

CHILDREN'S POLICY

Our Vision

Labour is putting giving children the best start in life at the heart of our social policy programme.

Our Agenda for Change will make a growing, far reaching investment in our children, their families and carers, and, through them, in all of our futures.

Recent years have seen important advances in understanding how children get the best start in life:

- the significant impact of the early years for long term development;
- the value of quality care and close parental bonding in the very early years,
- the short- and long-term effects of poverty and low income levels,
- the correlation between inadequate housing and poor health,
- the relationship between education and well-being outcomes,
- the need for a secure living environment and the effect of parents' stress on children,
- the importance of educational achievement of parents,
- the value of workplace engagement; and
- which interventions make a positive difference.

There is also growing evidence about what happens if the stresses and strains are too much: long term negative effects of children's development and family stability, sometimes severe, and always a waste of potential.

Labour will place children's development and parents' ability to do what only they can do at the centre of social policy.

Under Labour, social policy will focus on investing in the early years, giving children a good start in a secure caring environment which will generate benefits through the rest of a child's life. This will mean changes to the ways we resource early care, both in and outside the family, as well as to income support, benefits and, over time, housing.

The ability to care and nurture is the heart and soul of parenting. *Labour believes that care is work, and that parenting is some of the most crucial work ever done.* We don't believe the only good parent is a parent in paid work, or that raising children is just a handicap parents need to escape from in order to be productive.

Labour also believes much of what needs to be done (and not done) in child policy area is clear and incontrovertible, with a strong evidence base: *We don't need another lengthy green paper process: we need good policies, and we need them now.*

The Agenda for Change for children has six main spending elements:

- *Poverty alleviation*: putting another \$70-80 a week into the pockets of the poorest families by introducing a tax free zone and progressively extending full Working for Families eligibility to those currently excluded from the 'In Work Tax Credit' component.
- *Free 24/7 Access to Health Care for Under Sixes*: extending free access for under sixes to after-hours medical services.
- *Paid Parental Leave*: extending the duration from 14 to 26 weeks, and the reviewing the whole area with a view to establishing a more radical approach.
- *Early intervention*: intensive support for the first 18 months for the most vulnerable 5% of children, and universal enrolment of children with Well Child providers.
- *ECE-based support*: free high-quality Early Childhood Education and parent support from 18 months to three years for the most vulnerable 5% of children.
- *Early childhood education*: restoring the funding cut from centres with high numbers of qualified staff.

1. Better income from work and fairer tax arrangements

It does take a village to raise a child, but what happens in the family is at the heart of things. Parenting has enormous challenges, but it needs to be a positive experience, where *each* parent's strengths come through and are passed on to their children. All parents need time, security and basic income to raise children well.

Labour has already outlined policies to raise family incomes especially for those families on low incomes.

Labour will create a \$5,000 tax free zone. This means the first \$5,000 you make in personal income a year – whether you are a worker, a beneficiary, or retired on New Zealand superannuation – will be tax free.

Labour will take GST off all fresh fruit and vegetables. That gives the average household an extra \$160 a year to put back into groceries – and makes the healthiest choices more affordable.

Labour will increase the minimum wage from \$13 to \$15 an hour, raising earnings for the quarter of a million workers who currently earn less than \$15. For someone currently on \$13 an hour, this means an extra \$66 a week in the pocket.

2. Making children our priority: The leadership framework Labour will legislate for

Labour will make significant changes to the way government operates, to ensure children are given the highest priority.

Children's needs do not slot into one convenient area of government. They encompass health, education, social development, housing, sport, the environment and many other areas. To be effective in advancing children's interests there needs to be a co-ordinated all-of-government approach.

This requires up to date, forward-looking legislation, new government structures and smart processes so that the public and the Government itself are able to easily scrutinise whether the expected standards are being met.

This will involve:

- The establishment of a Children's Charter
- The enactment of a Children's Act
- The establishment of a Minister for Children (a senior role in Cabinet)
- The formation of a Ministry for Children, overseen by the Minister
- A strengthened position for the Commissioner for Children.
- A requirement to undertake Child Impact Assessments
- An annual Children's Summit, and
- A review and rewrite of the Children, Young Person's and their Families Act 1989.

The Children's Charter and Children's Act

Labour's child policy framework will be established under a new Children's Charter (which will set the goals) and a subsequent Children's Act (setting out how we will get there).

The Children's Charter and Children's Act will provide the legislative mandate (including performance monitoring) for the functions set out below.

The Children's Charter will set the goals that will be expected to be met on a yearly basis to improve the wellbeing and livelihood of children in New Zealand. The Charter will address:

- Attitudes towards treatment of children (reducing child abuse)
- Affordable healthcare for children as a priority for the health system
- Preventing and combating hunger
- Emphasis on healthy homes
- Adequate income levels for parents

- Children's education with an emphasis on early childhood education, and
- The importance of household stability.

The Charter will also allow government departments to measure their performance against prescribed expectations to improve outcomes for children. The charter will be developed and delivered by working closely with organisations that deliver services for children at the frontline. They will have a formal advisory role, and their core roles in the delivery of services to the community and families will be better established by the clearer focus in Government on children's outcomes.

The Children's Act will be the legislative mandate for the functions of government departments setting out what their responsibilities are with respect to the Charter. The purpose of the Act will be to ensure that there will be accountability and the failure to comply can be addressed within a statutory mandate.

This Act will also set out the functions of the Ministry for Children led by the Minister for Children.

Minister for Children and Ministry for Children

Labour will dis-establish the Families Commission, and establish a Ministry for Children and a Minister for Children.

The Minister for Children will be a senior minister at the Cabinet table.

A Ministry for Children can ensure that there is a whole of Government approach to dealing with children's issues similar to the way the Ministry of Women's Affairs operates. The Ministry's job will be to make sure children are a priority, not just in theory, but in practice. It will be tightly focussed and will lead policy, research and monitoring the whole-of-government approach and integrated approach to service delivery.

The funding for this Ministry will be sourced by dis-establishing the Families Commission. Its current budget is \$ 7.7 million a year, compared with the Ministry for Women's Affairs' budget of \$4.5 million. The Ministry for Children will have similar funding to the Ministry for Women's Affairs and the remainder will be used to invest in other priorities in Children's policy.

Strengthening the position of the Commissioner for Children

The Commissioner for Children has and does play an important role in being the independent but at times muted voice for children. It's time to see how that independence could be strengthened.

Labour will review the roles, responsibilities and functions of the Commissioner for Children to enhance the strong focus the government will place on achieving better outcomes for children.

Coordination and accountability

Labour will, through the Children's Act, require government departments and agencies to undertake Child Impact Assessments on new and changed policies so the impact on children can be measured as changes are made.

We will make sure that investment is very well focussed on what evidence shows works and on where and for which children it can make the biggest difference. We will ensure that money isn't wasted on programmes that overlap or go nowhere. There will be strong leadership across government and communities, strong accountability around results, and a strong learning process and evaluation which focuses on how well we are doing, and where we might do better.

The Ministry for Children will have a legislative mandate to work with other Ministries and Government departments, community groups and community advisors.

It will develop a *children's strategic plan* set against the Children's Charter. This will lay out priorities, goals, targets and performance indicators in child wellbeing and monitor the performance of every sector against those standards. The children's strategic plan will also outline how each sector will work together and within their own domains to enhance child well-being.

Labour will require, through the Children's Act, that each ministry will have to establish a children's leadership team which will work with the Ministry for Children to incorporate the children's strategic plan into their portfolio and nominate their own goals, targets and performance indicators.

Each team would be required to work with a representative sector advisory group involving community and other groups to ensure that the goals and targets identified reflect the priorities of that sector.

Each portfolio's core activities will be funded from their own Votes but the Ministry for Children will be required to develop projects with multiple sectors such as joint health and housing initiatives to reduce hospital readmission rates for children. The Ministry will be able to allocate earmarked contestable 'innovation funding' for this purpose.

Children's Summit

Labour will hold an annual Children's Summit each year, to be attended by all agencies working with children, where progress will be reviewed and the children's charter goals will be revisited.

This will become a major policy event with policymakers, practitioners, community groups and the media to assess the Government's performance. It will provide an opportunity to assess existing policy against the outcomes it produces and offer new alternatives where the outcomes are not met.

Children, Young Person's and their Families Act 1989

Currently, the Children, Young Person's and their Families Act 1989 determines how the state intervenes to protect children from abuse and neglect, and to prevent and address child and youth offending. Time and constant reinterpretation of this once ground-breaking Act means it is no longer working as it should for many families today. The previous Labour Government began the process of updating this Act, however, that bill which made minor changes to clarify its intentions languished at the bottom of the Order Paper under the National Government.

Labour will direct the Ministry of Social Development along with the Ministry of Justice to conduct a review of the Children, Young Person's and their Families Act 1989 with the view rewriting the law to better reflect the needs of children and families in the 21st Century.

This will allow Labour to examine the evidence of what methods and approaches work for dealing with children and adopting those to have an efficient system.

3. Eradication of child poverty

Child poverty is a major issue facing New Zealand, but its effects are not always obvious at the time it does most damage. Evidence is clear that poverty and the struggles that come with it in the early years have lasting effects: prevention of poverty is paramount to ensuring that the healthcare and education system are not unnecessarily burdened in the future as children fail to achieve. Prevention of poverty means the Corrections system will not be the end result for children who never felt at home in education and other institutions. Prevention of poverty will mean New Zealand's economic performance is not impeded by lost capability and productivity.

New Zealand has a significant child poverty problem:

- Depending on the precise measure used, there are between 170,000 and 270,000 children living in poverty in this country.¹
- Half of the children now living in poverty were from working families whose wages were so low they could not adequately care for them.²
- 55,000 kids go to school each day without breakfast.³
- The recession has made things worse: The number of children living in benefit dependent households increased from 199,108 in Jun 2008 to 231,488 in Jun 2011, an increase of 16% and 32,380 children.⁴

This flows through into a whole range of negative social statistics:

- More children going to hospital with poverty related diseases – up by 4,800 hospital admissions per year between 2007 and 2010.⁵
- The rate of sudden unexpected death in infancy among Maori and Pasifika babies is consistently higher than for Pakeha and Asian babies.⁶
- Child abuse notifications increased 37% from 110,000 in 2008/09 to 150,747 in 2010/11.⁷
- More than 30,000 students are truant from schools on any given day.
- More than 7,300 school leavers left with no qualification in 2009
- 1,286 admissions for children were as a result of assault, neglect or maltreatment
- More than 47,000 children 16 and under were present, or usually residing with the victim, at an incident of family violence reported to police last year.

According to the OECD report, *Doing Better for Children*, New Zealand has one of the highest rates of child poverty and one of the lowest levels of investment in the first 5 years of life among the 34 countries.⁸

In order to combat poverty the first step should be to lift the incomes of families across New Zealand.

¹ Perry, *Household Incomes in New Zealand - Trends in indicators of inequality and hardship 1982 to 2010*, published Jul 2011

² Child Poverty Action Group

³ New Zealand Herald, 26 Jul 2011

⁴ New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, Vulnerability Report, Sept 2009 and Sept 2011

⁵ Child Social Health Monitor 2011 Update, Released August 2011

⁶ Children's Social Health Monitor 2011 Update

⁷ 2008/09 Financial Review of the Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Social Development Annual Report 2010/11

⁸ www.oecd.org/els/social/childwellbeing

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When last in government, Labour made a huge investment in tackling child poverty. The Working for Families programme involved the biggest single redistribution of income to low and middle income families and is credited with lifting some 130,000 children out of poverty. The *Household Income in New Zealand* surveys published by the Ministry of Social Development show that this programme helped avert a sharp rise in child poverty.

Under Labour there was also significant investment in primary healthcare, including cheaper doctors' visits and prescriptions, and in early childhood education with programmes like 20 Hours Free. We reintroduced income-related rents, invested in rebuilding the state housing stock, and the minimum wage was raised each year.

But our work is not finished. There is no doubt that there is much more to be done.

A particular focus of concern has been the lower rate of assistance that those with little or no paid work (including beneficiary families) receive compared to families in paid work. This differential was introduced by National through the Child Tax Credit in 1996 and preserved as part of Working for Families, through the In Work Tax Credit which replaced the Child Tax Credit.

The rationale for keeping this differential was to acknowledge the additional weekly costs associated with going out to work.

This rationale was always contentious. Moreover, since the introduction of Working for Families, Labour continued to lift the Minimum Wage significantly over time, helping to 'make work pay' and avoid a 'poverty trap' that had previously existed where moving off a benefit was scarcely worthwhile for some families, once work-associated costs were taken into account. Labour is, as noted above, committed to lifting the Minimum Wage further to \$15 an hour when it becomes government.

Current tax and Labour's future wage arrangements mean families in paid work are better off, and incentives to work are stronger. Benefits are already low and falling against average wages, and depriving benefit families of tax credit support on top of that means there is simply not enough money to go around – and both parents and children suffer.

In this context, we also consider that the ways the In Work Tax Credit stigmatises beneficiary families, undervalues care, and keeps poor families' income unnecessarily low outweigh any remaining issues about work incentives.

We therefore intend to move over time to phase out the In Work Tax Credit and extend this funding to all of those eligible for Working for Families, including families caring for children fulltime and receiving benefit support to do so.

We estimate that this policy will effectively eliminate child poverty in sole parent families once fully implemented.

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The policy would be rolled out in three tranches based on the age of the youngest child in the family. The timetable for implementation would be as follows:

- *April 2013*: \$6 a week tax free-zone introduced (applying to beneficiary families as well as others), and Working for Families increased by \$60 a week for a quarter of families, which we estimate would cover those with a youngest child aged 0-2.
- *April 2014*: Tax-free-zone increased to \$10 a week per adult (which means \$20 a week for a beneficiary couple).
- *April 2015*: Working for Families increased by \$60 a week for another quarter of families, which we estimate would extend coverage to those whose youngest child was under 5.
- *April 2018*: In Work Tax Credit abolished and all Working for Families recipients qualify for the extra \$60 a week, which will now be paid via the 'first child' component.

The estimated costs for this initiative (in \$M) are:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
22	88	109	174	174	218	349

Based on the Ministry of Social Development's *Household Income in New Zealand* analysis, there is good reason to believe that this would have a very significant impact on levels of child poverty. The impact is likely to be particularly significant for children in sole parent families who make up a disproportionate number of the children in poverty.

Taking into account the number of children reliant upon benefit income and estimates of poverty rates for different groups as presented in the *Household Income in New Zealand* reports, it seems reasonable to expect that this policy will effectively lift at least 100,000 children out of poverty once it's fully implemented.

This is based on a measure of 50% of the median wage before housing costs. There are likely to be significant impacts based on the 60% line and taking into account housing costs as well, but these impacts are more difficult to estimate as they would require information about expenses and supplementary sources of income that is not readily available.

Labour will also review recent changes to support for older children aged 16-18 years, to ensure this support is adequate.

4. Making child health a priority

The health of our children reflects the complex nature of our society and the interactions they have within it. The outcomes for today's children will determine the future success or failure of our nation. The period of childhood shapes an individual more than any other time in life. We must ensure we do everything we can that children enter adulthood as healthy and happy as they can be.

The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies into which they are born.⁹

In order to give every child the best start in life it is essential that government focuses on reducing inequities in the early development of physical and emotional health, and cognitive, linguistic and social skills.

We need to ensure that there are high quality maternity services, parenting programmes, childcare and early years education to meet need across all communities.

We need to build the resilience of young children and enable them to control their own lives and health status. We need to ensure that schools, families and communities work together to reduce inequities and promote well-being for all children.

We need to strengthen the leadership in the health sector to promote the needs of healthy children, and ensure there is a whole of government approach for children. This must be backed by the capture and dissemination of high quality data about the health status and outcomes of children.

We have seen a number of reports in recent times that the cost of accessing primary healthcare is meaning that some children are not getting the treatment that they need. This is particularly so in terms of access to affordable after-hours care.

Labour will make child health a priority, and increase the proportion of health sector spending on services for children aged up to six years.

Labour will extend free access for under sixes to after-hours medical services, meaning 24 hour, 7 day a week free access for under six year olds.

Extended access will be in place across New Zealand and will be delivered through mechanisms based on the best evidence from around the country.

The estimated costs for this initiative (in \$M) are:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
10	10	10	10	10	10	10

Labour will also do everything we can to ensure children are free of or are receiving quality care for debilitating health conditions when they enter school at 5 years old, by providing

⁹ UNICEF, Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries. Innocenti Report Card 7. 2007, Florence

adequate funding of outreach services to reach vulnerable children, supporting and enhancing B4 School Checks and providing a “mop-up” service at school to capture those children who start school who have not accessed a B4 School Check.

Labour will require District Health Boards to adopt child health implementation plans with nationally agreed measurable outcomes and targets that are monitored by the Ministry of Health.

Labour will develop systems during pregnancy to identify children who are vulnerable, and then ensure that the relevant levels of support are in place to support and optimise parenting.

Labour will create a seamless transition from maternity services to health care services for infants and young children.

Labour will strengthen the Health in Schools Programme, including social workers, starting with low decile schools, with the aim of expanding the programme to higher decile schools as resources allow.

5. What we will do for children 0-2 years: Enabling care and supporting early development

Labour will recognise the care of young children as valuable work, and an important stage in both parents’ and children’s lives.

We will invest as a priority in programmes and support in the first two years of life, when some of the most important things in a child’s life happen.

Time to care and nurture

Labour wants to enable parents who choose to stay at home and care for very young children to do just that.

This will mean that carers in paid work who want to spend more time with their young children are able to, while retaining their place in an employment situation.

Most other OECD countries recognise this, and offer longer periods of paid parental leave than New Zealand, and many provide leave at a higher proportion of previous income. Australia’s new policy offers 18 weeks, paid at a higher rate than New Zealand’s. Norway’s offers 56 weeks at 80% of income, and The Czech Republic and Slovakia each offer 3 years.

Other countries also offer more flexibility in terms of which parent takes the time out to care. Whichever parent takes the leave, the child, the mother, the family are better placed in terms of choices about work, career, income, and of course care.

New Zealand values children and we too want them to have the best possible start. The first phase would be to extend the duration of the current Paid Parental Leave.

Labour will extend the period of Paid Parental Leave to cover the first 6 months of a child's development, in two steps:

- In Budget 2013 Paid Parental Leave eligibility will increase from 14 weeks to 18 weeks (commencing from April 2014); and
- In Budget 2014 Paid Parental Leave eligibility will increase from 18 weeks to 26 weeks (six months) (commencing from April 2015).

The estimated costs for this initiative (in \$M) are:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
-	11	68	143	150	158	166

Getting to 26 weeks is an important goal. But some would argue we need to go beyond that. The Children's Commissioner recently recommended an even longer period of parental leave. There is a strong case for this.

Labour will set up a Ministerial taskforce to explore ways for parents to be able to take up to one year of parental leave and investigate how New Zealand can afford this.

The review will cover the whole system of support for care, work, income and the early years, using the best international evidence and experience. It will consider how to achieve the optimal mix for children, mothers, parents, families, and the best long term outcomes for our society and economy.

The intent will be to set up a broad-based approach to the first years of life that covers everyone, from sole parents currently on the DPB to relatively well-off professional couples. This would aim for wide support from all groups (families, communities, employers, care providers, cross-party), enabling families to plan their futures with confidence. The review will involve consideration how best to pay for care in the early years, and how costs and benefits can best be shared.

Supporting positive parenting and other strong evidence-based interventions

Money spent on early years parenting programs is precious money, and we need to know it is being spent in the best ways possible. We will enable better access to parenting and family support programmes we know work, including positive parenting programming.

Over time, Labour will make parenting programmes available to all New Zealand families.

These programs will be delivered from conception onwards, in a range of ways and settings (including media programming, Whanau Ora and centre-based early intervention settings).

Labour will review existing expenditures to ensure we can fund the interventions we know work, while still fostering innovation which aims to establish a strong evidence base.

Universal well child enrolment, stopping children falling through the gaps

At the same time, we need to make sure the most vulnerable children are not being missed, or falling into the cracks between agencies who are guardians of child protection and development.

Labour will ensure all parents register their baby before birth with a Well Child provider of their choice, such as Plunket, Tipu Ora, the Pacific Health Service or the Tongan Health Society.

Well Child services are free to all New Zealand kids from birth to five years. They include health education and promotion, health protection and clinical assessment, and family/whānau care and support. Quite simply, if children aren't enrolled at all, they'll miss all their Well Child visits, and their parents will miss out on vital support.

This measure will require additional resourcing to Well Child providers; this will be funded within baselines through a rationalisation of existing early intervention initiatives

At present, New Zealand does not have a comprehensive way of registering babies at birth and sharing that information with services to monitor a child's health.

Labour will accelerate full implementation of the Child Health Information Strategy to drive progress towards a Universal Child Health Record.

The better the information and the sharing of it with those working with a family the better the care we can provide for our children.

Labour will ensure earlier and more formalised handover between Lead Maternity Carers and Well Child Providers.

This will assist with the identification of families and children needing special support, and will help Well Child Providers to begin support (e.g. home visiting) and, where needed, to intervene earlier.

Labour will also make sure children's health information is available to the health and child protection professionals who need it.

Core health and wellbeing information will be linked through health information systems to ensure it follows the child, and that all services are responding to that child's situation.

Labour will work to close the cracks between agencies protecting children.

While centre-based ECE is delivered by Education, the identification of vulnerable infants and children usually occurs first in the health sector (in the context of antenatal or well child care) or via CYF or the Police. CYF and Health often maintain on-going support (e.g. home visiting, drug and alcohol counselling) for parents, while Education's focus centres on the child.

Labour will deepen Child Protection and development partnerships between Health, CYF and Education for the identification of at risk children.

Labour will develop a strong inter-agency agreement outlining roles and responsibilities of each agency in early identification of vulnerable families, services and supports for parents, and early interventions for children.

Such agreements will be two way (e.g. while health may identify vulnerable children requiring centre-based early interventions, education may also identify children with health problems, who require interventions from the health sector).

6. Access for everyone to quality Early Childhood Education

After the child turns 3, Labour needs to make sure that the right combination of early care and education is put in place: with qualified, professional people working towards the best child development outcomes, ensuring the highest possible levels of school readiness.

The benefits for children of high-quality early childhood education are indisputable: research shows that for every dollar invested in ECE, at least \$11 is returned in long-term benefits to the country.¹⁰ Quality ECE lays the foundation for later learning, developing cognitive skills, and developing resilience and self-esteem.

Protecting 20 Hours Free ECE

Because we understand the immense benefits of quality education for young kids, the previous Labour Government invested heavily in ECE. We implemented the popular and successful 20 Hours Free ECE.

The National Party sees ECE as a cost – something that’s about babysitting rather than education¹¹ – and they cut funding significantly in Budget 2010 for centres with high numbers of qualified staff. This means that parents are now required to pay higher fees, while centres are no longer incentivised to employ qualified staff. Essentially, parents are paying more for less.

The National Government has also removed the target set by Labour to have 100% fully qualified staff in all teacher-led ECE centres, along with funding for services to have staff in training and professional development.

Labour will restore over the course of two terms the \$95 million p/a subsidy funding cut, and we will work with the sector to reinstate the policy of 100% qualified staff in all teacher-led services.

The estimated costs for this initiative (in \$M) are:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
16	31	47	62	78	94	94

Labour believes that quality education is a basic human right and it must be affordably available to every child without regard to wealth, income, ethnicity or disability.

Labour will retain the 20 hours free ECE model that is universally available to all children aged three and four, and those five-year-olds who aren’t yet in school. This means retaining fee controls and the current subsidies to ensure families don’t face increased costs. Labour’s model will cover the cost of delivering the curriculum to each child for 20 hours per week.

Increasing participation & early intervention for vulnerable groups

¹⁰ “Age 26 Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Child-Parent Center Early Education Programme”, *Child Development*, January/February 2011, Vol. 82, No. 1, pp 379-404, conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota and Chicago Public Schools

¹¹ Anne Tolley: “With early childhood, there is an element of looking after children while their mums go out to work”. *The Dominion Post*, 14 February 2011.

While 95% of all three and four-year-olds now access early childhood education, participation rates are lower among Maori, Pasifika and children from low-income families. The disadvantages faced by these children are accentuated if they miss out on quality ECE, and the result for New Zealand is increased inequality.

At present, as long as services meet licensing requirements, they can be established and funded by taxpayer subsidy – whether there is a need for the service or not. This has resulted in a proliferation of services in high-income neighbourhoods and a shortage in low-income areas. It has also affected the viability of community-operated services when new services are established.

Labour will develop a planned approach to taxpayer-funded ECE. New centres will only receive taxpayer subsidies for providing ECE if there is a need for a new centre in the proposed location.

Labour will enable more quality services to be available in communities with lower participation. This includes investigating transport issues that are barriers to participation and evaluating the success of supported play groups.

7. What we will do for vulnerable children and families: Early targeted intervention framework

Early intervention

Poverty, violence and exclusion do their damage early in children's lives. But some children are born exceptionally vulnerable, experiencing a combination of innate disadvantage (disability, developmental delay, behavioural difficulties) and a difficult living environment, often inherited over several generations. This is a deadly combination, with awful long term consequences, in employment, health, mental health, imprisonment. And research shows it affects around 5% of all children.

For the most affected of these children, we need to intervene early and more substantially if we are to make real impact. If we can make a difference, all of us will benefit as the child grows into an adult. If we don't make the effort, we will all be the losers.

Labour will use the best international and local evidence and experience to build more high quality early intervention programmes for socially / developmentally vulnerable children.

Research suggests that socially / developmentally disadvantaged children benefit from high quality centre based early childhood education at an earlier age, and from enhanced programming involving a mix of home family and centre-based interventions. It also suggests that a wider mix of children within an ECE environment may lead to better outcomes, than if all are from homes with significant social disadvantage.

Labour will take a two pronged approach to early interventions for the most vulnerable 5% of children, with intensive home based support provided during the first 18 months, but moving towards a greater emphasis on centre-based early intervention programs between 18 months and 3 years of age.

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During the first 18 months, the emphasis will be on identifying vulnerable children early, and providing additional supports to those that need them the most, predominantly in their own homes. In the course of early handover, universal enrolment with a Well Child Provider at birth, and routine Well Child visits, the most vulnerable 5% will be identified, using a set of pre-determined criteria.

Labour will fund additional home visits, access to parenting programs, intensive specialist support and other interventions where needed for the most vulnerable 5% of children aged 0-18 months

The initiative will be progressively rolled out over the next six Budgets. The estimated costs (in \$M) are:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
2	5	10	15	25	33	45

For vulnerable children aged 18 months – 3 years, Labour is committed to providing high quality early intervention programmes in ECE settings, so that at entry to school, the most vulnerable 5% are able to enter the classroom as ready to learn as their peers.

Labour will provide free high-quality Early Childhood Education and parent support from 18 months to 3 years for the most vulnerable 5% of children.

Funding to centres will be on similar basis to 20 Hours Free and will be progressively rolled out over the next six Budgets.

Labour will, as part of its funding of ECE-based support for vulnerable children, develop the provision of multi-disciplinary, evidence- and centre-based early intervention programmes, with a view to expanding access to effective programs for the most vulnerable 5% of children nationally over the longer-term.

This will be done in partnership with selected pre-existing ECE providers and/or in community hubs or whanau ora locations (see below).

The estimated costs for this initiative (in \$M) are:

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
2	8	15	20	30	40	50

The same services may also assist young parents making the transition into work and training.

Building on local and cultural strengths

Communities working together and pooling resources can provide a strong basis for all the programmes described above. Whanau Ora should be a very important development in this area, with significant potential which Labour wants to see realised in these programmes.

Labour will strongly support programmes built upon (and building on) cultural strengths, accountable to their communities and achieving strong outcomes.

OWN OUR FUTURE



Labour will also find the best ways to build on the strengths of Pacific providers in developing early childhood services in their communities.

Overseas models suggest that there may be significant advantages for families if social services can be co-located in the community, e.g. a one-stop shop providing early childhood education, parenting programmes and other health and social services. Labour believes that the range of early intervention and support services for children and families should be conveniently grouped and located in areas of need. There are already successful hubs operating in New Zealand that were trialled by the previous Labour Government, such as the Papakura Family Service Centre.

Labour's long term aim is to develop a network of high quality centre-based early intervention programs addressing the needs of vulnerable children in the most deprived areas.

For many families, early childhood education is the first education service they have contact with. Families also have frequent contact with their local primary schools. This provides an opportunity for parents to access the support they need through services co-located with ECE centres and primary schools.

Labour will, over time as resources permit, develop and resource integrated community hubs.

These additions will be adequately resourced to ensure that additional burdens are not simply bolted onto current school structures and systems.

8. Investment we can afford

Labour believes investment in the early years of life is the best investment we can make.

We, like the experts, are convinced that money spent in the early years and on early intervention unlocks the potential that lies in all kids, as well as leading to greater taxpayer savings as they grow into adults.

If we fail to change the status quo we will not reach our full potential as a country. We will face higher costs across the criminal justice system and the health system, have a less-educated workforce and never break the cycle of intergenerational deprivation.

We will no longer accept stop-gap measures. It's why we have developed a comprehensive and fully-costed Agenda for Change for children over a six year timeframe. We think this is an investment New Zealand must make.

Overall costs (\$M)

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/9
Early Intervention	2	5	10	15	25	33	45
Free 24/7 Health Care for Under Sixes	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Paid Parental Leave	-	11	68	143	150	158	166
Reverse ECE funding cut	16	31	47	62	78	94	94
ECE-based support	2	8	15	20	30	40	50
Poverty Alleviation	22	88	109	174	174	218	349
TOTAL	51	152	259	424	467	552	713

Note – this table shows seven years rather than six because the full-year cost of some Budget 2017 increases may not come through until the 2018/19 Budget year.