New Zealand's

AGENDA FOR Children

Making life better for children

June 2002

The Agenda for Children

FOREWORD FROM MINISTERS

Adults often tell each other that New Zealand is a great place to bring up children. But how do children themselves see their childhood? Do they think New Zealand is a great place in which to grow up?

The Government is committed to making life better for all our children. The Agenda for Children focuses on children aged 0-17 inclusive. It sets out a programme of action for government, which gives higher priority to their interests, rights and needs.

In developing the Agenda for Children, we asked children about their lives. They told us the great things about being a child and the things they don't like. They told us:

- adults tell them what to do and don't listen to them or take them seriously;
- they are not allowed to make their own decisions;
- many are pressured to fit in and not be individual or different;
- there is too much bullying in schools and playgrounds and on the streets; and
- there is too much violence in society, especially against children.

They gave us some ideas on what would make life better:

- having more activities to do and places to go;
- being given more responsibility;
- making school more enjoyable, with more choices on subjects and ways of learning, and smaller classes;
- being trusted, listened to and respected;
- having less crime and violence in society;
- families having enough money to buy things; and
- stopping bullying.

If New Zealand is to be a great place for children, we need change. We need to treat children as respected citizens who can contribute to society now and not just as "adults in the making". And we need to move from looking at health, education, welfare or other services for children in isolation, to looking at all aspects of children's lives. We need all government agencies to work together.

The Agenda for Children takes a whole child approach. This approach encourages a new view of children and childhood, and will be applied to policies and services that affect children. We all want to see children thrive. While the Agenda for Children focuses mainly on the Government's role, we also invite individuals, families and whānau, schools, churches, community groups, iwi/Māori organisations, workplaces and local government to think about how we can achieve this vision together.

The Agenda for Children is closely related to the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, which is all about how government and society can support young people to develop the skills and attitudes they need to take part positively in society, now and in the future. The Agenda for Children and the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa have been brought together under the Government's "Action for Child and Youth Development" work programme, covering all young people aged 0-24. However, they will stay as two distinct strategies so that we can focus on the different interests and needs within this wide age group (for example, the 0-6 and 19-24 year-olds respectively).

We'd like to acknowledge and thank the thousands of children, young people and adults around the country who have helped us by sharing their views and ideas for improvement. We have the beginnings of real positive change for children and young people in this country.

Steve Maharey
Minister of Social Services and Employment

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The Agenda is an ambitious but vital development and will need the ownership and enthusiasm by government from the top, and by key non-government leaders. Implementation will be the major determinant of success. The participation of non-government groups (private and voluntary agencies, communities and families) is also crucial to ensure that we move on from the current myth that "government can fix it". This needs a shift in the attitude of both government and the non-government players and all adults learning to respect and value the rights of children in practice as well as in theory.

Barnardos National Office[1]

1 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper. Ministry of Social Policy*, April 2001.

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PART 1: The Agenda for Children

WHAT IS THE AGENDA FOR CHILDREN?

The Agenda for Children is a government strategy aimed at improving the lives of our children. It includes:

- a vision;
- a set of principles to guide decision-making;
- a new "whole child" approach to child policy and service development; and
- a programme of action for the Government to help achieve the vision.

The Agenda is mainly for people who develop policies and those who provide services that affect children – in the public service, in local government and in community and voluntary organisations.

The Government has endorsed the whole child approach, along with the youth development approach outlined in the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*, as the basis for government child policy and service development. Public service agencies will work with the Ministries of Social Development and Youth Affairs in applying these approaches when developing policies and services affecting children and young people.

The Government also invites individuals, families and whānau, schools, churches, community groups, iwi/Māori organisations, workplaces, and local authorities to think about what they can do to help make life better for children. Many of the actions outlined in Part 3 of this report need different sectors to work together.

A VISION FOR CHILDREN

New Zealand/Aotearoa is a great place for children: we look after one another

We will have achieved this vision when all children have:

- security of care – all children are loved, protected, cherished and nurtured by the people around them;
- economic security – no children live in poverty;
- security of identity – all children know who they are, and feel respected and valued;
- security of opportunity – all children are able to access education and health care and reach their potential; and
- security of participation – all children have a say in the decisions that affect them and their views are given due weight in accordance with their ability and level of understanding.

This vision evolved through public consultation and is our goal for children in New Zealand.

How the Agenda was developed

The Agenda was developed through an open consultative process. This consultation process began with a public "Seminar on Children's Policy" in July 2000, and involved direct input from a joint reference group of community experts and government officials. It also involved nationwide consultation with children and adults. Appendix 1 has more information on the process of developing the Agenda, the reference group, and the consultation exercise. The response was excellent, and provided us with lots of insights and ideas on how to make New Zealand a better place for children. Many of the ideas we received, together with information from previous work and research, have helped shape the Agenda's action areas.

Appendix 2 summarises what children and adults thought would make life better for children in New Zealand. Some issues that were raised are already being worked on in other government projects (these are outlined in Appendix 3).

The consultation findings are also summarised in two publications: the pamphlet *Agenda for Children: What you told us*; and the report *Agenda for Children: Submissions made by children and young people and by adults: A summary report*. These publications, plus the full reports on the analysis of submissions, can be found on the Ministry of Social Development's website at www.msd.govt.nz. For paper copies, email agendaforchildren@msd.govt.nz or write to: Agenda for Children, Ministry of Social Development, PO Box 12-136, Wellington.

The *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* is available from the Ministry of Youth Affairs, PO Box 10-300, Wellington, and on its website www.youthaffairs.govt.nz.

Save the Children New Zealand applauds the Government's efforts to consult with children on this strategy document, and hopes that the process will continue to be an inclusive one. …The key to success will be the implementation of the strategy which will require a commitment of significant resources and a change in the operational culture of agencies to put children at the forefront of their agenda.

Save the Children New Zealand[2]

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

At the heart of the Agenda for Children are 10 principles we should always apply when developing government policy and services for children. These principles have also been developed through public consultation.

Government policies and services affecting children will be:

Consistent with UNCROC
They will recognise and support children's "provision", "protection" and "participation" rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), which New Zealand ratified in 1993. (There is more information on these rights on pages 13-15.

Child focused
The best interests of the child will be the most important consideration, and children will be able to participate in decisions that affect them, according to their ability and level of understanding. A focus on the child means looking at their whole life and circumstances.

Family and whānau oriented
Government policies and services will support families and whānau to meet children's needs and will recognise that children need to be seen in the context of their family and/or whānau. Children's wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the family and whānau.

Inclusive
Government policies and services will be flexible enough to respond to the diverse needs of all children in New Zealand, and enhance their participation in society.

Culturally affirming
Government policies and services will promote respect for cultural diversity and support children's place and potential within their own cultural context.

Preventative
Government policies and services will have an early intervention approach where possible, to prevent problems and provide help as soon as it is needed.

Well co-ordinated
Government policies and services will be well co-ordinated, well aligned, and based on a shared understanding of children's needs and rights.

Collaborative
Government agencies will work well together, and with families and whānau, iwi/Māori providers, community and voluntary groups, local government and the private sector to promote the wellbeing of all children.

Community focused
Government policies and services will respond to local interests and needs. They will seek ways of working with local structures and methods, and recognise communities' interests and contributions in creating safe and healthy environments for children.

Evidence based
Government policies and services will be based on the most up-to-date information and evidence of their effectiveness.

2 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

KEY ACTION AREAS

The Agenda's plan of action covers seven key areas. Part 3 has more detail, but in summary they are:

Promoting a whole child approach

This work is about promoting, within the public service and beyond, a new view of children and childhood. It encourages adults to look at children in all their contexts, when working with them and when developing policies and services for them.

Increasing children's participation

This work is about recognising what children can and do contribute to their communities, and enhancing their opportunities to participate, especially in decision-making that affects them. This not only improves adults' understanding of children's issues, interests and needs, but is also likely to result in more responsive and effective policies and services for children.

An end to child poverty

The aim of this work is to eliminate poverty among children. The Ministry of Social Development is currently working on a programme of research to provide evidence-based advice on further measures to achieve this goal.

Addressing violence in children's lives with a particular focus on reducing bullying

This work builds on initiatives already underway that aim to reduce crime and violence in families and in children's lives. It focuses on reducing bullying among children in schools and the community. The existence and fear of bullying have been highlighted in research and in consultation feedback from children.

What is child policy?

When we refer to "children", we mean everyone under the age of 18 years (the definition used by UNCROC). However, we recognise that many older children identify as "youth" or "young people", and that their issues are likely to differ from those of younger children.[3]

Child policy includes policies that:

- apply to all children (such as primary and secondary education policies and services);
- are aimed at specific groups of children (such as those in need of care and protection services); and
- are specific to children as an age group of the population (such as health policies and services for children under the age of six).

3 Definitions of children and childhood are also culturally determined and change over time. The distinction between childhood and adulthood may be linked to birthdays or the ability to engage in adult activities sanctioned by the law, such as voting in a general election, or as in Pacific cultures, rites of passage such as marriage or engagement in official duties. (Suaalii, T.M. and Mavoa, H., "Who Says Yes?" in *Childrenz Issues*, Vol. 5, No 1, 2001, University of Otago Press).

What about family policy?

Policies and services that support parents, families and whānau and other kin-related groups are a key way to meet children's needs. Policies such as family support, paid parental leave and parent education have a major effect on children's wellbeing.

What about other policies that affect children?

Other policies affect all members of the population, including children. Examples include economic development, retirement income, transport and environment policies. Some affect children directly, and others such as retirement income policies will have longer-term implications for today's children.

Improving central government structures and processes to enhance policy and service effectiveness for children

This work is about giving children and children's issues more profile and status in government, and making government policies and services more responsive to their interests, rights and needs. It focuses on improving the way government policies and services for children are developed and co-ordinated.

Improving local government and community planning for children

This work looks at ways to make local government and community services more responsive to children's needs. It focuses on working with local government to ensure that children are involved in community planning processes.

Enhancing information, research and research collaboration relating to children

This work is about getting government agencies to work together better in: undertaking research and providing information; addressing gaps in research on children; developing regular reports on indicators of children's wellbeing; and looking at the feasibility of a new longitudinal study of New Zealand children.[4]

IMPLEMENTING AND REVIEWING AGENDA FOR CHILDREN WORK

Work on the Agenda for Children is part of the Government's "Action for Child and Youth Development" work programme, which covers the implementation of the Agenda and the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa.

Work has already begun in each of the seven action areas, including developing ways to monitor and evaluate specific projects. Each year the seven action areas and actions will be reviewed and updated in line with progress and new information and developments. In this way we will make sure the Agenda for Children work stays relevant.

4 Longitudinal studies are a form of in-depth research – they gather information about an individual or group at different times over a long period.

WHY FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND WHY NOW?

The wellbeing of children matters to us all. How well they do affects how we as a society do. All children need love, protection, support and opportunities to thrive during childhood, to grow up healthy and happy, to acquire the skills they need to form positive relationships, and to fully participate as adults. Children who are nurtured and supported throughout childhood are also more likely to reach their full potential at school, in higher education, in work, in sport or artistic activities and in society. This has positive benefits for individuals and for the whole of society.

Children have the right to be treated as respected citizens, to be valued for who they are, and to have their views considered in matters that affect them. Achieving this requires a change in the way children and childhood are viewed and understood. It means raising the status and profile of children in society. It also means keeping pace with the changes in children's lives.

If we are to design good policies and services for children and help them to reach their potential, we need to understand who we're working for, listen to their concerns, and make changes to meet their needs.

Some of the important changes for children are in:

- **population and ethnicity patterns:** for example, by 2016 around half of all children under the age of 18 will identify with an ethnic group other than European;
- **family structures:** for example, families tend to be smaller than in the past, first parents tend to be older, children are growing up in a wider variety of family forms, and family structures change more often;
- **the economic environment:** for instance, the economic position of many families deteriorated in the 1980s and 1990s in relative if not absolute terms. Children tend to be financially dependent for longer than in the past, but the trend towards smaller families means that, on average, families are likely to have greater material resources per child;
- **living and work patterns:** for example, students leaving school without any formal qualifications are increasingly disadvantaged in the workplace; and more mothers of young children are working than in the past.

We all want children to be able to reach their potential; to have the opportunities and support they need to pursue their interests and talents. Unfortunately, the reality for many children in New Zealand is very different. Too many experience poverty and, with it, poor health and low educational achievements. Too many are exposed to violence or bullying at home or school.

Why do we need to be concerned about children's wellbeing in New Zealand?

- Data from *The Social Report 2001* showed that in 1997/98, almost three in ten children (29 percent) were living in poor families (defined as families with incomes below 60 percent of the median, adjusted for housing costs). The level recorded in 1987/88 was 16 percent.[5] One fifth (21 percent) of New Zealand children born in 1993 spent at least five of their first seven years included in a main income-tested benefit.[6]
- In the year to June 2000, 6,833 children were assessed by Child, Youth and Family as abused or neglected (6.9 children for every 1,000 under 17 years of age, and 12 per 1,000 for Māori). There has been little change in the abuse rate in the past three years.
- After falling during 1991-1995, the rate of hearing failure among new school entrants has remained relatively unchanged over the past five years. In 1999/2000 the rate was 7.7 percent. Among Māori and Pacific children, the rate is much higher (13.1 percent and 16.4 percent respectively).

5 Ministry of Social Policy (2001), Wellington, p79.

6 Ball, D. and Wilson, M., forthcoming, *The Prevalence and Persistence of Low Income among New Zealand Children: Indicative measures from an analysis of contact with the benefit system*, Ministry of Social Development, Wellington.

- The proportion of school leavers with qualifications increased over the 1980s, but there was little improvement over the 1990s. Among those who left school in 1999, only 66 percent had gained qualifications of at least Sixth Form Certificate level. For Māori and Pacific school leavers, the proportions were even lower (43 percent and 54 percent respectively).
- In 2000, there were 1,175 births to females aged under 18 (8.8 births per 1,000 females aged 13-17). Māori are much more likely to have a birth under the age of 18 than non-Māori (22.6 births per 1,000 Māori females compared with 4.9 for non-Māori). After falling sharply during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the under-18 birth rate fluctuated over the next decade. Since 1995, the rate has fallen and is now below the level recorded in the mid-1980s. However, New Zealand has a relatively high rate of teenage childbearing compared with other OECD countries.
- Infant death rates declined sharply during the 1960s and 1970s, but the pace of decline has since slowed. Other OECD countries that were behind New Zealand in 1960 have improved and New Zealand, which was near the top of the rankings, is now in the bottom half for infant deaths. There were 5.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1998 (7.2 per 1,000 births for Māori and 7.5 per 1,000 for Pacific infants).

There is much to be done to improve circumstances for children. We have done – and will continue to do – a lot in the health, education and welfare sectors (Part 3 and Appendix 3 have some examples of this work). However, we want the Agenda for Children to be more than the sum of these initiatives. The Agenda takes a broader, strategic approach: it promotes new ways of thinking about children and new ways of developing policies and services that will give more attention to their interests, rights and needs. It also puts in place a programme of action involving a range of agencies working together on issues that cannot be addressed by one sector alone.

Children are our taonga and our future. If they are not supported, empowered and loved, it is impossible for anyone in our society to live a fulfilling life.

National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges Inc[7]

7 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

PART 2: A whole child approach

WHAT IS A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH?

The Agenda promotes a whole child approach to addressing children's issues. This means:

- focusing on the big picture, on the child's whole life and circumstances, not just isolated issues or problems;
- focusing from the outset on what children need for healthy development, rather than simply reacting to problems as they arise; and
- looking across the whole public service at what can be done to support children's healthy development, instead of looking for single-sector solutions.

A whole child approach recognises that:

- children largely depend on others and are sometimes vulnerable, but they are also continually learning and developing the skills they need to look after themselves and make responsible decisions;
- children are shaped in part by the settings in which they live, but they also shape their own lives through their thoughts and actions;
- children are citizens in their own right, but also need to be seen within their environment – with their parents, family and whānau, with friends and peers, in school, their communities and in other important social and cultural settings; and
- with growing ethnic diversity in New Zealand, children's roles in the settings in which they grow up may differ culturally.

The Agenda focuses on developing a whole child approach within government, but we also encourage other organisations working with and for children to use it.

WHAT MAKES THE WHOLE CHILD APPROACH DIFFERENT?

A broader approach

A whole child approach moves away from seeing children only as:

- vulnerable dependants, in need of adult protection, control and guidance because of their immaturity;
- as adults in development – in a state of "becoming" rather than "being";
- as passive recipients of services;
- as possessions of their parents; or
- in the case of older children, as problems.

A focus on children as citizens with particular rights and interests

The whole child approach emphasises the rights and interests of the child. UNCROC has done much to encourage a focus on children's rights in New Zealand and internationally. New Zealand ratified UNCROC in 1993 and the Government is required to report every five years on progress in implementing its articles. UNCROC's articles cover three main kinds of rights for children:

Links between the whole child approach and the youth development approach

The youth development approach, outlined in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, is similar and complementary to the whole child approach but it is for young people aged 12-24 years. It acknowledges that this group is less vulnerable than younger children and less dependent on others, and that peers, secondary schools, tertiary institutions and workplaces have a stronger impact on their lives. It also recognises the importance of young people participating in decisions that affect them.

The youth development approach has six key principles:

1. Youth development is shaped by the "big picture";
2. Youth development is about young people being connected;
3. Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach;
4. Youth development happens through quality relationships;
5. Youth development is triggered when young people fully participate; and
6. Youth development needs good information.

The Government has agreed that public service agencies should use the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* as the basis for policy advice and initiatives relating to young people aged 12-24 years. It can be used as a tool, along with *New Zealand's Agenda for Children*, by individuals, groups and organisations that work at all levels with young people and on youth issues.

Common views of children

Traditionally, particularly in the welfare and justice sectors, child policies and services have tended to focus on children as dependants.

However, while children largely depend on adults for care and protection (and their care and protection is also an important part of government work), there are problems with this view. Assumptions that they lack skills, understanding and knowledge mean their views on decisions affecting them are unlikely to be considered.

Over-emphasising children's immaturity can also lead to their being perceived as "at risk", "victims", "chattels" or as "problems". However, if children are given the opportunity to take responsibility and participate in decisions that affect them, they become increasingly able to make informed choices.

Sectors such as health and education have tended to emphasise children's physical, mental and social development, and on what will help them reach their potential and enhance their contribution to society as adults. This has been heightened in part by new scientific evidence that most of the crucial development, or "hard-wiring", in a child's brain takes place in the first three to five years of life. A focus on the whole life course is also an important part of early intervention services for children.

The Government has a clear interest in the healthy development of all children and in the factors most likely to enable them to remain healthy, to gain skills and to become fully contributing adults. However, a preoccupation with children as adults in the making can also diminish their status in the present.

1. **Provision rights:** these include the right to health, education, social security, physical care, family life, play, recreation, culture and leisure;
2. **Protection rights:** these include being safe from discrimination, all forms of physical or mental violence, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, substance abuse, injustice and conflict; and
3. **Participation rights:** these include the right to a name and identity, to be consulted and be taken into account, to physical integrity, to information, to freedom of speech and opinion and to challenge decisions made on their behalf.[8]

Essentially, they promote a view of children as people in their own right, while recognising their need for protection and care.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH

The whole child approach has three foundations:

- UNCROC and the Treaty of Waitangi;
- a "key settings" model; and
- social development.

UNCROC and the Treaty of Waitangi

The whole child approach draws on UNCROC, which New Zealand ratified in 1993. UNCROC provides the most commonly used definitions of children's rights. As outlined above these can be broadly categorised as provision, protection and participation rights. Specific rights include the right of children to preserve their own identity (Article 7) and the right of indigenous children to enjoy their own culture, religion and language (Article 30). UNCROC also encourages collective responsibility for children (Articles 5 and 18).

In addition, the Treaty of Waitangi requires the Crown to work in partnership with Māori to protect and respond to the collective and individual interests of Māori wellbeing and development. Together, the Treaty and UNCROC work to reinforce Māori children's rights.

Children's provision, participation and protection rights are about their human rights and how we guarantee them the things they need for a positive and productive childhood. In reference to the Treaty, UNCROC supports the view that Māori children need to be seen in the context of their whānau.

Puao te-Ata-tu, the 1988 report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Māori Perspective for the then Department of Social Welfare[9], provides guidance on how a whole child approach should be applied to issues affecting Māori children. In particular it makes recommendations about incorporating Māori values, cultures and beliefs in all policies and developing strategies that harness the potential of Māori people to advance. *Puao te-Ata-tu* is available on the Ministry of Social Development's website www.msd.govt.nz.

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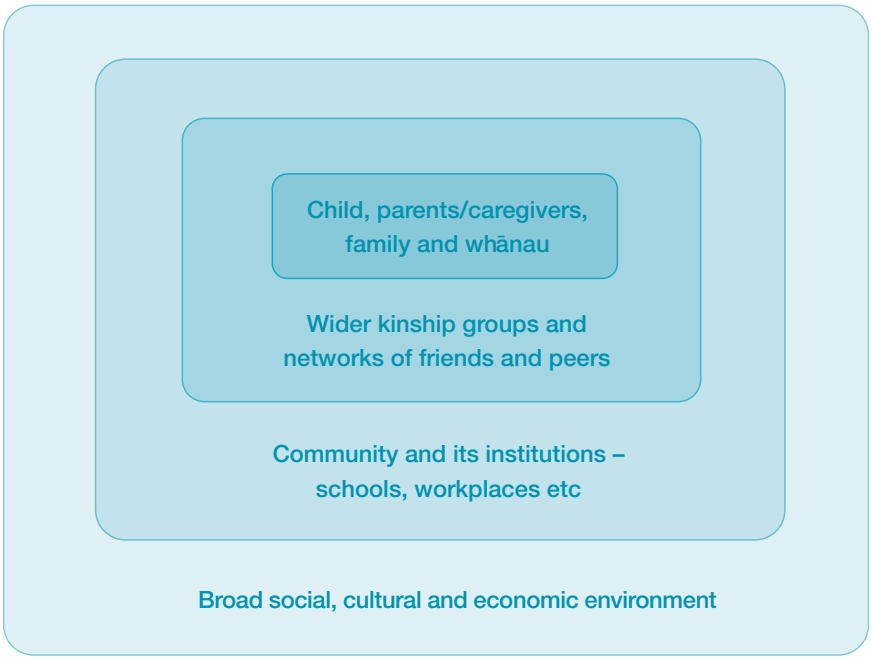
8 From Lansdown, G. (1994) "Children's rights" in B. Mayall (Ed), *Children's Childhood: Observed and Experienced*, The Falmer Press, London. pp33-34.

9 Now the Ministry of Social Development.

A "key settings" model

The whole child approach recognises that children cannot be separated from the "key settings" in which they live and grow. These settings include parents, families and whānau, friends and peers, broader community settings and society at large.



The diagram above illustrates the key settings in children's lives. The different shades signify the interactions between these settings. This model recognises that children are shaped by, but also help shape, the settings in which they live.

Importance of these key settings for children

Parents or caregivers, family and whānau

The parent/caregiver and the wider family and whānau settings are the earliest and most formative settings for children. Parents, families and whānau are primary sources of nurturing, protection, support and guidance. Families and whānau are also important in transmitting attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, values and cultural identity between members and between generations. A whole child approach affirms the fundamental importance of the family and whānau and of government support to families and whānau to help them meet children's needs.

Wider kinship groups and networks of friends and peers

Children, parents and families are also part of wider kinship groups such as relatives, hapu and iwi. They also gain support from networks of friends and peers. The opportunity to interact and play with peers in a safe, supportive environment greatly helps young children's learning. Friendships help build a person's confidence, security, social skills and self-esteem, encourage pro-social behaviours, and reduce the likelihood of aggressive, anti-social or offending behaviour.

Common misinterpretations of children's rights

The concept of "children's rights" is not well understood. For example, children's participation rights are often seen as undermining parents' power. In fact, participation rights simply recognise that children have a right to have a say in decisions that affect them, and the right to have their views considered by the adults making the decision. At present children have little chance to participate in most government decision-making processes, either as individuals or as a group.

Children's rights are also often defined and applied in a "Euro-centric" way, which can be a problem for cultures such as Māori and Pacific that are organised more around concepts of collectivity and reciprocity. However, if you look beyond the "rights talk" to the principles and ideas that underpin rights, they become just one way of talking about the ways in which different cultures protect, provide for and involve children in society.

UNCROC does not represent children as completely autonomous human beings. Instead, it recognises that they need to be nurtured and guided as they grow and develop, and that the best place for this to happen is within their families. UNCROC respects the rights and duties of parents and legal guardians to provide direction to children in exercising their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion in a way consistent with the children's evolving capacities (Article 14). It also encourages collective responsibility for children (Article 18 - joint responsibilities of parents or guardians assisted by the state) and respects the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents/guardians, extended family or community as provided for by local custom to provide direction and guidance to the child in the exercise of the child's rights (Article 5).

Community and its institutions
Child and family wellbeing can be supported by social services and facilities, churches, sports groups and communities of interest. The community and its institutions include crèches, kohanga reo, language nests and kindergartens, schoolrooms, child and family health services, playgrounds, immediate neighbourhoods and recreation, sports and other facilities.

Broader social, cultural and economic environment
The immediate settings in which people live – the face-to-face sites of daily life – are all part of wider social, cultural, legal and economic systems. These systems are diverse and dynamic. They include the Government's laws and regulations, the labour market, health, education and welfare systems, as well as society's values and cultural practices. All are likely to affect child, family and whānau wellbeing. The Government can influence this broader environment by promoting an understanding of children's interests, rights and needs and creating laws, policies and services that reflect changing family structures and the population's cultural diversity.

Social development

Social development is about improving people's lives by helping them to gain the skills and qualities they need to maintain healthy relationships, find long-term employment, and participate fully in society. It focuses on government, the community, families and individuals working together to:

- help individuals, families and whānau to support themselves;
- increase opportunities for people to participate fully in social and economic life;
- build individual skills and knowledge; and
- strengthen links between individuals, families and groups in the wider community.

A social development approach recognises that the different institutions – markets, families, communities, the state and the environment – all contribute to social wellbeing and interact with each other.

IMPLICATIONS OF A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH FOR POLICIES AND SERVICES

The whole child approach recognises that a child's behaviour and development can be profoundly affected by interactions that happen between the settings in which they live. For example, how well a child does at school may be influenced by how much time and support they have to do their homework. A child's life may also be affected by "outside" factors, such as the nature and conditions of their parents' work, or social or cultural attitudes towards drug use and corporal punishment.

The following section looks at key links between a child's settings and their implications for developing policy and services. Appendix 4 has practical examples of how a whole child approach might be applied.

Each child's situation is unique
As well as being born into a particular family, children are born into a particular community, cultural and socio-economic environment. This means:

- Strategies to improve long-term results will be more effective if they address risks and promote strengths and provide support at a community level as well as at the individual and family level.
- Policies and services need to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of approaches to child-rearing and recognise different cultural values.
- Child policies and services need to take account of intra-cultural diversity as well as inter-cultural diversity.

Cumulative effect of life experiences
Positive/negative experiences in different settings tend to have a cumulative effect. For example, a child with normal birth weight and secure family relationships is more likely to experience healthy mental and social development, which in turn helps them to adapt to and achieve at school and make friends. This means:

- It is important to invest in children and families early as the relationship between family, pre-school and school settings and the crucial importance of the first five years in a child's life mean that gains from early investment are likely to grow over time.
- We must respond immediately once an emerging problem is identified for a child of any age. The longer problems are unidentified or not addressed, the harder they are to resolve.

Importance of protective factors
Positive (or protective) factors in one setting can buffer negative effects in another. For example, risks within a family may be compensated for by a child's success in school or by a supportive relationship with an adult mentor. Good family relationships can also reduce the negative effects of anti-social peers as children move into adolescence. This means:

What the research tells us about what children need for healthy development

Secure attachment to involved caregivers
- Children need to have a close attachment to parents/caregivers who provide them with love in a nurturing relationship where they are valued and respected.
- Children are helped to realise their potential when their parents/caregivers value education, support their learning, and help them to participate in their family, school and community.
- Children are more likely to develop social confidence and show positive behaviour when their parents/caregivers have good relationship and problem-solving skills, and use consistent and non-abusive discipline.

Strong families and whānau
- Children's healthy development is influenced by the availability of family resources, including nutrition, health care and an adequate level of income.
- Strong family and whānau relationships that support and model positive behaviour help create an environment where children feel safe, protected, nurtured and empowered.

Positive peer interaction
- Involvement in friendships helps children build confidence, security, and social skills.

Community support
- Supportive communities offer children safe physical and social spaces that connect them to caring adults and social services. These community networks can compensate for an absence of strong family support.

- Communities that provide opportunities for children to participate in social, cultural and recreational activities can help to foster self-esteem, promote feelings of "connectedness" and encourage civic responsibility.

Economic security

- Children need economic security so they can access goods and services and participate in society. Poverty during childhood, especially if prolonged, severe or occurring during the early years, can have lasting negative effects. It can affect children's health and development and educational attainment and flow through to poorer employment and earnings in adulthood.

Participation in decisions that affect them

- Children need opportunities to be involved in solving problems and resolving conflicts and to participate in decision-making that affects them, their family and community.

A safe, supportive and enriched learning environment

- Children are more likely to achieve good academic and social results with teachers who focus on individual achievement rather than competition, and where bullying is not part of the school culture.

Cultural knowledge and identity

- Children who are supported to identify with their culture are likely to feel a sense of pride and belonging, and develop a positive identity.

- Having a shared cultural knowledge can improve the bonds between children and their family and/or whānau and their community, and help them feel valued.

- Multi-level, multi-setting interventions are required. As Fitzpatrick describes it, "protective factors must be woven into a web of support that enables young persons to tap into social resources at a variety of levels. Thus, in the absence of one form of support, other supports become available and in effect replace the weaker parts of the protective system."[10]

Transition Points

Movements between settings (for example, from the family to pre-school or from intermediate to high school) are often points of vulnerability. This means:

- Services need to respond to children's additional support needs during transition times. These needs are likely to be even greater for children in families that are transient or dealing with other kinds of life changes or crises.

10 Fitzpatrick, K. M. 1997, "Fighting among America's youth: a risk and protective factors approach" *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, vol 38.

PART 3: Key action areas: Taking the Agenda for Children forward

This section discusses the key action areas for the Agenda for Children, including those that are being worked on jointly with the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa under the Government's "Action for Child and Youth Development" work programme. The Agenda for Children work is being led by the Ministry of Social Development in close collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, which is leading work on the implementation of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa.

Each action area has three sections:

- What is happening already;
- What the Agenda for Children work will add; and
- Possible future developments and directions.

ACTION AREA 1: PROMOTING A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH

The Government should practise and promote a whole child approach in developing policy and planning and delivering services.

What is happening already

Lots of organisations are already taking a whole child approach in their work. They include:

- the Office of the Commissioner for Children, which promotes public awareness about children's issues and children's rights. The Commissioner's office is training community child advocates and organisations in this area and plans to adapt these training packages for use with local government;
- the Christchurch City Council, whose Children's Policy aims to: ensure that all Council policies and programmes positively affect the wellbeing of children and their families; and involve children and their perspectives in planning and decision-making. The key to successful implementation has been an integrated strategy "owned" by the whole organisation, including elected members;
- the Waitakere City Council, which adopted the principle of "First Call for Children" in 1993 to improve the quality of life for children now and in the future. First Call for Children involves seeking the views and contributions of children and young people; and
- the Champion Centre in Christchurch, which has stated:
  The philosophy for work in the Champion Centre is inclusion. This refers to the child having the right to be part of their family/whānau and community. Inclusion also recognises that a child is a "whole being". She or he is not a health, education or welfare "case".[11]

Information provision to all parties is critical, especially to those not currently engaging children and young people in their work. For policy makers, it would be valuable to have a series of information resources including a website containing examples of good policy and policy practices eg Waitakere City's First Call for Children; projects that successfully involved and/or benefited children and young people; links to other relevant websites; and contact details for people and organisations experienced in involving children and young people.

Waitakere City Council[12]

11 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper*. The Champion Centre is based in Burwood Hospital in Christchurch and works with children from birth to school-age who have a developmental delay and/or disability, or are viewed as at risk of developmental delay.

12 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

What the Agenda for Children work will add

The Government has now endorsed the whole child approach, along with the youth development approach outlined in the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa,* as the basis for child policy and service development.

New Zealand's Agenda for Children provides a practical resource for those developing policies and services that affect children. Together with the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* it: builds a common understanding of what is needed to support healthy development of children and young people; raises their status and profile within government; looks at the big picture rather than individual issues; and encourages joined-up responses by government rather than single-sector solutions.

Public service agencies are to consult with the Ministries of Social Development and Youth Affairs on how to apply whole child and youth development approaches when developing policy advice and services affecting children and young people. In the future we will develop additional information and training resources for the public service based on the identified needs of agencies. These resources could include guidelines for:

- assessing the impact of policies on children and young people; and
- enhancing opportunities for children and young people to participate in government decision-making processes.

They will also be available to individuals and non-government organisations working with children and young people.

Possible future developments and directions

- Develop specific guidelines to assist government agencies and community organisations in applying a whole child approach when developing policies and services that affect Māori children.
- Evaluate how the training resources are working and how agencies are including a whole child approach and involving children in their policy-making, and whether agencies should be required to provide a statement in Cabinet papers of the effects of any proposals on children and young people.[13]

ACTION AREA 2: INCREASING CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

The Agenda for Children work aims to increase opportunities for children's participation, particularly in government and community decision-making processes that affect them. Children's participation is an important component of a whole child approach. It includes recognising and supporting children's contribution to their community, involving and listening to them and giving due weight to their views.

By involving children in decision-making we will:

- improve our understanding of their ideas, issues, interests, and needs;
- develop more responsive, efficient and effective policies and services for children generally and for individual children in specific circumstances;
- provide them with greater "ownership" of those policies or services;

13 There are international precedents along these lines. The Swedish Government has implemented a child impact assessment process at all levels of government and the UK Parliament has piloted child impact reporting on all Parliamentary Bills.

- provide those involved with new learning experiences, practical civic education and the chance to contribute to their own community; and
- improve New Zealand's compliance with UNCROC.

Many children who responded to the *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack* told us they felt adults did not ask for their opinions, listen to them, or take them seriously.

Young people who responded to the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa consultation documents emphasised that they wanted to be involved in decision-making in all aspects of their lives. They also stressed the need for participation methods that recognised the diversity of the youth population, avoided tokenism, and had meaningful results for the young people involved.

People don't value your opinion as much as if you were an adult. You are in some ways not valued as a person, but as a possession.

Girl, 12

Not much adults listen to what we have to say because they think we are too immature to understand what we are wanting to talk about.

Member of mixed age and gender group[14]

What is happening already

Organisations at different levels including government, schools and community groups are already working hard to provide opportunities for children's participation in decision-making. For example:

- the Law Commission's review of Family Court disputes resolution processes is considering how and when children's views and interests could be best represented. The Commission released a discussion paper in February 2002, which made a number of suggestions for improving children's involvement in Family Court processes. The final report is due for completion in mid-2002;
- a number of local authorities also consult regularly with children. Some have established youth councils, and others have done major consultation exercises to find out what children think about their local environment; and
- many schools have school councils, and secondary schools are required by law to have a student representative on their Boards of Trustees.

What the Agenda for Children work will add

The Ministries of Social Development and Youth Affairs are currently working with a range of government and non-government agencies to develop resources on participation. These will:

- include "best practice" principles, guidelines and examples of specific tools to improve opportunities for children and young people to participate in decisions that affect them;
- focus on ways to enhance the participation of Māori and Pacific children and young people, those from ethnic minority groups and those who are disabled; and
- be developed in partnership with a range of organisations and tailored for their use.

This year the two Ministries are also working on projects to improve opportunities for children's and young people's participation in three areas:

- assessing the effectiveness of national and political participation models for children, young people and young adults. This will include assessing the effectiveness of the current Youth Parliament initiative;

14 Submissions to the *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack*. Ministry of Social Policy, April 2001.

- work with the Department of Internal Affairs, Local Government New Zealand, and a number of local authorities and community organisations to increase opportunities for children to have a real say in decisions that affect them in their local communities; and
- work with the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office to identify current practice and let others know of examples of good practice and positive ways of increasing children's participation in the governance and life of primary and secondary schools in New Zealand.

Possible future developments and directions

- Develop specific guidelines and mechanisms for enhancing the participation in decision-making processes of Māori and Pacific children, children from ethnic minorities and children with disabilities.
- Develop a website to share resources with government agencies, local authorities and community organisations on the benefits of and issues surrounding children's participation in decision-making. This could include a database of relevant contacts in organisations.
- Look at ways of raising awareness of the contributions children make and the value they can add to their communities.

ACTION AREA 3: AN END TO CHILD POVERTY

The *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper* highlighted the Government's commitment to give priority to addressing child poverty – this was one of the key goals outlined in the discussion document.

Consultation responses from adults confirmed that child poverty is of real concern to New Zealanders – it was the most frequently mentioned negative aspect about New Zealand as a place for children to live. People were particularly concerned about income disparities between different groups of New Zealanders, and about unemployment, especially long-term unemployment. Others were concerned about the negative effects of market-driven policies and of poor quality, overcrowded housing. Many children also raised concerns relating to money and families not having enough money for the basics.

The strength of these responses from New Zealanders has reinforced the Government's aim to end child poverty. It recognises that poverty can seriously affect children's development, especially when they are young. The Government is committed to investing in ways to eliminate child poverty and improve life for individuals, families and communities, both economically and socially.

This means investing in economic and social development, as a growing economy is important in ensuring social security and sustainable employment. The Government's economic development policies are focused on building an economy that is capable of sustaining higher growth rates (its "Growth and Innovation" framework is being used to achieve this goal).

What is happening already?

The Government has already introduced, or is in the process of introducing, a number of measures which will reduce child poverty, including:

- fairer employment law and increases in minimum wages;
- paid parental leave;
- income-related rents for state housing tenants;
- improved access to childcare, with an increase in the maximum number of childcare subsidy hours and additional funding for childhood services in low socio-economic communities;
- additional funding for early childhood services in low socio-economic or isolated areas, for services that use a language other than English, and for organisations that have significant numbers of children with special needs;
- a strategic plan for early childhood education services;
- a Tertiary Education Strategy, which aims to raise basic skill levels and increase people's capacity to participate in the knowledge economy (leading to greater financial security for families with children);
- a Primary Health Care Strategy, of which a component is to make primary health care (such as doctor's visits) more affordable and reduce the inequalities in health status due to access. One immediate priority for the new funding is to inflation-adjust the general medical service subsidy for children under six years which was introduced in 1997. As more funding becomes available from 2002/03, the Government will start to extend free or low-cost access to primary health care services, with the first priority to reduce costs for school-aged children;
- removing the $5 per week deduction from special benefit payments;
- enhanced case management and a new planning process to support more effectively the movement of sole parents into work, as their family responsibilities and individual circumstances allow;
- an improved and simplified abatement regime for Domestic Purposes and Widows beneficiaries;
- assistance to improve the supply, affordability and viability of out-of-school childcare (OSCAR) programmes;
- improvements in the administration of family income assistance to ensure continuity of family support payments when families are moving from benefit to employment and to minimise the risk of overpayments of family support when beneficiaries commence part-time work;
- smoothing the transition to work for beneficiaries with children by making a payment available of up to the equivalent of two weeks' benefit when they enter work; and
- suspending benefit debt for three months to encourage beneficiaries with children to move into work.

[I don't like it] when the teacher tells me off for not having shoes (black) even when I told him Dad can't afford them yet

Māori contributor, age 12, gender unknown, rural area[15]

Asking children for their input without looking at socio-economic factors affecting a child's life is useless. Most children like their country, but none like the 'different' feeling when money or resources are perpetually short.

Adult respondent[16]

15 Submission to the *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack*.

16 Submission to the *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper*.

What the Agenda for Children will add

The Agenda has strengthened existing efforts by the Government to eliminate child poverty by establishing a robust research base for future policy developments.

In the *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper,* we highlighted the need for more knowledge about the nature, extent and persistence of material hardship among families with dependent children in New Zealand, and about how we can measure child poverty. The Agenda has now put in place a programme of research on child poverty. This work will inform the development of effective policies. Intended research projects include investigating:

- the effectiveness of various policies in alleviating and preventing child poverty;
- the ages at which children are most affected by low family incomes;
- the effects of family income assistance in reducing negative outcomes; and
- improved measures for monitoring poverty levels for children.

In addition, the Government is investigating the feasibility of a longitudinal survey of children. Such a survey could provide important new information on child poverty dynamics and factors that are associated with children moving into and out of poverty.

Possible future developments and directions

A comprehensive programme to end child poverty requires a social assistance system that ensures families with children have adequate income to meet their needs. It also requires investing in parents' work skills and removing barriers to work. Ensuring people have the opportunity to earn an adequate income from work is central to the elimination of child poverty. Sole parents, especially, face difficulties balancing work and family responsibilities. For many sole parents there is also little financial gain from moving off benefit and into work, once additional costs such as travel and childcare have been paid. Future work will focus on:

- improving the social assistance system, including family income assistance, so that it provides families with secure and adequate financial assistance when it is needed;
- better incentives and ways of assisting parents to move into paid work, and to improve their work opportunities through education and training;
- addressing barriers to work that make it difficult for some parents to improve their family income, for example, lack of childcare;
- improving the ability of accommodation assistance to adequately meet families' housing costs and needs;
- improving families' access to hardship assistance and making it more responsive to their needs; and
- further measures to address benefit debt to help parents improve their family income.

ACTION AREA 4: ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN CHILDREN'S LIVES WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON REDUCING BULLYING

The Agenda for Children aims to address violence in children's lives. This includes child abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing family violence, violent offending by young people, bullying and victimisation, discrimination such as racism and sexism and a lack of personal safety in the neighbourhood and community. These are all serious issues that can be specifically targeted, but there are also many links between the approaches we can take to address them.

The Agenda for Children consultation confirmed the importance of taking action to address violence in children's lives. When asked what would make life better, children said they wanted adults to address crime in society, the abuse of children and bullying.

Specific suggestions from adults included adopting a policy of zero tolerance to violence, early intervention, monitoring and treatment or counselling, the use of positive role models, reducing violence in the media, and providing education about violence and abuse.

What is happening already

A number of government and non-government activities are already underway that aim to reduce crime and violence in the lives of children and families. They take a multi-agency approach and work across home, school and community settings.

There are no simple, single-sector solutions to the problem of violence in children's lives. We need an integrated approach involving family, community and society.

Initiatives taking an integrated approach include:

- **Action to reduce crime**
  The Crime Reduction Strategy provides a framework and focus for government and community crime prevention and reduction policies and activities. It covers seven priority areas: youth offending; family violence; other violence; burglary; organised crime; traffic offences; and theft of and from cars.

- **Action to prevent family violence**
  The Government has recently released *Te Rito: The New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy* (available on the Ministry of Social Development's website at www.msd.govt.nz). *Te Rito* sets out the Government's key goals and objectives, a set of guiding principles and a five-year implementation plan for achieving the vision of families/whānau living free from violence. The Strategy is based on the family violence prevention plan of action released in September 2001, and was developed by government and non-government agencies in partnership.

- **Action to enhance services for at-risk children**
  The draft Care and Protection Blueprint promotes the Government's commitment to enhancing services for children who are at risk of, or who have suffered from, abuse and neglect. The Blueprint was developed by a group of government and non-government representatives with input from stakeholders across the care and protection community, and draws from a mix of theory, policy and practical experience. The Blueprint presents a

I think something really needs to happen with the bullying in schools. Too many people are killing themselves. It needs to be stopped.

Girl, 15[17]

Often I have found that young people behave violently because they have no skills or means to communicate their frustrations, hurt and anger. I found through education these kids become less violent and more composed and able to deal with situations in life. So violence can be remedied in part, through education.

Adult respondent[18]

17 Submission to *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack.*

18 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

shared vision of the care and protection sector "working together for the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families", and a strategy for achieving this vision. The four key goals of the strategy, for which there are specific objectives and actions, are that:

- leadership of the care and protection community is shared;
- outcomes drive the provision of care and protection services;
- government and non-government funders and providers co-operate to provide a seamless service; and,
- good practice is reinforced, based on a systematic assessment of empirical knowledge and quality standards.

- **Action to prevent child abuse**
  Child, Youth and Family's public education strategy aims to ensure that all New Zealanders act to achieve safety and wellbeing for our children. The strategy's primary message is "we as New Zealanders all have a part to play in preventing child abuse and caring for our children". The programme "Everyday Communities" has a set of core activities tailored for each community.

- **The "Building Tomorrow: Paths to Prevent Child Abuse" website –** www.buildingtomorrow.org.nz – recommends an integrated approach to preventing child abuse which recognises that caregivers, family members and members of the wider community all need to play a part in prevention.

- **Physical punishment of children**
  The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has raised concerns about New Zealand's law relating to physical punishment and its compliance with UNCROC. The Government has looked at how other countries have addressed the issue of physical discipline of children, including education campaigns and changes to law. We have also considered the implications for New Zealand should Parliament decide to repeal or amend section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961. This section provides a defence to parents charged with assaulting their children. Under this section the force used by a parent must be reasonable and for the purposes of correction.

- **Action to reduce youth offending**
  The recently released Youth Offending Strategy focuses on creating processes and tools to build the Government's capability to deliver youth justice services of the type, quality and quantity envisaged by the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989. It was developed by a ministerial taskforce which undertook extensive consultation with government and non-government youth justice service providers.

What the Agenda for Children will add

The Agenda for Children consultation feedback from children frequently highlighted bullying as a negative aspect in their lives. In particular, Māori and Pacific children and children with disabilities strongly articulated their experience of being bullied, teased and picked on by other students at school. These results are strongly supported by research, which confirms that bullying is a serious issue affecting the lives of children and young people in New Zealand today.

The Ministry of Social Development is working with a range of government agencies to look at current approaches that aim to reduce bullying in schools and the community. A large number of activities already underway in schools target bullying by creating a safe school culture where:

- positive student and staff behaviour is modelled and supported; and
- school pupils, caregivers and community members are all involved in preventing and managing bullying.

The project aims to strengthen current approaches to reducing bullying by:

- looking at ways to improve the co-ordination between specific anti-bullying initiatives, and improve their links with wider education and violence prevention strategies, for example the New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy; and
- working with the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office to explore "best practice" approaches to creating a positive school culture and environment with a particular focus on reducing bullying.

Possible future developments and directions

- Develop a public education process to let people know about alternatives to physically disciplining children and to lead changes in attitudes and behaviour.
- Upskilling people who work with children (for example, teachers, health professionals, programme providers) so that they are better able to support children to understand that the violence they are experiencing is not their fault, that violence is not an appropriate way of solving conflict, and what to do to keep safe.
- Develop resources that draw together research and knowledge on the bullying of children with disabilities.
- Develop resources that draw together research and knowledge on the bullying of children because of their ethnicity, in particular their experiences of racial harassment and other forms of discrimination.

ACTION AREA 5: IMPROVING CENTRAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES TO ENHANCE POLICY AND SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS FOR CHILDREN

The Government has identified a need for better structures and processes for developing policies and services for children, young people and young adults across the 0-24 year age span. The *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper* included two goals about making government policies and services more responsive to children's interests, rights and needs. Feedback indicated general support for these goals and for the suggested actions, such as establishing effective structures to represent children's interests and new mechanisms for developing child-focused policy and for delivering services for children.

What is happening already

New Zealand already has some structures and processes in place for addressing children's issues. For example:

- the Office of the Commissioner for Children is responsible for:
  - advocating for and raising awareness and understanding of children's interests, rights and welfare;
  - promoting children's participation in making decisions that affect their lives; and

The co-ordination of all relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies is critical to the success of the Agenda for Children.

Adult respondent

There will be significant resourcing issues … but as a society we must be prepared to pay for the best for our children – they are our future, they are the touchstone on which we shall be judged.

Adult respondent[19]

19 Submissions to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

– promoting the establishment of accessible and effective complaints mechanisms for children and monitoring the nature and level of complaints.

These functions will be formalised and strengthened in the Commissioner for Children Bill, which is currently working its way through Parliamentary processes;

- the Ministry of Social Development has a significant policy and legislative role in respect of children in the social development, strategic and inter-sectoral policy, social assistance, care and protection and youth justice areas, including policy and legislative management responsibilities relating to the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989; and it provides purchase advice in relation to services delivered by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services;
- the Ministry of Youth Affairs provides advice on policies, services and legislation affecting young people and young adults aged 12-24 years inclusive. This includes developing and leading the implementation of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa and co-ordinating and leading the implementation of the New Zealand Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy; and
- the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Development and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services work closely together on issues for children, youth, and families "at risk", and have some jointly funded services for this group.

What the Agenda for Children work will add

The Agenda for Children work in this area involves:

- implementing the Government's "Action for Child and Youth Development" work programme, which brings together the Agenda for Children and Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa work. This joint work programme will help to raise the profile of children and young people in government business and improve the coherence of policies and services affecting this group;
- the Ministries of Social Development and Youth Affairs promoting whole child and youth development approaches and working together on issues affecting children and young people as a population group; and
- establishing a Child and Youth Development Leadership Group of senior staff across the public service to encourage agencies to work together on issues affecting children, young people and young adults.

Possible future developments and directions

The Government is looking at a range of initiatives to improve management and co-ordination across all government agencies. These include:

- establishing networks of related agencies to improve the integration of policy work and delivery of services across the state sector; and
- consolidating the structure of government agencies.

Over time this is likely to lead to improved structures and processes for developing policies and services for children and young people.

ACTION AREA 6: IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN

The Government is also working to improve the way local government and community-based services respond to children. In the Agenda for Children consultations, the most frequent suggestion from children for improving their lives was to provide more things for them to do. Children provided us with long lists of amenities and activities they would like to see in their local areas. The large majority of adults supported the need for services to be funded and delivered in a way that responds to children's interests, rights and needs. Many stressed the need for more funding and better co-ordination of funding and services.

What is happening already

Initiatives already underway to improve service planning and delivery at a local level include:

- "local services mapping", a move by Child, Youth and Family towards a community-based planning and needs assessment process for child and family services. It aims to give a stronger voice to communities in prioritising social service needs and will involve both community-delivered and departmental services. It is expected to be introduced gradually from July 2002;
- the "Stronger Communities Action Fund", a pilot programme being run in seven communities by Child, Youth and Family. The Fund offers local communities the opportunity to develop their own decision-making and needs assessment processes for funding social services. Its goals are to improve needs assessment, develop innovative local solutions to community needs, and build "social capital" in communities by increasing social networks;
- "Strengthening Families" local co-ordination groups, established throughout the country to improve local service co-ordination. Members include frontline workers from the health, education, welfare, justice, housing and employment sectors and other government and community agencies and iwi. In each community, a local approach helps people at the front line work more closely together in the interests of individual children and young people at risk;
- Te Puni Kōkiri's Capacity Building programme, which is based on Māori development by Māori for Māori. Capacity building is a process that seeks to strengthen the ability of whānau, hapu, iwi, Māori organisations and Māori communities to build the strategies, systems, structures and skills that they need to control their own development and achieve their own objectives. Capacity building supports whānau, hapu, iwi, Māori communities and Māori organisations to control their own development and achieve their own objectives. These programmes are intended to build the capacity of whānau, hapu, iwi and Māori across all sectors including economic development, education, health, housing, social services and employment;
- the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs' Pacific Capacity Building (PCB) programme, which focuses on communities coming up with their own ideas for solutions. Initiatives are designed to build the capacity of Pacific peoples

Bigger libraries and more books for children. Longer hours at leisure parks and centres.

Member of mixed age and gender group

More and more houses are being built but they are forgetting about putting in parks for children and other places like swimming pools and skateboard places etc.

Girl, 11

More playgrounds, more sandpits, more books, more toys, clothes, paper, cars, trains.

Age and gender unknown[20]

Whilst it is important Central Government increases and improves its provision of services for the Under 17s, it is equally important that Local Authorities are acknowledged, encouraged, supported and resourced by government as major stakeholders in the development of their Cities' children. Councils, in partnership with government, business and the community, can significantly improve the conditions in which their young citizens grow and learn.

Waitakere City Council[21]

20 Submissions to *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack.*

21 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

Imagine a city in which children are valued and precious – where politicians, children, parents, planners and business people recognise the need to actively and deliberately move towards creating such a city. It would be safe. Children's opinions and perceptions would be given validity by decision-makers. Children would enjoy a clean, green, attractive environment. Recreation, health and educational facilities would be easily accessible to all, regardless of where they lived or what their parents earned. They would be positive about learning and employment opportunities and be confident, happy citizens. Children would be proud and enthusiastic about their families, communities and city. They would belong. This is the kind of vision meant by a "child friendly" city.

Christchurch City Council vision of a child-friendly city, quoted in *The Children's Strategy Study: Research Report,* Christchurch City Council, 1996

and communities in areas including economic development, education, health, housing, social services and employment. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs is monitoring the implementation of the community-identified milestones, signed up to by around 30 government agencies. The Pacific community via Pacific Community Reference Groups can provide feedback on the progress and perceived effectiveness of government responses to date. The PCB process involves ongoing engagement with agencies to develop further milestones in partnership with the community as well as full reports back to all participating Chief Executives;

- Housing New Zealand Corporation's (HNZC's) programme of community renewal projects. Projects are underway in Clendon (South Auckland), Aranui (Christchurch) and Fordlands (Rotorua) and others are in the planning stages. The primary objective of community renewal is to address social exclusion and foster strong, sustainable communities. It is hoped that communities such as these will provide places in which children and their families will: feel safe and secure; live in a physical environment and housing which meets their needs; and have access to appropriate support services. The programme is based on HNZC, local communities, councils and other government agencies working together to support projects such as youth groups and after-school clubs and to provide spaces especially for activities that children like, such as skateboard parks; and

- the recent reform of local government legislation, which provides opportunities to improve policies and services for children. From 1 July 2003 local authorities will be required to develop and work to implement long-term council plans that must include specific outcomes, developed through community consultation.

What the Agenda for Children work will add

The Ministry of Social Development is working with the Department of Internal Affairs, Local Government New Zealand and a number of local authorities and community organisations to help ensure that community planning processes consider children's interests and needs. This work involves:

- working with local authorities to discuss how children can be involved in community consultation; and

- developing in partnership with local authorities and communities "best practice" guidelines and mechanisms for consulting with children.

Possible future developments and directions

- Local authorities may develop their own plans for children, including ways to measure improvements in children's welfare and wellbeing.

- Local authorities have clear consultation processes for involving children in the development of long-term council plans and local strategies for issues such as traffic safety and recreation and parks.

- Local authorities may enhance children's opportunities to contribute to their community on a wide range of issues, not just those that directly affect them.

- Community organisations may provide opportunities for children to participate in their decision-making processes.

ACTION AREA 7:
ENHANCING INFORMATION, RESEARCH AND RESEARCH COLLABORATION RELATING TO CHILDREN

The information and research dimension of the Agenda for Children was developed to meet the need for a solid base of information for cross-sector policy development work for children. The information will also increase our understanding of children's lives and what influences good outcomes for children. This action area aims to identify gaps in research and information about children in New Zealand and the steps we need to take to address those gaps.

What is happening already

Government initiatives that aim to improve information about children and their wellbeing include:

- **Improving the Knowledge Base (IKB) for social policy**
  The IKB review resulted in a package of recommendations aimed at improving the knowledge base for social policy, and increasing co-ordination across social policy agencies and the wider social research sector. One of the key initiatives was the establishment of the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee (SPEaR), a co-ordinating group of representatives from government agencies to have an overview of government's social policy research purchase. SPEaR will explore ways to better co-ordinate: identification of key social policy knowledge needs; development of research agendas to meet social policy gaps; assurance of quality and relevance of government social policy research; and integration of research information into policy development;

- **Family Dynamics/Family Effectiveness Research Programme**
  The Ministry of Social Development is researching family dynamics and family functioning – that is, how families work – and particularly how these relate to outcomes for children from different social and economic circumstances and cultures. The programme explores the connections between family dynamics and resources, and the economic, social and policy environment;

- **Review of Family Violence Prevention in New Zealand**
  The Review of Family Violence Prevention in New Zealand Plan of Action, completed in 2001, identifies five focus areas, with goals and objectives for each area. SPEaR is considering the best way to develop a co-ordinated approach to researching family violence;

- **Longitudinal survey of Income, Employment and Family Dynamics**
  Statistics New Zealand is developing a longitudinal study to collect information on a group of individuals every year over an eight-year period beginning in October 2002. The sample will include 10,000 households, and the information collected will include income, labour market activity, wealth, demographics, family type and relationships, household composition and living standards. It will help us understand children's circumstances and some of the economic and social changes happening over time; and

Penei te tamaiti he kakano. A lot of what's done to children is done by adults. The focus should be on whānau.

Adult respondent

The Committee expressed concern that the extensive economic reform process in New Zealand has negatively affected the welfare of children, and suggested that the impact of the reform process on children and their families be closely examined.

Adult respondent[22]

22 Submissions to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

- **The Competent Children project**
  This Ministry of Education project, is following a sample of children from the Wellington region as they move through early childhood education and school and into early adulthood. The main aim of the project is to chart the contributions to children's progress that are made by some of the main experiences and elements in their lives, such as family resources, early childhood education, school experiences, their interests and activities in the home or outside school, and their relationships with their peers. As part of the long-term project a fourth report, *Competent Children at 10*, was recently released.

What the Agenda for Children work will add

This action area was developed using literature, the analysis of research issues and gaps identified in the Seminar on Children's Policy in July 2000, information from the consultation with children and young people, and information from consultation with researchers and other professionals working on issues for children.

All this information pointed to some gaps in research relating to children. Eight broad research themes were identified:

- children and their environment (neighbourhood, community, peers);
- social exclusion, multiple disadvantage and wellbeing;
- the impact of family dynamics and transitions (effects of family structures and functioning);
- the impact of parenting;
- violence, child abuse and neglect;
- child poverty;
- participation in society; and
- the impact of policies, services and interventions.

Appendix 6 has more information about each theme. Research undertaken on these themes needs to have a specific focus on Māori and be relevant and appropriate to Māori, including using Māori frameworks and concepts in research. Research also needs to be relevant and appropriate to other ethnic groups and others such as children experiencing disabilities and illnesses, children in different regions of the country (particularly rural children) and migrants and refugees.

- **Improved collaboration on research and addressing research gaps**
  SPEaR is developing its role in encouraging collaboration across government agencies and government sectors on research concerning children and ensuring that research expenditure across agencies is co-ordinated to address these gaps in research relating to children. SPEaR will also monitor progress on research being carried out on the research themes above and identify new gaps in knowledge concerning children that need research.
- **Reporting on indicators of children's wellbeing**
  Every five years, the Ministry of Social Development (in consultation with SPEaR) will produce a report on the things that contribute to children's wellbeing. This will align and help with reporting under UNCROC. It will also produce an interim report which will detail how New Zealand children are doing on issues such as living standards and poverty, health and development, education, offending, safety and adjustment and self-esteem.

At present, the *Strengthening Families Report on Cross-sectoral Outcome Measures and Targets* reports some indicators of children's wellbeing and *The Social Report* recently reported on general population indicators of wellbeing. The relationship between these reports and the proposed report will be looked at. The first report on indicators for children is planned to coincide with the next UNCROC report, due in 2005.

- **Feasibility work for a longitudinal study of children**
  The Ministry of Social Development is looking at the option of a new national longitudinal study of children, in consultation with relevant government departments. Given the large amount of time and money studies like this need, we need to think about its scope, how it could best be done and what we can learn from other longitudinal studies that have been done.

Possible future developments and directions

In future, government agencies may work more closely together on the research gaps in the eight themes. This may involve:

- developing co-ordinated research agendas across the public service;
- collaborating to pay for research in which several agencies have an interest;
- joint research projects by cross-agency teams; and
- working together to make or support applications for funds for undertaking research.

This is a chance to recreate a vision and hope! There are lots of good things around – build on them, nurture them. You do not have to have thrown money at it! But, similar to "venture capital", seeding a good idea and good people and making their life easier is a really good way to go! There are lots of good people around – children need to be children, don't make them adults before they are ready and do not criticise them for being children.

Principal of Waikouaiti School[23]

You don't cater for the young people of [suburb]. Sometimes I think that you look down on us and stereotype our lifestyle and culture. I hope you find the courage to relate to our needs and cater for the future generations.

Member of mixed age and gender group of children[24]

23 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

24 Submission to *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack.*

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE PROCESS: HOW WE WENT ABOUT DEVELOPING THE AGENDA FOR CHILDREN

An open, consultative process

The Seminar

From the very beginning we decided to take an open, consultative approach in developing the Agenda for Children. The Agenda initiative was launched in July 2000 at a Seminar on Children's Policy attended by community groups and individuals with experience of and interest in children's issues. The lively debate at that seminar was just the start of an extensive process of discussion and public consultation on the Agenda's development.

The Reference Group

The second important step was establishing the Children's Policy Reference Group[25] to work on the Agenda with the then Ministry of Social Policy[26] and the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

The Reference Group's work has demonstrated the benefits of drawing on the knowledge and skills of community experts right from the start of a policy development process. The Group has met nine times since October 2000, has maintained the same membership throughout and has been a stimulating and valuable forum for developing the Agenda. The non-government members were heavily involved in the public consultation process, brought new ideas and perspectives to the policy discussions, and helped shape the Agenda's scope and focus.

Consultation with children and adults

The third feature of the Agenda for Children development process was the public consultation phase itself. Here too, we decided to do things differently. Instead of focusing on consultations with adults *about* children, we decided early on that most time and resources should go into consultation with children. This made good sense given that the Agenda for Children is all about raising the profile of children's issues and making government more responsive to their interests, rights and needs.

Children contributed in a variety of ways. Most sent response sheets from the *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack,* which was sent to all schools and interested organisations. In addition to individual and group submissions on the response sheets, we received many drawings, posters, essays and even video presentations from some schools. Many children also sent their views through the Globalnet website, and many more took part in group discussions facilitated by a professional facilitator, and in some instances by a Government Minister.

The response was wonderful. We received over 3,500 submissions from individual children and groups. This represented the views of more than 7,500 individuals up to the age of 18 years. This was an excellent response rate, particularly from girls, Māori and Pacific children, those of primary school age and those living in rural areas.[27] Their insights and ideas on how to make New Zealand a better place for children were invaluable. One of the Agenda's key action areas is to create more opportunities like this for children to participate in decision-making processes that affect them.

25 Established in September 2000, the Reference Group comprises nine non-government children's issues experts and six government members. Details of its membership and work are available on the Ministry of Social Development's website at www.msd.govt.nz.

26 Now called the Ministry of Social Development.

27 Most came from primary and intermediate school students, and more girls participated than boys. Submissions from rural areas were over-represented in the total, while major urban areas were under-represented. A quarter of the individual submissions were from Māori and 6 percent were from Pacific children.

Playgrounds are often too babyish for young people. For older people they could be more challenging.

Member of group of 8-12 year-olds, gender unknown

I'd like school subjects to be more fun and exciting and practical – more drawing – free style – more sport.

Boy, 13

In school teachers must understand that at times they need to teach according to the student's learning style not the way they learn. Just like no two fingerprints are the same, no two minds think the same.

Girl, 14

Have not so many people in my class.

Member of group of 8-10 year-olds, gender unknown[28]

We also wanted to hear the views and ideas of adults working with and for children. We did this by sending out a public discussion paper to all interested groups and individuals (and made it available on the Ministry of Social Policy website), and holding 10 facilitated discussions (including four hui and three fono) around the country. In addition to the oral feedback from these discussions, we received 444 written submissions from adults.[29] Together with the responses from children, these responses provided us with rich material to draw on in developing the content of the Agenda.

APPENDIX 2: CONSULTATION FINDINGS: WHAT YOU SAID

This Appendix summarises people's comments from the Agenda for Children consultation on ideas for improvements – what children and adults thought would make life better for children in New Zealand.

Responses from children

The messages in the responses from children were remarkably consistent across the various sub-groups of children who responded (i.e. by age, gender, ethnicity, and geographical location, and from children with disabilities and those in the care of Child, Youth and Family).

What would make it better to be a child or young person in New Zealand?
More than anything else, children wanted more things to do. They suggested a whole range of activities including parks and playgrounds, skateboard parks, swimming pools, and especially places for younger teenagers to go. This main request was associated with other suggestions such as more free or cheap activities, more theme parks, more holidays and leisure time and more money.

A smaller proportion of respondents wanted improvements to schools and the education system. Their suggestions included having fewer students in each class, teachers being more responsive to students' learning styles, better equipment in schools and more choice over subjects. They particularly wanted school to be more enjoyable and a number suggested that school would be improved by having more things to do and less homework. Several referred to the cost of education.

Others wanted adults to address crime in society as well as the abuse of children, and to provide more protection for children, including having patrols in areas where children spend their leisure time. They also wanted adults to deal with bullying.

28 Submissions to *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack.*

29 Most of the adult submissions were from women, from people aged between 25 and 64 and from New Zealand Europeans. Over half were from groups, particularly non-governmental organisations, such as social service organisations, support groups and youth organisations. Many educational institutions, including a large number of early childhood services, also made submissions. A list of groups who responded is included in the full report on the analysis of adults' submissions – see page 6 for information on how to obtain a copy.

Another cluster of comments referred to children's desire to be treated with more respect, to be trusted, given more responsibility, listened to and supported. For the 13-17 age group this was the second most frequent suggestion for change. Others discussed health-related issues such as smoking, alcohol and drugs, teenage suicide and teenage pregnancy and some suggested having somewhere for children to go after school.

Responses from adults

Adults were also asked what would make life better for children in New Zealand. In addition, they were asked to comment on the Government's vision for children, the principles that should underpin it, the goals for achieving it, and priorities for action to implement those goals.

What would make it better to be a child or young person in New Zealand?
Adults had quite different priorities from the children who responded. Adults' first priority was to improve education through increased funding and resources, teaching more life skills in schools and providing more help to children with special needs.

Adults wanted more support for parents and families, including services like parent education and budgeting advice and paid parental leave. Some wanted more parental accountability. Adults wanted more done to address poverty and violence towards children. They identified a need for more social and health services and thought that society could do more to value children. They also felt that more research on children and their needs would be useful.

Vision and principles

The great majority of submitters agreed with the draft vision and principles, with a few suggesting changes or additions. Key suggestions were to:

- add the word "Aotearoa" to the vision statement;
- include the idea of being protected under "security of care";
- add access to education and health care under "security of opportunity"; and
- ensure that children's views are given due weight, under "security of participation".

The consultation feedback provided one strong message on the principles. It was suggested that the final principle – "Māori children need to be seen in the context of whānau" – should apply to all children. In other words, all children need to be seen in the context of their family and/or whānau. This is consistent with the whole child approach which recognises all the important contexts and systems of influence in a child's life.

Tell adults to give us a chance. We are not all bad and you have to make a few mistakes sometime in your life otherwise you won't learn.

Girl, 15

Teenage pregnancy is an issue that needs to be looked at more closely. We, the students, need to be educated from the age of 13 on sexual intercourse. The teenagers of today do not realise what drugs and alcohol can do to their bodies.

Girl, 14

More support places that are designed for young people. Places where we can talk about things anonymously and get help from people IN PERSON! Young people need to know that there ARE people out there who do care about your feelings and opinion. Things need to be advertised more. You could send flyers to every household addressed "to the children of the household", or something similar.

Girl, 14[30]

30 Submissions to *Agenda for Children: Children's Discussion Pack.*

Goals and priorities for action

Almost all of the adults who responded agreed with the five goals in the *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper*. They were:

1. Change the way children are viewed – establish their place in New Zealand society as respected citizens with valuable contributions to make;
2. Ensure that all government policies and practices respond to children's interests, rights and needs;
3. Ensure that services are funded and delivered in a way that responds to children's interests, rights and needs;
4. Give priority to addressing child poverty and violence in children's lives; and
5. Give priority to maximising opportunity for all children.

There was also much support for the suggested priorities for action to achieve each of the goals and some suggestions for additional priorities for action.

Overall, the responses to questions about the goals and priorities for action fell into five main themes. These were:

- the need for **improved education** for children by, for example, increasing participation in quality early childhood education, providing more help for low-decile schools, having smaller classes, encouraging innovation in schools, providing more social workers in schools, meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties, teaching life skills, and increasing children's self-confidence;
- **addressing violence** by, for example, adopting a policy of zero tolerance to violence, early intervention, monitoring and treatment or counselling, the use of positive role models, reducing violence in the media, and providing education about violence and abuse;
- the need for more **parent education** (education for parents about how to be a parent) including that this should be compulsory and/or free;
- **"fixing the family to fix the child"** – people of all ethnicities want policies that value and support families and encourage parental responsibility. All children, not just Māori, need to be seen within the context of their family and/or whānau; and
- the need to address **poverty**. Adults were particularly concerned that the cycle of unemployment should be broken and that the minimum wage or benefit level should be increased.

APPENDIX 3:
OTHER GOVERNMENT WORK ON ISSUES YOU IDENTIFIED

Work on addressing poverty and addressing violence in children's lives has already been discussed in Part 3 of this report (under Action Areas 3 and 4). This Appendix outlines policy work underway that addresses or helps to address consultation respondents' concerns relating to improving the education system, and parent education and support services for families.

Improved education

Many of the education-related concerns people raised in the consultation match areas on which the Government is already focusing. The Government is aiming to reduce disparities in educational achievement between different groups as well as raise the overall level of educational achievement in New Zealand. The Ministry of Education is focused on education outcomes and its work on this centres on six themes:

1. More Children Gaining Strong Learning Foundations

Achieving success in the early years, particularly in literacy and numeracy, lays the foundation for later learning. Participation in quality early childhood education (ECE) improves achievement, particularly for children from low-income families.

The Ministry's literacy and numeracy work (across early childhood and the first years of school) aims to improve outcomes for all children, and especially for those who are at greatest risk. The National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) has shown a marked lift in the literacy levels of all Year 4 students, which confirms the gains we are starting to see from projects such as Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara (SEMO) and other local literacy initiatives. The initial results from the early numeracy project suggest many students are also making significant gains in this area.

The Government has developed programmes to increase the participation of Māori and Pacific families in early childhood education, and has developed a new funding system (Equity Funding for Early Childhood Education) to improve access for families in low socio-economic communities. The Government also aims to improve the quality of services by increasing the qualification requirements for early childhood teachers.

The Government will release a long-term 10-year Strategic Plan for Early Childhood Education in August 2002. The Strategic Plan was developed by a sector working group with wide representation, and includes 20 strategies for improving early childhood education in New Zealand. They have four main directions:

- increased participation, engagement and access;
- fostering collaborative relationships between ECE services and other family support services;
- improved quality; and
- sustainability of services.

2. More Students Participating and Achieving Through Education

A large part of our population needs to increase their involvement in education particularly Māori and Pacific students. There is a range of strategies that aim to engage students who are at risk of educational under-achievement, and develop better and more appropriate qualifications for all students. Initiatives already happening include work to reduce truancy and suspension rates, work to provide mentoring and guidance for students at risk, and work on identifying effective practices for teachers and schools to use. The Ministry is also developing a long-term strategy to improve learning results for students placed at risk by their educational and social environments.

A new qualification, the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) will be phased in from 2002. It will support a more flexible approach to learning as it is not time bound and students can choose to undertake the course levels that most meet their needs. Students, parents and employers will benefit from having an assessment of a wider range of skills and knowledge, more specific information on student achievement and more choices of pathways for students.

The Ministry is continuing to implement and refine special education policies. Specialist Education Services (SES) has recently been merged with the Ministry of Education, which will create opportunities to improve education outcomes for children and young people with special education needs. This move was in response to a review that highlighted the need for more responsiveness, effectiveness, and co-ordination in delivering services.

3. Higher Quality Teaching

Teachers play a critical role in education, and more effort is going into supporting them and improving the effectiveness of teaching practices. The Ministry's teacher supply strategy is seeing more Māori and Pacific peoples being attracted into teacher training. Other initiatives designed to improve teaching practices and learning outcomes include increasing the qualifications requirements for early childhood educators, professional development for teachers in areas such as literacy, numeracy, assessment and information and communication technologies (ICT), and the establishment of the Teachers' Council later this year.

More curriculum assessment material and diagnostic tools in English and Te Reo Māori have been developed to help teachers benchmark students' progress and ongoing learning needs. Te Kete Ipurangi, the Ministry of Education's interactive website for educational professionals, is also helping to ease teachers' workloads while increasing the supply of quality curriculum resources available.

4. Better Schools and Early Childhood Providers

The Early Childhood Equity Funding system and the Early Childhood Strategic Plan aim to raise the quality of early childhood education. The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) and changes to how schools plan and report on student outcomes are designed to ensure schools focus on student achievement and the progress students should be making. A number of schools have been working in clusters to develop ICT applications to enhance student learning. "School Support" assistance is provided to about 400 schools, to help them address problems which are putting education at risk. Stronger and more effective schools are becoming more evident from the work of a number of School Support initiatives such as those on the East Coast, and for Māori boarding schools.

5. A Stronger and More Responsive Tertiary Sector

The tertiary sector plays a crucial role in developing the skills and knowledge New Zealanders need to contribute to our country's economic and social development. The Government is undertaking a package of tertiary education reforms as a result of the work of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) and recent reviews of industry training, adult education and adult literacy, and Training Opportunities and Youth Training. A significant review of government tertiary student support policies, including student loans and allowances, is also underway, with a public discussion document due for release in May 2002.

6. Families and Communities More Strongly Engaged in Education

Work continues on strengthening the important role of families and whānau in both supporting the education of, and setting high expectations for, their children. The Ministry's Whakaaro Matauranga (Think Learning) project, including the Te Mana Campaign and the recruitment of Pouwhakataki (staff who work with communities), is designed to help strengthen the role and engagement of Māori in education and to strengthen relationships between schools and communities. The Pasifika Education Plan has a range of strategies and a long-term focus on improving outcomes for Pacific peoples in education, and was developed in consultation with Pacific communities and educators.

Parent education

The Agenda for Children consultation responses raised issues about providing more support and education for parents and caregivers to do a better job of parenting their children. The Government funds a range of programmes, services and resources to support families, particularly those families with the highest levels of need. Many families access support and information through their own family and friends, through public libraries, the Internet, and programmes run by local authorities and community organisations.

1. Early Start and Family Start programmes

Investment in children's early years can be very effective in improving later outcomes. The Early Start and Family Start programmes identify children and families who are at risk of social exclusion, around the time of a child's birth. They work with these families to improve long-term outcomes for the child and family, to improve parenting and the way the family functions, and to help parents improve their personal circumstances. Providers of the Early Start and Family Start programmes deliver a range of services directly to families in their homes and link them with other services in their communities. The Family Start programme is an inter-sectoral early intervention service that operates in 16 locations. Early Start is a similar programme operating in Christchurch.

2. Other parent support and development programmes

The extensive range of government-funded services and programmes that support parents, families and whānau involves social services, health, and education organisations. Examples include: Homebuilders, Barnardos, Birthright, WellChild, ante-natal and maternity services, Parents as First Teachers, Home Instruction Programme for Pre-school and Year One Youngsters (HIPPY), Anau Ako Pasifika, and Whānau Toko I Te Ora.

3. A review of Parent Support and Development

The Ministries of Social Development, Health and Education, and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services are working together on a review of Parent Support and Development programmes and services for families with young children. Many of the parenting education issues raised in the Agenda for Children responses are expected to be addressed as part of this work.

Other support for families with dependent children

Whānau development programmes

Eight Māori communities have designed innovative programmes to strengthen whānau structures in the Government's Whānau Development Project. The three-year programmes have established whānau-based enterprises and services such as organic food gardens, training courses and youth development services in order to increase whānau self-reliance and provide models for future social services.

Review of relevant legislation

The following legislation is currently being reviewed to ensure a stronger focus on children's needs and interests and to recognise the diverse family arrangements for the care of children:

- the Guardianship Act 1968;
- adoption legislation; and
- the Child Support Act 1991.

One of the most successful strategies I have seen implemented is the Family Start programme. Integrating the funding. Government departments need to commit themselves to a model, and give that model back to the community along with the putea (funding). And also don't interfere in the service.

Response from Māori adult[31]

31 Submission to *Agenda for Children Discussion Paper.*

APPENDIX 4:
EXAMPLES OF THE WHOLE CHILD APPROACH IN ACTION

The Government has endorsed the Agenda's whole child approach as the basis for child policy and service development, in conjunction with the youth development approach outlined in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa.

This Appendix provides a guide and practical examples to illustrate when and how the whole child approach might be applied to policy and service development, delivery and evaluation.

Why is a whole child approach important in policy and service development and evaluation?

Policy and service development, delivery and evaluation without a whole child approach may:	Policy and service development, delivery and evaluation with a whole child approach will:
• be targeted towards individual issues or problems affecting children;	• consider children's whole lives and circumstances and the links between individual issues and other aspects of their lives;
• focus on a single-sector solution;	• involve co-ordinated action across different sectors;
• focus interventions on a single setting;	• consider multi-level interventions in the settings of family and whānau, friends and peers, school and the wider community;
• fail to consider the implications for children;	• always consider the implications for children;
• view children solely as passive recipients of policies and services; and	• view children as having valuable knowledge to contribute to developing and evaluating policies and services that affect them; and
• rely solely on information from adults to account for children's experiences and views.	• consider ways in which children can be involved in decision-making on issues which affect them.

When to apply a whole child approach

We encourage public service agencies to adopt a whole child approach when they are developing and putting in place policies and services that:

- apply to all children;
- are aimed at specific groups of children;
- are specific to children as an age group of the population;
- apply to all people in relation to a specific issue; and
- apply to families and whānau with dependent children.

The Ministry of Social Development can provide further information and guidance on applying the whole child approach for children aged 0-17 years.

How should a whole child approach be applied?

Adopting a whole child approach involves considering the following questions:

- how will the issue or initiative affect children now and in the future?;
- will different groups of children be affected in different ways? For example, are there particular issues for Māori children, for very young children, children with a disability, children who live in a low-income household?;
- how will addressing the issue affect other aspects of children's lives?;
- are there ways that children can contribute to work on this issue or initiative? For example, can they help identify the issues and associated problems or develop solutions?;
- what are the links with other sectors' policies, services or initiatives?;
- what key settings do we need to focus on to address this issue for children or to reach children? For example, will we have most effect if we focus on families, iwi, schools, community or religious leaders, broader public opinion, or relevant laws or regulations?; and
- how might other settings support or undermine what we are trying to achieve? What additional supports might be needed?

Examples of applying a whole child approach

The following examples have been designed to explore the range of issues that require consideration when applying a whole child approach. The first two examples – second-hand smoke and pedestrian safety – look at applying a whole child approach to issues affecting children as members of the general population. The third example uses the development of a skateboard park by a local authority as an example of how the approach might be applied when considering an initiative directly targeted towards children.

Example One: Improving pedestrian safety

What will be the effects on children?

- Pedestrian safety is an important issue for everyone. It directly affects children for two reasons:
  - Pedestrian injury is a major cause of unintentional injury, death or hospitalisation for children in New Zealand; and
  - Children are only able to move around the community independently as pedestrians or cyclists, so it is important that they are able to do so safely.
- Actions to improve pedestrian safety would affect other aspects of children's lives by increasing their independence and access to their school, peer group and recreational opportunities, and improving their safety knowledge.

Will there be differential effects?

Action to improve pedestrian safety needs to consider the following varying factors:

- pedestrian injury varies for children of different ages. School-aged children, especially 5-6-year-olds, are more likely to be involved in "on-road" accidents. In contrast, 0-4-year-olds are more likely to be injured or killed in "off-road" accidents (for example, in driveways);
- Māori children are at greater risk of being killed or injured as pedestrians, and Pacific children are at greater risk of being hospitalised; and
- boys are more likely to be injured than girls as pedestrians, with 5-9-year-old boys being at greatest risk of pedestrian injury.

How can we involve children in work on this?
Ways to involve children could include:

- asking them about their experiences as pedestrians and what they do to keep safe on the roads;
- asking them about how to improve footpaths, roads and crossings to make them safer, and for other ideas to improve pedestrian and road safety;
- establishing an advisory group of children and young people to represent their interests at a local or national level;
- working with children to identify the key messages for road safety public education campaigns and the ways these messages could be conveyed to their peers and adults; and
- exploring ways to involve children in evaluating road safety public education campaigns.

What links need to be considered?
Work in this area needs to consider, and contribute to:

- national roading strategies;
- local plans for road development and local and regional pedestrian strategies;
- existing pedestrian safety initiatives such as "walking school buses" and the Safe Routes to School Programme developed for children by Safekids and the Land Transport Safety Authority;
- the work and role of the Land Transport Safety Authority; and
- individual school road safety strategies and rules.

What are the key settings to focus on?

- This issue needs a multi-level approach involving communication between children and parents, schools, town and transport planners, roading engineers, road safety experts (including the Police) and community leaders.
- Education will be important in raising road safety awareness among children and family and whānau members, and to alert drivers to specific safety issues relating to children (for example, when crossing roads, children do not judge speed and distance as accurately as adults and are more likely to be distracted).
- We would also need to improve the roading environment so that it more effectively meets the needs of children and enables them to use the roads safely (for example, the location of playgrounds on busy roads, places for school buses to stop, speed bumps in suburban areas).

How will other settings influence this?

- The policy, funding and regulatory frameworks for roading and road safety would affect the way the issue can be addressed.

Example Two: Reducing second-hand smoke

What will be the effects on children?

- Reducing second-hand smoke creates positive health outcomes for both children and adults. It directly affects children as they may be more at risk of harm from second-hand smoke, particularly younger children. Children may be less free to remove themselves from a situation where there are smokers present. In addition, children's developing lungs are more sensitive to airborne hazards such as second-hand smoke.
- Public education on the issue of second-hand smoke will increase children's awareness of the benefits of smoke-free environments for both children and adults.

Will there be differential effects?

- Māori children are more at risk as Māori are over-represented among smokers.
- Children in Pacific families are also more likely to be living with smokers than children in the wider New Zealand population.

How can we involve children in work on this?

Ways to involve children could include:

- asking them to find out when and where they are affected by people smoking in their environment and what they do to avoid second-hand smoke;
- working with them on ways to reduce second-hand smoke in their home, school and community; and
- developing public education campaigns with children to raise awareness of the effects of second-hand smoke.

What links need to be considered?

Work on this issue needs to take account of:

- the National Drug Policy; and
- existing anti-smoking campaigns and education programmes within schools and the community.

What are the key settings to focus on?

- The key settings for this issue are family and whānau, schools, the regulatory environment and the community.
- The family and whānau setting is particularly important because this is where children are most likely to be exposed to cigarette smoke.
- Smoke-free schools are an important initiative for children's health and also help to change smoking behaviour.
- Laws and regulations are potentially useful levers for reducing exposure to cigarette smoke in other settings.
- Broader community awareness is important to reach community settings that are not covered by laws and regulations, such as cultural groups and sports teams.

How will other settings influence this?

- Current public feeling against smoking and increased public awareness of the harmful effects of smoking may reinforce efforts to address this issue.

Example Three: Assessing the development of a skateboard park

What will be the effects on children?

- Children will be able to take part in a fun, safe and accessible recreational activity.

Will there be differential effects?

- Children interested in skateboarding or watching skateboarding would benefit most.
- More boys may use the skateboarding park than girls.
- The facility would need to cater for different age groups and skill levels and be accessible by public transport.

How can we involve children in work on this?

Ways to involve children could include:

- asking them whether there is a demand and need for a skateboard facility;
- asking them what a great skateboard park would need, such as toilets, parking, location near a bus stop and schools, lights for evening skating, drinking fountains;
- asking them for ideas and involving them in discussions on design (the colour and style of equipment, physical layout of equipment) and location before design work begins;
- creating an advisory group of children who are interested in skateboarding to establish the key specifications; and
- involving children in the park opening and its continued publicity.

What links need to be considered?

- We would need to consider the existence and location of other recreational facilities for children in the area (either planned or already in place).

What are the key settings to focus on?

- The key setting in this example is the local community. It would be vital to the project's success to get the community's support, particularly local children and groups working with children, such as schools and youth centres.

How will other settings influence this?

- Central and local government laws and regulations (for example, the Resource Management Act 1991) would influence the park's development.
- Other settings such as peer networks could influence how much children use the park.

APPENDIX 5:
INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDREN

This Appendix provides indicative information about children's circumstances and some of the changes they are experiencing. It includes population trends, children's family circumstances, children's health circumstances, and children's participation and achievement in education.

Population trends for 0-17-year-olds

Population trends from 1981 to 2001

There are just over one million children under the age of 18 years in New Zealand (1,008,390 in the 2001 Census). From 1981 to 2001 the child population grew at a slower rate than the population as a whole. As a result children under 18 have declined as a proportion of the total population, from 33 percent in 1981 to 27 percent in 2001.

Children aged 0-17 years inclusive by age group, 1981-2001 Censuses

			NUMBER		
AGE GROUP	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001
0-4	251,697	249,072	277,149	279,603	270,801
5-9	289,551	254,019	251,178	288,291	286,203
10-14	305,349	291,888	255,318	264,186	290,742
15-17	181,455	184,149	166,182	158,535	160,644
Total 0-17	1,028,052	979,128	949,827	990,615	1,008,390
Total population	3,143,307	3,263,283	3,373,926	3,618,300	3,737,277
0-17 as a % of total	33	30	28	27	27

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census usually resident population

Future population projections

Under 1999-based medium population projections, the number of children is expected to decline gradually after 2005, falling to around 957,500 by 2016. By that time, children under 18 are projected to make up just 22 percent of the population. Over the decade to 2010, the number of children aged under 10 years is expected to continue to decline, while the number aged 10-17 will increase, peaking in 2006/07.

Increasing ethnic diversity

Children make up a much larger proportion of Māori and Pacific ethnic groups than European and Asian ethnic groups. In 2001, children under 18 years accounted for 43 percent of all Māori, 45 percent of Pacific peoples, 30 percent of Asians and 25 percent of Europeans. The greater share of children in the Māori and Pacific ethnic groups reflects the concentration of women at the childbearing ages and higher fertility levels in these populations.

In 2001, children under 18 who were identified as Māori made up 23 percent of all children under 18 years, an increase from 20 percent in 1991. Pacific children accounted for 11 percent (up from 7 percent in 1991). The proportion of Asian children has more than doubled over the decade, from 3 percent in 1991 to 7 percent in 2001.

The latest available population projections for Māori, Pacific peoples and Asian ethnic groups are based on the 1996 Census. Under medium projection assumptions, they suggest that by 2016, Māori children will make up 27 percent of all children under 18, Pacific children 13 percent, and Asian children 11 percent.

The increasing ethnic diversity of the child population is apparent in recent birth statistics, which show that only 53 percent of all babies born in 2000 were identified as European only. According to 1996-based population projections, by 2010 around half of all children under five years of age will be able to identify with an ethnic group other than European, rising to half of all children under 18 years of age by 2016. Many of these children will have multiple ethnic identities. Of the 56,605 babies born in the year to December 2000, one in five had two or more ethnicities. Less than half of Māori babies were identified with a single ethnic group (43 percent) compared with 57 percent of Pacific babies and 77 percent of European babies.[32]

Geographical distribution

In 2001, more than four in five children lived in urban areas, the majority (69 percent of all children under 18) in major urban centres with populations of 30,000 or more. Pacific and Asian children are the most urbanised, with 97 percent living in urban areas, followed by Māori children (84 percent) and European children (82 percent). Māori children are more likely than children from other ethnic groups to live in small urban areas of 1-10,000 people (14 percent in 2001, compared with 9 percent of European children). About three-quarters of children live in the North Island, with 3 in 10 living in the Auckland region.

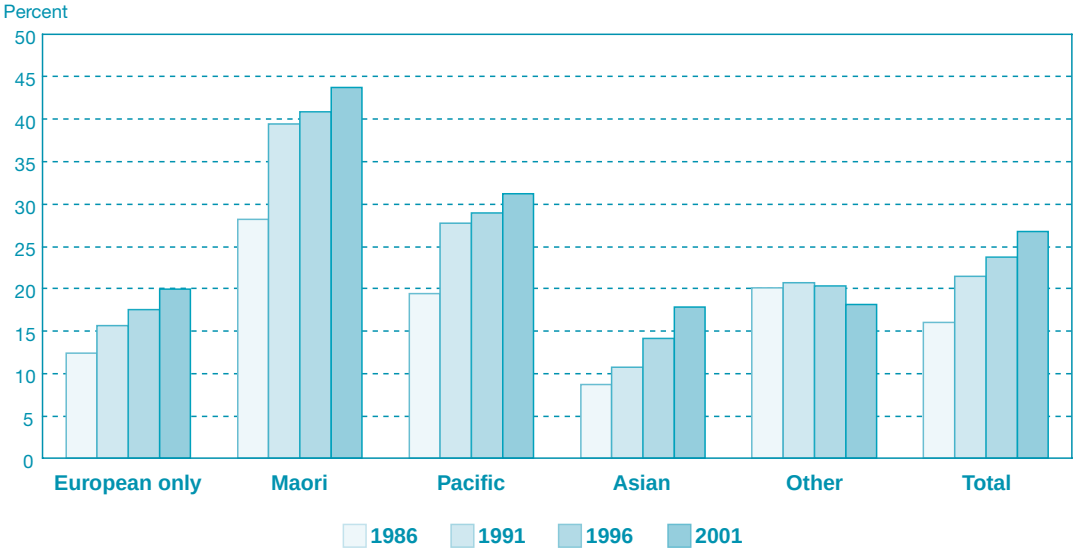
The proportion of children in the population varies between regions, with the Gisborne region having the highest concentration of children (32 percent), and Otago the lowest (23 percent).

In general, regions with large urban areas have the greatest ethnic diversity. Auckland is New Zealand's most multicultural region and has the largest proportion of Pacific children (22 percent) and Asian children (15 percent). The Gisborne region has the largest proportion of Māori children (60 percent), followed by Northland (46 percent) and Bay of Plenty (42 percent). In contrast, only 13 percent of all children in the South Island identified as Māori.

Children's family circumstances

Family structure

Dependent children living with one parent by ethnic group, 1986-2001



Source: Statistics New Zealand, unpublished census data

32 Statistics New Zealand (2002). *Demographic Trends 2001*, p39.

While most dependent children under 18 years of age live with two parents, the proportion has declined over time, from 84 percent in 1986 to 73 percent in 2001. Over the same period, the proportion of dependent children living in mother-only families rose from 14 to 23 percent, while the proportion living in father-only families has doubled from 2 to 4 percent. In all, 27 percent of dependent children lived with just one of their parents at the time of the 2001 Census.

Changes in family structure in the 1980s were most pronounced for Māori and Pacific Island children. Between 1986 and 1991, the proportion of dependent children living with one parent rose from 16 to 21 percent overall, but from 28 to 39 percent for Māori children and from 19 to 28 percent for Pacific children. In the decade to 2001, this upward trend continued but at a slower rate, bringing the proportion of children living with one parent to 44 percent for Māori children, 31 percent for Pacific children, and 20 percent for European children. In contrast, there was a sharp increase in the proportion of Asian children living with one parent, from 11 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2001, perhaps reflecting changes in the composition of the Asian population as a result of recent migration.

The proportion of babies under one year living with a sole mother increased from 13 percent in 1986 to 19 percent in 1991 but has changed little over the last decade, standing at 20 percent in 2001. Among Māori babies under one year, the proportion living with a sole mother increased sharply from 29 percent in 1986 to 40 percent in 1991, but fell slightly to 37 percent in 2001.

Māori children are over-represented among children living in one-parent families. While they accounted for 23 percent of all children under 18 in 2001, they made up 38 percent of dependent children living in one-parent families. Pacific children made up 10 percent of these children, Asian children made up 4 percent.

Children in low-income families

Children in low-income families are likely to be worse off than children in more affluent families across a range of health and educational outcomes. This can be inferred from international research which shows a persistent correlation between low income and poor health.[33] Longitudinal studies in New Zealand have also identified low income as a key factor associated with lower levels of developmental competence in young children, and one of a group of factors more likely to be experienced by young people with multiple problems.[34]

In 1997/98, almost 3 in 10 dependent children (29 percent) were living in poor families (defined as families with incomes below 60 percent of the median, adjusted for housing costs). Measured in terms of the same buying power, the level recorded in 1987/88 was 16 percent.[35] Children living in sole parent families are much more likely to be living in poverty than those living with two parents.

Children with a parent on benefit

At the end of June 2001, there were 262,760 children whose parents or caregivers were receiving an income-tested benefit. This represents a decline of 6 percent (17,500 children) since 1998, when numbers peaked at just over 280,000. Most of the decline has occurred among children under 10 years of age, which is consistent with the ageing of the child population. In the year to June 2001, however, there were also fewer children aged 10-17 with parents receiving a benefit.

33 National Health Committee (1998) *The Social, Cultural and Economic Determinants of Health in New Zealand: Action to Improve Health*, p23.

34 Wylie, C. et al. (1996) Competent Children at 5: Families and Early Education, p.xi; Fergusson, D. (1994) "The childhoods of multiple problem adolescents: A 15-year longitudinal study", *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, p1132.

35 Ministry of Social Policy (2001), *The Social Report 2001*, p79.

As a proportion of all children, the number of children with a parent receiving a benefit has declined slightly from 27 percent in 1998 to 26 percent in 2001. However, this figure is still twice as high as it was in 1986 (13 percent).

Nearly three-quarters of children with a parent on a benefit are the children of sole parents on Domestic Purposes Benefit (71 percent).

Longitudinal data shows that one fifth of children born in 1993 (21 percent) spent at least five of their first seven years included in a main income-tested benefit.

Children in large or crowded households

The number of people living in a household is thought to be a factor influencing health outcomes. Overall, 22 percent of children under 18 lived in a household containing six or more people in 2001. Pacific and Māori children are more likely than other children to live in large households. In 2001, 50 percent of Pacific children and 31 percent of Māori children lived in households containing six or more people. Only 16 percent of European children and 23 percent of Asian children lived in households this large.

There is no official measure of household crowding in New Zealand. However, in an exploratory exercise using a Canadian model, Statistics New Zealand identified 16,700 households, or 1.4 percent of all households, which required two or more additional bedrooms to meet the standard in 1996, and deemed those to be crowded.[36] Almost all those homes deemed to be crowded contained children (90 percent) and nearly 60 percent included young children under five years. In all, there were just over 50,000 children under 18 living in crowded households in 1996, representing 5.3 percent of all children in New Zealand.[37]

Access to transport

Most children (94 percent) have access to private transport within their household, but Māori and Pacific children are less likely to do so. In 2001, 15 percent of Pacific children and 14 percent of Māori children under 18 years of age lived in a house with no vehicle available for the use of residents. The comparable proportion for both European and Asian children was 4 percent.

Access to telephones and the Internet

Almost all children (95 percent) live in households with access to a telephone, but again, Māori and Pacific children are less likely to. In 2001, 14 percent of Pacific children and 13 percent of Māori children had no telephone in their residence, compared with 2 percent of both European and Asian children.

Asian children are the most likely to have access to the Internet at home (62 percent), followed by European children (53 percent). In comparison, just over a quarter of all Māori children (26 percent) and a fifth (20 percent) of Pacific children had Internet access. Overall, just under half of all children under 18 had Internet access at home in 2001 (47 percent).

36 These figures should be regarded as indicative only as they are highly sensitive to the measure used. The Canadian National Occupancy Standard sets the bedroom requirements of a household according to the following criteria: there should be no more than two people per bedroom; parents or couples share a bedroom; children under five years of either sex, and children under 18 of the same sex, may share a bedroom (however, a child aged 5-17 should not share a bedroom with a child under five of the opposite sex); single adults 18 and over and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom.

37 Statistics New Zealand (1998) *New Zealand Now: Housing*, Wellington, pp54-61.

Children's health circumstances

Access to adequate incomes, good housing and good health care is critical to ensuring that children are given the best possible start in life. The health measures shown here illustrate some key aspects of health that reflect children's living circumstances.

Infant mortality

Between 1988 and 1998, the total infant death rate halved, from 10.9 per 1,000 live births to 5.4 per 1,000. A reduction in post-neonatal deaths (those occurring after a child has lived for at least 28 days but less than one year) was the most significant factor in decreasing the total infant death rate over the decade to 1998. Among babies of this age, post-neonatal sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the major cause of death. In the period 1988 to 1998, the SIDS death rate declined by 73 percent from 4.4 to 1.2 per 1,000 live births, the lowest rate ever recorded.

Despite this positive trend, there is cause for concern that the infant mortality rate is still considerably higher for Māori babies (7.2 per 1,000 in 1998) and Pacific babies (7.5 per 1,000) than for babies of all other ethnic groups (4.1 per 1,000). Of particular concern is the Māori SIDS rate, which at 2.4 deaths per 1,000 live births is more than three times higher than the rate for Pacific and other ethnic groups (0.7 per 1,000). However, the Māori SIDS rate has dropped substantially since 1988, when it stood at 8.4 per 1,000.

Another cause for concern is that New Zealand has not maintained its ranking among OECD countries in respect of infant mortality. In 1960, with an infant mortality rate of 22.6 per 1,000 live births, New Zealand ranked 11th among 29 OECD countries. Although New Zealand infant mortality rates declined sharply during the 1960s and 1970s, the pace of decline slowed over the 1980s. Other OECD countries that were behind New Zealand in 1960 have made greater improvements, resulting in New Zealand falling to 23rd place out of 29 countries by 1997 but recovering to 17th place in 1998.

Hearing loss among school entrants

Hearing loss in early childhood has a significant effect on emotional, social and educational development. Around 1 in 13 new entrants experienced hearing loss in 1999/2000. This is a rate of hearing loss of 7.7 percent, which is unchanged from the previous year.

The rate of hearing loss among school entrants fell from 11 percent in 1991/92 to 8 percent in 1993/94 but has since stalled at around the level recorded in the mid-1990s.

Māori and Pacific Island children are much more likely to experience hearing loss than other children. Around one in eight Māori children (13.1 percent) and one in six Pacific new entrants (16.4) percent) experienced hearing loss in 1999/2000, compared with 5.1 percent of all other children.

Proportion (%) of new school entrants who failed hearing tests 1998/99, 1999/2000

	MĀORI	PACIFIC	OTHER	TOTAL
1998/99	13.8	13.9	5.3	7.7
1999/2000	13.1	16.4	5.1	7.7

Source: Ministry of Health

Child abuse

In the year to June 2001, 5,432 children were assessed as abused or neglected by Child, Youth and Family. This was a substantiated abuse rate of 5.5 children for every 1,000 children under 17 years of age and 7.2 per 1,000 for Māori children. These rates are somewhat lower than those for the previous three years, when around 7 in every 1,000 children and around 12 in every 1,000 Māori children were recorded in substantiated abuse statistics.

A number of factors may have influenced the figures for 2001, including the impact of public education strategies on child abuse prevention, the encouragement for families to seek help early, the delivery of early help services such as Family Start, and a change in the recording system at the end of 2000. However, it is too early to say whether the data represent a real change in the rate of substantiated abuse.

Under-18 birth rate

Childbearing among young adolescents has been associated with a number of negative outcomes for both mother and child. In 2000, there were 1,175 births to females under 18, of which the majority (97 percent) were to females aged 15-17 years.

After falling sharply during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the under-18 birth rate fluctuated over the next decade. Since 1995, the rate has fallen and is now below the level recorded in the mid-1980s.

Māori females are much more likely to have a birth under the age of 18 than non-Māori. In 2000 there were 22.7 births per 1,000 to Māori females compared with 4.9 for non-Māori. Of the 1,175 births to females under 18 in 2000, over half (670) were to Māori females.

The Māori under-18 birth rate has fallen sharply since 1996 from 29.1 births per 1,000 to 22.7. As a result, the ethnic difference in the rate of adolescent childbearing has narrowed.

The rate of childbearing among adolescent females is relatively high in New Zealand by OECD standards.

Under-18 birth rate, 1995-2000 (Rate per 1,000 females 13-17 yrs)

	MĀORI	NON- MĀORI	TOTAL
1995			11.8
1996	29.1	6.0	10.9
1997	30.9	5.3	10.8
1998	26.2	4.9	9.5
1999	24.7	4.9	9.3
2000	22.7	4.9	8.8

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Children's participation and achievement in education

Early childhood education (ECE)

New Zealand and international research shows that the early years of childhood are especially vital to a child's development and future ability to learn. Quality early childhood programmes prepare young children socially and academically for entry to primary education and can help narrow the achievement gap separating low-income children from more advantaged children.[38]

In July 2001, 88 percent of Year 1 students had attended some form of early childhood education service before starting school. This was a slight increase from 86 percent in 2000. Pacific children and Māori children are less likely to have had this experience than Asian and European children.

Proportion (%) of Year 1 students who had attended ECE 2000, 2001

	EUROPEAN/PAKEHA	MĀORI	PACIFIC	ASIAN	TOTAL
2000	91.9	79.2	68.6	82.7	86.3
2001	93.5	81.5	72.8	84.7	88.2

Source: Ministry of Education

School leavers with higher qualifications

Upper secondary education is the foundation for higher (post-secondary) learning and training opportunities as well as preparation for direct entry to the labour market. Those who leave school early with few qualifications are at much greater risk of unemployment or vulnerability in the labour force and of having low incomes.[39]

In 2000, 64 percent of school leavers left school with at least Sixth Form Certificate. After increasing in the late 1980s, this proportion has changed little over the decade to 2000.

On average, male students, Māori and Pacific students, and those from schools that draw their students from low socio-economic communities are less likely than other students to leave school with higher qualifications.

Proportion (%) of school leavers with Sixth Form Certificate or higher by gender and ethnic group, selected years, 1986-2000

	MALES	FEMALES	MĀORI	PACIFIC	ASIAN	TOTAL
1986	45.2	48.1	na	na	na	46.7
1991	63.5	69.2	37.4	52.2	na	66.3
1996	59.0	66.5	37.4	53.7	81.5	62.7
1999	61.9	70.2	43.0	53.8	84.9	66.0
2000	60.0	67.6	40.1	54.6	83.5	63.7

Source: Ministry of Education

38 Ministry of Social Policy (2001). *The Social Report 2001*, p30.

39 Ministry of Social Policy (2001). *The Social Report 2001*, p32.

Proportion (%) of school leavers with Sixth Form Certificate or higher by socio-economic status of school, 1997-2000

	DECILES 1-3	DECILES 4-7	DECILES 8-10
1997	51.0	64.2	81.5
1998	48.3	64.8	81.5
1999	48.8	63.9	79.5
2000	48.1	60.2	78.8

Deciles 1-3 = most disadvantaged communities; deciles 8-10 = least disadvantaged communities

Source: Ministry of Education

Other useful resources

Statistics New Zealand (1999). *New Zealand Now: Children* (1998), Wellington
Ministry of Health (1996). *Our Children's Health,* Wellington
Ministry of Social Policy (2001). *The Social Development Approach,* Wellington
Ministry of Social Policy (2001). *The Social Report 2001,* Wellington

APPENDIX 6:
FURTHER INFORMATION ON RESEARCH GAPS RELATING TO CHILDREN

Eight broad research themes have been identified to address the research gaps relating to children (see Action Area 7). This Appendix provides further information on each of these research themes.

Children and their environment (neighbourhood, community, peers)

We need information about:

- the effect of communities and their nature and level of wellbeing on children;
- the extent to which living in a particular neighbourhood affects outcomes; and
- the characteristics of communities and neighbourhoods that have the greatest effects on outcomes.

Social exclusion, multiple disadvantage and wellbeing

We need research to:

- identify the proportion of children experiencing multiple disadvantage (such as economic and social disadvantage)
- identify the factors that most need addressing and the interactions between these factors; and
- develop ways to identify disparities in social and economic wellbeing between groups.

The impact of family dynamics and transitions

We need information on:

- the effects of different family structures and functioning on outcomes for children;
- how family transitions and resources affect good outcomes; and
- why some families achieve good outcomes when others in similar circumstances do not.

The impact of parenting

If we are to design policies that strengthen families and provide appropriate help, we need to know:

- what kind of parent behaviour is important in achieving positive outcomes and how we can promote it;
- how much parents understand child development and effective behaviour management strategies; and
- more about issues around parenting in different circumstances, how parenting is carried out and these issues are managed, and the effect of this on children's development and outcomes.

Violence, child abuse and neglect

Living in a violent or neglecting environment threatens children's wellbeing and development. We need information on:

- the effectiveness of particular actions in specific situations;
- the impact of the neighbourhood's wellbeing on the incidence of harm;
- circumstances that increase the risk of harm; and
- the relationship between discipline and violence.

Child poverty

Child poverty is linked to a greater likelihood of negative outcomes for children. We need research on:

- the effectiveness of actions to alleviate and prevent child poverty;
- the effect of income transfers on poverty and reducing negative outcomes;
- the ages at which children are most affected by the level of family income;
- the effect of a change in income on outcomes; and
- establishing poverty measures and monitoring poverty levels for children.

Participation in society

If we are to help children influence the decisions that affect them, we need research to:

- look at the areas in which children do and do not participate;
- look at groups that do and do not participate; and
- identify measures to ensure diverse groups of children participate.

The impact of policies, services and interventions

Many changes to policies and services affect children, but their effects have not been regularly investigated. We need research to determine how much interventions improve children's outcomes, and how the way children are depicted in policy affects their ability to access services.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

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