

**22 February 2006**

### **Record numbers of children in early childhood education**

As record numbers of children headed to school after the summer holidays, record numbers of under-five years olds were also getting involved with some form of education and care.

“Nearly 185,000 children\* are enrolled in early childhood services around the country, nearly 25,000 more than a decade ago,” says Barnardos New Zealand’s early childhood advisor, Penelope Janes.

“And the steady growth in numbers is matched by the increased number and choice of services available.”

Today there are nearly 4500 Ministry of Education approved services for under-six year olds, 550 more than a decade ago. They include education and care centres, kindergartens, playcentres, kohanga reo and playgroups as well as services provided in the homes of the child or of a caregiver.

“While most children attend some form of centre-based service, it is the home-based sector which has seen the greatest growth,” says Penelope. “Over the last decade the number of home-based services has nearly doubled to 200, with the number of children enrolled close to 10,000.”

“Parents may not realise how many common attributes home-based and centre-based services share,” says Penelope.

“All approved services have usually been created or adapted to meet the needs of their communities and the families who use them, and must meet stringent standards set by Government.”

“KidStart, the country’s largest home-based education and care service, is a prime example.”

The service, which is run by Barnardos New Zealand, provides education and care for up to four children aged from birth to school age in the homes of carefully selected, vetted and trained Caregivers.

“Under KidStart every day activities in the home and local community become rich learning opportunities for children,” says Penelope. “Caregivers use the national early childhood education curriculum framework, Te Whāriki, as the basis for and to enhance children’s learning and development. Caregivers receive on-going training and support from registered early childhood teachers.”

While the low ratio of children to Caregiver means each child’s interests and abilities can be recognised and responded to, regular playgroups and outings enable children to meet up with friends, use different play resources and take part in larger group activities.

Barnardos early childhood specialists provide on-going professional development and support, to ensure that current best practice is followed,” says Penelope.

“The Barnardos connection is invaluable in that it also enables families to easily access the organisation’s other services, such as family support and parent education.”

“Barnardos main concern is for the well-being of children,” says Penelope, “and it sees the provision of quality early education and care as integral to that.”

The not-for-profit children’s organisation opened its first early childhood service in 1972 in Mangere, south Auckland. It now runs 20 Early Learning Centres as well as KidStart across the country.

**ENDS**

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[www.barnardos.org.nz](http://www.barnardos.org.nz)

[www.kidstart.org.nz](http://www.kidstart.org.nz)

\*from the Ministry of Education’s Early Education research and statistics on [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)