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Project to increase participation in early childhood education in the Hutt Valley

A project aimed at helping ensure every child in the Hutt region has the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood education was launched this week.

“The learning experiences a child has in the first years of life can make a significant difference to his or her future,” says Moana Jessett, one of two Barnardos New Zealand qualified and experienced early childhood teachers running the Early Childhood Education Participation Project in the Hutt region. “And research shows that participation in quality early childhood education can have on-going social and educational benefits for a child long after they have started school.”

“Which is why we want to help families whose three and four year olds are not participating in early childhood education, get involved. By participation, we mean anything from nine hours a week on a regular basis.”

“We want to overcome any barriers that families might perceive. Some parents can find the process quite daunting. Because we’ve worked in the early childhood environment, we can support families through the process,” says Moana.

“This will involved visiting the family in the first instance, giving them information about the early childhood services in their area, helping them choose a service which best suits them and their child, physically accompanying/transporting them to the service, introducing them to the teachers and other parents, staying with them in the initial sessions and remaining an on-going point of contact. We will also help fill out enrolment forms and apply for subsidies where necessary.”

“Some parents may feel that they can do enough for their children at home, but there are some things that children may not get the opportunity to experience, such as being part of a larger group and socialising with others of their own age, getting involved in a more diverse range of creative activities and learning experiences, having the freedom to get messy, as well as discovering a diverse range of cultures. All these experiences also help build self-esteem and confidence.”

Moana and colleague Anne-Mette cover the whole of the Hutt Valley from Upper Hutt to Petone, across to Wainuiomata, Eastbourne and the surrounding hills. Within this area there are 127 early childhood education services, including kindergartens, playcentres, Kohanga reo, Pacific Island language nests, childcare centres and home-based education and care services.

Barnardos New Zealand delivers the Early Childhood Education Participation project in the Hutt region on behalf of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry launched the nationwide project in 2001. It is delivered in various other parts of the country by other community-based agencies.

Families interested in finding out more can contact Moana Jessett or Anne-Mette Kvers at Barnardos New Zealand’s Lower Hutt office, telephone 569 1204.



Moana Jessett and Anne-Mette Kvers