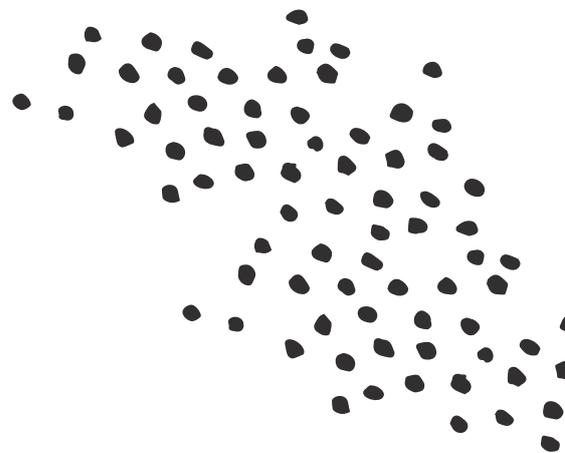


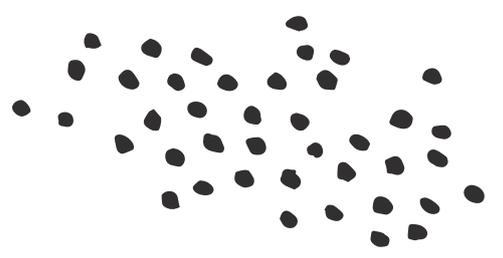
PROVIDING A DEADLY SERVICE FOR OUR JARJUMS/BOORI

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT WORKBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

We all want the best for our children. We want to see them grow up as strong and healthy as they can be. The first years of their lives are really important to set them on this path. While families are children’s first teachers, quality education and care services also play a key role. High quality education and care in these first years lead to better health, education and employment outcomes all throughout children’s lives.

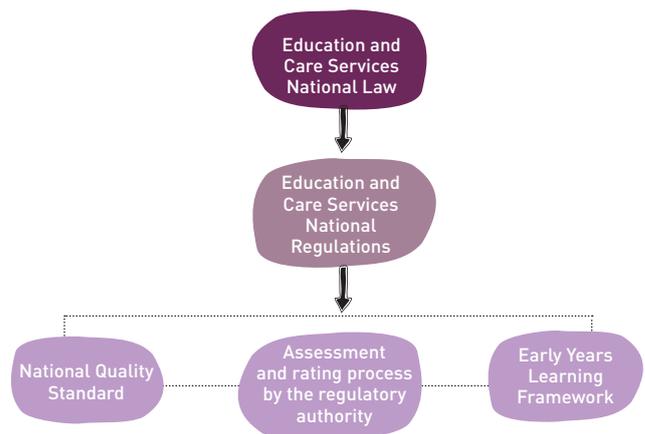
This is why we have the National Quality Framework (NQF). The NQF helps to improve service quality by setting enforceable minimum standards, and requiring quality assessment and rating of services against the National Quality Standard (NQS). Services are assessed on the seven quality areas within the NQS by the New South Wales (NSW) regulatory authority, which is the Early Childhood Education Directorate within the NSW Department of Education. Services are given a rating for each of the seven quality areas, summarised through an overall rating. This means that educators are focused on continuously improving their services to get the best outcomes for our children.

This workbook aims to assist educators and staff to work effectively with the NQF and, within that, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), to provide high quality education and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It offers practical processes, questions, activities and tips to use your own ideas about improving your daily practice and the approaches of your service.

The workbook will sit alongside the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) of your service and will help you to decide what is important to include in it.

The workbook provides a quick overview of quality improvement within the NQF and then explores each quality area within the NQS. It offers a series of questions to help guide your thinking on what you are doing and how effectively you are progressing outcomes for children. These questions can be visited weekly, fortnightly or monthly based on your service’s needs.

You can focus on one quality area and pull out the relevant section, or tackle a number of areas at the same time. You can revisit your comments later to see how things are changing and improving.



1	Educational program and practice
2	Children’s health and safety
3	Physical environment
4	Staffing arrangements
5	Relationships with children
6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7	Governance and leadership

Ratings awarded

Excellent	Service promotes exceptional education and care, demonstrates sector leadership, and is committed to continually improving. This rating can only be awarded by ACECQA.
Exceeding National Quality Standard	Service goes beyond the requirements of the National Quality Standard in at least four of the seven quality areas.
Meeting National Quality Standard	Service meets the National Quality Standard. Service provides quality education and care in all seven quality areas.
Working towards National Quality Standard	Service provides a safe education and care program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement.
Significant improvement required	Service does not meet one of the seven quality areas or a section of the legislation and there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children.



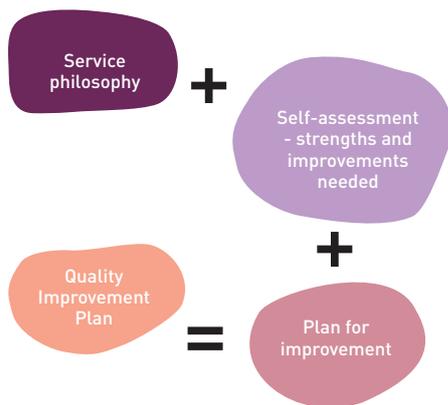
QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Regularly reviewing your progress against the NQS supports educators and the service as a whole to continue to improve in quality. This helps ensure that children attending the service are learning and developing to their full potential.

Quality Area 7 focuses on governance and leadership. Within this area, element 7.2.1 requires services to have an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place. The QIP provides the foundation for this.

A QIP is a document that identifies the service's goals for quality improvement and how the service plans to work towards those goals. It helps the team to stay focused on the improvements and on implementing the strategies needed to achieve the goals.

A QIP contains three things (regulation 55) :



The QIP is a living document that needs to be implemented, reviewed and added to as each goal is achieved and new ones are identified. It is part of your journey as a service.

QIPs must be updated at least once a year and be available on request by the regulatory authority or parents of a child enrolled or looking to enrol at the service. It is helpful for your learning and practice if it is used regularly to check in on your goals and how you are tracking.

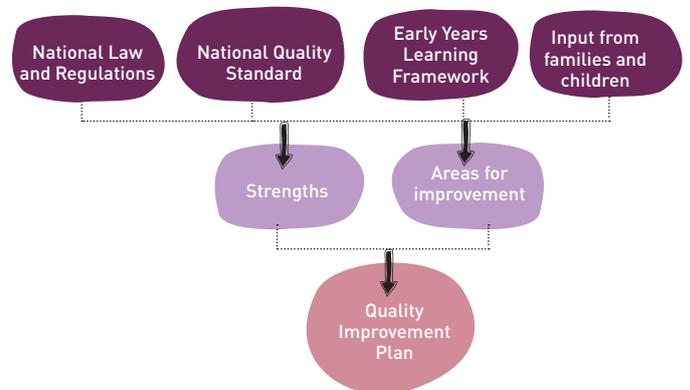
SERVICE PHILOSOPHY

The written statement of philosophy for a service outlines the purpose, values and principles that are important for the operation of the service. It should also reflect the guiding principles of the NQF and the EYLF. It sums up your service and the kind of care you offer children, their families and communities.

It is important that everyone involved in the service should contribute to its development and review. It should guide the operation of the service and be shared with families and the staff team. Be proud of it and make sure it is on display at the service.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assessment involves examining what is happening at the service, deciding what is being done well and identifying what might need to be improved. This requires the service team and the approved provider to assess how it performs in a number of different areas:



This assessment is really important to help the service to identify goals that will improve the quality of children's and families' experiences of the service, and ultimately the outcomes that children achieve. These goals can then be incorporated into the service's QIP.

Key tips for a deadly QIP

- Appoint someone to **lead** the process and be responsible to ensure that it is implemented.
- Be **inclusive** – involve everyone in the self-assessment process, including children, families, the approved provider, educators and staff. There may be other relevant organisations to include too, depending upon your context, like Elders or services working with children with additional needs.
- **Engage families** through a feedback survey conducted in person at your service, with conversations or informative posters.
- Seek **children's views** by asking children about what they like about coming to the service, what they don't like and what they would like changed.
- Start with your **strengths** under each quality area. This can be really empowering. But note that strengths should go beyond compliance with the National Law and Regulations. Focus on what your service is doing well and give examples.
- Use the **NQF Guide** to assist your assessment of each quality area. It unpacks each area in detail, connects each area to the National Law and Regulations, provides examples of what assessors will look for, and suggests reflective questions to guide self-assessment.
- **Record** and prioritise everything in a working document.
- **Be honest** and open. The service cannot genuinely improve without this.
- **Keep it real** – Be realistic and don't overload yourselves.
- **Be practical** – use examples and direct language.

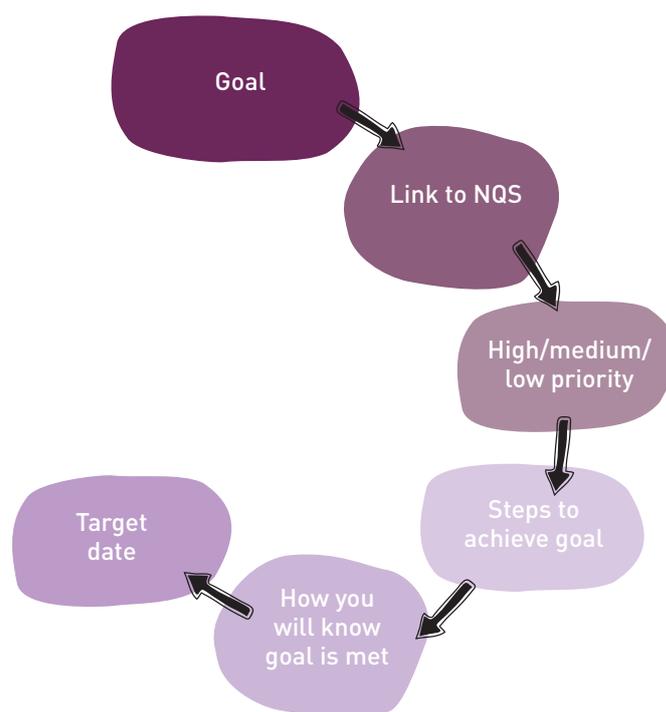
PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

Start with the strengths identified in your self-assessment. It is really powerful and empowering for the team to collectively recognise and value what you do well. Strengths should be identified across all quality areas and should go beyond compliance with the National Law and Regulations.

No doubt there are also areas for improvement. These can be prioritised into:

- Actions that need to be executed immediately, such as where the service is not complying with any aspect of the National Law or National Regulations;
- Priority issues that need to be incorporated into the QIP now; and
- Other issues that may be of a lower priority that could be included into the QIP at a later time.

The plan should be realistic and concrete, including for each identified improvement:



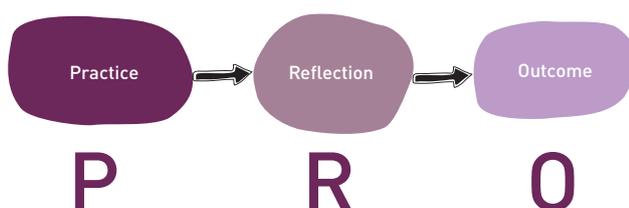
The Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) and the NSW Department of Education have useful templates you can use. But remember your QIP does not need to be in any particular format – you can develop your own format to meet your needs. This gives you a chance to promote what you do and why you do it to the assessor.

KEEPING THE QIP ALIVE

Using the QIP as a tool to guide practice is really important. It shows you are continually identifying things that need improvement and making changes to provide a better service for your children. Quality services make sure that they are improving by:

- Identifying the key focus within the QIP. Prioritising some areas and displaying this information in the staffroom, bathroom or other place where the team sees it.
- Updating the QIP monthly or every two months. Regulations require it be updated annually and it should be updated after receipt of the assessment and rating process results.
- Using the QIP in team meetings to keep focus on priorities.
- Continuing to discuss strengths and areas for improvement against the NQS in team meetings, and as educators at other scheduled times.
- Gathering feedback about the service to improve understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. For example, this could be children, families, other educators or other educational theories and approaches.
- Placing a question or priority goal on a white board in the staffroom or a noticeboard in the kitchen. Have educators comment on it or write up what they are doing that contributes to it. Take a photo of it at the end of the week and put up a new question.
- Displaying the QIP or a focus area publicly at the service for the team and families to see and include updates or highlights in your service's newsletter.
- Bringing critical reflection or 'deadly reflections' into the day-to-day practice of educators, which involves learning from everyday situations and problems. It means regularly questioning yourself and your actions to better understand why things happened in a certain way and how this might inform future planning and actions. A simple three-step formula for you to remember for your thought process is:

- Moving actions out of the QIP and into an achievement folder when they are completed. This could be on display so that families and visitors can see progress. You could also use photos and posters to highlight achievements as they occur.
- Where deadlines for goals have not been met in the QIP, documenting progress achieved and setting new strategies and target dates that are realistic.



HOW TO GET EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE QIP

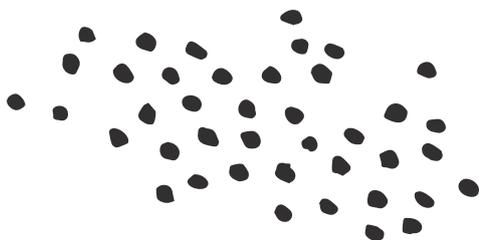
It is much more fun and effective to have team members working on the QIP together. This also helps keep it alive as you work together and talk about things that you are focusing on. This can be tough however as it adds to the workload.

Here are some ideas about getting everyone involved:

- Keep the QIP short and achievable so the team does not feel overwhelmed by it;
- Have clear timeframes;
- Structure your weekly team meetings around the QIP;
- Nominate someone to update the QIP after your meetings to reflect the progress made and changes agreed;
- Display one quality area of the NQS on a large poster in the staffroom or kitchen and ask educators to write examples of how they are meeting it in one colour and new ideas in another;
- Put up a summary of your focus areas in the QIP publicly for families to see and on clipboards in the staffroom, where team members can add their ideas as they go by;
- Appoint different team members as the lead person for each goal; and
- Have an incentive for team members exploring new ways to document learning observations, connecting it to focus areas in the QIP.

Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre's Director shares their approach for getting everyone involved:

"SO WHAT I HAVE DONE IS FOR EACH TEAM MEETING I WILL PICK A QUALITY AREA AND I HAVE MADE A SHEET ON IT, HOW CAN WE IMPROVE? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE? WHAT CAN WE DO? AND THEN WE BREAK UP INTO GROUPS AND TALK ABOUT EACH GOAL, HOW WE ARE PROGRESSING IT AND WHAT MORE WE NEED TO DO. THEN WE COME BACK TOGETHER AND TALK ABOUT IT AT OUR MONTHLY MEETING AND ADAPT THE QIP AS NEEDED!"



How to get started

- Get familiar with the different National Quality Areas through the ACECQA National Quality Standard handout on p.6-7.
- Print a copy of the QIP for your service and become familiar with it. Identify what you would like to prioritise and have as your focus. Discuss this with your Nominated Supervisor, room leader, Responsible Person or Educational Leader.
- Allocate time each week to think about this focus issue, how you could look at it differently, what impact it is having on children, what alternatives there are and what steps would be needed to progress it.

BUSTING THE MYTHS ABOUT QIPS

- QIPs don't need to cover all quality areas. Recognise your strengths in each area and focus on just a few of your goals.
- QIPs don't need to be written in any particular format. As long as it is meaningful to you and you can explain it to the assessors.
- Longer QIPs do not mean better QIPs. High quality QIPs can be short and concise documents. They do not need to be hundreds of pages long. It is hard to keep focused on identified priorities when you have very lengthy documents. Once actions are completed they can move out of the QIP. Just keep a record in a completed actions sheet.
- Having a quality QIP as a living document does not need to take a lot of time each week.
- The QIP does not need to contain everything about service planning and improvement. The service may have a number of documents they use. The QIP is a summary of the key areas prioritised for improvement that helps you promote what you are doing and why.

Concept		Descriptor
QA1		Educational program and practice
1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.
1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
1.2	Practice	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
1.2.3	Child directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.
QA2		Children's health and safety
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
QA3		Physical environment
3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

Concept		Descriptor
QA4		Staffing arrangements
4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.
4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2		Professionalism
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
QA5		Relationships with children
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
QA6		Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.
QA7		Governance and Leadership
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.
7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
7.2.2	Educational leadership	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.



"CRITICAL REFLECTION MEANS THAT WE CAN ONLY IMPROVE: WE LOOK AT WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE CAN IMPROVE FOR KIDS TO LEARN BETTER. IN OUR CENTRE, WE DO THAT ON A FRIDAY.

WE TAKE TIME OUT TOGETHER TO REFLECT ON WHAT IS COMING UP THAT WEEK AND HOW EFFECTIVE WERE CHANGES MADE LAST WEEK: DID IT WORK, HOW DID CHILDREN RESPOND ETC. IT IS ABOUT A CENTRE CRITICISM, NOT AN INDIVIDUAL CRITICISM. IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE THAT CLEAR FOR STAFF. IT IS A PROFESSIONAL NOT PERSONAL REFLECTION. YOU FEEL LET DOWN IF IT IS PERSONALLY TARGETED.

BUT AS PROFESSIONALS IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM ON HOW WE CAN IMPROVE.

HOW DO WE MAKE IT MORE SPONTANEOUS, MORE INTERESTING FOR CHILDREN, MORE STIMULATING FOR CHILDREN? THIS IS THE KEY TO CRITICAL REFLECTION!"

– Frayne Barker, Director,
Gainmara-Birrilee Preschool, Brewarrina

WORKING THROUGH THE QUALITY AREAS

The NQS has seven quality areas. These are summarised at the beginning of each section below and outlined in the ACECQA handout on p.6-7. These quality areas are the focus for planning, programming and assessment of service quality.

This section suggests some questions to help you think through the key aspects of each quality area and where your service is strong. It also helps to think

about where you could try something different to improve your children's experience at the service. Tips and examples are also provided. This workbook can be completed weekly, fortnightly or monthly based on your service's needs. You can focus on one area at a time or a few, do whatever best suits your needs.

The questions in each area are adapted from the NSW QIP template.

QA1 SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO LEARN

Introduction

Quality Area (QA) 1 is about supporting the learning needs of each child through a quality educational program.

The educational program is based on the EYLF. This document describes principles and practices, as well as the outcomes that children should be achieving, to inform educators in developing quality programs.

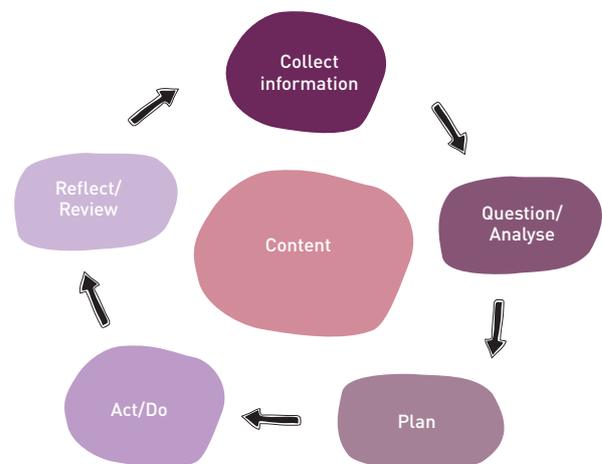
It is important that the educational program can be changed or is flexible enough to support the learning needs, interests and experiences of each child.

How we implement the program is critical to best supporting the learning of children at your centre.

Remember – children are capable and independent little people. Our job is to bring out their strengths and support them to continue to grow through exciting play-based experiences.

The five learning outcomes for children under the EYLF are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity;
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world;
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing;
4. Children are confident and involved learners; and
5. Children are effective communicators.



TIPS

- Check out the SNAICC fact sheets on the five EYLF outcomes to get some ideas for your program.
- The Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina have incorporated the 8 Ways Pedagogy for cultural learning into their programming with the EYLF to better connect with Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing to ensure an Aboriginal lens over their programming and its implementation. They find that it helps to bring out the way that we do things as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- The Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre (ACFC) pulled the EYLF apart to look at what each area would mean for its service. The Centre Director explains, "We picked little snippets from the EYLF to bring into our regular programming, we hung posters around with photos of our children and captions to link with the EYLF in a meaningful way for our families, we use Story Park, making clear links to the EYLF and NQF, and we use the terms all the time so staff become more comfortable with them."
- The Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina has a yarning circle every morning with the children. This is a check-in point where children can talk about their feelings, or what they did on the weekend. Those interests and experiences can become the focus in programming for the week.
- The Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre has a reflection book in each of the rooms and also individually for educators as well. The Educational Leader explains, "What is your reflection for the day? Did it work well? What didn't? It could be a self-goal as well. Am I going to come in and work with this child with a happy demeanour or am I going to be grumpy? Let's change our ways. Let's improve it. Asking yourself is it working? Are the resources age appropriate? If it is not working, change to a different way and then see if it will work. So you are using those same strategies and processes for improvement as a person."

DEADLY REFLECTION IDEAS

- Use key words when reflecting – what happened, why, how, I felt, the child responded by, I was being impacted by, the children learnt, my expectations, I would do it differently by, I am challenged by.
- Stay away from general statements when you are reflecting as they don't give much insight – "it was a really good day," "children were happy." More detail is needed – why were they happy? What was happening?
- Remember you reflect a lot in your day at the service, you may just not call it that.
- Set yourself a goal for the day that you write down somewhere. This might be about positive and supportive interactions with one particular child, trialling a new approach, focusing on children's strengths and so many other things. Check in with a co-worker at lunch to talk about how it is going and share ideas for the afternoon. Then take a few moments to jot down some notes in your journal or the communications book about how this went at the end of the day.

"I SAY WHEN WE DO OUR CURRICULUM THAT THE FOUNDATION OF OUR PROGRAM STARTS WITH CULTURE. ALL OF THE OTHER CONCEPTS, LIKE LITERACY AND NUMERACY AND THE CHILDREN'S INTERESTS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, COMES FROM A PLACE OF CULTURE.

SO IF WE WANT TO LEARN ABOUT NUMBERS WE GET STICKS AND STONES, OR RELATE TO HOW MANY FISH THEY CAUGHT WITH UNCLE ON THE WEEKEND. THAT IS THE BASIS OF CULTURE, THE BASIS OF FAMILY, THE BASIS OF COMMUNITY AND THAT IS HOW WE TEACH THE CONCEPTS FOR EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS!"

– Educational leader, Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina

9. Are there any resources or professional development that you feel would be helpful to further support you in this area?

Notes

Date:

Date:

Date:

QA2

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO GROW UP STRONG AND DEADLY

Introduction

QA2 focuses on providing a safe and supervised space for children and making sure that the service is meeting their basic needs every day.

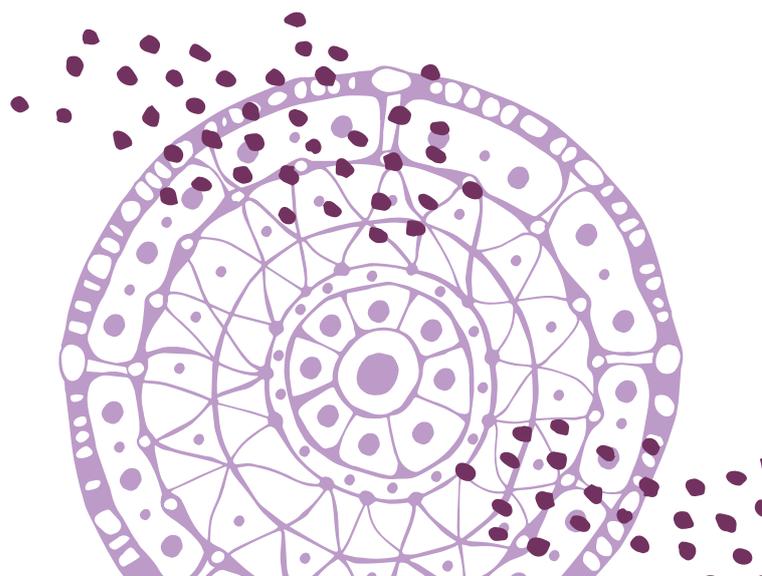
This includes things like healthy food, water, physical activity, rest and relaxation. It is also important to be aware of our responsibility to identify and take action concerning any risk of child abuse or neglect. Supporting children's wellbeing is at the heart of what we do.

DEADLY REFLECTION EXAMPLE

Practice: A parent called the service upset because the wrong bottle had been sent home with her child.

Reflection: The Nominated Supervisor, room leader, Responsible Person or Educational Leader put this as the focus item on the agenda for the team meeting, identifying it as an important issue under Quality Area 2 of the NQS. She also discussed it with the team that was working in the child's room that day to understand what had happened. In the team meeting, educators worked through how it had happened, and what practices they were using to ensure each child's bottle was used only for that child and properly cleaned and sterilised. They also discussed difficulties with implementing those practices, whether their work consistently aligned with their policies and whether their policies were adequate. They made adjustments to their practices, updated their policy and informed the family of their discussions and the decisions made. This incident was also helpful to identify and resolve a number of other issues that some educators were concerned about.

Outcome: The team felt confident and supported in ensuring a safe and hygienic service. No further incidents around the hygienic practices of the service occurred.



7. How do you identify, assess, manage and record dangers and potential risks for children, such as potentially dangerous products, plants, objects and animals at the service, and how often do you do this?

Date:

Date:

Date:

Notes

QA3 CREATING A DEADLY SPACE

Introduction

The third quality area focuses on a good design and set-up for a deadly space for little ones.

This ensures that each child is safe from injury at the service, can participate in many different activities to support their development and can seek out things that interest them to direct their own play. Supporting them to understand what is good for our environment is also important.

TIPS

- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre's Educational Leader assesses their inclusive environment by seeing: "What it looks like, what it sounds like, how it looks, how it listens and how it feels. When I walk into a place what do I see? I see children smiling and happy. When I listen I hear them communicating and expressing themselves in a way that empowers them to be confident and know their identity. I see educators warmly interacting and supporting their strengths. And what it feels like – that they are hugged and that they are loved."
- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre has set its centre up for play-based learning through the natural environment. The Educational Leader shares: "It uses natural resources, "Because the children do that at home naturally. They do that as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. And it is free. It builds on their strengths, makes them innovative, think about the science way, the mathematical way of doing things and scaffolding their skills."
- Frayne Barker, Director, Gainmara-Birrilee Preschool, Brewarrina, feels that it is all about how the environment flows. Staff regularly look at how the space is flowing, what they need in the room to make it flow and to offer children more choices about their independent play: whether they need fewer or more tables, petitions, plants, grass mats etc, how they best use what they have and whether there are other resources that are important to include. It is an ongoing process.

DEADLY REFLECTION EXAMPLE

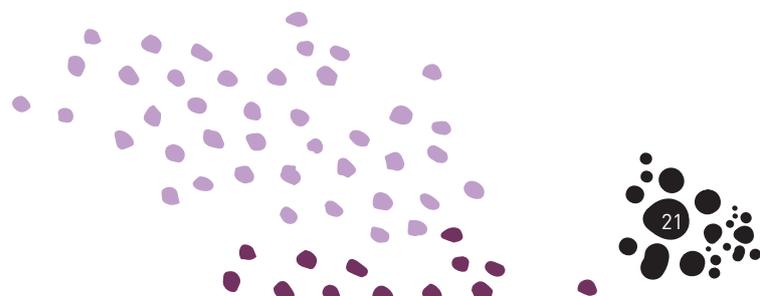
Practice: One service had a flat outdoor area with a bike track running around it. There was a lot of equipment outside and there had been several bike accidents.

Reflection: The educators discussed the issue at one of their meetings. One educator felt that the bike track should be removed, but others disagreed. They investigated the benefits of the activity, why the problem was occurring and whether there were any solutions that could help prevent the accidents. They looked at all the relevant aspects, including:

- the children's interests;
- the learning benefits of the activity;
- incident reports showing the time the accidents were happening, where they were happening, and who they involved;
- relevant service policies;
- staffing arrangements; and
- the children's daily routine.

The educators identified another solution to trial – building wooden speed humps onto the track.

Outcome: The speed humps were built and there were no further accidents over a four-month period.



7. Which features in the physical environment encourage open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature?

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QA4

A DEADLY TEAM FOR A DEADLY SERVICE

Introduction

QA4 focuses on the importance of qualified and experienced educators who follow professional standards.

It also promotes collaboration and a culture of learning among educators, where educators recognise each other's strengths and challenges and learn from each other.

TIPS

- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina has higher staff to child ratios and builds in six hours programming a week, not the two-hour standard, to ensure a high-quality program that responds to the needs of children at the centre. It also runs a partnership program with the local adult community education institute to offer school-based traineeships and supports professional development of the team. They have recently supported one of the mothers at the centre to do a traineeship. She is now working at the centre.
- Cullunghutti ACFC's Director shares her approach in supporting a culture of learning: "Just showing them that I believe in them by giving them the opportunity to have a go has made them flourish really. When we see a strength, we give anyone the chance, work on it. If you have someone who likes gardening, then encourage them to set up a veggie patch. ... it is about knowing your staff and families."
- Cullunghutti ACFC fosters collaboration by supporting the team to get to know each other's personality traits, how they like to be treated and how they like to do things. The team then collectively sets team rules about how they want the service to run. This includes guidelines on how to talk to each other, including finding the right time to bring up a concern, using a 'compliment sandwich' for delivering feedback (highlight a positive, a negative and then a positive), bringing in the director as a mentor for support, rehearsing a conversation with a role play, taking a deep breath, and understanding an issue from another person's point of view.

- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina supported educators to do the Stronger Smarter leadership program to support them in stepping up as leaders in their service and meeting their high expectations for program delivery for children .

DEADLY REFLECTION EXAMPLE

Practice: A service planned to start a closed Facebook page for the service team and families, involving updates from the different rooms, photographs and information about what is coming up. Some staff however did not have high literacy skills and were not confident about writing updates.

Reflection: The team explored how they could support staff to practice and improve their writing skills and their confidence in this area. They identified a range of strategies as well as the benchmarks that they wanted to reach before they went live to parents. They reflected on their communications policy with all of the current modes of communication that were adequate in the meantime.

Outcome: The team put plans for the Facebook page on hold and continued with the existing communication mechanisms in the interim. The strategies to support team members to build their confidence in their literacy skills were applied and supported. Then 12 months later, when the benchmarks were met and all of the team felt comfortable with sharing information through the live Facebook page, they initiated the process. The team felt very positive about the process and families responded very positively.



7. What opportunities does the service provide for educators and other team members to have discussions to further develop their skills, or to improve practice and relationships?

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QA5 NURTURING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

Introduction

QA5 is about educators developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children that promote their wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging.

It also focuses on supporting positive relationships between children and helping children to regulate their behaviour and manage conflict.

TIPS

- Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Coordinator conducted a relationship audit for its service. It listed each child and parent, and paired them up with an educator – a key contact point at the service with whom they could develop a relationship.
- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre approaches behaviour management in a respectful and nurturing way. An Educational Leader says, “When a child has a meltdown, this is what we have been doing: we get down to their level, ask them why are you angry? What do you want? The child will let you know in their words. Respect the child’s behaviour and try to understand it. We love the child. It is not the behaviour that defines the child, but it is the behaviour we don’t like so how do we make it better. Being patient is another thing. ... kids are often rushed in to the centre. They just want to be understood; they want to be loved. ... Perhaps a piece of fruit, to calm them down, something like sensory play in the sand... and they are ready to go.”

DEADLY REFLECTION EXAMPLE

Practice: A child within the service has become withdrawn, doesn’t play with others, is disruptive and the educators are struggling to engage with him.

Reflection: The team unpacked the different aspects of his behaviour that had changed and when it had started to shift. They spoke to the boy’s parents quietly to see whether there was anything happening at home. They learnt that the family was going through a separation at that time. They then shared with the family the changes that they had noticed and explored together how the service could provide additional supports over such a difficult period.

Outcome: An educator he had a close relationship with was moved to the room he was in. She made sure she had quality one-on-one time with him each morning doing an activity together, and paid greater attention to him throughout the day. They provided regular updates to the mother, who was the contact point. Slowly the boy’s behaviour improved and he started participating in the program again.

QA6 WORKING WITH OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Introduction

QA6 focuses on respectful relationships with families in which families feel supported and contribute to service decisions.

It also requires broader community engagement and partnerships with relevant services and schools to ensure children get the supports that they need.

TIPS

- One important strategy that Cullunghutti ACFC uses to ensure strong connections with families is a transport bus and communication book for the bus where educators write any information important to share with families about the day that the educator raises with them at drop-off.
- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina has built relationships with the local schools. Its Educational Leader has regular meetings with the school teachers so that, "They know where I am coming from and there are no excuses for them dropping the ball."

DEADLY REFLECTION EXAMPLE

Practice: One parent visited the service who was very angry. They made a complaint to the service about the care being provided to their family.

Reflection: The educators came together and wrote down the family's concerns. They identified the processes that they followed, reviewed the relevant service policies to check whether they did the right thing, and then developed a plan of how they would respond to the family and what action they would take.

Outcome: The family felt heard and valued. A plan was agreed and implemented. The family was happy with the response and continued attending the service.

3. How do you help all families to feel comfortable, welcome and valued at the service?

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4. What role do families play in the service?
How can you recognise their contributions?

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QA7

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Introduction

QA7 focuses on effective leadership and governance of education and care services.

This requires systems to support effective management and operation of the service, consistent with the service's statement of philosophy. It also requires good planning and quality improvement processes and procedures, and a culture of learning.

TIPS

- Mentoring has been critical to the leadership at Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre in Ballina, from team members with Certificate III upwards. The Educational Leader explains that, "It all comes down to relationships and understanding where the staff are coming from, what is happening in their lives and being sensitive to that. Whether it is looking after grandchildren or Sorry Business, sometimes they may need to take a week off, and that is the way it is."
- Cullunghutti ACFC Director shares about the key to self-assessment: "The biggest thing for us in our self-assessment is always talking about it and working as a team on where we need improvement and having the family input: what they think of the centre, what they like that we are doing, what their expectations are of the centre and how they think we can improve. Then we have to document that to say that that has happened. Open communication has been the key for us. We are always working on better communications and systems in place."
- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre's Manager shares their approach on critical reflection: "We would describe critical reflection as a basis for how we work – for example, because we work from a strengths-based cultural foundation our staff use evaluations and feedback surveys to assess whether an activity was a success and how an activity could work better. Our staff work together as a team trying to improve our service to the community, so we have been able to continually find solutions to most service issues."

- Jarjum Bugal Nah Childcare & Family Centre's management believe that embedding critical reflection is about having regular formal and informal meetings with team members – encouraging suggestions and ideas from them as well as ensuring that the QIP is followed in the centre, and making suggestions when required. Key team members also completed QIP formal training with an accredited trainer, which was very useful in helping them to document what they do. Its management suggests to, "Make sure that the exceptional and special things undertaken in the service are documented under the ELYF so that the excellent work the service does with the Jarjums and their families can be clearly seen."

DEADLY IDEAS ON DOCUMENTING OBSERVATIONS

You can record your observations in whatever way works for you.

Keep it simple!

Some ideas are:

- Photo collages with key words
- Photo learning stories
- 'Our Day' daily reflections diary
- Developmental checklists
- Weekly videos using an iPad yarning up about your week
- Use the talk to text tool on your mobile phone to make notes
- Jottings in your team communications book
- Use apps like storypark

What is important is that you note what was significant about what the child did, what it was that you think helped it happen and how this is reflected in the planning cycle.

See this short video on documenting and observing:
<http://www-foundationsforsuccess.qld.edu.au/documenting-and-reflecting>



7. How do you use the information you collect in your self-assessment and quality improvement processes? Do you need to collect additional or different data, for example, from children, families, communities or injury reports?

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