NEW ZEALAND

Country Highlights

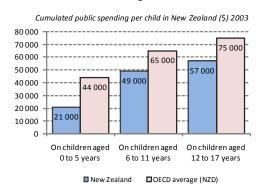
OECD (2009), Doing Better for Children



Outcomes for New Zealand children are weak in several key areas, according to the OECD's first ever report on children. Co-author of the OECD report Mr Dominic Richardson concludes that "New Zealand needs to take a stronger policy focus on child poverty and child health, especially during the early years when it is easier to make a long-term difference. Despite a relatively good average educational performance, gaps in education between top and bottom performers are higher than they need be."

New Zealand government spending on children is considerably less than the OECD average. The biggest shortfall is for spending on young children, where New Zealand spends less than half the OECD average.

Early childhood spending in New Zealand is half of that spent in later stages, 2003



New Zealand has the highest rates of youth suicide in the OECD



Material conditions for Kiwi kids are relatively poor. Average family incomes are low by OECD standards, and child poverty rates are high. The number of New Zealand children who lack a key set of educational possessions is above the OECD median.

Despite their relatively poor material living conditions, Kiwi kids manage high rates of educational achievement – the fourth best in the OECD. However, unlike the other three high performing countries, differences between good and poor performers in the education system in New Zealand are average, not low.

In terms of child health, New Zealand has the highest rates of suicide in the OECD for youth aged 15-19. Overall child mortality is also higher than the OECD average. Immunisation rates are poor for measles (2nd worst in the OECD) and whooping cough (5th worst in the OECD).

New Zealand spends less than the OECD average on young children and much less than it does on older children. Spending more on young children is more likely to generate positive changes and, indeed, is likely to be fairer for more disadvantaged children. Based on international evidence, the OECD concludes that New Zealand should spend considerably more on younger, disadvantaged children. Equally, the New Zealand government should ensure that current high rates of spending on older children are much more effective in meeting the needs of the disadvantaged amongst them.

