



He Mana tō ia Tamaiti
Every **Child** Counts

Election 2005

The place of children in party politics

Responses to an all-party questionnaire

Every Child Counts / He Mana Tō Ia Tamaiti was formed by Barnados, UNICEF NZ, Save the Children NZ, the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society, and the Institute of Public Policy at AUT to promote public awareness and support for key issues affecting children and families. Its formation and programme have been timed to coincide with the 2005 general election campaign.

The organisations involved in ***Every Child Counts*** are keen to ensure open dialogue with all political parties about policies affecting children. We also wish to inform public discussion in the election campaign.

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The 2005 *EVERY CHILD COUNTS* questionnaire to political parties

Introduction

The children of today will clearly play a critical role in New Zealand's future social and economic development. For this reason (amongst others) children's current well-being and healthy development warrant special attention. The challenge is to ensure our most significant brain drain does not occur before children even reach adulthood.

But are children receiving the attention from politicians that they deserve?

Do children even figure in political parties' vision for New Zealand's future social and economic development?

The questionnaire

In February 2005, *Every Child Counts* circulated a questionnaire to political parties asking them to specify their policies for and positions on children; they were also asked to provide copies of relevant policies. At the time of preparation of this report, completed questionnaires had been received from the Greens, Labour, Maori Party, National and United Future. New Zealand First responded with their child and family policy.

The questionnaire was designed to obtain party positions on key policy areas identified by *Every Child Counts*:

- Placing children first in government planning.
- Ensuring every child gets a good start.
- Reducing child abuse, neglect and family violence.
- Ending child poverty.

Every Child Counts' four key policy areas

Why do these four key areas matter?

- *Placing children first in government planning*: children will play a pivotal role in the future social and economic development of this country. We must therefore make children's well-being a priority and one of the guiding principles of government policy and planning.
- *Ensuring every child gets a good start*: the first few years of a child's life are critical to his or her future in all spheres of health, welfare and education. When things go wrong, early interventions are both cheaper and more effective than later ones.
- *Reducing child abuse, neglect and family violence*: child abuse, neglect and family violence inflict immediate and lifelong damage on children, while also contributing to inter-generational patterns of violence.
- *Ending child poverty*: childhood poverty is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes including poor health, poor cognitive development, increased delinquency and educational underachievement. These outcomes are not only a tragedy for the individual, but impose a high cost on society.

The parties' responses

In the body of this report, we reproduce the responses of the political parties verbatim.¹ In each case the answers are preceded by our own brief explanation of why the issue in question matters.

¹ In some cases we have redistributed them in a way which, in our view, makes a better fit with the questions asked.

GENERAL

Q1: Do you have a specific policy for families?

Why does this matter?	<p>In recent times 'family' or 'child and family' policies have become part of the political currency. 'Family policy' is in large part a proxy for 'child policy' in that the reason for the existence of many of its main components, such as child placement, child protection and income maintenance is to serve the interests of children. It is an indication of children's status that policies aimed exclusively at their well-being are disguised as 'family policy'. Something similar was once the case with women whose interests were considered to be subsumed entirely by 'family' interests.</p> <p>No matter what it is called an overarching policy which gathers together and integrates policies designed to benefit children is of value. It can reduce the 'silo' effect that leads to gaps, overlaps and imbalances in providing for children. It will be visible to the electorate and to policy-makers so that its overall impact on children can be appreciated and effective adjustments made. Simply naming as either 'family' or 'child' policy those policies items directly aimed at children but separately administered will not achieve this integration. These policies must reside within a framework where they can be examined and developed as a whole.</p>
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Party responses

Greens	Pending. The attached Children's Policy, Women's Policy, Work and Employment Policy, Income Support Policy all deal with Family issues and we will be issuing a Family Policy Statement later in the year.
Labour	<p>Many aspects of Labour's policies are about furthering the interests of families, across a number of portfolios, including Social Development, Labour, Education, Health and Justice. No decision has yet been made about packaging these areas together as a suite of 'family policies' during the election campaign. Some of the major family-oriented policies are listed in Attachment 1, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Working for Families changes will put more money in the pockets of nearly 300,000 low to middle income families by 2007 through increased support for living costs, housing and childcare. ▪ We've committed funding to expand the effective Family Start early intervention programme to over \$30 million a year, and from 16 sites to more than 30. ▪ We've set up the Families Commission as an independent Crown entity, mandated to advocate for the interests of families, and raise awareness of the issues that affect them. ▪ Since 1999 we have increased the Child Youth and Family department's baseline funding by more than 50 per cent, strengthened the social work profession by introducing a system of formal registration, and improved relationships with the community sector. The number of unallocated cases of child abuse has dropped by more than 50 per cent.
Maori Party	Our commitment to whanaungatanga guides the Maori Party to place priority on people, and in particular, the whanau. One of the three central planks of our foundation statement is the whanau, caring for ourselves. Children are an important part of whanau but should not be separated out or considered in isolation from the whanau context.
National	Yes. It will be launched in the near future.
United Future	United Future believes the best interests of children must remain at the very centre of policy-making, and that these cannot be separated from their existence within a family context. Consequently, all of United Future's policy development takes place against the measure of good outcomes for today's families. A specific family policy, and as a component of this, a children's policy, will be announced shortly and will form the hub of United Future's 2005 Election policies.

Q2: Do you have a specific policy for children?

Why does this matter?

It may be argued that, as children form part of a family, their needs can be adequately dealt with by a family policy; that is, what is good for families is by definition good for children. Certainly there is a great deal of overlap: for example, the need for adequate housing, income and health services is just as important to families as a whole as children as a distinct group. However, the effect of adverse conditions on a developing child can differ markedly from that on an adult:

“[Children’s] dependence [on adults] and developmental state make them particularly vulnerable so that they are more affected than adults by the conditions under which they and their families live. Thus they are disproportionately affected by poverty, poor housing, environmental pollution and so on.” (Hodgkin & Newell, 1996, p. 25)

Furthermore, with a focus on the family, the specific needs of children can be overlooked. For example, a family-focused policy on paid parental leave might look at family needs such as income replacement and job security when a mother takes time off work in relation to childbirth. A policy that was sensitive to newborns’ needs would also consider the importance of parents and children forming a secure attachment, the relationship between leave duration and breastfeeding rates and the effect on children when a mother is forced to return to work before she is ready.

A further argument against protecting children’s needs through a family policy is that the concept of “family” is so wide as to include nearly all members of society. That is, as nearly everyone belongs to a family, the policy would have to be so wide-ranging as to be almost vacuous. One possibility is to define “family” to restrict the policy’s application. This in turn poses a set of complex questions about family formation patterns; defining family with regard to the presence of resident, dependent children might be helpful, but still misses some family structures. A policy that focuses on children’s rights and needs circumvents some of these issues.

The formulation of a child policy is not an attempt to deny the importance of the family; rather, it is an attempt to ensure that policies are sensitive to the unique circumstances of children within the family unit (Hodgkin & Newell, 1996, p. 40).

Party responses

Greens

Yes. See “Every Child Matters” policy document attached.

[ECC note: The categories are in this policy are (a) Giving every child the best possible start in life - regardless of the income of their parents. (b) Making sure that parents have the opportunity to spend time with their children. (c) Creating a safe, supportive, nurturing, non-violent environment for children to grow up in. (d) Supporting quality television programming for children. (e) Improving childhood health by ensuring our children have a safe and healthy environment in which to grow. (f) Providing quality education from early childhood to tertiary. (g) Ensuring children have the opportunity to actively participate in sport and leisure activities. (h) Creating a safe, natural environment for children to learn and play in. (i) Supporting quality and appropriate services to children and families in need. (j) Ensuring the interests of children are protected and promoted.]

Labour

Again, many aspects of Labour’s policies are about supporting children, across a number of portfolios. Labour’s policy goals in relation to children are set out in *New Zealand’s Agenda for Children (2002)*, which is attached and can also be found at www.msd.govt.nz/publications/agenda-for-children-public-report/.

The vision set out in the *Agenda for Children* is:

New Zealand/Aotearoa is a great place for children: we look after one another. We will have achieved this vision when all children have:

- security of care – all children are loved, protected, cherished and nurtured by the people around them;
- economic security – no children live in poverty
- security of identity – all children know who they are, and feel respected and valued;
- security of opportunity – all children are able to access education and health care and reach their potential; and
- security of participation – all children have a say in the decisions that affect them and their views are given due weight in accordance with their ability and level of understanding

This vision evolved through public consultation and is our goal for children in New Zealand. To achieve this vision, Labour has committed to seven key action areas. These are:

1. Promoting a whole child approach

This work is about promoting, within the public service and beyond, a new view of children and childhood. It encourages adults to look at children in all their contexts, when working with them and when developing policies and services for them.

2. Increasing children’s participation

This work is about recognising what children can and do contribute to their communities, and enhancing their opportunities to participate, especially in decision-making that affects them. This not

only improves adults' understanding of children's issues, interests and needs, but is also likely to result in more responsive and effective policies and services for children.

3. An end to child poverty

The aim of this work is to eliminate poverty among children. The Working for Families package has been a major initiative in relation to this action area.

4. Addressing violence in children's lives with a particular focus on reducing bullying

This work builds on initiatives already underway that aim to reduce crime and violence in families and in children's lives. It focuses on reducing bullying among children in schools and the community. The existence and fear of bullying have been highlighted in research and in consultation feedback from children.

5. Improving central government structures and processes to enhance policy and service effectiveness for children

This work is about giving children and children's issues more profile and status in government, and making government policies and services more responsive to their interests, rights and needs. It focuses on improving the way government policies and services for children are developed and co-ordinated.

6. Improving local government and community planning for children

This work looks at ways to make local government and community services more responsive to children's needs. It focuses on working with local government to ensure that children are involved in community planning processes.

7. Enhancing information, research and research collaboration relating to children

This work is about getting government agencies to work together better in: undertaking research and providing information; addressing gaps in research on children; developing regular reports on indicators of children's wellbeing; and establishing a new longitudinal study of New Zealand children.

Work on the Agenda for Children is part of the Government's "Action for Child and Youth Development" work programme, which also covers the implementation of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa. The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa is about how government and society can support young women and men aged 12 to 24 years to the skills and attitudes they need to take a positive part in society, now and in the future. It is available online at www.myd.govt.nz/pag.cfm?i=234.

Maori Party	[See Q1]
National	No. Policy is included in Families policy.
United Future	[See Q1]

Q3: Will you advocate for increased investment in children? What are the priority areas and rationale for this investment?

Why does this matter? One of the consequences of the burial of policies affecting children in diverse portfolios is that the level of funding of provision for children is less able to be scrutinised and less subject to electoral pressure than for other sectors of the population. Serious underfunding can result as is evident from New Zealand's income maintenance policies which have led to one of the highest rates of child poverty in the OECD and childcare policies whose funding is likewise at the bottom end of the OECD table.

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Our key priorities for investment in children are introducing a universal child benefit and bringing forward Working for Families to help address child poverty, expanding parenting support programmes including paid parental leave in order to support positive parenting, and expanding funding for child mental health work to address problems early. Equally importantly we want to make the workplace more flexible so parents can spend more time with their children and reduce children's exposure to violence on television and video.</p> <p>We also support a 10% increase in schools operations grant and increased emphasis on the needs of children in transport decision-making.</p>
Labour	<p>Labour has a strong record of increased investment in children, as epitomised in the \$1.1 billion a year Working for Families package. Other major investments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since 1999 we have increased the Department of Child Youth and Family's baseline funding by more than 50 per cent; ▪ We are investing new funding of \$365 million over the next four years to implement a comprehensive plan for early childhood education, and increasing total annual funding to around \$750 million annually in 2011-12; and ▪ We introduced Paid Parental Leave and have increased entitlement to 14 weeks from 1 December 2005. <p>We will continue to increase the level of investment in children. As well as that, however, we will also defend the current level of investment against political parties who intend to stop further implementation of Working for Families. Labour believes that the 'dividend' from a prosperous economy needs to be allocated as 'targeted tax relief' to families with dependent children, rather than spread thinly through across-the-board tax cuts whose impact increases the more a person earns.</p> <p>Priority areas for further investment will be guided by the Agenda for Children's seven key action areas (see above) and also by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The critical social issues set out as priorities for interagency action over the next three to five years in Opportunity for All New Zealanders (2004), which is a summary of the government's social policy and strategies for sustainable social development, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving educational achievement among low socio-economic groups - promoting healthy eating and healthy action - minimising family violence and abuse and neglect of children and older persons. • Areas highlighted through the work of the Families Commission. <p>Major areas for us looking ahead will include early intervention to assist children aged 5 and under and initiatives to support parenting.</p> <p>We are increasing the annual investment in Family Start from \$14 million in 1999/2000 to over \$30 million, to provide assistance to families with young children whose family and social circumstances place their health, education and well-being at risk.</p> <p>We are also investing nearly \$2.1 million over the next four years to pilot a universal parenting support service (see question 7).</p>
Maori Party	<p>We advocate that well educated and healthy whanau are fundamental to the stability and progress of Aotearoa. In this context we believe investment in whanau (of which children are an integral part) is key to achieving well-being for all who live in Aotearoa.</p>
National	<p>Yes. Child health. Primary and pre-school education. Family Start. Social Workers in schools.</p>
United Future	<p>[See Q1]</p>

CHILDREN IN PUBLIC POLICY

Public policy is generally developed by balancing the competing interests of different constituencies. For example, a paid parental leave policy might balance the needs of parents, employers and Treasury. But for a group's interests to be considered, they need to be visible to policy-makers in the first place. Children are largely invisible in these processes.

No one would doubt that children are vital to the future of the country; they are crucial to the nation's social and economic sustainability. It is also true that children have a right to a safe, satisfying life, that society has a responsibility to care for its most vulnerable and those without a voice, that children are an essential part of our humanity. *Every Child Counts* is calling for political parties to acknowledge the pivotal role of children in the future (and the present) of this country and ensure that their well-being becomes one of the central considerations in the development and implementation of all policy that affects them – and there are very few policy areas that don't affect children in one way or another. We are accustomed to policy having regard to how it will affect the environment, our natural resources, the economy. *Every Child Counts* believes no less a priority should be given to children.

If government is serious about the future sustainability of New Zealand, it needs to ensure that children are not disregarded; more than that, it needs to make the best interests of children a priority and one of the guiding principles of policy.

Q4: What does your party consider to be the place of children in social and economic development?

Why does this matter?

Every Child Counts sees children as fundamental to the sustainability of our nation, to its economic and social development, and to the quality of its citizens' lives. Without children, there is no future. However on a number of counts, children in New Zealand are not doing so well: for example, we have high rates of child poverty, child abuse and neglect, youth suicide, child deaths through injuries and traffic accidents. These are not just a tragedy for the individual, but impose a huge cost on New Zealand in terms of (amongst other things) high health costs, lost productivity, lost potential.

So how do we give children the best opportunity to maintain and improve New Zealand as a prosperous economy and a strong, agreeable, self-respecting, functioning society? The first step is to recognise the vital part children play in the present and future of the nation.

Party responses

Greens	The opening para of the Vision for our Children's Policy states: "We are the guardians of the earth for our children. They are our future, so we must give them the best possible start to life." The final section in our Children's Policy entitled "Ensuring the interests of children are promoted and protected" commits us to implementing UNCROC and ensuring the interests of children are considered as part of policy development. The seriousness with which we take this commitment is illustrated by the fact that our Children's policy covers a broad range of areas from income support and parental support to transport, diet and television violence.
Labour	Labour believes New Zealand's long-term social and economic wellbeing depends on achieving better social outcomes for children and young people. Evidence shows that the longer children experience difficulties, the poorer their wellbeing through childhood, and the poorer their foundation for building a successful adult life. This increases the probability of educational underachievement, long-term unemployment, and criminal offending. In addition, the longer problems develop, the harder it is for later interventions to be effective. These persistent poor outcomes are very costly to the child or young person, through damage to lifetime health, income and employment prospects, social relationships, and living standards. They are also very costly to society, through reduced tax revenue, high remedial spending in care and protection services and health and criminal justice, and high costs of relationship failures and crime.
Maori Party	Whanau, of which children are intricately linked, are the foundation for all social and economic development.
National	Clearly, strong families build a strong society. We do not believe that the focus should be narrowed to children by themselves but to children as part of their family. If we get the family strong and functioning, the children will be in a far better position.
United Future	United Future believes children's interests need to be central to social and economic development, and as families are the means by which children's needs are provided for, policy initiatives that promote positive parenting and healthy family functioning must be given priority.

Q5: What structures and processes will you use to ensure effective development and implementation of your policy/policies for children?

Why does this matter?	<p>An integrated policy for children requires a structure and processes within government that take responsibility for its development and administration and are transparently accountable for its success. In a number of countries an office for children exists within a broad social policy and social services ministry or department. A serious effort to place children centrally in government thinking and policy-making would require the appointment of a cabinet minister to take responsibility for a children's portfolio as has been done in countries such as Ireland and more recently in the State of Victoria, Australia.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">"In August 2003 I established a Premier's Children's Advisory Committee to advise me on how the government can work better to improve the lives of Victoria's children. The Committee's recommendations were received in September this year and have been carefully examined. I am pleased to now release the Government's response to the PCAC report and announce some new major changes to co-ordinate children's services in Victoria under a new Minister and a new Office for Children."</p> <p style="text-align: right; padding-right: 40px;">(Steve Bracks, Premier of Victoria, Dec, 2004)</p> <p>Setting up a policy development and administration body together with a cabinet portfolio will not in themselves bring the necessary changes. Real change will require the public championing by government as a whole of children's interests and the establishment of processes such as child impact reporting.</p>
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Party responses

Greens	<p>See [items 55-58] of our Children's Policy entitled "Ensuring the interests of children are promoted and protected". We believe it is difficult to go beyond this level of detail outside of Government as we need to ensure whatever measures are put in place lead to a genuine change in approach.</p> <p><i>[ECC note: Items 55-58 are:</i></p> <p><i>55: Strengthen the role of the Children's Commissioner through greater independence and stronger advocacy role.</i></p> <p><i>56: Establish a children's reference group to work with the Office of the Children's Commissioner.</i></p> <p><i>57: Work towards the implementation in New Zealand legislation and government policy of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</i></p> <p><i>58: Require the interests of children to be considered as part of all policy initiatives.]</i></p>
Labour	<p>Work on the Agenda for Children is part of the Government's "Action for Child and Youth Development" work programme, which covers the implementation of the Agenda and the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa.</p> <p>Each year the seven action areas and actions of the Agenda for Children are reviewed and updated in line with progress and new information and developments. In this way we will make sure the Agenda for Children work stays relevant.</p>
Maori Party	<p>The Maori Party is committed towards ensuring public policy strengthens whanau, while providing a safety net for individual whanau members.</p>
National	<p>We will use existing structures and will be focussing on using and consulting with agencies such as Parentline, Pacific Foundation, Plunket, Salvation Army and others who work with families in need.</p>
United Future	<p>The Families Commission, a United Future initiative, has been established to ensure that children and families are given a strong voice in policy development and implementation.</p> <p>Part of the Commission's role is to make sure that policies are built upon evidence-based research of the structures and mechanisms that promote good outcomes for families.</p>

Q6: Will you develop and monitor measurable targets and objectives aimed at improving outcomes for children?

Why does this matter?	<p>Any strategy which aims to improve conditions for children needs to be based on a thorough understanding of how children are currently faring, what is needed to improve their situation and how these needs can be met. Central to this process is the development and accurate monitoring of targets and objectives against which to evaluate the efficacy of policy. These in turn should be used to inform any further policy developments.</p> <p>A key to this process is the conscious and specific focus on children as a distinct sub-population:</p> <p>“Good policy-making depends on an informed understanding of the groups to be affected and their situation. Evaluation of policy outcomes depends on information which accurately registers the results of interventions and enables judgments to be made about their likely impact. In the case of children, this is impossible because so little information is collected which is child-specific or can be re-interpreted to reflect the situation of children.” (Save the Children, 1994)</p>
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Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. This is implicit in much of our policy – for example we have measurable targets and timetables for ending child poverty and commitments across a range of areas. Targets and timeframes for implementation of more detailed policy are difficult to establish outside of Government. We have also shown a commitment to targets and timetables in legislation we have influenced across a whole range of policy areas.</p>
Labour	<p>Action Area 7 of the Agenda for Children is ‘Enhancing information, research and research collaboration relating to children’. This information and research dimension of the Agenda for Children was developed to meet the need for a solid base of information for cross-sector policy development work for children. The information will also increase our understanding of children's lives and what influences good outcomes for children. This action area aims to identify gaps in research and information about children in New Zealand and the steps we need to take to address those gaps.</p> <p>Labour in government has also published an annual Social Report. This report enables us to examine the current level of wellbeing in New Zealand, how this has changed over time, and how different groups in the population are faring. The social report helps us to identify adverse trends in social outcomes at an early stage.</p>
Maori Party	<p>The Maori Party believes that any outcomes for children and whanau cannot be supported without reference to the nation's constitutional blueprint, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The Maori Party will ensure that Te Tiriti o Waitangi will guide the nation as its founding document. Any development of measurable targets and objectives, assessment and impact reporting, or consultation processes, must therefore be compliant with the principles and spirit of Te Tiriti o Waitangi; as well as adhering to the principles of cultural competency.</p>
National	<p>Yes.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future supports efforts to improve reporting on social indicators, not only by central government, but also at regional and local levels.</p>

Q7: Will you assess all policy during development and following implementation for its impact on children (child impact reporting)?

Why does this matter? To say that government policy affects children is to state the obvious. It is equally obvious that policy can have negative as well as positive effects. For example, the benefit cuts of 1991 made a significant contribution to the rise in child poverty during the 1990s – the rate doubled between 1998 and 2001 (St-John & Craig, 2004). It is worth asking whether these cuts would have been acceptable to New Zealanders if they had known in advance that they would have such a devastating effect upon hundreds of thousands of children.

Child impact reports are a means of anticipating how public policies will affect children before those policies are put into practice. This reporting process involves determining whether the impact of policy is in the best interests of children, then making adjustments to avoid or mitigate negative outcomes. Importantly, the process also involves ongoing monitoring of the impact of policy on children. Child impact reports are an attempt to ensure that the well-being of children – a nation's most precious and vital resource – is not inadvertently compromised by policy decisions. They are also an important means of increasing the visibility of children in government decision-making.

Child impact reporting is one of the recommendations of New Zealand's Agenda for Children. In spite of this, there is currently no statutory requirement that the needs of children be formally assessed in public policy decision-making processes. Assessing the impact of policy on the environment and the economy, however, is routine.

Governments around the world are starting to incorporate child impact reporting in public policy decision-making.² Perhaps the most advanced country in this respect is Sweden. What is clear from their experience is that making child impact reporting an integral part of public policy-making is a long-term process; the first step is to gain the support and understanding of policy-makers through an initial phase of education, discussion and debate. To this end, high level support (say, from the prime minister or other high ranking post) is critical (Payne, 2002; Sylwander, 2001).

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes – point 58 in our Children's Policy commits us to this. We are unsure whether this will be the most effective means of bringing about culture change within Government and we will explore other measures in parallel.</p> <p><i>[ECC note - point 58 is "Require the interests of children to be considered as part of all policy initiatives."]</i></p>
Labour	<p>The Agenda for Children commits the government to practise and promote a whole child approach in developing policy and planning and delivering services. This means focusing on the big picture, on the child's whole life and circumstances, not just isolated issues or problems.</p> <p>Cabinet has asked government agencies to apply the Agenda's whole child approach when developing policies and initiatives that affect children.</p>
Maori Party	[See Q6]
National	No. I am not interested in tying up resources on more report writing.
United Future	Yes.

² These include the governments/parliaments of Belgium, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Sweden.

Q8: How will you ensure meaningful consultation with communities, families and children during policy development?

Why does this matter?	<p>Many children took part in the consultation that informed New Zealand's Agenda for Children. A common theme in these children's responses was that adults seldom asked for their views or took those views seriously.</p> <p>It might be argued that children are not competent enough to participate in decision-making that affects them. Certainly, there are some issues that children would struggle to comprehend. However, just as consultation with, say, frontline health workers is essential if cabinet ministers are to understand the issues facing the health sector, consultation with children can reveal views and issues that adults themselves would struggle to perceive from their unique perspective as adults.</p> <p>Consultation with children on issues that affect them is justified on the basis that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are constituents no less than adults and entitled to be consulted. ▪ They are able to make a valuable contribution based on their unique viewpoint. ▪ For the health of democracy it is as well for them to gain experience in its processes. <p>While representative government hopes to make and administer policy to the benefit of all its citizens it is true that we live in a society in which public policy is made in the context of a mosaic of constituencies. Most of these constituencies have well developed processes for ensuring that they are heard. Children, and their parents and communities on their behalf, do not. Consultation is one means of redressing this.</p>
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Party responses	
Greens	<p>Achieving meaningful input and dialogues is as much a matter of institutional culture as legislation and formal structures. The Green Party is committed to a more participatory and inclusive style of Government across the board. We believe it is particularly important to ensure communities are consulted meaningfully in ways that work for them rather than being subject to an endless series of separate requests for input on specific topics.</p>
Labour	<p>We have established the Families Commission to act as an advocate for the interests of all families, from the traditional nuclear family to multi-generational families. Community relationships and feedback are a major focus for the Commission, which seeks to obtain views from the broad range of families and from organisations with an interest in families.</p> <p>The Families Commission is a unique institution whose primary function, mandated in legislation, is to speak up for families and to assist governments to provide better support for families. Its role is to encourage informed debate on issues affecting families, and also to commission research into family issues and comment on policies affecting families.</p> <p>It works closely and with other agencies whose policies or services impact on families, including the Children's Commissioner and the Ministry of Social Development, as the Government's principal advisor on family policy. The Family and Community Services section of the Ministry provides leadership and co-ordination of services and programmes that support families and encourages good relationships between government and community organisations that deliver services to families.</p>
Maori Party	[See Q6]
National	In the usual ways. Except, we will LISTEN. [original emphasis]
United Future	The establishment of the Families Commission means New Zealand now has a public body charged with the responsibility of making sure families have an active role in the policy process. United Future is committed to the principle that policies exist to serve our families, not families to serve policies.

Q9: How will you ensure coordination of child and family policy development?

Why does this matter?

Government tends to be structured according to functions (such as economic development, health, education, environment and the like) rather than according to population groups (such as workers, parents, children, superannuitants, disabled) (Hodgkin & Newell, 1996). Hence policies across these functions are often developed and implemented in isolation of policies developed in other ministries, but with which they intersect. Portfolios such as Youth Affairs, Women's Affairs, Disability Issues and Rural Affairs are a means of cutting across these function-based structures and encouraging the coordination of relevant policy developments and development of the principles underlying government responses to those population groups. There is currently no minister with responsibility for children's affairs in New Zealand.

Party responses

Greens	The Green Party will review the role of the Families Commission as a stand alone entity as part of ensuring that policy advice and development within Government is well co-ordinated.
Labour	Labour believes that policies and services that support parents, families and whanau and other kin-related groups are a key way to meet children's needs. Policies such as Working for Families, paid parental leave and parent education have a major effect on children's wellbeing.
Maori Party	Our policy does not support the perpetuation of the silo mentality, where child and family needs and concerns are fragmented across a range of sectors and agencies. Our policy programme is kaupapa driven, not portfolio driven.
National	Have the same spokeswoman – [Judith Collins].
United Future	This is an issue which currently requires attention as we are beginning to see a proliferation of high-level policy frameworks, many of which have significant overlap and whose implementation programmes are spread across a number of Government departments. United Future would like to see clear and achievable policy goals, that do not suffer from fragmentation and duplicated efforts on the ground. As a starting point to ensure that child and family policy is coordinated, United Future would like to see the relationship between these two areas - namely that children's interests are intrinsically reliant on good family processes - recognised and better encapsulated in policy.

Q10: Do you have any other comments to make about your party's perception of the role and status of children and measures you would pursue in government in the interests of sustainable social and economic development?

Why does this matter? For example, investing in child and youth development is part of the present programme of action for sustainable development for New Zealand. Treasury and the Ministry of Social Development have produced recent papers relating to this theme. There appears to be some confusion as to children's place in economic development and sustainability.

Even a limited view of children as tomorrow's citizens, workers, leaders and innovators warrants consideration of how investment might be most effectively made. Economic models which take into account children's role as essential members of a thriving human community are more convincing. Such models are in need of further development and incorporation into economic and political thinking.

Party responses	
Greens	<p>Our Vision at the start of our children's policy sets out clearly our view of each generation's responsibilities towards the next generation. The Green Party is committed to helping our nation put itself on a just and ecologically sustainable footing in the face of massive global challenges such as climate change and the end of cheap oil.</p> <p>As noted above, ensuring today's decisions make sense tomorrow is central to our philosophy. This approach runs through our entire range of policies.</p> <p>We have attached a copy of our economic policy framework "Thinking Beyond Tomorrow" and a copy of the Vision and Long-Term Goals from our Strategic Plan. Together these provide an overview of the transformation we believe is required to put our nation on a sustainable footing and set out some of the ways we might begin to achieve them by working together as a nation.</p>
Labour	<p>Labour has a track record of delivering for children and families, and we have put in place policy processes such as the Agenda for Children to keep children at the centre of government decision-making.</p> <p>We are committed to continuing to deliver in the future.</p>
Maori Party	<p>People are the absolute priority in our policy programme; hence the importance given to whanau.</p>
National	<p>All children have families. If families function well then the role of the state can be greatly reduced. Our focus is on functioning families that look after children.</p>
United Future	

THE EARLY YEARS

During children's first few years, their brains develop and change more rapidly than they will at any other time during the course of their lives. Their brains acquire an astonishing array of capabilities. Indeed, they are designed to be highly receptive to the experiences needed for the various functions of the brain to develop and organise. But this receptiveness makes their brains equally vulnerable to poor development if the environment does not provide the experiences needed. The social, sensory and emotional environment in which children grow in these early years has a major impact on how a child's genetic potential for physical, emotional, social and cognitive health and competence is realised.

"We now know with certainty that the chances for successful early physical, social/emotional, and cognitive/language development are strongly influenced by the day-to-day qualities of the environments where children grow up, live and learn." (Hertzman, 2004, p. 4)

The home environment plays a critical role in a child's development. That environment and the day-to-day care of children are clearly the responsibility of families and communities. However the care of children is carried out within a wider social and economic environment. That environment may be conducive – or not – to giving children a good start in life. The role of government is that of providing the social, economic and environmental conditions that allow families and communities to nurture their young and promote optimum child development. Government policies *do* make a difference to families' ability to care for their children:

"The care and protection of young children are shared responsibilities. At their most intimate level, they require the investment and attention of a limited number of adults. In their broadest context, they depend on an environment that supports the childrearing function of families. In the final analysis, healthy child development is dependent on a combination of individual responsibility, informal social supports, and formalized structured that evolve within a society." (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 337)

There is increasing awareness internationally of the value of investing in initiatives to give children the best possible start in life. This is in part due to recognition that a poor start in life weighs the odds in favour of poor outcomes during childhood, adolescence and adulthood. As noted above, the poor outcomes that are associated with inadequate early childhood development include criminal behaviour, low educational achievement, poor health, substance abuse, mental illness, reliance on benefits (including unemployment), behavioural problems, violence and aggression. By no means is it true that all children who experience a poor start in life will become criminals, low achievers and so on. Far from it, many children prosper even in the face of great adversity. The challenge is to foster those conditions that either overcome or, at the very least, lessen the impact of adversity. While researchers and analysts are continually improving their knowledge of which early intervention programmes work for whom, there are still a number of challenges to overcome. One in particular is the tendency for there to be fragmentation with respect to public policy, programmes and sources of funding. In addition, there is often both doubling-up and gaps in service provision. This issue underscores the need for there to be a well-defined portfolio of interventions and a need for policy to support the provision of the full range of services needed.

The cost to society of negative outcomes is significant; the cost of interventions to promote positive outcomes is also significant. However, evidence points directly to the high returns on investments which seek to *prevent* poor outcomes as compared to those which seek to *cure* or rehabilitate after the event (Jacobsen et al., 2002; Kalil, 2003). For example, a study conducted by the New Zealand Department of Corrections showed that measures to prevent criminal behaviour are more effective than those that rehabilitate teenagers and adults already

in the criminal justice system (respectively, 70% effective versus 20%). The study also highlights the economic benefits of the earliest possible intervention:

“We know the earliest possible intervention works best and costs the least. Working with a five-year-old to change aggressive and defiant behaviour is estimated to cost \$5,000 and has a success rate of 70 percent; the same behaviour at age 20 costs \$20,000 and has a success rate of only 20 percent.” (Department of Corrections, 2001)

Q11: Do you have a policy on paid parental leave?

Why does this matter?	<p>In many parts of the world – New Zealand included – an increasing number of households depend on two adult incomes to maintain an adequate standard of living. Women's contribution to household income is often crucial for the well-being of the family. The trend worldwide is for women to remain in the workforce for most of their childbearing years. A growing number are fulfilling the dual roles of childbearer and worker.</p> <p>But when a mother takes time off work in relation to childbirth, the loss of income can impose financial hardship and stress and all too often loss of seniority and career prospects. Mothers may be forced to return to work before they are ready, at the expense of their own and their infant's health. There is a link between restricted time for the child, loss of income, stress and compromised parenting. Less involved parenting is further linked to 'impairment of the emotional, social and intellectual development of children' (Gavey et al., n.d.).</p> <p>Paid maternity leave of realistic duration is a vital component of the balance women must strike between the roles of mother and worker. The well-being of the family and satisfactory attachment between mother and baby are dependent on the availability of sufficient unstressed time. Adaptation to infant feeding and sleeping patterns and establishment and maintenance of breast feeding are important contributors to the health and well-being of mother and infant.</p> <p>The World Health Organisation states that women should have at least 16 weeks' absence from work following childbirth; note that this would entail a leave duration of more than 16 weeks to allow for time off work before birth. This is in line with the International Labour Organization's recommendation that the minimum of 14 weeks' paid leave provided for in ILO 183 be extended to 18 weeks (Recommendation 191).</p> <p>An increasing number of countries are providing leaves which recognise the need for mothers and fathers to balance their work-life with their role in childrearing and family life generally. Making childrearing and family leaves available to both men and women workers paves the way for this responsibility to be shared more equally by working parents.</p>
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Party responses	
Greens	<p>Yes. See Women's Policy. Our current policy is for 14 weeks paid parental leave for all parents, including the self-employed. We are currently reviewing our policies with a view to extending this substantially. We also wish to see the scheme made more flexible to allow the type of positive parenting choices available in Scandinavian countries.</p>
Labour	<p>The Labour-led government introduced paid parental leave for the first time in New Zealand in 2002. Since that time 45,000 people have accessed the scheme. The scheme was extended last year to more parents and the duration of the payment period was increased from 12 weeks to 13 weeks and will be extended again to 14 weeks in December this year.</p> <p>Paid parental leave fully replaces the employee's earnings, at the rate of their ordinary weekly pay or average weekly earnings (whichever is greater), up to a maximum payment. Currently this is \$346.63 per week (or \$18,024.76 per year) before tax. A woman may transfer some or all of her entitlement to payment to her spouse (husband or de facto partner, including same sex partner), if they are also an employee, are taking parental leave, and meet the eligibility criteria for parental leave.</p> <p>Legislation to extend New Zealand's paid parental leave scheme to the self-employed will be introduced to Parliament this year, and, when passed, is aimed to come into force from 1 July 2006. An estimated 2173 self-employed people will take paid parental leave each year.</p> <p>A full evaluation of the parental leave scheme and the experiences of women, including those currently not eligible for parental leave, their partners and employers will also be carried out this year.</p> <p>Labour will defend paid parental leave provisions against those parties that seek to overturn them.</p>
Maori Party	<p>We believe that paid parental leave should include those in low-income or part-time work, to ensure that all parents are able to benefit from the scheme.</p>
National	<p>Yes. If paid parental leave is available to employees, then it should also extend on the same basis to self-employed.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. This term United Future has sought an expansion of paid parental leave entitlements from the Government, including an extension to parents who are self-employed, which has been announced recently. United Future will continue seeking to extend the length of paid parental leave as economic conditions allow.</p>

Q12: Do you have a policy on housing for families with or expecting children?

Why does this matter?

The housing that children live in directly affects their health and well-being. Overcrowding or poor-quality housing (such as damp, cold homes) can lead to poor physical and mental health for occupants. For example, a recent study found that the risk of meningococcal disease in Auckland is "strongly associated" with household overcrowding (Baker et al., 2000). Overcrowding is also implicated in respiratory diseases, cellulitis, rheumatic fever and tuberculosis. Studies have shown that children living in overcrowded or poor-quality housing also experienced low academic achievement and exhibited "bad social adjustment" (Shirley, Adair, & Anderson, 2000, p. 37).

As the locus for family life, housing can also affect children indirectly through its effect on other members of the family, particularly parents: "Housing factors such as security, comfort, ease of management and warmth are identified as contributing to effective parenting, whereas overcrowding, homelessness and poor housing conditions (such as high rise accommodation) are associated with stress and instability thereby contributing to an unfavourable environment for children." (Shirley et al., 2000, p. 38)

Families with children are more likely than other household type to experience overcrowding (Shirley et al., 2000, p. 38). In 2001, 17% of all New Zealand children under 10 years old lived in overcrowded homes (Ministry of Social Development, 2004b, 2005).

Party responses

Greens	Yes. Our Housing Policy is currently under review – in broad terms we see families with or expecting children as a priority group for an expanded commitment to social housing. The final policy will be available in the next couple of weeks.
Labour	<p>The Labour-led government re-introduced income-related rents in December 2000 so that tenants in state houses on low incomes now pay no more than 25 percent of their income on rent. We will oppose moves by those parties who favour market rents to abolish income-related rents.</p> <p>We are also investing to provide 3,288 more homes for those in need over 2005-09. This will reduce waiting lists and waiting times in areas of high demand, particularly in Auckland.</p> <p>We will maintain the Accommodation Supplement, as enhanced by the Working for Families package, to help make private accommodation more affordable.</p> <p>The Healthy Housing and retrofitting programmes for Housing New Zealand Corporation houses are helping ensure families have healthy, quality rental accommodation. We will also continue the Rural Housing programme, to addressing sub-standard housing in rural areas, and the Community Renewal programme, to improve housing and social conditions in deprived areas.</p> <p>The recently-expanded Mortgage Insurance Scheme is helping to bring the dream of home ownership closer for up to 8000 modest-income families who can support a mortgage but can raise little or no deposit. Families seeking to buy their first home will also be assisted through a one-off deposit subsidy up to \$5,000 will be made available for first home buyers who belong to the KiwiSaver government-sponsored work-based savings scheme. KiwiSaver members can also put their savings and interest towards the price of their new home, and their subsequent KiwiSaver contributions towards their mortgage.</p>
Maori Party	Our commitment to manaakitanga is demonstrated in housing policies that address the particular needs of communities, including low income groups. We will seek to eliminate the waiting lists for any form of public housing or community housing.
National	No. But we do have a housing policy based on need.
United Future	Yes. To be announced shortly.

Q13: Do you have a policy on income support for families with or expecting children?

Why does this matter? UNICEF's analysis of child poverty and social spending in OECD countries confirms that social spending on initiatives which improve family security ("family allowances, disability and sickness benefits, formal day care provision, unemployment insurance, employment promotion..." and the like) lowers the risk of children growing up in poverty. The report notes that, "No OECD country devoting 10 per cent or more of GDP to social spending, so defined, has a child poverty rate higher than 10 per cent. And no country devoting less than 5 per cent of GDP to such benefits has a child poverty rate less than 15 per cent [with the exception of Japan]" (UNICEF, 2005, p. 23).

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 2, 3, 5, 10 and 11 and our Income Support Policy. The Green Party is the only party which has consistently and vigorously defended the Domestic Purposes Benefit and those who receive it.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – the policy items from the Children's Policy noted above are:</i></p> <p><i>C2: Introduction of a universal child benefit.</i></p> <p><i>C3: Review and reform of family assistance, including removal of discrimination on the basis of employment status; adjusting family assistance payments for inflation; reviewing targeting/abatement to reduce poverty traps.</i></p> <p><i>C5: End compulsory work testing for DPB recipients and for partners of beneficiaries whose primary responsibility is caring for dependents.</i></p> <p><i>C10: Work towards setting benefits at a level sufficient for all basic needs.</i></p> <p><i>C11: Work towards full employment that provides a decent income.]</i></p> <p><i>[ECC note – relevant items from the Income Support policy include:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Support public debate on a universal basic income.</i> <i>4. "Implementing the principles of simplicity and universality in all aspects of income support, including:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>(a) establishing a two-tier benefit system consisting of: (i) a universal base rate; and (ii) add-ons for specific circumstances or additional needs, such as dependants, disability or chronic illness. ... (c) reintroducing a benefit for unsupported unemployed and sick young people aged 16 and 17; (d) abolishing stand-down periods; (e) treating people aged 18 and over as adults for income support purposes; (f) increased emphasis on treating all adults as individuals for income support purposes; (g) all students be eligible for the Emergency Unemployment Benefit over summer."</i> <i>6. Introduce a tax-free threshold at the bottom of the income-tax scale.</i> <i>7. Various measures to assist people on income support to set up their own small business.</i> <i>8. Various measures to inter alia ensure MSD informs people of their entitlements and expand vocational services].</i> <i>9. [Measures to ensure quality support and advocacy services for people dealing with govt. departments.]</i> <i>11. "Supporting the valuable role of those on income support who participate in voluntary work by providing a participation allowance to all beneficiaries who carry out a minimum number of hours of voluntary work per week with organisations undertaking work of value to the community or the environment."]</i>
Labour	<p>Labour believes in using targeted tax relief through the Family Assistance system to provide income support to all families that need it, rather than thinly-spread across-the-board tax cuts whose greatest impact goes to the very richest New Zealanders.</p> <p>This is epitomised in the \$1.1 billion a year Working for Families package, which Labour will continue the implementation of – in contrast to some other parties.</p> <p>From 1 April 2006 an estimated 136,000 working families - nearly 30% of all families with children - will receive an In-Work Payment. For most of these families, this will mean between another \$15 and \$45 a week more in their pockets. Smaller families in particular will benefit from the move to the In-Work Payment, which will cost \$192 million a year and ensure that thousands of families are better off in work than they could be on a benefit. At present a sole parent with two children earning two-thirds of the average wage is no better off in work than on a benefit. In Work Payment changes that by putting \$30 a week into the pocket of that family if they're in work -- it 'makes work pay'.</p> <p>From 1 April 2007 nearly 300,000 families – including all beneficiary families with children – will receive a further Family Support increase of \$10 a week per child.</p>
Maori Party	<p>Our long term aspirations are that all whanau will have the opportunity to participate fully in society and in decisions that affect them. In the short term this may mean income support is required, but the long term goal is that reliance on state support will reduce.</p> <p>Notwithstanding that, the Maori Party has been concerned that the Working for Families package sets in place a policy regime by which the weekly per child payment of \$15 for children whose parents are independent of the state will not be available to children in beneficiary families. The package also cuts the special benefit by an average of \$13.50. We believe that a society is only as strong as its</p>

	most vulnerable members, and that this new initiative will be at the expense of significant numbers of children.
National	Yes. This will be announced as part of our financial/tax policies.
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future has supported the Working for Families changes for low income working families. However, United Future believes further initiatives, including tax cuts and income splitting, are needed to increase the incomes of families who do not qualify for this assistance. See attached United Future Policy Documents, <i>Income Splitting</i> and <i>Tax Policy</i> (in Appendix).</p> <p><i>[ECC note: the relevant items from the Tax Policy are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Make the first \$3000 of earned income tax-free, as part of the Working For Families package.</i> <i>2. Increase the other tax thresholds by \$5000 to offset the increase in inflation (...).</i> <i>3. Further lower tax rates, as economic conditions allow, with the goal of establishing a tax rate that is comparatively flat.</i> <i>4. Ensure that the taxation system takes into account the costs of raising a family by introducing income splitting for couples raising children.</i> <i>5. Reduce company tax to 30 cents in the dollar over the next three years.</i> <i>8. Recognise the impact of student loan debt on raising a family by freezing interest and writing off a portion of the debt of parents for two years after the birth of a child.</i> <i>9. Streamline the tax compliance and penalties regime</i> <i>10. Zero-rate local body rates for GST.</i> <i>11. Review the tax treatment of Research and Development, to generate incentives for an increase in private sector expenditure to 1.5% of GDP.</i> <i>12. Ensure that a significant proportion of fuel taxes collected within a specific region are earmarked for improvements to roads in that region, rather than being diverted into the Crown Account.</i> <i>14. Give working families the opportunity to receive their Working For Families entitlements in ways that do not resemble a benefit payment. United Future would explore the following alternatives for the delivery of family assistance: (a) As a lump sum at the end of the tax year, to remove the possibility of overpayment and indebtedness to IRD, enabling families to use it to offset other tax liabilities (e.g. student loans). (b) As a child tax allowance (reducing a family's taxable income by a certain amount per child) rather than a child tax credit (reducing a family's tax liability). This would be less likely to generate high effective marginal tax rates. (c) As an adjustment to the take-home pay of parents, paid through the employer (as it is in the US and the UK). (d) To be paid directly to the main carer, to reflect the value of their work. (e) To be diverted into a workplace savings scheme, to help save for a house deposit; (f) To be diverted into a tertiary savings scheme. (g) To be capitalised in advance and used to increase equity in a home.]</i>

Q14: Do you have a policy on family support services?

Why does this matter?

Healthy child development involves the development of a range of functions and capabilities including physical health, age-appropriate social competence and emotional maturity, language and cognitive competence, communication skills and general knowledge (Hertzman, 2004, p. 6).

These in turn are influenced by a wide array of factors including "family income, parental education, parenting style, neighbourhood safety and cohesion, neighbourhood socio-economic characteristics, and access to quality child care and developmental programs" (Hertzman, 2004, p. 5). Adverse family circumstances such as poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment and the like can impact directly on children's health and well-being, particularly when there is an accumulation of these disadvantages. There is strong evidence for the link between economic hardship and "non-nurturant, uninvolved parenting" (Shirley et al., 2000, p. 24); stressful living conditions make it difficult for parents to give the type of care that promotes optimal child development.

Family support services aim to improve conditions for families and children. Examples of these services include home visiting programmes aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect, well-child care, parenting programmes and childcare.

Family support services are likely to be most effective when they are:

- built on a template of community need,
- accepted and widely known among all families including the marginal
- subject to a carefully judged mix of local governance and central expectation
- carefully reviewed and adapted
- adequately resourced

Programmes such as Britain's Sure Start have met with some success in following these principles.

There is no cure-all service that will address the whole range of development outcomes for the whole range of child/family circumstances. Rather, what is needed is a "portfolio" of family support services; that is, a range of co-ordinated initiatives that can be matched to the needs, goals and circumstances of the individual families and children. Whether they are provided on a universal, population-based or targeted basis would be determined by the nature of the intervention itself.

Party responses

Greens

Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 6 and 7, and points 12 through 16. The Greens have also succeeded in getting legislation sent to select committee to allow parents to negotiate flexible working hours. Sue Kedgley's private members bill to this effect will be open for submissions later this year.

[ECC note – points 6, 7 and 12-16 of the Children's Policy are:

6: Provide support and education programmes for parents.

7: Additional support for parents in child's first year of life; review and increase resourcing for programmes such as Plunket to ensure every child seen regularly in first months of life.

12: Encourage child-friendly workplaces, businesses and public places wherever possible (e.g. breastfeeding facilities, ensure parents/children can contact each other when parents at work, childcare close to/in workplace).

13: Investigate tax incentives for companies providing child-friendly facilities/equipment.

14: Support minimum of four weeks' annual leave.

15: Work towards shorter working week (35 hours) and initiate public debate/research into the future of work.

16: Review employment legislation/practices to encourage work flexibility. "All parents should be able to negotiate with their employer greater flexibility in their working hours and in their work location, especially during school holidays and when children are sick."]

Labour

Labour has introduced or expanded a range of family support services. In particular:

- Family Start provides assistance to families with young children whose family and social circumstances place their health, education and well-being at risk. The service helps families set goals for the future, assists them in developing a plan to meet those goals and then provides parenting advice and in-home assistance to get them on the right track.

Last year more than 4,000 vulnerable families with pre-school children were helped by the service. Our latest expansion of this programme will see that number grow to 6,000 when 11 new sites are set up over the next two years.

- Strengthening Families Co-ordinators work with service providers, particularly in the Health, Education and Welfare sectors, to achieve greater collaboration in the delivery of services to vulnerable children, young people and their families. A key component of this role is implementing a collaborative case management approach across those working with the family where more than one of the sectors is, or should be, involved.

We are increasing the number of hours per week that co-ordinators are paid to work from an average of 25 hours a week to an average of 30 hours per week. The additional funding will increase the time co-ordinators have to meet increased demand for Strengthening Families responses, and enable them to take a more preventative approach to individual cases as well as

responding to new government programmes.

- We are investing nearly \$2.1 million over the next four years to pilot and evaluate a universal parenting support service for all parents of young children that will build on the core Well Child health service.
- The service will focus on preventing early behaviour problems in children, early identification of parenting/family problems, and improving access to targeted specialised services where necessary. Preventing behaviour problems in children is a high priority for Labour as early difficult behaviours are associated with a range of later problems including school drop-out, alcohol and drug misuse, mental health problems, unemployment and crime.

The Family and Community Services section of the Ministry of Social Development provides leadership and co-ordination of services and programmes that support families and encourages good relationships between government and community organisations that deliver services to families. This includes initiatives such as SKIP (see question [15] below), SAGES: Older people as Mentors, and Heartland Services.

Labour also remains committed to supporting services that advance Te Rito, the New Zealand family violence prevention strategy (see question [28]), such as Family Violence Funding Circuit Breaker and the Family Violence Intervention programme.

Maori Party Our key policy position is that we seek to restore faith and confidence in the ability of whanau to care for themselves rather than creating dependency on state agencies, and others, to provide to support. We should invest in whanau rather than continuing programmes.

National Yes. We support services in the community that produce positive results, eg: Plunket.

United Future Yes. See Policy document, United Future's Policy Proposal for Restructuring the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF), April 2004 (attached).

[ECC note – The proposed restructuring examines both child protection and family support services. UF's belief is that: "two fundamental shifts in New Zealand's child protection system need to occur: (a) A return to parents and communities bearing the responsibility for the care and protection of children. (b) A shift towards preventative and community-based family support services that everyone can access."

UF's proposed reconfiguration of child protection and family support services includes the following key elements:

- 1. "Initiate a Dual Track Intake process that differentiates critical child protection concerns from broader family support needs;*
 - 2. Re-build a Child Protection Agency, working more closely with the Police;*
 - 3. Establish a Family Support Track that focuses on lower criticality cases;*
 - 4. Develop Family Centres ("one stop shops") bringing together key services and involving the community; and*
 - 5. Initiate public education campaigns promoting parenting skills through the Families Commission."]*
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Q15: Do you have a policy on preventative health care to meet the needs of individual families?

Why does this matter? A precondition for a child's normal cognitive, emotional and social development is physical health (Shirley et al., 2000, p. 11). Well child care services comprise a range of health-promoting and disease-preventing checks for young children. These are essential for the early detection of illness and disease, as well as helping parents to ensure the health of their infants. For example, hearing loss through ear infections can impede a child's acquisition of language, leading to other cognitive deficits. The earlier the detection of infections or of hearing loss, the better the changes of eliminating or mitigating negative effects.

Trust in the agency providing this service is a key to its effectiveness. To be trusted, the service must have the resources and capacity to be adaptable to the expressed needs of individual families, as well as meeting a competent professional standard in regular contacts.

Party responses	
Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 19 through 36. Our Health Policy is also focussed on preventative health and a copy of this is attached.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – items 19-36 of the Children's Policy are:</i></p> <p><i>C19: Ensure public spaces safe for children (introduce vehicle emission standards; reduce exposure to traffic noise in areas of significant pedestrian activity; work with local authorities, schools and communities to make walking/cycling more attractive; lower maximum speeds around areas of significant pedestrian activity; help schools set up e.g. walking buses; improve safety, quality and availability of school buses).</i></p> <p><i>C20: TV violence: (a) Ensure violent programmes scheduled after 10.00pm; (b) Require BSA to monitor violence levels on all TV channels and report to Parliament each year. (c) Require BSA to monitor and enforce TV broadcasting codes re: portrayal of violence, esp. the requirement to avoid screening gratuitous violence. (d) Require TVNZ to take a lead in reducing TV violence by (i) developing guidelines on violence for producers/programmers; (ii) not screening programmes that contain gratuitous violence; (iii) not screening violent programmes before 10.00pm.</i></p> <p><i>C21-25: Measures to support quality children's programmes.</i></p> <p><i>C26: Work towards free healthcare for all children.³</i></p> <p><i>C27: Make child/adolescent mental health services an urgent priority. Improve/expand services in line with Mental Health Blueprint.</i></p> <p><i>C28: Work with iwi and Maori to ensure all Maori children can access culturally appropriate care/treatment (primary and mental health).</i></p> <p><i>C29: Work with Pacific Island peoples to ensure all Pacific Island children can access culturally appropriate care/treatment (primary and mental health).</i></p> <p><i>C30: Research needs of other ethnic and cultural groups for culturally appropriate health services.</i></p> <p><i>C31: Continue public role in provision of affordable housing at rent no more than 25% of income.</i></p> <p><i>C32: Establish national housing forum and develop national housing strategy; any work on housing must consider the wellbeing of children and interdependence of housing with other issues.</i></p> <p><i>C33: Improve home energy efficiency to create drier, warmer, well-insulated homes.</i></p> <p><i>C34: Reduce child respiratory disease through mandatory vehicle emission testing and cleaner petrol/diesel. (Also stated in H81)</i></p> <p><i>C35: Reduce harmful effects of alcohol/drugs on children (banning alcohol broadcasting advertising; health warnings on alcohol products; harm reduction approach to drug/alcohol education for parents; treating parental substance abuse as a health issue.)</i></p> <p><i>C36: Various measures to improve children's diet.]</i></p>
Labour	<p>The Primary Health Care Strategy (www.moh.govt.nz/primaryhealthcare, 2001) sets out a new direction for primary health care with a greater emphasis on population health and the role of the community, health promotion and preventive care.</p> <p>As part of this, Primary Health Organisations are required to provide a defined set of services including population services to improve health, screening and preventive services; support for people with chronic health problems; and information, assessment and treatment for any episodes of ill health.</p>
Maori Party	<p>Our commitment to manaakitanga means that we will seek to resource whanau to develop strategies that promote the well-being of whanau members as a reflection of good health. A focus on well-being intrinsically requires a focus on preventative health.</p>
National	<p>Yes. This is part of our Health policy which is to be announced.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. Included within United Future Health Policy, to be announced shortly.</p>

³ Increase access and improve services, no matter where people live (includes dental health).

Q16: Do you have a policy on enabling adults to use positive, non-violent and effective child disciplinary techniques?

Why does this matter?	<p>The parenting that children receive directly affects their development. According to the research literature, the parenting styles that promote good outcomes are ones characterised by warmth, affection, consistent and non-abusive disciplinary practices and the provision of opportunities for learning (Davies, Wood, & Stephens, 2002; Shirley et al., 2000).</p> <p>A key element of this type of parenting is the use of non-abusive disciplinary techniques (“positive parenting”). To this end, positive parenting programmes help parents find alternatives to corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children.</p> <p>Physical discipline (hitting, smacking, beating, and so on) is relatively common in New Zealand. The decision to use such practices is commonly viewed as a matter of personal choice, but it is also a matter of public concern. The effects of severe or harsh physical punishment have been well documented:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“New Zealand research, replicated in many international studies, suggests that children who experienced severe or harsh parental punishment practices had one-and-a-half to four times higher rates of conduct problems, substance abuse, depression, anxiety and violent crime in early adulthood, than those whose parents did not use physical punishment.” (Jacobsen et al., 2002, p. 26)</p> <p>In many cases, parents use physical punishment as a matter of last resort, when other forms of discipline have not worked or when the behaviour is seriously disobedient. It can also be a reaction to frustration. Habitual and frequent use of physical punishment is associated with the risk of serious injury, disability or death.</p> <p>Around 10 children are killed each year by people who have their care. In 2003 the rate of substantiated child abuse was 7.4 children in every 1,000 under-17s (Ministry of Social Development, 2004a, p. 75). Moving parents and caregivers away from using physical punishment is a step towards changing societal norms regarding violence as an appropriate means of conflict resolution.</p>
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Party responses	
Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children’s Policy – particularly points 17 and 18, and also 20. We believe these measures need to be supported both by a broader reduction in the level of violence to which children are exposed (eg on television) and by creating an environment where parents have more time to spend with their children.</p> <p>In the 1999-2002 Parliament the Greens negotiated a budget bid to set up a high-level committee to investigate the impact of violence on children.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – points 17, 18 and 20 of the Children’s Policy are:</i></p> <p><i>17: “Outlaw the use of physical force in the discipline of children. We will repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act so that parents may no longer use reasonable force to discipline a child. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.”</i></p> <p><i>18: “Work with schools and communities to create a culture that does not tolerate any form of bullying or intimidation.”</i></p> <p><i>20: [Measures to reduce TV violence - (a) Ensure violent programmes scheduled after 10.00pm; (b) Require BSA to monitor violence levels on all TV channels and report to Parliament each year. (c) Require BSA to monitor and enforce TV broadcasting codes re: portrayal of violence, esp. the requirement to avoid screening gratuitous violence. (d) Require TVNZ to take a lead in reducing TV violence by (i) developing guidelines on violence for producers/programmers; (ii) not screening programmes that contain gratuitous violence; (iii) not screening violent programmes before 10.00pm.]</i></p>
Labour	<p>We’ve introduced more support for parents raising preschoolers with the \$10.8 million SKIP: Strategies with Kids – Information for Parents campaign. SKIP works with community groups to provide resources and training for parents and caregivers of children up to five years old.</p> <p>Research shows that the most effective parenting uses love and nurturing and strong boundaries. Raising a child can be very challenging and parents tell us they are interested in learning new skills and strategies. As well as boosting training, SKIP will be producing lots of practical tips for parents trying to cope with the everyday challenges of bringing up small children.</p> <p>SKIP was developed following extensive consultation with community groups. A strong theme that emerged from this was the need to tap into the organisations that have the history, the infrastructure and the networks to work with parents and children.</p> <p>With that in mind, one of SKIP’s three strands is developing national resources for training providers and parents wanting information and advice. The second strand will work with community organisations such as Plunket and Barnardos, to help them strengthen their existing programmes and services. Resources based on these two strands form a SKIP toolkit, designed to support groups to deliver consistent and effective education and resources.</p> <p>The third SKIP strand is the Local Initiatives Fund, a pool of money we’ve made available to support community organisations who are promoting the benefits of everyday parenting and who are</p>

	providing practical support to parents and caregivers.
Maori Party	Our commitment to whanaungatanga ensures that we will encourage use of strategies to ensure children are kept in a safe, abuse-free and secure environment.
National	Yes. We believe that strong families can generally look to this matter themselves. We are committed to parenting training for those needing assistance.
United Future	Yes. United Future believes the Families Commission is the ideal body to initiate and implement parenting skills programmes, available to all families. See Policy document, <i>United Future's Policy Proposal for Restructuring the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF)</i> , April 2004 (attached).

Q17: Do you have a policy on child care and early childhood education?

Why does this matter?

Access to quality childcare is essential if parents are to combine work with raising a family. The *quality* of that childcare is crucial. Poor quality childcare is associated with poorer outcomes for the children; high quality childcare is associated with positive outcomes including the child's ability to cooperate with adults, their abilities in maths and reading, and positive interactions with other children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 313). Features associated with high quality childcare include good staff training, child-centred attitudes towards childrearing and attractive working conditions (such as good pay, ongoing staff training and development, low child:staff ratios). Public policy has an important role to play in ensuring that childcare centres provide these conditions, along with ensuring the affordability and availability of such care.

Party responses

Greens

Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 37 through 43. This policy is also under review in light of the Government's adoption of our commitment to support community and not for profit childcare. We are also working to ensure that healthy food is made available in all early childhood centres.

[ECC note – points 37-43 of the Children's Policy are:

37: Ensure all children have access to quality, affordable early childhood and school education; improve resourcing to community-based, not-for-profit centres incl. kohanga reo, Pacific Island language nests and other culturally appropriate options.

38: Increase investment in education at all levels (and support teaching profession and lower teacher:pupil ratios).

39: Assist children with special needs to get all the assistance and support they need to get the best possible education.

40: Fund special needs according to need, not school roll.

41: Work towards Te Reo being taught in all schools.

42: Increase number of Maori advisers and resource teachers and invest more in development of Maori resource material.

43: Add environmental education to core curriculum at all levels.]

Labour

Labour's commitment to early childhood education is reflected in the Early Childhood Strategy, Nga Huarahi Arataki - Pathways to the Future – that sets out goals for participation, quality and collaborative engagement.

www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?indexid=5234&layout=index

Early childhood education is the first stepping-stone on the path to lifelong learning. Access to high quality early childhood education that parents can afford, is the firm footing children need to thrive at school and beyond.

In government, Labour has delivered for early childhood education. Our investment has doubled in six years – an increase of over 100 percent since 1999.

Over the next term of government, Labour intends to continue along the same pathway, focusing on increasing participation in quality, affordable early childhood education.

Labour has committed to providing 20 hours free early childhood education per week for three and four years olds in community-based centres from 2007, but affordability still needs to be tackled at other points in the system.

In addition to the 20 hours free policy, Labour will cut the cost to parents of early childhood education by reviewing the rate of the childcare assistance and extending eligibility criteria. In Budget 2005 we invested an extra \$55 million over four years in childcare and employer support initiatives to enhance the work choices available to parents. This involved widened eligibility for OSCAR and Childcare and Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) subsidies, which will see around 70 per cent of all families with children eligible for extra assistance, including 96 per cent of all sole parents. It also included the extension of childcare subsidies to home-based care and increased funding for OSCAR providers.

This is a significant investment that will help to ensure access to childcare is no longer a financial hurdle for parents looking to return to work. Moreover, these initiatives are over and above the extra assistance offered through the Working for Families package, which saw childcare Assistance rates increased by 10 percent last year – with a further 10 percent boost in October this year.

Another important focus is widening the supply of services. Labour will work with existing early childhood providers to extend services, by either growing their centres where appropriate or establishing additional centres on other sites.

Employers, particularly in the state sector, will be encouraged to establish early childhood education and care facilities on work sites. Greater family and whanau involvement will be encouraged through targeted education programmes and improved co-ordination with health and social service agencies.

In addition, to help ensure services are working to meet the needs of the families they serve Labour will move toward requiring parental and staff involvement in the governance of early childhood

	services. This will include providing them with good information to guide their input.
Maori Party	Our expectation is that regardless of the opportunity to pay, there will be opportunities for everyone to be successful to the highest level of their potential, and that rising educational levels will be achieved. Access to quality early childhood education is a vital aspect of this. Incumbent with our focus on wairuatanga is that we will ensure kaupapa Maori is taught in all early childhood institutions.
National	Yes. This will be included in our education and tax based policies.
United Future	<p>Yes. See attached United Future Policy Document, Early Childhood Education (in Appendix).</p> <p><i>[ECC note – the Early Childhood Education Policy includes the following:</i></p> <p>Access / cost</p> <p><i>(a): All preschoolers over 3 years old to receive 20 hours' free ECE at any teacher-led centre.</i></p> <p><i>3: "Ensure that government funding of early childhood centres is reflected in the fees passed on to parents by requiring them to disclose what proportion of fees is taxpayer-funded."</i></p> <p><i>7: "Support the further development of Kohanga Reo and Pacific Island language nests as a means of increasing participation in early childhood education amongst Maori and Pacific Island pre-schoolers."</i></p> <p>Quality</p> <p><i>1: "Support lifting the qualifications of early childhood teachers, but relax the government's target for all staff to be degree-qualified by 2012 for centres that provide all-day care as well as education, to allow them to employ support staff to supervise children when they are not actively engaged in learning."</i></p> <p><i>2: "Include early childhood teacher trainees in United Future's bonding scheme that reduces student loan debt for those who are qualified in fields facing shortages, in return for a continuous period of work in New Zealand after they graduate."</i></p> <p><i>10: "Prioritise staff-to-child ratios for each age group taught early childhood education centres as a condition of funding."</i></p> <p><i>11: "Support flexible training options for those early childhood workers who want to upgrade their qualifications while they continue to work."</i></p> <p>Value / resourcing ECE</p> <p><i>9: "Give playcentres and other parent-run early childhood education providers more recognition and resources for the work that they do."</i></p> <p>Special needs</p> <p><i>5: "Increase funding for early identification of children with special needs and disabilities with targeted systematic, intensive and high quality interventions."</i></p> <p><i>6: "Ensure that early childhood education teachers are trained to recognise children with behavioural disorders or potential learning difficulties."</i></p> <p>Parental involvement in children's education</p> <p><i>(c): UF is focused on "engaging more parents in their children's education from the very beginning, by expanding credible programmes such as Parents As First Teachers and Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) progressively to include all new families."</i></p> <p><i>(d): "...implement family education programmes, enabling new parents to enrol in adult education while their children attend early childhood education, so that they may be better able to support the learning of their children. Parents could improve their literacy, numeracy, communication and parenting skills, and the programmes would also bring parent and child together on a regular basis to learn as a family."</i></p> <p><i>4: "Ensure that parents are fully consulted in the development of early childhood education policy, and assist early childhood education providers to encourage greater parental involvement in their activities."</i></p> <p>Coordination</p> <p><i>8: "Establish networks between early childhood education centres and family support services, such as parenting courses, budget advice, health and counselling services."</i></p>

Q18: Do you have a policy on support and respite care for families and carers of children with special needs?

Why does this matter?

Families of children with special needs may have extraordinary demands made on their resources of time, patience, love, understanding, skill and finances. This applies to siblings as well as parents and other family members. A thorough assessment of need, provision of specialist services, arrangements for shared and communal care and regular respite care enable family to cope and the child with special needs to live as full a life as possible. Without these, lives can be made miserable and desperate, relationships can break down, families can disintegrate and human potential can be lost.

Party responses

Greens	<p>Partially. We do not presently have specific policy in relation to respite care, although this may be addressed in the policy review process. However the general approach in our education, income support and health policies is supportive of respite care. We have a specific policy commitment to increase the level of ORS funding for schools which will significantly benefit families caring for those with special needs.</p> <p>Sue Kedgley's Private Members' Bill on workplace flexibility provides for parents to negotiate flexible working hours if they have children with disabilities under 18.</p>
Labour	<p>Labour's commitment to support and respite care for families and carers of children with special needs is set out in Objective 15 of the New Zealand Disability Strategy (2001, www.odi.govt.nz/documents/publications/nz-disability-strategy.pdf) to value families, whanau and people providing ongoing support.</p> <p>Support for family caregiving can be accessed from health and disability support programmes provided by the Ministry of Health, ACC, Ministry of Social Development (Work and Income service), and the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.</p> <p>People who have a child with special needs or a health disability can apply to Work and Income for a Child Disability Allowance, which is assessed by a GP or Psychologist/Specialist and is not means tested. Child Disability Allowance is a non-taxable allowance, not income or asset tested. It is available to the principal caregiver of a dependent child or young person who has a serious physical or intellectual disability.</p> <p>Needs Assessment And Service Co-ordination (NASC) agencies cater for people with an intellectual, physical or sensory (for example, blind or deaf) disability that will last six months or more. Needs assessment identifies and prioritises all of a person's care and support needs (including those that can be met by other agencies). Service coordination then identifies the most appropriate services and support options to meet assessed needs and outcome goals, within available funding.</p> <p>However, Labour acknowledges that family caregivers have voiced concern at problems they perceive with the assistance available for family caregiving. For example, that it does not recognise the wide range of families' needs, is not sufficiently flexible or easy to access, and does not provide sufficient recognition of the work of family caregivers.</p> <p>The Office for Disability Issues is therefore leading an inter-departmental review of issues of payment and support of family caregivers of disabled people. It includes clarification of government's objectives for family caregiving, and consultation with the disability sector on possible options for change. More information about this review is available at www.odi.govt.nz/whats-happening/work-programmes/family-caregivers.html.</p>
Maori Party	<p>We believe that families must be provided with the appropriate support - and the equivalent support that any outside agency would receive – in order to respond to the needs of children with special needs.</p>
National	<p>Yes. National has traditionally funded respite care for those children with special needs. This will continue.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future believes that caregivers, particularly those that provide daily care for family members and with an illness or special needs, are in need of greater support and the impact on their own personal and financial resources addressed in the form of a Family Carers' Payment. Improved access to equipment designed to aid people with a disability or illness is another area requiring development.</p>

CHILD POVERTY

The rate of child poverty in New Zealand doubled between 1998 and 2001 as a result of social and economic policies which left huge numbers of families struggling to make ends meet (see St-John & Craig, 2004). By 2001, one in three children were poor; by 2004, that figure had dropped to one in five. But that still leaves over 200,000 children in poverty.

In answering the question, "Why does child poverty matter?", there are at least four powerful reasons that can be given.

Firstly, there is an enormous body of research which shows that childhood poverty is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including poor health and well-being, poor cognitive development, increased delinquency and educational underachievement. Furthermore, the longer and more severe the poverty, the more severe the negative outcomes (Shirley et al., 2000).

Socio-economically disadvantaged children "have significantly higher rates of illness, hospitalisation and death from conditions such as pneumonia, injury, skin infections, fetal growth restriction and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome." (Davies et al., 2002, p. 32). Child abuse, developmental delay, gastroenteritis, ear infections and rheumatic fever are also associated with child poverty (The Paediatric Society of New Zealand, 2004). The timing of poverty in a child's life is also relevant; poverty in a child's early years exerts a greater influence on the child's abilities, behaviour and achievements than poverty in later childhood (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 280). In short, "one of the most consistent associations in developmental science is between economic hardship and compromised child development" (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 275).

Secondly, there is evidence that some of the negative effects (both direct and indirect) of childhood poverty are long-lasting, reaching far into adulthood. Some are irreversible. For example, a recent study found that "upward mobility did not mitigate or reverse the adverse effects of low childhood socio-economic status on adult health" (Poulton et al., 2002, p. 1640). There are furthermore fairly robust statistical associations between childhood poverty and subsequent low income in later life (Ballantyne, Chapple, & Maré, 2003), thus perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage.

Thirdly, there is the question of economic (and social) justice: it is manifestly unjust and contrary to the traditional values of this society that so many children, through no fault of their own, fare much less well than other New Zealand children.

Finally, the injustice of child poverty is unsustainable given not only the cost to the individual, but the cost to society and the threat it poses to social cohesion.

The long-term cost of childhood poverty to the individual and society as a whole has clear ramifications for public policy: action against child poverty needs to be preventative in the best interests of both the child and the nation, particularly during children's early years when they are highly vulnerable to the long-term ill effects of poverty:

"The development and organization of the brain are directed by the day to day experiences of babies, infants and toddlers. Neglect of their needs is frequent in impoverished homes with this neglect seen in the failure of the brain to make vital connections and to form the pathways between the brain cells that are essential for communication. The myriad of disorders and disability seen later in adolescence and adulthood are already too expensive for the country to control or contain." (Fancourt, 2000)

Q19: Do you have a policy to reduce child poverty?

Why does this matter?

Governments routinely state that they have a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of society and have a commitment to securing a nation's future. Children are both vulnerable and our future. But poverty robs too many children of the opportunity to fulfil their potential. This is not only a tragedy for the individual, but also for the nation. According to some, child poverty is inevitable and cyclical. However, research conducted by UNICEF suggests otherwise:

"...there is nothing inevitable or immutable about child poverty levels; they reflect different national policies interacting with social changes and market forces" (UNICEF, 2005, p. 3).

The point to note here is that government policy plays a critical role in determining child poverty rates:

"government policy appears to account for most of the variation in child poverty levels between [developed] countries." (UNICEF, 2005, p. 2)

UNICEF's analysis of child poverty and social spending in OECD countries confirms that social spending on initiatives which improve family security ("family allowances, disability and sickness benefits, formal day care provision, unemployment insurance, employment promotion..." and the like) lowers the risk of children growing up in poverty.

Party responses

Greens

Yes. Please see our Children's Policy section headed "giving every child the best possible start in life – regardless of income".

[ECC note – the relevant policy items are:

1. "Work towards eliminating child poverty in New Zealand by 2010. As a first step to achieving this, the Green Party will urgently develop indicators to measure poverty and regularly monitor poverty levels, especially for children.

2. Introduce a Universal Child Benefit. This non income tested, non transferable payment to the primary caregiver would be similar to the Family Benefit that was scrapped in 1991. The benefit would provide a payment of \$15 per week for the first child and \$10 per week for every subsequent child.

3. Review and reform family assistance policies. International research has shown that family assistance policies play a crucial role in reducing child poverty rates. The real value of family assistance policies has decreased as successive governments have not increased income thresholds. The Greens will undertake a major review of family assistance policies, and in particular:

a. Ensure family assistance payments keep pace with the cost of living. Family assistance payments are currently not adjusted for inflation, unlike other benefits. (b) Review targeting provisions and adjust abatement rates to reduce poverty traps. Remove barriers to work for those on benefits who are moving into work or those in work seeking to increase their wages. (c) Remove discriminatory policies to ensure families in and out of work are treated equitably. (e.g. some family assistance policies such as Independent Family Tax Credit discriminate against beneficiaries and those not in the workforce).

4. Extend paid parental leave of 14 weeks to all mothers in the workforce. As an initial step the Greens would extend paid parental leave from 12 to 14 weeks, which is the minimum standard set by the ILO, and work to extend eligibility to self employed workers and other workers currently excluded.

5. End compulsory work testing for single parents on the Domestic Purposes Benefit and for the partners of beneficiaries whose primary responsibility is caring for dependants.

6. Provide support and education programmes for parents. All parents should have access to programmes that will support and develop their parenting skills.

7. Provide additional support for parents in the first year of each child's life. Review and increase resourcing of programmes such as Plunket to ensure that every child is seen regularly in their first months of life.

8. Introduce a tax-free threshold at the bottom of the income tax scale. This would have a direct impact on child poverty by giving low income families more money in their pockets, and reducing the poverty trap.

9. Support a full and wide ranging public debate on Universal Basic Income. As a first step, more research is required on how a UBI would be applied in NZ. The UBI recognises the value of caring for children and the many women and men who stay at home full time to look after their children and other dependants.

10. Work towards setting benefit amounts at a level that is sufficient for all basic needs.

11. Work towards full employment that provides a decent income."]

Labour

Yes. The *Agenda for Children* makes clear our commitment to end poverty. Labour "recognises that poverty can seriously affect children's development, especially when they are young. The Government is committed to investing in ways to eliminate child poverty and improve life for individuals, families and communities, both economically and socially" (pp. 21-23).

Over the next two years, the Working for Families package will continue directing substantial targeted tax relief towards 300,000 New Zealand households with dependent children. That is sixty per cent of

	<p>all households with dependent children.</p> <p>By 1 April 2007, families earning \$25,000 to \$45,000 a year will be, on average, \$95 to \$100 a week better off through these changes – and that isn't counting help from the improved accommodation and childcare subsidies which are also part of the Working for Families package.</p> <p>The Working for Families package is the biggest single redistribution of income to low and middle income families in three decades. It stands in stark contrast to the redistributions upwards during the last two decades, which increased social inequality.</p> <p>But it also builds upon a number of earlier measures, in particular income-related rents for state house tenants and an increased housing stock. 90 per cent of Housing New Zealand tenants now pay no more than 25% of their household income in rent, with nearly 98% of new tenants qualifying. Income-related rents were cited in the <i>Social Report</i> as a key factor in the recent fall in child poverty. Around 5,600 properties were added to our state and community housing stock over the past five years with 3,288 to be added over next four years.</p> <p>Also, all under-18 year olds and over 65-year olds enrolled with a Primary Health Organisations now qualify for lower cost doctor visits and lower charges for prescription items.</p>
Maori Party	<p>Our commitment to rangatiratanga leads us to respond to the global call to action against poverty, with particular focus on the eradication of child poverty. We certainly agree that it is desirable and indeed possible to end child poverty. Our particular concern is that the proportion of children in sole parent families below the poverty threshold rose from 18% in 1988 to 66% in 2002, and recent Government decisions will disproportionately disadvantage this group.</p>
National	<p>Yes. We believe that the way forward is to discourage welfare dependency and increase employment and self-sufficiency.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future's aim is the elimination of child poverty. We recognise that ending child poverty involves an economic dimension of ensuring that families have adequate income, but also reaches into many other aspects of family life. This includes ensuring access to quality housing at an affordable price, addressing children's nutritional and health needs, education, and the relational dimension of families, aided by good parenting skills.</p> <p>Any approach to ending child poverty needs to be holistic and engage families from an early stage. United Future promotes a comprehensive family support model, see attached Policy document, <i>United Future's Policy Proposal for Restructuring the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF)</i>, April 2004.</p>

Q20: Do you think ending child poverty is possible? If not, why not?

Why does this matter?

Tables of rates of child poverty (UNICEF, 2005) in OECD countries demonstrate marked differences which do not follow closely measures of national income or wealth. Commitment to ending or reducing child poverty would seem to be a decisive factor in the differences between countries.

Party responses

Greens	Yes!
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Labour	Yes.
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Maori Party	[See Q19]
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National	Yes.
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United Future	[See Q19]
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Q21: Do you think ending child poverty is desirable? If yes, what are the key reasons for doing so? If not, why not?

Why does this matter?

Research, including New Zealand studies shows that childhood poverty is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including poor health and well-being, poor cognitive development, increased delinquency and educational underachievement. Furthermore, the longer and more severe the poverty, the more severe the negative outcomes (Shirley et al., 2000). Poorer children suffer worse cardiovascular and dental health, substance abuse and addiction than their less poor counterparts (Poulton et al., 2002, p. 1640). Socio-economically disadvantaged children “have significantly higher rates of illness, hospitalisation and death from conditions such as pneumonia, injury, skin infections, fetal growth restriction and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome” (Davies et al., 2002, p. 32). Child abuse, developmental delay, gastroenteritis, ear infections and rheumatic fever are also associated with child poverty (The Paediatric Society of New Zealand, 2004). The timing of poverty in a child’s life is also relevant; poverty in a child’s early years exerts a greater influence on the child’s abilities, behaviour and achievements than poverty in later childhood (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p. 280).

There is evidence that some of the negative effects (both direct and indirect) of childhood poverty are long-lasting, reaching far into adulthood. Some are irreversible. For example, a recent study found that “upward mobility did not mitigate or reverse the adverse effects of low childhood socioeconomic status on adult health” (Poulton et al., 2002, p. 1640). There are furthermore fairly robust statistical associations between childhood poverty and subsequent low income in later life (Ballantyne et al., 2003), thus perpetuating the cycle of disadvantage.

There is the question of economic (and social) justice: it is manifestly unjust and contrary to the traditional values of this society that so many children, through no fault of their own, fare much less well than other New Zealand children.

Finally, the injustice of child poverty is unsustainable given not only the cost to the individual, but the cost to society and the threat it poses to social cohesion.

Party responses

Greens Yes. The Greens as a party are fundamentally committed to ensuring that decisions taken today still make sense tomorrow. Ending child poverty is part of our fundamental commitment to passing the earth on in a better state than we inherited it! To quote from the Vision section of our Children’s Policy:

“Each child should have the opportunity to grow with joy, be fully supported by their family and be an integral part of our society. Each child deserves a secure base from which they can express their creativity and discover life as an adventure.

For children living in poverty, violence or loneliness, life is grim. The first step in offering them a better life is to help their families cope materially. Money alone can not guarantee a happy childhood, but without enough money, children can be ground down and left with little hope.”

Labour Yes – as stated above, the *Agenda for Children* “recognises that poverty can seriously affect children’s development, especially when they are young.” The earlier Agenda for Children Discussion Paper set out the problem definition in greater detail:

“The literature on outcomes for children shows that persistent low family income in childhood is associated with negative outcomes, such as lower educational achievement. While the factors that influence outcomes for any single child are complex and inter-related, and low income will not always mean poor outcomes, these findings suggest we should be concerned if New Zealand children are living in families where low income and other disadvantages persist over time.”

Maori Party [See Q19]

National Yes. Every child deserves a decent start in life. A society that does not look after its most vulnerable is not a society that we want to lead in Government.

United Future [See Q19]

Q22: Have you set a target date for ending child poverty? If yes, by what date? If not, why not?

Why does this matter?

Financial planning by governments is detailed and routine. Target-setting is a part of that planning. Any serious commitment by government to elimination of child poverty will incorporate this aim into other aspects of financial planning and set targets and timelines accordingly. The United Kingdom government as an example, has set targets for reducing and eliminating child poverty and has so far been successful in meeting them.

Party responses

Greens Yes. 2010

Labour No. Setting targets of this sort can be a counter-productive exercise. The timeframes almost always are (and need to be) too long to be meaningful, and there is a risk that it focuses policy too narrowly on the target itself (in this case the proportion of households below a specified point on the income distribution range). This means some of the wider implications of the policy goal can be lost sight of. But we are however committed to constantly measuring progress in reducing child poverty. We report each year via the Social Report – the analysis for this year's forthcoming report is attached; it is available publicly at www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/cross-sectoral-work/indicators-for-low-incomes-and-inequality.html. We also evaluate impact of key programmes like Working for Families (see question [24]).

Maori Party

National No. It has taken 30 years of welfare dependency to become ingrained. It will take some time to remove it and replace with a culture of self-esteem, personal responsibility and worth.

United Future

Q23: If in government, how long do you anticipate it would take your party to reduce child poverty by 50 percent?

Why does this matter?

Elements of taxation, income support, employment, and overall economic policies can be brought to bear on the problem of child poverty to enable realistic estimates to be made in the context of economic forecasts. New Zealand is enjoying a period of economic prosperity which would seem to be a suitable time to aim for elimination of child poverty and to introduce structural changes which maintain that condition.

Party responses

Greens That is a very good question! Assuming we are the major party in Government after the next election, we believe we could reduce Child Poverty by 50% by 2007.

Labour The Working for Families package will have a dramatic impact on child poverty, reducing it by up to seventy per cent if we use fifty per cent of the median income as the poverty line. The proportion of children in homes earning under fifty per cent of the median income will be reduced from 14.7% in 2004 to just 4.3% by 2007. Even if we use sixty per cent of the median as the poverty line, we will reduce child poverty by thirty per cent – and at this new level, child poverty in New Zealand reduces well below the average European Union rate – and will be on a par with that of the Netherlands.

Maori Party

National It is impossible to say. For us to significantly reduce child poverty will take several years and is dependent on economic conditions, or the willingness of some to change and end a culture of addiction to welfare.

United Future

Q24: Will you monitor and report on progress towards ending child poverty?

Why does this matter? In its description of best practice with respect to eliminating child poverty, UNICEF highlights the importance of monitoring and reporting on progress towards this aim. The function of monitoring is to “fuel advocacy, inform policy, and sharpen accountability” (UNICEF, 2005, p. 9). Monitoring the impact of policy on children – in this case, child poverty – is an essential part of the child impact reporting process.

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children’s Policy – policy point 1.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – policy point 1 is:</i></p> <p><i>1. “Work towards eliminating child poverty in New Zealand by 2010. As a first step to achieving this the Green Party will urgently develop indicators to measure poverty and regularly monitor poverty levels, especially for children.”]</i></p>
Labour	<p>We have committed to a multi-year programme of evaluations covering the various components of the Working for Families package and the package as a whole. One of the evaluation objectives is to assess the impact of the package on net incomes, income poverty and living standards for all those affected by the changes, especially for low-to-middle income families with dependent children.</p>
Maori Party	
National	<p>Yes. I am concerned, however, to have sensible monitoring and reporting that does not waste resources looking at poverty without actually coming up [with] positive solutions.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future believes regular reporting on social indicators, particularly on family outcomes (e.g. incomes, health indicators, education) that encompass children’s interests is essential.</p>

Q25: Will you build on existing initiatives (e.g. Working for Families) to reduce child poverty?

Why does this matter?	<p>The Working for Families package contains significant and praiseworthy elements towards eliminating child poverty in New Zealand. It contains a number of features which will assist families, including a great deal of support for those families who are able to work. Support for beneficiary families, however, is disappointing. There is a danger that the two-pronged strategy could undermine the better parts of the package. Leaving children who happen to have parents not currently in work in greater poverty could lead to a growth of problems among this group and make it more difficult to help them out of poverty.</p> <p>What appears to be missing is a long-term strategy to fulfil the Government's commitment to eradicate child poverty in this country, for which Working for Families would be a first step. The current emphasis on 'work not welfare' will improve the outcomes for many of New Zealand's poor children. However, as the British evidence suggests, the 'work not welfare' strategy can only be expected to reduce poverty, not eliminate it.</p> <p>A long-term strategy would need to include setting targets to progressively reduce poverty and monitoring progress. The measures would need to lift all children out of poverty, not just those in working households - after all, no one would argue that children themselves are to be blamed for finding themselves in poverty. Further, the measures would need to pay attention to prevention, that is to breaking the cycle of disadvantage which overseas research shows is suffered by those in unemployment and low-quality, low-paid jobs. The cooperation and support of the public cannot be underestimated; to this end the strategy would need to include awareness raising about the dynamics of poverty and public debate on how we value children and childhood and whether this society will continue to let children suffer the deprivations of poverty.</p>
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Party responses	
Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children's Policy and Income Support Policy. We have committed to bringing forward the Family Support changes deferred until 2006 and 2007. We wish to see a system more focussed on children, which addresses child poverty regardless of income source. We are committed to ending structural discrimination against the children of beneficiaries.</p>
Labour	<p>Unlike some other parties, Labour intends to implement Working for Families in full. Beyond that, Labour will continue to invest in initiatives to reduce child poverty, and our manifesto of policies for the 2005 election will set out more information about this.</p> <p>However, we have already built on Working for Families through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The extension of the Mortgage Insurance Scheme to help up to 8,000 first home buyers who can service a mortgage but need help to raise a deposit. ▪ The further expansion of childcare and OSCAR subsidies to 96 per cent of sole parents and 70 per cent of all families with children ▪ \$52 million to support a move towards 20 hours a week of early child education in community based centres from July 2007 ▪ The reform of the benefit system around a Single Core Benefit to assist people to stay in work, change jobs or move into better quality employment and to provide tailored employment support for all clients.
Maori Party	<p>We do not believe the Working for Families policy will reduce child poverty. Indeed we have been concerned about the likely impact of this programme on those whanau living below the poverty line. About 300,000 children will miss out on the Child Tax Credit. The Government's Working for Families package keeps the <i>child tax credit</i> in place until 2006. Furthermore, the package removes the <i>child-related component</i> of between \$17 and \$21 in core benefits. This equates to 175,000 children being deprived of the child-related component of core benefits.</p>
National	<p>See tax package to be announced.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future supports the Working for Families initiative and believes that continued efforts are needed to ensure that all families have adequate income to support children.</p>

Q26: Are you in favour of a universal child benefit?

Why does this matter?	<p>Universal (or near-universal) child benefit payments, as opposed to targeted ones, have a number of advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “a secure source of income that stays with the caregiver of the child at times of family breakdown ▪ certainty of payment, as the amount does not reduce with earned income ▪ control of this amount by the caregiver, reducing problems brought about by lack of sharing of family income ▪ very high take-up rates, in contrast to income-tested measures ▪ the facility to maintain a national register of all children ▪ the possibility of capitalisation in order to provide a deposit for a first home ▪ structural and administration simplicity.” (St-John & Craig, 2004, pp. 58-59) <p>It is worth pointing out that take-up of universal payments is obviously much higher than take-up of targeted ones; a low take-up of benefits, for example due to their being too complex or too risky, compromises a government’s ability to implement anti-poverty measures.</p>
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Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children’s Policy – point 2. We wish to see a Universal Child Benefit introduced which would provide a payment of \$15 per week for the first child and \$10 per week for every subsequent child.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – point 2 of the Children’s Policy is: 2. “Introduce a Universal Child Benefit. This non income tested, non transferable payment to the primary caregiver would be similar to the Family Benefit that was scrapped in 1991. The benefit would provide a payment of \$15 per week for the first child and \$10 per week for every subsequent child.”]</i></p>
Labour	<p>Not in the foreseeable future. In an environment of relatively scarce resources, Labour see the priority as being targeting additional spending towards initiatives that reduce child poverty and/or make work pay rather than spreading funding thinly across the whole population, including better-off New Zealanders, through across-the-board tax cuts or a universal child benefit.</p>
Maori Party	<p>The Maori Party supports the concept of a universal child benefit, and particularly one that can be capitalized to enable whanau to buy their own homes.</p>
National	<p>I am not prepared to comment on that at this stage.</p>
United Future	<p>No. United Future supports the Working for Families Package on the basis that income support is targeted where it is needed most. Income splitting and tax reductions then provide for increased family incomes for those families who do not qualify for state assistance.</p>

Q27: What is your policy on income support for families with children when the parents are receiving welfare benefits?

Why does this matter?	<p>Benefit levels must be sufficient to prevent families falling into poverty if faced with unemployment or other adverse events:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">“Good benefits are needed to help people to avoid or escape from poverty: a decent level of benefits enables people to cope and to plan more easily when faced with problems which interrupt or limit earnings. Benefits combined with tax credits should be set above the poverty line and in accordance with established Minimum Income Standards. The long-term harm created by inadequate benefits and frozen disregards must be recognized and remedied.” (Sinfield, 2004)</p> <p>Good benefits are especially important for those most at risk of unemployment, but the provision of generous benefits is not uncontroversial. A common argument is that good benefits act as a disincentive, discouraging beneficiaries from entering the paid workforce; that is, if life on a benefit is comparable to life in work, there is no incentive to seek paid work. However the evidence for this is inconclusive. What is clear, however, is that poverty through unemployment (i.e. inadequate benefits) can be a barrier to finding employment.</p>
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Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes! As noted above, we want to see all families on a given income receive the same child support irrespective of the source of family income.</p>
Labour	<p>Labour wants to improve income adequacy for all low income families with children while also promoting movement into employment by making sure moving off benefit pays. Paid work is the best form of welfare therefore we need a differential between those in paid work and those not in paid work.</p> <p>At present a sole parent with two children earning two-thirds of the average wage is no better off in work than on a benefit. The introduction of the In Work Payment from 1 April 2006 changes that by putting \$30 a week into the pocket of that family if they're in work. It 'makes work pay'.</p> <p>We also believe financial assistance towards the cost of children should be paid as much as possible through one payment, Family Support. This allows assistance to be readily transferable when people move between benefit and work. This is why, from 1 April 2005 the 'child component' of benefits and Student Allowances has become part of the (increased) Family Support payment. This affects couples with children and sole parents with more than one child.</p>
Maori Party	<p>The Maori Party is opposed to children being deprived or disadvantaged through the exercise of government policy targeted at penalizing beneficiary parents</p>
National	<p>Our job/priority must be to get parents off welfare wherever feasible and desirable for the children and the parents. Welfare is subsistence living; children deserve better.</p>
United Future	<p>United Future continues to support the view that all children deserve quality education, health, housing, social and family relationships, sporting and cultural opportunities no matter what their family situation is; and that family incomes must be sufficient to provide for this.</p>

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Ill-treatment (abuse and neglect) blights the lives of many New Zealand children. For these children home, which should be a place of safety and love, is instead a place of emptiness, misery and terror. Child abuse and neglect includes physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and witnessing domestic violence.

What becomes of these children? A number of them die or are disabled as a result of their ill-treatment but most survive. By the time they reach adulthood, they carry no outward sign of their childhood experience but many are impaired in their enjoyment of life and ability to cope. They have an increased rate of serious difficulty with relationships, mental ill-health, failure and suicide. They have a tendency to be violent, exploitative and neglectful toward other people.

What lies behind the ill-treatment of children? Research identifies domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, family poverty and social isolation as closely associated with child ill-treatment. A cycle of violence exists through which people abused in childhood are more likely to abuse their own children although it should be said that two thirds of people who were abused in childhood and have children of their own do not abuse them. Countries differ markedly in their rates of child ill-treatment deaths, indicating that national differences in social attitudes are important.

New Zealand's rate of child deaths from ill-treatment is high by comparison with other industrialised countries. It is four times that of a group of five countries, Spain, Greece, Italy, Ireland and Norway with the lowest rate (UNICEF, 2003). Ten children under fifteen years of age are killed each year in New Zealand, by the people who have their care. Four of these children are under a year of age. Eighty-five percent of adults responsible for child homicide in New Zealand are members of the child's family or household. They include fathers, stepfathers, mothers, mother's boyfriends and other family members. Seventy percent are male.

The prevalence of ill-treatment can be measured in ways other than mortality rates. In the most recent year for which figures are available (2002/3) 7,361 of the children notified to the statutory child protection agency were assessed as abused or neglected. The Christchurch cohort study found that 5.6% of girls and 1.4% of boys up to the age of sixteen had suffered sexual abuse involving intercourse.

While strategies and services to respond to existing abuse and neglect of children and to other forms of family violence are needed the hope for reduction of its prevalence lies in prevention. Worldwide there is a great range of programmes aimed at preventing violence and leading toward more peaceful, constructive family life, greater respect for children and limitation of abusive behaviour.

Prevention can aim to change the attitudes and behaviour of the population as a whole or of population groups at higher risk. A number of broad aims are to:

- bring about changes in the conditions of life, such as poverty, unemployment, unequal life chances and social isolation that contribute to abuse and neglect
- change aggressive and exploitative attitudes and behaviour.
- provide assistance and support to families with young children.
- enable children and those who might be in a position to act on their behalf to resist incipient abuse.

Q28: Do you have a policy on reducing family violence?

Why does this matter?

Adults who abuse a partner are also likely to abuse children in the household. Harm to children from violence is not restricted to direct effects. Violence between the adults in their households causes fear, and insecurity and provides negative models of behaviour.

Children's experiences of domestic violence range from being directly involved in the violent incident, seeing their mothers being beaten or choked and hearing the verbal and physical abuse as it occurs (Edleson, 1999a). Many children attempt to intervene during violent assaults to protect their mothers either by shielding them from the attacker or by calling for help. They experience the omnipresent fear and intimidation produced by the violence.

When the statistics are compiled, children of battered women are believed to be 6 to 15 times more likely to be directly physically abused (Stark & Flitcraft, 1987). The overlap of violence against women and children is believed to be between 30% and 75% depending on the methodology and definition used (Appel & Holden, 1998b; Edleson, 1999a; Emery & Laumann-Billings, 1998).

Addressing violence against women is an important part of addressing child abuse.

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 17 and 52 to 54 – and our Women's Policy – particularly points 24 through 33. We are committed to the repeal of Section 59 and Sue Bradford has a private members' bill in the ballot to achieve this.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – points 17, 52-54 of the Children's Policy and points 24-33 of the Women's Policy are:</i></p> <p><i>17: "Outlaw the use of physical force in the discipline of children. We will repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act so that parents may no longer use reasonable force to discipline a child. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."</i></p> <p><i>52: Support full implementation of Brown Report on CYF to improve quality and accountability of services.</i></p> <p><i>53: Support CYF to develop a culture which respects the children, families and communities it serves, while carrying out its core function of child protection and nurturing. Staff should be well trained and properly supervised and supported.</i></p> <p><i>54: Seek better infrastructure resourcing for community-based organisations working with and for CYF.</i></p> <p><i>24: Review (with a view to reducing) cost of obtaining a protection order.</i></p> <p><i>25: Resource targeted information to women/men re: protection orders.</i></p> <p><i>26: Fully resource the Domestic Violence Act 1995.</i></p> <p><i>27: Increase educational/training programmes dealing with attitudes and behaviours that result in violence (including non-violent conflict resolution for girls/boys in schools, behaviour modification for men convicted of assaulting women).</i></p> <p><i>28: Financial support for refuge agencies.</i></p> <p><i>29: Reduce TV violence – requiring Broadcasting Standards Authority to monitor and report on TV violence.</i></p> <p><i>30: Require BSA to monitor and enforce TV codes of broadcasting practice re: the portrayal of violence (esp. the requirement that channels avoid screening gratuitous violence).</i></p> <p><i>31: Require TVNZ to lead by reducing TV violence (developing guidelines for producers and programmers; committing to not screening gratuitous violence).</i></p> <p><i>32: Free counselling and support to victims of violence (in addition to ACC).</i></p> <p><i>33: Ensure information on sexual victimisation is available and accessible.]</i></p>
Labour	<p>Labour's policy on reducing family violence is set out in <i>Te Rito, the New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy</i> (2002), which is attached and can also be found at http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/publications/sector-policy/te-rito.pdf</p>
Maori Party	<p>The Maori Party is supportive of manaakitanga and social harmony among our peoples. The Party will advocate for an environment where the care and welfare of one's neighbours, as well as one's whanau, is an important measure of manaakitanga. Another important principle is that of waiuatanga, for we cannot separate our physical existence from our spiritual. In any interpersonal or inter-collective dispute, the Maori Party encourages restorative justice to reflect reconciliation and undo any harm. Such kaupapa lead us to a position of 'zero tolerance' for any form of violence, be it physical, psychological, spiritual, cultural or social.</p> <p>Our key policy preference is to restore our practices and beliefs, in order that we have confidence and faith in our own abilities to care for ourselves and each other. In this respect, we support whanau as the foundation of our communities.</p> <p>We will work to ensure whanau are supported to meet their responsibilities and obligations towards each other, to create an environment where abuse and neglect are not tolerated.</p>
National	<p>Yes. We consider family violence completely unacceptable and, given our history of legislating against it, that will continue.</p>
United Future	<p>See attached Policy document, <i>United Future's Policy Proposal for Restructuring the Department of</i></p>

Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF), April 2004.

The differential intake model proposed by United Future last year (see UF Policy Proposal, p9) has been incorporated into the Children, Young Persons and their Families Amendment Bill (No 4) currently awaiting second reading by Parliament.

Other aspects of the proposal make up United Future's policy on reducing child abuse and neglect.

Q29: Will you commit to action to change societal attitudes towards violence to women and children?

Why does this matter?	<p>While strategies and services to respond to existing abuse and neglect of children and to other forms of family violence are needed, the hope for reduction lies in prevention. An important aspect of prevention is challenging – and changing – those societal attitudes that underpin a tolerance of violence towards women and children. The purpose of changing attitudes is to change behaviour so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children remove themselves from situations in which their safety is compromised. ▪ Men behave non-violently towards women. ▪ Adults behave non-violently towards children. ▪ Women avoid or remove themselves from situations in which their safety is compromised. ▪ Individual observers take action to stop violence. ▪ Public, institutions and influential people take action to support these changes. <p>The much lower rates of child death from abuse in a number of countries indicate the potential for reduction of child abuse and its consequences in New Zealand. Entrenchment of attitudes of interpersonal respect including respect for women and children and of limits to interpersonal violence appear to be important factors in those countries with lower rates of abuse and neglect of children.</p>
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Party responses	
Greens	Yes. Please see our answer to the previous question.
Labour	<p>Yes. This is reflected in Goal 1 of the Te Rito framework, which is, 'To bring about attitudinal change by encouraging intolerance to violence in families/whanau, and by ensuring members of society understand its dimensions and manifestations, and play their part in preventing it'.</p> <p>The Ministry of Health has allocated funding of \$2.5 million to spend on the Framework. The funds have been allocated over the 2004/5 to 2006/7 financial years, and will focus on Goal 1 of the Framework.</p>
Maori Party	[See Q28]
National	Yes. This is a strange question. Violence against women and children is already against the law. Of course National will continue to work to try to reduce violence.
United Future	<p>UF believes the best forum to address negative attitudes towards violence and women and children are public education campaigns promoting parenting skills, run by the Families Commission (See UF Policy Proposal p15).</p> <p>Attitudinal change needs to occur at a mass level, and public education through mass media campaigns (eg. targeting drink driving) has already been used with success. United Future will allocate funding in order to create a television series exploring good parenting and family strategies.</p> <p>United Future has supported the SKIP initiative and also promoted the national roll-out of the "Children in the Middle" Family Court Parent Education Programme, which we will continue to advocate should be mandatory for all separating parents.</p>

Q30: Do you have a policy on child protection?

Why does this matter? Child protection services can operate effectively only if they have a clear, publicly supported mandate and well trained and resourced personnel. The public mandate involves the service in a role conflict between on the one hand offering assistance to families, whanau and communities to enable them to function more effectively to protect their children and on the other hand investigating and holding to account, usually against their will, those involved in ill-treating children. Present efforts hold some promise of reducing this conflict by separation of these two roles through a differential response by the statutory agency and involvement of non-government services and communities.

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 17 through 20 and 52 to 54. The Greens input was essential in securing the passage of the care of children bill which includes an emphasis on the needs of the child and on their protection.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – points 17-20 and 52-54 are:</i></p> <p><i>17: "Outlaw the use of physical force in the discipline of children. We will repeal Section 59 of the Crimes Act so that parents may no longer use reasonable force to discipline a child. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."</i></p> <p><i>18: "Work with schools and communities to create a culture that does not tolerate any form of bullying or intimidation."</i></p> <p><i>19: Ensure public spaces safe for children (introduce vehicle emission standards; reduce exposure to traffic noise in areas of significant pedestrian activity; work with local authorities, schools and communities to make walking/cycling more attractive; lower maximum speeds around areas of significant pedestrian activity; help schools set up e.g. walking buses; improve safety, quality and availability of school buses).</i></p> <p><i>20: Measures to reduce TV violence: (a) Ensure violent programmes scheduled after 10.00pm; (b) Require BSA to monitor violence levels on all TV channels and report to Parliament each year. (c) Require BSA to monitor and enforce TV broadcasting codes re: portrayal of violence, esp. the requirement to avoid screening gratuitous violence. (d) Require TVNZ to take a lead in reducing TV violence by (i) developing guidelines on violence for producers/programmers; (ii) not screening programmes that contain gratuitous violence; (iii) not screening violent programmes before 10.00pm.</i></p> <p><i>52: Support full implementation of Brown Report on CYF.</i></p> <p><i>53: Support CYF to develop a culture respectful of people it services; staff should be well trained and properly supervised and supported.</i></p> <p><i>54: "Seek better infrastructure resourcing for community based organisations working with and for CYF. It is also important to recognise and resource work that is done with families before their children end up in statutory care or the parents in refuge or prison."]</i></p>
Labour	<p>Labour's policy on child protection is set out in the <i>Care and Protection Blueprint</i> (2003), which is attached and can also be found at www.msd.govt.nz/publications/care-protection-blueprint-2003/. The <i>Care and Protection Blueprint</i> is "a strategy for enhancing the services provided to children and young people who are at risk of, or who have suffered from, abuse and neglect. It has been developed for the whole care and protection community and is aimed at improving the way government and community agencies work together to respond to child abuse and neglect."</p>
Maori Party	
National	<p>Yes. No child should be left in violent situations. CYF needs to be overhauled. It should be the agency that works with the worst cases. Far better use of community groups, eg: Plunket, needs to be made.</p>
United Future	<p>See attached Policy document, <i>United Future's Policy Proposal for Restructuring the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYF)</i>, April 2004.</p>

Q31: Will you increase resourcing of services for abused and neglected children and their families?

Why does this matter?

Children may require skilled help to overcome the harm done by abuse and neglect which is usually of long-standing. Their families are also in need of help in learning to establish better relationships. Sometimes the need is for placement away from the immediate family, either through kinship or stranger foster care. In both kinds of foster care support may well be needed to cope with a child whose behaviour has been distorted. Child advocates have a role in supporting the child and looking to his or her interests as he or she engages with services and foster family.

Selection and training of personnel in all of these capacities is crucial to the eventual well-being of the child.

Party responses

Greens	<p>Yes. Please see our Children's Policy – particularly points 52 through 54. A key priority for extra services would be improved funding and support for community-based organisations.</p> <p><i>[ECC note – points 52-54 are: C52: Support full implementation of Brown Report on CYF. C53: Support CYF to develop a culture respectful of people it services; staff shld be well trained and properly supervised and supported. C54: "Seek better infrastructure resourcing for community based organisations working with and for CYF."]</i></p>
Labour	<p>A pilot scheme aimed at improving responses to family violence was funded in Budget 2004. We set aside \$14.9 million over four years for the creation of four Family Safety Teams to provide a collaborative approach to dealing with family violence issues. Each team consists of a supervisor, three police investigators, and three adult and three child victim advocates. Two national coordinators have also been appointed.</p> <p>Taking a more holistic approach to family violence will result in increased support for families and safer environments for family members. That in turn will help build stronger, better-functioning families, and lead to a reduction in family violence and related crimes. An evaluation of the pilot's effectiveness will be done over a three-year period.</p> <p>In Budget 2005 we committed \$12 million for services for children who witness family violence. The new services will ensure the needs and interests of children affected by family violence were appropriately addressed. They will see up to 45 child advocates placed in community NGOs around the country. Child advocates will work with children who receive family violence services from both NGOs and government agencies. Their role will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education and awareness of the effects of family violence on children ▪ Ensuring all agencies respond to the needs of the child ▪ Advice and consultation with those working one-on-one with a child; ▪ Specialist assessment and referral for individual children where necessary.
Maori Party	
National	<p>We will commit to changing the focus of the department towards prevention. This should not involve more money, but better use of it. We will commit to parenting programmes and better/more frequent use of mediation in Family Court.</p>
United Future	<p>Yes. United Future believes this is vital, but as the Baseline Review has highlighted, increased funding by itself will not produce improved outcomes. Increased funding for services needs to be coupled with an improved child protection and family support system oriented towards a preventative and long-term focus, structured to meet the range of needs of vulnerable families.</p>

Q32: Do you support independent auditing of Child Youth and Family Services or other strategies for ensuring quality child protection services?

Why does this matter? Child Youth and Family Services must have public confidence if it is to do its job well. It has frequently been criticised for both excessive and inadequate intervention. Whether the criticism is just or unjust it has a corrosive effect. A standard of practice would be supported and public confidence enhanced by a system of independent audit such as is carried out in schools by the Education Review Office (ERO).

Party responses

Greens	Yes. This is part of our commitment to implement the findings of the Brown Report. We support the development of effective models for genuine monitoring which do not require significant extra bureaucracy. Example include as the role of the Mental Health Commission in monitoring the implementation of the Blueprint for Mental Health or the role of Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment and the Auditor General in monitoring the Electricity Commission.
Labour	A number of mechanisms are already in place aimed at ensuring community involvement in decisions on policy and practice. For example, each Child, Youth and Family site has a Care and Protection Resource panel, which provides community involvement and oversight to the care and protection process. The Children's Commissioner has a special responsibility to monitor the policies and practices of the Department of Child Youth and Family Services and other agencies that exercise a function, duty or power under the Children Young Persons and their Families Act. Decisions and plans are also subject to the oversight of the Family and Youth Courts.
Maori Party	The Maori Party recommends that cultural safety audits should be carried out across all child protection services.
National	Yes. Auditing, however, must be fair and focussed on the delivery of positive outcomes for children.
United Future	Yes. The Baseline Review and subsequent reviews of CYFs case management have underscored the need for all agencies providing child protection and family support services to have rigorous records and information systems in place; so that auditing and quality improvement can occur.

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