



Children's Services Central

Supporting the provision of quality, inclusive, children's services

NSW Professional Support Co-ordinator

Love to Learn

A Professional Support Needs Analysis of Child
Care Practitioners across NSW



2011

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the child care practitioners across NSW who set time aside to complete yet another survey, speak on the telephone or give their feedback.

Thank you to the Management Committee for your valuable guidance in developing the tools to get the information and for encouraging your services to participate.

Thank you to Marika Kontellis and Dr. Gary Jacobson from Zakumi Consulting Pty Ltd for helping us collect the information and make sense of what people think will make a difference for them.



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1. Executive Summary

Children's Services Central (CSC) is the Professional Support Co-ordinator in NSW and is funded by the Commonwealth Government under the Inclusion and Professional Support Program. Children's Services Central is managed by a consortium of key organisations that resource and support children's services in New South Wales.

As part of the funding agreement with the Commonwealth government CSC (as the Professional Support Coordinator for NSW) is required to undertake a state-wide professional support needs analysis. This is in addition to the existing, in built and on-going mechanisms and strategies CSC employs to keep up to date with the needs, challenges and support needs of children's services across the State.

This purpose of this Project was to conduct a comprehensive Professional Support Needs Analysis (PSNA) of all eligible children's services in NSW. In conducting this extensive PSNA with eligible children's services in NSW, the Project drew on a variety of data sources such as surveys, focus groups, and formal and informal discussions.

It is widely acknowledged that working with young children and families can be complex and challenging. Families are changing. Community attitudes regarding children and their education are changing. Expectations are changing as the rapid growth in our knowledge about children and their early learning needs occurs. As a result of all this, our national early childhood system is changing too. With all this change, it is no wonder that the demand for professional support is high and increasingly recognised as a valuable tool in managing the changes.

"... These changes will impact on our licensing and accreditation systems as well as our curriculum and delivery models. Whilst the amount of change and growth in our sector presents us with great opportunities for increasing the quality of our services, adapting to and working positively with change and trying to keep up to date with theory and research is indeed a challenge. Professional development, when planned and implemented effectively, is a key tool that can be used to support us..."¹

This report has collated, included and summarised the collective voices of hundreds of child care practitioners across NSW. Essentially, it is the most contemporary evidence of professional support needs gaps in NSW. The key message is that children's service practitioners embrace their role as educators, but they too, *Love to Learn*.

¹ Professional Support Coordinator Alliance: Child Care Staff , Learning and Growing Through Professional Development

2. Recommendations

In many ways, compliance to new regulations and meeting expectations set by the National Reform Agenda have hijacked the personal development priorities of front line practitioners. Whilst the data collected from this PSNA confirm that as educators, children service practitioners *"Love to Learn"*, the data also tells us that this learning is not necessarily self directed. There is a sense that the demand for learning is being externally mandated, with a sense of urgency. The challenge is to ensure that the culture of *"Love to Learn"* is not replaced with a culture of resistance and compliance.

The data collected from this PSNA does affirm Children's Services Central role in providing professional leadership support to children's service practitioners across the State. The sector is looking to CSC for guidance and support and as the gateway to information resources to compliment and build practice.

The report recommends that:

I. Build Information Vehicles

Children Services Central should continue to develop their key information vehicles for training and development across NSW. The website and the Professional Development and Support Calendar are critical vehicles for informing the sector. The Central Newsletter and access to research and publications is a critical component to professional development. Linking these resources to other organisations and sector involved in the provision of support to children and or their families and across diverse geographic areas will further enhance equity of access to what is highly valued information and support.

II. Focus professional support for 2011 on 4 core priority areas as identified in this report

The report identified four key areas of professional support need.

- Practical support to locally interpret and create practices that comply with the Early Years Learning Framework and more broadly the National Quality Framework
- Education and skills development in managing teams and leading change
- Opportunities to understand the impact of practice on children's early learning
- Building resources to develop curriculum programs that are recognised as delivering learning outcomes for children

A range of training opportunities should be developed this calendar year that focus on these core learning areas as identified by practitioners

III. Increase Mix of Learning Delivery Modes

The findings support that the preferred way of learning is usually through group based, face to face learning. Having said that, participants also identified work based, on the job support and on line learning opportunities as preferred modes of accessing support. There is opportunity for CSC to develop and trail the use of social media and other web based models of professional support that is self directed and accessed by practitioners across the State.

IV. Specifically target front line practitioners

More effort to specifically target front line practitioners is warranted. The majority of participants in this project were more likely to hold senior roles in their service and therefore more likely to have access to the computer at their workplace, and or access to information about professional support. A specific program tailored to front line staff, who are least likely to be engaged in professional support strategies is warranted.

V. Introduce standardised post evaluation feedback

The way CSC collates and evaluates the immediate impact of training/professional development would warrant a review. Introducing a standardised approach to collecting feedback will assist in creating a clear and more consistent picture of the benefits participants identify from each professional development occasion.

VI. Build a stronger understanding of the impact of professional development, over time.

A longer term study that aims to measure the impacts of professional development in its variety of forms, on practitioners should be explored for the future. The feedback/evaluation of specific training and the participation in a PSNA like this provides a current view of professional support needs. Building evidence of professional support approaches in terms of how they help to change practitioner behaviours will help to strengthen the body of evidence around approaches.

VII. Build CSC's leadership role and deliver professional development programs that build a culture of "Love to Learn"

Develop approaches to innovative professional development that goes beyond service's current identified need to comply and meet mandatory requirements. The risk of merely responding to the urgency of compliance is that innovation, research and collective capacity are stood aside to assist services to merely comply. CSC's focus on leadership and mentoring should continue and spaces for creativity and innovation should be created and encouraged over the next few years.

3. Background and Context

CSC assists our front line children's services practitioners to develop their capacity to link theory and practice, to invest in their own learning and development and to build a confidence and professional esteem around their role in supporting children and their families. As a consequence, CSC continues to broaden its own understanding of professional development and redefines how support will be delivered.

CSC defines professional development in very broad terms and accepts that professional development includes, but is not limited to:

- Information
- Advice
- Referral to training opportunities
- Networking opportunities
- Access to Specialist Equipment
- Resources
- Accreditation Support
- Individual Service Support
- Mentoring and Coaching
- Support for New Services

In 2009 CSC undertook needs analysis activities to better understand its target population and the network of support and professional development services that are in demand. The needs analysis examined preferred methods of learning, specific regional needs, potential professional development and support needs for children's services in NSW.

In the second half of 2010 CSC engaged Zakumi Consulting Group to undertake a professional support needs analysis driven directly from end users of support.

This project builds on information already gathered, and aims to assist Children's Services Central in further advancing its responsiveness to children's services across the State. In addition, it will be a pivotal document in the strategic development of the PSC and its 2011 State Plan.

It is important to state that this PSNA has been undertaken in a very different operating context than previous PSNA's. Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), every State and Territory government and the Commonwealth have endorsed two National Partnership Agreements which have been the basis of widespread reform across our sector.

The Early Years Learning Framework is part of the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) reform agenda for early childhood education and care and is a key component of the Australian Government's National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care. It underpins universal access to early childhood education and will be incorporated in the National Quality Standard in order to ensure delivery of nationally consistent and quality early childhood education across sectors and jurisdictions.(DEEWR Website, 2011)

There appears to be widespread support for the theoretical underpinnings of the Early Years Framework but it is fair to say that the Framework has challenged many services who are now required to:

1. familiarise themselves with the Early Years Learning Framework
2. map their existing practice against the principles and practice outlined in the Framework
3. develop their own strategy to implement the Framework, taking their own unique context into consideration.

CSC has the responsibility (along with all other Professional Support Coordinators (PSC) and the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) networks in each state and territory) to deliver assistance and support for implementing the EYLF to all Commonwealth Government funded services.

It will be of no surprise, therefore that this PSNA, has been dominated with requests for professional development support, in various forms to assist services to applying the EYLF to their service. Overriding the EYLF is The National Quality Framework aimed at delivering a higher standard of care for children in the critical areas of education, health and safety and will provide clearer and comprehensive information for families so they can choose the best services for their child.

At the moment quality standards across early childhood education and care services vary across Australia and there is often limited information available to help families choose the best service for their children. The Framework has

Messages about Professional Support Needs from child care practitioners across NSW

"..How to make my documentation reflect the EYLF..."

"...the main focus for us now would be the EYLF and the NQS..."

"..The EYLF in practice..."

"...The national quality framework..."

"...we want support to help us help our team understand and reflect on EYLF and standards..."

provided new National Quality Standards for early childhood education and care providers in Australia. Some of these standards aim to improve quality through:

- better staff to child ratios to ensure each child gets more individual care and attention
- new staff qualification requirements to ensure staff have the skills to help children learn and develop
- a new quality rating system to ensure Australian families have access to transparent information relating to the quality of early childhood education and care services
- the establishment of a new National Body to ensure early childhood education and care is of a high quality.

These significant policy reforms have had a clear and definitive impact on what children's service practitioners across NSW have identified as their professional support needs.

4. Methodology

The Project Framework

The Steering Group was clear and up front that this PSNA would aim to engage a minimum of 700 participants across the State. Participants needed to reflect the range of services that are supported by CSC and attempt to capture what their future professional development support may look like.

The Project Methodology was based on a collaborative framework, driven by the agreed outcomes. The Project Methodology Framework encompassed the following three components:

1. **Accomplish shared vision and agree on outcomes and milestones**
Build and agree on interdependent system to address issues and opportunities with CSC members and other stakeholders. Agree on our processes of communicating, engaging and consulting
2. **Introduce and agree on consensus based decision making**
Roles, timeframes and agreed actions formalised through the project planning process. Links are formal and written in project plan

3. **Leadership high, trust level high, productivity high**
Ideas and decisions equally shared. Highly developed communication.
Outcomes

The Project Steering Group facilitated the development of methods that would be used to collect the information about professional support needs. In developing these tools, the following factors were identified as important:

- Range of services needed to be engaged with the PSNA
- A mix of opportunities to participate in the PSNA needed to be developed
- Participants needed to appropriately represent the regions across the state
- Accessible ways to participate as part of other key activities needed to be offered
- Minimise duplication of information gathering
- Distinguish the PSNA from other surveys etc being operationalised outside of CSC

The methodology also took into consideration the timing of the PSNA (early into the New Year) and the opportunities to engage staff at what is a traditionally busy time of the year (with new children entering services and needing extra support). Opportunities to link to existing planned training sessions were also limited because of timing (Few opportunities for training throughout January and February 2011).

The Tools

TOOL	APPROACH
On- Line Survey	<p>Survey Monkey was developed and tested by Zakumi Peer Circle Exchange</p> <p>On line survey was sent to all email contacts on CSC's data base inviting recipients to take the survey.</p> <p>Zakumi has developed a Peer Circle Exchange that is made up of industry leaders and academics who review approaches, methodologies and project outcomes as part of personal development and continuous improvement plans. The survey was developed, tested and modified prior to being sent out.</p>
Groups	<p>As part of existing scheduled training, trainers were asked to lead a short focus group type inquiry with their participants. A structure was developed and trainers were able to collate this information in a consistent way</p>
Training Evaluations Feedback	<p>Randomly selected 100 completed evaluations from professional development sessions and feedback forms from ISA and PSSP. These forms were assessed with a particular emphasis on collating responses relation to future training needs.</p>
Telephone Interviews	<p>In depth telephone interviews using telephone interview schedule to capture information</p>

5. Findings

A total of 772 child care practitioners participated in this PSNA

559	took the on-line survey
100	individual training feedback evaluation forms were assessed
99	participants shared their views in a focus group
20	participants were interviewed on the telephone

1. Online Survey

The online survey used Survey Monkey, a known and trusted on line resource that can enhance participation for those who have access to a computer. Given the State wide focus of CSC and its commitment to access and equity, Survey Monkey offered the most effective and efficient approach to capturing participants and their views.

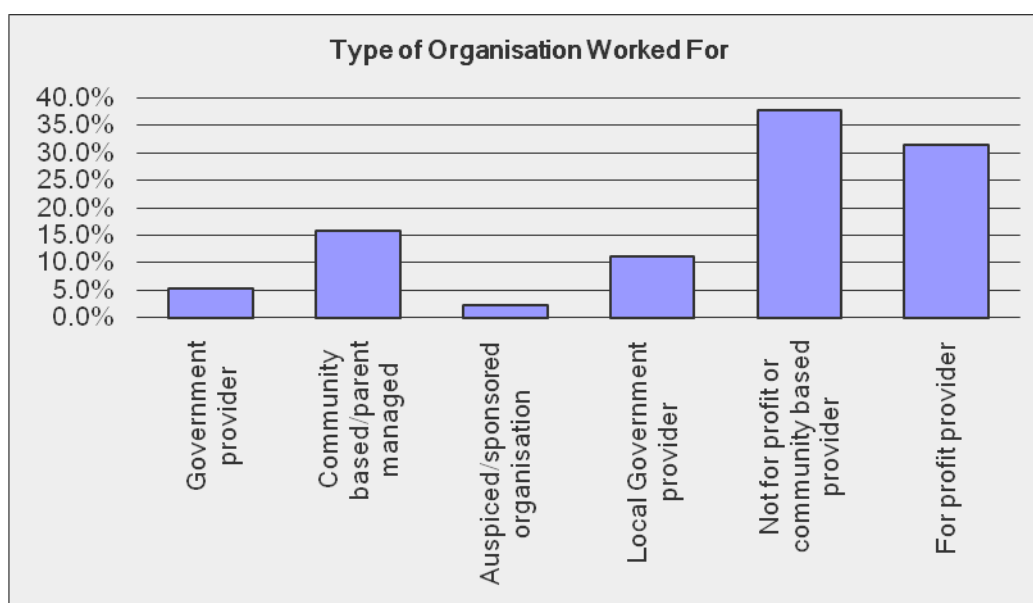
This approach was able to yield results in an efficient and effective manner. A total of 559 people took the survey by the time the survey was closed off. An invitation to take the survey, plus three reminders throughout the data collection period was shared across the target group. The target group was children services who are on CSC's database because they have recently accessed professional support from CSC. The total number of services on the data base exceeded 3 600.

Like all methods of collecting information the on line survey did present limitations. These included:

- Limited participation in that only services with a computer and the capacity to use the computer were able to complete the survey
- The onus was on the person receiving the initial email from CSC to share the invitation with other practitioners in their services
- The questions, were predominately closed questions with limited fields of response
- The open ended question delivered a range of responses making it difficult to assess, although clear to determine key themes.

1. Please choose what type of organisation you work for.

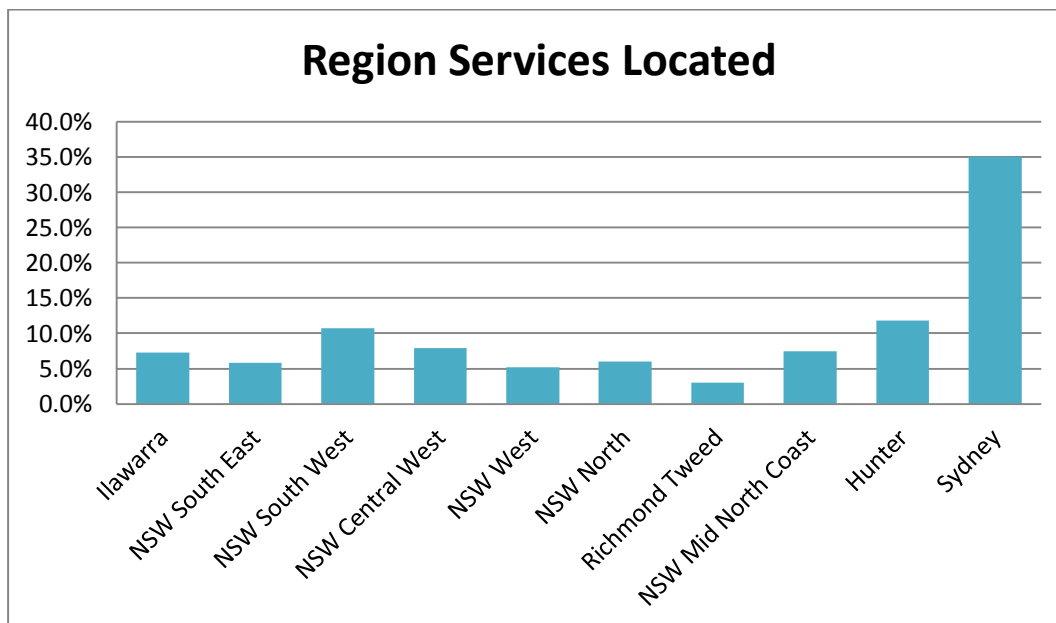
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Government provider	5.4%	30
Community based / parent managed	15.8%	88
Auspiced /sponsored organisation	2.2%	12
Local Government provider	11.2%	62
Not for profit or community based provider	37.8%	210
For profit provider	31.5%	175
<i>answered question</i>		556
<i>skipped question</i>		3



Key Messages

There is a mix of service type organisations offering child care services. The findings are in line with service provider trends in that, the not for profit and for profit sectors are more likely to be the direct providers of children’s services across the State. Approximately 70% of practitioners who took the survey came from the not for profit or for profit sectors, with the not for profit sectors most likely to use CSC’s professional support services. Community based/parent run organisations are also relatively high users of CSC’s support.

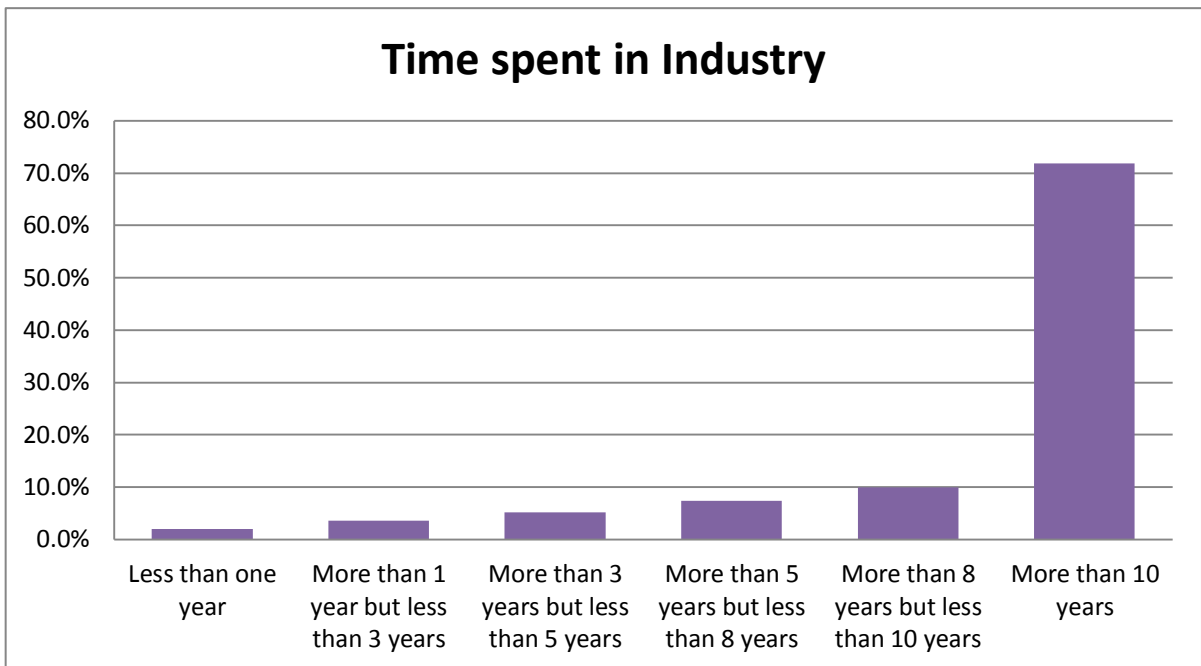
2. What region is your service located in?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Illawarra	7.3%	39
NSW South East	5.8%	31
NSW South West	10.7%	57
NSW Central West	7.9%	42
NSW West	5.2%	28
NSW North	6.0%	32
Richmond Tweed	3.0%	16
NSW Mid North Coast	7.5%	40
Hunter	11.8%	63
Sydney	35.0%	187
If Sydney, which suburb		211
<i>answered question</i>		535
<i>skipped question</i>		24



Key Messages

Sydney based practitioners were highly represented in the on-line survey. This is in line with the concentration of children’s services across the Sydney region. Having said that, every region across the State was represented in this online survey and collectively, 75% of participants were from rural, remote, regional and coastal regions across the State. The Hunter and South West regions of the State each representing just over 10% of on line survey participants.

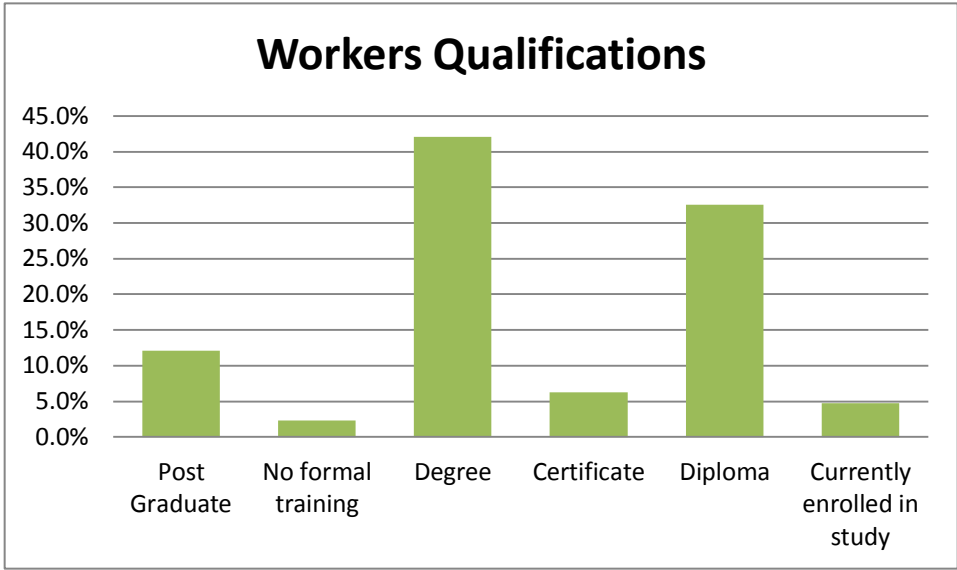
3. How long have you been working in the children's services sector		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than one year	2.0%	11
More than 1 year but less than 3 years	3.6%	20
More than 3 years but less than 5 years	5.2%	29
More than 5 years but less than 8 years	7.4%	41
More than 8 years but less than 10 years	9.9%	55
More than 10 years	71.9%	400
<i>answered question</i>		556
<i>skipped question</i>		3



Key Messages

The overwhelming majority of participants claimed to have been in the industry for more than 10 years. It is acknowledged that those practitioners with more years experience may hold senior roles in their service, and possibly more likely to have access to the computers at work. Having said that, the results tell us that there are benefits in the sector for practitioners and they are choosing to stay in work in the sector. The fact that CSC is able to leverage the support of their end users of professional development may also indicate that CSC has assisted to deliver higher role satisfaction and less turnover in the sector.

4. Tell us about your qualifications		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Post Graduate	12.1%	67
No formal training	2.3%	13
Degree	42.1%	234
Certificate	6.3%	35
Diploma	32.6%	181
Currently enrolled in study	4.7%	26
<i>answered question</i>		556
<i>skipped question</i>		3

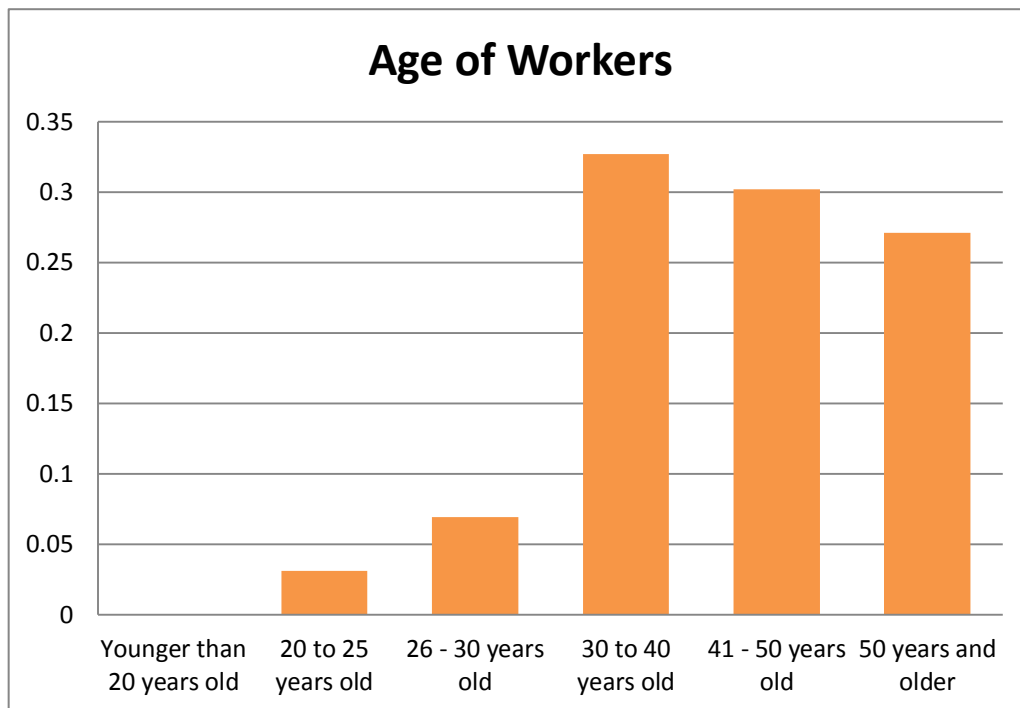


Key Messages

The high level of professionalisation of the sector is evidenced in this result. The overwhelming majority of respondents are qualified. This result may be explained by the fact that those staff with access to the computer at work are most likely senior staff who know and can use a computer. Having said that, it may also be an indicative trend across the sector that is seeing more and more front line workers engaged or having completed tertiary qualifications. This does raise significant issues in terms of the future approach to professional development which may indeed be more about practice enhancement, rather than professional development as seen across other professionalised human service sectors .

5. Please let us know your age group

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Younger than 20 years old	0.0%	0
20 to 25 years old	3.1%	17
26 - 30 years old	6.9%	38
30 to 40 years old	32.7%	181
41 - 50 years old	30.2%	167
50 years and older	27.1%	150
<i>answered question</i>		553
<i>skipped question</i>		6



Key Messages

The data suggests that children service practitioners are likely to be 30 years and older with 25% of participants being 50 years and older. It may also be assumed that child care practitioners who are older, are likely to be more senior, therefore more likely to have access to the computer and complete an on-line survey. A series of assumptions can also be made about the preferred learning needs and support needs of practitioners who are older in relation to their life experiences (they themselves are more likely to have had children in their lives) and in their learning and development preferences. These assumptions are validated further on in the survey as participants begin to tell us of their preferred way of learning.

6. Do you have access to the current Professional Development Calendar produced by Children's Services Central?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	84.4%	466
No	8.3%	46
Unsure	7.2%	40
<i>answered question</i>		552
<i>skipped question</i>		7

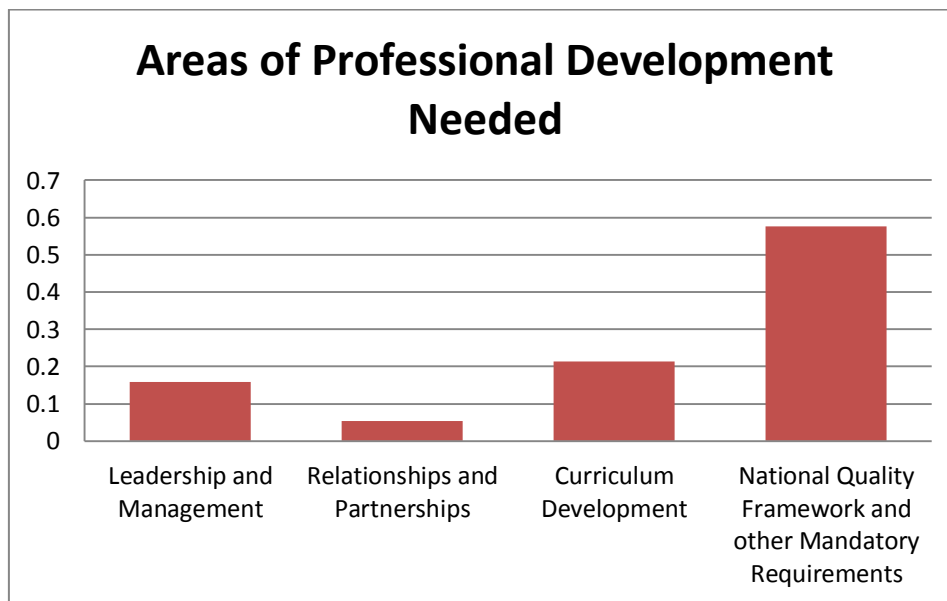


Key Messages

Almost 85% of people who took the survey know about and have access to CSC's training calendar. This confirms that CSC's marketing and target practices are reaching organisations across the State. There was no variation in responses across regions which assumes that target marketing and information sharing initiatives of CSC are equitable. This message to CSC suggests that the information about professional development options are accessible to the target group.

7. Children's Services Central provides professional support and development around the 4 national priorities of the Inclusion and Professional Support program. Choose the area that you feel you MOST need professional development and support.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Leadership and Management	15.8%	87
Relationships and Partnerships	5.3%	29
Curriculum Development	21.3%	117
National Quality Framework and other Mandatory Requirements	57.6%	316
<i>answered question</i>		549
<i>skipped question</i>		10



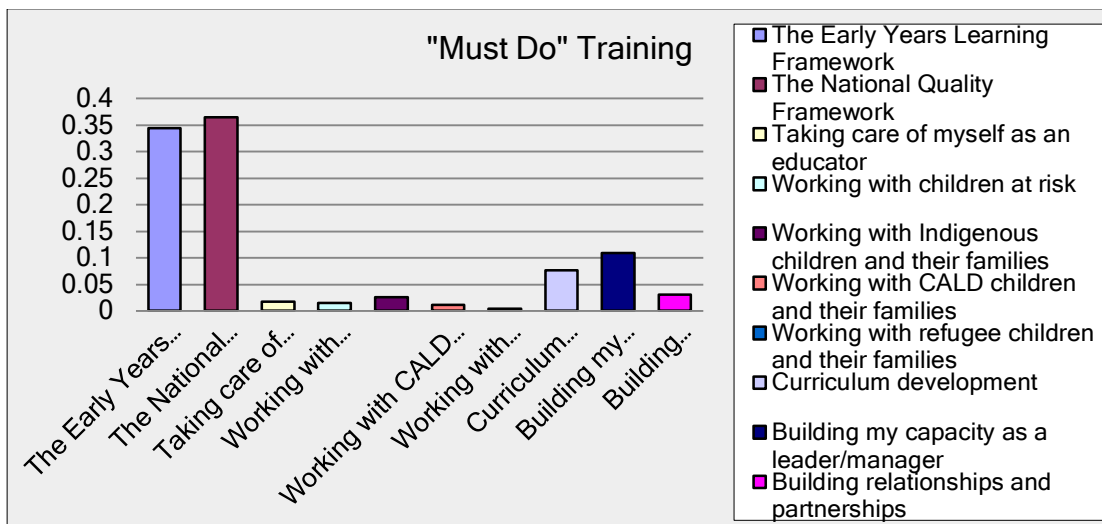
Key Messages

It may be of no surprise that the overwhelming majority of participants are focussed on developing their practice in line with the National Quality Framework and in particular the Early Years Learning Framework. Given the national reform agenda across Australia in relation to children's services, most participants are wanting direction and support to deliver their services. Interestingly however in this question and in the final question (Q.10 of the survey) there is very little evidence of how participants want this professional development delivered and what the content may look like. This gives a clear message that the sector is looking for practice leadership.

This question also identified a need for professional support in curriculum development and leadership and management. This was supported in the answers participants gave in Q.10 of the survey.

8. There is a range of training and professional support available to you. In 2011, what is the "must do" training/professional support for you?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The Early Years Learning Framework	34.4%	187
The National Quality Framework	36.5%	198
Taking care of myself as an educator	1.8%	10
Working with children at risk	1.5%	8
Working with Indigenous children and their families	2.6%	14
Working with CALD children and their families	1.1%	6
Working with refugee children and their families	0.4%	2
Curriculum development	7.7%	42
Building my capacity as a leader/manager	10.9%	59
Building relationships and partnerships	3.1%	17
Other (please specify)		44
<i>answered question</i>		543
<i>skipped question</i>		16

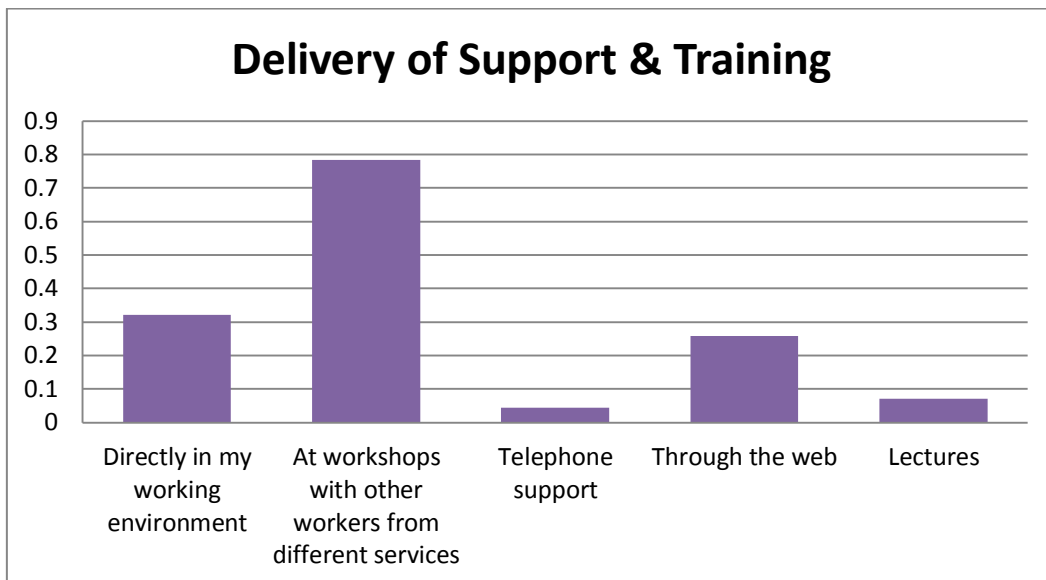


Key Messages

Again the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Framework dominated answers to this question that asked participants to identify their "must do" training for this year. The answers also confirmed the previous assumptions that the participants were more likely to hold senior roles in their service as support to build curriculums and develop personal capacity as managers and leaders scored high in the responses.

9. How do you like your professional support and training to be delivered to you?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Directly in my working environment	32.2%	177
At workshops with other workers from different services	78.4%	431
Telephone support	4.5%	25
Through the web	25.8%	142
Lectures	7.1%	39
Other (please specify)		16
<i>answered question</i>		550
<i>skipped question</i>		9



Key Messages

The findings here support the generally accepted principles of adult learning. Adults learn from each other and through relating their experience to theory and their practice. The preferred way of learning is usually through group based, face to face learning. Having said that, participants also identified work based support as a preferred option, with a significant proportion of responses also identifying web based learning as an option.

10. What other professional development and/or resources would you find beneficial as an educator.

Answer Options	Response Count
	556
<i>answered question</i>	556
<i>skipped question</i>	3

556 individual responses to this question and the raw responses are attached as a schedule in Appendix section of this report

Key Messages

556 participants gave a response to this open ended question that sought to identify key themes in professional development need preferences.

Again, as with the other key questions, participants identified the EYLF and the National Quality Framework as the areas where they required further support in the short term.

This question, like most open ended questions yielded some interesting and strong responses in terms of professional support over and above the EYLF and the National Framework. Participants were able to see professional development in broader terms (other than training) and talked about access to information on latest research findings, behavioural support interventions and practice support in working with families. Participants appear to also be looking for networking opportunities where they can share and build their practice experience back into their service. Some have taken the initiative to build these networks, but some seem to be looking for leadership and advice on how to best do this.

The constraints of a mainly female work force and geographically isolated services indicate that training and support to better build capacity into their service needs to happen as part of the day to day service delivery, or within work hours and close to home.

The overwhelming message is access to timely and varied information and tools to convert this information into practice is the future challenge.

2. Focus Group Consultation

This approach built in some broader exploration of professional support needs through pre-planned training sessions. Trainers were asked to put aside some time at the end of their session and engage participants in a few questions about their professional support needs. A set structure was developed and trainers were asked to lead the session or ask participants to individually complete the form.

A total of 99 people participated in this focus group structure over February and early March 2011.

1. Key Challenges and what do you most worry about?

Most Responses

- Recruitment of skilled and qualified staff
- Resources and enough time
- Geography and isolation
- Staff training
- EYLF implementation and more information wanted
- Paperwork
- CALD
- New NQS

Key Messages

Consistent with the findings in the on line survey, participants identified the NQS and the EYLF as their most challenging area of their work. Having said that, the issues around staffing rated very high in their responses as did the broad issue of “paperwork” which participants fleshed out as meaning increased accountability through documentation.

2. Better understanding and doing?

Most Responses

- Early Childhood Education terms, practices and developing systems
- The framework
- EYLF- programming, documenting, implementing and systems
- More resources needed
- NQF implementation
- Time management
- Portfolios

Key Messages

This question explored what participants felt they needed to help them better understand their practice. Again, the EYLF and NQF are top of mind for practitioners across the State. The reform agenda is absolutely dominating practitioners thinking and planning.

In addition some responses indicated some support in better managing time and also building portfolios for children in their practice.

3. How do you want to learn and develop as a children's service practitioner? What support do you need to do your job?

Most Responses

- Training, support and more resources
- Practical ideas, documents, professional development, skills development, and information on current trends.
- More training on FDC and EYLF
- Better explanation of what is expected
- Online support

Key Messages

A strong indication that practitioners are looking for a mix of opportunities to learn and further develop their practice. The overwhelming message is that practical, useable and transferrable tips of how to build the EYLF into everyday practice are in high demand. Focus on developing skills was also important to participants as is the capacity to use professional support whenever they are able to, through on line resources.

4. Example of how you used the professional support you have accessing in your job?

- Sharing with all staff members- information and ideas
- Networking
- Starting to implement and understand EYLF and NQS
- To ask questions
- Training and improve systems

Key Messages

Professional support outcomes in practice are often difficult to determine. Asking participants to reflect on how they use what they learn in their practice can be a challenge. Measuring the impact of professional development as well the outcomes often requires more intensive inquiry. Having said that it is clear that the value that participants put on professional support is more likely to be measured by how their personal networks have expanded, their capacity to ask more questions about their practice, the ability to share information with others and improved systems and processes in their own workplace.

3. Training Evaluation Analysis

This approach attempted to use existing information held by CSC in regards to professional development that had already been delivered. 100, randomly selected evaluation forms from training conducted over the past year were assessed.

Respondents to the training evaluation come from community based centres (55.3%), privately owned (38.2%) and other service bases (6.5%) e.g. council. The breakdown of types of centres from which they emanate is as follows:

LDC	FDC	OSHC	Occ Care	In home	MACS	Other
54%	8%	7.1%	0.1%			34.5%

Tally equals more than 100% as some participants nominated multiple service types

The Key Ratings

There are a number of evaluation forms in use and there were some difficulties in standardising the response information. However, a number of interesting findings did emerge.

Attendees are very pleased with the content of sessions, quality of the facilitator and the usefulness of the session.

In response to questions regarding their satisfaction with the training session and facilitator, 92% scored their responses as either very good or excellent. The remaining 8% rated the sessions and facilitator as good.

When asked to rate the usefulness of content, 96% rated the content as either very useful or extremely useful. The remaining 4% rated the content as useful. There were no negative ratings recorded for any of the three scales.

Attendee expectations

99% of attendees come to sessions with expectations they can list and describe. However, it is difficult to measure a correlation between the expectations listed and the actual points/skills they have learned. In other words, the current evaluation forms do not allow for a measurement of the extent to which expectations have been met.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that as the overall ratings for the sessions are very positive, expectations are predominantly met. A more numeric approach to gauging expectations and their correlation to outcomes could be desirable for the future.

Do attendees have further questions?

A significant percentage of attendees (72%) nominated further questions arising from the sessions. The majority were linked to issues that had been stimulated in their minds to follow-up at their services.

A smaller, but significant percentage, approximately 11%, identified skills or knowledge deficits in their questions which may provide a springboard for consideration of more training options that are more skills and implementation focused.

Examples of questions which provide insight into this potential are:

- *Could I correctly identify a child at risk?*
- *What is the practical part of EYLF?*
- *How to follow criteria for accreditation*
- *Where to start-programming links (refers to EYLF)*
- *How can I put the framework into place?*
- *How to manage conflict*
- *Documentation?*
- *How to write all the policies and procedures*

Can attendees identify actions that are generated from their learning?

Once again, the overwhelming majority of those completing evaluation surveys were able to identify things they could do or wanted to do on return to their service (less than 2% did not nominate new actions).

If education is deemed to be a change in behaviour, there is strong evidence in this result that education, as opposed to information sharing, has occurred at the training sessions.

Identified actions are listed in the table below:

Action	Number
Pass on knowledge, discuss with staff, mentor staff	22
Start implementation of EYLF/gather info for NQS	11
Meeting with staff and/or director	9
Develop self-study/review outcomes	6
Team building	5
Update policy/procedures	4
Change/improve programming, new approaches and strategies re program	4
Look at philosophy	3
Physical checks at close/am, pm checks	2
Use resources/bring back resources	2
Distribute info to parents	2
OHS/risk management	2
Rethink documentation, daily diaries, portfolios	2
Organise training	2
Change menus and drink, evaluate food options	2
Temp checking, temp gauge	2
All the following scored 1 response each: Join institute, enforce an issue, work to improve inclusion, change communication with parents, factor in meetings and documentation time to budget, follow up on legislation, time management, access Fair work Act and IR website, staff responsibilities and Regs, implement recycling.	

How do attendees find out that the sessions are on?

Attendees access a variety of information channels to identify their training opportunities:

Train calendar	Internet	Email flier	Word of mouth	Work colleague	Other
49%	12.2%	12.2%	3.4%	16.6%	6.6%

The predominant method is via training calendar but the variety of access points suggests that CSC should continue to use varied communication methods for promotion of training.

Do Attendees have other training needs expressed?

Attendees have indicated a number of other training requests. While there was a dominance of requests regarding EYLF, Accreditation and standards, they were able to identify other needs. These are grouped in categories in the table below. Many are offered by CSC at present.

Training request	Number
EYLF	32
Autism, behaviour management, children with additional needs, Paed. mental health	14
NQS/Accreditation	6
School readiness, child develop, babies and younger children	5
Reflective programming, vacation care programs	5
Child protection	5
Team building	5
Documentation	4
Visualisation and meditation, music therapy, music in early childhood	4
Time management, planning, management issues, strategies	4
Curriculum	3
The following topics attracted 2 nominations each: Mentoring and leadership, intentional teaching/reflective learning, multicultural/multilingual, OHS/risk management, OOSH	2
The following topics attracted 1 nomination each: First Aid, research update, implementing new ideas, cooking, anything in Newcastle, conflict management, critical incident, counselling, literacy, setting up outdoor environment	1

What did the respondent want from the training?

Confidence re EYLF / better understanding / questions answered 1
 Embrace change 1
 Info for programming input 1
 How to put framework into place 1

What did the respondent learn from the training?

How to adapt EYLF 1
 Incorporate into service 1
 That EYLF is integrated individually in each service 1

What questions were raised by the training?

How can I put framework into place 1?

What action will you take when you get back?

Change program 1
Training for staff 1
Start implementation 1

What future training is required?

More EYLF 1
Mentoring and leadership 1

Other comments

Enjoyable and informative 2
Need longer session to bring documentation and share 1

Please note: variations in individual tallies on the sheets reflect variables such as participant not answering a question, answering more than one option or the question not being available on the particular evaluation form

Key Messages

CSC is offering many courses that are sought by people involved with child care, the quality of the courses is high and they are very well-received by participants.

There are opportunities for new training initiatives that are either information or skills based. While there is currently an overwhelming pre-occupation with the need for information and guidance regarding EYLF and National Standards, participants were able to identify other areas of need.

Evaluation forms are non-standard and a number of different formats were completed by participants. The evaluation form should be standardised and thought should be given to creating a stronger repertoire of quantitative questions for the purpose of analysis and trend mapping. The revised form should also explore the interest of participants in accessing other modes of training method via online sources in order that CSC generates data which enables it to plan for both content and training methodology for the future. CSC should continue to use a range of notification techniques to promote its training but the training calendar is obviously a key resource.

4. Telephone survey

The nominated services for contact were a representative sample of services across the state. The manager/director of each of the contacted services was consulted. They were asked to respond to the questions, by giving consideration to both themselves and their frontline staff.

Telephone surveys were just one of the methodologies employed to confirm the professional support needs of the sector. The nominated services were a representative sample of services across the state. The manager/director of each of the contacted services was consulted. They were asked to respond to the questions, by giving consideration to both themselves and their frontline staff.

A total of 43 services were contacted which resulted in a response rate of 46.5% (20/43).

Question 1: Key Challenges

Whilst a variety challenges were identified, 44% of participants nominated that their key practice challenge related to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The main challenges associated with EYLF included programming, documentation, duty of care, time and change management.

Other non-EYLF issues included accessing affordable training, staff/carers retention and working with children who have additional needs.

Question 2: What participants worry about the most?

Overwhelmingly, 62% of participants identified that they worried about EYLF the most. Their concerns in relation to EYLF included translating EYLF to CALD carers, documentation, implementation, time management, legal implications, compliance and maintaining pace with the ongoing changes. A pervasive theme throughout the interviews was uncertainty and confusion about EYLF. Most participants expressed concern as to understanding EYLF despite having attended the training. This was a source of significant concern for participants.

Question 3: Need to get better at understanding + doing

Again, whilst a variety of responses were provided 65.7% of respondents nominated that they need to get better at understanding EYLF. On further prompting respondents identified more specific areas they need to improve in relation to EYLF. This included understanding the framework, legal responsibilities, how to operationalise the framework, documentation and how to translate EYLF to make it accessible to Family Day carers.

Question 4: Support to do job

67.6% of respondents identified that training was a key support, which assisted them to undertake their role. Respondents also advised that training should be affordable, localised, regular, during the day and face-to-face. The respondents nominated the following topics that specifically supported them to undertake their work: EYLF, time management, policy development, IT and behaviour management. Other respondents suggested that mentoring, networking and conferences also supported them to undertake their role.

Question 5: Professional support accessed in the past

Participants have accessed the following professional support in the past:

- telephone advice/support provided by Children's Services Central (CSC) 12.5%
- regular newsletters from CSC 3%
- training (provided both by CSC and other accredited facilities) 56%
- conferences 6%
- networking 6%
- mentoring 15.6%

All participants spoke highly of the professional support offered by CSC.

Question 6: Other information

The key feedback provided to this question related to training.

Participants were keen to see that affordable and specific training was provided. The other key feedback was a desire for a telephone advice line provided by CSC.

Key Messages

Overall it was difficult to get participants to think about their professional development beyond EYLF. Most services believed there was little other professional development they required, other than understanding how to implement EYLF. There was little insight that the skills required to implement EYLF, were key skills they required in their day to day work.

6 Snapshot of Professional Support Needs in NSW

The professional support agenda for children's services across NSW has been dominated by the National Reforms in Children's Services.

High energy, and in some instances, high concern is evident as children's services across NSW begin to embrace the fact that their accountability requirements, and their practice, needs to change in line with the reforms. Without a doubt, children's services across NSW, are rightly so, looking towards CSC to provide them with leadership and support to ensure their service meets, or exceeds requirements.

The results of this PSNA are impacted upon by the roles participants have in children's services. Most participants were aged 40 years and over, many of whom held senior roles in their service. The significant proportion of participants in this PSNA identified as having formal qualifications. What was once seen as an unskilled job is being recognised as a skilled profession and subsequently the demand for professional development and enhancement, rather than skills development and information sharing is evident.

There was very little difference across the children's service types (LDC, OOSH, Family Day Care etc) were requesting in support other than the fact that Long Day Care Staff are much more likely to engage in professional support than their peers.

The interesting finding is that attitudes towards the new Framework are positive. The sector understands and supports the direction of the National Reform Agenda but the anxiety about what this means in terms of their services and the impact the reforms will have directly on their service is driving the demand for support.

The PSNA confirms that the CSC has come a long way in identifying demand for support and delivering a real mix of professional development and support across the State. The high and equitable level of participation in this PSNA is indicative that services are being delivered and accessed across the State.

The findings also being to show a shift in attitudes in terms of how support should be delivered. Whilst face to face, workshop style training is the preferred way of learning, practitioners understand that their development also lies in their capacity to access information on latest research, network with others, and share practice techniques and tools. As such demand for access to information and on line learning tools appears to be high with over 50% of participants requesting that training be delivered in their own working environment or through web based techniques.

The demand for easily accessible, here and now learning and development resources will need to be broadened into the future. The CSC website has high

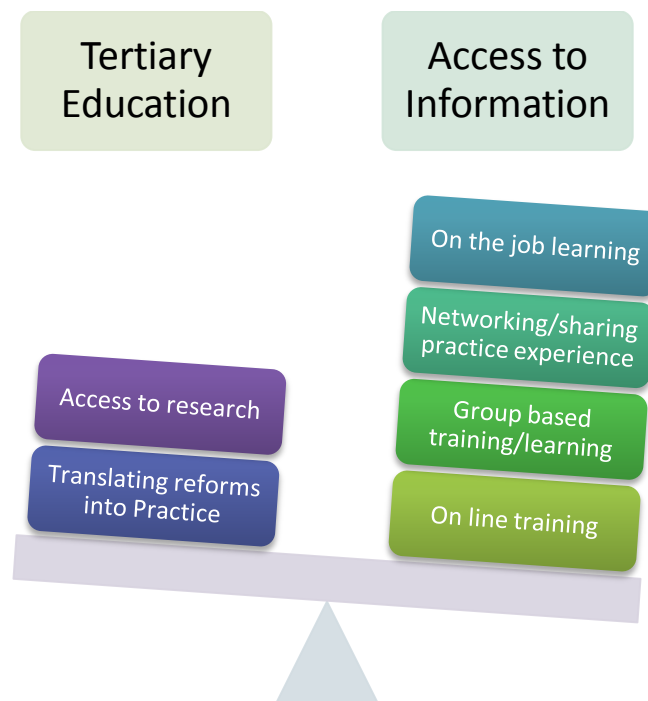
traffic and good strong links to other resources for end users to access. It makes sense to develop this resource into the future.

The professional support needs of children’s service practitioners across NSW are shifting. The shifts are attributed to the changing regulatory framework, as well as the professionalisation of the sector. Practitioners are also being challenged by the changing demands of children and their families as well as the long awaited recognition that early years education for young children is of critical importance.

In 2011, children’s service practitioners have told us that their professional support and development needs can be best met through a mix of support.

Tertiary trained practitioners are looking for opportunities to build their practice and lead others in practice. The demand for quality, user friendly information through a mix of vehicles, including website, journals, research, policy directions, overseas experiences, on line papers, practice examples, storytelling , etc need to be coordinated and made easily accessible to end users across the State. Opportunities to bring practitioners together to share experiences and network is also seen as strengthening practice and with many people in the industry indicating that they are time poor, opportunities to use social media to share these experiences and practice is a significant opportunity.

BALANCING THE COMPONENTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



The top four professional support needs identified by State’s children’s service practitioners are:

1. Practical support to locally interpret and create practices that comply with the Early Years Learning Framework and more broadly the National Quality Framework
2. Education and skills development in managing teams and leading change
3. Opportunities to understand the impact of practice on children’s early learning
4. Building resources develop curriculum programs that are recognised as delivering learning outcomes form children

The preferred ways of developing skills, learning and experience appears to accept that one size does NOT fit all. A mix of learning opportunities is in demand.

The critical message from practitioners is that whilst new reforms, regulations and practice approaches are changing, so too is the availability support and resources to improve practice and outcomes. The onus of keeping on top of these changes and determining what best suits individuals and their service is in fact on the individual practitioner. Collectively we have a responsibility to influence a culture that is about “love to learn”.

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