



How
can we
help you?



Cathy Hamill and Deb Gleeson at work.

Cathy & Deb: here to help!

Many children's services have called or emailed Children's Services Central in the last six months. Enquiries come from Mobiles, Macs, In home Care Services, FDC carers, long day care centres, occasional care centres and OOSH services. They come from services a few hundred metres away and from services in the most remote areas of NSW. We thought it would help to have an idea who is at the other end of the phone, so over the next few issues of *Central*, we will profile some of the people who take your calls and respond to your emails.

When you phone 1800 157 818, calls get routed to different people depending on the service type of the caller and nature of the question. Cathy Hamill and Deb Gleeson answer most of the calls coming from long day care services and occasional care services. They also transfer calls to the Bicultural Support Pool, ISA teams or other relevant organisations as needed.

Deb has been working on the phones at Children's Services Central since we started, and was previously at Community

Child Care. Deb joined Community Child Care as a training project officer in 2004. She administered training provision to management committees and staff of childcare centres including the development of a six month training calendar for services across NSW.

Deb previously owned and operated her own business and has over 15 years experience in early childhood. She completed

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What is Children's Services Central?

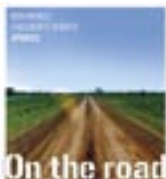
Children's Services Central has been funded by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to co-ordinate professional support for all Australian Government Approved Child Care Services in NSW.

That includes training courses for:

- Long Day Care Centres
- Family Day Care Schemes and carers
- In home Care Schemes
- Occasional Care Schemes
- Mobiles
- Before and After Care Services
- Vacation Care Services
- MACS
- and other Australian Government funded non-mainstream care services.

Children's Services Central is managed by The Alliance of Children's Services, which is a consortium of the seven key organisations that resource and represent the various sectors of children's services in NSW:

- **Community Child Care Co-operative (lead agency)**
- **NSW Family Day Care Association**
- **Network of Community Activities**
- **Contact Incorporated**
- **Ethnic Child Care Family and Community Services Co-operative Limited**
- **Child Care NSW**
- **Semann and Slattery.**



Attention! Mobile Services

Have you noticed the special *On the Road* newsletter? Look for it in each copy of *Central*. It's funded by Children's Services Central to provide you with all the information you need.

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, through the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), funds the Professional Support Co-ordinator initiative as part of the Inclusion and Professional Support Program.

Children's Services Central

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★ ROUNDUP

Have you registered for the Regulation?

Out of School Hours Services across NSW are currently involved in the registration of their centres as Stage 1 of the regulations implementation. All services were required to register by June 30 2007. Consultations on the regulations will be held in the latter part of 2008. For more advice on the process or to discuss how this may affect your service, contact the peak body for Out of School Hours Services in NSW, Network on **9212 3244 or 1800 157 818 and press '3'**.

Video/phone linkups

Are you aware that Children's Services Central runs Phone Linkups and video training sessions? These innovative professional development forms are aimed particularly at rural and remote services who cannot easily attend other forms of training. For more information check out the website at **www.cscentral.org.au/training**

Professional Support Research

The PSC Alliance, the name for the 7 Professional Support Co-ordinators, (organisations like Children's Services Central in other states) is funding research about how services view professional development for children's services. *Practice Potentials: Impact of participation in professional support activities on quality in child care centres* is a national research study contracted to explore professional development opportunities available to childcare centre staff. The purpose of the study is to investigate current perceptions of directors/managers about the impact of professional development support activities on quality outcomes for children and their families using centre based childcare.

Thanks to all the services in NSW that participated in an online survey feeding into this research or volunteered to be part of a case study or focus group.

The research, being undertaken by Macquarie and Charles Sturt Universities, will be published when completed.

New Accreditation System

FaCSIA have placed the PowerPoint presentation used at the recent Capital City Discussion Forums on their website for services who could not attend: **www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/child_care_system.htm**

A DVD of the forums is also being sent to each children's service across Australia. FaCSIA are encouraging services to present the DVD to staff and other stakeholders to allow them to provide comments on the new system to FACSIA.

Additional copies of the DVD can be obtained by calling **1800 050 009**.

Training Calendar out, courses filling up



By now, all services should have received a copy of the latest Children's Services Central Training Calendar.

Please take the time to examine the courses on offer in your region and make bookings for your service's team. Some of the more popular courses are already filling up.

All bookings can be made online at **www.cscentral.org.au/training**

For a policy that's going places: source it, source it, source it!

After hearing way too many anecdotal stories of children's services failing to meet accreditation standards because they have not sufficiently sourced their policies, Children's Services Central phone staff are begging us to get the message out... **SOURCE YOUR POLICIES!**

Sourcing of policies is in the CCQA Quality Practices Guides as an indicator of quality care and must be documented in the service policy in order to meet the Satisfactory standard for Accreditation.

So what is sourcing?

It simply means identifying the relevant recognised authorities and sources of information used to support the policy.

What it doesn't mean is writing a policy, and then realising you have to stick in some sources and scrambling around at the end to find some appropriate web references.

Policies are meant to be based on current authoritative knowledge and the specific situation of your service.

Each service provides care and support to children and communities with differing needs, so every service's policies should be different. It is vitally important to ensure that your policies are based on current authoritative knowledge.

Policies written using up-to-date information and advice from recognised authorities help to ensure not only that you will pass accreditation, but that your practices are evidence-based and satisfy your legal obligations.

So what is a recognised authority?

NCAC defines a recognised authority on their website as: "an organisation that provides specialist information or advice based on current research and current thinking". They also suggest that "Current information and recommendations may also be sought through State, Territory or Federal legislation. However, it is important to ensure that when policy information is sourced from legislation that it is also supported by current information from a relevant recognised authority."

To find out who the 'recognised authorities' are, NCAC suggests:

- Access the 'Useful Links for Services' section on NCAC's website.
- Talk to a NCAC Child Care Adviser on **02 8260 1900** or **1300 136 554**.



- Contact Children's Services Central on **1800 157 818**.
- Access the references provided in the 'Further Reading' section in relevant NCAC *Putting Children First* articles, factsheets and other professional articles.
- Use key words in an internet search engine. For example, using the key words 'safety standards for cots' provides contact details for Better Health Victoria, Parenting and Child Health South Australia, and The Children's Hospital Westmead. All three sources provide factsheets and quote the Australian Standards as the recognised authority for cots, mattresses and other furniture specifically for babies and children. (Hint: it is useful to tick 'pages from Australia' when using a search engine, to narrow the number of web pages on a particular subject)
- Contact the Department of Community Services and check the Children's Services Regulation (if it covers your service type).
 - Network with other children's services and professionals.
 - Contact education institutions that facilitate children's services or early and middle childhood education studies.
 - Read industry-based publications.
 - Access the local library for relevant resources.

Children's Services Central would also suggest contacting your service type's peak body. Organisations such as Community Child Care and Child Care NSW (for long day care services), NSW Family Day Care Association, Mobile Children's Services Association, Contact Inc. and Network of Community Activities (OOSH services) have a wealth of information.

Sometimes it is also just common sense. If you are writing a policy on Child Protection, you would start off with sources such as DoCS, the NSW Ombudsman, and the *Children and Young Person's Care and Protection Act*. Remember that it is always important to have more than one source!

For more information

See the NCAC Policy Development Guide online at www.ncac.gov.au/policy_development/policy_development.html

New children's services resources

Network of Community Activities is currently developing a series of resources for Children's Services Central. All resources will be cross sectoral and have practical application in your service. The first two publications are due for release in August.

Children's Services and the Anti-Discrimination Act, written by Maggie Smythe, the 30 page resource will unpack the Act and it's application to a variety of real life case studies from children's services. Disability, sexuality and employment practices will all be looked at in a practical and reflective way that will encourage management and staff to develop a deeper understanding of their requirements under the law.

Understanding multiculturalism and anti bias in children's services, written by Miriam Guigni, the 30 page resource has lots of practical information including some reproducible resources for use with parents and team members across all sectors.

The resources will be available on the Children's Services Central website for easy downloading and in limited hard copy editions. See www.cscentral.org.au



New newsletters for Family Day Care

Family Day Care Schemes and Family Day Carers should by now have all received two copies of the new and revamped newsletters *Connections* and *CarerConnections* produced by NSW Family Day Care Association.

These newsletters have been subsidised by Children's Services Central to ensure Family Day Care schemes get access to timely and accurate information.

Children's Services Central congratulates Family Day Care Association on the quality of these publications.

Mobile Children's Services Association of NSW Inc. Annual Conference & AGM

To Infinity and Beyond: Building Resilience,

Wednesday 5 to Friday 7 September, 2007 at Orange Ex-Service's Club, Anson St, Orange. Twenty-one years of dedication to mobile children's services of NSW with a dinner on 6 September was also celebrated.

The conference was opened by Minister for Community Services, Kevin Greene with keynote address by Gillian Calvert, Commissioner for Children and Young People.



Workplace Relations Fact Sheet

If your service is a constitutional corporation and is under the Federal WorkChoices system, you are required by law to provide a Workplace Relations Fact Sheet to all employees.

The fact sheet has been prepared by the Workplace Authority (formerly known as the Office of the Employment Advocate) and can be downloaded from: www.workplaceauthority.gov.au Alternatively, copies can be obtained by calling the Workplace Authority on **1300 363 264**.

Employers in the federal system must give the fact sheet to current employees by 20 October and must give a copy to every new employee within seven days of their start date.

Cathy & Deb: here to help

an Associate Diploma of Child Care at the Illawarra Institute of Technology, Nowra, in 1994 and further updated her skills by completing the Diploma of Children's Services in 1999. She has a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and is currently undertaking a teaching degree at University of New England.

Cathy joined Children's Services Central last month. She also comes with a wealth of experience, having been Head Teacher at Crows Nest College (Northern Sydney Institute) for the last five and a half years.

Cathy won an Australian College of Educators Teaching Award in 2001. She was a teacher in child studies at Riverina Institute of TAFE and was part of a delegation to Reggio Emilia in 1999.

Cathy has also worked as a specialist consultant to

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children's services in areas such as accreditation, emergent curriculum, NSW Curriculum Framework and reflective practice in the Riverina and northern beaches areas. She got her Bachelor of Education (Early childhood /primary) at Charles Sturt University. She has a graduate certificate in flexible delivery of training programs.

Cathy and Deb both relish the depth and variety of questions they face from services. "One minute I could be asked a question on immunisation, the next on WorkChoices and the next minute on an obscure medical condition a child at a service may have," Cathy reports.

Cathy and Deb have both found few questions that they could not answer. "sometimes we may have to call a service back while we research, but we always get there eventually" Cathy said.

Have you started thinking about CCMS?

Sometimes it feels like no sooner have you learnt a way of doing things, that it is altered from on high. Children's Services Central understands the frustration people working in children's services can feel about continual change.

One change that may not be as hard as it first looked, is the changes all services will have to make to transfer to the new Child Care Management System. Long Day Care Services and Family Day Care Services will be gradually moved onto this new system of managing CCB payments and acquittals early next year. OOSH services and other service types will transfer from July next year, with all services completely transferred to the new system by July 2009.

It is really important that all services read the special edition of *Child Care News* recently sent to all services by FaCSIA. If you cannot remember receiving this edition (pictured right) you can download it from: www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/ccms.htm

In this special edition of the newsletter, FaCSIA announced that all CCB approved children's services will get a \$1,000 transition payment to help services with the costs they may incur when moving to CCMS, such as new software, computers or internet connections. (LDC and FDC services will receive this in September or October and other services in March/April next year). Services can also apply for extra funding of up to \$2,100 for additional assistance if required (in line with specific guidelines to be announced).

Children's Services Central is currently determining the type of professional support we can best offer services to help with the move and will let services know as soon as possible. We urge all services to look at the CCMS Preparation Checklist contained in the abovementioned *Child Care News*. Essentially, to be prepared for CCMS your service will require an internet connected computer and CCMS compatible



software to enable your service to submit information about the attendance of children at your centre to FaCSIA over the internet and receive information about families' CCB entitlements and services' CCB payments.

Absences to change under CCMS

There will no longer be Allowable and Approved absences under CCMS. Families will all be eligible for up to 42 days absences. After these 42 days, CCB will only be paid for reasons such as illness, RDOs, non immunisation etc. Further guidelines will be issued explaining what absences services can approve over the 42 days with appropriate documentary evidence.

Looking for resources?

Check out Children's Services Central's General Resource Library!

Now with
**free
postage!**

The General Resource Library is a specialist children's services resource pool which contains over 20,000 different resources – books, articles, videos, and a range of other resources that children's services in NSW may wish to access.

Yearly membership of the library costs only \$44 (inc GST). All children's services in NSW are able to borrow from the library after becoming a library member.

The Children's Services Central General Resource Library is delivered by Lady Gowrie Child Centre for Children's Services Central.

To view the Library catalogue and to join the Library go to:
www.cscentral.org.au



Online Training

Learn when and where you want

Children's Services Central first online training sessions are now available. Among the many advantages of online training is the fact that it can be undertaken when and where you choose.



Training modules all have step-by-step instructions and helpful graphics to lead you through the modules

Once you have paid for the module you have access to the course for three months. The exciting range of online training modules have been developed for Children's Services Central by ECTARC to allow people with limited computer skills to easily move through the material, with clear links and videos to help participants understand the current and easily accessible information. Each module is designed to take about 1 to 1½ hours to complete and can be accessed whenever a participant wishes. There are tasks to ensure participants have clearly understood the material and a Certificate of Participation available to those who successfully complete each training module.

Children's Services Central first 'online graduate', Kathy had this to say: "I have found the online training really helpful. I am exploring new work options for next year and needed to update a few things. Looking forward to completing more modules. I have not done other online training before but found this really flexible and was able to stay at work late one night and complete it uninterrupted, which was great and then refer back at a later time and collect more information. The links were particularly helpful. Completing the assessments made you put what you had learnt together in a practical way."

Modules available:

■ Legal Responsibilities for Managers/Committee Members

This module provides an overview of the responsibilities of licensees and managers of all types of children's services.

■ Legal Responsibilities for Authorised Supervisors

This module is designed to provide an overview of the responsibilities of the 'Authorised Supervisor' as defined by the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004.

■ Nutrition

This module provides an overview of the nutritional requirements for children and menu planning.

■ Recruitment of Staff

This module is designed to assist those involved in the recruitment of staff for children's services with an overview of the responsibilities and tasks necessary to successfully recruit new staff.

■ Retention of Staff

This module presents an overview of some different approaches and strategies to assist with maintaining staff.

■ Defining and Packaging Your Business - Family Day Care

This module is designed to provide Family Day Care schemes – Co-ordinators and Carers – with an overview of how to define and professionally package their service.

■ Defining and Packaging Your Business - Early Childhood Centre Based Care

This module provides an overview of how to define and professionally package your centre.

■ Defining and Packaging Your Business - Out of School Hours Care

This module provides an overview of how to define and professionally package your service. Promoting Your Business The module provides an overview of effective methods to promote a service and advises how to conduct market research and align marketing activities to meet strategic goals.

Book for all of these courses at www.cscentral.org.au/online

MENTORING

A valuable professional development tool

Mentoring is an ongoing relationship for a set period, voluntarily entered into by both a mentor and a mentee. Robyn Monro Miller, Executive Officer, Network of Community Activities, explores.

In children's services mentoring can be a valuable tool for skilling up staff and retaining expertise in the organisation. A successful mentoring relationship promotes the transfer of knowledge, leadership development and career exploration while also building the capacity of the mentee. The purpose of the mentoring should be explicit and agreed upon prior to commencing the relationship.

A mentor is generally an individual experienced in their field who holds a higher or equivalent position to the person they are mentoring. The mentor understands that their role is to assist another to develop skills and to share their knowledge with a less experienced person, known as the mentee. The mentor accepts that this is designed to enhance the career opportunities of their mentee.

The benefits of mentoring for staff in children's services are numerous. Mentoring will assist them to acquire new skills and to problem-solve more effectively. Mentoring is commonly used to assist an individual adjust to a new form of employment or role. However, many of the benefits are not recognised immediately, as much of the work of mentoring is preparing the mentee for success in their future as much as in the present. Successful mentoring provides practical insights into the reality of a chosen profession and into the mentee's own behaviour and practices. Mentoring can assist mentees to recognise their potential and develop a blueprint for setting goals to achieve it. Being able to think aloud with another person with more experience promotes the opportunity for a mentee to start to 'think outside the square', broadening their understanding and encouraging them to look deeper into problems. For many it provides the opportunity to try out new ideas or plans or to share concerns with a trusted colleague.

For people in children's services, mentoring may happen informally or on a regular basis. Research indicates that informal mentoring can be just as effective as formal mentoring. The benefit of informal mentoring is that it generally occurs while you work, while formalised mentoring has a structure and a time set aside for reflection and discussion. In any mentoring role, whether formal or informal, setting some structure around the process can help achieve more and avoid some of the common obstacles faced in mentoring relationships.

Most common is the difficulty for both parties to find sufficient time for mentoring between employment tasks. Unrealistic expectations about the mentoring relationship and the outcomes can develop. For this reason it is critical that the mentor and mentee agree in advance on the rules and expectations they will abide by. Mentoring should not dominate either party's life: regular scheduled times for mentoring should be set, or either person could find they are overwhelmed when the phone calls keep coming and the issues seem never-ending. Both parties should be equals in the relationship; mentors should not direct the process without contribution from, or consultation with, the mentee.

Before you start, set some ground rules:

1. How often, where and when should we meet?
2. How many sessions will we have?
3. What does each of us hope to get from this mentoring relationship, professionally and personally?
4. What is the purpose of the mentoring? Be clear and specific with a measurable goal.
5. What will our meetings be concerned with, i.e. the topics of discussion or demonstration?
6. How much self-disclosure will we allow?
7. Do we both agree to maintain each other's confidentiality?
8. If either of us does not wish to continue the mentoring, what do we do?

New mentoring program for children's services professionals

Children's Services Central has funded a special new mentoring project.

Network of Community Activities has developed the tools for the mentoring project, which will be conducted by Network of Community Services, NSW Family Day Care and NSW Community Child Care Co-operative.

Project structure

Mentoring will be for a maximum period of four months with the span of 10 sessions negotiated between mentor and mentee. This mentoring program is not designed to be part of an ongoing resourcing role with a service or individual. The maximum time between mentoring sessions is to be four weeks. The sessions are designed to be through phone support but may be face-to-face if agreed between mentee and mentor. Participation in the project is based on an agreement of confidentiality for both parties. There is no formal reporting back to Children's Services Central or the service about the content of the mentoring or the outcomes of the specific goals.

Services and or individuals applying for mentoring will pay a one-off fee of \$110 (inc. GST). This fee is non-refundable and applies whether or not the service/individual chooses to complete the ten mentoring sessions. The fee is payable to Children's Services Central prior to commencing the mentoring process.

There are limited places, so if you are interested in applying to be mentored, contact 1800 157 818.



What's an Assisted Inclusion Readiness (AIR) Plan?

While some of you might have had more experience writing a Service Support Plan (SSP), it is likely that some time soon you will have the opportunity to develop an Assisted Inclusion Readiness Plan, or, as it is more commonly known as, an AIR plan. Lorraine Madden, Manager, Training Research and Innovation, Semann & Slattery explains.

It seems that some of you may be a little unsure about exactly what an AIR plan is, when to use one and how it can help. This article is an attempt to answer some of those questions and get you thinking about how an AIR plan might work for your service.

Unlike an SSP which relates more specifically to including a child or children with additional needs in a particular care environment, an AIR plan addresses those "big picture" issues that relate to the whole service. In developing an AIR plan you are actually identifying some practical steps to help you to feel more ready and more confident to include all children in your service, both now and in the future.

A number of issues have already been addressed by childcare services across the state using AIR plans. Examples include enrolment and orientation processes, partnerships with families, working as a team, engaging children and families from Indigenous backgrounds, including children with disabilities, guiding children's behaviour, and programming for diversity.

Already Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) across NSW are reporting that services are very aware of the areas they would like to improve on, and are excited about the

possibilities for using an AIR plan to identify the steps they will take. ISFs have also identified a number of positive reactions and outcomes from services that have participated in the AIR Plan process. Some of the benefits include:

- Providing concrete steps to work towards
- Validating what services are already doing
- Developing confidence and increasing motivation
- Achieving annual service goals and objectives
- Creating opportunities to work as a team
- Promoting collaborative learning
- Enhancing approaches to program planning
- Increasing access and participation for all children
- Expanding knowledge of local resources and supports.

Some helpful hints to get you started:

- Involve the whole team and target issues that are relevant and meaningful for everyone.
- Be clear (and specific) about what you want to achieve.
- Keep the plan manageable and achievable.
- Place the final plan somewhere visible so that you can write in your achievements and comments along the way.
- Make a time to review your plan to evaluate what you have learnt and achieved. This might also help you identify what you might like to work on in your next plan.

An on-site AIR plan session is provided free of charge through your local Inclusion Support Agency (ISA). Contact your ISA to find out more.

You can also read more about AIR plans on the Children's Services Central website:

www.cscentral.org.au/pdf/AIRPlan_FS.pdf



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