Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

Guide to the National Quality Standard

September 2013

Amendments to the Education and Care Services National Regulations affecting the National Quality Framework Resource Kit

Amendments to the Education and Care Services National Regulations came into effect in all states and territories except Western Australia on 1 September 2013. The National Regulations in Western Australia will be amended later in 2013 to reflect these changes. The minor amendments deliver benefits to providers and educators, resolving several issues raised since the introduction of the National Quality Framework. ACECQA has updated the National Quality Framework Resource Kit to reflect the amendments. Key changes are shown in the table below.

There are also a number of jurisdiction specific amendments. More information about changes in your state or territory is available on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website or from your regulatory authority.

Changes to the National Quality Framework Resource Kit			
		Page number	
Change	Reg.	New	Old
Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations			
Information that must be included in an application for service approval (centre-based)	r25	22	24
Definition of serious incidents that must be notified to the regulatory authority (note: the definition has not changed for providers in WA)	r12	57	59
Requirements for rehearsal of emergency and evacuation procedures	r97	65	67
Space requirements do not apply in relation to a child being educated and cared for in an emergency under regulation 123(5)	r107-8	72-3	74-5
Educator to child ratios do not apply in relation to a child being educated and cared for in an emergency under regulation 123(5)	r123	84	87
Early childhood teacher requirements do not apply in relation to a child being educated and cared for in an emergency under regulation 123(5)	r129	90	92
Guide to the National Quality Standard			
Guidance about child safety restraints in vehicles has been removed, to clarify that the NQF does not extend to regulation of transport services	n/a	n/a	70-7
Guidance about child protection responsibilities of educators and providers has been revised for consistency with state and territory based legislation	n/a	76	80
References to the NHMRC Staying Healthy in Child Care guidelines have been updated following publication of the 5th edition	n/a	58, 191	61, 197

Contents

About the National Quality Standard

The National Quality Framework

In December 2009, all Australian governments, through the Council of Australian Governments, agreed to a partnership to establish a National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care ('National Quality Framework').

The Australian Government and state and territory governments recognise the importance of increasing their focus on the early years to ensure the wellbeing of children throughout their lives and to lift the productivity of our nation as a whole. The drive for change is based on clear evidence that the early years of children's lives are very important for their present and future health, development and wellbeing.

The National Quality Framework aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in education and care services through:

- the *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care ('National Quality Standard')*
- a national quality rating and assessment process
- streamlined regulatory arrangements
- a national body jointly governed by the Australian Government and state and territory governments—the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)—to oversee the system.

The system replaces state and territory licensing and quality assurance processes.

Effective date

The National Quality Framework took effect on 1 January 2012, with key requirements being phased in over time. Requirements such as qualifications, educator-to-child ratios, and other key staffing arrangements are being phased in between 2012 and 2020.

The national legislative framework

The National Quality Framework is underpinned by the *Education and Care Services National Law* ('National Law') and *Education and Care Services National Regulations* ('National Regulations'). Together they set the *National Quality Standard* and the regulatory framework for most long day care, preschool/kindergarten, family day care and outside school hours care services in all states and territories.

The *National Law* provides objectives and guiding principles for the National Quality Framework.

In making decisions about operating education and care services and working to achieve the *National Quality Standard* to improve quality at services, the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework apply. These principles are:

- 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.

The National Quality Standard

The *National Quality Standard* sets a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. It also gives services and families a better understanding of a quality service. This enables families to make informed decisions about the services providing education and care to their child. The *National Quality Standard* is a key aspect of the National Quality Framework. It brings together the seven key quality areas that are important to outcomes for children.

How the National Quality Standard was developed

The development of the *National Quality Standard* was informed by research on best practice and the way in which high-quality education and care contributes to positive outcomes for children. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development identifies aspects of quality critical to the provision of early childhood education and care services[1] These aspects include educational concept and practice, structural quality, interactions between educators and children and targeting services to meet the needs of families and local communities. These aspects of quality are reflected in the *National Quality Standard*.

Approved learning frameworks

For the first time Australia has a *National Quality Standard* linked to national learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth. These are:

- *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* ('Early Years Learning Framework')

- *My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia* ('Framework for School Age Care').

These frameworks outline practices to support and promote children's learning.

Early Years Learning Framework

The *Early Years Learning Framework* guides educators in developing quality programs for children. It describes the early childhood principles, practice and outcomes required to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, including their transition to school.

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[1] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2006), Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care.

Framework for School Age Care

The *Framework for School Age Care* builds on the *Early Years Learning Framework* and extends the principles, practices and outcomes to accommodate the contexts and age range of the children and young people who attend school age care settings.

The *Framework for School Age Care* exists to ensure that children in school age care have opportunities to engage in leisure and play-based experiences that are responsive to the needs, interests and choices of the children attending the service and that contribute to their ongoing development. It provides guidance to educators working with school age children in outside school hours care, long day care and family day care settings.

More information about approved learning frameworks is provided in Quality Area 1 on page 18.

Quality areas, standards and elements

The *National Quality Standard* comprises quality areas, standards and elements.

Quality areas

There are seven quality areas.

QA1	Educational program and practice
QA2	Children's health and safety
QA3	Physical environment
QA4	Staffing arrangements
QA5	Relationships with children
QA6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
QA7	Leadership and service management

Standards and elements

The *National Quality Standard* contains 18 standards with two or three standards in each quality area. These standards are high-level outcome statements.

Under each standard sit elements that describe the outcomes that contribute to the standard being achieved. There are 58 elements in total.

The table that follows lists the standards and elements that apply to each quality area.

Summary table of quality areas, standards and elements

QA1	Educational program and practice
1.1	An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.
1.1.1	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	Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.1.3	The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
1.1.4	The documentation about each child's program and progress is available to families.
1.1.5	Every child is supported to participate in the program.
1.1.6	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events and their world.
1.2	Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.
1.2.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.
1.2.2	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning.
1.2.3	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.
QA2	Children's health and safety
2.1	Each child's health is promoted.
2.1.1	Each child's health needs are supported.
2.1.2	Each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.3	Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.4	Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines.
2.2	Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children.
2.2.1	Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child.
2.2.2	Physical activity is promoted through planned and spontaneous experiences and is appropriate for each child.
2.3	Each child is protected.
2.3.1	Children are adequately supervised at all times.
2.3.2	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.
2.3.3	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.3.4	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
QA3	Physical environment
3.1	The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose.
3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.1.3	Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and interaction between indoor and outdoor space.
3.2	The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.
3.2.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses.
3.3	The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.
3.3.1	Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.
3.3.2	Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.
QA4	Staffing arrangements
4.1	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing.
4.1.1	Educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements are maintained at all times.
4.2	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
4.2.2	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills, to improve practice and relationships.

4.2.3	Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.
QA5	**Relationships with children**
5.1	Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Interactions with each child are warm, responsive and build trusting relationships.
5.1.2	Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
5.1.3	Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.
5.2	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.
5.2.1	Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
5.2.2	Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
5.2.3	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times.
QA6	**Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**
6.1	Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.
6.1.1	There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.
6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families.
6.2	Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.
6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.2.2	Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.3	The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.
6.3.1	Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained.
6.3.2	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.3.3	Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.
6.3.4	The service builds relationships and engages with their local community.
QA7	**Leadership and service management**
7.1	Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.
7.1.1	Appropriate governance arrangements are in place to manage the service.
7.1.2	The induction of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is comprehensive.
7.1.3	Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service.
7.1.4	Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or co-ordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.
7.1.5	Adults working with children and those engaged in management of the service or residing on the premises are fit and proper.
7.2	There is a commitment to continuous improvement.
7.2.1	A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.2.2	The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement.
7.2.3	An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place.
7.3	Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.
7.3.1	Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.
7.3.2	Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service.
7.3.3	The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of serious incidents and any complaints which allege a breach of legislation.
7.3.4	Processes are in place to ensure that all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner.
7.3.5	Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly.

The rating system

The *National Quality Standard* is accompanied by a national quality rating and assessment process that reflects a national approach to the assessment and reporting of the quality of education and care services across the variety of service settings.

The availability of this information promotes transparency and accountability and will help parents make informed choices regarding the quality of education and care at a service. Each service will receive a rating for each quality area and an overall rating. These ratings must be displayed by the service and will be published on the website of the new national body, ACECQA, and the MyChild website.

Five rating levels

There are five rating levels within the national quality rating and assessment process.

Excellent—indicates that a service demonstrates excellence and is recognised as a sector leader.

Exceeds National Quality Standard—indicates that a service is exceeding the *National Quality Standard*.

Meets National Quality Standard—indicates that a service is meeting the *National Quality Standard*.

Working towards National Quality Standard—indicates that a service is working towards meeting the *National Quality Standard*.

Significant improvement required—indicates that a service is not meeting the *National Quality Standard* and that the regulator is working closely with the service to immediately improve its quality (otherwise the service's approval to operate will be withdrawn).

Assessment and rating of services

A key focus of the National Quality Framework is to promote continuous quality improvement. From 1 January 2012, education and care services covered under the *National Law* are being assessed and rated against the *National Quality Standard*. The relevant regulatory authority in each state and territory undertakes the assessment and rating process and is the point of contact for any questions services may have about the assessment and rating process.

Quality Improvement Plan

An integral part of the assessment and rating process is the Quality Improvement Plan. The *National Regulations* require that the approved provider ensures a Quality Improvement Plan is prepared for the service that:

• includes an assessment by the provider of the quality of the practices of the service against the *National Quality Standard* and the *National Regulations*; and

• identifies any areas that the provider considers may require improvement; and

• contains a statement of philosophy of the service.

Further information on developing a Quality Improvement Plan is available in the *Guide to Developing a Quality Improvement Plan*. A Quality Improvement Plan template is an appendix to this guide.

Assessing and rating a service

The *National Regulations* set out how services will be assessed. Regulatory Authorities must:

- review service information (compliance history, rating and assessment history)
- review a service's current Quality Improvement Plan
- for centre-based services, visit the service to observe practice
- for family day care services, visit one or more family day care residences or venues under that scheme.

The *National Regulations* also provide that the regulatory authority must consider a range of information when determining a rating, including:

- any relevant information provided by a government department, public or local authority, state or territory regulatory authority or a Commonwealth department
- information relating to any other quality assurance or registration process under an education law relating to the service.

Services will be assessed by an authorised officer using the *NQS Assessment and Rating Instrument*. After undertaking an assessment, the regulatory authority will notify the approved provider of a rating for each quality area and an overall rating for the service.

Excellent rating

Services that receive a rating of *Exceeds National Quality Standard* may apply to ACECQA to be considered for the highest rating, *Excellent*.

How ratings are determined

Services need to meet:

- **all elements within a standard** to meet that standard
- **all standards within a quality area** to meet the *National Quality Standard* for that quality area.

The following table describes how the overall rating is determined.

Rating level	How the overall rating is determined
Significant improvement required	The service receives a rating of *Significant improvement required* for one or more quality areas.
Working towards National Quality Standard	The service receives a rating of *Working towards National Quality Standard* for one or more quality areas (but does not receive any rating of *Significant improvement required*).
Meets National Quality Standard	The service receives a rating of at least *Meets National Quality Standard* in each quality area. It may receive a rating of *Exceeds National Quality Standard* in one or more quality areas, but not satisfy the requirements for *Exceeds National Quality Standard*.

Rating level	How the overall rating is determined
Exceeds National Quality Standard	The service meets all standards and receives an *Exceeds National Quality Standard* rating in at least four quality areas, including at least two of the following areas: • Educational program and practice • Relationships with children • Collaborative partnerships with families and communities • Leadership and service management. A service that provides education and care to children of preschool age may only be given a rating of *Exceeds National Quality Standard* for Quality Area 1 (Educational program and practice) if the service: • provides a preschool program or • has a documented arrangement with another approved service to provide a preschool program and informs parents of this arrangement.
Excellent	The *Excellent* rating is given by ACECQA.

National Quality Standard document suite

The suite of documents and tools in place to support the *National Quality Standard* is as follows.

Frameworks	
Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia	For educators
My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia	For educators
Guides	
Educators Belonging, Being and Becoming: Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia	For educators
Guide to the National Quality Standard (this document)	For services and assessors
Guide to Developing a Quality Improvement Plan	For services
Quality assessment tools	
NQS Assessment and Rating Instrument	For assessors and services

Terminology

Refer to the Glossary on page 196 for guidance on the terminology used in this document.

About this guide

The purpose of this guide is to assist services to complete the self-assessment and quality improvement planning process by evaluating their current practices and identifying which practices they can or should improve.

How this guide is organised

The guide outlines each of the seven quality areas in the *National Quality Standard* and includes:

- an introductory statement for each quality area, which provides context and the rationale, as well as a list of the standards and elements that fall within the quality area

- a list of the relevant sections of the *National Law* and *National Regulations* that apply to the quality area

- a description of each standard and an explanation about how it contributes to quality education and care for children

- reflective questions for the service to consider when working towards each standard

- a guide to practice for each element, which describes how the element might be put into practice at the service and how the element may be assessed. This consists of guidance applicable to all service types and children of all ages, followed by any specific guidance identified for the service type or age of the children.

This guide also includes:

- suggestions for further reading, summarised by quality area, to support readers' understanding of the quality area

- a glossary of terms

- an index.

Working with standards

Read the introductory statement for each quality area and standard to clarify your understanding about its intent and context. These introductions describe the importance of each standard in a quality education and care service.

Each standard:

- outlines the requirements involved in service delivery

- is accompanied by a series of reflective questions that will assist the approved service to consider what happens at the service and why; to critically reflect on the effectiveness of their current practices; and to consider how these might be changed or improved.

The reflective questions consist of those applicable to all service types and children of all ages, followed by any specific guidance identified for the service type or age of the children.

Working with elements

Each standard has a number of elements of quality practice.

Examples of practice are provided for each element. The examples detail what the element might look like in everyday practice and the way the element will be assessed.

The examples consist of guidance applicable to all service types and children of all ages, followed by any specific guidance identified for the service type or age of the children.

The examples are listed under the following headings:

- **Observe**—the assessor observes what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in caring, friendly and respectful interactions). It is recognised that the assessor may not be able to observe all of the standards and elements at the time of the assessment.

- **Discuss**—the assessor and approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators, assistants or staff members engage in a discussion about why and how particular practices occur at the service.

- **Sight**—the assessor sights documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, records of attendance, enrolment records, policies and procedures, meeting minutes, safety checklists, staff and family handbooks, newsletters, feedback forms and/or communications books, planning documentation, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments or evaluations).

The examples of practice provided are not exhaustive. Each approved service is unique and the ways in which the elements and standards are met will be determined by the service context, including the service environment; the needs, interests and abilities of the children attending the service; and the needs of families and the wider community.

A service may determine that it is able to meet the standards and elements in ways other than those included in the examples. During the assessment process the service will need to demonstrate that its alternative approach achieves the same outcomes. While the assessment process determines whether each element is met or not met, it is likely that the assessor will be able to make decisions about a number of elements from an observation or a conversation.

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on ensuring that the educational program and practice is stimulating and engaging and enhances children's learning and development.

In school age care services, the program nurtures the development of life skills and complements children's experiences, opportunities and relationships at school, at home and in the community.

Quality Area 1: Standards and elements

Standard 1.1	An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.	
	Element 1.1.1	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.
	Element 1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
	Element 1.1.3	The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
	Element 1.1.4	The documentation about each child's program and progress is available to families.
	Element 1.1.5	Every child is supported to participate in the program.
	Element 1.1.6	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and to influence events and their world.
Standard 1.2	Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.	
	Element 1.2.1	Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.
	Element 1.2.2	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning.
	Element 1.2.3	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.

Quality Area 1: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
1.1	section 168	Offence relating to required programs
1.1	section 323	Approved learning framework
1.1	regulation 73	Educational programs
	regulation 75	Information about the educational program to be kept available
1.1	regulation 76	Information about educational program to be given to parents
1.2	regulation 74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program

Introduction

Critical reflection and careful planning increase the value of children's time in education and care by ensuring that the educational program and practice responds to children's interests and scaffolds their learning. A statement of philosophy (covered in element 7.2.1) will also guide a service in developing the educational program and practice. Planning is also important in ensuring accountability to families and children, management and funding and regulatory bodies.

The approved provider and nominated supervisor of an education and care service are responsible for ensuring that a suitable program based on an approved learning framework is delivered to all children.

Focus of Quality Area 1

Quality Area 1 provides a strong focus on enhancing children's learning and development through the:

- pedagogical practices of educators and co-ordinators
- development of programs that promote children's learning across five learning outcomes.

Approved learning frameworks

The *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Framework for School Age Care* outline practices that educators and co-ordinators use to support and promote children's learning.

Other approved learning frameworks are as follows:

- Australian Capital Territory: *Every Chance to Learn—Curriculum framework for ACT schools preschool to Year 10*
- Tasmania: the *Tasmanian Curriculum*, the Department of Education of Tasmania, 2008
- Victoria: the *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework*

- Western Australia: the *Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 Education in Western Australia*.

Services can obtain information about jurisdictional-specific approved learning frameworks from relevant state or territory education departments.

The purpose of learning frameworks

A learning framework assists nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators to think more deeply about the service's approach to learning, development and care and the way in which this guides everyday practice and development of the program.

The frameworks are designed to inspire conversations, improve communication and provide a common language about young children's learning among children themselves, with their families and the broader community, with educators and with other professionals (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 8; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 6).

The emphasis in the frameworks is on planned or intentional aspects of the program, which includes supporting spontaneous play and leisure experiences (*Framework for School Age Care*, page 6). Understanding children's learning and the value placed on play, relationships, collaborative decision making and respect for diversity is reflected in the sorts of opportunities that are provided for children.

Approved learning frameworks inform the development of the curriculum at a service and support curriculum decision making as an ongoing cycle. This involves educators drawing on their professional knowledge, including their in-depth knowledge of each child.

Pedagogical principles can be incorporated into program delivery to promote children's learning by:

- adopting holistic practices, being responsive to children, planning and implementing learning through play, intentional teaching, creating learning environments, valuing cultural and social contexts and providing continuity of learning, transitions and assessments for learning (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, pages 14–18)

- participating in secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships and partnerships, through setting high expectations and demonstrating equity, by respecting diversity, and through ongoing learning and reflective practice (adapted from the *Framework for School Age Care*, pages 10–12).

The Early Years Learning Framework

The aim of the *Early Years Learning Framework* is to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. It assists services to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a foundation for future success in learning.

The *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework* provides support to nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators to develop a greater level of expertise in delivering programs that enhance learning and developmental outcomes for each child.

The *Early Years Learning Framework* guides educators in their curriculum decision making and assists in planning, implementing and evaluating quality in early childhood education and care settings (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, page 8).

Framework for School Age Care

The aim of the *Framework for School Age Care* is to extend and enrich the wellbeing and development of school age children in education and care settings. It acknowledges time and place as children engage in a range of play and leisure experiences that allow them to feel happy, safe and relaxed; interact with friends and practice social skills; solve problems; try new activities; and learn life skills. This *Framework for School Age Care* is strongly linked to the *Early Years Learning Framework* and extends the principles, practices and outcomes to accommodate the contexts and age range of the children and young people who attend school age care settings.

Principles, practice and learning outcomes explained

The *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Framework for School Age Care* put children's learning at the core and comprise three interrelated components: principles, practice and learning outcomes. All three elements are fundamental to early and middle childhood pedagogy and curriculum decision making.

The learning outcomes sections in the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *Framework for School Age Care* demonstrate how the three elements combine to guide curriculum decision making and assessment to promote children's learning. These sections provide comprehensive examples of how nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators can promote children's learning across five learning outcomes:

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.
5. Children are effective communicators.

Planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning

An ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning underpins the educational program and involves educators in critically thinking about what is offered and why.

Planning involves observing, gathering and interpreting information about children to inform the preparation of environments and experiences that engage them and are meaningful for them. It also involves reflecting on and documenting children's experiences and learning.

Written plans, records of child assessment and evaluations underpin practice with children and families and enhance the accountability and professionalism of the service. Documenting children's experiences and their responses to the environment makes children's learning visible to children, educators and families and promotes shared learning and collaboration.

Working in partnership with families, educators use the learning outcomes to guide their planning for children's learning. To engage children actively in learning, educators identify children's strengths and interests, choose appropriate teaching strategies and design the learning environment. Educators carefully assess learning to inform further planning.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of quality areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 1.1

An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child's learning and development.

About standard 1.1

An approved learning framework is an important tool for enabling educators and co-ordinators to work with children and families to achieve the best learning and developmental outcomes for children. There are many ways to use a learning framework to guide curriculum decision making.

Educators and co-ordinators:

- use a learning framework that brings together ideas, philosophies and approaches to guide their everyday practice. An approved learning framework guides interactions with children, families and colleagues and informs the experiences that are planned for children and the teaching and learning that occurs

- develop the program based on their sound knowledge of each child so that the experiences, interactions and routines each child engages in are relevant to them, respectful of their background and recognise and build on their current interests and abilities.

What we aim to achieve with standard 1.1

Working in partnership with families, educators and co-ordinators use the learning outcomes to guide their planning for children's learning (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 9). They make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued and respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 14). Working in collaboration with children and in partnership with families, educators and co-ordinators use the outcomes to guide their planning for children's wellbeing (*Framework for School Age Care*, page 6).

How standard 1.1 contributes to quality education and care

Using an approved learning framework enables all parties involved in education and care services to share a common understanding of and support for the quality education and care practices that enhance each child's learning and development.

As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understanding of the world (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 7; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 5).

Children learn best when the experiences they have are meaningful to them and are focused on the here and now. Because children constantly learn new skills and gain new insights into their world, educators and co-ordinators need to continuously assess and evaluate teaching and learning to update their knowledge of individual children and to plan new and follow-up experiences that are relevant to the child's current context.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 1.1

- How do we build our knowledge and understanding of the learning framework that we use in our service to ensure enhanced learning outcomes for all children?

- How do we ensure enhanced learning outcomes are a priority for all age groups?

- How do we get to know about each child and their strengths, abilities and interests?

- How do we make decisions about children's daily experiences and routines and who is involved in making these decisions?

- How do we make sure that experiences and routines are child-focused rather than adult-focused?

- How do we support every child's participation in the program?

- How do we demonstrate in the program that we value children's ideas, thinking and interests?

- How can we improve the ways in which we engage children in making decisions about their own learning?

Additional questions for services with babies and toddlers

- How do we ensure that all babies and toddlers develop a sense of belonging in our service?

- How do we communicate the importance of learning outcomes for babies and toddlers with their families?

- How do we apply our knowledge of learning and development and the learning framework to this age group?

Additional questions for services with school age children

- How do planned or intentional aspects of the program support spontaneous play and leisure experiences initiated by children?

- How do we incorporate learning outcomes into leisure opportunities and the everyday experiences we provide?

Additional questions for family day care services

- How do we incorporate the learning outcomes into everyday activities that children experience in the home?

- What other activities can be incorporated into our program to ensure a range of learning opportunities for all children?

Element 1.1.1

> 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.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.1.1

Children's learning is ongoing and each child will progress towards outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways. Learning is not always predictable and linear. Educators and co-ordinators plan with each child and the outcomes in mind (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 19).

As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world. Children's learning in school age settings complements their learning at home and at school (*Framework for School Age Care*, page 5).

Assessment guide for element 1.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators and co-ordinators and children displaying behaviours and engaging in activities consistent with the evidence for outcomes described in the approved learning frameworks— for example:

  - children expressing a wide range of emotions, thoughts and views constructively

  - children exploring aspects of identity through role play

  - children expressing opinions in matters that affect them

  - children being empowered to make choices and solve problems to meet their needs

  - children working collaboratively with others

  - children moving around and through their environments confidently and safely

  - children being curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning

  - children using play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas

- educators providing experiences that actively promote or initiate the investigation of ideas, complex concepts and thinking, reasoning and hypothesising by, for example:
    - talking explicitly about concepts such as rhyme, letters and sounds when sharing texts with children
    - engaging children in discussions about symbol systems, such as letters, numbers, time, money and musical notation
    - supporting children to contribute constructively to mathematical and scientific discussions and arguments
    - using everyday events as a basis for children's learning about nature and science
    - supporting children to take on roles that use literacy and numeracy in their play
- children conveying and constructing messages with purpose and confidence
- educators and co-ordinators consolidating and extending children's communication by, for example:
    - engaging children in singing and chanting rhymes, jingles and songs, and engaging children in play with words and sounds
    - supporting children to convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, building on home/family and community literacies
    - providing opportunities for children to express ideas and make meaning using a range of media
    - supporting children to be independent communicators who initiate standard Australian English and home-language conversations, and who demonstrate the ability to meet listeners' needs
    - providing a literacy-enriched environment that includes displaying print in home languages and in standard Australian English.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators and co-ordinators:
    - supporting and promoting babies' and toddlers' early attempts to initiate interactions and conversations
    - acknowledging and responding sensitively to babies' and toddlers' cues and signals
    - initiating one-to-one interactions with babies and toddlers during daily routines
- babies and toddlers:
    - reaching out and communicating for comfort, assistance and companionship
    - being playful and responding positively to others.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe** educators and co-ordinators:

- acknowledging and planning opportunities for children to relax through play and leisure

- incorporating/including children's diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills in the program.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how the:

- service communicates learning outcomes for children with their families

- service's statement of philosophy guides pedagogy and teaching decisions.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss** strategies:

- used by the service to ensure that all children have a sense of belonging in the service, including regular and occasional attendees

- applied to ensure that the needs of children attending on an irregular basis are reflected in the program planning and delivery.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how activities outside the home are incorporated to provide a range of experiences to support children in achieving the outcomes of the approved learning framework.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

The assessment will be undertaken primarily through observation and discussion with educators.

Assessors may want to **sight** a written program or documentation (refer to element 1.2.1) regarding the assessment of learning that demonstrates how curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes.

Element 1.1.2

> Each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.1.2

Knowledge of individual children's strengths and capabilities guides educators' and co-ordinators' professional judgment in engaging children in a range of experiences across learning outcomes and in ways that optimise their learning (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 19).

Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond preconceived expectations about what children can do and learn. This requires educators to respect and work with each child's unique qualities and abilities (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 9; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 8).

The diversity in family life means that children experience 'belonging, being and becoming' in many different ways. They bring their diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills to their learning (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 9; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 7).

When school age care educators respect the diversity of families and communities, and the focus on the aspirations they hold for children, they are able to nurture children's wellbeing and foster children's development. They make program decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their cultures, identities, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued, and respond to the complexity of children's and families' lives (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 12).

Assessment guide for element 1.1.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators and co-ordinators:
  - observing, listening and talking with children for sustained periods of time and paying close attention to what they are saying, thinking and doing
  - demonstrating flexibility in program delivery to incorporate children's ideas, cultures and interests to ensure that experiences are relevant and engaging.

- children:

  - initiating and contributing to play experiences that emerge from their own ideas and interests to their satisfaction

  - repeating, revisiting and adding to projects or experiences that they have initiated

  - developing strong foundations in the culture and language of their family and in that of the broader community, without compromising their cultural identities

  - indicating their deep involvement in experiences that are rich and meaningful to them with facial and vocal responses, and sustained concentration

  - exploring ideas and theories using imagination, creativity and play, during large blocks of uninterrupted time.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the educators' and co-ordinators' current understanding of individual children's knowledge, ideas, culture and interests, and how they have developed an understanding of this in relation to each child

- how educators' and co-ordinators' curriculum decision making builds on the child's knowledge, ideas, culture, interests, skills and development when actively planning learning experiences.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- evidence that information about the children's family, culture and community is collected and used to inform the program

- examples of how educators and co-ordinators:

  - plan programs that are responsive to children's knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests

  - promote children's wellbeing and learning outcomes in this context.

Element 1.1.3

> The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.1.3

Curriculum encompasses all the interactions, experiences, routines and events—planned and unplanned—that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 9).

A school age care program encompasses all the interactions, experiences, routines and events—planned and unplanned—that occur in an environment designed to support wellbeing and foster children's learning and development (*Framework for School Age Care*, page 6).

Assessment guide for element 1.1.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - noticing and predicting patterns of regular routines and the passing of time
  - using effective routines to help make predicted transitions smoothly
  - participating collaboratively in everyday routines, events and experiences and having opportunities to contribute to decisions
  - having opportunities to enhance their learning during routines
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - using routines and play experiences to interact with babies and children to build attachment
  - using routines to undertake intentional teaching
  - seeking opportunities within routines for spontaneous learning
  - minimising the times during which children are expected to do the same thing at the same time.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe** educators and co-ordinators initiating one-to-one interactions with babies and toddlers during routine activities to ensure these provide opportunities for positive interactions and learning.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe**:

- children taking increasing responsibility for self-help and basic health routines
- educators collaborating with children about routines and procedures.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **observe** educators incorporating learning experiences into everyday activities that occur in the home, such as meal preparation and packing up.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how the service organises its program and routines to maximise opportunities for children's learning.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss** strategies used by the service to involve children in designing the program and organising the routines.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

The assessment will be undertaken primarily through observation and discussion with educators. Assessors may also want to **sight** policy documentation outlining routines.

Element 1.1.4

> The documentation about each child's program and progress is available to families.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.1.4

One of the goals of high-quality education and care services is to engage with families about the learning and development of their child.

The exchange of information about the child is central to the achievement of this outcome (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pages 12 and 17; *Framework for School Age Care*, pages 11 and 17).

Assessment guide for element 1.1.4

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** educators:

- exchanging information about the educational program with families
- showing meaningful documentation to families.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how information is made available to families, including how they access it and how meaningful it is to them
- nominated supervisors' and educators' understanding of the importance of regular communication with families
- how arrangements are made to exchange information about the child with families at mutually convenient times.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss** collaboration between educators and children in documenting children's achievements to share with families.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

• documented expectations for recording of information from families

• documentation at the service that provides all families with information about the educational program

• relevant records about each child's program and progress:

  • in a format that can be shared with families

  • that is appropriate to the age of the child and the time the child attends the service.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **sight** relevant records about each child's participation in the program in a format that can be shared with families and is appropriate to the age of the child and the time the child attends the service.

Element 1.1.5

> Every child is supported to participate in the program.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.1.5

Inclusion involves taking into account all children's social, cultural and linguistic diversity (including learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic location) in curriculum decision-making processes.

The intent is to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued and that they have equitable access to resources and participation and opportunities to demonstrate their learning (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 24; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 24).

Educators and co-ordinators challenge practices that contribute to inequities and they make decisions that promote inclusion and participation of all children. By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities and other services and agencies, they continuously strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to experience a sense of personal worth and achieve outcomes (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 12).

Assessment guide for element 1.1.5

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - regardless of background, age, gender or ability, being supported to fully participate as valued members of the group
  - being acknowledged as competent and capable and being encouraged to do many things independently
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - acknowledging each child's uniqueness in positive ways
  - supporting children's efforts, assisting and encouraging as appropriate
  - being consistently aware of and responsive to children who may require additional support, assistance or attention
  - noticing and listening carefully to children's concerns and discussing diverse perspectives on issues of inclusion and exclusion and fair and unfair behaviour.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how educators and co-ordinators support children to explore different identities and points of view through play and everyday experiences

- aspects of the program that have been adapted or changed to minimise barriers to participation.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight:**

- documentation that identifies goals set by families, paediatricians, child welfare workers, early childhood intervention services, psychologists or other therapists, and corresponding plans that demonstrate incorporation of these goals by educators or co-ordinators, for individual children

- equipment and resources that support the abilities, diversity and backgrounds of the children attending the service and support and encourage their participation.

Element 1.1.6

Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and influence events and their world.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.1.6

Children actively construct their own understandings and contribute to others' learning. They recognise their agency and capacity to initiate and lead learning and their rights to participate in decisions that affect them, including their learning.

Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond preconceived expectations about what children can do and learn. This requires educators to respect and work with each child's unique qualities and abilities (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 9). When children are given choices and control, they experience connections (*Framework for School Age Care*, page 7).

Assessment guide for element 1.1.6

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators:
  - providing children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours
  - encouraging children to make choices and decisions
  - displaying delight, encouragement and enthusiasm for children's attempts to gain new skills and knowledge
  - supporting play experiences initiated by children
- children:
  - making choices and decisions about things that affect them
  - openly expressing their feelings and ideas in their interactions with others
  - initiating play
  - beginning to initiate negotiating and sharing behaviours.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe:**

- educators:
  - allowing children to direct their own play and leisure experiences with their peers
  - creating possibilities for peer scaffolding
- children:
  - showing leadership, making decisions and following directions given by other children
  - leading their learning, designing experiences and freely making choices about participating in experiences
  - actively participating in decisions that affect them, including their learning and leisure.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- educators' expectations of each child's capabilities
- how educators provide opportunities for children to influence what happens to them and to exercise choice.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

The assessment will be undertaken primarily through observation and discussion with educators.

Standard 1.2

> Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child.

About standard 1.2

Educators and co-ordinators are intentional, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. They engage in reflective practice as a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework,* pages 13 and 15.)

What we aim to achieve with standard 1.2

Educators' professional judgments are central to their active role in facilitating children's learning. In making professional judgments, they continuously seek ways to build their:

- professional knowledge, skills and experience
- knowledge of the children, families and communities attending their service
- awareness of how their own beliefs and values impact on children's wellbeing and learning.

They also draw on their creativity, imagination and insight to help them improvise and adjust their practice to suit the time, place and context of learning (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 8).

How standard 1.2 contributes to quality education and care

Assessment for children's learning refers to the process of gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, can do and understand. It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating children's learning. It is important because it enables educators and co-ordinators in partnership with families, children and other professionals to:

- plan effectively for children's current and future learning
- make informed curriculum decisions
- communicate about children's learning and progress
- determine the extent to which all children are progressing toward realising learning outcomes and, if not, what might be impeding their progress
- identify children who may need additional support to achieve particular learning outcomes and providing that support or assisting families to access specialist help
- evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments and experiences offered and the approaches taken to enable children's learning
- reflect on pedagogy that will suit this context and these children (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework,* page 17.)

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 1.2

- How do we currently document and plan for children's learning?

- How can we improve the quality of information we provide to families about their children's learning, development and participation in the program?

- How are educators demonstrating intention in their teaching practice and how does this reflect on outcomes for children?

- What do we do to critically reflect on and evaluate the program, how is this documented and how are our evaluations used to make informed curriculum decisions to improve outcomes for children?

Element 1.2.1

> Each child's learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.2.1

Educators use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information that they gather to assess children's learning. They search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 17; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 17).

Assessment guide for element 1.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** educators:

- observing and recording children's learning and behaviour to inform their educational planning

- using their knowledge of the children's current learning and development to evaluate and reflect on programming.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the effectiveness of the processes used to capture and record information about children's strengths, interests, relationships and learning over a period of time

- how educators analyse the information that is gathered about individuals and groups of children to make judgments about each child's progress towards specific learning outcomes.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- evidence that information gathered in children's documentation demonstrates the children's learning and development in the service

- evidence of the cycle of planning, documenting and evaluating

- evidence that children's ideas, interests and points of view are heard and respected in planning for and assessing learning experiences

- examples of children's representation of their learning and work that is documented and displayed in sensitive and respectful ways

- information about planned experiences that is recorded in a way that children and families can appreciate and understand and that is displayed for them to view

- opportunities for families and children to comment on or provide feedback about the program

- evidence that written programming and evaluation is ongoing, appropriate and inclusive of each child.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **sight**:

- relevant records about each child's participation in the program in a format that can be shared with families and that is appropriate to the age of the child

- documented assessment and evaluation by educators, which includes what children know, say and can do, and evidence that shows how this assessment/evaluation leads to future curriculum decision making that extends children's learning.

Element 1.2.2

Educators respond to children's ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child's learning.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.2.2

Intentional teaching is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful. Educators who engage in intentional teaching:

- recognise that learning occurs in social contexts

- recognise that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning

- actively promote children's learning through worthwhile and challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level thinking skills

- use strategies (such as modelling and demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking and problem solving) to extend children's thinking and learning

- move flexibly in and out of different roles and draw on different strategies as the context changes

- plan opportunities for intentional teaching and knowledge building (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, page 15.)

Intentionality utilises professional knowledge and strategies that reflect contemporary theories and research concerning children's play, leisure and learning. School age educators are conscious of making the most of opportunities to follow up on children's needs and interests. They make use of spontaneous 'teachable moments' to scaffold children's development (*Framework for School Age Care*, pages 14–15).

Assessment guide for element 1.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators:
  - intentionally scaffolding children's understanding and learning
  - making use of spontaneous 'teachable moments' to extend children's learning
  - responding to children's displays of learning dispositions by commenting on them and providing encouragement and additional ideas
  - further extending critical thinking skills through provocations
  - valuing signs of children applying their learning in new ways and talking about this with them in ways that build their understanding
  - modelling mathematical and scientific language and concepts
  - modelling language associated with the arts
  - joining in children's play and co-constructing materials, such as signs that extend the play and enhance literacy learning
- children:
  - being curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
  - using their own ideas to develop their play.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how educators:

- recognise and value children's involvement in learning
- provide learning environments that are flexible and open-ended
- plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge, where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

The assessment will be undertaken primarily through observation and discussion with educators.

Element 1.2.3

Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program.

What we aim to achieve with element 1.2.3

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. Its intention is to gather information and gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision making about children's learning. As professionals, educators examine what happens in their settings and reflect on what they might change or develop.

Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators often frame their reflective practice within a set of overarching questions, developing more specific questions for particular areas of enquiry (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 13; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 12).

Assessment guide for element 1.2.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** educators:

- working with children to document and reflect on their experiences and learning
- using a variety of methods, such as diary jottings, children's comments and conversations, photographs and examples of children's work, to assist their reflection on children's experiences, thinking and learning.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how critical reflection, assessment and evaluation are ongoing processes in the service

- the opportunities available for educators to reflect on the events of each day, including thinking about what happened and why

- the opportunities available for educators to reflect on the program's successes and what can be extended or changed

- how children's comments about their experiences of the program are recorded and considered as part of the evaluation process

- whether information gathered provides insights about curriculum decision making that supports and extends children's learning, development and wellbeing

- how educators consider ways in which children's interests and ideas can be scaffolded to enhance their learning and development

- how nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators promote a culture of professional enquiry, where practices and outcomes are reviewed and new ideas are generated.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** documentation:

- that shows evidence of critical reflection that clearly identifies:

  - children's learning and their developing ideas and skills

  - examples of children's spontaneous play

  - the effectiveness of teaching strategies

  - changes that may be needed in the environment

- such as photographs, samples of children's work and their words being used, to create records that are meaningful for children and can be shared with their families.

Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on safeguarding and promoting children's health and safety.

Quality Area 2: Standards and elements

Standard 2.1	Each child's health is promoted.	
	Element 2.1.1	Each child's health needs are supported.
	Element 2.1.2	Each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
	Element 2.1.3	Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
	Element 2.1.4	Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines.
Standard 2.2	Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children.	
	Element 2.2.1	Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child.
	Element 2.2.2	Physical activity is promoted through planned and spontaneous experiences and is appropriate for each child.
Standard 2.3	Each child is protected.	
	Element 2.3.1	Children are adequately supervised at all times.
	Element 2.3.2	Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.
	Element 2.3.3	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
	Element 2.3.4	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

Quality Area 2: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2	section 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
2.3.2	section 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards
2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1	regulation 77	Health, hygiene and safe food practices
2.2.1	regulation 78	Food and beverages
2.2.1	regulation 79	Service providing food and beverages
2.2.1	regulation 80	Weekly menu
2.1.2	regulation 81	Sleep and rest
2.3.2	regulation 82	Tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment
2.3.2	reg ulation 83	Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs
2.3.4	regulation 84	Awareness of child protection law
2.1.4, 2.3.3, 2.3.4	regulation 85	Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures
2.1.4, 2.3.3, 2.3.4	regulation 86	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness
2.1.4, 2.3.3, 2.3.4	regulation 87	Incident, injury, trauma and illness record
2.1.4	regulation 88	Infectious diseases
2.1.4	regulation 89	First aid kits
2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.3.2	regulation 90	Medical conditions policy
2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.3.2	regulation 91	Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents
2.1.1, 2.1.4	regulation 92	Medication record
2.1.1, 2.1.4	regulation 93	Administration of medication
2.1.1, 2.1.4	regulation 94	Exception to authorisation requirement—anaphylaxis or asthma emergency
2.1.1, 2.1.4	regulation 95	Procedure for administration of medication
2.1.1, 2.1.4	regulation 96	Self-administration of medication

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
2.3.3	regulation 97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
2.3.3	regulation 98	Telephone or other communication equipment
2.3.2	regulation 99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
2.3.1, 2.3.2	regulation 100	Risk assessment must be conducted before excursion
2.3.1, 2.3.2	regulation 101	Conduct of risk assessment for excursion
2.3.1, 2.3.2	regulation 102	Authorisation for excursions
	Related requirements	
2.3.3	regulation 160	Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator
2.1.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3	regulation 161	Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record
2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.3.2, 2.3.3	regulation 162	Health information to be kept in enrolment record
2.1.1, 2.1.3, 2.1.4, 2.2.1, 2.3	regulation 168	Education and care service must have policies and procedures
2.1.3, 2.2.1, 2.3	regulation 168(2)(a) Policies and procedures are required in relation to health and safety, including matters relating to: (i) nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements; and (ii) sun protection; and (iii) water safety, including safety during any water based activities; and (iv) the administration of first aid	
2.1.4, 2.3.3	regulation 168(2)(b) Policies and procedures are required in relation to incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures complying with regulation 85	
2.1.4	regulation 168(2)(c) Policies and procedures are required in relation to dealing with infectious diseases, including procedures complying with regulation 88	
2.1.1, 2.3.3	regulation 168(2)(d) Policies and procedures are required in relation to dealing with medical conditions in children, including the matters set out in regulation 90	
2.3.3	regulation 168(2)(e) Policies and procedures are required in relation to emergency and evacuation, including the matters set out in regulation 97	
2.3.2	regulation 168(2)(g) Policies and procedures are required in relation to excursions, including procedures complying with regulations 100–102	

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)
2.3	regulation 168(2)(h) Policies and procedures are required in relation to providing a child safe environment

	Related requirements	
2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.3.3, 2.3.4	regulation 177	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider:
		(1)(b) an incident, injury, trauma and illness record as set out in regulation 87
		(1)(c) a medication record as set out in regulation 92
2.1.1, 2.1.4, 2.3.3, 2.3.4	regulation 178	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by family day care educator:
		(1)(b) an incident, injury, trauma and illness record as set out in regulation 87
		(1)(c) a medication record as set out in regulation 92

Introduction

Under the *National Law* the approved provider and other persons have responsibility for supporting the health, protection, safety and wellbeing of all children. In exercising their responsibilities under the *National Law*, these persons must take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection.

All children have the right to experience quality education and care in an environment that provides for their health and safety. This should be complemented by a focus on promoting each child's wellbeing and providing support for each child's growing competence, confidence and independence.

Wellbeing incorporates both physical and psychological aspects and is central to 'belonging, being and becoming'. Without a strong sense of wellbeing it is difficult to have a sense of 'belonging', to trust others and feel confident in 'being' and to optimistically engage in experiences that contribute to 'becoming' (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 31; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 30).

Fundamental to providing for children's wellbeing is to ensure that routines, activities and experiences support children's individual requirements for health, nutrition, sleep, rest and relaxation.

Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, personal hygiene (such as dental hygiene and ear care), physical fitness, emotions and social relationships, is integral to children's wellbeing and self-confidence. When children develop resilience, their ability to take increasing responsibility for self-help and basic health routines promotes a sense of independence and confidence. As children become more independent, they can take greater responsibility for their own health, hygiene and personal care and they become aware of their own and others' safety and wellbeing. This is particularly relevant for school age children attending education and care services.

The key factors related to Quality Area 2 that promote children's health, safety and wellbeing in services include:

- maintaining adequate supervision of children

- configuring groupings of children to minimise the risk of overcrowding, injury and illness

- monitoring and minimising hazards and safety risks in the environment

- managing illness and injuries effectively

- implementing effective hygiene practices

- providing for individual children's health, sleep, rest and relaxation requirements

- meeting children's nutrition requirements and promoting healthy food choices

- promoting children's physical activity

- encouraging and supporting childhood immunisation

- understanding obligations under state or territory child protection legislation.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of Quality Areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 2.1

Each child's health is promoted.

About standard 2.1

The service supports all aspects of children's health, with a focus on:

- ensuring that their individual health and comfort requirements are met

- effective hygiene practices to control the spread of infectious diseases are in place

- the management of injuries and illness.

What we aim to achieve with standard 2.1

Physical wellbeing contributes to children's ability to concentrate, cooperate and learn (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 30; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 30).

How standard 2.1 contributes to quality education and care

Being healthy, well rested and free of illness assists children to be able to participate happily and successfully in the learning environment.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 2.1

- How do we find out about individual children's health requirements and routines?

- How do we ensure that the educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members who need to be aware of and know how to manage children's specific health requirements are informed about these?

- How do we keep up to date with current, authoritative information about the management of specific health needs and anaphylaxis?

- How do we ensure that the service adopts the best practice in relation to the administration of medication for children?

- How do we keep informed about current food safety and hygiene practices and ensure that all educators, co-ordinators and staff members consistently implement these practices?

- How do we maintain acceptable levels of hygiene while minimising the use of toxic products?

- How do we keep up to date with current information about child and adult immunisation?

- How do we ensure that families are informed about and follow the service's policy and guidelines for the exclusion of ill children?

- How do we communicate with families if there is an outbreak of an infectious illness?

- What arrangements do we have in place to regularly review and update our child health related policies and procedures?

Additional questions for services with babies and toddlers

- How do we keep up to date with current information about safe sleeping practices?

- How do we arrange routine times to ensure that children are able to follow their individual routines, including arrangements for children who do not need or wish to sleep or rest when other children do?

- How do we communicate with families about children's routine experiences, such as sleeping and toileting patterns, while at the service?

Additional questions for services with school age children

What arrangements do we need to make for older children to be able to administer their own medication?

Element 2.1.1

Each child's health needs are supported.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.1.1

To develop a strong sense of wellbeing, it is important that children are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing. By acknowledging each child's cultural and social identity and responding sensitively to their emotional states, educators build children's confidence, sense of wellbeing and willingness to engage in learning (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 30; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 30).

It is important that nominated supervisors, educators, and family day care educator assistants are aware of the health requirements of all children and that there are effective processes to support and monitor these.

Children can also have specific health requirements and these often change over time and as children develop. The approved provider needs to work closely with children, families and, where relevant, schools and health care professionals to promote healthy lifestyles and ensure they understand and meet children's specific health requirements.

Assessment guide for element 2.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** educators:

- communicating with families about children's health requirements
  - implementing appropriate practices when administering medication, including:
  - checking the written authorisation from the parent or guardian
  - checking that the medication does not exceed its use-by date and is supplied in its original packaging
  - checking that prescribed medication displays the child's name
  - storing medication appropriately
- discussing health issues with children.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **observe** educators implementing appropriate practices when administering medication, including having another person check the dosage and witness the administration of medication.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how information about the child's individual health requirements is communicated to all people who will work with a child in the service

- how any concerns or questions about a child's health needs are conveyed to their family

- how confidentiality in relation to children's individual health needs is maintained

- the arrangements that are in place for the service to consult with relevant authorities to ensure that health information is current.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss**:

- arrangements for negotiating individual procedures for the administration of medication with families and children

- how information about the child's individual health requirements is communicated with the school.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's medical conditions policy

- enrolment records containing health information and authorisations for each child enrolled at the service

- individual medical management plans (developed and reviewed in consultation with families and medical professionals) for children with a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition or who have been diagnosed as being at risk of anaphylaxis or asthma. The plans should include evidence that the information received from families and medical professionals has been used to develop or review the child's individual medical management plan

- written authorisation for the administration of medication

- a written process for and records of the administration of medication for children that includes:

  - authorisation from a parent or guardian to administer the medication

  - the name of the medication being administered

  - details of the time and dosage of the medication administered

  - the signature of the person who administered the medication.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **sight** a written process for and records of the administration of medication for children that includes the signature of the person who administered the medication and the signature of the witness.

Element 2.1.2

> Each child's comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.1.2

Children's and families' requirements for children's comfort and welfare in relation to daily routines, such as rest, sleep, dressing and toileting/nappy changing, vary due to a range of factors.

Issues that may influence a child's individual requirements for these routines include the child's and family's sociocultural background, their personal preferences and the routines and activities that are in place at home.

Holistic approaches recognise the connectedness of mind, body and spirit. Educators and co-ordinators provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day and support children to make appropriate decisions regarding their participation in activities and experiences (*Early Years Learning Framework,* pages 14 and 32*; Framework for School Age Care,* pages 14 and 32.)

Assessment guide for element 2.1.2

👁 Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - communicating their needs for comfort and assistance
  - recognising and communicating their bodily needs
  - demonstrating a sense of belonging and comfort in their environment
  - who do not require sleep or rest having opportunities to engage in appropriate quiet play activities
  - being supplied with clean, appropriate spare clothes when they need them
- groupings of children configured to provide for each child's comfort and to minimise the risk of overcrowding
- sleep and rest practices that are consistent with contemporary views about children's health, safety and welfare and that meet children's individual needs
- physical spaces being made available for children to engage in rest and quiet experiences
- educators providing a range of active and restful experiences and supporting children to make appropriate decisions regarding participation
- children's needs for privacy during toileting and/or dressing and undressing times being respected

- children's and families' individual clothing needs and preferences being met to promote children's comfort, safety and protection within the scope of the service's requirements for children's health and safety.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- safe sleep practices being implemented, including cots, other bedding equipment and accessories that meet Australian Standards

- educators ensuring that sleeping infants are closely monitored and that all sleeping children are within hearing range and observed

- relaxed, positive nappy-changing and toileting routines that are adapted to meet the individual child's routines

- children being supported sensitively and positively when they are learning to use the toilet.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe** children accessing comfortable spaces away from the main activity areas for relaxation and quiet activity.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** the service's approach to:

- sleep and rest

- addressing individual clothing needs and preferences.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **discuss** how educators and co-ordinators:

- work with families to support children's toilet learning

- negotiate sleep and rest routines and practices with families to reach agreement on how these will occur for each child at the service

- find out about children's and families individual clothing needs and preferences and how they reach agreement with parents to balance individual needs with the practices of the service.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss**:

- privacy arrangements for children's toileting and personal hygiene requirements

- how educators negotiate arrangements for relaxation and 'downtime' with children.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** evidence that information about the service's approach to:

- sleep and rest is shared with families

- addressing individual clothing needs and preferences is shared with families.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **sight** evidence that families are provided with daily information about their child's sleep and rest patterns and nappy change/toileting patterns.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **sight** planning that reflects the input of children into rules and routines of the service that relate to the comfort of individuals and the group.

Element 2.1.3

Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.1.3

Maintaining high standards of hygiene is essential in preventing the spread of infectious diseases and ensuring good health. Effective hygiene practices assist significantly in reducing the likelihood of children becoming ill due to cross-infection or as a result of exposure to materials, surfaces, body fluids or other substances that may cause infection or illness.

In their settings, educators and co-ordinators promote continuity of children's personal health and hygiene by sharing ownership of routines and schedules with children, families and the community (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 32; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 31).

Assessment guide for element 2.1.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- hygiene practices that reflect current research, best practice and advice from relevant health authorities

- safe and hygienic storage, handling, preparation and serving of all food and drinks consumed by children, including foods brought from home

- educators and co-ordinators:

  - implementing the service's health and hygiene policy and procedures consistently

  - actively supporting children to learn hygiene practices (including hand washing, coughing, dental hygiene and ear care).

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators, co-ordinators and children implementing appropriate hygiene practices in relation to hand washing, toileting, nappy changing and cleaning of equipment

- clean toileting and nappy-changing facilities

- fresh linen and sheeting for each child using cots or mattresses.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** with nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators:

- how the service accesses information on current hygiene practices

- how service cleanliness is consistently maintained.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **discuss** the maintenance of a regular regime of washing children's toys and equipment.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- health and hygiene policy and procedures

- written procedures and schedules for maintaining a regular regime of washing children's toys and equipment

- evidence that families are provided with information and support that helps them to follow the service's hygiene procedures.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **sight**:

- nappy-changing and toileting procedures displayed in toilet and nappy-changing areas

- information about correct hand-washing procedures displayed in relevant areas of the service, such as bathrooms, nappy change areas and food preparation areas.

Element 2.1.4

> Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.1.4

Spending time in education and care services or other facilities and being exposed to a large number of children for some time provide an opportunity for infectious diseases to be spread. It is not possible to prevent the spread of all infections and illnesses within education and care services. However, a lot of illnesses from infectious disease can be prevented (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) publication *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services,* 2013).

In assisting children to take a growing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing, educators model and reinforce health, nutrition and personal hygiene practices with children. Routines provide opportunities for children to learn about health and safety (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 32; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 31).

Assessment guide for element 2.1.4

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members maintaining a hygienic environment for children
- groupings of children configured to minimise the risk of illness and injuries
- children consuming food and drinks in a hygienic manner
- educators:
  - observing and responding to signs of illness and injury in children
  - observing the symptoms of children's illnesses and injuries and systematically recording and sharing this information with families (and medical professionals where required)
  - discussing health and safety issues with children and involving them in developing guidelines to keep the environment safe for all.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- information about recognised health and safety guidelines is sourced and used to inform policies and practices

- the service's policies on dealing with infectious disease address child and staff immunisation, including exclusion periods

- the service's guidelines for the exclusion of ill children and educators are consistently implemented

- the service implements its procedure for notifying families of illness or injuries that affect children while in education and care

- families are advised of cases of infectious illnesses in the service and provided with information about the nature of the illness, incubation and infectious periods and the service's exclusion requirements for the illness

- the service responds to a serious accident or health-related emergency involving a child.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures

- the service's policy and procedures on dealing with infectious disease, including notifying families of cases of infectious illnesses in the service and exclusion of ill children, that is consistent with current information from a relevant recognised authority

- records of educators' and family day care educator assistants' first aid qualifications

- a first aid kit or kits readily available wherever children are (including in the service and on excursions)

- current records of the status of children's immunisations, including a written process for obtaining information from families about their children's current immunisation status

- a written process for observing, responding to and recording signs of illness and injury in children and notifying families of illness or injuries that affect children while in education and care

- information that has been provided to educators and families about child and adult immunisation recommendations.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **sight** records of:

- educators' first aid qualifications

- staff rosters that demonstrate a first-aid-qualified educator is on duty at all times.

Standard 2.2

Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children.

About standard 2.2

The service ensures that:

- children's nutritional and physical health needs are met
- learning about healthy lifestyles underpins everyday routines and experiences.

What we aim to achieve with standard 2.2

A strong sense of health and wellbeing supported by good nutrition and an active lifestyle provides children with confidence, energy and optimism that contributes to their ability to concentrate, cooperate and learn (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 30; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 30).

How standard 2.2 contributes to quality education and care

Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition and physical fitness, is integral to wellbeing and self-confidence.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 2.2

- How do we ensure food and drink is nutritious and appropriate to each child?

- How are children encouraged to make healthy food and beverage choices?

- How do we plan to meet the individual food and nutrition requirements of children, including managing their likes, dislikes, special dietary needs and any cultural or other requirements that families may have in relation to children's eating?

- How do we ensure that foods used on excursions or other special activities encourage healthy food and beverage choices?

- How do we incorporate discussions and activities about healthy eating and caring for their bodies into children's everyday experiences?

- How do we ensure educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members are familiar with current guidelines about healthy eating and physical activity and understand and implement procedures relating to food handling, transportation and storage?

- How do we plan the program to ensure that there is a balance between planned and spontaneous active play as well as a balance between passive and active experiences?

- How do we set up the environment and resources to encourage and support children to engage in movement and physical play?

- How do we encourage child-initiated or child-directed play and recreational experiences?

- How do we encourage children to solve problems in relation to physical challenges in the environment?

Additional questions for services with babies and toddlers

- How do we encourage and support breastfeeding in the service?

- How do we set up the environment to give babies a chance to observe and interact with other children?

Element 2.2.1

Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.2.1

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure. Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of healthy foods and to learn about food choices from educators and other children (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 30; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 30).

Assessment guide for element 2.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators:
    - engaging children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote relaxed and enjoyable mealtimes and promote healthy lifestyles and good nutrition
    - following the service's procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink
    - never using food to reward or punish children
    - modelling, reinforcing and implementing healthy eating and nutrition practices with children during mealtimes
- children:
    - showing an awareness of healthy lifestyles and good nutrition
    - being provided with food that is consistent with the:
        - Australian Government guidelines *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood,* and/or
        - *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*
    - eating food that is consistent with advice provided by families about their child's dietary requirements, likes, dislikes and any cultural or other requirements families have regarding their child's nutrition

- being encouraged to eat healthy food without being required to eat food they don't like or to eat more than they want

- who have not eaten at the routine time or who are hungry being provided with food at times other than during routine meal and snack times

- being provided with food and drinks consistent with the menu

- having ready access to water and being regularly offered water throughout the day

- adequate quantities of food available for children, sufficient quantities for children who may request more and quantities that are consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- babies being fed individually by educators

- educators following the service's procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink, including breast milk

- a supportive environment for mothers to breastfeed

- toddlers being supported by educators to feed themselves independently.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service:

  - meets the needs of children with special dietary requirements

  - consults with families to learn about children's individual needs for food, their likes and dislikes in relation to food and any culturally appropriate food needs

- where food is brought from home, how the service encourages families to provide food that is consistent with the:

  - Australian Government guidelines *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood,* and/or

  - *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia.*

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service supports families' choices regarding infant feeding, including breastfeeding and bottle feeding

- support for families who choose to breastfeed their child while they are at the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's health and safety policy, including nutrition, food and beverages and dietary requirements

- the service's policy on dealing with medical conditions such as anaphylaxis

- written procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink

- resources for families on healthy eating and where to go to get further information

- written menus (where the service is responsible for providing food) on display detailing the foods provided for children that are consistent with the:

  - Australian Government guidelines *Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood,* and/or

  - *Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents in Australia*

- furniture and utensils that are age appropriate and developmentally suitable to encourage children to be positively involved in and enjoy mealtimes.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **sight**:

- evidence that families are provided with daily information about their child's intake and experiences with food and drink

- written procedures for the safe storage and heating of babies' bottles and breast milk.

Element 2.2.2

> Physical activity is promoted through planned and spontaneous experiences and is appropriate for each child.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.2.2

Physical wellbeing contributes to children's ability to socialise, concentrate, cooperate and learn. Physical activity and attention to fine and gross motor skills provide children with the foundations for their growing independence and satisfaction in being able to do things for themselves (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 30; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 29).

In play and leisure programs physical activities are prioritised to provide children with these foundations (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 29).

Assessment guide for element 2.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators and co-ordinators:
  - consistently implementing movement and physical activities as part of the program for all children
  - encouraging and providing appropriate support to children to participate in new or unfamiliar physical experiences
  - becoming involved in and enjoying children's physical activity
  - encouraging each child's level of participation in physical activities according to the child's abilities and their level of comfort with the activities
- children:
  - being encouraged and supported to use increasingly complex sensory motor skills and movement patterns that:
    – combine gross and fine motor movement and balance
    – increase their spatial awareness
    – use their problem-solving skills

- having frequent opportunities to engage in outdoor play

- showing enthusiasm for participating in physical play and negotiating play spaces to ensure the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others

- helping to set up and plan for physical play activities and equipment

- children and educators or co-ordinators talking about how their bodies work and the importance of physical activity to people's health and wellbeing

- opportunities for children to engage in dance, creative movement and drama and to respond to traditional and contemporary music and storytelling

- indoor and outdoor areas that are set up in ways to promote safe physical play and activity for children of different age groups and capabilities.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- provision of safe areas and encouragement for babies to practise rolling over, sitting, crawling, standing and walking

- support for toddlers to develop co-ordinated movement through planned experiences, such as action songs, dancing and throwing and kicking balls.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how the service:

- maintains a balance between spontaneous and planned physical activity, and passive and active experiences, for all children

- considers children's voices in planning physical activities for each child.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the planned program to consider how it incorporates physical activity to meet the capabilities of the children involved, including how it balances quiet/passive play times with times of more energetic outdoor play

- evidence that information about the importance of physical activity to children's health and development is communicated to families.

Standard 2.3

Each child is protected.

About standard 2.3

The service ensures that all aspects of children's safety are protected.

What we aim to achieve with standard 2.3

Through a widening network of secure relationships, children develop confidence and feel respected and valued. A strong sense of wellbeing promotes children's confidence and optimism, which maximises their learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 11).

How standard 2.3 contributes to quality education and care

Children have a fundamental right to be protected and kept safe while they are in an approved service. Children who are unsafe are at risk of having their physical health and wellbeing negatively impacted on, which, in turn, can negatively affect children's experiences, learning and wellbeing in the present and throughout their future lives.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 2.3

- How do we identify potential supervision risks in the service?

- How do we plan to ensure that all areas used by children are effectively supervised, including when children are participating in high-risk activities?

- How do we plan to manage supervision of small groups of children who may need to be in a different space from the main group, such as children who sleep for longer periods than others, children who take longer to finish mealtimes or children who want to engage in quiet, solo activities away from other groups of children?

- How do we identify, assess and manage hazards and potential risks for children, such as potentially dangerous products, plants, objects and animals at the service, and how often do we do this?

- How do we ensure children are alerted to safety issues and encouraged to develop the skills to assess and minimise risks to their own safety?

- How do we ensure that all equipment and materials used in the service meet relevant safety standards, including bedding and sun protection resources and equipment?

- How do we conduct risk assessments for potential excursions and plan for children's safety during excursions?

- How do we identify which emergency procedures and specific action plans are required for our service and how often do we practise these?

- How do we maintain an awareness of the people who have contact with children at the service and/or who collect children from the service?

- How do we keep up to date with current legislation in our state or territory in relation to child protection?

Additional questions for services with school age children

How do we keep up to date with current information on travelling safely, such as bus travel and bike safety?

Element 2.3.1

Children are adequately supervised at all times.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.3.1

Educators promote children's learning and development by creating physical and social environments that have a positive impact (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 14; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 13).

Supervision is a key aspect of ensuring that children's safety is protected in the service environment. Educators need to be alert to and aware of risks and hazards and the potential for accidents and injury throughout the service, not just within their immediate area.

Assessment guide for element 2.3.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - being supervised in all areas of the service, by being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times, including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines
  - being unable to access unsupervised or unsafe areas in the service
- educators:
  - supervising children closely when they are in a situation that presents a higher risk of injury—for example, on an excursion near a road or water
  - adjusting their levels of supervision depending on the area of the service and the skills, age mix, dynamics and size of the group of children they are supervising
- equipment, furniture and activities arranged to ensure effective supervision while also allowing children to access private and quiet spaces.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe** educators attending to babies and toddlers:

- at all times when they are eating or drinking
- closely when they are in situations that present a higher risk of injury—for example, on a nappy change table or in a high chair.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **observe** educators exchanging information about supervision with colleagues to ensure that there are no areas being accessed by children who are unsupervised.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how educators:

    - inform new and/or relief educators of the service's supervision arrangements and what they are required to do in relation to supervising children

    - ensure that supervision arrangements are flexible to allow supervision of individuals or small groups of children, such as children while sleeping and while both indoor and outdoor experiences are offered to children

- if children are taken on excursions, how the service plans for and undertakes excursions.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight:**

- evidence of planning for the supervision of children in outdoor and indoor areas, including supervision of nappy changing/toileting, and meal and sleep routines

- evidence of planning for excursions that includes a risk assessment and considers supervision implications.

Element 2.3.2

> Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.3.2

Educators and co-ordinators foster children's capacity to understand and respect the social and natural environment and they create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems and create and construct in challenging and safe ways (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pages 14–15; *Framework for School Age Care,* pages 13–14).

Children have a right to be protected from possible or potential hazards and dangers posed by products, plants, objects, animals and people in the immediate and wider environment.

Assessment guide for element 2.3.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members:
  - consistently implementing safety checks and monitoring the maintenance of buildings, equipment and the general environment
  - consistently implementing the service's policy and procedures regarding the use and storage of dangerous products
  - removing identified hazards immediately or securing the area to prevent children from accessing the hazard
  - implementing risk minimisation plans in place for children enrolled at the service who have a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition
  - following the service's procedures for releasing children and ensuring they are released only to parents or authorised nominees
  - supervising every person who enters and leaves the service premises in areas where children are present
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - talking with children about safety issues and correct use of equipment and the environment and, where appropriate, involving children in setting safety rules
  - discussing sun safety with children and implementing appropriate measures to protect children from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation

- children:
  - being unable to access potentially hazardous items, such as medications, detergents, cleaning products and garden chemicals, and that such items are clearly labelled at all times
  - being unable to access power points, double adaptors and power boards and that other electrical equipment and electrical cords are secured
  - only being taken outside the service premises by an educator, co-ordinator, parent or authorised nominee
- toys and equipment made available to children only in areas where they may be used safely
- a tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment
- simple warning signs where potentially dangerous products are stored
- poisonous or hazardous plants identified, explained to children and in some instances removed or not made accessible to children, or children are adequately supervised
- hot drinks and hot food being made and consumed away from areas that are accessible to children
- that, where drinks, food and cooking utensils/appliances are used as part of the program, they do not present an unacceptable risk to children
- secure, protective caps placed in all unused power points that are accessible to children
- climbing equipment, swings and large pieces of furniture have stable bases and/or are securely anchored
- climbing equipment, swings and other large pieces of equipment are located over areas with soft fall surfaces recommended by recognised safety authorities
- close supervision of children at all times when they have access to animals
- animals kept separate to and apart from areas used by children unless involved in a specific activity that is directly supervised by educators

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe** safe sleep practices being implemented and cots, other bedding equipment and accessories that meet Australian Standards.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how daily safety checks of buildings, equipment and the general environment are conducted and what action is taken as a result of the checks
- the service's approach to sun protection
- how safety is maintained when children are involved in food preparation/cooking activities

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how the service ensures that children are not left alone with visitors to the family day care residence or venue.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- written procedures for conducting daily safety checks and identifying and undertaking the maintenance of buildings and equipment

- completed daily safety checks of buildings, equipment and the general environment

- records of pest/vermin inspections and/or eradications

- the service's policy and procedures on delivery and collection of children that ensures that children are released only to authorised nominees

- records of children's attendance, including arrivals and departures, with the signature of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record or the person collecting the child

- a written process for monitoring who enters and leaves the service premises at all times

- the service's policy and procedures on excursions that include evidence of a written risk assessment undertaken prior to conducting an excursion

- evidence of detailed information provided to families regarding excursions, including the destination, mode of transport, educator-to-child ratios and the number of adults in attendance, and written authorisation for children to be taken outside the service premises, including for excursions or routine outings (except during emergency situations)

- the service's medical conditions policy

- the service's policy on dealing with water safety, including safety during water-based activities

- enrolment records that include authorisations and health information

- the service's policy and procedures on sun protection and evidence that information about the service's approach to sun protection is shared with families

- evidence that information about the service's approach to safe sleep is documented and shared with families.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** evidence that a record is kept of all visitors to a family day care residence or venue that includes the signature of the visitor and the time of the visitor's arrival and departure.

Element 2.3.3

Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.3.3

Children's wellbeing can be affected by all of their experiences within and outside the setting. It is essential that educators and co-ordinators attend to children's wellbeing by providing warm, trusting relationships and predictable and safe learning environments (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 30; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 29).

Planning to manage incidents and emergencies assists services to protect adults and children, to maintain children's wellbeing and a safe environment and to meet requirements of relevant occupational health and safety legislation. Having a clear plan for the management of emergency situations assists educators to handle these calmly and effectively, reducing the risk of further harm or damage.

Assessment guide for element 2.3.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- emergency procedures displayed prominently throughout the premises

- educators having ready access to an operating telephone or other similar means of communication

- emergency telephone numbers displayed near telephones

- educators and co-ordinators having ready access to emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers and fire blankets.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service communicates information to families about the service's emergency procedures and plans to manage incidents

- how the service ensures that educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members (including relief educators and staff members) are informed about and understand the service's emergency procedures and plans

- how the service discusses and practises emergency drills with children

- the provision of training for educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members in the use of emergency equipment.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- procedures for managing incidents and emergencies and providing a child-safe environment

- records of emergency drills, and evaluations of these

- a current, portable record of children's emergency contacts that can be carried by educators in case of emergencies and/or evacuations

- written emergency and evacuation procedures that include instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency and an emergency evacuation floor plan (for example, a plan for a bushfire in a bushfire-prone area)

- written plans to manage an emergency that may be likely to affect individuals at the service (for example, the management of an asthma attack, anaphylactic reaction or epileptic fit)

- written communication with families about the service's emergency procedures and plans to manage incidents

- evidence that emergency equipment is tested as recommended by recognised authorities.

Element 2.3.4

> Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

What we aim to achieve with element 2.3.4

Educators who give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support can assist children to interact with others in mutually supportive ways and participate in positive learning experiences (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 12; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 11).

To be able to act when required, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members must be aware of current child protection policy and procedures, including their legislative responsibilities in states and territories where these apply.

Assessment guide for element 2.3.4

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** educators and co-ordinators:

- listening and responding to families' comments about their day-to-day observations of their child and the events occurring in their lives

- remaining vigilant about observing and responding to signs or indicators of child abuse and/or neglect.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- whether the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members are aware of any obligation under child protection law

- how new or relieving educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection and the particular protection needs of individual children in the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- evidence:
  - that information about child protection procedures and expectations is provided to educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants, staff members, volunteers and students
  - that educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members have attended training or professional development on child protection
  - of information provided to families about the service's practices in relation to child protection
  - that educators and co-ordinators work collaboratively with other authorities and/or professionals to support children who have specific protection needs
- a current list of local community resources that can provide information and support for children, families, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members in relation to children at risk of abuse and/or neglect.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** evidence of educators' families being provided with information and/or training to support their understanding and response to suspected child protection issues.

Quality Area 3: Physical environment

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on the physical environment and ensuring that it is safe, suitable and provides a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

Quality Area 3: Standards and elements

Standard 3.1	The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.	
	Element 3.1.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose.
	Element 3.1.2	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
	Element 3.1.3	Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and interaction between indoor and outdoor space.
Standard 3.2	The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.	
	Element 3.2.1	Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
	Element 3.2.2	Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses.
Standard 3.3	The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.	
	Element 3.3.1	Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.
	Element 3.3.2	Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

Quality Area 3: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
3.1.2	regulation 103	Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair
3.1.1	regulation 104	Fencing and security
3.2.2	regulation 105	Furniture, materials and equipment
3.1.1	regulation 106	Laundry and hygiene facilities
3.1.1	regulation 107	Space requirements—indoor
3.1.1	regulation 108	Space requirements—outdoor space
3.1.1	regulation 109	Toilet and hygiene facilities
3.1.1	regulation 110	Ventilation and natural light
3.1.1	regulation 111	Administrative space
3.1.1	regulation 112	Nappy change facilities
3.2.1	regulation 113	Outdoor space—natural environment
3.1.1	regulation 114	Outdoor space—shade
3.1.3	regulation 115	Premises designed to facilitate supervision
3.1.2	regulation 116	Assessments of family day care residences and approved family day care venues
3.1.1	regulation 117	Glass (additional requirement for family day care)
Related requirements		
	Part 3 of the National Law: Service approval	
	regulation 25	Additional information about proposed education and care service premises
	regulations 41–45	Service waiver and Temporary waiver.

National, state/territory and local government requirements

In addition, services must consider and comply with relevant national, state/territory and local government requirements, including:

- the Building Code of Australia

- food safety standards (for kitchens and food preparation areas)

- relevant Australian Standards (for example, pool safety, playground equipment and soft fall).

Introduction

The physical environment plays a critical role in keeping children safe; reducing the risk of unintentional injuries; contributing to their wellbeing, happiness, creativity and developing independence; and determining the quality of children's learning and experiences.

To maximise children's engagement and level of positive experience and inclusive relationships, an approved service needs to carefully consider physical layout and resources in the environment, including:

- the location of the service

- the amount of space and how it is arranged and used for different groups and ages of children

- access between indoor and outdoor environments

- arrangements within rooms

- the availability of a variety of furniture, equipment and resources

- the air quality

- internal and external noise levels

- visibility and design that facilitates effective supervision

- ventilation and access to natural light.

The way in which the environment is designed, equipped and organised determines the way that space and resources are used by children.

Carefully chosen resources and materials, adequate in number, contribute to each child's sense of belonging and challenge them to explore new possibilities. These resources also play a part in fostering children's knowledge of and connections with the natural environment.

Physical learning environments

A secure and predictable environment with adequate space and appropriate facilities and resources enables children to choose what they will do and take increasing responsibility for their own health, hygiene and personal care. Environments also support positive relationships when space is arranged so that small groups of children can play and talk without undue distraction from children engaged in other activities.

Wherever possible, children need opportunities to be outdoors as much as indoors. This can be achieved with well-designed integrated indoor and outdoor environments that are available at the same time.

Physical learning environments are characterised by both indoor and outdoor learning spaces that:

- are flexible

- are welcoming and accessible

- reflect the diversity of families within the local community and the broader community

- facilitate convenient access between indoor and outdoor areas as well as convenient access to toilet (including nappy-changing, if applicable) and hand-washing facilities

- offer a range of activities and experiences

- are environmentally sustainable

- promote an understanding of and respect for the natural environment

- allow for grouping of children in ways that:

  - minimise the risk of injury

  - minimise conflict between children

  - reduce prolonged exposure to excess internal and external noise

  - promote children's learning and development.

Indoor environments are characterised by open spaces that provide children with opportunities to work on self-chosen and negotiated activities that can be quiet and active learning situations, routines and small-group and whole-group experiences. These spaces:

- support children's emerging interests and allow them to demonstrate their innate creativity and curiosity

- reflect children's different cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles

- recognise children as active learners and decision makers.

Outdoor environments are characterised by both active and quiet zones that comprise a balance of fixed and moveable equipment, open space to engage in physical activities and spaces that promote investigation and respect for and enjoyment of the natural environment. These spaces are dynamic and flexible and:

- provide opportunities for unique play and learning

- complement and extend the indoor activities and learning experiences

- offer children opportunities to be active, messy and noisy and play on a large scale.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of Quality Areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 3.1

The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service.

About standard 3.1

This standard is about the physical facilities of the service, including its design and location. It includes the amount, arrangement and use of indoor and outdoor space. It is the key standard considered in relation to granting an approval to operate a centre-based service.

What we aim to achieve with standard 3.1

Educators draw on a rich repertoire of pedagogical practices to promote children's learning by creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 14).

School age care environments are welcoming spaces when they reflect and enrich the lives and identities of children and families participating in the setting in response to their interests and needs *(Framework for School Age Care*, page 15).

How standard 3.1 contributes to quality education and care

The physical environment impacts on the behaviours and interactions of children and adults. Sufficient physical space and careful arrangement of the environment allows children to access different areas, move between spaces, explore, experiment, create and express themselves without disturbing other children. By creating environments that work for children, educators are able to spend valuable time interacting with children.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 3.1

- What are the strengths of the environment? What barriers do we need to overcome?

- How does the physical environment contribute positively to children's learning and provide opportunities for sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning?

- How does the physical environment contribute positively to children's developing autonomy and independence?

- What elements and features in the physical environment support the creation of a welcoming environment where all children and families are respected and actively encouraged to collaborate with educators about curriculum decisions?

- How do we ensure that there is interaction between the indoor and outdoor environments and that the design and organisation of these areas accommodates a variety of uses?

- How do we ensure that children are safe entering and leaving the service?

- In environments where mixed age groups include school age children, what strategies can be implemented or are in place to ensure that younger children are safe, while activities and experiences for school age children provide them with appropriate levels of challenge?

Additional questions for services with school age children

How do we ensure the environment is organised to balance supervision and the school age children's growing need for privacy and autonomy?

Additional questions for family day care services

How do we ensure the environment offers a rich and diverse range of learning experiences while maintaining a warm, homely environment for children?

Element 3.1.1

> Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.1.1

It is important for services (including family day care residences and venues) to have sufficient space, equipment and facilities to promote the learning and development of children and ensure the health and safety of children, staff and families. Age-appropriate furniture and equipment assists in minimising accidents and supports children's learning, growing independence, confidence and self-esteem.

In environments catering for school age children, consideration should be given to offering appropriate levels of challenge so that school age children can explore, experiment and take appropriate risks (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 35; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 34).

Assessment guide for element 3.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- an environment designed to foster children's learning and development

- appropriately sized and equipped indoor and outdoor spaces

- challenging elements of outdoor and indoor environments that allow for experiences that scaffold children's learning and development and offer chances for appropriate risk taking

- a physical environment that is safe and includes adequate space for children to work, play and talk together in small groups

- outdoor spaces that include plants, trees, edible gardens, rocks, mud, water and other elements from nature

- outdoor areas with shaded areas that meet the recommendations of relevant recognised authorities for protection from the sun

- environments designed to assist educators to adequately supervise children

- fencing that provides safety

- children:
  - engaging in a variety of experiences and activities in both indoor and outdoor environments
  - having access to furniture, materials, resources, toys and equipment adequate in number (to minimise disputes between children over their use) and suitable for promoting learning
  - exploring, solving problems, creating, constructing and engaging in critical thinking in the learning environment
  - grouped in ways that minimise the risk of injury and conflict, reduce prolonged exposure to excess noise and promote children's learning and development
- adequate and accessible toilet and hand-washing facilities
- a balance of natural and artificial lighting, good ventilation and fresh air
- appropriate areas for food preparation and storage
- quiet areas for resting or sleeping.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- nappy-changing and related facilities for services with children under three years of age
- separate indoor space provided for children under two years of age in centre-based services.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **observe**:

- adequate and accessible toilet and hand-washing facilities that are accessible from indoor and outdoor areas
- space available for administrative functions, private conversations and consultation with parents and for staff respite
- separate indoor space provided for children under two years of age.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss:**

- the arrangements the service has for appropriate laundering of soiled items that is on or off the premises
- the administration spaces used to consult and discuss confidential matters with parents
- how materials and equipment are chosen to enhance children's learning
- how the indoor and outdoor spaces have been designed to invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection to nature.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **discuss**, where relevant, how the impact of any building modifications and/or the installation of new furniture, storage areas and fixed equipment on the unencumbered space available at the service has been considered.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how educators:

- balance their family members' need for privacy with providing sufficient space for the children being educated and cared for

- maintain a homely environment for the children being educated and cared for.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **sight**:

- plans of indoor and outdoor areas, including information about soft fall

- plans that show evaluation of and changes to the placement of furniture and equipment, if available

- where relevant, a management plan that is in place to protect the safety of children, families and staff while major work is being undertaken at the service

- the service's approach to grouping children.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** a documented risk assessment of the physical environment.

Element 3.1.2

Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.1.2

Every child has the right to be safe. In education and care services the safety of the buildings, furniture and equipment impacts directly on the safety of children, educators, co-ordinators, nominated supervisors and others. Implementing good maintenance, cleaning and appropriate safety precautions also contributes to ensuring that as many unintentional injuries as possible are prevented.

Children who experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships with people and the environment respond accordingly. As children participate collaboratively in everyday routines, events and experiences and have opportunities to contribute to decisions, they learn to live interdependently (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 24).

Assessment guide for element 3.1.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- premises, furniture and equipment that are safe, clean and well maintained
- educators consistently conducting safety checks and monitoring the maintenance of buildings and equipment
- educators following safety advice from recognised authorities and manufacturers when arranging equipment, furniture and experiences
- areas used by children that are regularly cleaned.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members:

- schedules for cleaning all toys and equipment used by children
- procedures for undertaking building and equipment maintenance at the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** documented:

- procedures and schedules relating to:

  - safety checks

  - the cleaning of buildings, premises, furniture and equipment

  - adhering to manufacturers' advice when using and cleaning furniture and equipment

- documents that confirm equipment meets Australian Standards

- risk assessments of the physical environment.

Element 3.1.3

Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and interaction between indoor and outdoor space.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.1.3

Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. They cater for different learning capacities and learning styles (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 15; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 15).

School age care settings are commonly located in a variety of venues and many are in shared facilities. The space should be flexible enough to allow for the range of activities necessary for children to achieve the outcomes (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 19).

Assessment guide for element 3.1.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- facilities:

  - designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service, including adaptive equipment to support the inclusion of children with additional needs

  - that enable access for all children, educators, co-ordinators, staff members, parents and interested others

  - that enable interaction and convenient access between indoor and outdoor spaces, including toileting (and nappy-changing, if applicable) and hand-washing facilities

- indoor and outdoor spaces that are organised in ways that ensure that:

  - every child can participate in all daily experiences

  - children are not always dependent on adults to do things for them

  - small groups of children can work together on their own projects

  - children are supported to create their own games and experiences

  - the time that infants and toddlers spend in high chairs, cots, playpens, and strollers is minimised

- children actively engaged in a range of indoor and outdoor activities and experiences

- educators:

  - supporting and encouraging children to participate in activities and experiences

  - engaging with children in constructing their own play settings/environments and creating indoor and outdoor environments that stimulate and reflect children's interests

- involving children in making and maintaining aesthetically pleasing environments
- creating and continuously adapting the indoor and outdoor environments to:
  - meet the needs and interests of all groups of children
  - facilitate the inclusion of children with additional needs
  - match the developing abilities and interests of all children
  - ensure that all children have positive experiences when children of different ages are educated and cared for together
  - promote small and large group interactions and meaningful play and leisure
- a relaxed and happy environment maintained by using positive and effective strategies to modify inappropriate noise levels and activities
- flexible spaces that are responsive to the welfare and abilities of each child.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe** comfortable and protected areas both indoors and outdoors where babies can:

- rest, roll, sit, crawl and stand, alone or with others
- experience sensory activities
- safely explore their environment with their mouths, hands and bodies
- be cuddled or held by an adult.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- strategies the service has for working collaboratively with family members, specialists and/or resource agencies to plan for the inclusion of children with additional needs
- how educators and co-ordinators involve children in discussions about the use of space and resources.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's approach to access and participation as documented in the statement of philosophy
- documented evidence that indicates the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators work collaboratively with family members, specialists and/or resource agencies to:
  - plan for the inclusion of children with additional needs
  - access adaptive equipment to support the inclusion of children with additional needs
  - facilitate access to support services required while the child is at the service.

Standard 3.2

> The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.

About standard 3.2

Educators create environments that are inviting and inclusive and support children's exploration, creativity and learning.

What we aim to achieve with standard 3.2

Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. They cater for different learning capacities and learning styles and invite children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 15).

Resources need to reflect the breadth of age groups and interests and capabilities that are sharing the environment and be accessible to children so they can choose and be responsible for their actions (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 15).

How standard 3.2 contributes to quality education and care

The arrangement and provisions in the physical environment create the context for children's learning and relationships. A flexible learning environment supports the holistic way that children learn. Physical activity enhances brain development, coordination and social and motor skills and helps children to build confidence in their own abilities and learn to enjoy being active.

Exploration of the natural environment helps children to develop an appreciation of the natural world, an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment and to begin to think of ways in which they can contribute to a sustainable future.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 3.2

- How do the environment and resources support children's interests and abilities?

- What opportunities do we provide for children to be involved in planning and setting up the environment?

- How do we foster children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land?

- How is the environment equipped and organised to cater for all levels of capabilities?

- How can we organise our physical environment to encourage children to explore, solve problems, create, construct and develop environmental awareness?

- How can we organise environments and spaces in ways that allow children opportunities to play on their own as well as promote small and large group interactions and meaningful play and leisure?

- How do we provide spaces that promote safe exploration, learning through play and interaction with the environment for babies and toddlers?

- How can we provide opportunities for older children to safely undertake more complex physical activities, particularly in the outdoor environment?

- What elements and features in the physical environment invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature, and what additional resources can be introduced to provoke interest and more complex and increasingly abstract thinking?

- How do we balance the need for order and the messiness that happens when children play and explore?

- How are the backgrounds and cultures of families and the wider community reflected in the environment?

- What are our 'rules' about where resources and materials may be used? Do these rules support or hinder children's creativity and learning?

- How do we regularly evaluate the effectiveness of learning environments and draw links to the intended learning outcomes?

Element 3.2.1

> Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.2.1

Indoor and outdoor environments offer significantly different yet complementary experiences and should be given equal focus and attention. Well-designed indoor and outdoor environments can support the diverse interests, preferences and learning styles of all children in the service. Flexible arrangements of furniture and equipment together with open-ended materials encourage children to become flexible thinkers and investigators.

School age care is characterised by opportunities to develop relationships. Some children develop social skills through quiet play, such as talking to friends. Accordingly, space needs to be available for small and large groups to gather. Other children socialise through physical play, requiring open spaces to develop physical skills and social skills such as team building and leadership. Indoor and outdoor environments support all aspects of children's learning and invite conversations between children, school age care educators, families and the broader community (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 15).

Assessment guide for element 3.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- outdoor and indoor spaces that:
  - offer both built and natural features and structures
  - include learning or interest areas that are defined to assist children to function autonomously
- clear pathways that direct children and adults around rather than through areas being used by other children
- spaces organised to ensure that routine activities (such as toileting, nappy changing, eating and sleeping) promote positive interactions and learning experiences
- comfortable and well-ventilated areas for sleeping and resting
- safe shelving and storage areas from which children can access equipment and resources that are age and capability appropriate
- children:
  - engaging in both outdoor and indoor activities and experiences
  - initiating their own experiences using equipment and resources that they can access independently

- engaging in mealtimes and other routine experiences that are pleasant and comfortable occasions with opportunities for relaxed conversations with adults and other children
- exploring relationships with living and non-living things and observing, noticing and responding to change
- being supported to manipulate equipment and manage tools with increasing competence and skill
- being encouraged to use their senses to explore natural and built environments
- accessing areas with natural features such as plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud and water
- opportunities for children to confidently explore and engage with social and physical environments through relationships and play
- educators:
  - structuring the environment so that it:
    - is inviting and comfortable
    - encourages a free flow of activity throughout the day
    - facilitates positive interactions between children, educators and families
    - is regularly reorganised to continuously engage children in quality experiences in both built and natural environments
    - is flexible in the arrangement of furniture and equipment and includes open-ended materials to encourage children to become flexible thinkers, problem solvers and investigators
    - is flexible to allow children to move resources and equipment to extend learning opportunities
  - planning learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning
  - using outdoor environments not only as places for children to release energy and engage in physical activity but also for exploration, problem solving and creative expression
  - ensuring the environment is sufficiently ordered and predictable to support constructive learning and engagement
  - arranging eating and resting/sleeping areas to promote positive interactions.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe** built and natural environments for school age children that provide access to opportunities for play and leisure activities in which the children experience fun, enjoyment, mastery and success.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** with the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators the strategies used in the service to ensure that every child has opportunities to engage in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** documented learning programs that:

- pay equal attention to planning outdoor and indoor environments and provide a range of choices for children

- incorporate opportunities for children to:

  - be active, messy and noisy

  - withdraw to a quiet area

  - participate in large and small group activities

- indicate that the outdoor and indoor spaces are regularly reorganised to continuously engage children and promote their learning and development.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** evidence that strategies are in place to ensure that children in homes without direct access to outdoor environments—for example, high-rise units—have opportunities to access outdoor environments.

Element 3.2.2

> Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.2.2

Educators and co-ordinators value children's play. They use a range of strategies to support learning, including the design of learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework,* page 15.)

The environments for school age care settings provide children with access to opportunities for play and leisure activities in which they experience fun, enjoyment, mastery and success. In addition, the play and leisure activities undertaken in these settings provide children with the confidence to take responsibility for their own learning, personal regulation and contribution to the social environment (adapted from the *Framework for School Age Care,* page 32.)

Choosing equipment and materials that can be used in multiple ways allows the environment to be regularly and readily rearranged or adjusted to provide additional interest, variety and challenge. Resources in the environment need to reflect the breadth of ages and interests and capabilities of children who are sharing the environment and be accessible to children so they can choose and be responsible for their actions (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 15).

Assessment guide for element 3.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- evidence that the outdoor environment is regularly rearranged or adjusted to provide additional interest, variety and challenge

- resources, materials and equipment in the indoor and outdoor environment that children can explore and use freely in their play, which:

  - are sufficient in variety and number to:

    – meet the range of interests, ages and abilities of children

    – avoid overcrowding and ensure that children do not have to wait for long periods to participate or access resources or facilities

    – minimise disputes over their use

    – use in a range of different ways

  - are inclusive and reflect the lives of the children in the service, their families and the cultural diversity of the broader community

  - are organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program

- offer a range of challenges and experiences that reflect the breadth of ages, interests and capabilities of children who are sharing the environment
- are flexible and can be rearranged or adjusted to provide additional interest, variety and challenge
- stimulate children's curiosity
- include natural elements, such as plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud and water
- provide many sensory experiences
- invite children to explore, discover and experiment
- provide opportunities for children, including babies and toddlers, to make a connection with nature
- are challenging and allow children to take appropriate risks
- children:
  - participating in a variety of rich, meaningful, enquiry-based experiences
  - being supported to take on challenges and try new things
  - using a range of equipment and resources to engage in energetic experiences that help them to develop movement, coordination, balance, flexibility and strength
  - using a range of real, commercial, natural, recycled and simple homemade materials to support their learning in a range of ways—for example, to:
    - express meaning using visual arts, dance, drama and music
    - explore mathematical concepts
    - represent their thinking
    - experiment with different technologies
    - sort, categorise, order and compare collections of materials
    - use their imagination and make up their own games
    - be involved in completing day-to-day tasks, such as preparing and cooking food, caring for living things and being involved in the care of the environment
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - enhancing child-initiated experiences by providing additional resources and, where appropriate, participating in and extending their play
  - choosing resources, materials and equipment with children and using them in a way that supports children's sense of belonging, relationships, creativity and learning
  - providing sufficient time and resources for children to initiate and become actively involved in experiences
  - introducing appropriate tools, technologies and media to enhance children's learning
  - demonstrating the potential of resources to children and suggesting new and different ways to use them
  - being creative in their use of equipment and materials to stimulate children's interest and curiosity.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** with the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators the strategies used to engage with families and children to ensure their views are considered and incorporated in the selection and organisation of materials, equipment and resources at the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- documentation and learning programs that demonstrate links between the arrangement and choice of resources, materials and equipment and the learning outcomes for children

- plans for the arrangement of indoor and outdoor spaces to create inviting learning environments.

Standard 3.3

The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future.

About standard 3.3

Services promote sustainable practices in the immediate service environment and beyond, and foster respect and care for the environment.

What we aim to achieve with standard 3.3

Children develop positive attitudes and values by engaging in learning experiences, joining in discussions that explore solutions to the issues that we face, and watching adults around them model sustainable practices (*Climbing the little green steps*, 2007).

School age care environments and resources can emphasise accountability for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment, day to day and for long-term sustainability (*Framework for School Age Care*, page 15).

How standard 3.3 contributes to quality education and care

Education and care settings are places to learn about self, others and the world. Educators and co-ordinators foster children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. Educators and children work together to show respect, care and appreciation for the natural environment (Adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework,* page 7 and page 29; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 5.)

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 3.3

- How do our policies and practices promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment (day to day and for long-term sustainability) and promote the development of life skills, such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling?

- What strategies can we implement to ensure educators foster children's capacity to:
  - value and respect the broader environment and be world-wise?
  - understand and appreciate the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land?

- What environmentally sustainable practices already exist in the service? How are children involved in these?

- How do we as educators model environmentally friendly and sustainable practices?

- How do we highlight our responsibilities for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment?

- Where could we go to access more information, ideas and strategies to incorporate in our educational program that will support our children to take an active role in caring for the environment and contributing to a sustainable future?

- What messages are given to children about what is valued at the service through the environment, materials and resources and how they are maintained?

Element 3.3.1

Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.3.1

Educators and children work together to learn about and promote the sustainable use of resources and to develop and implement sustainable practices.

Assessment guide for element 3.3.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- sustainable practices—such as recycling, use of recycled resources, energy efficiency and water conservation—embedded in daily routines and practices at the service
- children participating in planned experiences that engage them in appropriate sustainability practices within the service
- educators and co-ordinators sharing information and providing children with access to information about the environment and the impact of human activities on environments
- the service's environmental strategy being consistently implemented.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** examples of:

- the service's approach to promoting sustainability
- sustainable practices used at the service and the ways in which children are involved in them.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's environmental and sustainability strategy
- evidence that information and ideas about sustainable practices are regularly shared with families.

Element 3.3.2

Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment.

What we aim to achieve with element 3.3.2

Children develop an understanding and respect for the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land.

Educators and children work together to show respect, care and appreciation for the natural environment (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework,* page 29; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 28).

Assessment guide for element 3.3.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - being supported to appreciate and care for natural and constructed environments
  - participating in planned experiences that:
    - support their engagement with and respect for the natural environment
    - increase their awareness of the impact of human activity
    - build a sense of responsibility for caring for the environment
- opportunities for children to increase their:
  - knowledge of and respect for natural and constructed environments
  - awareness of the interdependence of living things
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - developing environmental awareness and programs as a platform for ongoing environmental education
  - fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
  - sharing information and providing children with access to resources about the environment and the impact of human activities on environments
- spaces that promote the development of life skills, such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling
- the service's environmental strategy being consistently implemented.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the development and implementation of strategies to support children to be environmentally responsible and to show respect for the environment
- how the educational program fosters wonder and knowledge about the natural world.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** documentation of children's learning about environmental and sustainability issues.

Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on the provision of qualified and experienced educators, co-ordinators and nominated supervisors who are able to develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create safe and predictable environments and encourage children's active engagement in the learning program.

Quality Area 4: Standards and elements

Standard 4.1	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing.	
	Element 4.1.1	Educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements are maintained at all times.
4.2	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical.	
	Element 4.2.1	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
	Element 4.2.2	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships.
	Element 4.2.3	Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.

Quality Area 4: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
4.1	section 169	Offence relating to staffing arrangements
4.1	regulation 118	Educational leader
4.1	regulations 119–120	Age and supervision requirements
4.1	regulations 121–124	Minimum number of educators required
4.1	regulations 125–128	Educational qualifications for educators
4.1	regulations 129–135	Requirements for educators who are early childhood teachers
4.1	regulation 136	First aid qualifications

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
4.1	regulations 137–143	Approval and determination of qualifications
4.1	regulation 144	Family day care educator assistant
4.1	regulations 145–152	Staff and educator records—centre-based services
4.1	regulation 153	Register of family day care educators
4.1	regulation 154	Record of staff, family day care coordinators and family day care educator assistants
	Related requirements	
4.1	section 161	Offence to operate education and care service without nominated supervisor
4.1	section 162	Offence to operate education and care service unless responsible person is present
4.1	section 163	Offence relating to appointment or engagement of family day care co-ordinators
4.1	regulations 46–54	Supervisor certificates
4.2	regulation 55	Quality improvement plans
4.1	regulation 168(2)(i)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to staffing including a code of conduct for staff members; determining the responsible person present at the service and the participation of volunteers and students on practicum placements.

Introduction

It is the role of the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators to establish effective and ethical practices in the service. A sound philosophy guides decision making, including decisions about the appropriate number and deployment of suitably qualified and experienced educators, co-ordinators and staff members at the service.

Policies and procedures

Clear policies and procedures:

- ensure there are common expectations about how things are done at the service

- promote consistent practice.

A code of conduct/ethics

An agreed code of conduct/code of ethics that applies to management, educators, co-ordinators and staff members clearly explains the responsibilities of all parties in relation to one another and to children and families using the service.

Recruiting appropriate staff

Consistent and committed educators and co-ordinators support good quality standards and continuity of care for children. Effective, transparent and equitable recruitment processes ensure the service attracts and retains educators, co-ordinators and other staff members who can best meet the needs of children and their families.

Continuous learning

Updating and maintaining educators' knowledge is a joint responsibility of educators, co-ordinators, the nominated supervisor and the approved provider, and includes a range of professional development strategies that challenge and extend current thinking.

The team and how it operates

An education and care service operates most effectively when there is open communication and information is shared. Effective communication and problem solving between the adults in the service also models successful working relationships for children.

Teamwork and collaboration, where others' viewpoints are respected and contributions are acknowledged, are fundamental to the development of trusting relationships.

Diversity within the team in terms of skills, experiences and backgrounds enhances the team and ultimately leads to more effective and responsive programs for children.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of Quality Areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 4.1

> Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing.

About standard 4.1

Having sufficient educators, co-ordinators and staff members available at all times when children are educated and cared for enables the service to deliver quality education and care programs and respond to and promote children's learning and development in the five learning outcomes.

What we aim to achieve with standard 4.1

Staff in the service:

- are deployed in ways that support optimal learning and development for children
- act cohesively and ethically as a team to achieve this.

How standard 4.1 contributes to quality education and care

Responsive learning relationships are strengthened as educators and children learn together. Educators are more likely to be responsive, purposeful and thoughtful when staffing arrangements at the service allow them to direct their full attention to their work with children, and when they do not have to attend simultaneously to other tasks (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework,* pages 14–15.)

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 4.1

- How do our staffing arrangements enable all children to feel that they belong in ways that support their 'being' and 'becoming'?
- How do our staffing arrangements and communication between nominated supervisors, educators, staff members, families and children support consistent practice, including staff members' and children's transitions?

Additional questions for family day care services

- What are our service's procedures that support families to access alternative care when their usual educator is unavailable at short notice?
- How do our educators support a range of experiences for children?
- What arrangements are in place to ensure that our coordination unit can support educators and families when children are in care overnight and at weekends?
- How do we communicate with educators and with families when there is a change of co-ordinator in the service?

Element 4.1.1

> Educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements are maintained at all times.

What we aim to achieve with element 4.1.1

The *National Quality Standard* sets educator-to-child ratios to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children while attending the service.

The presence of adequate numbers of qualified and experienced educators has been consistently linked with quality interactions and positive learning experiences for children.

Carefully planned rosters ensure that educators are always available to respond to children and to support continuity of care and adequate supervision at all times when children are in the service and on excursions.

The *National Quality Standard* also sets qualification requirements for co-ordinators in family day care services. Qualified and experienced co-ordinators train, support and monitor educators in their education and care role with children.

Assessment guide for element 4.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements maintained throughout the day, including during educators' meal breaks and administration and/or programming time.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **observe** the numbers and ratio of educators rostered at the beginning and end of the day who are:

- facilitating effective communication with families
- ensuring children are adequately supervised, engaged in activities and cared for while rooms are set up or packed away.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the provision of non-contact time to enable undertaking tasks like:
  - programming
  - meeting with parents
  - meeting with inclusion support professionals

- networking with relevant organisations, such as other education and care services and local schools

- the strategies that are in place to:

  - ensure a regular pool of relief educators is available

  - facilitate communication between educators about the program

- how the service arranges rosters to support continuity of care and positive transitions.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the service's approach to placing children with individual educators

- how the allocation of co-ordinators to individual educators supports children's learning and wellbeing

- the processes in place to assist families to access alternative care when their usual educator is unavailable.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- rosters for nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and staff members

- staff records.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **sight**:

- staff records including educators' first aid qualifications and working with children checks

- staff rosters that demonstrate the service is meeting staffing arrangements requirements including that a first-aid-qualified educator is on duty at all times.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** records:

- of co-ordinator qualifications

- that demonstrate all educators and family day care educator assistants hold a prescribed first aid competency/qualification.

Standard 4.2

Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical.

About standard 4.2

Nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators, staff members and volunteers develop and maintain relationships with each other that are based on the principles of mutual respect, equity and fairness.

What we aim to achieve with standard 4.2

Partnerships within the team are based on the foundation of understanding each other's expectations and attitudes, and build on the strength of each other's knowledge (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12).

How standard 4.2 contributes to quality education and care

The positive and calm atmosphere that is created when the adults around children communicate effectively allows children to develop positive attachments with nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and their peers. Unresolved and poorly managed conflict between the adults in the service affects morale and impacts on the focus on children.

Constructive relationships between nominated supervisors, staff members and volunteers help to prevent conflict and misunderstanding (*Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics,* 2006).

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 4.2

- How do we ensure that the service's statement of philosophy reflects our different views, beliefs and values?

- Does our practice reflect the beliefs outlined in our statement of philosophy?

- How do we acknowledge the personal strengths, professional experiences and diversity that colleagues bring to their work?

- What beliefs about relationships between management, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are included in our statement of philosophy? Is this a true reflection of what happens in daily practice?

- How do we promote professionalism, confidentiality and ethical conduct?

- What strategies have we developed to ensure information is shared between management, educators, co-ordinators and staff members?

- What opportunities do we provide for educators, co-ordinators and staff members to have conversations and discussions to further develop their skills, or to improve practice and relationships? How do we ensure that everyone's voice is heard and considered?

- What makes our service a good place to work?

- How effective are the processes we have implemented to resolve any ethical issues that may arise?

- How regularly do we review the code of conduct/code of ethics and ensure that our practices and policies align with the code?

Element 4.2.1

Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

What we aim to achieve with element 4.2.1

The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members use ethical principles and professional standards to guide decision-making and practice in their education and care service. The code applies to all parties and clearly explains their responsibilities in relation to one another and to the families and children using the service.

Assessment guide for element 4.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe:**

- demonstration in everyday practice of care, empathy and respect for children, colleagues and families
- demonstration of the service's code of conduct/code of ethics in practice in interactions and relationships
- the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members taking responsibility for implementing the *National Quality Standard* and other legislative requirements.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss:**

- the ways in which educators, co-ordinators and staff members access copies of:
  - the *National Quality Standard, National Regulations* and *Guide to the National Quality Standard*
  - the *Early Years Learning Framework*
  - the *Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework*
  - the *Framework for School Age Care*
  - the service's statement of philosophy
  - the service's policies and procedures
  - other relevant professional publications
- the processes the service has in place to assist nominated supervisors and staff members to resolve differences
- how nominated supervisors and staff members use the code of conduct/code of ethics as a resource for professional conversations about day-to-day practice at the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics*, 2006, or a code of ethics developed by the service that is displayed and made available to families

- a handbook for new and existing educators, co-ordinators and staff members that includes:

  - the statement of philosophy

  - the code of ethics

  - position descriptions

  - professional standards that apply to educators.

Element 4.2.2

Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships.

What we aim to achieve with element 4.2.2

A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when educators and those with whom they work are all involved in an ongoing cycle of review through which current practices are examined, outcomes reviewed and new ideas generated. In such a climate, issues relating to program quality, environment design, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised and debated (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 13*; Framework for School Age Care,* page 13).

Collaboration involves working together cooperatively towards common goals. Collaboration is achieved through information sharing, joint planning and the development of common understandings and objectives (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 13).

Assessment guide for element 4.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- the nominated supervisor and staff members demonstrating a strong drive to learn more regardless of their experience and current knowledge and skills

- educators discussing and reflecting on the needs of particular children and families

- educators, co-ordinators and staff members:

  - sharing tasks and responsibilities

  - offering assistance to each other

  - acting promptly to support other team members in difficult situations

- the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators working collaboratively to affirm and challenge their practice through supportive relationships with their colleagues.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the service's approach to using particular strengths, talents and interests of individual educators, co-ordinators and staff members

- whether the service has regular team meetings that focus on and include collaborative work that affirms, challenges, supports and provides opportunities to learn from each other, to further develop the team's skills

- how staff in the team support and mentor each other

- how new information and innovative ideas and approaches are gathered, shared and enacted.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **discuss** whether the service has purposeful, collaborative and regular room/ team meetings.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** evidence of the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators engaging with their colleagues to reflect on practice, explore new possibilities and plan for children's experiences in, for example, staff meeting minutes or reflective journals.

Element 4.2.3

Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills.

What we aim to achieve with element 4.2.3

Communication between the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members is respectful, professional and guided by the service's code of conduct/code of ethics.

Educators, co-ordinators and staff members respect and value the diverse contributions and perspectives of their colleagues and this is evident in their interactions with each other.

Assessment guide for element 4.2.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- positive working relationships in the service and an atmosphere of openness

- educators, co-ordinators and staff members reflecting the code of ethics in their everyday practice

- new educators, co-ordinators and staff members being supported by other team members during their orientation and induction

- strategies being demonstrated that assist casual and relief educators, co-ordinators, staff members and students to belong as part of the team

- the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members demonstrating an ongoing commitment to developing their own cultural competence in a two-way process with each other, families and communities.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- the approved provider, the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members demonstrate that they are open to change and new possibilities

- the service ensures that all interactions, including grievance procedures, convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills

- staff members acknowledge each other's strengths and diverse knowledge and skills.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the *Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics,* 2006, or a code of conduct developed by the service

- documented examples of projects or teamwork that capitalise on the diverse skills, knowledge and strengths of the team.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on relationships with children being responsive and respectful and promoting children's sense of security and belonging.

Relationships of this kind free children to explore the environment and engage in play and learning.

Quality Area 5: Standards and elements

Standard 5.1	Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.	
	Element 5.1.1	Interactions with each child are warm and responsive and build trusting relationships.
	Element 5.1.2	Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
	Element 5.1.3	Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.
5.2	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.	
	Element 5.2.1	Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.
	Element 5.2.2	Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
	Element 5.2.3	The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained at all times.

Quality Area 5: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
5.2	section 166	Offence to use inappropriate discipline
5.1, 5.2	regulation 155	Interactions with children
5.2	regulation 156	Relationships in groups
	Related requirements	
5.1, 5.2	regulation 73	Educational program

	Related requirements	
5.1, 5.2	regulation 74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
5.1, 5.2	regulation 168(2)(j)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to interactions with children, including the matters set out in regulations 155 and 156

Introduction

Experiencing 'belonging'—knowing where and with whom you belong—is integral to human existence. In early childhood, in middle childhood and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 7; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 5).

Children benefit from positive peer relationships

All children need to know that others care about them, know them well and are interested in what they do, think and feel. Developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security.

Relationships with peers take on increasing importance for older children, and educators sensitively monitor, support and guide children's interactions with others as they explore their own identity and develop more complex social skills and relationships.

Relationships with supportive care givers promote positive child development

Having supportive relationships with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members enables children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, work through differences, learn new things and take calculated risks.

Educators' and co-ordinators' interactions with children convey to them that they are valued as competent and capable individuals. Educators are actively engaged in children's learning and share decision-making with them. They also use their everyday interactions with children during play, routines and ongoing projects to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning.

Educators and co-ordinators support children as they begin to empathise with others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners and to value collaboration and teamwork.

Positive and responsive one-to-one interactions with babies and toddlers are important to both their current wellbeing and their future development. Having secure relationships with educators encourages babies and toddlers to thrive, and provides them with a secure base for exploration and learning. As children grow and develop they continue to rely on secure, trusting and respectful relationships with the adults in their lives.

From birth children begin to explore how the social world works. Exploring and learning to manage feelings, behaviour, rights and responsibilities is a complex process. Educators and co-ordinators take a positive approach to guiding children's behaviour that is ultimately aimed at empowering children to regulate their own behaviour and to develop the skills to negotiate and resolve conflicts or disagreements with others.

Educators and co-ordinators develop guidance strategies that demonstrate respect and understanding of individual children when they strive to recognise and understand why each child may behave in a certain way, or why behaviour may occur in particular circumstances or at specific times of the day.

A positive approach to guiding behaviour builds children's confidence and self-esteem and is based on the development of caring, equitable and responsive relationships between educators and children.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of Quality Areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 5.1

Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.

About standard 5.1

When children have positive experiences they develop an understanding of themselves as significant and respected, and feel a sense of 'belonging'. Relationships are the foundations for the construction of identity—'who I am', 'how I belong' and 'what is my influence?' (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 20; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 19).

What we aim to achieve with standard 5.1

When children experience nurturing, respectful reciprocal relationships and consistent emotional support this contributes to the development of a strong sense of wellbeing (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 10).

How standard 5.1 contributes to quality education and care

Constructive everyday interactions and shared learning opportunities form the basis of the relationships that educators and co-ordinators build with each child. These relationships provide a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to manage their own behaviour, make decisions and relate positively and effectively to others.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 5.1

- How do we build close, secure relationships with children of all ages, abilities, genders and backgrounds?

- How do we help children to feel that they belong in the service?

- How do we learn about individual children's non-verbal cues and communication strategies, and the specific communication requirements of children who have additional needs? How do we cater for them?

- How do we engage in children's play? What roles do we play?

- How do we interact with children to engage them in learning?

- What strategies and techniques do we use to extend and build on children's comments and conversations?

- How do we use conversations and interactions with children to make routine times enjoyable and meaningful learning opportunities?

Additional questions for services with babies and toddlers

- How do we respond to the distress some babies and toddlers experience when they have to adapt to unfamiliar routines, new people and new places?

Additional questions for family day care services

- How do educators ensure that they respond to their own children and to the children they are educating and caring for in a fair and consistent way?

Element 5.1.1

Interactions with each child are warm and responsive and build trusting relationships.

What we aim to achieve with element 5.1.1

Educators who are attuned to children's thoughts and feelings support the development of a strong sense of wellbeing. They positively interact with the young child in their learning (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12).

Mutually supportive relationships are very important in school age care settings. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships provide the foundation upon which the community in school age care settings is established (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 10).

Assessment guide for element 5.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- an atmosphere that is generally relaxed and happy

- relaxed, unhurried mealtimes during which educators sit and talk with children

- children initiating conversations with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members about their experiences inside and outside the service

- children expressing ideas and feelings and sharing humour with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members

- educators and co-ordinators:

  - responding sensitively and appropriately to all children's efforts to communicate

  - engaging children in many conversations throughout the day or session

  - engaging in sustained conversations with individual children about things that interest the child

  - consistently responding positively to all children who require their attention.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- predictable personal-care routines that are rich and enjoyable experiences for babies and toddlers

- educators and co-ordinators responding to babies and toddlers when they practice and play with language, by repeating the words, sounds and gestures that children use.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **observe** co-ordinators supporting educators' relationships with children during home visits and playgroups by sharing their expertise and professional experience.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- the service's statement of philosophy guides interactions with children

- experiences and routines are organised to maximise opportunities for meaningful conversations between children, educators and co-ordinators

- the service ensures that all children have equal opportunities to engage in one-to-one and small group conversations with educators.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- educators and co-ordinators learn about babies' and toddlers' non-verbal cues and communication strategies

- staffing and grouping arrangements within a centre-based service support the development of trusting relationships between educators and babies and toddlers.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- home visits and playgroups are used to support educators' relationships with children

- the service ensures that educators' personal and family arrangements support positive relationships with children.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the statement of philosophy

- the service's policy on interactions with children

- evidence that planned and spontaneous experiences and routines provide opportunities for children to engage in meaningful conversations with educators and co-ordinators.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** documentation in relation to playgroup and home visits, showing evidence of planning that supports the development of positive relationships between educators and children.

Element 5.1.2

Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.

What we aim to achieve with element 5.1.2

Educators who engage in intentional teaching recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that interaction and conversations are vitally important for learning (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 15; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 14).

Assessment guide for element 5.1.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - engaging in spontaneous, two-way conversations and interactions with educators and co-ordinators about what is happening around them, why things happened and what can be learnt from these experiences
  - asking educators and co-ordinators for assistance as they try new things, take on new challenges and try to do things for themselves
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - participating in children's play and using children's cues to guide their level and type of involvement
  - responding positively and respectfully to children's comments, questions and requests for assistance
  - modelling reasoning, predicting and reflective processes and language
  - collaborating with children about routines and experiences
  - using techniques, such as sign language and other resources and tools, to support the inclusion of children with additional needs.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- educators describing objects and events and talking about routine activities with babies and toddlers
- educators and co-ordinators encouraging give-and-take communication by adding to interactions initiated by babies and toddlers.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the ways in which children's cues are used to guide the level and type of adult involvement in children's play

- how children are encouraged to share their stories and ideas

- how routines and everyday experiences are used to support children's learning

- the ways in which educators and co-ordinators use information from their observations of and interactions with children to extend children's thinking and learning

- how educators use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- plans for the inclusion of children with additional needs

- evidence of planned and spontaneous experiences and routines that support the engagement of individual children and groups of children in experiences of their own choosing with the support and guidance of educators

- documentation of children's learning that shows evidence that educators' interactions with children are used to support the children's developing ideas, skills and relationships.

Element 5.1.3

Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included.

What we aim to achieve with element 5.1.3

Children develop a sense of belonging when they feel accepted, develop attachments and trust those who care for them. When children feel safe, secure and supported they grow in confidence to explore and learn (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 20).

Children who are supported to understand themselves in this positive way experience a sense of belonging that nurtures the development of self-esteem. Self-esteem is critical to children's capacity to develop positive images about their abilities, interests and personal future (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 10).

Assessment guide for element 5.1.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - demonstrating a sense of belonging and comfort in the environment
  - communicating their need for comfort and assistance
  - engaging in helping activities, and showing kindness and compassion to their peers
- an environment that reflects the lives of the children, their families and the local community
- practices and routines that honour children and their family and community contexts
- group sizes and staffing practices that:
  - support the establishment of secure relationships between educators and children
  - support children settling into the service each day
  - facilitate effective daily communication with families
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - showing genuine interest in, understanding of and respect for all children
  - comforting children who cry or show other signs of distress
  - responding positively to the varying abilities and confidence of all children
  - acknowledging children's efforts and achievements
  - actively supporting the maintenance of the child's home language.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - being supported to build secure attachments with one and then more familiar educators
  - using a favourite toy or comfort item brought from home to help them settle and feel secure in the service
- many opportunities for babies and toddlers to experience relaxed physical contact and one-to-one interactions with familiar educators.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** the:

- ways in which the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members learn more about the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child-rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families using the service
- strategies used to assist all children to develop a sense of belonging and confidence in the service.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **discuss** how staffing and grouping arrangements within a centre-based service support babies and toddlers to feel secure in the service.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **discuss** how rosters are planned to promote continuity for children.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- examples of the information gathered from:
  - families to support their child during the settling-in process
  - other professionals or support agencies that work with children, including children who have additional needs and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the service's approach to equity and inclusion, documented in the statement of philosophy
- evidence that educators and co-ordinators draw on the diverse knowledge, experiences and views of their colleagues in reviewing the experiences planned for children and their teaching strategies to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning outcomes.

Standard 5.2

Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults.

About standard 5.2

Over time the variety and complexity of ways in which children connect and participate with others increases. When educators create environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships, children respond accordingly.

When children participate collaboratively in everyday routines, events and experiences and have opportunities to contribute to decisions, they learn to live interdependently and make informed choices about their behaviours (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 25; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 24).

What we aim to achieve with standard 5.2

The service ensures that all children are being supported to develop the skills, dispositions and understandings they need to interact positively with others (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 10).

How standard 5.2 contributes to quality education and care

Developing effective relationships with others is a key aspect of children's social development and these relationships also provide a base for children's learning. Positive relationships provide children with the confidence and agency to explore and learn about their world. As their relationships become more complex and far-reaching, children's interactions and conversations with others also help them to extend their knowledge, thinking and ability to apply what they already know in new and unfamiliar contexts.

An important aspect of children's 'belonging, being and becoming' involves them learning how their behaviours and actions affect themselves and others and developing the skills to regulate these independently. Educators and co-ordinators assist children to develop these skills when they are focused on developing positive and respectful strategies for guiding children's behaviour, and mediate and assist children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 5.2

- How do we enable children to form and maintain positive relationships with others?

- How is a culture of respect, equity and fairness encouraged in the service? How is this communicated to educators, children and families?

- How are the program and routines arranged to ensure adequate time for children to engage in projects and play experiences of their own choosing, with a variety of peers and adults?

- How do we model positive, respectful relationships with others to children?

- How do we ensure that the physical environment, program and routines are conducive to the development and maintenance of children's interpersonal relationships?

- How do we promote a sense of community within the service?

- How do we ensure that our policy on interactions with children reflects current information about child development and best practice in guiding young children's behaviour?

- How do our own beliefs and attitudes and experiences as children influence the way in which we guide children's behaviour?

- What opportunities do children have to make decisions about rules, expectations and outcomes in relation to their own and other's behaviour?

- How do we manage situations where we experience challenges in relation to guiding the behaviour of a child or group of children?

- How do we work with families and other professionals and resource agencies to ensure that behaviour guidance strategies are tailored for individual children? How are different expectations managed?

Additional questions for services with school age children

- How do we meet older children's needs for independence and greater freedom?

- How do we ensure some consistency between school and the service in the approach taken to guiding children's behaviour?

Additional questions for family day care services

- How do we foster positive relationships between members of the educator's family and the children being educated and cared for?

- How do we support educators when they are feeling stressed by or are having difficulty coping with a child's behaviour?

Element 5.2.1

Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.

What we aim to achieve with element 5.2.1

Educators help children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork (*Early Years Learning Framework,* pages 12 and 25).

School age care settings are places to learn about self, others and the world – in other words learning about living and learning through living (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 13).

Assessment guide for element 5.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - participating in play experiences and developing friendships as part of a small group
  - engaging in enjoyable interactions with their peers, contributing to shared play experiences and responding positively to ideas and suggestions from others
  - negotiating roles and relationships in play and leisure experiences
  - engaged in ongoing collaborative projects they have initiated that involve research, planning, problem-solving and shared decision-making
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - modelling for children explicit strategies to initiate interactions and join in play and social experiences with other children
  - engaging in children's group play and projects
  - assisting and supporting children when they are having difficulty understanding or communicating with each other
  - creating opportunities for peer scaffolding
  - promoting a sense of community in the service.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe**:

- children spending a large proportion of their time with their peers

- educators and co-ordinators:

  - acknowledging older children's complex relationships and sensitively intervening in ways that promote social inclusion

  - providing opportunities for children to assume leadership roles and direct play experiences with their peers.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:

  - engaged in playgroup experiences that support them in establishing and maintaining relationships with children of various ages, genders, cultures and capabilities

  - experiencing friendly and genuine interactions with members of the educator's family

- educators responding to their own children and to the children being educated and cared for in a fair and consistent way.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how staffing and grouping arrangements within a centre-based service support positive relationships between children

- how educators and co-ordinators support and promote children's interpersonal relationships

- the ways in which the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators support inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and capabilities in collaborative play, projects and experiences with others

- how educators and co-ordinators learn about children's shared interests and how they use this information to plan further learning opportunities.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the opportunities provided for children to take on leadership roles within the service

- how educators and co-ordinators broaden children's perspectives and encourage an appreciation of diversity and difference within the group.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- educators and co-ordinators provide opportunities for children to experience a variety of group settings

- the service addresses and communicates the role educators' family members can play in the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's policy on interactions with children

- evidence that:

  - the program and routines include regular opportunities for children to engage in social play and collaborative experiences

  - educators regularly identify children's shared interests and use this information to plan further collaborative learning opportunities.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** guidelines about the role of educators' families in the provision of family day care.

Element 5.2.2

> Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

What we aim to achieve with element 5.2.2

As children move through childhood they become increasingly mindful of the way others interact with them and they develop understandings that their actions or responses affect how others feel and experience 'belonging'. Early childhood educators work with young children to promote and model positive ways to relate to others (*Early Years Learning Framework,* pages 15 and 26).

School age care educators actively support the inclusion of all children in play, help children to recognise when play is unfair and offer constructive ways to build a caring fair and inclusive learning community (*Framework for School Age Care,* pages 14 and 25).

Assessment guide for element 5.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - engaging in cooperative, helping behaviour
  - exploring different identities and points of view in dramatic play
  - challenging other children's behaviour when it is disrespectful or unfair
  - expressing their feelings and responses to others' behaviours confidently and constructively
  - being supported to communicate effectively to resolve disagreements with others
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - discussing emotions, feelings and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fair and unfair behaviour, bias and prejudice
  - encouraging children to listen to other children's ideas, consider alternative behaviours and solve problems together
  - talking with children about the outcomes of their actions, and the rules and reasons for these
  - prompting and supporting children to remove themselves from situations where they are experiencing frustration, anger or fear
  - listening empathetically to children when they express their emotions and reassuring children that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times

- supporting children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others and intervening sensitively when children experience difficulty in resolving a disagreement.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **observe** educators and members of their family modelling positive, socially acceptable behaviour and language.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- educators and co-ordinators:

    - learn about and respond to individual children's relationships with others, and the relationship preferences they may have

    - use their knowledge of individual children's personalities and friendship preferences to support children to manage their own behaviour and develop an understanding of others' feelings

    - support children when they are trying to negotiate and resolve conflicts with others

    - support children who are subject to aggressive or bullying behaviour, including social isolation and, where applicable, cyber-bullying

- children who have specifically diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties are genuinely and sensitively supported to understand how their own actions affect others

- the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators work with each child's family and, where applicable, their school, to ensure that a consistent approach is used to support children who have specifically diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's policy and procedures on interactions with children
- evidence of:

    - planned and spontaneous experiences that support children to develop and practise the skills required to participate in group discussions and shared decision making with their peers

    - collaboration with schools, other professionals or support agencies that work with children who have diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties

- examples of the information gathered from families about their children's social skills and relationship preferences

- plans for the inclusion of children who have specifically diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties.

Element 5.2.3

The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained at all times.

What we aim to achieve with element 5.2.3

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability.

By agreeing to undertake the obligations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has committed to protecting and ensuring children's rights. This includes Article 19 of the convention, which states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.

Assessment guide for element 5.2.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:

  - being allowed to make choices and to experience the consequences of these where there is no risk of physical or emotional harm to the child or another being

  - being acknowledged when they make positive choices in managing their own behaviour

  - who are not isolated for any reason other than illness, accident or a pre-arranged appointment with parental consent

- spaces, resources and routines arranged to minimise times when children are likely to experience stress or frustration

- educators and co-ordinators:

  - pre-empting potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions where there is conflict

  - using positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them

  - responding promptly to children's aggressive or bullying behaviour

  - being patient, gentle, calm and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger

  - clearly reflecting the information received from families, other professionals and resource agencies

- consistently guiding all children's behaviour in ways that:
    - are focused on supporting children to develop skills to self-regulate
    - preserve and promote children's self-esteem
- that corporal punishment is not used at the service
- that food is being used appropriately and not as a reward or punishment.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **observe** educators and co-ordinators:

- speaking in comforting tones and holding babies to soothe them when they are crying
- responding positively to babies' and toddlers' exploratory behaviour.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **observe** older children having some privileges and increased freedom in recognition of their growing maturity and ability to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **observe** educators responding to their own children's behaviour and the behaviour of children using the service in a fair and consistent way.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the strategies used by educators and co-ordinators to encourage children's positive behaviour and minimise negative behaviour
- how educators and co-ordinators involve children in developing behaviour limits and the consequences for inappropriate behaviours
- how the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators manage situations in which:
    - families have different expectations from the service in relation to guiding children's behaviour
    - a child's behaviour is particularly challenging
- how the service supports educators and co-ordinators to enhance their skills and knowledge in relation to guiding children's behaviour.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **discuss** how the service manages situations where babies or toddlers bite.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss** how the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators ensure there is some consistency between school and the service in the approach taken to guide children's behaviour.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how co-ordinators support educators when they are feeling stressed by or are having difficulty coping with a child's behaviour.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight:**

- the service's policy on interactions with children that outlines a clear process for guiding children's behaviour positively, based on what is currently understood to be best practice in education and care services

- examples of individual behaviour guidance plans for children with diagnosed behavioural difficulties that have been developed in consultation with families, other professionals and support agencies.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on collaborative relationships with families that are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children and community partnerships that are based on active communication, consultation and collaboration.

Quality Area 6: Standards and elements

Standard 6.1	Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.	
	Element 6.1.1	There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.
	Element 6.1.2	Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
	Element 6.1.3	Current information about the service is available to families.
Standard 6.2	Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about childrearing are respected.	
	Element 6.2.1	The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
	Element 6.2.2	Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
Standard 6.3	The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.	
	Element 6.3.1	Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained.
	Element 6.3.2	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.
	Element 6.3.3	Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.
	Element 6.3.4	The service builds relationships and engages with the local community.

Quality Area 6: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 157	Access for parents
	Related requirements	
6.1, 6.2	section 172	Offence to fail to display prescribed information
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	section 175	Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 73	Educational programs
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 74	Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 75 available	Information about the educational program to be kept
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 76 parents	Information about educational program to be given to
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 80	Weekly menu
6., 6.2, 6.3	regulation 86 illness	Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and
6.3	regulation 99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
6.3	regulation 102	Authorisation for excursions
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 111	Administrative space (centre-based services)
6.1	regulation 168(2)(k)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to enrolment and orientation
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 173	Prescribed information is to be displayed
6.1	regulation 177	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider
6.1	regulation 178	Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by family day care educator

	Related requirements	
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 181	Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 182	Confidentiality of records kept by family day care educator
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	regulation 183	Storage of records and other documents

Introduction

Learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when educators work in partnership with families and communities (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 11).

Effective educator–family relationships underpin quality education and care

Families are the primary influence in their children's lives and also have strong beliefs and values regarding the education and care of their children, and the experiences in which their children should be able to participate. Effective relationships between educators and families are fundamental to the quality of education and care that children receive.

All families are different. Children will have diverse understandings of 'family' and unique relationships with those who feature prominently in their lives. Nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators need to think broadly about how families can be defined. Educators and co-ordinators can nurture the important attachment relationship that exists between the family and child when they seek to involve all those who are important to families and children at the service. For example, they recognise the importance of extended families, kinship ties, carers and guardians in children's lives.

Families' feedback is essential to the program for their child

Effective collaboration with families regarding the education and care their children receive occurs when constructive strategies for ongoing two-way communication are established by the service. Families can provide invaluable information about children's interests, strengths and abilities as well as feedback that assists nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators to develop improvement plans that are practical and focused on meeting the needs of all children and their families.

Effective educator–community collaborations contribute to quality education and care

The child, the family and the service do not exist in isolation. They are all part of a much wider community. In most communities, the service is one of a range of services that support families with children. When nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators develop links, share information, and work in collaboration with other community organisations they are better able to achieve the best outcomes for children and families using the service.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of Quality Areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 6.1

Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.

About standard 6.1

Partnerships are based on effective communication, which builds the foundations of understanding about each other's expectations and attitudes, and builds on the strength of each other's knowledge (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 10).

What we aim to achieve with standard 6.1

Educators create a welcoming environment where the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for their children, are respected (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 13).

Being aware of and understanding diversity in school age care means taking into account the context of different family practices, values and beliefs (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 11).

How standard 6.1 contributes to quality education and care

Partnerships with families contribute to building a strong, inclusive community within the service. Continuous, honest and open two-way communication with educators assists families to feel connected with their children's experience in education and care and helps them develop trust and confidence in the service.

Shared decision making with families supports consistency between children's experiences at home and at the service, helping children to feel safe, secure and supported. It is also important to recognise that families, and parents in particular, are often busy, juggling a number of priorities, and that the service will need to consider a range of strategies to build and maintain relationships with them.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 6.1

- How do we think about families, and how broad is our thinking given the diversity of children at the service?

- How do we help all families to feel comfortable and welcome at the service?

- How do we facilitate communication with families who have specific or diverse communication needs?

- How can we find out if our communication strategies are reaching all families?

- What strategies are in place for information sharing between families, educators and co-ordinators, during orientation, settling in and on an ongoing basis?

- How can we listen to families and include their perspectives in the educational program?

- What role do families play in the service?

- How do we encourage families to contribute to service activities and to their child's experiences in ways that are meaningful for them?

- How do we share decision making with our families? What are we willing/unwilling to share decisions about?

Additional questions for services with babies and toddlers

How do we support and reassure families with babies and toddlers using an education and care service for the first time?

Additional questions for family day care services

How do the nominated supervisor and co-ordinators establish and maintain a partnership with families? How can they become more accessible?

Element 6.1.1

There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.1.1

The practices of educators and the relationships they form with children and families have a significant effect on children's involvement and success in learning. Children thrive when families, educators and the wider community (especially schools) work together in partnership to support children's wellbeing and learning (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 9; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 7).

Assessment guide for element 6.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- enrolling families being:
  - invited and encouraged to visit and become familiar with the service before their child starts
  - encouraged to talk with the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators about the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's learning
  - encouraged to share information about other child-related services accessed by the family
  - encouraged to share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs
- families being encouraged to:
  - stay with their child for as long as needed during the settling-in period
  - contact their child's primary educator during the day if they wish
- educators assisting families to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
- children who are distressed at separating from their family being held and comforted, or being closely observed and offered reassurance when they want this type of interaction
- educators and co-ordinators sharing information with families about how their child is settling in to the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators identify the individual education and care requirements of each child and their family
- the provisions made to support families during the enrolment and orientation process
- how the settling-in process is tailored to meet the needs of individual children and families

- how information is gathered from families to support continuity of care between home and the service.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss** how currently enrolled children are involved in the orientation of new children and their families.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss:**

- how the nominated supervisor and co-ordinators determine the best placement for a new child and how families are involved in the selection of an educator best able to meet their child's needs

- how co-ordinators work with educators and families to settle new children into the service

- the educator's approach to interviewing new families and settling their child into the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's enrolment and orientation procedures

- evidence that:

  - families seeking a place at the service are provided with easy-to-read information about how the service operates and what it can provide

  - the service has made preparation to communicate with families for whom literacy is an issue or for whom English is not a first language, even if this not currently required

  - families are able to share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs

  - families have easy access to the service's policies and procedures.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** documented information provided:

- to new families about the role of the co-ordination unit, including how co-ordinators:

  - monitor each child's placement

  - provide ongoing support for educators, families and children

  - assist families in finding an alternative placement when the child's educator is unavailable

- by the educator to new families about themselves and their family, and their philosophy, expectations and routines.

Element 6.1.2

Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.1.2

In genuine partnerships families and educators value each other's knowledge and roles, communicate freely and respectfully and engage in shared decision making (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 12; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 11).

Assessment guide for element 6.1.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- a culture of open communication, characterised by friendly conversations between families, the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members
- educators, co-ordinators and families sharing information about children's progress, relationships, interests and experiences both in and outside the service
- the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members:
  - creating a welcoming environment for all families using the service
  - communicating respectfully and sensitively with all families
  - responding to families' questions, concerns and requests in a prompt and courteous way
- educators encouraging families to:
  - talk about the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's learning
  - share their knowledge, skills and expertise and aspects of their family life and culture
  - contribute to plans for children's experiences and the documentation of children's learning.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **observe** co-ordination unit facilities that are well signposted, accessible and family friendly.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- processes in place to communicate effectively with all families

- opportunities provided for families to:

  - contribute to curriculum decision making

  - provide feedback about the experiences planned for their child

  - talk with the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators about their needs and the issues that concern or affect them

- how families, including extended family members, are able to contribute to the operation of the service and be involved in an advisory, consultative or decision-making role

- how families contribute to the:

  - service's self-assessment process and the development of the Quality Improvement Plan

  - development and review of the service's philosophy, policies and procedures

- how the service takes account of the suggestions and issues raised by families when planning for improvement.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- the nominated supervisor and co-ordinators maintain ongoing, two-way communication with families about children's placements and their progress in education and care

- co-ordinators:

  - involve families in a regular evaluation of their child's placement

  - support and involve families who have difficulty accessing the coordination unit due to their geographical location and/or lack of transport.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- information available to families and educators about families' participation in the service

- evidence that families, including extended family members, are invited and supported to participate in the program and events at the service

- evidence that:

  - families' contributions are recorded in the documentation of children's learning

  - families' knowledge of their child informs plans for children's experiences and learning

  - families are involved in advisory, consultative or decision-making roles

  - families have opportunities to contribute to the development and review of the service's statement of philosophy, policies and Quality Improvement Plan.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** evidence of regular communication between the coordination unit and families.

Element 6.1.3

> Current information about the service is available to families.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.1.3

Readily available information supports the partnership between families and the service and assists in developing a shared understanding of the detail of service operation. School age care educators are also sensitive to the conduit role they provide between families and schools (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 10).

Assessment guide for element 6.1.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- current information about the operation of the service displayed on noticeboards, charts or posters or through other appropriate media
- easy-to-read information about the service in the main languages used in the local community.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the provision of information to families
- how families are kept informed about the service's participation in the National Quality Framework and the service's progress towards meeting the *National Quality Standard*.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** how the nominated supervisor and co-ordinators:

- keep families informed about the operation of the family day care service
- advise families about policy changes.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- newsletters, communication books or other methods of communication with families
- information about the service's philosophy, policies and procedures being available in:
  - areas of the service regularly accessed by families
  - service documentation
- evidence that the outcome of policy changes is fully explained and communicated to families prior to implementation.

Standard 6.2

Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about childrearing are respected.

About standard 6.2

This standard acknowledges that the family is the most powerful influence on children's lives and that learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when educators work in partnership with families to ensure the experiences planned for children are meaningful.

It also recognises that each family's wellbeing and, in turn, their capacity to nurture and support their children, is influenced by the community in which they live and the material resources and social support available to them.

What we aim to achieve with standard 6.2

The service plays an active role in supporting families in their parenting role by becoming a reliable source of practical information about resources and services within the local community.

How standard 6.2 contributes to quality education and care

Factors inside and outside the family can impact on children's wellbeing. When the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators work in partnership with families they are able to share insights and perspectives about the child and engage in shared decision making. This is more likely to result in the development of a program that builds on children's strengths and abilities, and supports families in their parenting role.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 6.2

- How do we learn about children's families and those who are important in their lives?

- How does the information that families provide to the service contribute to decision making?

- What do we do when families make unusual requests or express concerns?

- How do we find out about the community resources that are relevant to our service and to the children in the service and their families?

- How do we support families to access community resources?

Element 6.2.1

The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child's learning and wellbeing.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.2.1

Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers. They honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions and child-rearing practices of families so they can better support children in their care (*Early Years Learning Framework,* pages 12–13; *Framework for School Age Care,* pages 11–12).

Assessment guide for element 6.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- daily information being exchanged with families at arrival and departure times
- families being informed promptly and sensitively of any incidents affecting their child
- educators, co-ordinators and families discussing children's individual needs and play preferences
- the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators demonstrating an understanding of each child, and each child's family and community context
- educators and co-ordinators sharing with families:
  - some of the interactions they have had with children
  - children's successes and achievements.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the strategies used by the service to facilitate shared decision making with families and to honour families' requests regarding children's education and care

- the opportunities provided for families to have private discussions with the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators

- how the service supports consistency between each child's home and the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** evidence that:

- information from families about children's backgrounds, experiences, likes, dislikes and home routines is regularly updated

- families have regular opportunities to:

  - provide feedback about children's experiences

  - make suggestions about service routines and activities

  - contribute to curriculum decision making and the documentation of children's learning.

Element 6.2.2

Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.2.2

Parenting young children is a complex and often stressful task for many families. Education and care services can support families in their parenting role by providing easily accessible and reliable information and helping them to make connections with other services in the local community.

Assessment guide for element 6.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators:

• providing information about community services and resources in conversations with families

• assisting families to locate, contact and/or access local community services.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

• examples of the community resources and support agencies in the local community that may be relevant to children and families at the service

• the processes used by the service to maintain current contact details for local support services

• how families are supported and encouraged to access information about local community services and resources.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** information about community services and resources available in:

• areas of the service regularly used by families

• service documentation.

Standard 6.3

The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

About standard 6.3

This standard recognises the connections between children, families and communities and the importance of reciprocal relationships and partnerships (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 14; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 13).

It involves finding out about the people and resources that are available in the community in which the service is located and where families live and work. It is about building connections between the education and care setting and the local community to support children's learning and wellbeing.

What we aim to achieve with standard 6.3

While working in partnerships with families, the service recognises that it is also important to see families in the context of community and wider society. The service has an active presence in the local community, seeks to strengthen community links and uses community resources to meet the needs of local families and their children.

How standard 6.3 contributes to quality education and care

Open communication and collaboration between the service, the family and other professionals within the community can be mutually beneficial. These partnerships:

- can provide everyone with a holistic understanding of the child, which contributes positively to the child's wellbeing and learning outcomes
- build the capacity of organisations involved in supporting children and families in the local community
- are more likely to result in information sharing, joint problem solving and the development of best practice models.

Supporting children and families to feel connected with their community also assists them to become aware of the similarities, differences and connections between people and to broaden their understanding of the world they live in.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 6.3

- How do the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators share information with each other to encourage continuity of care?

- How is communication managed with other educators and with families when there are shift changes, when positions are shared or when different educators care for a child throughout the day?

- How do our educators and co-ordinators share information with other services to support the child's learning and development?

- How do we support each child's transition from and to other education and care environments?

- How do we support each child's successful transition to formal schooling?

- In what ways do we work with schools and other community organisations to meet the needs of children and their families? How effective are these strategies and how can we improve them?

- How do we access support when we are working with children who have additional needs?

- What local resources and networks exist that might connect children and families with the community?

- What are the community's early childhood development strengths and where might additional support be needed? What data is available?

- What is happening in our local community that is relevant to our work with children and families? How can we best be involved?

Element 6.3.1

Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.3.1

By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in partnership with children, families, communities, and other services and agencies, educators continuously strive to find equitable and effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to experience a sense of personal worth and achieve learning outcomes (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 13; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 12).

Assessment guide for element 6.3.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the strategies used to develop links and relationships with other services and support agencies in the local community

- the processes involved in making or taking a referral to or from other services/agencies

- examples of collaboration with professionals working in other services/agencies to develop compatible support strategies for a child and their family.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- processes for making and accepting referrals from other services/agencies in the local community such as:
  - child protection agencies
  - early childhood intervention services
  - family support agencies
  - health professionals
- evidence that:
  - where required, families are referred and supported to make contact with appropriate support services/agencies
  - with the family's consent and when required, information about the child's experiences and achievements in the service is shared with other support services/agencies.

Element 6.3.2

Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.3.2

Transitions—including from home to the education and care setting, between settings and from early childhood settings to school—offer opportunities and challenges. Educators work with children, families, other professionals and the broader community to ensure successful transitions between settings and that children feel secure and confident (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 16; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 17).

Assessment guide for element 6.3.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children:
  - experiencing positive transitions between the service, home, preschool/kindergarten and/or school
  - being supported and appropriately supervised when being transported to or from the service by car, bus, train or tram or on foot.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **observe** educators on different shifts in centre-based services communicating with each other about:

- children's experiences earlier in the day
- information shared by families about their child.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the strategies in place to ensure:
  - children are supported when:
    - moving from one group to another
    - moving between settings
    - returning to the service after an absence

- excursions are positive and safe experiences for children
- the strategies and processes used to support:
  - children's positive transition to formal schooling
  - children with additional needs in their transition to school and to specialist services
- how road safety education and any active transport initiatives are incorporated into the program.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- information from families about their child's attendance/non-attendance at the service is communicated to educators responsible for transitioning children between school and the service
- information is shared between educators working in the before-school and after-school components of the service
- the service supports and manages children's attendance at extracurricular and sporting activities.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** processes in place to ensure families are able to access alternative care if their usual educator is unavailable.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- examples of plans and statements to assist children in making a positive transition from the service to formal schooling (including specialist schools)
- written procedures for releasing children from the service and ensuring that they are released only to authorised nominees
- records of children's arrivals and departures, with the signature of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record or the person collecting the child
- in relation to excursions, written:
  - evidence of risk assessments that were undertaken and provided to families prior to conducting excursions
  - evidence of detailed information provided to families regarding excursions including the destination, mode of transport, educator-to-child ratio and number of adults in attendance
  - written authorisation for children to be taken outside the service's premises.

Additional guidance for services with babies and toddlers

Assessors may **sight** evidence that in centre-based services shifts are planned to maximise continuity of care for babies and toddlers.

Additional guidance for services with school age children

Assessors may **sight** documented procedures for transitioning school age children between school and the service, including a procedure that addresses enrolled children who have not arrived at the service.

Element 6.3.3

Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.3.3

Educators recognise and respond to barriers to children achieving educational success. In response they challenge practices that contribute to inequities and make curriculum decisions that promote inclusion and participation by all children *(Early Years Learning Framework,* page 12).

Partnerships also involve children with additional needs, educators, families and support professionals working together to explore the potential in everyday events, routines and play experiences (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 11).

Assessment guide for element 6.3.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- children with additional needs:
  - demonstrating a sense of belonging and comfort in the service environment
  - demonstrating trust and confidence in educators and staff members
  - participating and engaging in group experiences
- programs for individual children devised by other professionals/therapists informing the program offered at the service
- educators working with families, other professionals, therapists or specialists to ensure the environment and routines are adapted appropriately to facilitate the inclusion of children with additional needs
- images, books and resources that reflect children and people with disabilities as active participants in the community.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **observe** educators working with families, other professionals, therapists or specialists to ensure the environment, routines and/or staffing arrangements are adapted appropriately to facilitate the inclusion of children with additional needs.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** how:

- the service:
  - demonstrates its commitment to the full participation of children with additional needs
  - ensures that educators and co-ordinators have the skills and expertise necessary to support the inclusion of children with additional health or developmental needs
  - works with inclusion and support agencies to include children with additional needs
- plans are developed to support the inclusion of children with additional needs.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- evidence:
  - that the service accepts and actively seeks to build their capacity to respond to children with specific needs
  - of professional development to support ongoing responsiveness to children with additional needs
  - that the service philosophy, policies and procedures demonstrate a commitment to full participation of children with additional needs
  - of regular meetings and/or ongoing communication between families, supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and other agencies or specialists working with the child
- examples of individual support plans for children with additional needs.

Element 6.3.4

> The service builds relationships and engages with the local community.

What we aim to achieve with element 6.3.4

Experiences of relationships and participation in communities contribute to children's 'belonging, being and becoming'. Engaging with the community strengthens children's interest and skills in being and becoming active contributors to their world (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 25).

School age children are increasingly involved in a wide range of communities. As they participate in these communities they develop their capacity for independence and self-direction (*Framework for School Age Care,* page 25).

Assessment guide for element 6.3.4

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- an environment that reflects the lives of the children and families using the service and the cultural diversity of the broader community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- images, books and resources that provide a balanced view of contemporary Australians
- the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members responding positively to the differences in families' home lives and lifestyle choices.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service:
  - promotes child-friendly communities and advocates for universal access to a range of high-quality early childhood and school age care programs for all children
  - builds connections between the service and the local community
  - strengthens children's connection with and understanding of their community
- examples of community members coming into the service and the service's participation in the local community

- how the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators:

  - raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and local elders

  - demonstrate respect for community protocols

- how children are supported to develop an understanding of their social and cultural heritage.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** evidence that:

- the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators liaise with other children's services, local businesses, schools, health services and organisations working with families and children in the local area

- members of the local community are invited into the service to contribute to the program

- children have opportunities to learn about and contribute to the community in which the service is located.

Quality Area 7: Leadership and service management

This quality area of the *National Quality Standard* focuses on effective leadership and management of the service that contributes to quality environments for children's learning and development.

Well-documented policies and procedures, well-maintained records, shared values, clear direction and reflective practices enable the service to function as a learning community.

An ongoing cycle of planning and review, including engagement with families, creates the climate for continuous improvement.

Quality Area 7: Standards and elements

Standard 7.1	Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.	
	Element 7.1.1	Appropriate governance arrangements are in place to manage the service.
	Element 7.1.2	The induction of educators, co-ordinators and staff members, including relief educators, is comprehensive.
	Element 7.1.3	Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service.
	Element 7.1.4	Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or co-ordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.
	Element 7.1.5	Adults working with children and those engaged in management of the service or residing on the premises are fit and proper.
Standard 7.2	There is a commitment to continuous improvement.	
	Element 7.2.1	A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operations.
	Element 7.2.2	The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement.
	Element 7.2.3	An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place.

Standard 7.3	Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.	
	Element 7.3.1	Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.
	Element 7.3.2	Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service.
	Element 7.3.3	The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of serious incidents and of any complaints which allege a breach of legislation.
	Element 7.3.4	Processes are in place to ensure that all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner.
	Element 7.3.5	Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly.

Quality Area 7: Related sections of the National Law and National Regulations

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
7.1.5	section 12	Applicant must be fit and proper person (provider approvals)
7.1.5	section 13	Matters to be taken into account in assessing whether fit and proper person (provider approvals)
7.1.5	section 21	Reassessment of fitness and propriety (provider approvals)
7.1.5	section 109	Matters to be taken into account in assessing whether fit and proper person
7.3.1	regulations 158–162	Attendance and enrolment records
7.1.5	regulation 163	Residents at family day care residence and family day care educator assistants to be fit and proper persons
7.1.5	regulation 164	Requirement for notice of new persons at residence
7.3.1	regulation 167	Record of service's compliance
7.1.1, 7.3.1, 7.3.4, 7.3.5	regulations 168–172	Policies and procedures
7.3.1	regulations 173–176	Display and reporting of prescribed information
7.3.1	regulations 177–180	Prescribed records

Standard/element	National Law (section) and National Regulations (regulation)	
7.1.1	regulations 181–184	Confidentiality and storage of records

	Related requirements	
7.1.5	regulation 14	Application for provider approval by individual
7.1.5	regulation 15	Application for provider approval by person other than an individual
7.1.5	regulation 16	Matters relating to criminal history
7.2.3	regulation 31	Condition on service approval—quality improvement plan
7.1.5	regulation 46	Application for supervisor certificate
7.2.1, 7.2.3	regulations 55– 56	Quality improvement plans

Introduction

Effective leaders of education and care services are able to set direction and establish values for the service that reflect its context and professionalism.

Effective leadership contributes to a positive organisational culture

Effective leadership creates a positive organisational culture that values openness and trust, where people are motivated to ask questions, debate issues and contribute to each other's ongoing learning and inquiry.

Leaders must fully understand the education and care context

In order to do this well, leaders need in-depth content knowledge as well as a deep understanding and appreciation of children's learning and development. They are clear about the purpose of education and care services and have the skills to effectively communicate their goals and expectations.

Good leaders empower others

Leadership is a relationship between people and the best leaders are those who are able to empower others. They listen to differing views, recognise and address areas of potential conflict, and engage and manage teams through change processes.

Good leaders adapt to change and drive continuous improvement

The effective management of education and care services requires the constant review of a changing environment to enable continuous improvement. Managing for quality requires a wide range of skills and a thorough understanding of the education and care system, including standards and effective practice. Approved providers and service leaders must work in partnership to meet the expectations of a wide range of stakeholders.

Good leaders establish skilled workforces

To achieve the best outcomes for children and families, the approved provider needs to provide a skilled and engaged workforce, effective budgeting and financial accounting processes, sound administrative systems and a safe and healthy learning environment for children.

Further reading

References to reading that can enhance understanding of Quality Areas can be found at the end of this document.

Standard 7.1

Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community.

About standard 7.1

Effective leadership enables the establishment and maintenance of a professional workplace in which educators, co-ordinators and staff members can communicate openly, participate in respectful debate and take steps to further their professional learning (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 13; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 12).

What we aim to achieve with standard 7.1

This standard aims to promote leadership within an approved service. A positive organisational culture is an environment of trust and openness where management and staff members are motivated to continuously improve the service for the benefit of children and their families.

A lively culture of professional enquiry is established when educators, co-ordinators and staff members are encouraged to build their professional knowledge, reflect on their practice and generate new ideas.

In a climate that values professional learning, issues relating to curriculum quality, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised and debated (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, page 11).

How standard 7.1 contributes to quality education and care

Building a positive culture and professional learning community involves:

- continuously questioning how to improve teaching methods

- strengthening relationships with children and families

- establishing high expectations of:

  - the quality of education and care provided by nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators

  - children's learning.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 7.1

- How is the leadership in our service contributing to the development of a positive organisational culture?

- How can we develop the skills and capacity of team members in a way that leads to improved shared leadership?

- How are we creating opportunities for professional conversations?

- How can we share the collective knowledge of the team?

- What do we know about the rate of and reasons for turnover of educators, co-ordinators and staff members at this service?

- How can we structure our staffing arrangements to improve continuity for children?

Element 7.1.1

Appropriate governance arrangements are in place to manage the service.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.1

Governance arrangements for services are required to reflect the appropriate legal status and authority to hold a provider approval and service approval.

Assessment guide for element 7.1.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** stakeholder engagement in management and decision-making processes at the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's policy on governance and management, which includes confidentiality of records
- evidence of the implementation of appropriate governance arrangements at the service, which may include records of decisions by the governing authority
- information displayed as required under the *National Regulations*
- information provided to parents about relevant governance structures, which may include the name of the approved provider and the person to contact to make a complaint.

Element 7.1.2

> The induction of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is comprehensive.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.2

Induction is a key process in creating and maintaining a positive and professional culture. Each individual who begins work at the service should have a clear understanding of their role and the expectations for their performance, and should be given the opportunity to engage with the philosophy and context that underpin the operation of the service at the earliest possible time.

Assessment guide for element 7.1.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how responsibilities and expectations are communicated to each educator, co-ordinator and staff member

- educators' and co-ordinators' understanding of:

  - the *National Law* and *National Regulations*

  - the *National Quality Standard*

  - the *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Framework for School Age Care* or any other approved learning framework

  - the service's statement of philosophy

- the service's code of conduct/code of ethics

- with any new educators, co-ordinators and staff members (employed within the past six months) their level of understanding of the philosophy of the service and the context in which it operates

- with educators, co-ordinators and staff members their satisfaction with the service's induction process

- induction processes for relief staff members.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** the service's documented induction procedure and information provided to educators, co-ordinators, staff members or volunteers.

Element 7.1.3

Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.3

Continuity of educators, co-ordinators, practice and processes plays a significant role in promoting children's learning and development. A service that values and proactively supports continuity is well placed to attract and retain educators and co-ordinators and to benefit children and families.

Assessment guide for element 7.1.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- opportunities to build staff cohesion and pride in the service

- educators' and co-ordinators' understanding of the importance of educator continuity for children's learning and wellbeing

- how the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators set individual performance and learning goals

- the extent to which performance development processes provide educators and co-ordinators with targeted feedback that supports continuity.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- rosters and staffing arrangements that reflect the importance of educator continuity on a day-to-day basis

- exit data and documentation that provides information about the reasons for educators and co-ordinators leaving the service.

Element 7.1.4

Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or co-ordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.4

Effective curriculum development requires ambitious goals and clarity of purpose. It requires attending to the principles, practice and outcomes of the approved learning framework. The role of the educational leader is to work with educators to provide curriculum direction and to ensure children achieve the outcomes of the approved learning framework.

Assessment guide for element 7.1.4

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** the educational leader working with other educators and co-ordinators to observe, support and extend children's learning.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- opportunities available for discussion and reflective practice
- educators' and co-ordinators' expectations for their teaching and for children's learning
- how the educational leader promotes children's learning and development to families
- what strategies and processes the educational leader uses to lead the development of the curriculum and set goals for teaching and learning
- in long day care and family day care services, arrangements for the delivery of or families' access to a preschool program for children in the year prior to full-time school.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- evidence of:
  - designation of the educational leader in the staff record
  - ongoing planning and evaluation that centres on children's learning and development
  - a curriculum at the service
  - professional discussion and interrogation of research and new ideas
- documented goals for teaching and learning that demonstrate a deep understanding of children's development and learning.

Element 7.1.5

> Adults working with children and those engaged in management of the service or residing on the premises are fit and proper.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.1.5

Fitness and propriety describes a person's suitability to fulfil the particular role which, in this case, is involvement in the operation of an education and care service. Assessment of the approved provider and any certified supervisor appointed as the nominated supervisor of a service is undertaken prior to granting any approval. The approved provider and nominated supervisor must remain fit and proper for the service to operate under their management.

Adults who reside in family day care educators' homes when the education and care service is provided to children must be assessed as and remain fit and proper for the service to operate.

Checking records that relate to the fitness and propriety of educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members assists in safeguarding children against risks to their safety and wellbeing.

Assessment guide for element 7.1.5

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members their understanding of their responsibilities under the relevant child protection legislation.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss** with the nominated supervisor the service's approach to ensuring the fitness and propriety of adults who reside in educators' homes when the education and care service is provided to children.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** evidence:

- in the staff record of sighting 'working with children' checks
- of required safety screening clearance for educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members prior to engagement at the service.

Standard 7.2

> There is a commitment to continuous improvement.

About standard 7.2

Establishing and maintaining a culture of ongoing reflection and self-review offers challenge, provides motivation and supports positive levels of educator, co-ordinator and staff member satisfaction (*Early Years Learning Framework,* page 13; *Framework for School Age Care,* page 12).

What we aim to achieve with standard 7.2

A cohesive approach to continuous improvement is achieved when there:

- is a shared understanding of the principles that inform the service

- are processes in place for:

  - reviewing the performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members

  - identifying the extent to which the service meets or exceeds the *National Quality Standard*.

How standard 7.2 contributes to quality education and care

Effective evaluation and self-review enables a service to continuously improve their policies, procedures and practices. This approach enables the nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators to improve their practice, which contributes directly to improved learning outcomes for children.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 7.2

- To what extent does our statement of philosophy reflect a commitment to continuous improvement?

- How are resources targeted to support improvement plans?

- How does the evidence/data we collect inform our planning cycle? Do we need additional or different data?

- How do we address complaints?

- What evaluation strategies and processes do we undertake with parents and children?

- How and when are our policies and procedures reviewed?

- How do our performance management processes support continuous improvement?

Element 7.2.1

A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service's operations.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.2.1

A written statement of philosophy outlines the principles under which the service operates. This philosophy reflects the principles of the *National Law,* the *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Framework for School Age Care* (or other approved learning frameworks).

It underpins the decisions, policies and daily practices of the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members and assists in planning, implementing and evaluating quality experiences for children.

It reflects a shared understanding of the role of the service with children, families and the community.

Assessment guide for element 7.2.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe**:

- the availability of the service's statement of philosophy to educators, co-ordinators, staff members and families

- the extent to which practices undertaken and decisions made by educators, co-ordinators and staff members are informed by the service's statement of philosophy.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- with the nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators and staff members how a shared understanding of the service's statement of philosophy underpins everyday practice and decision making

- how families are encouraged to be meaningfully involved in the development and review of the service's statement of philosophy

- examples of how the statement of philosophy is used to set directions, build commitment and align actions with the service's goals and outcomes.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's statement of philosophy

- evidence that the service's statement of philosophy is readily available and included in the induction process for all staff members and in the enrolment and orientation process for families.

Element 7.2.2

> The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.2.2

The approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, staff members, families and children benefit when performance plans, under a regular cycle of review, are in place.

This planning and review ensures that knowledge, skills and practices are current and areas requiring further development are addressed.

Assessment guide for element 7.2.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** the performance of each educator, co-ordinator and staff member supported by the educational leader and/or nominated supervisor.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service's performance review cycle contributes to planning for learning and further development

- how the effort, contribution and achievement of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is acknowledged and celebrated

- processes to ensure each educator, co-ordinator and staff member receives ongoing feedback about their performance

- how performance processes identify strengths and areas for development, and how these are addressed.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service manages situations where the educator's family members impact on the quality of education and care being provided

- the systems in place that ensure educators' performance is monitored where distance precludes regular home visits

- opportunities for educators to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the support provided by the coordination unit.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- documented position descriptions for educators, co-ordinators and staff members that:
  - clearly outline the responsibilities of the position
  - clearly explain the approved provider's expectations
  - are used as the basis for monitoring and reviewing educators', co-ordinators' and staff members' performance

- evidence of participation by educators, co-ordinators and staff members in professional development activities to update their knowledge and skills

- evidence that performance reviews for all educators, co-ordinators and staff members are conducted regularly and include a process for reviewing and updating professional development plans based on an evaluation of their professional strengths, interests and goals.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight**:

- home visit records

- policies and procedures about conducting visits to educators' homes.

Element 7.2.3

An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.2.3

Effective services regularly monitor and review their performance to guide their planning.

Ongoing self-review that results in informed judgment about performance against the *National Quality Standard* is fundamental to an effective cycle of improvement.

This self-review will include:

- how the service is working with the *Early Years Learning Framework* and/or the *Framework for School Age Care* (or other approved learning frameworks)

- the outcomes for children included in these frameworks.

Assessment guide for element 7.2.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** service practices and program delivery that match the service's self-assessment, which is reflected in its Quality Improvement Plan.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- how the service:

  - aligns program delivery with quality improvement planning

  - collects and uses information or data from a range of sources to inform the process of planning and review

  - uses information about children's learning and development based on reflection and documentation to inform and evaluate programs and to support children in achieving outcomes

- how approved providers, nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and staff members engage in reflection and refinement of strategies to create and sustain improvements

- processes for planning and review of the service's Quality Improvement Plan, at least annually.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- the service's Quality Improvement Plan

- evidence that the statement of philosophy and the Quality Improvement Plan are reviewed in consultation with staff and families

- the documented process for planning and review against the *National Quality Standard*

- systems for collecting information from families, children, educators, co-ordinators and staff members about their perceptions of the service.

Standard 7.3

Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.

About standard 7.3

Effective administration and records management systems and documented policies and procedures contribute to a service environment where the primary focus can be on delivering quality education and care for children and establishing productive partnerships with families.

What we aim to achieve with standard 7.3

The policies and processes necessary for the effective administration and management of the service exist, including compliance with legal requirements.

How standard 7.3 contributes to quality education and care

The efficiency and effectiveness of internal systems have a direct impact on the amount of time that educators, co-ordinators and staff members can spend in planning, delivery and evaluation of the program for children and families.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for standard 7.3

- What are the strengths of our management and administration systems that contribute to delivering a quality service for children and their families?

- Can we improve the efficiency of our systems and processes?

- Does our management of confidential information meet requirements?

Element 7.3.1

Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.3.1

Maintaining the confidentiality and currency of information provided by families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members or other stakeholders:

- is an indicator of the level of professionalism that exists within the service
- builds families' confidence in the service's records management practices.

Assessment guide for element 7.3.1

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** the facilities for storage of confidential records that are at the service or are immediately accessible by the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss** the:

- processes in place at the service for reviewing and updating records and information on a regular basis
- service's practice in relation to the retention and disposal of records.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight:**

- the following records on hand and kept for the required length of time:
  - evidence of current public liability insurance (this does not apply if the insurance is provided by a state or territory government)
  - a Quality Improvement Plan
  - child assessments
  - an incident, injury, trauma and illness record
  - a medication record
  - the child attendance record
  - the child enrolment record
  - the record of the death of a child while being educated and cared for by the service
  - a record of the service's compliance history
  - a record of the responsible person in day-to-day charge, which includes certified supervisors placed in day-to-day charge
- evidence that records are stored appropriately to protect confidentiality
- that the following prescribed information is displayed:
  - provider approval, including:
    - the approved provider name
    - the provider's approval number
    - any conditions relating to the provider approval
  - service approval, including:
    - the name of the approved service
    - the service approval number
    - any conditions relating to the service approval
  - nominated supervisor, including:
    - the name of the nominated supervisor
    - if the nominated supervisor belongs to a class under regulation 49

- service rating, including the:
  - current ratings for each quality area under the National Quality Framework
  - overall rating of the service
- service or temporary waivers, including:
  - the elements of the *National Quality Standard* and/or *National Regulations* that have been waived
  - the duration of the waiver
  - whether the waiver is a service or a temporary waiver
- service operation, including the:
  - opening days and hours
  - name and phone number of the responsible person in charge at any given time
  - name and phone number of the person who can be contacted for a complaint
  - name of the educational leader
  - contact details of the Regulatory Authority
- health and safety, including a notice:
  - stating that a child at risk of anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service, if applicable
  - of an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, if applicable.

Additional guidance for centre-based services

Assessors may **sight** the following records on hand and kept for the required length of time:

- the staff record
- the record of educators working directly with children
- the record of volunteers and students.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** the following records on hand and kept for the required length of time:

- assessment of family day care residences and approved family day care venues
- record of family day care staff (including educators, co-ordinators and assistants)
- record of visitors to family day care residences or approved family day care venues.

Element 7.3.2

> Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.3.2

Approved providers, educators, co-ordinators and staff members have a shared responsibility to ensure the adequacy of systems needed to maintain the effective operation of the service.

Approved providers are required to nominate a supervisor (the 'nominated supervisor') to:

- ensure that the service is operated in compliance with the *National Law,* the *National Regulations* and the *National Quality Standard*

- assist with communication between the approved provider and the Regulatory Authority.

Assessment guide for element 7.3.2

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** the availability of information technology for administration, planning, evaluation and communication purposes, including for communication with families.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the role of the nominated supervisor in the service

- procedures that apply to educators, co-ordinators and staff members when requesting specific resources to support program delivery

- human resource management procedures including recruitment and selection, leave, rosters and access to training and development

- opportunities for nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and staff members to comment on and improve the effectiveness of systems within the service.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** examples of internal communications, such as meeting minutes, distribution of notices and staff bulletins.

Element 7.3.3

The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of serious incidents and of any complaints which allege a breach of legislation.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.3.3

Responsibility for notifying the Regulatory Authority of any significant changes to the operation of the service rests with the approved provider.

The Regulatory Authority must be kept informed of any complaints that have the capacity to impact on the provider approval or service approval. The Regulatory Authority must also be informed of any serious incidents that occur at the service.

Assessment guide for element 7.3.3

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** information displayed in staff areas about the required notifications.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the process the service has in place for informing the Regulatory Authority about relevant changes

- the service's processes for notifying the Regulatory Authority of required matters

- with the nominated supervisor, examples of the types of incidents they consider to be serious, which would require notification to the Regulatory Authority.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** records:

- of changes notified to the Regulatory Authority

- held by the Regulatory Authority in relation to complaints against the service that allege a breach of legislation or a serious incident.

Element 7.3.4

> Processes are in place to ensure that all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.3.4

An effective complaints and grievance management system confirms to educators, co-ordinators, staff members, families and the community that complaints and grievances are taken seriously and investigated promptly and thoroughly.

Assessment guide for element 7.3.4

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the management of any complaints or grievances lodged with the service during the most recent assessment cycle

- how educators, nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and staff members listen to, document and follow up issues raised by children.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight**:

- a documented grievance and complaints management procedure

- evidence that grievances and complaints are investigated and documented in a timely manner

- evidence that complaints lead to amendments to policies and procedures as required

- information for families on how complaints and grievances are made and how they are managed by the service.

Element 7.3.5

Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly.

What we aim to achieve with element 7.3.5

Well-documented, accessible information that is regularly reviewed in collaboration with families supports a shared understanding of a service's practices.

Assessment guide for element 7.3.5

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **observe** that the service's practices are consistent with documented policies and procedures.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **discuss**:

- the provision of information about the service's policies and practices to parents/families prior to the child's attendance at the service

- the ways in which families are encouraged to contribute to the development and review of policies

- how families are explicitly informed of policy changes.

Guidance for children of all ages and all service types

Assessors may **sight** the following required policies and procedures available at the service, which are also available to families:

- health and safety policies and procedures, including:

  - delivery and collection of children

  - excursions

  - refusal of authorisation for a child to leave the service

  - dealing with infectious disease

  - dealing with medical conditions

  - emergency and evacuation

  - health and safety, which covers:

    - nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements

  – sun protection

  – water safety

  – the administration of first aid

  • incident, injury, trauma and illness

  • a child-safe environment

• staffing policies and procedures, including:

  • a code of conduct

  • determining the responsible person present

  • the participation of volunteers and students

• relationships with children policies and procedures, including interactions with children

• service management policies and procedures, including:

  • governance and management of the service, and confidentiality of records

  • enrolment and orientation

  • payment of fees

  • dealing with complaints.

Additional guidance for family day care services

Assessors may **sight** the following required policies and procedures available at the family day care service, which are also available to families:

• the assessment, approval and reassessment of approved family day care residences and family day care venues

• the engagement or registration of family day care educators

• keeping a register of family day care educators

• monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators

• fit and proper assessment of family day care educators and assistants and adults residing at family day care residences

• visitors to family day care residences and venues

• provision of information, assistance and training to family day care educators

• engagement and registration of family day care educator assistants.

Further reading

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Glossary

This glossary explains key terms used in this guide.

Additional needs is the term used for children who require or will benefit from specific considerations or adaptations and who:

- are Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders

- are recent arrivals in Australia

- have a culturally and linguistically diverse background

- live in isolated geographic locations

- are experiencing difficult family circumstances or stress

- are at risk of abuse or neglect

- are experiencing language and communication difficulties

- have a diagnosed disability—physical, sensory, intellectual or autism spectrum disorder

- have a medical or health condition

- demonstrate challenging behaviours and behavioural or psychological disorders

- have developmental delays

- have learning difficulties

- are gifted or have special talents

- have other extra support needs.

It is important to note that:

additional needs arise from different causes, and that causes require different responses any child may have additional needs from time to time.

Approved learning framework means a learning framework approved by the Ministerial Council (*National Law).*

Approved provider means a person who holds a provider approval (*National Law*).

Authorised nominee, in relation to a child, means a person who has been given permission by a parent or family member of the child to collect the child from the education and care service or the family day care educator (*National Law*).

Centre-based service means an education and care service other than a family day care service (*National Regulations*).

Certified supervisor means a person who holds a supervisor certificate (*National Law*).

Children refers to each baby, toddler, three to five year old and school age child and means children as individuals and as members of a group in the education and care setting, unless otherwise stated. It is inclusive of children from all social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and of their learning styles, abilities, disabilities, gender, family circumstances and geographic locations (adapted from *the Early Years Learning Framework*, page 45.)

Co-ordinator refers to a family day care co-ordinator and means a person employed or engaged by an approved provider of a family day care service to monitor and support the family day care educators who are part of the service (*National Law*).

Critical reflection describes reflective practices that focus on implications for equity and social justice (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 45).

Curriculum means all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 45; adapted from Te Whariki).

Each child is used in the *National Quality Standard* when an individualised approach is warranted and educators are required to modify their response to meet the needs of an individual child. An example is 'each child's current knowledge, ideas, culture and interests provide the foundation for the program'.

Educational leader is the person the approved provider of an education and care service designates in writing to be a suitably qualified and experienced educator, co-ordinator or other individual to lead the development and implementation of educational programs in the service (*National Regulations*).

Educator means an individual who provides education and care for children as part of an education and care service (*National Law*).

Every child is used in the *National Quality Standard* when it is intended to suggest an inclusive approach. It implies that all children have the same opportunity regardless of their age, gender, background or abilities. An example is 'every child is supported to participate in the program'.

Family day care service means an education and care service that is delivered through the use of two or more educators to provide education and care for children in residences, whether or not the service also provides education and care to children at a place other than a residence (*National Law*).

Family day care educator assistant means a person engaged by or registered with a family day care service to assist family day care educators (*National Regulations*).

Family member, in relation to a child, means:

- a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or cousin of the child, whether of the whole blood or half blood and whether that relationship arises by marriage (including a *de facto* relationship) or by adoption or otherwise, or

- a relative of the child according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition or

- a person with whom the child resides in a family-like relationship or

- a person who is recognised in the child's community as having a familial role in respect of the child (*National Law*).

Nominated supervisor, in relation to an education and care service, means a person who:

- is a certified supervisor

- is nominated by the approved provider of the service to be the nominated supervisor of that service

- has consented to that nomination (*National Law*).

Parent, in relation to a child, includes:

- a guardian of the child

- a person who has parental responsibility for the child under a decision or order of a court (*National Law*).

Preschool program means an early childhood educational program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher to children in the year that is two years before grade 1 of school (*National Law*).

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves engaging with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice (*Early Years Learning Framework*, page 13).

Service approval:

- means a service approval granted and amended under Part 3 of the *National Law* or this Law as applying in another participating jurisdiction

- includes a service approval as amended under this Law or this Law as applying in another participating jurisdiction

- does not include a service approval that has been cancelled (*National Law*).

Staff member, in relation to an education and care service, means any individual (other than the nominated supervisor or a volunteer) employed, appointed or engaged to work in or as part of an education and care service, whether as a family day care co-ordinator, educator or otherwise (*National Law*).

Statement of philosophy is a statement the approved provider of an education and care service must ensure is in place. It is designed to guide the operation of the service and must be available to the staff members of the service and parents of children attending the service (*National Regulations*).

Transitions refers to the process of moving between home and the education and care setting, between a range of different education and care services or from the education and care service to full-time school (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 46.)