

## WHAT DOES A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH MEAN FOR CHILD POLICY AND SERVICES?

A whole child approach means that policy advisers and service providers working on issues relating to children should:

- Look at the big picture and consider the implications for children. It's about looking at all the different things going on in a child's life, not just focusing on isolated issues or problems.
- Look at what children need for healthy development from the outset rather than reacting when problems arise. The Agenda document outlines a number of things children need for healthy development such as strong families and whānau, supportive learning environments, economic security and community support.
- Look across the whole public service to see what can be done to support children's healthy development rather than focusing on single sector solutions. It's about considering which settings in children's lives government interventions are likely to be most effective and whether multi-level interventions are needed.

Copies of New Zealand's Agenda for Children and more information on the whole child approach are available on the Ministry of Social Development website

[www.msd.govt.nz](http://www.msd.govt.nz)



MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT  
*Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora*

New Zealand's  
Agenda for Children

## Taking a Whole Child Approach



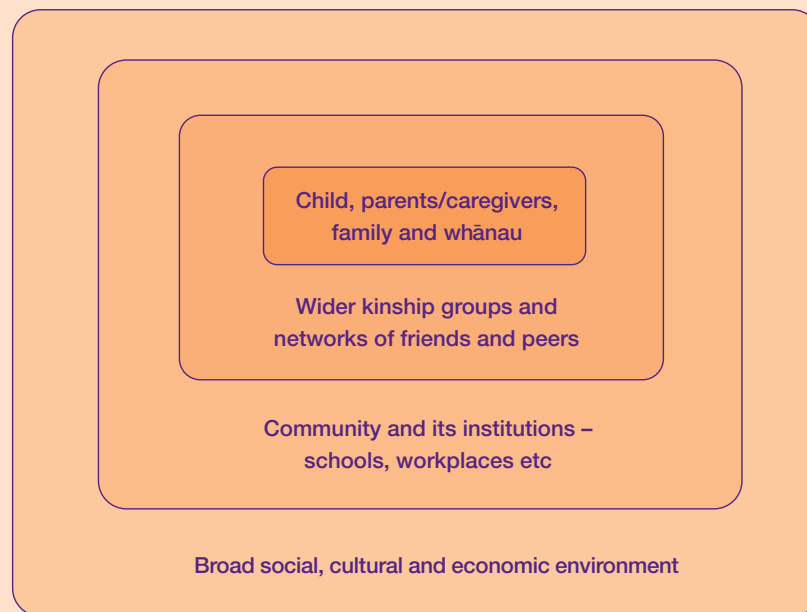
## NEW ZEALAND'S AGENDA FOR CHILDREN: TAKING A WHOLE CHILD APPROACH

A key feature of New Zealand's Agenda for Children is a new approach to the development of policies and services that affect children called the **whole child approach**.



A whole child approach is a broader approach to child policy issues - it moves away from seeing children as: vulnerable dependents in need of adult protection; in need of control and guidance because of their immaturity; as adults in development; as passive recipients of services; as possessions of parents; or in the case of older young people, as problems. It recognises:

- Children have valuable knowledge, views and ideas, and can often provide solutions to issues and problems.
- Children are continually learning and developing the skills they need to look after themselves and make responsible decisions.
- Children are shaped in part by the settings in which they live, but also that they shape their own lives through their thoughts and actions.
- Children are citizens in their own right but also need to be seen within their environment.
- Children's roles may differ in different cultural settings.



### KEY SETTINGS MODEL

One of the foundations of the whole child approach is a key settings model. The whole child approach recognises that children cannot be separated from the "key settings" in which they live and grow. These settings include parents, families and whānau, friends and peers, broader community settings and society at large.

The diagram above illustrates the key settings in children's lives. The different shades signify the

interactions between these settings. Some of the key points are:

- Every child is born into a unique cultural and socio-economic environment.
- Positive or negative experiences in different settings tend to have a cumulative effect.
- Protective factors in one setting can buffer negative effects in another.
- Transitions between settings are often points of vulnerability.

