



The right professional development

In the past, choosing professional development for staff meant navigating your way through a variety of workshop calendars filled with anything from a two-hour workshop for 'Orff Music for Babies', to 'Creative Ideas with Elastic'! But, in 2008, approaches are different.

Every service deserves to have a highly motivated team committed to the care and education of children, and maintaining family and community relationships. Services also need leaders who can find new solutions to current issues and future challenges and, because of this, professional development and support is important for all staff. Professional development is a series of learning opportunities matched with staff strengths and the needs and interests of the children and families accessing the centre. Discovering staff development needs can be exciting and stimulating and choosing the right support and development for those needs and strengths offers opportunities to think creatively about getting it right for the organisation.

Finding out

As a director, co-ordinator or manager, the first question to ask is: 'How will our team learn?'. Adults have different styles of learning and, for maximum benefit, there needs to be a match with the learning opportunities offered. The first step is to find out the best way for your staff to acquire new knowledge.

A good starting point is a set of simple questions:

- Do you enjoy listening to people talk about topics and ideas?
- Do you need to discuss ideas to understand them?
- Do you learn by watching someone else working with the children?
- Do you enjoy reading? Are you excited by the ideas you read about in early childhood publications?
- Do you enjoy a formal or more casual approach to learning?
- Do you need to have constant change and be exposed to new ideas to keep up your motivation?

These questions can be asked during a group meeting or during an individual consultation. Other approaches could include asking staff to complete surveys or questionnaires. To find out more about learning styles, strengths and approaches, go to:

- www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu
- www.literacyworks.org/mi/assessment/findyourstrengths.html

Paula Jorde Bloom's work, *Blueprint for action: Achieving centre-based change through staff development* (2nd ed.), also offers guidance around assessing needs. (Available through www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

Observation of the team at work will provide additional information about the people in the team.

Where to from here?

Following a period of reflection and analysis, staff teams can work together to plan learning opportunities. Some basic principles form the foundation for planning:

- Needs and strengths of individuals within staff teams are unique.
- Broad thinking around learning opportunities is important. Keeping a narrow focus will limit the development of staff.
- Putting staff in charge of their own professional development. With guidance, staff will decide their own direction and make choices that will benefit the organisation.
- If you are a director, co-ordinator or manager, give attention to your own professional development. Ask for support from other team members.

Matching strengths and needs with professional development will promote an atmosphere beneficial to learning. Staff will develop a community spirit as a result of their learning experiences, sharing ideas and supporting each other. Professional development is the opportunity to make your centre a great place for children, and to foster commitment and motivation among staff and families.

This is the first in a series of articles about professional development. The next edition of Central will feature an article about choosing professional development to match strengths and needs of staff members.

Please look out for the new Children's Services Central Training Calendar. The Calendar shows the professional development opportunities that Children's Services Central will be offering in the first half of next year. The Calendar will reach services in January/February 2009. A version will be online in late December 2008 on our website at:
www.cscentral.org.au



★ ROUNDUP

CCMS transition dates

So far, over 850 services have made the transition to the Child Care Management System (CCMS) in NSW. The remaining NSW services are expected to make the transition in February and March 2009, ahead of the 1 July 2009 deadline.

The proposed transition schedule is as follows:

- Sydney: February 2009
- Central Coast and North Coast: early March 2009
- Rest of NSW: late March 2009

Services should receive their CCMS Information Packs and first transition letter approximately eight weeks prior to the proposed transition date.

CCMS Survey

Children's Services Central would like to thank the 115 services who have made the transition to CCMS and completed the Children's Services Central Survey on their transition experiences.

The results of the Survey showed that services were almost evenly split between those services that had an easy transition and those that have found it to be a more complex process.

Specific findings include:

- The majority of services found that a lot of additional administration time was needed to implement CCMS – two-thirds of services considered that it took up too much time to implement the new system and one third of services considered that the time taken was within their expectations.
- Around 36 per cent of services rated their changeover to CCMS as 'complicated' and a further 20 per cent of these rated it as 'traumatic'. Thirty-one per cent rated it as 'uncomplicated' or 'fairly easy' and 13 per cent rated the experience as 'neutral'.
- Seventy-two per cent of services had not experienced major cashflow problems.
- A lot of services reported difficulties obtaining quick answers to their questions about CCMS. Services complained of long delays getting onto the CCMS

Children's Services Central, the Professional Support Co-ordinator for Children's Services in NSW, is a program of The Alliance of Children's Services. The Australian Government funds the Professional Support Co-ordinator initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

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Helpline; long delays in the Helpline returning their calls; and being shuttled between the Helpline, their software suppliers and the Family Assistance Office for answers.

- Many services are struggling with billing of families and advising them about outstanding fees at any point in time especially when families change attendance patterns.

Slight differences in the experiences of different service types were apparent.

- Less family day care schemes found that the changeover was complicated or traumatic (only 43 per cent). Ninety-three per cent of family day care services were happy with their software supplier's support processes and only 50 per cent of family day care services experienced major billing problems.
- Out-of-school care services reported a higher rate of billing issues (73 per cent) and slightly more services (60 per cent) rated their change over as 'complicated' or 'traumatic'.
- Out-of-school care services found the need to create separate enrolments for before school care and after school care as onerous.
- Long day care services were most likely to nominate billing as an issue (84 per cent). This was slightly higher for community-based services than privately-owned services.
- 76 per cent of private long day care services rated the transition as 'complicated' or 'traumatic'. 71 per cent of private long day care services and 57 per cent of community-based long day care services rated the extra administration time required as 'excessive' or 'a lot'.

Most of the services who responded to the Survey had upgraded from a previous version of their CCMS software, rather than transferring to a new CCMS software supplier.

- Services using Harmony software appear to be happier with their software than other users.

Children's Services Central is working on developing supports that we can offer services yet to make the transition to CCMS. Many great suggestions were received from services relating to the supports they thought would be appropriate. For more information about the Survey, go to:

www.cscentral.org.au

Children's Services Central engaging with Indigenous communities

Children's Services Central is pleased to announce that we will undertake a project with the Indigenous Professional Support Unit NSW and ACT in response to a request by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The project is designed to:

- promote practices that facilitate cultural inclusion in Australian Government Approved children's services in specific areas of NSW;
- act as a stimulant to increasing the number of Indigenous children attending children's services in these areas; and
- act as a pilot project for the development of a conceptual model of engagement.

The project aims to ascertain the depth of knowledge within mainstream services regarding Indigenous culture and the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

children and families.

Professional development opportunities will aim to enhance knowledge and increase engagement of Indigenous families in mainstream services and assist these services throughout this engagement.

We will include more information about this project in future issues of *Central*.



Regulation Review

As covered in the last edition of *Central*, the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004 is now under review. The Department of Community Services has now released a discussion paper about the review, canvassing major changes to the Regulation.

How do services get to have their say on what the new Regulation may look like?

Services can:

- put in a written submission;
- answer an online survey between 24 November–12 December 2008;
- communicate their views to a peak organisation.

To read the discussion paper or answer the survey, go to www.community.nsw.gov.au

Through the Regulation Review, children's services may have their say on what they believe are the key issues for children's services in NSW. The Regulation shapes NSW children's experience in services by defining key standards such as ratios, group sizes and qualifications.

Does your service need a bicultural support worker?

A bicultural support worker will support the inclusion of a child from a particular culture. Contact your Inclusion Support Agency or call CSCentral on **1800 157 818**



New Manager for Children's Services Central

Leanne Gibbs has come to the position of Manager at Children's Services Central via a circuitous and enjoyable route across the children's services landscape.

Her adult early childhood life began at Newtown Nursery School Teacher's College and she has since passed through a number of tertiary institutions to gain further knowledge and qualifications in early childhood education, gifted and talented teaching, and politics and public policy.

The experience of teaching and directing in long day care and preschools has given Leanne a deep respect for the community of children, staff and families, as well as a passion for professional development. The introduction of the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System in the early 1990s signaled a new era in staff development and support, and this period opened up possibilities in building the capacity of teams through a process of raising the quality of service provision.

Her involvement in professional development and training was combined with advisory positions within local, state and federal government while moonlighting as a committee member, volunteer and children's services consumer. Following periods of teaching and lecturing in adult education programs, TAFE and Macquarie University, Leanne most recently spent time as manager of professional development with KU Children's Services. Her interest in writing has led to the publishing of two books; *Action, Advocacy and Activism*; *Standing up for children* (Community Child Care Co-operative) and *Policy Development in Early Childhood Settings: From idea to implementation* (Pademelon Press).

She is relishing the opportunities and challenges offered by the role of Manager of Children's Services Central and will continue to work to ensure children's hold a prime position within thriving communities.

Resources for families and service newsletters



As a Centre Director, the one task I avoided the most was putting together the Centre's newsletter. As I emailed the newsletter to my families and staff, I always wanted to have information and links to websites which were relevant, user friendly and reflected current practices, but never felt I had the time to do the research to find appropriate sites. On one of my many 'Google' searches on topics, I came across the website for Centre for Community Child Health in Melbourne.

– Carolyn, Centre Director

The Centre for Community Child Health's website – www.rch.org.au/ccch – is rich with online resources that are valuable for both early childhood professionals and families with children up to 12 years of age. The web site includes:

- Multilingual information fact sheets that cover a range of topics such as:
 - School readiness;
 - Literacy;
 - Dental health;
 - Hygiene and infection control.
- A listing of resources available for purchase such as:
 - A colour hand washing poster with visual steps and simple statements for children and staff to follow for \$10.00.
 - Posters for families promoting interactions – a set of three posters for \$20.00.
- Practical resources on behaviour, language, literacy, settling

and sleep and eating behaviours. These include relevant information based on current research for childcare professionals which can be shared with families. There are links to websites, practical suggestions and ideas that staff can follow. Stages of typical development are included; as well as developmental or behavioural concerns.

- A downloadable Outside School Hours Care Injury Prevention Manual.

‘The Practical Resources, discussion papers and literature reviews are great for staff discussions, professional development and for reference when families want more information,’ said Carolyn. ‘As a centre, we found this website a great resource when going through Accreditation. It helped provide the centre with a range of information on a variety of topics that were of great relevance to the centre community.’

Another website that produces wonderful, easy-to-read information for parents that can easily be adapted for newsletters is South Australia's Parenting SA website. Found at www.parenting.sa.gov.au, the site has Parent Easy Guides – simple, easy-to-read information on many of the issues faced by parents, from birth through to adolescence.

The Parent Easy Guides represent a valuable information source not only for parents but also for childcare professionals needing a quick information refresher. Covering areas such as child biting, toilet training, ‘second baby’ issues, nightmares, milestones, after the breakup... these are the sort of information sheets you could easily have on hand in a service to give parents. All are available free to download and print out and most are between one and four pages in length.

Are you getting the **latest news?**

Sign up for the Children's Services Central enews! Go to: www.cscentral.org.au

Resourcing your service



'We've only just borrowed for the first time and Gowrie staff were extremely helpful. I'm very impressed with the resources and assistance I received. Thanks!'

'Fantastic Aboriginal resources. Great service.'

'What a fantastic selection of resources you have available. As always, my order was here at the centre three days after I called. Thanks and keep up the great work.'

'I was looking everywhere for Braille resources and found them at [the resource library]. Thank you for the inclusive work you do!'

'Many thanks for these wonderful resources. Our children 0-2 enjoyed the various blocks, while the 3-5 years learnt much about frogs and their lifestyles with the many resources you sent us.'

These are some of the comments made by users of the Children's Services Central General Resource Library. The General Resource Library is operated for Children's Services Central by Lady Gowrie and is located in Sydney, but services anywhere in NSW can access all the resources by post.

What resources does the library hold?

The library has thousands of items, books, recent journal articles, CDs, DVDs, musical equipment, and other games, toys, puzzles and equipment for use in services.

What else?

Multicultural dress-ups, home equipment, particularly kitchenware used by different cultures in cooking and home living; Aboriginal resources such as coolamons, flags, tapping sticks, boomerangs; dolls showing different skin colours, facial features and some with disabilities; disability equipment for dolls; musical instruments from various cultures around the world; audio cassettes and CDs; puzzles reflecting cultural diversity, gender equity and different occupations; posters showing diversity, inclusion of children with special needs,

children from different cultures and a variety of animals, pictures supporting science education; children's books in English and other major languages; children's literature reflecting diversity, gender equity and issues which children confront such as death, birth of a sibling, and bullying, as well as a variety of inspirational resource books for use by children's services professionals.

Does it cost my service to borrow?

To borrow from the library, you need to join. Membership is only \$44 per annum – services can then borrow resources free of charge. Resources are posted to you for free and come with free return postage labels.

How do I know what you have when I can't come in to see?

You can order online (see www.cscentral.org.au under the 'Resources' tab) or call the number below to talk about your needs.

I don't have time to look at a computer to find out what the library has available...

...then telephone us and talk to one of the friendly library staff about your needs. The staff will then choose a variety of items to meet those needs, package them up and send them out the next day via Australia Post. You should receive them within a few days of the telephone call.

How does the online database work?

Services can search the database by typing in a topic. The search facility is valuable as images of the books and equipment are included and seeing the cover page of a book or the photograph of an item ensures that services are well informed about the choices that they make. The catalogue may be accessed at www.cscentral.org.au by clicking onto 'Resources' and following the prompts. The catalogue can be browsed without membership, but if you want to order resources, you will need to join.

How do I get the resources and how do I send them back?

Resources are posted directly to your service. With your box of resources, you will receive a reply-paid label to be used when sending the resources back to the library. You can then keep the resources for three weeks and send them back, postage free, by taking them to your local post office, with the label on the package. If you would like to keep the resources for longer than three weeks, contact the library and they will be happy to extend the loan, if not on order.

How do I join?

Services can become a member of the library through completing the application form in the 'General Resource Library' brochure or by downloading or printing an application form from the Children's Services Central website. If you cannot access the website, please contact the library on **8345 7624** if you require the membership form. A form can be faxed, emailed or posted to you.

Do you need specialist equipment?

Do you need specialist equipment to include a child? See the specialist equipment catalogue at: www.cscentral.org.au

'Children's Services Central can we help you?'

Children's Services Central's 1800 number is a freecall number that aims to provide you with answers to your questions relating to every different type of care. The people responding to your questions have extensive experience in a range of children's services – here are their responses to some of the questions received in recent weeks.

A tip to ease the stress!

We have received a number of calls from services subject to the Children's Services Regulation regarding information for a visit from a Children's Services Adviser from the Department of Community Services (DoCS). Have you had a visit from your CSA and had to find all the relevant information for them out of numerous folders in your centre's office? Try creating one folder that contains all the relevant information that your CSA would need to view. Keep this folder in a central location and make sure all staff know where to locate the folder in case the Director or Co-ordinator is absent. This folder should include information or certificates to state the following tasks have been completed, as per licensing requirements:

- Hot water regulation;
- Fire equipment testing;
- Installation of safety glass;
- Pest control;
- Repairs and maintenance of equipment and the building;
- Softfall testing;
- Staff qualifications, including First Aid;
- Authorised Supervisor documentation;
- Centre architectural plans;
- DoCS correspondence.

First Aid qualifications: New guidelines

Children's Services Central has also fielded several calls asking about what courses staff are required to complete under WorkCover NSW guidelines (available at: www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCSWR/_assets/main/documents/CHILDCARE_FIRSTAID_PROCESS.PDF).

All First Aid qualifications as required under the Children's Service's Regulation 2004 are also required to be approved by WorkCover. From June 2009, WorkCover NSW will only recognise First Aid qualifications with the following competencies:

- HLTFA301B Apply First Aid; or
- HLTFA402B Apply Advanced First Aid.

After contacting the major First Aid training organisations, Children's Services Central has established that Advanced and

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Supporting the provision of
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 **1800 157 818**
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Senior First Aid qualifications do meet the requirements of WorkCover NSW and Children's Service's Regulation 2004, as required from 1 July 2009.

If you are looking to complete a First Aid certificate or re-certify, ensure that your First Aid training organisation provides a course that includes the HLTFA301B or HLTFA402B competencies.

If you require more information on WorkCover-approved First Aid and occupational First Aid courses, the link to the WorkCover NSW website can be viewed at www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/WorkcoverOnline/FAidProviders/Pages/default.aspx or contact a Children's Services Central Project Officer on **1800 157 818**.

A new team at Children's Services Central

When calling the 1800 number and selecting the Long Day Care option, you will be greeted by one of our new project officers. Treena Cutmore, Carolyn Arlette and Kelera Mar recently joined Children's Services Central and all have extensive experience in the early childhood field and, particularly, the area of long day care. More details about our new team will be published in the first issue of *Central* in 2009.

Occupational Health and Safety External Audits

To obtain a High Quality Indicator for Principle 5.5 a long day care centre is required to undergo an external OH&S Audit. This must be conducted by an external identity to the service. A copy of the external auditor's qualifications should be stored with the audit paperwork for the Validator to sight.

NSW Family Day Care working with the Australian Government

The *National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care Discussion Paper* was prepared by the Council Of Australian Governments (COAG), and will be the basis for the initial round of consultations on the development of a new national quality framework for early childhood education and care.

NSW Family Day Care, along with key people from all other state and national peak family day care organisations, met in a range of working parties in Adelaide during August to collate the needs of the sector into a nationally-appropriate response. A summary of this response, grouped under the four major areas, is provided below.

1. National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework group discussed the strength of the quality standards, the gaps in the current framework and the transition needed to achieve the standards.

It was decided that the key standards were appropriate, in particular, for all children to have access to community/health services which would ensure children's wellbeing was receiving attention from a range of professional resources.

It was also decided that recent research on brain development should be reflected in the way we weighted quality in regard to secure attachments, including sibling attachments and the secure transitions for children between home, care, professionals and other services.

It was also decided that a core set of standards should be supplemented by service specific standards which acknowledge each specific difference.

2. The Quality Rating System

The Quality Rating System discussed the objectives of the system, the measurement of quality, what the system should look like, the potential risks of a rating system, who should carry it out and how it links to standards, accreditation and licensing.

Family Day Care supports an integrated system (of all services), while ensuring that the integrity of different services types is valued and preserved. However, we noted that in the short-term period, streamlining (FDC specific) is more feasible.

We also noted that services should be able to set higher standards to suit their local demands and culture.

We are also aware of the rapid changes that have occurred in the sector and that this change must be accompanied by support and adequate transition times to ensure tangible benefits.

3. The Workforce

The Workforce discussed how Family Day Carers' experience and competence needs to be respected, valued and recognised and that these skills should be enhanced by government-assisted training that is accessible to all.

It was proposed that a national marketing campaign led by government would be an effective way to raise the profile of Family Day Care along with other service types.

It was also proposed that financially supported training under the Productivity Places Program be available to all Family Day Care personnel.

4. Early Years Framework

This group considered the purpose of the framework and the need for a philosophical focus. Discussion considered what format would be appropriate, what supporting documents would be most valuable and how the role of the differently skilled educators would be defined.

It was decided that play-based learning, combined with the child's interests, would reinforce the importance of the children's local community context, the natural environment and the importance of secure attachments and connections.

It was also considered that Family Day Care educators would require mentoring and modelling of competencies that connect with adult learners. This would ensure that Carers are resourced effectively to deliver the Early Years Framework outcomes.

Are you looking for resources?

To view the library catalogue, go to: www.cscentral.org.au and see under 'Resources'.

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Need to know
something?
ONE-STOP
CALL CENTRE
1800 157 818

Reaching out through resources

In response to sector feedback, Children's Services Central will be releasing two new practical resources for children's services in December. These resources have been prepared by Network of Community Activities.

The resource, *Managing Expectations in Children's Services* written by Jo Comans, will assist services with practical advice and reflection/discussion questions on the management of the expectations of parents, staff and the community. The resource will build on the popular *Change management in Children's Services* resource, with scenarios provided for discussion on solution-focused application.

A second resource, *Introduction to children's services in NSW*, will provide an overview for all practitioners working in children's services in NSW. This free resource will be a useful tool for orientating new staff to the sector. It is also due for release in December. Look out in early 2009 when Children's

Services Central will release more free online resources prepared by Network, including *Service Evaluation and Review in Children's Services* and *Business Continuity Planning for Children's Services*.

If you would like to participate in the review and consultation on these and other emerging needs resources, we would love to hear from you and will value your assistance. Contact Robyn Monro Miller on robyn@netoosh.org.au for further details. Feedback is always welcomed from all levels of experience, qualification and service type – they are designed for you, so your input is important!

Calling all isolated children's services practitioners

Network is also in the process of working on a resource about survival strategies for isolated children's services practitioners. We would love to hear how you manage when working in a services that may be in an isolated area, or the only service in a region, or where you work by yourself or in a very small team.

Rural and remote practitioners are especially encouraged to share your experiences!
Send an email to news@netoosh.org.au
or phone Robyn on 9212 3244.

Improving the quality of childcare for the under twos

The NSW Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney, has announced that centre-based and mobile childcare services will be required by law to have one carer for every four children under two, compared to the current legal requirement of one carer for every five children.

Ms Burney said the move had long been on the NSW Government's agenda, and was approved by Cabinet following widespread consultation with the industry and a strong working partnership with the Federal Government.

'Research tells us that higher regulatory standards correlate with higher measured quality, and that good quality early childhood care can improve child development and school performance – especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds,' Ms Burney said.

'For babies, the individual care and nurturing they receive is fundamental to their emotional wellbeing and their safety.'

Ms Burney said existing research was accompanied by an economic analysis conducted for the Government.

The report found the move would have a modest cost impact, but Ms Burney said this would be outweighed by the

benefits to children and the community as a whole.

Ms Burney said that 'early childhood advocates in NSW have been seeking this change for a long time, and their arguments are extremely compelling'.

Ms Burney also said many childcare services already offered a 1:4 ratio for children under the age of two. '[The economic analysis] report found 34 per cent – more than one-third – of all long day care centres currently operate with a 1:4 ratio.'

'This change will not come into force until the current Regulation is replaced in 2010, giving childcare services time to plan for the change.'

'We will be consulting widely with the industry on the best way to bring about the ratio change, as part of the review. No-one wants costs to go up, but we all want the best care possible for our children. At some stage we have to weigh up the pros and cons of cost versus quality – and that time is now,' she said.

Ms Burney said NSW would continue to work with the Commonwealth on reducing the cost impact of this important quality reform.