



# 2021/22 ANNUAL REPORT

## Early Start Project



**Atawhaitia nga pepe**  
Nurture the baby early

*November 2022*

Address: PO Box 21013, Christchurch 8140 Tel: 0800 378-278 <https://www.earlystart.co.nz>

## Message from the Chairperson

The last few years have been a significant challenge on many fronts and I hope that this brief introduction to Early Start's Annual Report finds all Early Start staff, Board members, and the tamariki and whānau we work alongside well.

It is also important to acknowledge our funders and generous donors as well as all others who continue to support Early Start in a variety of ways. Thank you. It is through your kindness that Early Start's kaimahi are able to work alongside tamariki and whānau.

I would like to offer a warm welcome to our new Director, Dale Stephens; Dale joined the Early Start whānau in May this year.

Dale brings important understanding and insights into the political and legal environment we operate within. This is coupled with very extensive experience in governance, business, and operational management. In his past Dale has worked in the justice sector. We are grateful to Dale for his willingness to use his skills and experience to strengthen the governance of Early Start.

From my perspective the last year has felt like one of moving slowly forward through the numerous complexities that the management of Covid imposed upon us. By the end of the financial year (the period this report covers) the sun was beginning to shine through the clouds. Unfortunately, the long shadow that Covid cast continues to have negative impacts on many of our client families/whānau. Early Start's services will be needed more than ever over the next few years as our economy, education, and housing environment recovers.

From a governance level we continued to work towards long term secure property solutions for Early Start; we continued to look for ways to support the fantastic work set in motion by Early Start Leadership Team to ensure Early Start is meeting its Treaty of Waitangi obligations to tamariki and whānau; we continued to support them as they looked to introduce efficiencies into some business processes, and we continued work to strengthen our management of client data and integrity of the IT system.

It was pleasing to be asked to participate in local research that aimed to identify the factors that make community service delivery effective. The invitation reflected Early Start's robust reputation. Thank you to kaimahi and Directors that took part in the interviews.

To close I want to thank all my colleagues on the Board. It is a pleasure working with, and learning from, you.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Early Start's kaimahi and leadership team for their ongoing commitment to children and families in Ōtautahi.

Ashley Seaford  
**CHAIRPERSON**

*Kāhore taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini* ~ We cannot succeed without the support of those around us

## Vision

A society where children enjoy a supported, positive and happy childhood.

## Mission Statement

Early Start encourages and supports Canterbury families to provide each of their children with a positive and enjoyable childhood experience.

## Early Start Board

Early Start Project Ltd is a charitable company and was formed in 1995. It is governed by a board of directors consisting of a consortium of health care professionals and community members:

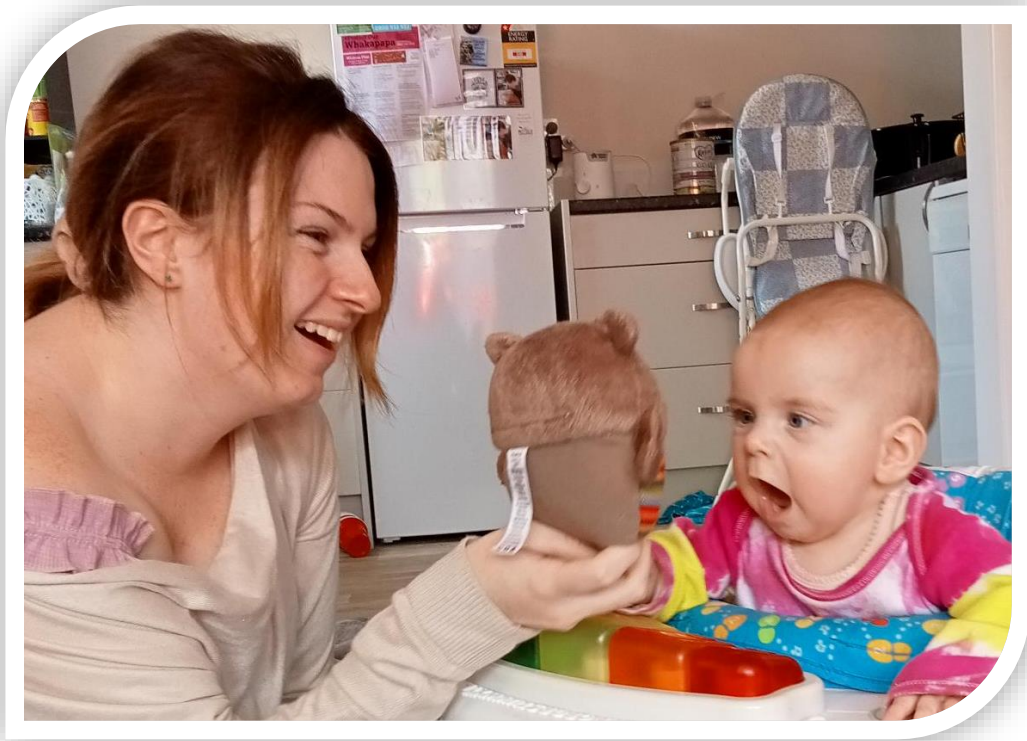
- Mr Ashley Seaford ~ Chairperson
- Shelley McCauley ~ Deputy Chairperson
- Maria van der Plas
- Dr Lynda Gray
- Emeritus Prof. John Horwood
- Elsa Kipa
- Hildegard Grant
- Dale Stephens



NOTE: Although this report is for the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022; Elsa Kipa resigned from her role as director in Sept 2022. Elsa has been an active, supportive board member since July 2015.

Dale Stephens was appointed as a director in May 2022.

*Babies remain calm twice as long when listening to a song as they do when listening to speech.*



*It's the simple, caring things that parents do for baby that give baby a strong, healthy brain.*

## Message from the General Manager

*“He aha te mea nui o te ao. He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!”  
What’s the most important thing in the world? It is people! It is people! It is people!*

Tēnā koutou

This year our Annual Report has a different format where you will read updates from several Team members sharing some aspects of their work. This enables me to focus on something that is fundamental to our work which is *people and relationships*.

Amidst a complex environment of living and working while in a pandemic Early Start continues to thrive where we as an organisation continue to emphasise our innovations/efforts to evolve into an even better service in response to both the changing environment we work in and an ever changing evidence base.

Our success and longevity can be attributed to many factors however the primary ingredient is *people*. Early Start Governance and Team and Early Start supporters consistently demonstrate passion and commitment in our collective endeavors to support the vision we share of a society where all children enjoy a supported, positive and happy childhood. We strive to provide high quality, tailored interventions within high quality relationships with families. These relationships are based on mutual engagement and trust which acts as the foundation of the support on offer to Canterbury whānau from Early Start.



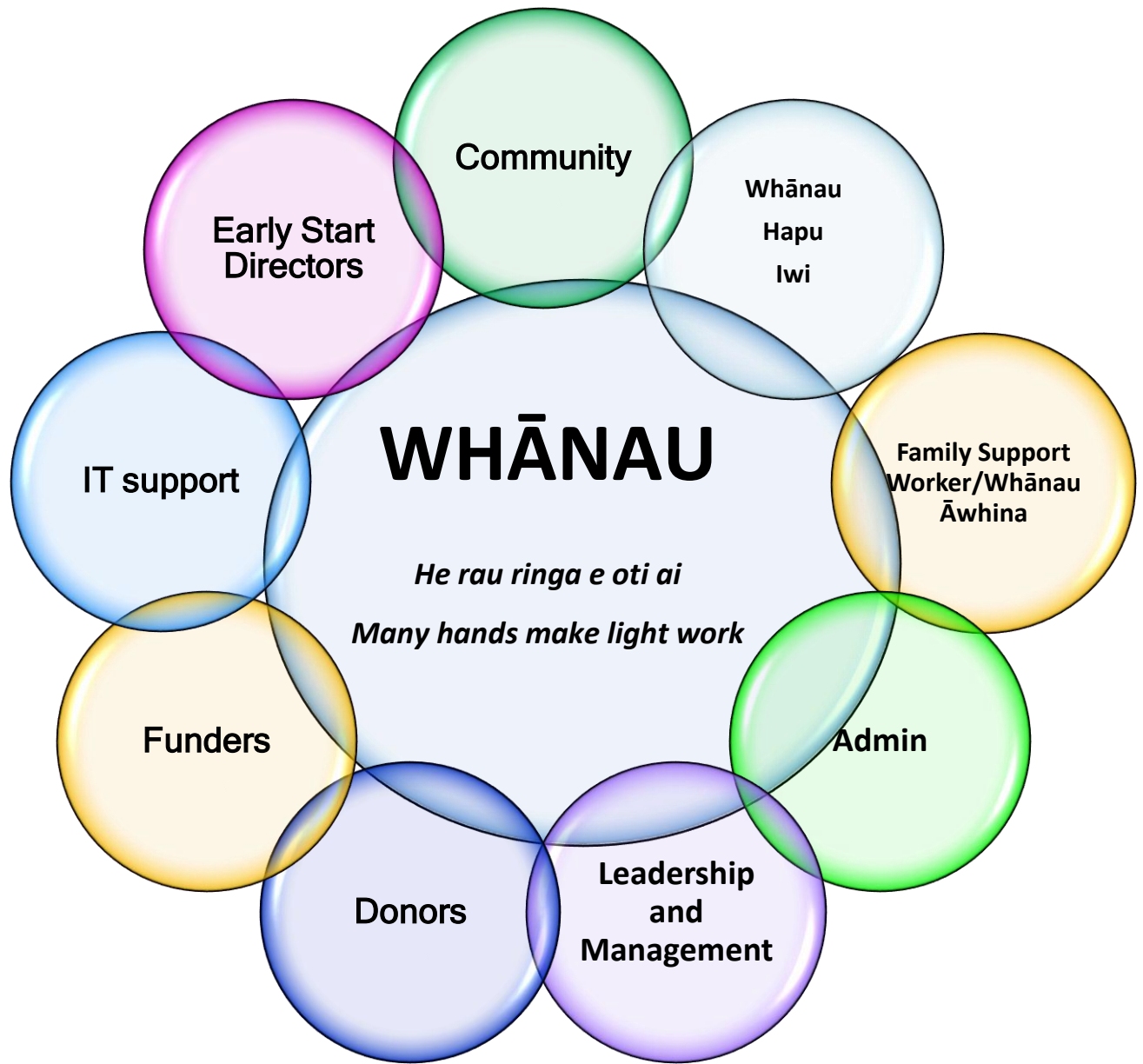
Our Team shares vital skills and experience in relationship with each and every whānau they connect with. The stories that follow in the Annual Report demonstrate some of our work with whānau over the past year. A year that has had its share of challenges both for the community and for our Team as we navigated the effects of Covid-19 not only in the workplace but within our own families.

I want to acknowledge the Early Start Team for the creative and skilled work undertaken both in leadership and alongside whānau, and behind the scenes the strong administrative support over this past year. Thank you to Early Start Board Directors for their capable and caring governance. To our partners, supporters and donors, as well as our funding agencies, thank you for your support on behalf of the tamariki and whānau Early Start have engaged with over the year.

Ngā mihi maioha

Jan Egan

**GENERAL MANAGER**



*Comforting baby when they're stressed and making them feel special will  
reduce stress and help baby develop a healthy brain.*



## Early Start Core Service Components ~ tailored to meet whānau need

- Family well-being
- Physical, social and emotional well-being of infants and children
- Healthy child development
- Child safety and well being
- Parenting Education
- Encouraging participation in Early Childhood Education Services
- Child and Home Safety
- Smoke Free Home Environment / Smoke cessation
- Maternal/Paternal Depression/Mental Health Support
- Advocacy, Home Skills, Relationship Issues
- Family Harm, Addictions, Strengthening Family Supports
- Support through crisis



*A babies brain will double in size in their first year of life. That means that by the time they are 1-year-old their brain will be 60% of an adult size brain.*

## Our service area

Early Start provides service to families/whānau living in the greater Christchurch area, Waimakariri, Selwyn and Hurunui.



*Babies' brain growth is massive in the first 3 years. They learn through exploring with the help of their whānau.*

# tākai

“The Tākai website: <https://www.takai.nz> provides a complete parenting resource for supporters of whānau, from pregnancy to five years of age. It brings together all of the evidence-based information and resources from SKIP and Parenting Resource, wrapped up in one place.

Tākai is a kaupapa that wraps around the awesome people who provide awahi for whānau of our littlest tamariki under-five.

Through rauemi, hononga, ako and pūtea to bring ideas to life – Tākai taps into the energy of the village, weaving threads of traditional storytelling with parenting in the modern world.

Standing on the shoulders of many – we are a thriving village raising children together.”

**Janine – Clinical Supervisor – Tākai Portfolio**

## Oral Health



In 2022 Health NZ offered Early Start the opportunity to join a very exciting new initiative in providing free toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste to all our families four times a year. In the past we have only given the enrolled child a toothbrush on enrolment, but this new initiative includes everyone in the family and makes it a family experience. The Oral Health Promotion says that 59% of 0-4 year olds are not brushing daily with fluoride toothpaste. The affordability of good oral health is seen as a barrier. In my role I have witnessed families hardly being able to afford food, so being offered a means to improve their families oral health is a huge relief. Taking these supplies

to our families regularly is a reminder and encouragement to them to make changes.

**Jean – Family Support Worker - Oral Health Portfolio**



## Car Seat Safety

Kia ora, I'm Anna and I hold the car seat safety portfolio for Early Start. Since completing my training to be a certified child restraint technician in 2019, I have been holding monthly, free car seat checking clinics for Early Start families, as well as assisting Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina with information and resources to ensure children are safely restrained. One such family came in with two car seats that were completely unsafe for their children, one of which was expired and had inadequate weight limits. I was able to support the Family Support Worker to choose new car seats that allowed maximum safety at a low cost, and these were purchased by Early Start using the family services fund. The family was able to come back to have these correctly installed, so the children could now travel safely.

### Anna – Family Support Worker – Car Seat Portfolio





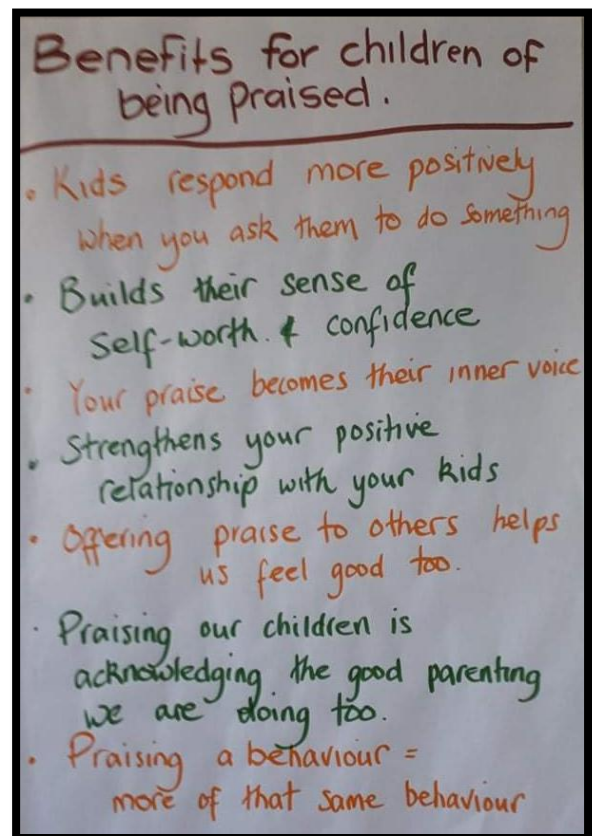
Incredible Years Toddler is a positive parenting group programme that supports parents to build a positive relationship with their child through play, and to understand and respond to the developmental needs of their toddler.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts, we ran just one MOE-funded Incredible Years Toddler programme in the 2021/22 year, rather than our usual two programmes. Our group met for the first time on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021, then hours later the whole country moved into a Level 4 lockdown, and the programme start was delayed by 3 weeks. Despite this difficult start, and a very low bar for sickness causing increased absences, 8 participants completed the course, receiving their certificates on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021. As facilitators of this programme, Lucy and myself would like to recognise the commitment of those parents who attended when they could, coped with last minute changes, and were available for home or virtual catch-ups, in order to complete the programme in trying times.

### Some of the feedback from parent evaluations

- Had a wonderful day today.
- Awesome group learning experience
- Coming here always feels like a 'recharge' of positivity. I love the new strategies. They work.
- Had a brilliant day, learning new things to help improve my relationship with my son.

Jo – Clinical Supervisor/Family Support Worker  
Incredible Years Facilitator



## Oranga Kai

Over the last 12 months 26 whānau have completed all 7 sessions of the Oranga Kai programme.

**Small steps huge change for one whānau:** Mum experienced big anxiety and mental health challenges so Dad did all the cooking and shopping for the whānau. The focus was to build mum's independence, confidence and skills in the kitchen so she could cook for them. Over time Mum learnt how to follow simple recipes, lists and meal plans supplied by Oranga Kai. and how to work her way around the kitchen. She commented she repeated the meals during the week with some assistance from her partner and enjoyed cooking healthy meals for her whānau. She learnt what utensils to use, how to cook and how to use pantry items to create meals. Prior to each O.K. session Mum told me she was anxious but always completed the session. Mum made a book to keep her recipes, additional notes and resources so she could refer back when she wanted to cook a meal again.

Some of the favourites from our Recipe Book that parents learn to cook for their family/whānau.



Quiche



Spaghetti Bolognese



Meat Loaf



Apple Crumble

## Korina – Oranga Kai Support Worker





As we are aware, New Zealand is currently facing a housing crisis. This can directly affect Early Start whānau. Below is but one example of the part we can play in supporting our whānau to secure a private rental in Christchurch. When whānau have a permanent home, it provides stability in which they can look ahead and make plans.

An Early Start client whānau moved from the West Coast last year, they managed to secure a short term rental, the lease was extended twice by a further three months each time. This uncertainty caused much anxiety for the whānau as they wished to find a permanent rental.

The mother (MOC) had viewed and applied for approximately 40 to 50 homes with no success, MOC was feeling overwhelmed as to the next step to take. A suggestion was made that the family attach a cover letter to their application. During the following home visit we discussed drafting a cover letter, MOC shared the statement she included when sending through an application.

Working with MOC's statement, we extended on the information she had previously written and turned it into a one page cover letter. In brief, the client shared information about herself, whānau hobbies, reasoning behind why she is a stay at home mother, why they were moving and why they would be a great fit for the landlord's home. The barriers to MOC securing a property in the past were also included.

When our client attended a house viewing in the days that followed, MOC ensured she connected with the property manager in a way that she would be remembered. MOC's application went through to the next step but her credit check failed. The property manager rang MOC to ask if she could share the cover letter story with the landlord. The landlord gained an understanding of MOC's situation and was happy to rent the property to our client.

When our client received the good news, the first person she rang was her FSW. MOC expressed a number of emotions that included relief, surprise, anticipation and pride. The landlord has since planted fruit trees and their intention is for our client to stay for many years.

Since the shift, the family are no longer living in the now, but are focusing on what's next, this home has transformed the family's future.

**Becky – Family Support Worker/Whānau Āwhina**





## Family Services Fund

This fund is used to provide practical support to families/whānau in many ways; i.e., groceries, nappies, safety gates, children's clothing, GP/health fees, car seats, firewood, fire guards, cell phones and top-ups, power costs and other essential items.

With support from our very generous donors we were able to provide:

- A safety gate for a family who have a sliding door in the lounge that drops directly onto the driveway. The family cannot use this door as there is a danger of the children falling out. However it is the only way to ventilate the lounge in the summer. Having this safety gate will allow them to have the window open for ventilation, while ensuring the children will be safe. The family are very low income earners and not able to afford this.
- A Willowbank annual pass to celebrate this family's graduation from the Early Start Programme after 4½ years and to create positive memories. The family engaged very well with Early Start, even in really difficult times. They have remained open and willing to work in partnership, and also reflect often on their parenting and build skills along the way. The children have experienced loss and some very difficult times.
- This whānau was in desperate need of a Safety Play-Pen. This whānau is living in transitional motel accommodation. Having this will give them the peace of mind they desperately needs to be able to work safely in the kitchen, pop to the bathroom or complete general chores.
- A cell phone top-up was provided to a mother who was experiencing family violence.
- A \$55 St John ambulance annual subscription fee, as over the previous 2 months they had to pay \$400 for ambulance trips.
- A \$150 grocery voucher and a \$50 MTA voucher for a family under immense stress due to their rental being sold and having to move into another rental quickly. The family are trying to make plans to save money in any way possible in case they need to come up with funds for the bond, as well as having

money for petrol costs to get food and a trailer for moving. Both parents experience episodes of depression, and they were both very flat and tearful at today's home visit.

- A \$200 grocery voucher so money can be reallocated in a family budget to pay for a learner licence application. The father is a labourer with no drivers licence; to have a licence will open up work opportunities and potentially his hourly wage would increase.
- A \$200 grocery voucher for a mother who recently needed to have several emergency dental appointments. Mum normally manages her budget well but this was unexpected. WINZ is willing to pay a limited amount and the rest of the debt is hers. The grocery voucher will just take the pressure off while she pays this expense down.
- A \$200 grocery voucher for a mother who is living with a friend following a family harm incident.





### Our client whānau/families have told us:

- Treated the caregiving changeover from birth mother to us (Grandparents) with tact, diplomacy and understanding all the while giving great support and encouragement to the whole family unit. FSW/WĀ was amazing. Supportive and positive to me during this time.
- I struggled with anxiety and depression but I was helped to feel more comfortable to use more community services.
- It was great to have someone to talk to and help me navigate around our son's behaviour. Just a simple conversation with experienced person made a huge difference in my approach towards our son.
- Good, wasn't patronizing or pushy and respected what I was doing and already knew.
- From working with my FSW/WĀ I'm aware I'm not perfect but I'm enough for my children and can provide them with emotional needs and physical things that make them feel loved and learn to be great people when they grow up.
- The everyday struggles are always there however I now know I can get through using tools learned.
- I have loved being a part of Early Start and have my FSW/WĀ a part of our life. I have always felt supported and un-judged by FSW/WĀ, which has helped me become a better more confident parent and knowing I am doing my absolute best job at raising my children. This has helped me to achieve some small goals along the way. I used to hate goal setting but my FSW/WĀ helped me to make it something positive and easy to achieve. Overall Early Start has definitely been a wonderful experience for both my child and I. I will also highly recommend it to anyone who asked me about it. We will miss having FSW/WĀ visit and are a little sad our Early Start journey has come to an end, but I just want to thank you for allowing us on the programme.

## Donation Acknowledgements

It is with great pleasure that we acknowledge the very generous donors that support the mahi at Early Start. These donated funds support specific programmes that are not covered by the main contract funding from Oranga Tamariki. Therefore, all donated money goes directly into wrap around services to envelop our whānau to encourage growth and development. A very warm ka nui te mihi in recognising the amazing impact that your donations make for our enrolled whānau.



- ❖ Oranga Kai Healthy Eating Programme ~ Funded by anonymous donors
- ❖ Family Services Fund ~ Funded by private anonymous donors, the Mauger Charitable Foundation and ASB
- ❖ Fire and Emergency NZ ~ supply and fitting of smoke detectors
- ❖ Bargain Chemist Shirley ~ family/whānau Covid health packs
- ❖ Christchurch Aunties ~ essential supplies for vulnerable families/whānau
- ❖ Good Night Sleep Tight ~ warm bedding for vulnerable families/whānau

## Photos

- ❖ Thank you to Early Start families/whānau for giving us your permission to share the special moments in the photos included in this report.

## NGO/Government Funding

- ❖ Main Family Start contract: Funded by Oranga Tamariki to 369 whānau
- ❖ Incredible Years Toddler: 12 x week Parenting Courses: Funded by Ministry of Education
- ❖ Early Support to Young Parents 19 years and under: Funded by Canterbury DHB (*from July 2022: Te Whatu Ora, Health NZ, Waitaha, Canterbury*)

## Financials

Early Start completed the financial year with a deficit of (\$63,079), this was similar to the previous year. There were various factors contributing to this deficit; lower interest rates, operating cost pressures and the board decision to apply a CPI increase for the team (our contract funding does not include CPI). This decision was made to ensure that our kai mahi were supported within a pandemic environment, acknowledging challenging working conditions. Our overall financial position is one of strength with a reserve fund allowing for unforeseen changing conditions of contract and other funding.

## Financial Statements to 30-6-2022

Please email the Board Secretary to request a copy of audited Financial Statements: [shirley.percasky@earlystart.co.nz](mailto:shirley.percasky@earlystart.co.nz)

