

Essential Guide

to early learning service
management in NSW

REVISED EDITION 2023

SAMPLE
CHAPTER 5 SECTION A



Chapter 5

Managing staff

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Chapter 5



SAMPLE

INTRODUCTION Managing staff

The quality of care your service delivers rests largely with your staff. It makes sense then that a large part of your time will be spent managing staff. Managing people is a complex and, at times, difficult task.

But managing people well is how Directors make their service the best possible service. The quality of a service is determined by its staff, and how they are managed determines how well they do their job, how inspired they are to do their job and how well they work together.

Feeling the pressure? When a person is appointed as Director, it is likely they already have people management skills, so fear not. But remember, research tells us that relationships matter the most in delivering high quality education and care to children.

Relationships can only be developed with children and their families by educators who are comfortable, competent and who love their jobs. It is the Director's job to make sure they have a team of comfortable, competent, engaged and highly qualified staff who want to provide the best quality education and care possible to children, their families and their community. Recruitment, retention, professional development and team building are important components of managing staff.

Additionally, wages and associated costs are the largest expenditure item for education and care services (most services outlay between 75 and 85 per cent of income on wages) so it also makes economic sense to ensure this vital resource is managed accordingly.



Section A: Recruiting and retaining good staff

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Educators in education and care services are in short supply. The Australian Government's National Quality Framework reforms to early education and care will require an additional 15,000 more workers be employed in the sector and the average level of educators' qualifications has to increase. Low wages in the sector in general coupled with an ongoing disparity between early childhood teachers' wages and primary school teachers wages in NSW, further compound educator and teacher shortages.

For individual education and care services, this means that the task of recruiting and retaining staff is vitally important. Securing the right team and ensuring they are happy to remain in the service's employ will determine the quality of service provision.

MINIMUM STAFFING REQUIREMENTS IN EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

Recruitment and employment of quality staff is integral to the operation of an excellent education and care service. The staffing complement within the service must be in line with the minimum requirements set down in the National Education and Care Regulations, including the minimum number of educators at each qualification level. NSW requirements for the employment of degree-qualified early childhood teachers, which were generally higher than other states and territories when the National Regulations were developed, were retained. These are expressed in Part 7.3 of the National Regulations.

CHANGES TO THE NQF STARTING FROM 1 JULY 2023

Extension of 'Equivalent to an ECT' provision.

Taking into account the workforce pressures on the sector across the country, particularly in rural and remote settings, the ACECQA Board has determined it will also extend its 'Equivalent to an ECT' provision until 31 December 2024.

This further extension by the ACECQA Board ensures consistency with the decision of Education Ministers to provide flexibility for services in the management of workforce requirements.

EDUCATOR QUALIFICATIONS / For NSW centre-based early education and care services:

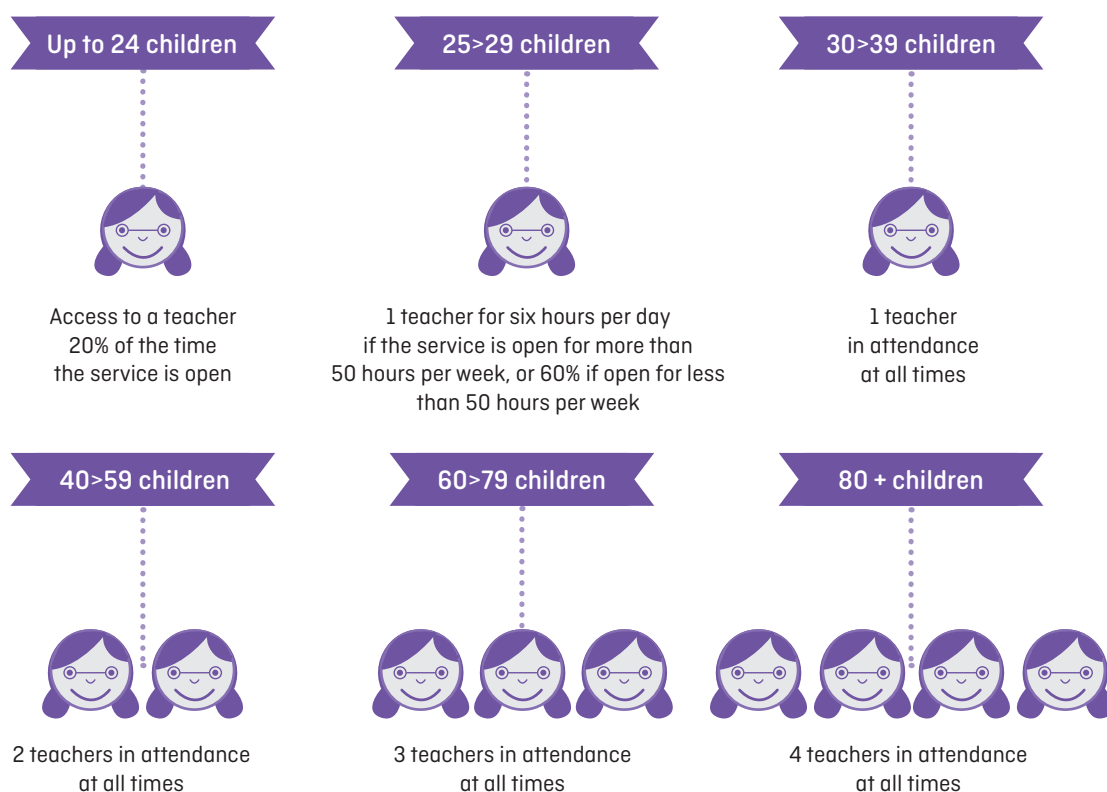
- ▶ at least 50 per cent of the educators required to meet ratios for the service must have, or be actively working towards, at least an approved diploma level education and care qualification; and
- ▶ all other educators required to meet the ratios for the service must have, or be actively working towards, at least an approved Certificate III level education and care qualification.

All centre-based early education and care services must also have:

- ▶ access to an early childhood teacher working with the service for at least 20 per cent of the time that the service provides education and care if approved for less than 25 places.
- ▶ one early childhood teacher in attendance at all times the service is caring for 25 to 29 children for at least six hours on that day, if the service operates for 50 or more hours a week; or for 60 per cent of the operating hours of the service on that day, if the service operates for less than 50 hours a week.



- ▶ one early childhood teacher in attendance at all times the service is caring for 30 to 39 children.
- ▶ two early childhood teachers in attendance at all times the service is educating and caring for 40 to 59 children.
- ▶ three early childhood teachers must be in attendance at all times the service is educating and caring for 60 to 79 children.
- ▶ four early childhood teachers must be in attendance at all times that a centre-based service is educating and caring for 80 or more children preschool age or under.



An early childhood teacher is considered 'in attendance' if they are physically present at the service and performing one or more of the following activities — working directly with children, planning programs, mentoring, coaching or supporting educators, facilitating education and care research, and /or performing the role of educational leader of the service.

NSW has a higher standard regarding teachers than other states. If your centre has over 29 places, it is important that you refer to Regulation 272 for rules concerning early childhood teachers in NSW. Regulation 272 applies in place of Regulations 132-134.



Under the Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 [s28], since 2016 it is mandatory for degree qualified early childhood teachers to be accredited by their teacher accreditation authority (in NSW, this is NESA). There are penalties attached to the teacher if they work as a teacher without being accredited as well as penalties for the employer if they employ someone as a teacher who does not hold current accreditation.

Note that the responsibility for maintaining their accreditation status rests with the individual teacher. Further information is available at <https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/apply/first-time-accreditation>

Because of the educator-to-child ratio and qualification requirements, staffing an education and care service can be complex. As well as ensuring the service's staff have the right mix of qualifications, it is important to ensure the appropriate staff are rostered on correctly to meet the Regulation's ratio requirements.

Changes to the NQF starting from 1 July 2023 and the extension of workforce transitional arrangements to 31 December 2024:

The second round of approved regulatory changes, coming into effect for the majority of jurisdictions* from 1 July 2023, will assist in addressing workforce challenges by providing flexibility for services when replacing educators during short-term absences and resignations.



For more information, go to:

www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-04/Information%20sheet%20-%20Key%20changes%20for%20centre-based%20services%20from%20July%202023.pdf

EDUCATOR RATIOS / The following table shows the required educator-to-child ratio:

Educator-to-child ratio according to the Regulations for NSW services

Age of children	Educator-to-child ratio
Under 2 years	1 educator to 4 children
2 to 3 years	1 educator to 5 children
3 to 6 years	1 educator to 10 children

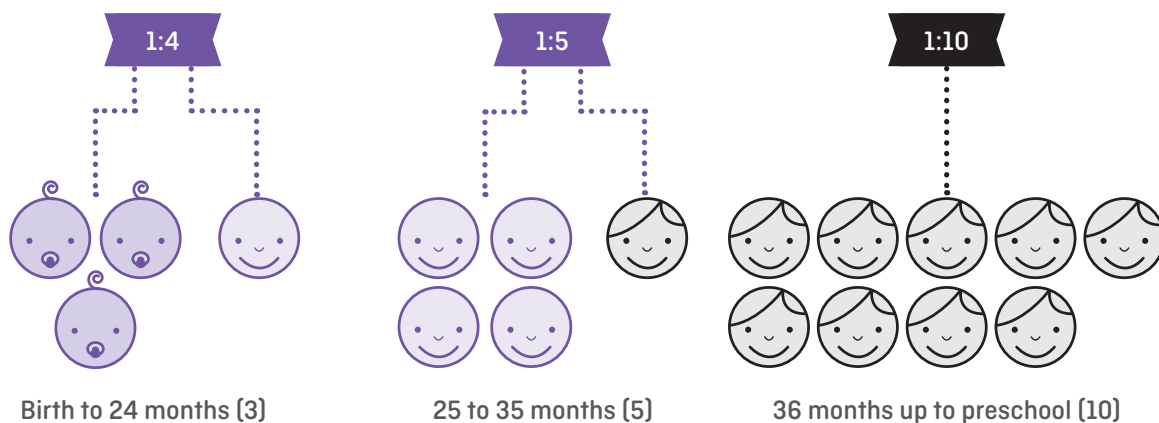
Educators must be working directly with children to be included in the ratios. If the service has less than 25 places, the teacher the service is required to have access to for 20 per cent of the time, cannot be included in the educator-to-child ratios unless they are working directly with children.

Educator-to-child ratios are not the only consideration in determining appropriate staffing. The service also needs to maintain adequate supervision and organise staffing in a way to achieve quality education, health and wellbeing outcomes under the seven Quality areas of the NQS.



Section A: Recruiting and retaining good staff

MIXED AGE GROUP RATIOS / If rooms are joined at the beginning or end of the day or if family groupings are held throughout the day, the service still needs the minimum number of educators for the children required under the ratios—so 1:4 for babies, 1:5 for toddlers and 1:10 for preschoolers. For each educator, the relevant ratio for each age group needs to be maintained. Older children can be included in the ratio of younger children.



In the above scenario, the required educator for the babies could also be responsible for one of the toddlers and still meet the 1:4 ratio for babies. The educator with the toddlers could also be responsible for one of the preschoolers and still meet the new 1:5 ratio. The final educator would therefore be responsible for up to 10 preschoolers.

STAFFING WAIVERS / If the service cannot meet some of the staffing requirements of the Regulations, it can apply for a waiver. The National Law provides for two types of exemptions or waivers from meeting a prescribed element or elements of the National Quality Standard or the National Regulations:

- **Service Waiver**—provides a waiver on an ongoing basis.
- **Temporary Waiver**—provides a waiver for a fixed period (up to 12 months).

What sort of thing might a service need a temporary waiver for? If the service is unable to meet its staffing requirement, for example, the recruitment of one or more early childhood teachers, a temporary waiver may be granted for this requirement.

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) is responsible for considering applications for waivers. Waivers are only approved when providers can show extenuating circumstances and genuine difficulty in meeting the requirements of the NQF, and where there is no unacceptable risk to children's safety, health or wellbeing in granting the waiver.



For more information, see: SA08 Application for service or temporary waiver or SA09 Application for revocation of service waiver

Available at: www.acecqa.gov.au/resources/applications

Note: All applications must be completed via the National Quality Agenda IT System (www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-agenda-it-system#firsttime)



STAFF RECORDS

The National Regulations describe the information that a service must retain as part of its staff record:

- ▶ For each staff member:
 - Full name, address and date of birth
 - Evidence of any relevant qualifications
 - Evidence of any approved training (including first aid training)
 - Working with children check verification
 - Proof of teacher registration if the nominated supervisor is a registered teacher
- ▶ The name of the person designated as the educational leader
- ▶ The full name, address and date of birth of each student or volunteer
- ▶ The date and hours of participation for each student or volunteer participates in the service
- ▶ The name of the responsible person for each time that children are being cared for by the service

Other records that are useful to maintain include:

- ▶ original application;
- ▶ job description and an original copy of the letter of appointment or employment contract;
- ▶ induction checklist;
- ▶ appraisal and details of involvement in staff development activity;
- ▶ copies of accident or injury reports;
- ▶ staff training records, including any on the job training such as occupational health and safety procedures; and
- ▶ other records including:
 - general staff policy
 - all award information that relates to the employees of the service
 - relief staff records
 - time-in-lieu records
 - staff meeting minutes book.

RECRUITING STAFF

Recruitment and selection is not only about choosing the most suitable applicant. An applicant's recruitment and selection experience with an organisation can also impact on the likelihood of whether an applicant will accept a job offer and on their subsequent commitment to remaining with the service.

Poor recruitment choices (for example, poor person-job fit) can have a range of adverse consequences for the service and the worker including:

- ▶ higher rates of turnover;
- ▶ reduced performance effectiveness;
- ▶ lowered job satisfaction;
- ▶ reduced work motivation.



Section A: Recruiting and retaining good staff

Before beginning to appoint new staff, the service must have a selection process in place. The checklist below is designed to help education and care services prepare to recruit and employ staff.

Note: Extension of 'Equivalent to an ECT' provision

Taking into account the workforce pressures on the sector across the country, particularly in rural and remote settings, the ACECQA Board has determined it will also extend its 'Equivalent to an ECT' provision until 31 December 2024.



For more information, see ACECQA's *Short term relief of Educators at Centre-Based services fact sheet*: <https://bit.ly/3PDi2IC>

RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST

- ▶ management is clear on the need for, and role of, the position;
- ▶ there is a job description for the position;
- ▶ there is a selection criteria for the position;
- ▶ there is an agreed approach to advertising for the position;
- ▶ a panel of interviewers who are clear on their role in the interview is in place;
- ▶ there is a process for selecting applicants to interview;
- ▶ the list of interview questions is fair, relates to the selection criteria and does not discriminate against individuals or groups;
- ▶ there is a description of conditions and salary associated with the role;
- ▶ there is an approach to providing feedback to applicants and to informing successful and unsuccessful applicants;
- ▶ a letter of appointment and/or a contract has been prepared;
- ▶ the applicant has provided their Working With Children Check Number;
- ▶ the Working With Children Check has been undertaken;
- ▶ if necessary, the applicant's qualifications have been checked on the approved educator qualification lists on the ACECQA website: www.cecqa.gov.au/qualifications/nqf-approved;
- ▶ there is an orientation planned for the new staff member.

FORMULATING JOB DESCRIPTIONS / A job description outlines the main duties and responsibilities of a particular position and clearly explains what is expected of the employee. To formulate a job description, gather information about the role and prepare it under specific categories, as outlined below.

Purpose of the role

- ▶ What is the service that is required of the employee?
- ▶ What is the relationship of the job to other jobs in the organisation?
- ▶ What are the consequences of poor performance or non-performance?

Responsibilities of the role

- ▶ What are the key responsibilities of the role (that is, what is the employee actually expected to do?)



Reports and accountabilities

- ▶ Who will be the employee's direct supervisor and what are the reporting relationships?
- ▶ Will any other staff member(s) report to the employee in this role?
- ▶ Are there any other requirements of the role, such as attendance at meetings and training?

Skills and attributes

- ▶ What interpersonal skills are required to support relationships with others?
- ▶ Is logic or reasoning required?
- ▶ What specific skills are absolutely essential?
- ▶ How important is attitude?

Legal requirements: What legislation does the employee need to comply with?



For more information, draft job descriptions are available in the members section of the Community Early Learning Australia website at: www.cela.org.au

SELECTION CRITERIA / The selection criteria is a list of qualifications, skills and qualities that are needed to do the job effectively. They are based on the job description and should be used when providing information to potential applicants, culling applications and developing interview questions.

Criteria will include previous experience, skills, knowledge and ability, qualifications and personal attributes such as initiative, flexibility and motivation. Once the selection criteria have been developed, each requirement should then be prioritised, based on the job description, and listed as 'essential' or 'desirable' to the position.

ADVERTISING THE POSITION / There are a number of options for advertising the position. Considerations include budget and where to place the advertisement so that it will be seen by suitable applicants. Options for advertising a position, range from major metropolitan newspapers to local newspapers and professional magazines such as *Broadside* and *Rattler* (both published by Community Early Learning Australia), staffing agencies and internet sites such as www.seek.com.au and www.mycareer.com.au.

Community Early Learning Australia has a specific section of its website—www.cela.org.au—where members can post jobs that they want advertised, as does Community Connections Solutions Australia at www.ccsa.org.au and the NSW Council of Social Services at www.ncoss.org.au

To recruit new graduates, notice boards at TAFE colleges and universities provide good exposure. Services may also wish to work with a reputable recruitment agency that specialises in the education and care services sector.

HANDLING JOB APPLICATIONS / A clear time schedule should be set out for handling the job selection process. Management will need to move as quickly as possible so as not to miss out on good applicants, but not so quickly that there is potential to mistakenly select the wrong applicant. A sample time selection is included below.



THE INTERVIEW

- ▶ interviews need to be planned;
- ▶ set a time limit for each interview, usually between 30–60 minutes;
- ▶ between interviews, set aside time for discussion and time to prepare for the next candidate;
- ▶ restrict the interview panel to around three or four people and make sure each member is clear on their role in the interview;
- ▶ all members of the panel need to be familiar with the job description and each candidate's application;
- ▶ appoint someone to lead the panel to ensure that the interview runs to schedule and all questions are covered;
- ▶ have someone available to greet the applicant and provide pre-interview information and questions as appropriate.

Note: Many organisations provide applicants with the questions that will be asked 30 minutes prior to the interview, to allow the candidate time to reflect on their answers. Technical questions—such as those relating to regulations—may be best asked and answered in writing.

At the time of the interview, greet the applicant and introduce them to the panel. Interview questions should reflect the key selection criteria and each applicant must be asked the same questions in accordance with the [NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977](#). Questions asking about past behaviour, for example, 'tell us about a time when you...' rather than future scenarios have been demonstrated to be more likely to give you a true indicator of the applicants work style and approach. Although each applicant must be asked the same questions, the panel can probe for a more comprehensive answer to a question from a particular applicant. The applicant must also be given time to ask questions.

Innovative approaches to interviews

Many education and care services are approaching employment in innovative ways, which are designed to find out more about the candidate and give them the best possible opportunity to sell themselves. Some approaches include:

- ▶ asking applicants to arrive early so that they may familiarise themselves with the service and gain a better feel for its philosophy and approach;
- ▶ providing applicants with the list of interview questions prior to the interview so that they can give more thoughtful and detailed responses to the panel;
- ▶ sending information packs to applicants to help them gain a clear picture of the service;
- ▶ presenting candidates with 'real life' scenarios and dilemmas and asking them how they would resolve the problem in that situation—allowing the panel to assess how the applicant 'thinks on their feet'; and
- ▶ including other staff members on the panel to assist with the recruitment procedure and offer their input on the applicants.

Checking references

Before employing any staff member, references must be checked to confirm information about the applicant's background and previous work experience. A thorough reference check also provides insights into the way a person works and develops professionally. This is a good opportunity to ask



specific questions that the service may have about the applicant that were not covered adequately in the interview process. A template for doing reference checks on potential employees is included in Chapter 12: Resources to Support Management.

COMPLETING THE WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK / A Working With Children Check is a requirement for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

The result of a Working With Children Check is either a clearance to work with children for five years, or a bar against working with children. Cleared applicants are subject to ongoing monitoring and relevant new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

The Working With Children Check is fully portable so it can be used for any paid or unpaid child-related work in NSW for as long as the worker remains cleared.

Who needs the check?

Everyone who undertakes child-related work needs to complete the Working With Children Check. Under Part 2, Division 1, section 6 of the *Child Protection (Working With Children) Act 2012*, child-related work is defined as work that involves direct contact (physical or face to face contact) by the worker with a child or children and that contact is a usual part of and more than incidental to the work, or work in a child-related role. Additional roles can be found in the *Child Protection (Working With Children) Regulation 2013*. Areas of child-related work include the following:

- ▶ child development and family welfare services;
- ▶ child protection;
- ▶ children's health services;
- ▶ clubs or other bodies providing services for children;
- ▶ disability services;
- ▶ early education and childcare;
- ▶ education;
- ▶ entertainment for children;
- ▶ justice centres;
- ▶ membership of governing body of certain agencies;
- ▶ principal officer of registered agency;
- ▶ religious services;
- ▶ residential services;
- ▶ transport services for children;
- ▶ school cleaners;
- ▶ youth workers.

Employers have specific responsibilities under the Working With Children Check. They must:

- ▶ register online with the Office of the Children's Guardian (<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check>);
- ▶ identify roles within their organisation that undertake child-related work and need a Working With Children Check and which roles are not child-related or fall under an exemption



- ▶ verify every new paid employee online before employing them;
- ▶ verify current paid workers and all volunteers (new and current) online;
- ▶ ensure their own Working With Children Check is verified online by an appropriate person within the organisation (employers cannot self-verify);
- ▶ keep records of employees who require a Check and when they were verified
- ▶ as part of registering, nominate two people from the organisation who are authorised to receive confidential information in case we need to contact you about a change in someone's Check status.
- ▶ remind employees to renew which they can do up to three months before their Check expires.
- ▶ remove anyone who's Check status is barred, interim barred, whose Check cannot be found or has expired from child-related work. You can only employ people who have an Application number or Check clearance in child-related work.



For more information, go to:

<https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check>

RECRUITING RELIEF STAFF / Education and care services, especially long day care centres, may experience depleted staff numbers throughout the year because of ill health, annual leave, rostered days off and absences relating to in-service and training. As such, each service should have a pool of reliable and resourceful relief staff.

Working with a reputable staffing agency to meet relief staff demands

Working with a staffing agency has added benefits, as the agency will present appropriately screened, suitably experienced and qualified applicants who offer an on-call service, thus reducing the time spent finding relief staff at the last minute and time spent on legislative compliance in employment areas. It is important to note that it is still up to the employer to ensure legislative requirements are complied with.

Pool of relief staff

Should people who are seeking relief work approach the service, it is beneficial to meet with them and find out about their qualifications, experience, and availability. Even an informal meeting will provide some insight into their suitability for temporary work. Of course, it is often hard to gauge how competent a person is until they have had 'hands on' experience at the service in question. It is important to remember that all a service's legislative requirements around permanent staff also apply to relief staff such as taxation, superannuation, Working With Children Checks, occupational health and safety inductions. Relief staff also need to be informed of your service's policies in key areas such as health and safety procedures prior to them working in a room.

Permanent relief

For some education and care services, a more secure way of filling relief staff positions is the employment of additional permanent staff who move between rooms as needed to fill vacancies caused by annual and rostered leave. Many services choose to employ permanent relief staff as a way of ensuring continuity of care for children, as well as reducing the need to employ more costly relief staff on a regular basis. A simple calculation can help decide whether to implement this option or not. For example, if the service employs eight staff and they are all eligible for four weeks of annual leave and approximately two weeks of



rostered days off, it is possible to be down one staff member for at least 48 weeks of the year. Employing a permanent float thus makes simple economic sense. Services who chose this option must also manage the way employees take leave—for example, only one staff member should take leave at a time and there should always be one staff member on leave—to ensure that the relief position works. Services also need to ensure staff do not accrue too much leave at any one time.

INDUCTION

Induction programs provide a sound start for new employees and form a basis for staff development programs. The process of induction or orientation is the final step in the recruitment process and the first step in an employee's professional development program.

Beginning professional development during the induction will encourage employees to be attuned to the policies and operating principles of the service and provide them with an understanding of management's commitment to training and staff development. The process is also an opportunity to make employees feel welcome, introduce the lines of communication and emphasise the importance placed on clear and open communication. During the induction, the employer re-iterates the employee's role in relation to the children and families involved with the service.

A typical orientation program may involve the employee spending time with the Director, who ideally explains the conditions of employment and the organisation's requirements and answer any questions that arise. The new staff member could then team up with a more experienced staff member, who outlines the practical aspects of the service and the program.

WHAT DO NEW EMPLOYEES NEED TO KNOW?

Community Early Learning Australia recommends that new employees be provided with:

- ▶ a brief history of the service, an overview of the management structure, and a description of how it currently operates;
- ▶ details on lines of communication at the service, and a guide to who they should raise concerns with or go to if they need to discuss a minor grievance;
- ▶ the philosophy, aims and objectives of the service, its policies and procedures;
- ▶ a job description;
- ▶ a delegations list and level of authority;
- ▶ information about programs and regulations that relate to the operation of the service;
- ▶ a summary of how the service approaches staff–family communication;
- ▶ information relating to awards, union membership, and conditions of employment (particularly leave entitlements);
- ▶ workplace health and safety information;
- ▶ the grievance and disciplinary procedure;
- ▶ other relevant staff procedures such as emergency and evacuation, notification of sick leave, breaks, and rosters;
- ▶ meetings and professional development policies and procedures;
- ▶ training resources and information about opportunities;
- ▶ the service's curriculum approach and documentation systems;



Section A: Recruiting and retaining good staff

- ▶ the services Quality Improvement Plan and strategic plan;
- ▶ the service's child protection policy.

One of the easiest ways to ensure new employees have access to the information they need is to have a staff handbook.

STAFF HANDBOOK CHECKLIST / Community Early Learning Australia recommends that the staff information handbook includes:

Introduction

- ▶ service's philosophy;
- ▶ service strategic plan;
- ▶ service's Quality Improvement Plan
- ▶ management profile.

Administration

- ▶ emergency procedures;
- ▶ sign in and out book;
- ▶ payroll;
- ▶ time sheets;
- ▶ leave forms;
- ▶ staff amenities.

Conditions of employment

- ▶ code of conduct;
- ▶ non-discrimination in employment policy;
- ▶ recruitment and selection;
- ▶ annual performance review;
- ▶ performance management;
- ▶ secondary employment.

Grievance procedures

- ▶ resolution of formal complaints;
- ▶ responding to a complaint;
- ▶ resolution of a complaint;
- ▶ appeals;
- ▶ dispute avoidance and grievance procedure.

Workplace health and safety

- ▶ purpose;
- ▶ employer/staff responsibilities;
- ▶ hazard reporting;



- ▶ injury and accident reporting;
- ▶ first aid;
- ▶ harassment;
- ▶ manual handling procedures;
- ▶ risks to pregnant staff;
- ▶ sun protection policies;
- ▶ immunisation policies;
- ▶ workplace rehabilitation program.

Employment practices

- ▶ absences;
- ▶ hours of work;
- ▶ rostered days off;
- ▶ lunch breaks/crib breaks;
- ▶ pay arrangements;
- ▶ change of personal details;
- ▶ public holidays;
- ▶ superannuation;
- ▶ use of telephone;
- ▶ staff development and training;
- ▶ non-contact hours for programming.

Leave

- ▶ annual;
- ▶ annual leave loading;
- ▶ bereavement leave;
- ▶ leave without pay;
- ▶ long service leave;
- ▶ jury service;
- ▶ parental leave;
- ▶ roster days off;
- ▶ sick leave.

Induction program

- ▶ confidentiality policy;
- ▶ information technology policy;
- ▶ information on Working With Children Check;
- ▶ information on mandatory reporting responsibilities and reportable conduct;
- ▶ information on child protection policies;
- ▶ information about how to access a current copy of all service policies and procedures.



TEAM BUILDING

It is impossible to run a quality education and care service if teamwork between the staff is not present. A team is a group of individuals who come together to work towards common goals. These individuals may have different backgrounds, experiences, values and beliefs, but come together and work effectively to achieve these goals. Combining these differences at work allows for a rich and varied work environment.

Staff need to be efficient and effective members of the team, working towards a common goal, encouraging and supporting each other and using their various skills and abilities to create an effective service. Without this contribution and support from every staff member, the quality of both the team and the service may decline. To be an effective team member, employees need to:

- ▶ understand the roles and responsibilities expected of them and of other staff;
- ▶ understand the way the service operates;
- ▶ share information, experiences, knowledge and skills with other staff;
- ▶ understand the program's policies and procedures;
- ▶ be able to take on extra duties where necessary;
- ▶ work together on required tasks;
- ▶ be involved in making team decisions;
- ▶ be professional at all times.

All staff need to be active in work performance by completing assigned tasks according to the planned workload. The different roles and responsibilities of the staff need to be identified and respected. There need to be procedures in place for dealing with grievances and conflicts. These should be in the form of clear set guidelines on the steps that need to be taken when conflicts occur. Staff need to feel supported by these guidelines and understand the steps required. Regular staff meetings need to be held where concerns are voiced. Communication needs to be clear, concise and focused on the issue and staff need to be flexible, adaptable and accepting of change.

Where there is effective teamwork, the atmosphere is happy and positive and provides positive role models for the children. There is a relaxed atmosphere at the service as staff are friendly to each other, joke with each other and the children, are happy to be at work, help each other out, and have fun at work.

The children will detect the caring environment modelled by the staff and will also benefit from the effects of the strong team. A program with happy energetic, fun loving staff and children is so much better than one with tense feelings and staff that feel undervalued.

Procedures that foster team work help to produce a work culture where individuals are able to contribute to the operation of the program and work with colleagues from a basis of mutual respect and effective communication. To have an effective and efficient team requires regular maintenance. Continually maintaining good relations between staff is vital and should be incorporated into the policy and procedures of the service.

Effective and efficient teams recognise that everyone can contribute to decisions about what work is performed in the workplace and how it is performed. Ensuring that staff are involved in decision making and regularly encouraging all team members to contribute their ideas and suggestions about how to do things better provides for effective operations and increased productivity among staff.



When each person contributes to the team effort and the team continues to develop, staff often find greater job satisfaction, contributing to a more effective work environment where:

- ▶ there is a more harmonious atmosphere;
- ▶ goals are reached more effectively;
- ▶ responsibilities are shared;
- ▶ skills, opinions and abilities are valued by colleagues;
- ▶ staff work together to help each other achieve and succeed;
- ▶ conflict is dealt with more effectively;
- ▶ the work load is shared happily.

The four stages of working together as a team include:

Stage 1: Information sharing

- ▶ room routines;
- ▶ staff handbook;
- ▶ staff induction;
- ▶ staff meetings;
- ▶ planning;
- ▶ getting to know one another professionally and personally.

Stage 2: Confronting conflict in the team

- ▶ it is inevitable, normal and healthy;
- ▶ ignoring it will hinder the team's progress;
- ▶ in groups where conflict is not addressed effectively, decision making and problem solving is poor and a higher level of stress is present.

Stage 3: Consensus and co-operation in the team

- ▶ team spirit;
- ▶ when present, team members are:
 - more open minded;
 - more willing to listen;
 - more willing to support each other;
 - more able to focus on group rather than individual needs.
- ▶ this leads to staff being involved in:
 - goal setting;
 - developing policies and implementing them;
 - open communication;
 - constructive feedback;
 - acknowledgement for contributions to the group.

Stage 4: Effective team performance

- ▶ the team shares responsibility for the efficient operation of a 'quality service';
- ▶ regular review and evaluation of the service's policies and practices to ensure ongoing



improvement;

- the relationship is based on mutual respect and support.

STAFF MEETINGS / Regular staff meetings ensure that members of staff are encouraged to voice any concerns or ideas regarding the program. They should be scheduled regularly (for example, once a month), and be structured around an agenda that sets out items for discussion. Minutes need to be recorded and actions documented. Roles can be given to staff (that is, chair of the meeting, minute taker, time keeper) during the meeting as required.

Minutes need to be accepted from the previous meeting and any outstanding business should be discussed and actions taken summarised, where appropriate.

Staff should be given the opportunity to table items for discussion. During each meeting, time should be set aside for discussion and to plan forthcoming program activities with the children. This allows each staff member the opportunity to input his or her ideas and hobbies/areas of expertise into the program. Agendas and minutes should be prepared and circulated to all members.

WHEN THE TEAM BREAKS DOWN / Teamwork relies on every person to be committed. If this does not happen, the team becomes a group of individuals who are moving in different directions. When team work is lacking, the:

- atmosphere is tense, unwelcoming and negative;
- efforts are not acknowledged or are disregarded;
- staff are suspicious of one another;
- staff work in isolation;
- work is not a fun place to be—there is no humour or joking around;
- children pick up on the negativity and can become more disruptive as a consequence;
- children will not enjoy attending the service.

When mutual co-operation and support breaks down, employees may feel that:

- they are not valued;
- their goals are different from others;
- they work harder than anyone else;
- they do not need to bother about it, someone else will do it
- morale is low;
- they do not need to treat others with respect;
- they do not need to value other people's skills and knowledge;
- they do not know their role and responsibilities;
- people may be talking about them behind their back;
- they do not like coming to work.

SETTING PERSONAL GOALS / Setting personal goals is a valuable tool in any aspect of an individual's life, yet goals are equally useful as they relate to teamwork. Goals help people to realistically achieve dreams. There are short-term and long-term goals that need to be set to achieve a productive and positive workplace. To set achievable goals, they should be easily attainable and able to be completed in



a designated timeframe. Short-term team goals can be as simple as:

- ▶ arriving at work on time or five minutes earlier to calmly start the day;
- ▶ returning from breaks on time;
- ▶ completing all the tasks you have been set;
- ▶ saying something positive to a fellow staff member every day.

Long-term goals obviously take more time but can be achieved by breaking them up into smaller goals that lead to the completion of the larger goals.

For example:

Long-term goal: To review all health and safety policies.

Objective: To ensure that the centre is operating under evidence based policies and is prepared for assessment.

Timeline:

- ▶ how long should the whole process take?
- ▶ break up the workload into smaller, more attainable jobs
- ▶ decide on who will help
- ▶ decide on a time during the term/year when it will be done.

Short-term goals:

- ▶ Week 1: Locate all existing policies on computer and in policy manual;
- ▶ Week 2: Source exemplary policies from Community Early Learning Australia
- ▶ Week 3: Divide policies amongst staff and management committee for initial review;
- ▶ Term 2: Re-draft one policy per week;
- ▶ Term 3: Issue draft policies to staff and families for consultation. Revise drafts;
- ▶ Term 4: Management committee to adopt all new policies.

COMMUNICATION / An education and care service is a busy work place with many things going on all at once. It can be difficult to find the time or the way to pass on information to all staff. There needs to be effective communication methods employed, so that all staff are informed of the goings on at the workplace. The key to good work place relations is communication:

- ▶ meet with staff to discuss issues and problems in a 'no-blame' manner;
- ▶ listen to other staff;
- ▶ discuss any issues after the program and away from children and parents;
- ▶ never discuss issues about a child in front of other children or parents;
- ▶ have regular staff meetings;
- ▶ incorporate 'ice breakers' into meetings to introduce new staff to the regular team;
- ▶ introduce new staff to the children;
- ▶ have a method of communication in place that will inform all staff about important events or information that needs to be shared, such as what equipment each staff member will be using in their room during the week. Consider setting up a whiteboard in the staff room or



using a communication book.

Staff meetings

As discussed earlier, staff meetings are an important and integral part of a successful program. Staff should be informed of the meeting time in advance so they can prepare or plan any activities. Each meeting can be a platform to:

- ▶ discuss and express concerns;
- ▶ share information, for example professional development sessions attended, in-services, seminars, newsletters;
- ▶ discuss programming and policy issues;
- ▶ discuss relevant information on children/families;
- ▶ discuss any issues or concerns from staff;
- ▶ debrief on any relevant issues occurring in the previous month or fortnight.

Time is precious, so it is important to be very clear about what you want the staff meetings to achieve. For example, it is not useful for a team to be pulled into a negotiation between two individual staff. It is also important to have balance of problem solving issues and opportunities for learning and creative discussion. Discussing with the team how they want to use their meeting time and developing agreements about how this will be achieved can make meeting much more productive. For example, an agreement could be, that if a problem is raised, a possible solution also needs to be suggested.

Other forms of communication

A communication book can be useful for day-to-day information that needs to be passed on to all staff attending on that day. Items can include:

- ▶ staff roster;
- ▶ messages for staff and children;
- ▶ reminders of upcoming events;
- ▶ casual bookings for children;
- ▶ children coming on an extra day.

A notice board for messages and memos can be useful particularly in larger teams with a number of part-time staff. Getting staff to initial the message will let others know who has read it and when the note can be removed. It is important for teams to decide what information needs to be shared, and where it will be put, and this then can form part of the induction process for new staff and casuals.

Information in the 'Minimum staffing requirements' section is adapted from *The Really Simple Guide to the New Regulations*, Community Child Care (NSW), November 2011.

Information in the 'Recruiting staff' section is adapted from *The Manual: Managing a children's service*, Community Child Care (NSW), 2009.

Information in the 'Team building' section is adapted from *Building a Winning Team: Self-guided learning package*, Community Child Care Victoria, 2011.



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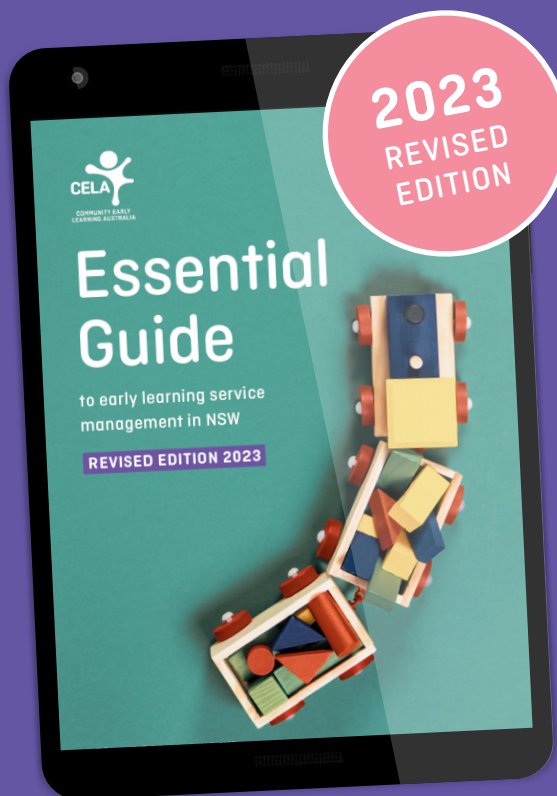




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