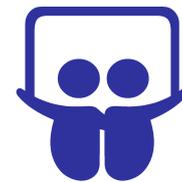


TALKING QUALITY: REFLECTING ON PRACTICE IN EDUCATION AND CARE



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Welcome

Welcome to the 1st edition of Talking Quality. We hope to distribute this publication four times a year to promote a culture of inquiry and collaboration across the ACT Education and Care sector. It aims to regularly engage stakeholders with the guiding principles of the [National Quality Framework \(NQF\)](#) and connect these with goals for continuous improvement.

Guiding Principles of the NQF

- *The rights and best interests of the child are paramount.*
- *Children are successful, competent and capable learners.*
- *Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework.*
- *Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.*
- *The role of parents and families is respected and supported.*
- *Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.*

Acknowledging the wealth of knowledge and expertise in the ACT Education and Care community of practice, we also hope that this publication will be a platform to share stories within the sector. We welcome contributions from the sector of successes, challenges and questions that align with the guiding principles of the NQF. The content of the publication is generally divided into four key areas: Committing to Continuous Improvement; Critical Conversations; Embedding Practice and Engaging with Community. In this first publication we have provided topics for discussion within these four areas with questions to prompt team reflection. Each publication will also have a Frequently Asked Questions section where we address questions from the sector.



If you would like to contribute to future publications or provide a question, please email Elise.Kleeman@act.gov.au for further information.



Meet the Quality Assurance Team - January 2018

Back row (left to right): Kylie Berry, Delphine Coutin, Wendy McDuff, Jessica Annerley, Nicole McNaughton, Tracey Marsden

Front row (left to right): Jacinta Dale, Brigid Donohoe, Elise Kleeman

Nicole McNaughton, Tracey Marsden and Jacinta Dale joined the team this year as part of the Growing Pre-school Expertise Project.

What's New

-Updates from the Quality Assurance Team

Introducing unannounced visits with a focus on quality

Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA) has been giving some consideration to the length of time it can take to schedule next assessments for services, which has been longer than the ideal timeframes originally planned for the NQF. Taking into account changes that regularly take place in education and care services and our commitment to ensure children are receiving the quality education and care that is so important for their wellbeing and development, the following strategy to review quality has been developed.

During 2018 the Quality Assurance Team will commence making unannounced visits to approved education and care services that have been rated against the [National Quality Standard \(NQS\)](#). The focus of these unannounced visits will be to review quality as defined by the NQS and to ensure that the service's current quality rating accurately reflects the education and care being provided. During these visits, authorised officers anticipate spending between 2-4 hours at the service observing aspects of quality from each quality area and collecting information pertaining to changes such as staffing arrangements or groupings of children since the last assessment and rating. Authorised officers do not anticipate this to be a laborious process for educators nor the nominated supervisor, and information can be provided to the authorised officer post visit if it is not immediately available at the time of the unannounced visit.

After the visit the authorised officer will analyse the information collected and practice observed to assess whether the service appears to be operating at a level consistent with their current quality rating. If it is determined that the service appears to be operating below their quality rating this may impact the scheduling of their next assessment and rating OR potentially, after further visits and discussion, it may result in a reassessment and re-rating as provided for under Section 138 of the *Education and Care Services National Law (ACT) Act 2011 (National Law)*.

As always, services are encouraged to continually reflect on how they are maintaining the quality of their practices and what systems are in place to support continuous improvement.

What's New Continued.

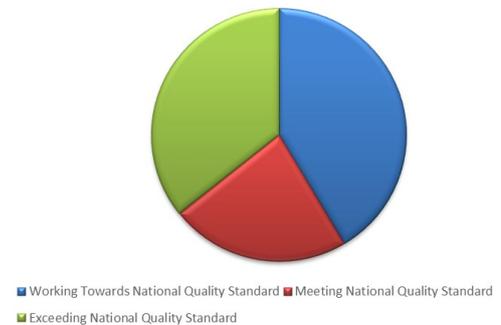
-Updates from the Quality Assurance Team

Assessment and Rating Report Survey

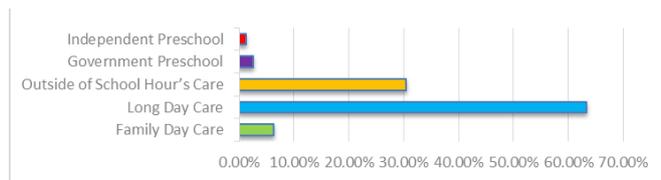
A survey was sent out late last year to services who had received a final assessment and rating report between 1 July 2016 and 31 December 2017 – a total of 129 services. CECA would like to thank all services who responded to the survey.

The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback about the assessment and rating reports prepared by the Quality Assurance Team. In particular information was sought that may assist in ensuring reports are relevant, able to be understood in terms of the ratings given and useful for ongoing continuous improvement. We are happy to report that 60% of possible respondents engaged in the survey with a mix of service types and service ratings that closely matched the ACT profiles as seen in the [ACECQA Snapshot Q3 2017](#).

Ratings of services who participated in the survey



Service types who participated in the survey



The results

The majority of respondents felt that the assessment and rating report reflected their service well with a very high percentage of services (76%) indicating that they felt the report clearly explained the service rating. This is great news as the Quality Assurance Team works very hard to ensure that reports reflect each service's context and that reports clearly explain quality outcomes. Services were also invited to share any suggestions for how reports could better reflect context. These suggestions are being reviewed by the Quality Assurance Team with the aim of making changes where this is appropriate.

The majority of services (87%) indicated that they used the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) notes provided to support continuous improvement. The question in the survey about the usefulness of hyperlinks within QIP notes was inconclusive. This may be attributed to the large number of services who had received a report before hyperlinks were consistently used in assessment and rating reports. The Quality Assurance Team will continue to include hyperlinks as a part of the QIP notes to assist services in their continuous improvement.

Perspectives on the value of providing feedback have provided important insights for the Quality Assurance Team. Commentary regarding feedback indicated that services did not always feel the Regulatory Authority fairly considered the additional evidence provided. The Quality Assurance Team and individual authorised officers review all additional evidence very thoroughly as part of the procedure when feedback is received. Bringing greater transparency to how this process is undertaken could assist services in understanding this procedure. The Quality Assurance Team will also be considering how further clarity regarding the provision of feedback could assist in ensuring the process is valuable to services.

Overall the survey has provided excellent feedback for the Quality Assurance Team, providing us with guidance for reflecting on change and continuous improvement in the assessment and rating process. Once again thank you to all who participated in the survey.

Committing to Continuous Improvement

-Voices Reflected in your Quality Improvement Plan

Do you sometimes wonder where to start when reviewing your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)? Seeking input from members of your service community as well as the wider community can be a good way to start the process and can provide insight from various perspectives. You could devise a series of simple open-ended questions that enable you to engage a broader range of stakeholders. It is also important to remember that the content of your QIP will be unique to your service's context and may not consider all of the elements, standards or even all of the Quality Areas. Your self-assessment against the NQS and the *Education and Care Service's National Regulations* will provide you with more insight regarding your current strengths and areas for improvement. Considering a wide range of perspectives will help you to understand community contexts and values which will result in more meaningful and collaborative decision making.



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ Who are our key stakeholders?
- ⇒ What is the difference between consultation and collaboration? Which best describes our current engagement with stakeholders with regards to continuous improvement?
- ⇒ Who could we work with in our local and broader communities?
- ⇒ Are some voices more prominent within discussions? Are some voices silenced by our approach?
- ⇒ How can we get families more interested in engaging with our QIP?
- ⇒ How could we include the voices of the children?
- ⇒ What is the most effective way to seek input? E.g. survey, meeting, children's drawings or artwork, discussions, email, brainstorming?



Suggested Links

[Pursuing best practice: What does it take to drive continuous improvement?](#)

[Uncovering the Layers of Reflective Practice – Part 3](#)

[Leading Through Change](#)

[From Soaring Towers to Inclusive Playscapes – Exploring the Journey of Children's Participation](#)

[The Cycle of Self-Assessment and Continuous Improvement](#)

Critical Conversations

-Conversation starter #1 What is the role of the adult in children's play?

Do you engage educators in critical conversations? These are opportunities to examine practice from multiple perspectives not just your own. This can include reflecting deeply about your approach and then also delving deeper with regards to the origin of the practice. What informs your approach and how does your approach consider the lived experiences of children and families attending your service? Are all perspectives valued or are some prioritised? Are individuals advantaged or disadvantaged by the approach taken?



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ What does our philosophy say about play?
- ⇒ What do I believe about the nature of play? What might have influenced this belief?
- ⇒ Do we agree or disagree as colleagues or as individuals?
- ⇒ What is the difference between adult-led and child-led play? Are their varying degrees between these two themes?
- ⇒ How does culture influence play and the role of the adult in children's experiences?
- ⇒ Do adults influence children's play simply by being present within play? Does this change the play?
- ⇒ Does the role of the adult promote further opportunities for scaffolding learning?
- ⇒ What could be gained/lost through becoming involved in children's play?
- ⇒ What can theory and theorists tell us about children's play and the role of the adult?



Suggested Links

[World Views - Using Theories](#)

[World Views - Perspectives on Play](#)

[Playwork: An Introduction](#)

[Thinking about Play](#)

[Playing as Becoming: Sharing Australian Aboriginal Voices on Play](#)

[Responding to children's play](#)

[Learning and teaching through play](#)

[Exploring multiculturalism Anti-Bias and Social Justice in Children's Services](#)

[Cultural Influences on Children's Play](#)

Embedding Practice

-What does embedded practice look like for your service?

How do you know if a practice has become embedded? Does it occur daily or weekly? Or is it a one off event? Is your service philosophy evident within the practice? Does current research on education and care guide your practice? How do practices in your service reflect the *principles* and *practices* of the [Early Years Learning Framework](#) or [My Time, Our Place](#) Framework? Are there everyday practices that are taken for granted? How often do you reflect on the day-to-day happenings from a child's point of view? Are there opportunities for children to contribute to decision making about practice? What opportunities are there for families to collaborate and influence the approach taken to daily routines and everyday practice?



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ What role could the Educational Leader have in supporting embedded practice?
- ⇒ How can we involve families in embedding practice at our service?
- ⇒ Could we make connections with other services to learn about embedded practice in different Quality Areas?
- ⇒ How do we support educators to reflect critically on practices that are taken for granted?
- ⇒ How can observations of children help us to reflect on practice?
- ⇒ Do children's responses give us insight into whether or not practice is embedded?
- ⇒ Does embedded practice look different across different service types or different age groups?



Suggested Links

[Links between the EYLF, the NQS, and everyday practice](#)

[Our 'philosophy'](#)

[Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics](#)

[Embedding children's rights into children's services](#)

[WHAT IS PEDAGOGY? How does it influence our practice?](#)

[The Role of the Educational Leader](#)

[Thinking about Practice](#)

[Reviewing Practice](#)

[Supporting Agency: Involving Children in Decision Making](#)



Engaging with Community

-Reflecting on engagement within each Quality Area

As we transition to the revised National Quality Standard, it is important to reflect on ways of engaging with community in all 7 Quality Areas. This could include consulting with the service community, local community and also extending out to the wider community. This will be unique for each service and will require reflection on cultural diversity, interests of children, lifestyles of families, expertise of educators and the context of the service. How can you do this in a way that involves all the stakeholders at your service? How can you ensure that the children have a voice in the process too? Children's agency is promoted when they have a voice in the planning process and meaningful opportunities to contribute to decision making.



Questions you may like to ask...

- ⇒ What are our current ways of engaging with community?
- ⇒ What quality areas are reflected in our current ways of engaging with community? Where are the gaps?
- ⇒ How can we involve our community to find new ways of engaging?
- ⇒ Have you considered children's lived experiences and the multiple settings in which they engage?
- ⇒ What do we know about each child's community? How could we use Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory to better understand child and family contexts?
- ⇒ How could we document community engagement in a meaningful way?



Suggested Links

[Narragunnawali Build Relationships with Community](#)

[A Welcoming Yarn – Engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and their Families in Education and Care Settings](#)

[Creating a Sense of Community](#)

[A little known way to make your service more flexible, and improve quality](#)

[Transition to School – A Collaborative Effort](#)

[Collaborating with children for effective programming](#)

[Building Partnerships with Families](#)

[Establish and Maintain Community Links - Self-Guided Learning Package](#)

[Collaborative partnerships with families and communities](#)

[An Analysis of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Perspective for Early Childhood Educators](#)



FAQ

-Frequently asked questions

The purpose of this section is for us to try and answer questions that you may have. These would need to be broad so that other services can relate and engage. Specific questions should continue to be directed to authorised officers where contextual advice or guidance maybe needed.

What happens if authorised officers organise an assessment and rating visit at the beginning of the year and children aren't settled into the service or their new room yet?

Assessment and rating visits can occur at any time of the year with practice assessed as a point in time. When visits occur at the beginning of the year, authorised officers are aware that relationships are still being built with children and families. Authorised officers will use a variety of tools (observation, sighting documentation, discussion with educators) to help them to assess usual practice. Where authorised officers observe children that are upset or becoming distressed, they will be observing the approach taken by educators to settle the child and how they work with families. Authorised officers conducting the assessment and rating may also decide to move to another space within the service and return once the room has settled. At a later time, an authorised officer may ask educators about how they intend to support families and children as they become familiar with the environment and build attachments with educators.

Authorised officers may ask to see what information you have gathered from children, families, professionals and other settings the child may have attended to establish an understanding of how you support them as they transition. In some settings, authorised officers may need to engage in discussions or sight documentation from the previous years to understand how practices evolve throughout the year especially with services that offer education and care to a new group of children at the commencement of each year.



Spotlight on Practice

-We need your expertise!

Do you have any stories or insights to share? We would love to hear about challenges and successes to inspire others in their journey of continuous improvement! Maybe you could share recent critical reflection or even reflection inspired by the Talking Quality publication! To share your story please contact Elise Kleeman using the following email address: Elise.Kleeman@act.gov.au .



If you would like receive this publication at another email address or individual educators would like to sign up to receive this publication please send contact details to Elise.Kleeman@act.gov.au .

General enquiries to Children's Education and Care Assurance can be made to CECA@act.gov.au.