

RECOMMENDATION

Instead of asking employees to update their qualifications all the time, there should be a points system allocated to professional learning to prove that Educators are current in their learning (similar to how nurses keep their quals current). This will minimise impact on staff stress as they continually need to upgrade their quals. E.g. we have staff on the old triple C qualification who has maintained her professional learning throughout the years, but now faces losing her job as it is not a Diploma.

The Working towards rating is too 'murky' as a centre that has issues in one area is rated the same as a person that has issues in several areas.

The other issue is something that is minor and can be fixed within a week should be given that chance and not automatically given 'working towards' this occurred when a filing cupboard did not have a key and so the whole service was marked down, I think area 7 if it is not a major issue in service and can be fixed quickly then the service should not be marked down, our main concern is working with the children and ensuring they received the best start in life.

Re-install the NSW Family Day Care ratio to 1:5 as the impact of losing 20% of income for Educators as well as schemes has impacted greatly. The majority of schemes have been giving quality care for many years with the ratio being 1:5 and should not be penalised.

Community Family Day Care Office can become the Hub for referrals to all Childcare services in the area making them a one stop shop.

BACKGROUND/ISSUE

The Diploma certificate has been upgraded 4 times since 1980 from Triple C, Associate Diploma, Diploma in Children's Services and now Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care with each upgrade staff usually need to complete a further 4-6 units; long term staff are tired of this upgrading and wish to concentrate on areas more relevant to the community they serve. If a point system was put on professional learning (similar to nurses and Teachers in schools) then staff would be current and would not need to upgrade. RPL is a long drawn out process which sometimes can be faulted with RTO's seemingly making it too hard for staff that they end up doing the modules instead which cost more.

When the term 'working towards' is used our intelligent, caring and committed educators are made to feel inadequate despite their hard work.

Our educators are nurturing and educating our children in small groups for the past 30 years to a very high standard. Their income should not be penalised due to ratio change as they already know their children intimately and cater for their needs.

Families need to register at several early childhood services to ensure a placement of their child. This can be expensive as parents pay for each registration, as well as, time consuming. If Community Family Day Care became the one stop shop for registering for families then it would save time and money on families. Community Family Day Care are already set up as a referral service so it would not take much to expand this service to cover immediate vicinity.

COMMENTS

- Immediately put a point system in for all professional training so RPL's become unnecessary as RTO's upgrade.
- Remove the words 'Working Towards' from the NQS or put a qualitative number beside it e.g. Working Towards in 1 Meeting in 6.
- The rating does not accurately describe the overall quality of the service. For example we were marked 'Working Towards' in only 3 of the 58 NQS Elements. The other 45 were 'Meeting' the NQS and in 10 elements we were 'Exceeding.'
- Parents at our service have made comments about the 'Working Towards' rating we received. Families don't understand the rating system and thought we failed and could not understand why?
- All 14 Staff and 33 of the educators at our service are ethical, hard working and responsible individuals who take their role and position seriously and care for the children we educate. Educators have commented that the term working towards makes them feel inadequate.
- Grandfather the ratio for existing NSW FDC Educators to 1:5 so they can maintain the income but all new Educators work to the 1:4 ratio.
- Community Family Day Care Services become the referral service for all childcare services in their area making them a one stop shop for families to access childcare and save time for families in registering for early childhood centres in the region.
- We already do this at our service with Family day Care, In Home Care, three OOSH and Vacation services it would not take much to extend to all Child care Centres, and Nanny thus bringing a stop to duplication. Community centres already work not-for-profit so costing would increase slightly.

Recommendations

In home care

Background issues

Kempsey Family Day Care (KFDC) service has been providing In-home care (IHC) to families in the Kempsey and Hastings area for 12 years, during this time there have been a number of changes in the child care sector, but In-home care is still operating under the Interim standards that came in to being in 2008.

We are situated in a low socioeconomic area with a high indigenous population and a number of our referrals come from single parent families, family support services, disability, brighter future program and Burnside.

We believe that the interim standards need to be reviewed and updated to reflect the current direction of child care as a whole, this would also allow for the recognition of the IHC educators as professional child care workers and not seen as cares.

As a service we expect best practice from our IHC educators including meeting the same requirements as our Family Day Care educators, i.e. to provide an educational and learning environment in the family's home, minimum requirement would be a Cert. III, first aid, working with child check, as well as, ongoing professional development. We expect our IHC educators to work within the national quality frame work and we provide regular visits to the family home monitoring and assessing the quality of care as well as the safety of the work environment.

If the government wishes to provide child care benefit to families that employs nannies to meet their child care needs then they need to make sure that it is a level playing field where by the Nanny services would have to meet the same requirements as any child care service to receive child care benefit.

We find it hard to have adequate number of educators in IHC to meet the demand we have from families; this is partly due to the requirements under the interim standards and the low income that educators earn, as well as in the country the distance one needs to travel to a family's home can mean the difference of a family receiving care or not.

Child care benefit structure needs to be more flexible and increased to keep up with the cost of living. We find that families using IHC that only have one to three children often find the gap fee in affordable.

Our services minimum fee is \$18 per hour for one to two children then it increase by \$3.00 for each additional child per hour. If the fee was any lower a self-employed educator trying to run their own business would not be able to sustain themselves financially.

The majority of the IHC educators do not charge families a higher rate during non-standard hours as they are aware that the families would find it difficult to pay the higher fee also, the majority of the families do not receive extra pay for those hours.