

Supporting Quality Improvement in Education and Care

*Early findings from
the Quality Support
Program*



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

Background

This document offers a summary of key findings and learnings from a preliminary evaluation of the Quality Support Program (QSP) by ACECQA.

The QSP is an initiative of the NSW Department of Education Early Childhood Education Directorate (NSW DoE) involving the delivery by ACECQA of free tailored professional development and support to approved providers and service leaders of eligible long day care and family day care services across NSW.

From the commencement of the QSP in March 2018 until May 2019 (the period covered by the preliminary evaluation), three 16-week rounds of support were provided to 142 eligible services. The eligibility criteria for services to participate in the QSP was:

- rated 'Working Towards National Quality Standard (NQS)' and not meeting six or more Elements of the 2012 NQS
- last quality rated between June 2015 and the end of December 2017.

The main objective of the QSP is to improve the quality of participating services to the level of 'Meeting NQS' or higher, and to improve participants' knowledge of and confidence in the 2018 NQS.

Participants benefitted from resources, advice and one-on-one support to help improve on practice and prepare for their next quality assessment and rating (A&R). The structure of each round of the QSP consisted of an introductory workshop, face-to-face service visits, support phone calls and emails, eLearning training, and bespoke resources.

Participating services

During the period covered by the preliminary evaluation report, 142 services participated in the QSP, of which 126 were long day care and 16 family day care. **Table 1** groups the participating services by number of Elements assessed as 'Not Met' when last quality rated.

Table 1

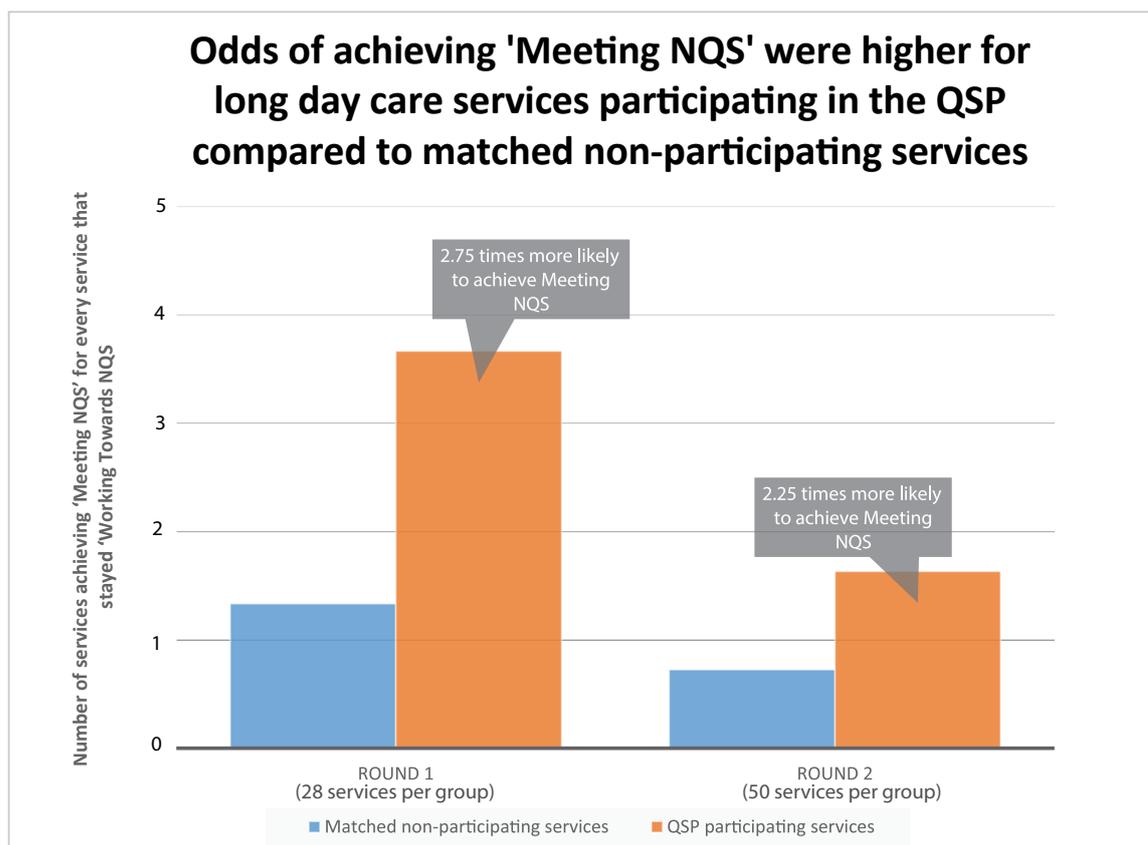
Service type	Number of NQS elements 'Not Met' - 2012 NQS					Total Services
	6 to 9	10 to 19	20 to 29	30 to 39	40+	
LDC	56	49	14	4	3	126
FDC	3	7	4	2	0	16
Total Services	59	56	18	6	3	142

Preliminary findings

Findings from the QSP to date:

- The QSP was largely successful in supporting participating services to achieve an overall rating of 'Meeting NQS' and to improve the number of Elements assessed as 'Met', and Standards and Quality Areas rated as 'Meeting NQS' (see Figure 1).
- QSP services were almost three times more likely to achieve a rating of 'Meeting NQS' compared to matched non-participating services* (see Figure 1). The participating services entered the QSP with diverse levels of quality. Services had at least six Elements 'Not Met', and some had more than 30 Elements 'Not Met' (see Table 1). Services with a larger number of Elements 'Not Met' were less likely to be rated 'Meeting NQS', but could still show quality improvement by being reassessed with a higher number of Elements 'Met'.

Figure 1



Note: Results are displayed for the 78 participating long day care services reassessed at the time of the evaluation. No Round 3 services and few family day care services had received reassessments at the time of the evaluation. Round 2 services had a higher number of elements 'Not Met' than Round 1 services when entering the QSP, and had less time to implement changes before the post-QSP reassessment.

* Non-participating services were matched based on a similar number of Elements 'Not Met' prior to reassessment.

- Service leaders became more confident following their participation in the QSP and felt they were better prepared for the A&R process, as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2

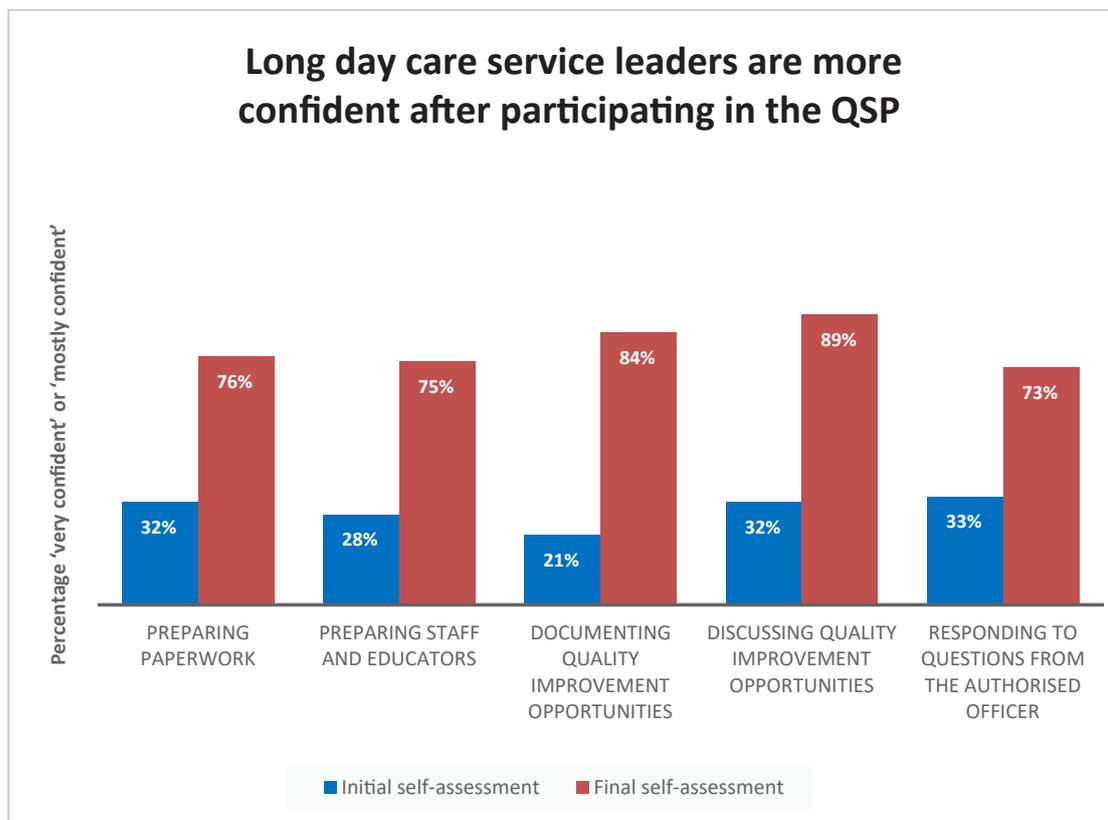
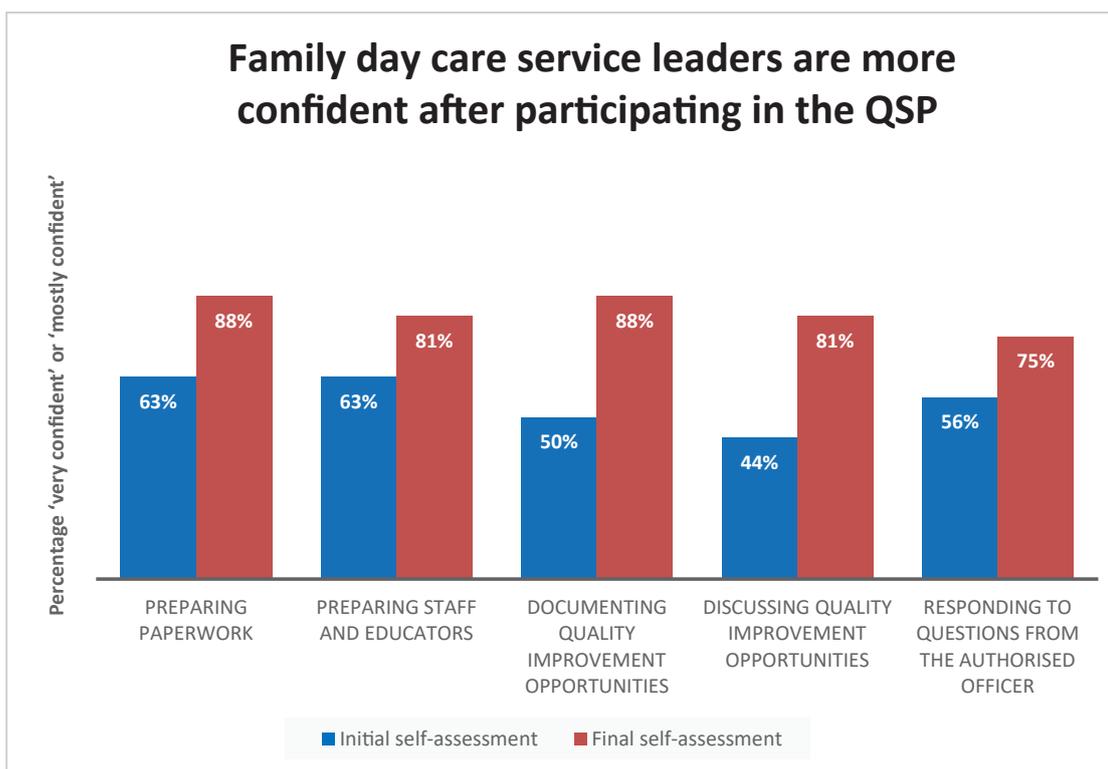
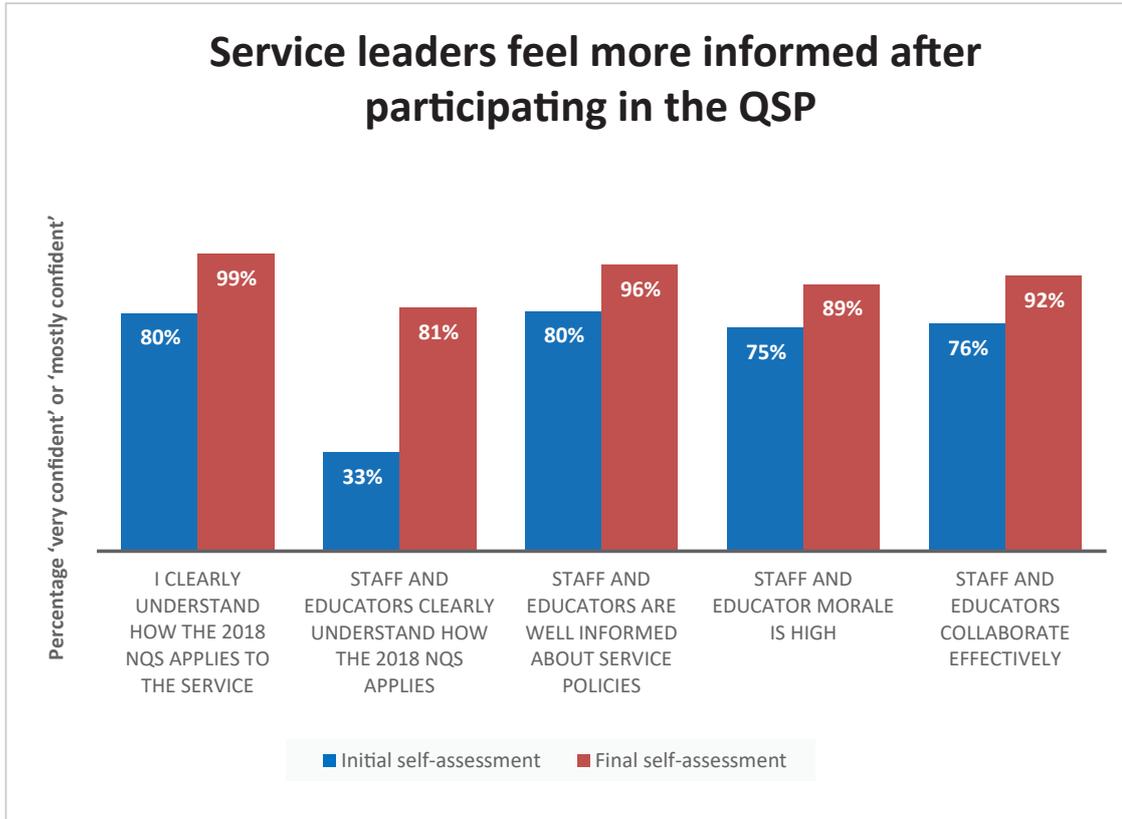


Figure 3



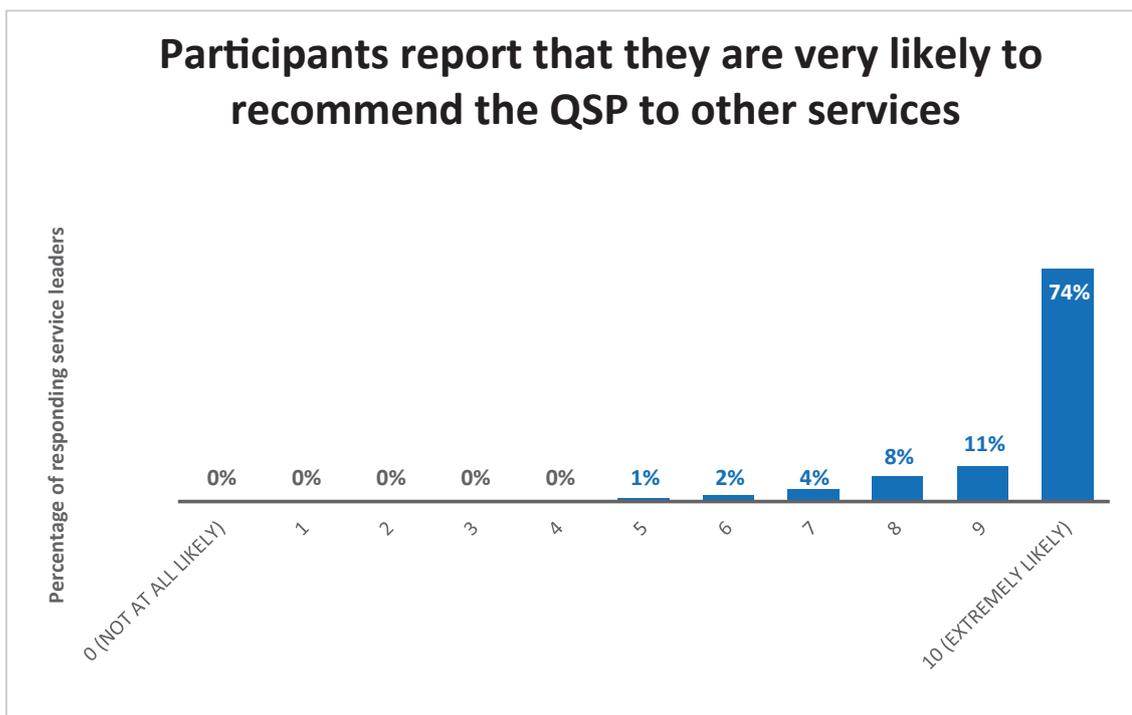
- Service leaders were more knowledgeable about the NQS at completion of the QSP, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4



- Service leaders were overall very satisfied with the QSP, would recommend it to others (Figure 5), and found that the support and resources provided were helpful.

Figure 5



Preliminary learnings

- The QSP highlighted that many of the general sector resources available to support services' understanding of the NQS can be better tailored to the needs of services. In response, ACECQA developed a suite of resources that use plain English, practical tips, and graphical representation.
- Participating service leaders and QSP support officers also identified gaps in National Quality Framework sector resources which ACECQA addressed. Five new information sheets that were developed specifically for the QSP audience have been published to the ACECQA website, as well as more general sector resources (<https://www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/research/meeting-nqs>).
- Sector resources, guidance and templates were found to be more effective for use by QSP participating service leaders when they are provided with support and advice on how to apply them in their service context. This finding has potential implications for how sector resources for this audience are developed in future and how agencies, such as ACECQA and regulatory authorities, support quality improvement.

Conclusion

The QSP evaluation results, together with the qualitative feedback from QSP support officers and participating service leaders, demonstrate how the provision of tailored, service-specific support can improve quality and deliver other benefits for services rated 'Working Towards NQS'.

Specific advantages of this method of support that were highlighted included:

- choosing a few specific areas to target for improvement
- adapting supportive resources to meet service needs
- having support provided by a sector professional who is familiar with the service and available to answer specific questions.

An aim of the QSP is that once this program of tailored support is provided, service leaders will have more capacity and skills to continue the quality improvement journey. Follow up evaluations are planned to track and report on progress.