistants and teacher aides on-site was credited with releasing teachers from mundane tasks, allowing them to focus on working with children. The comment below typifies this belief.

More teachers, aides and administration support allows teachers to focus on professional tasks and engage more with children and families.

Some associations noted that recent Education Review Office (ERO) reviews have reinforced these findings.

### **Parents and families**

Association managers believe that there is now less pressure on parent/whānau committees. As associations have centralised they have taken over responsibilities that previously fell on local committees, which has resulted in families/whānau being more willing to participate.

Families can focus on being involved with their child’s learning and not worry so much about raising money constantly.

It was noted that parent/whānau committees were becoming more social and supportive and engaging in parent education rather than focusing on the need to raise funds for essential running expenses.

## **Hours and accessibility**

Association managers reported that extended provision has suited parents' needs.

Greater diversity of session times and attendance options within centres and across the association means more choice for families and children are more likely to get to kindergarten as we are more flexible.

A range of attendance options and enrolment of younger children also featured in the following response.

Great outcomes! Kindergartens with diverse hours and options, including for under-tuos. Our services meet the needs of a larger proportion of the community.

Associations were committed to the cost of attendance remaining affordable for parents/whānau. The majority of families accessed *20 hours ECE* funding and fees have remained low for hours outside this allocation or for those not able to access it.

## **Overall comments**

Responses from associations confirm that the funding developments since 2005 have had a most beneficial effect for children and families. The quality of ECE provided, teaching and learning have been enhanced. The developments have been equitable (applied across associations' services) and reinforced by ERO review findings.

The focus and pressure of parent/whānau participation has switched from fundraising to pay for essential services to fundraising for specific projects. More parents/whānau are willing to be involved in these projects and in their child's education. Parent/whānau committees now fulfil a more supportive, social role and members are more likely to engage in education and education concerns.

The change to longer and more flexible hours has allowed kindergartens to respond to particular community requirements and made kindergarten more accessible. The cost of participation remains low with the majority of families/whānau accessing *20 hours ECE*.

# 11. REACTIONS TO THE 2010 BUDGET

Associations voiced strong support of recent funding initiatives that have enabled them to improve quality, accessibility and participation in services. However, they expressed serious concerns about the changes announced for the ECE sector in the 2010 Budget and particularly how these will impact on their services.

The reduction in ECE funding is based on removing the top two bands of all-day funding. Effectively ECE services will be paid only to provide up to 80 percent registered teachers. Kindergarten associations, who employ 80 to 100 per cent registered teachers, will experience a significant cut in funding as of 1 February 2011 (this is explained in more depth in the introductory section of this report).

Associations were asked to comment on the impact of the budget announcements, whether they might need to make changes as a result of it and what form those changes might take. Twenty-seven associations responded to this question. Their responses indicated that the cut in funding was significant and would impact negatively on their ability to maintain current provision.

The commitment of all associations was to retain 100 percent registered teachers. However, they were considering other ways to reduce expenditure. The most common reductions were to make cutbacks around the margins of their services. In addition they planned to change the operation of their services to attract more funding. The most common planned change was to convert sessional licensed kindergartens to all-day licensed kindergartens. Aspects identified for possible change are set out below.

## Staffing

- Reducing teacher aide hours.
- Cutting professional support.
- Ceasing the employment of additional or specialist teachers.

## Employment conditions

- Reducing professional development.
- Cutting non-child contact hours for part-time teachers.

## Property

- Deferring non-essential maintenance.

## Operation and funding

- Ensuring that full rolls are maintained.
- Opening for additional days or an additional week.
- Raising fee levels
- Converting all services to all-day licences and funding.

The following comments typify association responses.

The 2010 Government budget has a huge impact on our association with a sixteen percent decrease in bulk funding. We will have to look at reducing/removing teacher aide support, cutting back on major maintenance, reduce the professional development budget. We will have to review the number of days we are open for in a year and increase the number of hours we can claim. At this stage we remain committed to 100 per cent trained registered teachers in all our kindergartens.

We are changing all our kindergartens to all-day licences. It was always our intention to have 1:10 ratios but government has forced our hand to do it earlier.

We will lose nearly a million dollars per year in funding and have only just started to discuss where this will come from. Likely possibilities include: operation grants to kindergartens; professional development; curriculum initiatives; major property developments; maintenance of property; increase in fees; decrease to kindergarten hours who offer over twenty but where parents don't pay; decrease in the number of senior teachers.

We will become a reactive rather than proactive organisation again.

We will try not to change too much for children and families but: decrease in budgets for professional development; maintenance; resources. We hope it won't be too visible but will not know until at least a year. We just can't plan ahead when we are reliant on the government of the day.

## **Overall comments**

Associations are considering the likely impacts of the funding cuts announced in the 2010 Budget. They are adopting a cautious approach to change but are all expecting to have to make significant reductions in expenditure. The cutbacks indicated at this early stage are peripheral and designed to impact least on children, teaching and learning. The enhanced quality, flexibility and accessibility measures adopted to date by associations are in a precarious state.

Associations have increased accessibility and participation in line with Government goals for the ECE sector. They are anxious that Government policies have changed so quickly and impacted adversely on their ability to make long-term plans and budget for further expansion.

## 12. ASSOCIATION GENERAL COMMENTS

Association managers were asked if they had any further comments to make about changes in provision since 2005.

When asked specifically to comment on changes since 2005 the following positive comments were typical:

20 hours (ECE) was a dream come true and we had just begun to be able to offer and support exciting innovation, playground developments, building projects that offered sufficient spaces for children, parents and teachers and these will go. The thought of going back to sausage sizzles to pay the power bill is depressing!

We have just experienced a golden era for kindergarten during which time we have been able to make changes to meet community needs (eg a range of times), improve quality (eg a move to 1:10 ratio, employing more professional leadership staff) and to reduce the financial and administrative burden for committees. We now face the risk of retrenchment in some areas in order to make ends meet. It is sad that we are returning to the official view that education starts in school, rather than in ECE.

It was the best thing since sliced bread!!! Bring back the 100 per cent funding for all-day licences.

Our association has grown significantly since 2005:

- Teacher numbers have doubled.
- Income has trebled.
- One new kindergarten built and another re-built.
- Much more professionally managed.
- Planning one more new service and extensions and renovations to existing kindergartens.

The changes up until this year have meant better educational outcomes for children. We are very disappointed at this step backwards...we are shocked that this government isn't recognising literature available regarding quality provision.

The ability of families to pay fees has not increased. The improved funding rates meant we were able to move away from charging fees and were able to reduce the levels of fundraising required. For a brief two years since the introduction of *20 hours* we were finally able to pour much needed funds into our kindergartens and teachers.

Our organisation is becoming more structured, cohesive and professional.

I feel the diversification and increased funding has allowed us to address areas we were previously struggling in ie. adult:child ratios and attracting trained teachers to rural areas as well as decreasing costs to parents so all children get the opportunities to attend. I feel sad that these strong links made within the individual kindergarten communities may be the first to go. We will lose the ability to respond to individual community needs eg employing an extra trained teacher in a kindergarten that has high behavioural needs.



## Overall comments

The associations that chose to comment further were very positive about the developments from 2005 to 2009. They described changes that

- enabled them to meet community needs;
- improved the quality of ECE;
- enhanced the professionalism of staff;
- reduced the financial and administrative burden placed on local committees;
- improved accessibility;
- increased participation; and
- ensured affordability for families/whānau.

These associations voiced strong concern that the recently announced funding cuts would impinge on their ability to develop further and indeed, take them backwards. They were concerned that the funding cuts would result in a return to their previous experiences of underfunding.

## 13. CONCLUSION

The aim of this survey was to ascertain the nature, extent and reasons behind changes in association provision and/or operation during the period 2005 to 2010. The degree of change revealed during this five-year period is remarkable. Every association reported that they have made significant changes. To develop a clear picture of what was happening in kindergartens, it was necessary to examine a number of aspects.

It became apparent very early on in the study that there were distinct differences between licensing and operation and that these aspects needed to be addressed separately. Significant changes in licensing were evident. All associations had moved at least some kindergartens from the traditional sessional licence to all-day licences. Fourteen associations had moved all their kindergartens to all-day licences and no longer administered any kindergartens holding sessional licences. Association managers made it clear that they intend to continue to review their traditional sessional licensed kindergartens and a further reduction is likely.

The vast majority of kindergartens are now all-day licensed (320 out of total 361 or 89 percent). This shift in licensing has responded to community demand for longer and more flexible provision and enabled kindergarten associations to access a higher rate of funding.

With regard to operation every one of the 28 associations had altered the hours of operation of at least some services. The most common change was an extension of hours. Associations attributed this to community demand for longer and all-day services.

One of the key needs expressed by parents in New Zealand over the period 1999 to 2007 had been to access more hours of ECE than were available (Department of Labour & National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, 1999; Mitchell, 2008; Mitchell, Royal Tangaere, Mara, & Wylie, 2008). Often the need was for just a few hours per week or for flexible provision. The changes made by associations may better cater for the contexts of modern families' lives.

A simple review of the findings may indicate that the majority of kindergartens have moved to all-day operation. However, closer examination demonstrates that sessional provision continues to account for the majority of kindergarten provision. In combination traditional sessions, extended sessional and extended sessional with an option to attend all day account for 53 percent of associations' provision.

Associations have diversified not only by changing licensing and extending kindergarten hours of operation, but also by showing some early interest in the provision of non-centre-based services and the contracting out of association expertise. They have adopted a cautious approach to the development of these services. Associations have also taken a number of other existing services (mainly existing all-day services) under their umbrella.

The structure, roles and responsibilities of associations have altered significantly. Associations in 2010 are centralising and taking over tasks and responsibilities that were previously undertaken by volunteers and teachers. The number of staff they employ and the level of skill and expertise required have increased. Associations operate in a professional, businesslike manner, managing large budgets and significant property responsibilities. The flow of more funding into associations required them to transform into forward thinking, more efficient, businesslike structures. The largely voluntary parent co-operative model of the past has virtually disappeared.

It is interesting that medium and large associations are reporting more change than their smaller counterparts. Small associations are less likely to employ teacher aides or administrative assistants in services; they are less likely to employ professional teaching and learning advisors and specialist staff. They are also less likely to report structural administrative change or change in the roles and responsibilities of association staff. The reason for this is likely to be that medium and large associations generate more funding and this enables them to cross-subsidise services, centralise responsibilities, employ staff in across association roles and experiment with innovative practices.

It was evident that associations viewed the developments made possible by the funding initiatives as overwhelmingly positive. Reliable, secure funding at a rate that recognised the cost of provision meant that associations gained the ability to provide flexible services that were responsive to community needs. They were able to address issues of accessibility and participation and improve aspects of the quality of services provided.

The 2005 revised funding formula, *20 hours ECE* and Equity Funding initiatives in combination provided not only more money but more opportunity to respond to changing demands. These funding initiatives enabled associations to address historical issues and improve the quality of ECE services. According to managers, teaching and learning outcomes for children have been enhanced and improved affordability and flexibility have increased access.

## Challenges

Although associations were very positive about changes during the period 2005 to 2010, there are still some significant challenges that exist and others that are about to impact on associations and the services they provide.

A key challenge is to ensure that the provision now offered by kindergarten associations manages to keep up with community needs. Nationally there has been a 16 percent decline in enrolments in all kindergartens from 44,920 in 2005 to 37,600 in 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2011a). The findings from this survey indicate that the decline can largely be attributed to kindergartens changing their operation to cater for fewer children for longer periods of time. This has had positive spin-offs for families seeking more flexible or longer hours of attendance. Alongside these changes in the hours of provision, associations have made improvements to the structural quality of services, addressing aspects such as large groups size and low adult:child ratios. This enhancement of quality is likely to benefit children. However, in combination the extension of hours and improvements in structural quality have resulted in fewer children attending kindergarten. It may be that growth in provision has not kept up with the demand for services.

A related challenge is kindergarten associations' ability to compete with the rapid growth of services that has occurred in the EC sector. Many communities now offer families a wide variety of EC services to choose from. Many of these services market aggressively and target specific demographics. Kindergartens, as community-based services, may struggle with these strategies. The report of the Quality Public Education Project (QPECE) noted that:

Community-based early childhood services and organisations had been ill-placed in the policy environment of the past two decades to respond to the need for the expansion of provision in the sector and the increased participation of children in early childhood education (May & Mitchell, 2009, p. 2).

The QPECE project found that community-based organisations were not set up to raise funds in the same way as private companies and were reliant on limited Government grants and community funding. This disadvantage was compounded by a lack of experience in property

development. Despite these factors, kindergartens attract 37 percent of four year olds enrolled in an early childhood service although they represent less than 15 percent of services (Ministry of Education, 2011d). The challenge is to remain the service of choice for families.

A third challenge is the potential for further changes to ECE funding. Government established a taskforce to review the ECE sector in 2010. The Minister of Education at the time advised repeatedly that there had been a cost blowout in the sector and stated that she intended “bringing spending under control, while targeting it at children who need it most” (New Zealand Government, 2011). The report of the ECE Taskforce was released in 2011 (Early Childhood Education Taskforce, 2011) and there is concern that they were asked to present recommendations that were fiscally neutral. This indicates that the Government does not intend to increase early childhood funding.

The change to the ECE funding rate announced in the 2010 Budget took effect from February 2011. It has resulted in a significant loss of funds for associations. Associations have predicted severe impacts and stated clearly in their responses to the questionnaire that they will need to reduce expenditure. Some of the gains made in quality, provision and resourcing may be threatened as associations once more grapple with underfunding. Reductions in expenditure may well negatively impact on the recent improvements in quality and accessibility made by associations.

Association managers’ responses to this survey indicate that the restriction of eligibility and loss of inflation adjustments to the Child Care Subsidy in September 2010 may have minimal impact initially. However, any change to *20 hours ECE* would have a significant impact on every association. A reduction or restriction of *20 hours ECE* would require associations to review their income and an increase in the number of services charging fees and the level of fees charged would be likely. Any such increases are likely to result in more families requiring access to the (now more restricted) Child Care Subsidy. It should also be noted that whereas *20 hours ECE* provides predictable funding for associations, the restricted eligibility criteria means that funding via the Child Care Subsidy is more variable, less predictable and not as reliable. The Child Care Subsidy requires parents to make application and meet eligibility criteria and kindergarten associations therefore are not able to rely on a steady stream of income from this funding.

## **Overall comments**

Association managers have reported positive outcomes as a result of changes to ECE funding policy during the period 2005–2010. Associations have grasped the opportunities offered by these developments and made significant changes to their provision and operation. The transformation of associations and the services they administer has responded to community needs, considered ECE professional support and incorporated respected aspects of quality provision. In 2010 we find associations operating in an effective, businesslike manner, providing ECE that supports Government goals. The direction of current early childhood funding policy will impact directly on associations. It also has the potential to impact negatively on the quality of ECE, the accessibility of ECE and young children’s rates of participation.

The data gathered from associations in this survey provides a useful baseline for comparison in years to come. Further developments and initiatives can be measured against these findings and further conclusions drawn over time.

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# GLOSSARY

All-day provision	Holds an all-day licence and children attend for more than four hours
ECE	Early childhood education
ERO	Education Review Office
Full-day provision	Holds an all-day licence and operates seven hours or more per day, more than 43 weeks per year
Extended sessional provision	Holds an all-day licence and operates morning session in excess of four hours and may/may not offer separate afternoon session
Extended sessional with all-day option	Holds an all-day licence and operates morning session in excess of four hours and separate afternoon—session—offers some children the option to remain and attend both sessions
ICT	Information communication technology
Kaimaihi Māori	Māori staff support
PAFT	Parents as First Teachers
NZKI	New Zealand Kindergartens Inc. the umbrella organisation for 29 kindergarten associations in New Zealand
School day provision	Holds an all-day licence and operates predominantly five to six hour days, 40–43 weeks per year in line with school terms
Sessional provision	Holds a sessional licence and offers sessions of four hours duration or less
SKIP	Strategies for Kids Information for Parents