



2023/24 ANNUAL REPORT

Early Start Project



Atawhaitia nga pepe
Nurture the baby early

November 2024

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

Message from the Chairperson

Atawhaitia nga pepe



They say it takes a village to raise a pepe. So too at Early Start, where the mahi here is made possible by our village. To nurture and awhi whānau relationships, Early Start sits alongside our pepe and their parents to encourage growth and changes needed. Early Start has again this 29th year, achieved consistency in positive outcomes for whānau and pepe.

Here is our village:

Administration Team

- Early Start could not operate without this powerhouse team supporting the mahi behind the scenes, providing excellence in reporting which management and Board rely on. Early Start has persistently protected and maintained our own database. Taking this stance allows us to capture additional data in specific areas to respond and improve service delivery. Our admin team expertly prepare a range of reports for both management and Board, many of which are shared with our Funders. Over the years this team have continually improved how reports are presented to be in the most readable and easily accessible form. Ensuring both financial information, and equally important, the outcomes for our whānau, are delivered on time and accurately. These financial and whānau outcome reports assist management and Board to quickly pivot in response to changing environment and funding decisions. Cashflow is pivotal to this also, with the Chairperson and administration team closely monitoring to ensure Early Start can maximize interest returns. The purpose is, of course, to reinvest this additional revenue back into our whānau. Sometimes this team get a little overlooked being in the background, today we celebrate them. Ngā mihi nui to our wonderful admin team.

Whānau Āwhina/Family Support Worker Team

- This team is our strength on the ground, having delivered our intensive home visitation service to over 360 whānau across Ōtautahi this year. These are the smiling faces that enter the whānau safe space of their own home/kāinga and find a way to be trusted to help facilitate the changes needed. We have a diverse range of backgrounds in this multidisciplinary team from a range of professions, for example pre-school teachers, social workers, nurses, and other related tertiary qualifications. Bringing their experience to this social work role adds depth to the team. The Board acknowledges and appreciates the difficult nature of this mahi and continue to be impressed by the skill, positivity and dedication of this team, providing such a pivotal role for our enrolled pepe and whānau. At the beginning of 2024 management presented the Board with a business case to modify the office layout slightly, to mitigate the noise levels of the open plan office. The Board responded by authorising a change in layout offering a quiet telephone room and access to their Clinical Supervisors who are now back in individual offices. The length of service in this team is so valuable to the mahi. Ngā mihi to our team of 26, who range from 6 months to 15 years' service.

Clinical Supervision Team

- This skilled team have all started out as Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina, therefore, bringing their wealth of understanding and experience to this supervision role. Early Start is dedicated to ensuring our team on the ground are safe in their mahi and to support their emotional/hinengaro and spiritual/wairua wellbeing. In addition, this team have the responsibility of managing whānau crises, ensuring referrals to appropriate services are made promptly. This is integral to Early Start upholding the respected position within our network of social services in Ōtautahi. During this year, we have seen a

change in the team with two long serving Clinical Supervisors retiring after 17 and 21 years' service. New supervisors have been appointed from our Family Support Worker/Whānau Āwhina team, ensuring a smooth transition for the mahi. The Board wishes to acknowledge and thank you for this smooth transition. Ngā mihi to the Clinical Supervisor team.

Kai Hapai Mataurangi Maori

- Tania Gilpin continues to inspire and lead Early Start through cultural competency and commitment to te Tiriti o Waitangi. This enriching mahi continues and has become part of the fabric of how we awahi all whānau. Alongside this, all the Early Start village across our teams are being guided on this journey embracing Te Ao Māori world view. Currently, Māori whānau represent 40% of our clients, and these client pepe and whānau are achieving equally positive outcomes across the 13 monitored key Benchmarks. Ngā mihi Tania.

Senior Leadership Team

- Glynis Matehaere in her Clinical Manager role and Jan Egan as General Manager. These two senior leaders attend our quarterly Board meetings and Jan attends our two monthly management meetings, along with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. It is a pleasure working with these experienced and dedicated kaimahi. Their ability to interface between the Board and wider team, hold firmly to the values of the mahi, respond and pivot as required, sets a high standard of excellence for the rest of the team. Ngā mihi Glynis and Jan, who have both been with Early Start for over 24 years.

Inspired Rangatira

- At the beginning of 2024 Jan announced to the Board her intention to retire at the end of October. This allowed the Board time to work with Jan on a succession plan. I would like to acknowledge Jan in this annual report.
- Jan has consistently led this team with passion, integrity, dedication, intelligence and exemplary human resource skills. She has held this challenging role since 2014. One of Jan's many strengths is her strategic thinking. She understands and responds to current political climate, funders changing conditions, Board requirements, networking with other agencies, then, communicating this to the team to optimise Early Start's mahi. When tough decisions need to be made, she finds a way to pivot operationally to continue to achieve whānau and pepe outcomes whilst satisfying the financial pressures. The Board are deeply grateful for Jan's commitment and dedication to Early Start and are very sad to see her go. She has made such a difference in the lives of thousands of whānau in Ōtautahi over these years. Jan, your stamina, inspiration of new ideas and clinical experience used wisely, has led Early Start through some of the toughest times. You will be missed by all the team, and in true Jan style, you continue to work at pace towards the final days of tenure. Jan, take this gratitude and admiration from your Early Start colleagues into your retirement as a career well achieved.

The Board

- To our voluntary Board members who continue to give generously their time, specialised skills and energy to govern Early Start, ka pai. Governance over the pay equity project, lack of timely response from Oranga Tamariki for contract negotiation and difficulty in balancing the financial commitments to waitlist demands, requires a balancing act. The Board continue to prioritise te Tiriti o Waitangi and are committed to the cultural competency journey across the organization. A special thank you to Ashley Seaford our Deputy Chairperson. His 17 years of active service on the Board has added depth with his background of social work and management within Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki. Ashley's strong belief in both Early Start and the value of early intervention to support whānau has been both a

meaningful and valued contribution both as Board Chairperson, Deputy Board Chairperson and Director over this time.

- Ngā mihi to the Board: Ashley Seaford, Lynda Gray, John Horwood, Maria Van Der Plas, Hildegard Grant and Dale Stephens.

Our Funders

- We thank Oranga Tamariki, who continue to be our major funder. In October 2023 pay equity was authorized by Treasury for Oranga Tamariki to disperse to community social service providers. This created additional mahi for administration, management and Board, preparing salary data and length of service in social work which defined our kaimahi level on the new pay spine. Oranga Tamariki sent the contract variation on the 20th December 2023. This late advice meant those involved in the sub-committee working to the last minute to ensure our team received their new salary and backpay early in the new year. Signing this variation, which did not specify the level of ongoing pay equity, has left Early Start in the frustrating and challenging position of preparing new budgets without advice of levels of funding. Unfortunately, this has affected all Family Start providers over the motu.
- Te Whatu Ora fund the Early Start Before Baby and Beyond service on offer to younger parents. We thank our local liaison here in Ōtautahi for ensuring we had advance notice of contract renewal with a pay equity component included. Early Start values and prioritises this funding as it is such a well-received service by our client whānau.
- Donations: another year of amazing support from our generous donors. These funds support additional projects like Oranga Kai, child psychologist sessions, family services fund. These add-on services allow for active participation that make a real difference in the lives of our whānau. Having local businesses and private donors supporting those who are struggling in our community says such a lot about the ethos of Cantabrians. We celebrate your ongoing support and advocacy of Early Start. A huge thanks to the Percasky Family, Mauer Foundation and our individual supporters.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank those team members who have retired or moved on this year, your contribution is highly valued.

The Early Start village is in good form, each of our people making an enormous difference in how we support whānau in our community. Teamwork is at the heart of what we do and there is such passion for the mahi which continues year on year, reaching a milestone next year of 30 years in Ōtautahi.

Shelley McCauley
CHAIRPERSON

*He iti tangata, e tipu.
Ke iti toki, he iti tonu iho.
A little child will grow.
A little adze will always remain small*

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:

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



*Your words as a parent have great power.
Use them wisely and make sure they come from the heart.*



Ehara taku toa I te toa takitahi engari taku toa he toa takimano



My strength is not mine alone but the strength of many

As General Manager of Early Start I have had the privilege of being part of the Early Start Team for 24 years. I am writing this, my last Annual Report, reflecting on not only the past year but the shared energy and passion so many people have contributed to the Early Start journey so far.

Early Start's guiding principle is expressed in the words *Atawhaitia nga pepe* (Nurture the Baby Early). The guiding principle remains a lived value consistently demonstrated and held by the committed members of the Early Start Team and Governance.

Early Start Board Chairperson, Shelley McCauley, has described this Team as a *village*, all of us invested in nurturing whānau as they navigate their parenting journey.

This Annual Report tells some of the stories of our shared mahi over this past year and does demonstrate '*the strength of many*', and their contributions in so many ways.

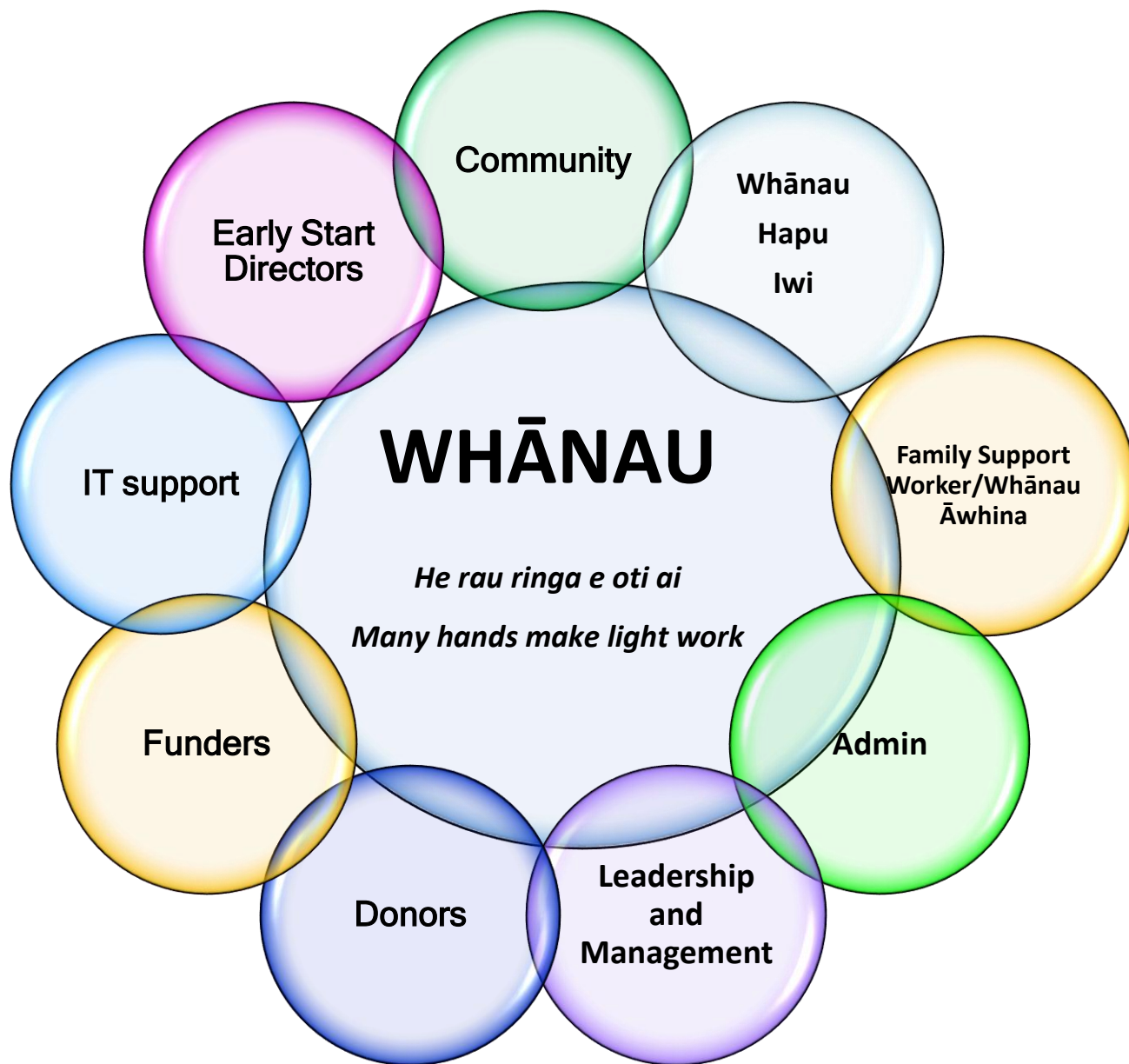
Once again Early Start this year has demonstrated how agile we can be to support the diverse and changing needs of the vulnerable whānau, in our community. At the same time, we have focused on capacity and efficiency while focused on our active commitment to being steadfast allies to te Tiriti o Waitangi. The intent over the next year is to keep exploring how we can continue to support whānau in innovative, culturally safe, and flexible ways to meet increasing need and changing times and to continue to provide a safe supportive working environment for all at Early Start.

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.

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.

Finally, I acknowledge and give heartfelt thanks to the Early Start Board of directors. In Shelley McCauley, Early Start Chairperson, we have a leader who shares a long-term belief in, and active commitment to Early Start. Generously sharing her passion, energy and many business and leadership skills and time. I appreciate and thank all Early Start Board Directors for their capable and caring governance.

Jan Egan
GENERAL MANAGER



Tohea ki te, tohe i te kai.
Persistence and perseverance.



Keeping tamariki safe in their homes

One of our benchmarks at Early Start is that less than 18% of children, by the age of 36 months, will have attended hospital for accident/injury. Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina work alongside whānau to raise awareness of home safety issues and support them to make their home environment safe. Every three months a health and safety awareness checklist is completed with whānau and addresses areas such as general safety, safe outdoor play, water safety, car and driveway safety, preventing burns and sun safety. This allows for conversations to be had with whānau as to how to ensure their tamariki remain safe.

Educational sessions are delivered by Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina around the dangers of poisonous household items, poisonous plants in the garden, water safety, driveway safety, safe sleep and how to make the home as child safe as possible. This is all completed in a collaborative way to ensure parents are thinking of safety and often involves crawling around the home to get parents to see the home from a 'toddler's view'.

In the past twelve months Early Start has contributed to home safety for tamariki in Canterbury by purchasing child safety gates in order to prevent children accessing stairs or other parts of the home, window latches, plug protectors, fire guards, car seats, powerboards and baby monitors.

Early Start also routinely talks about fire safety in the home, how to prevent fires from starting and what to do in the event of a fire. Early Start frequently makes referral to the Fire and Emergency New Zealand for installation of smoke detectors in homes and whānau love to get a visit from Fire and Emergency to make their homes safe and to talk about fire safety. If there have been issues in the home with children starting fires then again a referral to the Fire and Emergency is completed so that education can be provided to the tamariki involved.

The ability of parents to keep their children safe in the home is also dependent on multiple additional factors such as the health and wellbeing of each whānau member, the economic circumstances, family relationships, drug and alcohol dependencies, disabilities and mental health challenges. As skilled practitioners, Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina prioritise child safety whilst working through all these contributing factors.



Home Visiting

Early Start Core Service Components ~ tailored to meet whānau need

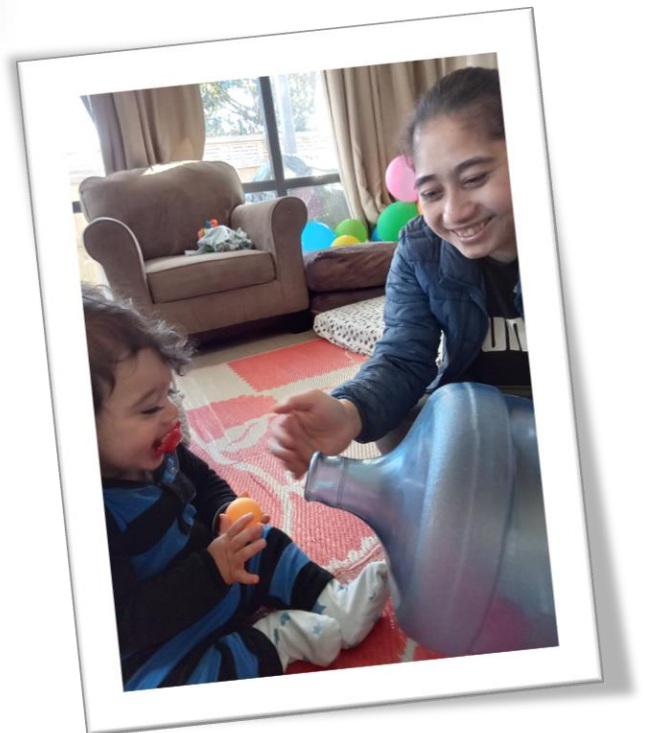
- Family well-being
- Physical, social and emotional wellbeing of infants and children
- Healthy child development
- Child safety and wellbeing
- Parenting Education
- Encouraging participation in Early Childhood Education Services
- Child and Home Safety
- Smoke Free Home Environment / Smoke cessation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



If speaking kindly to plants helps them grow, imagine what speaking kindly to kids can do.

Our service area

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



Poipōia te kakano, kia puāwai ~ Nurture the seed and it will blossom

Fun Facts about Toddlers

Cute by design: Your toddler's cute little nose, large beady eyes and even the chubby little limbs are a smart design of evolution to incite strong feelings of love and protection.



The average toddler takes 176 steps a minute!

They have a lot of energy: an average toddler expends the same amount of energy as an adult, if the said adult ran 30 miles!



Learn something new every day: an average two year old learns about five new words of varying difficulty, every day. At about 18 months, your toddler's spoken vocabulary starts to explode, adding new words at the astonishing rate of one every two waking hours.



They love Human speech: They love human speech which is why they imitate words rather than random noises like a phone ringing.



On average, a four year old child asks 437 questions a day. Which makes total sense, have you ever sat with a toddler for 15 minutes?

They start with being ambidextrous: Kids start with using both hands equally and just as proficiently. Somewhere between 2 and 3 years, they start preferring one hand over the other.

Toddlers have better hearing: Hearing in toddlers is much better than in adults, thanks to their relatively newer ears. They can pick up higher frequencies of sounds that adults just automatically learn to tune out.

They have more Brain synapses than Adults: A child's brain develops faster between birth to 3 years of age than any other time. In fact, by the time they are 3, they have 1000 trillion brain connections, which is twice as many as adults.

Toddlers have no kneecaps! What they do have is cartilage, and it will become bone at around three years of age.



This is my test

This is my test

...how much honest is too much

...how much straight forward, you didn't ask but I'll explain anyways, is too much

*I don't want to mask anymore,
I don't want to perform.*

*I want to see if the real me, can be
Or if she's destined to be alone.*

*For so long she sat,
On the outskirts, on the edge,
Only joining in with others,
When she had a full smile on her head.*

*Packed down, turned around
At every beck and corner call
Be this way, be that way
Told every voice, told her all*

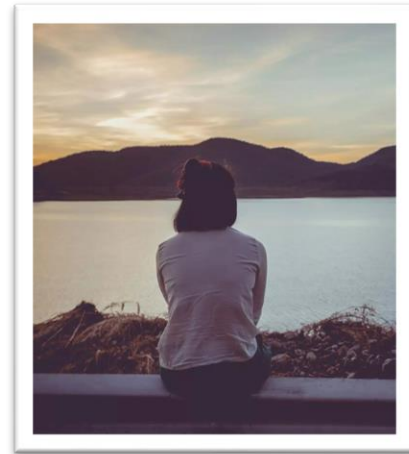
*And slowly, so slowly
The smile came out less,
Because 'all feelings are valid'
Cried the voices in her head*

*So she kept her head down
No focus on a crown
But got to work
Through the mud and the dirt*

*Do them proud
Be the one
Smile, the sun's out
So she'd run and run*

*But when straw
turned to bales
And her breath
came out in wales*

*It was too much, they said,
No fun.
Figure it out, before
You come completely undone*



*So alone, in the grind,
She passed the time.
Trying to unwind
But how to turn on a dime*

*Then slowly, so slowly
The hours eased
The children grew
And lessened their needs*

*Just as she had nurtured
She knew she would need
to start to crawl
Before she could stand
Then stand up tall*

*So she read the words
And searched for ones
That called to her.
She scrawled them out,
Put them in plain sight to see.
These were the words
That would bring her back to her babies.*

*Back from the corner
Out in to the light
Breath of air
A twinkle in her eye*

*The storm was far from over
But the eye had passed
More slog ahead
But this time, she would know,
the darkness wouldn't last.*

By A Hansford. Written by an Early Start client in 2024.



A SPECIAL
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS

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.

Here are some stories about how, with the support from our very generous donors, we were able assist families/whānau this year:

- Following a Health and Safety check during a home visit, a power board was purchased for a whānau where there were unsafe practices around cords and plugs.
- A family/whānau who had sick children and had been struggling financially due to extra visits to their doctor and hospital appointments, were provided with petrol vouchers to help them through.
- A mother was worried as her daughter's school camp was that week and they did not have the equipment needed and had exhausted family members' support. The mother was already paying the camp fees off at \$10 per week and money was tight for anything extra. Early Start was able to purchase the necessary camp equipment.
- Safety gates continue to be provided to many families to keep their children safe.

During the 2023-2024 year Early Start has also funded families who needed: carseats, groceries, firewood, GP fees, dental treatment, a Metro bus pass, safety latches and a pram.





Our client whānau/families have told us:

- I needed a sound ear and some company and my FSW/WĀ was that and more. Our visits definitely lifted me. Thank you for your service. I can only hope more women reach out and get the help they need.
- My FSW/WĀ is great at her job, she makes you feel at ease and helps with every issue we had. Don't let her leave.
- Things my FSW/WĀ suggested helped my son learn every day. My confidence has grown hugely in parenting. I feel more able to make decisions for myself. She helped me get out of the house and walking much more. Now we walk every day.
- Our FSW/WĀ was lovely, well informed and her approach fit perfectly with our whānau. It always felt friendly, comfortable and never like a confronting appointment.
- Very friendly and welcoming FSW/WĀ, who made honest and open communication between us possible. Supported us in a non-judgemental way and made bringing up challenges easy.
- My FSW/WĀ has assisted me with parenting over the past 3 years and I couldn't be more thankful. She truly is one of a kind. I now take more time with the kids and we enjoy creating and baking together, and I love all the courses I've achieved, especially Oranga Kai. Thank you for all that you do and all that you are.
- I wouldn't be the mother I am without this programme.
- I found being a mum quite a challenge with postnatal depression and difficulties in my relationship with my daughter's father. It was really helpful to have someone come into the house every week or two, who I could be open and honest with.
- MY FSW/WĀ was an amazing support when I spoke to her about trying to get back to work and provided support getting a full wardrobe from Dress for Success. They were amazing and my FSW/WĀ came along to help me feel comfortable leaving the house with my son.

Donations and 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 and the Mauer Charitable Foundation
- ❖ Fire and Emergency New Zealand ~ supply and fitting of smoke detectors
- ❖ Good Night Sleep Tight ~ warm bedding for vulnerable families/whānau
- ❖ Storytime ~ books for families/whānau
- ❖ Gifts of clothing, toys and food from generous individual donors

❖ Clothed in Love ~ preloved or new clothing for children

Early Start would like to thank and acknowledge the support of Clothed in Love. Clothed in Love is a children's clothing charity, run by volunteers, who gift high quality individualised clothing packs to tamariki. Their service is totally free and their mahi has enabled us to offer these to whānau we are working alongside, allowing another level of support.

❖ Pregnancy Infancy Parenting Support (PIPS)

We extend our sincere gratitude to PIPS for their invaluable support of Early Start clients. By providing essential maternity and baby items such as clothing, cots, prams, and car seats, PIPS has been instrumental in helping us care for whānau facing significant challenges during pregnancy and early parenting.

This partnership allows us to make a meaningful and combined impact on the lives of whānau in need, ensuring they receive both the material aid and emotional support necessary for a brighter future. Together with PIPS, we are committed to empowering whānau and making a lasting difference in our community.

❖ Close Knit – Baby knitting

Early Start thanks this team of knitters from throughout New Zealand. Each year, for several years now, we are sent bundles of sets of new baby knitting which includes a cardigan, singlet, hat and booties. These sets are all hand knitted and machine washable. From March through to September we gratefully receive these to gift to 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
- ❖ Early Support to Young Parents 19 years and under: Funded by Te Whatu Ora
- ❖ Incredible Years Toddler: Two 12 x week Parenting Courses: Funded by Ministry of Education

Financial Summary

Early Start has managed to operate for the year with a surplus, this is due, in part, to increased bank interest rates on our tightly managed cashflow along with the unspent donations which were carried forward. We are always grateful for the boost that our generous donors provide our entire team. In addition, these donations directly support our client whānau who receive highly effective add-on programmes outside of our contracts with Oranga Tamariki and Te Whatu Ora. A massive thank you from all of us at Early Start to Gore Holdings, Reefville Properties, Mauger Foundation, Percasky Family, and other anonymous donors.

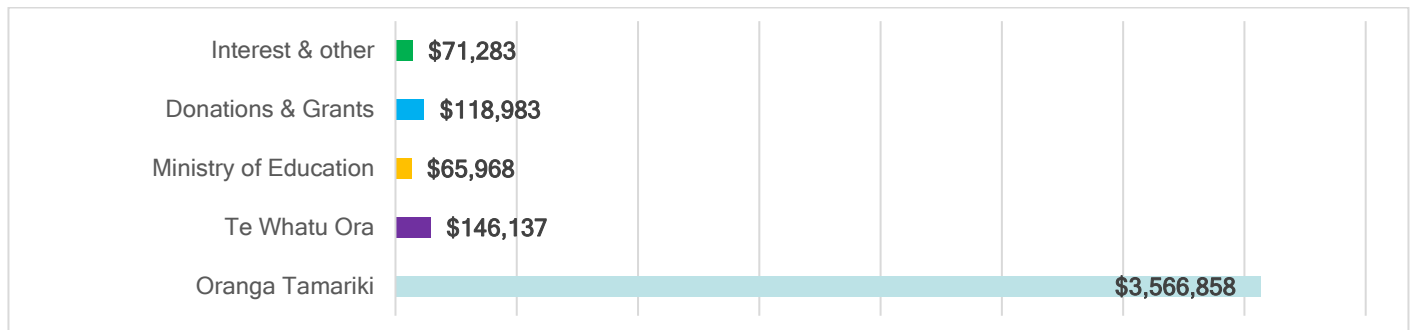
Senior management are to be commended for working within the budget, at times needing to pivot, engaging operational changes to lessen financial impacts. Thank you also to the board for their oversight.

This year, our Social Workers were given the legislated pay equity to match those in Government Social Work roles. Our Family Support Workers/Whānau Āwhina and Clinical Supervisors received the increase for the difficult mahi they undertake.

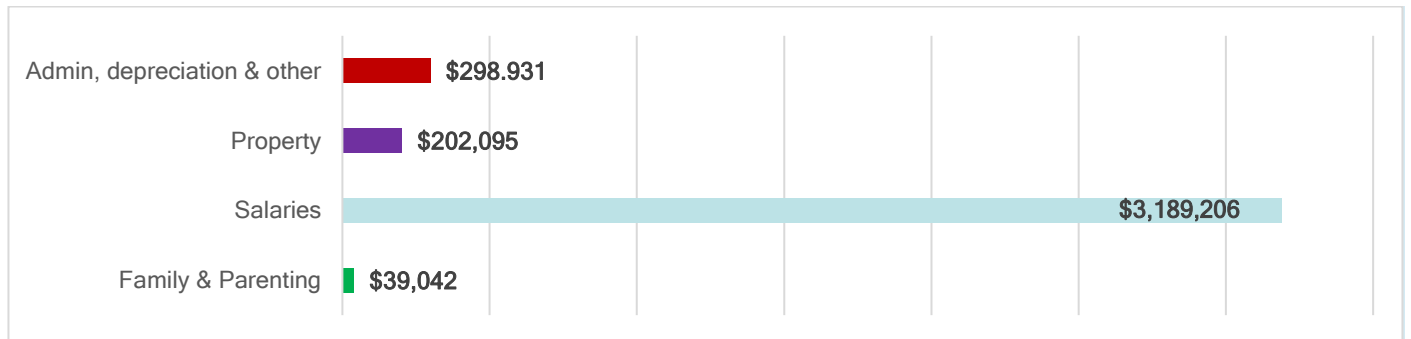
For planning and strategic decision-making, the board is presented with a budget spanning 2 years. The deficit in the previous year (2022-2023) was -\$128,865, and the surplus this year (2023-2024) is \$198,757. This surplus is inflated from an operational point of view due to a fit-out cost of \$105,191 which is being depreciated over the 6-year lease. However, when you take this into account our actual operating surplus is more like \$93,566 (see page 17 of Annual Financial Report).



REVENUE



EXPENSES



Financial Report to 30 June 2024

Please email the Board Secretary to request a copy of the audited Financial Report: sue.taylor@earlystart.co.nz

Some of the amazing Early Start team



Atawhaitia nga pepe
Nurture the baby early