

Wellington City Council to review early childhood centre lease arrangements

In December last year Wellington City Councilors discussed a paper setting out options for the future level of support by Council for early childhood services in the city. Currently the Council supports 22 early childhood services by leasing land or premises to them. Another 6 operate from community centre buildings owned by Council. Lease and rent payment arrangements for these services vary from service to service. Rents paid range from nothing at all to over \$5,000. The Council is also aware that some early childhood services that do not operate on Council property receive no support from the Council at all. The Council is keen to develop a policy that addresses the current disparities and provides consistency of approach based on a clear rationale, for the future.

After considering the report at the meeting in December, Councilors decided that they needed more information about the individual tenure arrangements for each service, and agreement on an appropriate consultation process before any decisions could be made about the Council's future role in the early childhood sector.

Meeting 30th January

The Council then invited representatives from local early childhood services to a meeting to be held on the 30th of January, to discuss a process for development of a WCC policy on early childhood. Representatives from eight individual services attended the meeting, as well as representatives from WCCCA, the Wellington Playcentre Association, the Wellington Region Free kindergarten Association, Te Tari Puna Ora o Aotearoa/NZ Childcare Association, and the Ministry of Education.

The purpose of the meeting was:

- to identify issues that an Early Childhood Policy would address; and
- agree to a process to develop the Policy.

The issues to be addressed in a policy were seen to fall into two categories:

1. The "Big Picture" – that is, the development of a policy that would guide the Council in its future direction and decision making:

- Council's role in supporting early childhood services;
- Fitting with Council's long term plans for the city;
- Council's relationship with early childhood services generally (including those that are not on Council land);
- Provision of early childhood services within the inner city;
- Council's role where there are gaps in provision.

2. Rationalising support for services currently operating on/in Council property:

- Framework or model for rent assessments;
- Principles to guide any rent increases imposed on services;
- Security of tenure – rights of renewal;
- Responsibility for maintenance, rates etc.;
- Barriers as a result of District Plan or resource consent requirements/ interpretation;
- The extent to which Community Centres with early childhood services are bound by the policy principles agreed by Council.

Where to from here

The meeting then agreed that Helen Walker, WCC Principal Policy Analyst, would develop a framework paper incorporating issues raised at the meeting on the 30th January. This paper would be circulated to the affected early childhood services and a further consultation meeting would be held before the final report was put to the Council in April.

Queries

Should you have queries or issues to raise regarding the above you can contact WCCCA: 04 934 8516, helen.b.wccca@xtra.co.nz or contact the Council directly: 04 801 3169 or by Email: helen.walker@wcc.govt.nz