Childcare and Early Childhood Learning Productivity Commission

1 RECOMMENDATION

 Alter current deficit model.

BACKGROUND/ISSUE

 The **not met** status, means that on the day the assessor rated the service, a particular element was not seen to be occurring. Families will be under the impression that this means that the element does not occur at all.

COMMENTS Removal of the statement, **not met**, will be a positive step for staff and families alike. The issue is with the perception of this statement and the negative thought it can generate with staff and the community of clients.

2 RECOMMENDATION

 Create a template which clearly outlines a range of possibilities which may be deemed as meeting and exceeding so all services have a set of possibilities against which to measure their own thinking. Access to such a document may assist services in reaching met status, as it is currently too ambiguous and open to any possible assessor bias.

BACKGROUND/ISSUE It is beneficial to have open-ended means to achieve meeting an element. However, ambiguity can arise, as what one assessor sees as meeting an element another may not necessarily see in the same way.

COMMENTS We felt we were meeting the requirements for environment and sustainability as we have two recycle bins and staff remind children to recycle daily, including reasons why we recycle and what types of items can and cannot go into recycle bins. We reuse paper and encourage children to use resources frugally. Yet element 3.3.1 Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations and element 3.3.2 Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment were deemed as **not met**. It is possibly due to the fact that we did not have a specific sustainability policy at the time; regardless we felt we would have qualified as meeting these elements.

3 RECOMMENDATION   Create an affirming framework model promoting consistency and positivity in assessment and rating

BACKGROUND/ISSUE In quality area 3 - physical environment, we were meeting all of 3.1 design and location of premises and the overall rating for 3.1 was deemed to be exceeding NQS.

Whereas, 3.2the environment is inclusive…

 All elements were also designated as met, yet rated as only MEETING NQS.

Element 3.3 The service takes an active role in caring for the environment… both elements were assessed as **not met**, resulting in an overall rating for quality area 3 as working towards. We are confused as to why and how one portion of a standard can be met and deemed exceeding and another set of elements within the same area is also assessed as meeting but , but one set of elements is rated as exceeding whilst the other is rated as only meeting. We assume it is decreed after correlating this data with the assessor's explanatory notes. However, we feel this method may open channels which could potentially be, once again, open to assessor bias.

COMMENTS

Develop a system whereby services can better query outcomes on the day of assessments as opposed to months in arrears. We, as a staff team felt the old Quality Assurance process was a fairer and more common sense model. We were able to discuss areas with the validator at the conclusion of the visit which was beneficial to all concerned. Whilst we understand there is scope for this to occur in some way currently, at the end of the assessor's visit, we do not have direct access to their notes and cannot therefore submit the evidence or extra information in the same way as within the Quality Assurance process

Examining quality area 3 it can be observed that only 2 elements of 7 within this quality area were deemed as **not met**. In quality area 6 collaborative partnerships with families and communities 1 quality area of 9 was deemed as NOT MET, yet this ENTIRE quality area was rated as WORKING TOWARDS despite meeting almost 89% percent of all elements for this area.

Our service overall was rated as working towards despite not meeting only 17% of the criteria, i.e. 10 of 58 possible elements were deemed as not met. This reinforces the NQS as a deficit model. I am a university student and am not required to resubmit work when I achieve 89%, in fact this is considered a high achievement in tertiary study.

4 RECOMMENDATION

NQF overhauled to be in line with practical workplace considerations

BACKGROUND/ISSUE

Speaking to numerous members of the community from diverse backgrounds, the feedback about quality assurance processes respective to their profession has been negative. People speak of being inundated with paperwork and meeting the basic requirements for quality processes, but really just getting on with the practical side and as much of anything else in the ways to which they are accustomed.

COMMENTS

When structures are imposed externally people lose motivation.

Which independent person or organisation wants to fail? When an individual or organisation is imposed upon, the drive for quality which may have previously existed: diminishes. Citing myself and our service as an example, I would say that I was highly driven to offer the best service, aiming to implement and innovate as much as possible for the improvement of the service and therefore hoping to build an excellent reputation and increase client numbers as a result. (This did not include vast amounts of written documentation which families in particular, have little or no interest in). Introducing the various quality improvement systems over the years have watered down my enthusiasm about my job and has had the same impact on my regular staff over the years. I have an idea which I would like to implement within the next year for my service, in order to create a point of difference, however as I study it has been difficult to focus on this and with the demands of NQF I don't see much hope for even moving my idea off the ground.

Referring to the psychology behind motivation in the workplace, people enjoy the freedom to think laterally, innovate and to feel they strive for the best, independent of any external impositions. Hence it should be axiomatic that organisations and individuals will strive for excellence in their own and unique way in order to set themselves apart from the competition. The money saved to services, the government etc. would be enormous if were allowed the freedom to independently reach our full potential and serve the families and children in our respective communities.

5 RECOMMENDATION

Address issues surrounding care settings now demanded to become educational institutions.

BACKGROUND/ISSUE Developmental theories state children learn through play. This being a widely accepted concept; it would follow that we should allow children from early years through to the end of primary school the latitude to be children in play settings and not dictate learning outcomes in a formalised fashion.

COMMENTS We accept and promote the need to take steps in order to assist children at a deeper level where issues regarding development, learning, mental health and other at risk issues are evident. In such cases it particularly important to refer to documentation such as observations as evidence to support referrals to agencies and further sources of interventions. However, we would like to offer an environment where a child can be free to experiment with and expand on knowledge gained from the school and home environment. In our current sociocultural and educational climate, children have enormous expectations and demands placed on them both from home and school. Homework is given to children from a young age and many families highly encourage extracurricular activities outside school to further enhance their child's learning. Our question is,

"Where then, does a child still have the opportunity to be a child in the traditional sense, exploring a range of materials in a safe environment where few expectations, apart from the adherence to a few safety rules, is imposed"

This would be the purest form of play and therefore we would expect this to result in quality educational outcomes for each child.

We feel that documenting play, and programming related to this documentation is superfluous and undermines the existing quality of communication between staff and between staff and children. Children change their likes , dislikes and interests rapidly and on any given day, spontaneity and knowing and communicating with each child as the day progresses allows for offering a programme which melds with the child's needs and interests at any given moment. Documentation encourages rigidity and promotes adherence to the paperwork, this is not how care environments with children operate. We operate in a climate of flexibility, without which it is more difficult to meet children's fluctuating needs and moods.