Getting to Know the NQS

Resources guide

Getting to Know the NQS is an eight-part video series produced for the National Quality Standard Professional Learning Program (NQS PLP), and presented by early childhood consultant Anne Stonehouse. This document contains the scripts for the video series, along with a selection of additional resources for each Quality Area, drawn from the NQS PLP resources library. All NQS PLP resources can be accessed for free on our website: http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/.

If you have questions or comments based on the video series, please let us know! You may choose to:

- Post a comment or question on our Facebook page—https://www.facebook.com/eylfplp—or our online Forum—http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/forum/.
- Email us at nqsplp@earlychildhood.org.au.

Introduction: script

Welcome to this series of videos titled Getting to Know the NQS. My name is Anne Stonehouse, and I’ll be guiding you through the National Quality Standard for children’s education and care services. This eight-part series is designed to give you a very clear, brief overview of the contents of the National Quality Standard.

The National Quality Standard applies to early childhood services and services for school age children. So this series has been designed for all the service types covered by the NQS, whether they provide outside school hours care, long day care or family day care. The information I’ll be giving you is equally suitable for use in each service type.

The purpose of the series is to:

- explain the National Quality Standard to educators and staff who are new to the education and care sector;
- assist services to prepare or review their Quality Improvement Plan; and
- generate and support discussion about practices and policies.

It’s important to remember that, although the Standard applies to all services covered by the National Quality Framework, your service and setting is unique in many ways. This series is designed to explain the National Quality Standard, but it also aims to get you thinking about your unique circumstances—the strengths and the challenges in your service—and about how your practices can help you to meet the Standard.
Let’s get started. Firstly, what is the National Quality Standard? The National Quality Standard is part of the National Quality Framework, an agreement between all state and territory governments and the Australian government. The National Quality Framework is designed to ensure the highest possible standard of education and care for children right across Australia.

The National Quality Framework was introduced on January 1 2012, and is being implemented over several years. The Framework applies to most children’s education and care services, including all services providing outside school hours care, long day care and family day care. But some types of services in some states and territories are not covered by the National Quality Framework, which means they are not covered by the National Quality Standard. Services not covered by the Framework at the moment could be included in the future, depending on the decisions of governments.

The National Quality Framework is made up of four parts:

- a national legislative framework, called the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations
- the National Quality Standard
- a quality assessment and rating system for services; and
- the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority—ACECQA—a national body that is jointly governed by the Australian Government and state and territory governments. ACECQA oversees the new Framework.

So, what is the role of the National Quality Standard as part of the National Quality Framework? The National Quality Standard is the new benchmark for quality in children’s education and care services. It is based on comprehensive evidence from Australia and overseas about how educators can best support and promote children’s learning. We know that the quality of education and care that children receive, from the time they are born, is important for their learning, development and wellbeing in the present and lays the foundation for the rest of their lives. The National Quality Standard aims to ensure the highest quality of experience for children. Striving to meet the Standard will also help services to improve continuously. Even services that are already performing well need to review their policies and practices regularly.

The National Quality Standard is also supported by a set of guiding principles, which are contained in the National Law. In working to achieve the National Quality Standard, services also need to apply the guiding principles, which are that:

- The rights and best interests of the child are paramount
- Children are successful, competent and capable learners
- Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework
- Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued
- The role parents and families is respected and supported
- Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

As you’ll see throughout this series, the National Quality Standard is very closely aligned with these guiding principles.

The National Quality Standard is also very closely aligned with the two national learning frameworks: the Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being, Becoming; and the Framework for School Age Care,
My Time, Our Place. These two learning frameworks describe the principles and practices of educators’ work with children, and the outcomes desired for children’s learning and development. So the National Quality Standard helps educators to work in accordance with the Early Years Learning Framework and the Framework for School Age Care, and with other approved frameworks that operate in some parts of Australia.

Let’s take a look at exactly what’s included in the National Quality Standard. There are 18 separate Standards, containing 58 Elements. The Standards and Elements are divided into seven Quality Areas.

The seven Quality Areas are:

- Educational program and practice
- Children’s health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staffing arrangements
- Relationships with children
- Collaborative partnerships with families and communities; and
- Leadership and service management.

The seven Quality Areas show that good quality involves more than the curriculum and relationships with children and families. Good quality also includes attention to management, staffing, links with the community and other areas of work.

Of course, some Elements relate to more than one Quality Area. So you will find common threads across Quality Areas. Here’s one example of the connections among the Elements. Element 1.1.5 in Quality Area One is that ‘Every child is supported to participate in the program’. This Element is about inclusion, and the purpose is to ensure that educators support children to participate fully as members of the group and provide any extra support, assistance or attention needed for full participation. This Element is very closely related to Element 6.3.3 in Quality Area Six, which says that ‘Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated’. This Element means that educators recognise and respond to any barriers to children participating fully in the program. They work with families and other professionals to modify environments or routines, and ensure the program meets the needs of each child. What this example shows us is that ‘Educational program and practice’ is linked to ‘Collaborative partnerships with families and communities’. You’ll find many similar links throughout the Quality Areas as you reflect on them and put them into practice.

Finally, you need to know how this series is structured and how to use it. Each of the videos in the series focuses on one of the Quality Areas and explains its importance for the practices of educators, coordinators and staff.

You can use the series in different ways. You might watch each of the episodes over the course of a day or a week. Or you might choose one or two Quality Areas that are important to you or your service right now, and watch the other episodes later. You can watch the series by yourself, although watching it with others and discussing it as you go is likely to be more useful. Regardless of the order in which you watch the series, you should start with this Introduction, which provides important information about the aims and structure of the National Quality Standard. And remember—the series is designed to be useful for both new and experienced educators and staff, so make sure it’s available to everyone at your service.
The information in this series is based very closely on the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*, produced by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority—ACECQA. So the ACECQA Guide is an essential resource for continuing your research into the National Quality Standard. You can find the Guide on the ACECQA website. The approved framework at your service is another essential resource. The information presented in this series is also available in written form. The companion document to this series is available on the Early Childhood Australia NQS Professional Learning Program website. It contains the transcripts from the series, along with links to other useful resources and suggestions for further reading.

You’re now ready to start watching the other episodes in the series.

**Introduction: resources guide**

**Essential reading:** *Guide to the National Quality Standard, ACECQA, 2011.*

| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 27 2012: Getting ready for the NQS |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 56 2013: Assessment against the National Quality Standard (NQS) |
Quality Area 1—Educational program and practice: script

Quality Area One of the National Quality Standard deals with educational program and practice. This is a very big topic that focuses on educators’ planning and practices and the ways that the programs they deliver contribute to children’s learning and development. In planning and delivering programs, educators are guided by each child’s culture, family context, interests, abilities and needs.

Some of the terms used in Quality Area One might be new to you—terms like ‘agency’ and ‘scaffolding’. Don’t worry: I’ll explain them as we go along.

Quality Area One includes two Standards.

Standard 1.1 is that ‘An approved learning framework informs the development of a curriculum that enhances each child’s learning and development’.

Standard 1.2 is that ‘Educators and co-ordinators are focused, active and reflective in designing and delivering the program for each child’.

These Standards have quite a few Elements under them, so let’s take a look at each Standard and its parts.

Standard 1.1 is about the role of a learning framework in planning and implementing the curriculum. A learning framework is a document approved by government. It contains principles about how educators work and outcomes for children’s learning and development. Two learning frameworks have been adopted by all state and territory governments in Australia, as part of the National Quality Framework: first, The Early Years Learning Framework, Belonging, Being and Becoming; and second, the Framework for School Age Care, My Time, Our Place. There are other learning frameworks approved for use in some states and territories, and these also aim to promote high-quality practices that lead to positive outcomes for children’s learning and development.

This means that every children’s education and care service covered by the National Quality Framework also has a learning framework to guide its work. But a learning framework is not the same as a curriculum. So what is a curriculum? In children’s education and care services, ‘curriculum’ means ‘all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned, that occur in an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development’. In other words, a curriculum includes the child’s whole experience. An educational program includes planned elements, but educators also recognise the importance of spontaneously occurring opportunities. When they plan their programs, educators need to think about this broad definition of curriculum.

So the Early Years Learning Framework, the Framework for School Age Care and other approved Frameworks are essential tools to use to develop an educational program. But each service will have its own program or curriculum: yours will be influenced by your unique environment and the particular needs and interests of the children at your service.

The first Element of Standard 1.1 is that ‘Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child’s learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators’.
You’ll notice that this statement mentions the five Learning Outcomes in the Early Years Learning Framework and in the Framework for School Age Care. Element 1.1.1 of the National Quality Standard says that your program will contribute to children progressing in the areas described in the two Frameworks. The focus in this Element on ‘each child’ is important: The EYLF says that ‘Children’s learning is ongoing and each child will progress towards outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways. Learning is not always predictable and linear. Educators and co-ordinators plan with each child and the outcomes in mind’.

It’s also important to consider the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework when making decisions about your curriculum. The guiding principles include the statement that ‘Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued’. So educators and co-ordinators need to help children learn in respectful ways about the history, culture and contemporary lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their local communities and more broadly.

The second Element of Standard 1.1 is that ‘Each child’s current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program’.

This means that planning a program involves observing, gathering and interpreting information about children. Educators need to watch, talk with, listen to and interact with children and pay close attention to what they’re doing and communicating in order to get to know them well. Communicating with each child’s family and learning from them about the child is also part of this process. It is the educator’s role to learn what is interesting and important to each child, so that they can provide relevant learning experiences: ‘Children learn best when the experiences they have are meaningful to them and are focused on the here and now’.

The third Element of Standard 1.1 is that ‘The program, including routines, is organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child’s learning’. Routines are predictable events in a child’s day—eating, sleeping and resting, arriving and leaving, toileting and nappy changing, as well as transitions between parts of the day or between indoors and outdoors. Remember that routines should be flexible and undertaken in ways that allow children to play a role and learn. They can offer important and powerful learning opportunities.

The fourth Element of Standard 1.1 is that ‘The documentation about each child’s program and progress is available to families’. This means that educators make recorded information available to families about each child’s development and learning and about the curriculum.

Element number five of Standard 1.1 is that ‘Every child is supported to participate in the program’. This Element is about inclusion—educators taking into account children’s diversity when making decisions about the educational program. The many kinds of diversity that educators take into account include differences in learning styles, abilities, gender, family circumstances, interests and needs. The purpose of this element is to ensure that educators support children to feel a sense of belonging and to participate fully as valued members of the group. Each child is unique, and the program needs to reflect their uniqueness in positive ways. Each child is acknowledged as competent and capable and gets the extra support, assistance or attention they need.

The final Element of Standard 1.1 is that ‘Each child’s agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions and to influence events and their world’.

*Getting to Know the NQS*
What do we mean by children’s ‘agency’? We mean that children are ‘able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on their world’. So this Element says that educators view children from birth as active participants and decision makers in their own experience and learning. What does this look like in practice? It might involve educators encouraging children to make choices and decisions. We might see children initiating play, negotiating and openly expressing their feelings and ideas. The idea of ‘agency’ applies just as much to babies and toddlers as to older children. Babies and toddlers need to make, and are capable of making, choices about their experiences. The goal is to give all children the opportunity and encouragement to initiate and lead learning and to participate in making decisions that affect them.

Let’s move on to Standard 1.2. This standard deals with the knowledge, skills and awareness of educators and co-ordinators in developing and delivering programs. Educators need to be intentional, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. They also need to be reflective, and engage with questions of philosophy, ethics and practice. The aim of this Standard is to ensure that educators strengthen their professional judgment and that they think deeply and critically about their work, always with the aim of improving.

The first Element of Standard 1.2 is that ‘Each child’s learning and development is assessed as part of an ongoing cycle of planning, documenting and evaluation’.

What do we mean by ‘assessing’ learning and development? Assessment for children’s learning means gathering and analysing information as evidence about what children know, what they can do and what they understand. It is part of an ongoing cycle that includes planning, documenting and evaluating. When we record or document assessments, we make children’s learning ‘visible’—to children, educators and families—and we promote shared learning and collaboration.

It’s important to know that there is no one best or right way to record assessments of children’s learning. You can use a wide range of strategies to collect and record information about children’s learning. Documentation can be in hardcopy or electronic forms; it can use words, or pictures, or sound recordings. The quality of the information is more important than how it is presented. The Standard tells us that the information should be ‘rich and meaningful’. The meaning of information about children’s learning comes from educators’ critical reflection and analysis. Involving children and families in assessing children’s learning is vital.

Educators need to remember that documenting children’s learning is not an end in itself. Rather it is a means of improving what is offered to children. And the quality of documentation is more important than the quantity. More is not necessarily better. Documentation only has value if educators use it to evaluate children’s learning and use that evaluation to plan the program.

The second Element of Standard 1.2 is that ‘Educators respond to children’s ideas and play and use intentional teaching to scaffold and extend each child’s learning’.

What do we mean by ‘intentional’ teaching and ‘scaffolding’ children’s learning? ‘Intentional’ teaching means that educators are deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions. It is the opposite of teaching by rote or continuing to do things a certain way simply because they have ‘always’ been done that way. ‘Scaffolding’ describes a way of extending children’s knowledge and skills. It means
that educators provide the right type of support and guidance, at the right time, to help each child build their own learning and development.

In other words, this Element tells educators that they need to be thoughtful about how they respond to children’s ideas and play and about how they plan the program. They need to have in mind purposes or intentions to extend and expand each child’s learning.

The third Element of Standard 1.2 is that ‘Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, is regularly used to implement the program’. Critical reflection means closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives. Educators regularly gather information about children and about the program, analyse it and use the information and analysis to support and improve their decisions about children’s learning. The information can sometimes be very simple—maybe diary notes or snippets of children’s conversations. The important thing is that educators think about what they understand about children’s learning, what they do to support it and why they do what they do. They reflect on their own and with colleagues, as they work and in team meetings or professional learning activities. The best quality services are those where there is a culture of reflection—where all educators are encouraged to reflect on children’s learning, and on their programs, regularly.

And that’s Quality Area One – Educational Program and Practice.

But there are three more things you need to do:

First, read the Guide to the National Quality Standard. It contains more information on Quality Area One, and it has some great suggestions for how to apply the standards.

Second, read the learning framework that your service has adopted. It might be the Early Years Learning Framework or the Framework for School Age Care, or it might be another framework.

Third, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area One, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:

- How do you get to know about each child and their strengths, abilities and interests?
- How do you make sure that routines focus on children’s learning rather than meeting educators’ needs?
- What are all the ways that you document children’s learning currently? Do you emphasise quality more than quantity?
- How do you plan the program? How do you link your records about children with your plans?
- How can you improve the quality of information provided to families about their children’s learning, development and participation in the program?
Quality Area 1—Educational program and practice: resources guide

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

Case studies: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in early childhood education and care

Babies and toddlers

NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 61 2013: Supporting babies’ social and emotional wellbeing
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 63 2013: Talking about practice: Recognising and supporting babies’ and toddlers’ belonging, being and becoming

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): ‘I can do it!’ Supporting babies’ sense of agency
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Recognising and supporting babies’ and toddlers’ belonging, being and becoming

Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Engaging with babies and toddlers
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): The busy baby room
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): A very young child putting a bib on a doll
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Young toddlers’ learning

Children’s agency

Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Doing your own thing—Child’s agency
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Mint tea and a chat
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Feeling better, with help

Cultural competence

EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 7 2011: Understanding cultural competence
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 65 2013: Becoming culturally competent—Ideas that support practice

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Cultural competency

Documenting children’s learning

EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 9 2011: Documenting learning
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 10 2011: Documenting learning 2
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 26 2011: Tracking learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 39 2012: Observing children
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 40 2012: Summative assessment
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 48 2012: Evaluating and communicating about children’s learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 55 2013: Noticing and recording learning

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Planning and documentation

Case studies: Documenting children’s learning and development

Educational program and practice
Getting to Know the NQS

EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 6 2011: Learning outcomes
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 8 2011: Planning for learning
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 14 2011: Planning for learning 2
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 16 2011: Reviewing practice
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 21 2011: Thinking about practice
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 37 2012: Interest-based learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 44 2012: Nurturing creativity
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 45 2012: Inquiry-based learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 46 2012: Continuity of learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 53 2013: Talking about practice: Social and emotional learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 57 2013: Planning the program
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 58 2013: Talking about practice: Adventurous play—Developing a culture of risky play
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 64 2013: Promoting independence and agency

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Reflecting on practice
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Social and emotional learning
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Adventurous play: developing a culture of risky play

Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Making connections
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discovering—What do you see?
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Making music
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Finger painting
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Sandpit play
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discussing a drawing of a watermelon
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Rolling in a tyre
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Folding washing
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): The café
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Samples from the garden: a show and tell experience

Case studies: Planning and programming for children's learning and development

General

EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 17 2011: Conversations
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 19 2011: Myths and realities
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 24 2011: Distant conversations 2
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 50 2013: Perspectives on 'quality'

Inclusive practice and additional needs

NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 38 2012: Curriculum decision-making for inclusive practice
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 41 2012: 'Additional needs'—looking beyond disability

Intentional teaching

EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 2 2010: Intentional teaching
EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 4 2011: Thinking about intentions
### NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 34 2012: Responding to children's play

**Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Intentional teaching**

- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Sustained, shared conversation
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Enjoying the vegetable garden
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Plastic cups
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Car factory

### Literacy and numeracy

- EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 18 2011: Becoming literate
- EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 22 2011: Being numerate
- NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 66 2013: Play-based approaches to literacy and numeracy

- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Story reading with three children
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Word game
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Counting flowers

### Philosophy

- EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 1 2010: Talking about 'play'
- EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 15 2011: Our 'philosophy'
- EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 3 2010: Thinking about play
- NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 28 2012: Revising the service philosophy

### Remote settings

**Case studies:** Quality in rural and remote settings

### School-based settings

- EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 23 2011: Distant conversations

### Transitions and routines

- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Storytime transition to naptime
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Routines around lunch
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Relaxed conversation during fruit time
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Lunchtime
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Hand and shirt washing
- **Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Welcome, an invitation and a brief chat with a parent

**Case studies:** Transitions: Between groups, settings and beyond
Quality Area 2—Children’s health and safety: script

Keeping children safe and healthy is a top priority in children’s education and care services. Laws and regulations explain many of the requirements that educators need to meet for children’s health and safety. Children’s wellbeing is also a priority. Wellbeing goes beyond basic health and safety to include children feeling secure and comfortable. When children are healthy and well rested, and feel secure and confident, they are in the best position to participate happily and successfully in a learning environment.

Learning about healthy lifestyles contributes to children’s sense of wellbeing and builds their confidence in themselves. Educators can help children learn about healthy eating, hygiene and how to keep fit and active. As children become more independent, they can take greater responsibility for their own health, safety and wellbeing.

Quality Area Two in the National Quality Standard deals with children’s health, safety and wellbeing. The aim of this Quality Area is that educators will take every reasonable measure to protect children from harm, injury and infection, and that they will work to promote children’s wellbeing and self-confidence.

Quality Area Two includes three Standards.

Standard 2.1 is that ‘Each child’s health is promoted’.

Standard 2.2 is that ‘Healthy eating and physical activity are embedded in the program for children’.

And Standard 2.3 is that ‘Each child is protected’.

Let’s take a closer look at each of these Standards.

Standard 2.1 is about supporting all aspects of children’s health: meeting their health needs; using good hygiene practices; and dealing with injuries and illness.

Standard 2.1 has four Elements:

The first Element is that ‘Each child’s health needs are supported’. A starting point is that nominated supervisors and educators know about each child’s health requirements. Good communication between educators and families is very important, especially so that educators stay informed about any changes to a child’s health needs.

The second Element is that ‘Each child’s comfort is provided for and there are appropriate opportunities to meet each child’s need for sleep, rest and relaxation’.

Providing for children’s comfort means helping them to stay comfortable and rested. Even very young children will often communicate their comfort needs to educators. For example, a baby may cry or communicate in other ways that her nappy needs to be changed. Meeting children’s comfort needs depends—in part—on tuning in and trying to understand the messages they are communicating and responding appropriately.

For example, each young child and their family will have their own routines for rest, sleep, dressing and toileting. It’s the role of educators to find out about those routines, so that whenever possible, they can
carry these out or adapt them for the child’s experience in the early childhood setting. There are many ways of doing this. For example, a child who does not usually sleep during the day might be given the opportunity to do quiet, restful activities such as looking at books while other children sleep. For older children, this might mean ensuring that they have easy access to a designated ‘quiet space’.

The third Element of this Standard is that ‘Effective hygiene practices are promoted and implemented’. It’s essential to maintain high standards of hygiene, in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and to ensure good health—for children, educators and staff. Good hygiene involves many different areas of practice—for example storing and handling food safely and ensuring that children learn to wash their hands properly.

The fourth Element of Standard 2.1 is that ‘Steps are taken to control the spread of infectious diseases and to manage injuries and illness, in accordance with recognised guidelines’. It’s not possible to prevent the spread of all infections and illnesses within education and care services. However, many illnesses can be prevented through good hygiene practices and implementing policies about infectious disease, including when to exclude children with illnesses or symptoms. When children do become ill, it’s important that educators recognise and respond to their symptoms.

Let’s move on to the second Standard in this Quality Area.

Standard 2.2 is about healthy eating and physical activity. These are required in the program for every service covered by the National Quality Framework. Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition and physical fitness, is an essential part of children’s wellbeing and self-confidence.

This Standard contains two Elements:

The first Element is that ‘Healthy eating is promoted and food and drinks provided by the service are nutritious and appropriate for each child’. There are guidelines provided by the government to help services make good choices about food and drink for each child. Just as important as implementing guidelines is that educators have conversations with children and provide learning opportunities for them about eating nutritious foods and how that contributes to good health. Healthy eating habits begun in childhood can have a lasting effect.

The second element of Standard 2.2 is that ‘Physical activity is promoted through planned and spontaneous experiences and is appropriate for each child’. We know that physical wellbeing plays a big role in a child’s ability to socialise, concentrate, cooperate and learn. Every child needs opportunities every day to be physically active and practice new physical skills, either indoors or outdoors.

The third Standard in Quality Area 2 is about protecting children from harm. This Standard has four Elements.

The first Element of Standard 2.3 is that ‘Children are adequately supervised at all times’. Supervision is a key aspect of ensuring that children’s safety is protected. Children need to be in the sight or hearing of an educator at all times—but educators can supervise effectively while also allowing children to use private and quiet spaces. Effective supervision does not mean keeping children together in large groups or following them around all the time.
The second Element of Standard 2.3 is that ‘Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury’.

The words ‘reasonable precautions’ are important. The idea of taking ‘reasonable precautions’ is that educators consider the likely risks presented by objects, activities and situations, and weigh them against children’s learning and development needs and interests. The purpose of this Element is not to remove from the environment every item or activity that could possibly cause an injury. Children need to play, explore and learn through new experiences. As they learn how to manage risks, and as educators support them to do this, children might sometimes hurt themselves. The purpose of this Element is for educators to manage the risks that children cannot manage safely themselves—things like preventing access to cleaning products and power points, keeping hot drinks away from children and making sure climbing equipment is stable. Daily safety checks will help to identify hazards and protect children from harm.

The third Element of Standard 2.3 is that ‘Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented’. When educators and staff have a clear plan for managing emergency situations, they can handle these situations calmly and effectively, thereby reducing the risk of further harm or damage. This element aims to protect the wellbeing of children and adults, and meet the requirements of occupational health and safety laws.

The final Element is that ‘Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities to respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect’. Educators, co-ordinators and staff are required by law to protect any child who is at risk of abuse or neglect. To meet this obligation, educators maintain a good understanding of the current child protection policy and procedures in their state or territory. In their work with children, educators are vigilant about observing and responding to signs or indicators of child abuse or neglect.

And that’s Quality Area Two—Children’s health and safety.

But there are two more things you need to do:

First, read the Guide to the National Quality Standard. It contains more detailed information on Quality Area Two, and it has suggestions for how to apply the Standards.

Second, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area Two, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:

- How do you find out about each child’s health requirements and routines, and how do you know if these have changed over time?
- How do you maintain acceptable levels of hygiene while minimising the use of toxic products?
- How do you encourage children to make healthy food and beverage choices?
- How do you ensure children know about safety issues and encourage them to develop the skills to assess and minimise risks to their own safety?
How do you set up the environment and resources to encourage and carry out the program to support children to engage in movement and physical play?

**Quality Area 2—Children’s health and safety: resources guide**

NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 29 2012: Health, safety & wellbeing
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 30 2012: An environment for learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 58 2013: Talking about practice: Adventurous play—Developing a culture of risky play

*Talking about practice* (video & supporting document): Adventurous play: developing a culture of risky play

*Connecting with practice* (short video & supporting document): Discovering - Routines around lunch
*Connecting with practice* (short video & supporting document): Relaxed conversation during fruit time
*Connecting with practice* (short video & supporting document): Hand and shirt washing
*Connecting with practice* (short video & supporting document): Feeling better, with help
Quality Area 3—Physical environment: script

The spaces where we live and work have a huge effect on us. For children, the physical environment is especially important. This means that it is essential for educators to pay attention to the physical environment. At a basic level, physical environments for children must be safe and healthy. But beyond this level of meeting basic needs, the physical environment is full of potential and opportunities for children to learn about the world of people and things and about themselves. The physical environment is not a backdrop for learning—it offers opportunities for learning. It can inspire, challenge, encourage and excite. The possibilities are enormous. It’s the role of educators to turn these possibilities into real opportunities—to make the physical environment comfortable, inviting and interesting. When children are in environments that offer rich opportunities and experiences, they learn and develop.

Quality Area Three in the National Quality Standard focuses on the physical environment. This Quality Area includes attention to both indoor and outdoor spaces, and encourages educators to provide children with easy access to both.

Quality Area Three includes three Standards.

**Standard 3.1** is that ‘The design and location of the premises is appropriate for the operation of a service’.

**Standard 3.2** is that ‘The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play’.

And **Standard 3.3** is that ‘The service takes an active role in caring for its environment and contributes to a sustainable future’.

Let’s take a closer look at these Standards, one by one.

**Standard 3.1** is about the physical facilities of the service, including its design and location. It includes the amount, arrangement and use of indoor and outdoor space.

The Standard reminds us that children are learning indoors and outdoors, and that the spaces—as well as what is in them—affect children’s wellbeing and learning. Time outdoors is just as important as time indoors. Having enough space, arranging it carefully and thinking about the materials and equipment in it enables educators to create environments that keep children safe and give them choices about where they are and what they are doing. Environments need to encourage children to explore, experiment, create, express themselves and interact with others in positive ways. The physical environment also provides quiet spaces and private places. Environments that work well free up educators to spend time interacting positively with children.

Standard 3.1 has three Elements.

The **first Element** is that ‘Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, furniture, equipment, facilities and resources are suitable for their purpose’. Their purpose is promoting children’s learning and development and ensuring the health and safety of children, families, educators and staff.

The **second Element** is that ‘Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well
maintained’. Every child has the right to be safe, and educators and others also need to be safe at work. That means keeping buildings, furniture and equipment safe and clean. Good maintenance, cleaning and safety precautions are essential basic elements of any care and education service.

The third Element is that ‘Facilities are designed or adapted to ensure access and participation by every child in the service and to allow flexible use, and interaction between indoor and outdoor space’. All children using a service must have physical access to its facilities, and the environment needs to include both indoor and outdoor spaces, with easy movement between them. The environment also needs to be flexible so that it caters for a range of children’s abilities and interests.

Let’s move on to the second Standard.

Standard 3.2 is about creating environments that are inviting and inclusive and that support children’s exploration, creativity and learning through play and physical activity, both of which are very important for children’s learning and development.

‘Environments that support learning are vibrant and flexible spaces that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child. They cater for different learning capacities and learning styles and invite children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions’ (Early Years Learning Framework, p. 15).

This Standard contains two Elements:

The first Element is that ‘Outdoor and indoor spaces are designed and organised to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments’. It’s the job of educators to think carefully about environments and to shape them so they provide good quality experiences for children. The design and organisation of the physical environment has a powerful effect on children: sometimes small changes can make big differences.

The second Element is that ‘Resources, materials and equipment are sufficient in number, organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program and allow for multiple uses’. In other words, educators provide children with the tools they need to play, choose and find interesting things to do. Materials and equipment need to be able to be used in a variety of ways so that they cater for different interests, abilities and learning styles.

Standard 3.2 focuses on encouraging all children’s independence and competence as they engage with the physical environment. But isn’t that dangerous? It could be, but it won’t be if children have the right spaces, equipment, materials and support. A safe environment for children should never mean a boring environment. In fact, the National Quality Standard encourages educators to ‘offer chances for appropriate risk taking’. Learning to manage risks is important. The National Quality Standard also tells us that children need ‘opportunities to be active, messy and noisy and play on a large scale’.

The final Standard is about caring for the environment and using sustainable practices in the service. When they explore outdoors, children can learn to appreciate the natural world. Educators can extend that interest and appreciation. They can also help children to become more aware of the impact of human activity on the environment and ways to create a more sustainable future.
The first Element of Standard 3.3 is that ‘Sustainable practices are embedded in service operations’. This means that educators work with children to learn about the sustainable use of resources, and together they put in place sustainable practices in the service. These practices might include recycling, using recycled resources, making efforts to use energy efficiently or conserving water. There are lots of possibilities. It is important that children are actively involved in all of these practices. Involving families and the wider community can also have benefits.

The second Element of Standard 3.3 is that ‘Children are supported to become environmentally responsible and show respect for the environment’. We want children to develop an understanding and respect for the natural environment, including the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land. This means providing children with information and explanations about how the environment works. When children learn to care for and appreciate the natural world and the resources around them and beyond, they develop respect for their physical environment.

And that’s Quality Area Three – the Physical Environment.

But there are two more things you need to do:

First, read the Guide to the National Quality Standard. It contains more detailed information on Quality Area Three, and it has some great suggestions for how to apply the standards.

Second, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area Three, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:

- What makes a physical environment interesting and enriching for children?
- What opportunities do you provide for children to be involved in planning and setting up the environment?
- What are the challenges involved in providing environments that cater for a range of interests and abilities and allow full participation by every child?
- Why do children need quiet, private spaces?
- How do you create learning opportunities in outdoor spaces?
- Do you allow children to take reasonable risks?
- How do you show children that you value and respect your environment?

Quality Area 3—Physical environment: resources guide

| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 11 2011: Learning spaces 1: Outdoors |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 12 2011: Learning spaces 2: Indoors |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 13 2011: Creating 'enabling' environments |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter r No. 25 2011: Spaces for children |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 30 2012: An environment for learning |
Environment makeover (five-part video series & website)

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Environments for learning
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Environments for belonging, being and becoming
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Adventurous play: developing a culture of risky play
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Embedding sustainable practices

Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Making connections
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Opportunities for learning in natural spaces
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Sustained, shared conversation
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Engaging with babies and toddlers
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Discovering - Making music
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Children playing with cars and trucks
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Sandpit play
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Working in a community garden
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Rolling in a tyre
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Enjoying the vegetable garden
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Respecting and responding to children
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Plastic cups
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): The café
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Young toddlers’ learning
Whatever the type of service, having a sufficient number of qualified, experienced educators working with children is essential to providing high quality education and care. All services should aim to provide the best possible experience for children. Educators, family day care co-ordinators and staff also need to work together, supporting each other to meet the needs of children and to improve their own practices. This teamwork is strengthened when the service implements a philosophy and policies and has in place procedures that create a shared understanding of practices. Showing warmth and respect to colleagues—including other educators and co-ordinators—is essential to creating a good quality program. These relationships among adults have a powerful, positive impact on children.

Quality Area Four in the National Quality Standard deals with staffing arrangements. The aim of this Quality Area is to improve children’s learning and development by maintaining good child-to-educator ratios and raising the standards for educators’ qualifications. It also aims to ensure consistent practices, ethical conduct and supportive working relationships among educators, co-ordinators and staff in children’s education and care services.

Quality Area Four includes two Standards.

Standard 4.1 is that ‘Staffing arrangements enhance children’s learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing’.

Standard 4.2 is that ‘Educators, co-ordinators and staff members are respectful and ethical’.

Let’s take a closer look at the Standards.

Standard 4.1 is about staffing arrangements that support children’s learning and development, safety and wellbeing. Educators are more likely to be responsive, purposeful and thoughtful when staffing arrangements allow them to direct their full attention to their work with children.

Standard 4.1 contains one Element: that ‘Educator-to-child ratios and qualification requirements are maintained at all times’. The ratio and qualification requirements are set out in the National Law and Regulations. They took effect in January 2012, and they are being phased in at different rates in different states and territories.

Educator-to-child ratios are designed to provide adequate supervision, and to allow educators to meet the learning and development needs of all the children in the group to a high standard. Evidence shows very clearly that having an adequate number of qualified and experienced educators contributes significantly to good quality relationships and positive experiences for children.

The second Standard in this Quality Area is about educators, co-ordinators and staff developing and maintaining relationships with each other that are based on mutual respect, equity and fairness. These principles of respect, equity and fairness are stated clearly in documents about the service’s philosophy and standards, and are evident in everyday practices and interactions among adults and children. Good communication and problem solving skills also provide a model of successful working relationships for children.

This Standard contains three Elements:
The **first Element** is that ‘Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships’. Documents that provide guidance include your service’s statement of philosophy; policies and procedures; and a code of conduct or code of ethics, like the ECA Code of Ethics. If these documents are to have real worth, they need to be understood and accepted by educators, co-ordinators and staff as a basis for everyday practices.

The **second element** of this Standard is that ‘Educators, co-ordinators and staff members work collaboratively and affirm, challenge, support and learn from each other to further develop their skills and to improve practice and relationships’. This element covers a broad area of practice and contains a number of important concepts. One of the most important is the idea that educators, co-ordinators and staff work as a team, in which they can support and also challenge one another. The idea of ‘challenging’ another person is something we might associate with aggression or conflict. But in this context, it means something quite different. If educators are to find the best solutions to problems, and the best ways to support each child’s learning and development, then they need to consider many possible ways of doing things, adopt some ways and reject others.

When educators, co-ordinators and staff communicate openly and positively, and share information, they can create an environment where everyone is trying to improve. In order to deliver high quality education and care, they need to work together — to support and learn from one another, and to challenge poor practices.

The **third Element** of Standard 4.2 is that ‘Interactions convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other’s strengths and skills’. You might be wondering what is meant by ‘equity’. ‘Equity’ is about being fair and impartial. When our actions are equitable, we treat other people fairly, without bias or prejudice.

Respectful and ethical relationships between educators, co-ordinators and staff are essential for productive and high-quality services. What does this mean in practice? It means that all interactions are respectful — even if people are involved in difficult situations like complaints or grievance procedures. It also means that the service recognises, uses and values everyone’s skills, knowledge and strengths.

And that’s Quality Area Four — Staffing arrangements.

But there are three more things you need to do:

First, read the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. It contains more detailed information on Quality Area Four, and it has suggestions for how to apply the standards.

Second, read the statement of philosophy for your service, along with the code of conduct or code of ethics. Can you understand these documents easily? Do the documents reflect what you see around you? If not, why not?

Finally, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area Four, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:
• How does communication between nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators, staff members, families and children support consistent practice, including transitions for children?

• How well is information shared between management, educators, co-ordinators and staff members?

• How well do you and your colleagues work as a team to discuss and reflect on the needs of particular children and families?

• What makes your service a good place to work?

Quality Area 4—Staffing arrangements: resources guide

| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 15 2011: Our 'philosophy' |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 16 2011: Reviewing practice |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 17 2011: Conversations |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 21 2011: Thinking about practice |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 31 2012: What have theories got to do with it? |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 32 2012: Staffing for quality |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 33 2012: The educational leader |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 54 2013: Employment practices—a link to quality |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 62 2013: Talking about practice: Recognition of Prior Learning Pathways |

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Recognition of Prior Learning pathways
Quality Area 5—Relationships with children: script

Warm and secure relationships are the foundation for children’s learning and development. All children need to know that others care about them, know them well and are interested in what they do, think and feel. Developing warm and trusting relationships with children promotes their wellbeing, self-esteem and sense of security. When children feel confident, secure, and supported by their educators, they are in the best position to explore their environment and engage in play and learning.

Quality Area Five in the National Quality Standard deals with children’s relationships, including those with educators and the relationships that children build with each other.

Quality Area Five includes two Standards.

**Standard 5.1** is that ‘Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child’.

**Standard 5.2** is that ‘Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships with other children and adults’.

Let’s take a closer look at the Standards.

**Standard 5.1** is about the quality of educators’ relationships with each child.

Standard 5.1 contains three Elements.

The **first Element** is that ‘Interactions with each child are warm and responsive and build trusting relationships’.

Positive relationships between children and educators build when educators make every effort to get to know children well, use that knowledge to plan learning opportunities and respond and interact in warm and respectful ways. When interactions are warm and respectful, children’s sense of security and trust, and their feelings of belonging, grow. These strong relationships form a foundation for children’s learning. The relationships continue to grow through responsive one-to-one interactions and conversations.

The **second Element** is that ‘Every child is able to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning’.

One of the most valuable things that educators can do is make themselves available to children— for conversations, support, investigation, assistance and play. Learning is largely a social activity, and educators play a big role in supporting all areas of children’s learning. Educators can use spontaneous as well as planned interactions with children to help them learn about themselves, others and their environment. Having these supportive relationships with educators helps children to develop confidence in themselves and their ability to communicate, get along with other people, learn new things and meet challenges.

The **third Element** is that ‘Each child is supported to feel secure, confident and included’. When educators interact in a warm and positive way with children, they convey to children that they are valued as competent and capable individuals. Children learn that they can get comfort and help when they need
it. Each child has their own unique abilities and their own level of confidence in their abilities—educators will recognise and respond to these as they meet each child’s needs. Children need to feel a sense of belonging and comfort in their environment; this is easier to achieve when the physical environment reflects the lives of the children, their families and their local community.

Let’s move on to the next Standard.

**Standard 5.2** is about children building strong, positive relationships with each other and with the adults in their setting.

Standard 5.2 contains three Elements:

The **first Element** is that ‘Each child is supported to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative relationships’.

When children play and learn together, they develop their social skills, knowledge and ability to solve problems and make decisions. When the experience is a positive one, they learn about the benefits of working with others. Children will need support and encouragement from educators to build these collaborative relationships. The type of support will depend on many factors. The support might be, for example, an educator helping a child learn how to join in other children’s play; or they might assist children when they have difficulty understanding or communicating with each other.

The **second Element** of this Standard is that ‘Each child is supported to manage their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts’.

Learning to manage feelings, behave in positive ways, ‘read’ other people’s behaviour and acknowledge others’ rights is a complex process that takes a long time. Educators contribute to this process by taking a positive approach to guiding children’s behaviour, with the goal of empowering children to regulate their own behaviour and develop the skills to negotiate and resolve conflicts or disagreements with others. The guidance strategies educators use demonstrate respect and understanding of individual children and the possible reasons for their behaviour. To support children to learn skills and gain understanding, educators model and discuss feelings, issues about inclusion and exclusion, fair and unfair behaviour, bias and prejudice in ways that make sense for children. It is significant that the National Quality Standard doesn’t separate out what might be labelled ‘challenging’ or ‘negative’ behaviour, but includes it in the broader area of supporting children to learn positive behaviour.

The **third Element** of Standard 5.2 is that ‘The dignity and the rights of every child are maintained at all times’. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child—a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations, founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child. By agreeing to undertake the obligations of the convention, Australia has committed to protecting and ensuring children’s rights. This commitment includes Article 19 of the Convention, which states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Educators, co-ordinators and staff work to protect children from physical and emotional harm. They respond patiently and calmly even when children express strong emotions like distress, frustration or anger. At all times, educators guide children’s behaviour in ways that maintain and promote children’s self-esteem.

And that’s Quality Area Five—Relationships with children.
But there are two more things you need to do:

First, read the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. It contains more detailed information on Quality Area Five, and it has suggestions for how to apply the standards.

Second, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area Five, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:

- What are all the ways that you get to know each child well?
- Do you know some children better than others? If so, why?
- How do you individualise your interactions and relationships with each child?
- What strategies and techniques do you use to extend and build on children’s comments and conversations?
- How do you learn about individual children’s non-verbal cues and communication styles?
- How do you respond to the distress some babies and toddlers (and even older children) feel when they have to adapt to unfamiliar routines, new people and new places?
- How do your beliefs, values and the experiences you had as a child influence the way in which you guide children’s behaviour?
- How do you model positive, respectful relationships with others to children?

**Quality Area 5—Relationships with children: resources guide**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 36 2012: Relationships with children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 42 2012: Cultural competence—stories about work in progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 43 2012: Sustained, shared thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 50 2013: Perspectives on ‘quality’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 53 2013: Talking about practice: Social and emotional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 61 2013: Supporting babies’ social and emotional wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 63 2013: Talking about practice: Recognising and supporting babies’ and toddlers’ belonging, being and becoming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Talking about practice** (video & supporting document): Recognising and supporting babies’ and toddlers’ belonging, being and becoming

**Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Making connections
**Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Storytime transition to naptime
**Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Opportunities for learning in natural spaces
**Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Relaxed conversation during fruit time
**Connecting with practice** (short video & supporting document): Discovering—Sustained, shared conversation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Discovering - What do you see?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Engaging with babies and toddlers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Learning about negotiation in play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Discovering—Lunchtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Children playing with cars and trucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Story reading with three children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Sandpit play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Working in a community garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Discussing a drawing of a watermelon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Word game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Rolling in a tyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Folding washing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Enjoying the vegetable garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Respecting and responding to children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Car factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>The café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Mint tea and a chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Hand and shirt washing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Feeling better, with help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Counting flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>A very young child putting a bib on a doll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting with practice</strong></td>
<td>Young toddlers’ learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality Area 6—Collaborative partnerships with families and communities: script

Families are the biggest influence on their children. When educators develop strong and mutually supportive relationships with families, they can work together to create a consistent, caring environment for children, with the best conditions for children’s learning and development.

Families are the first source of knowledge and advice for educators about their culture and their children’s abilities, life experiences, preferences and interests. Educators need this information to develop educational programs. Families will also have their own beliefs and values about the education and care of their children. Through respectful relationships with families, educators can gain a good understanding of what’s important for families and how to best meet the needs of their children.

Children’s sense of belonging also extends beyond their immediate family and their early childhood setting, to the wider community. By creating links between the community and the children, educators support children’s broader sense of belonging.

Educators and services also need to have links and relationships with other professionals and organisations in the community that support families and children.

Quality Area Six in the National Quality Standard deals with partnerships with families and communities.

Quality Area Six includes three Standards.

Standard 6.1 is that ‘Respectful and supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained’.

Standard 6.2 is that ‘Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about childrearing are respected’.

Standard 6.3 is that ‘The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children’s learning and wellbeing’.

Before we go any further, let’s think for a moment about what we mean by ‘family’. Children can have very important relationships with family members who aren’t parents or grandparents. Educators need to understand that extended families, kinship ties, carers and guardians can provide essential relationships in children’s lives. When educators try to involve all of the people who are important to a child, they are doing their best to create supportive, collaborative relationships.

Now let’s take a closer look at the Standards.

Standard 6.1 is about continuous, honest and open communication between educators and families. This helps families to feel connected with their children’s experience in education and care and helps to build their trust and confidence in the service.

Standard 6.1 contains three Elements.

The first Element is that ‘There is an effective enrolment and orientation process for families’. Creating a welcoming environment for families new to a service is the foundation for any enrolment and orientation process. For example, families who are enrolling might be invited to visit the service as many
times as they like before their child starts. Educators can encourage them to talk about their child’s interests, abilities and needs, as well as to ask questions. Educators can also encourage a family member to stay with the child to help the settling-in process, which is especially important for younger children. Educators can help family members develop a routine for saying goodbye to their child, and let them know that they are welcome to get in contact during the day to see how their child is settling in.

The **second Element** is that ‘Families have opportunities to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions’. Shared decision making with families supports consistency between children’s experiences at home and at the service, helping children to feel safe and secure, and empowering families. Creating a culture of open communication and friendly conversation between families, educators and co-ordinators is a great way to start and to continue. Educators might talk to families about their knowledge and skills, or aspects of their family life and culture that affect the child’s needs and interests. These conversations may lead to ideas about how to involve families in the educational program or other parts of the service. Families can also be involved in more formal ways: for example, through helping to develop or review the service’s statement of philosophy or its Quality Improvement Plan.

While it’s important to give families a variety of opportunities for involvement, it’s also important to recognise that families are often busy, juggling many demands on their time. Using a variety of types of communication will help to ensure that you cater for all or most families. Partnership is different to involvement— it focuses directly on shared information and decisions about the child’s experience in the service. Some families will have more time than others to be involved, but it’s crucial to build a partnership with all families.

The **third Element** of Standard 6.1 is that ‘Current information about the service is available to families’. There are many ways of doing this. Information could be displayed on noticeboards, charts or posters; or through newsletters, emails, websites or communication books. Keeping the information up to date is important; for example, if policies at the service change or there are changes in educators, co-ordinators or staff, families need to know. Services should also keep families informed about their participation in the National Quality Framework and their progress towards meeting the National Quality Standard.

Let’s move on to the next Standard.

**Standard 6.2** is about creating partnerships where educators show respect for families’ values and beliefs, and are able to offer support to families when it’s requested or needed. This requires good judgment and professional skills on the part of educators, co-ordinators and staff.

Standard 6.2 contains two Elements:

The **first Element** is that ‘The expertise of families is recognised and they share in decision making about their child’s learning and wellbeing’. This means that educators treat families as partners in designing and delivering the curriculum for their child. In order to understand and meet the needs of each child, educators use families’ knowledge, ideas and feedback to help improve the quality of education and care.

The **second Element** of this Standard is that ‘Current information is available to families about community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing’. Parenting young children
is a complex and often stressful task for many families. Education and care services can support families in their parenting role by providing information and helping them to make connections with other services in the community.

**Standard 6.3** is about building connections between the service, the local community and other professionals and organisations to support children’s learning and wellbeing.

Standard 6.3 contains four Elements.

The **first Element** is that ‘Links with relevant community and support agencies are established and maintained’. This means that educators connect with other professionals, such as health professionals or family support agencies, and develop relationships with them in order to support children and families more effectively.

The **second Element** is that ‘Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing relevant information and clarifying responsibilities’. Transitions offer both opportunities and challenges for children and their families. Whether they are moving to a different group within their setting, or moving into formal schooling, children need support to ensure they have a positive experience. Educators contribute to this in many ways, including through a plan or procedures agreed with other educators, the family and the child.

The **third Element** of this Standard is that ‘Access to inclusion and support assistance is facilitated’. This involves educators recognising and responding to any barriers to children participating in the program. The aim is to ensure that each child feels comfortable, confident and included, and participates fully. Where children have additional needs, educators work with families and other professionals to modify environments or routines, and to ensure the program meets the needs of each child.

The **final Element** of Standard 6.3 is that ‘The service builds relationships and engages with the local community’. Children, families and services are all members of a range of communities. Engaging with the community strengthens children’s interest and skills in being active contributors to their world. Opportunities to bring the local community into the service, and to take the children into the community, contribute to children’s sense of belonging, and to many other aspects of their learning and development. The guiding principles of the National Quality Framework tell us that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are to be valued in early childhood settings. So community engagement includes making connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in your community.

And that’s Quality Area Six—Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.

**But there are two more things you need to do:**

**First**, read the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*. It contains more detailed information on Quality Area Six, and it has suggestions for how to apply the standards.

**Second**, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area Six, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:
• How can you encourage families to share information, and how can you listen more effectively and include their perspectives in the educational program?
• What are some recent examples of shared decision making with families?
• How do you support and reassure families using your service for the first time, particularly families of babies and toddlers?
• How do you support families to access community resources?
• What is happening in your local community that is relevant to your work with children and families? How can you and the children be involved?
• How do you support each child’s successful transition to another setting or to formal schooling?

Quality Area 6—Collaborative partnerships with families and communities: resources guide

| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 7 2011: Understanding cultural competence |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 35 2012: Collaborative partnerships with families |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 41 2012: 'Additional needs'—looking beyond disability |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 42 2012: Cultural competence—stories about work in progress |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 47 2012: Community engagement |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 50 2013: Perspectives on 'quality' |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 68 2013: Communicating with families about children’s learning |

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Partnership with families
Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Cultural competency

Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Working in a community garden
Connecting with practice (short video & supporting document): Welcome, an invitation and a brief chat with a parent

Case studies: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in early childhood education and care
Case studies: Quality in rural and remote settings
Case studies: Transitions: Between groups, settings and beyond
Quality Area 7—Leadership and service management: script

Services that offer high quality experiences are guided by effective leaders and supported with good policies, procedures and management. They will also have an ongoing cycle of planning and review that involves all educators, co-ordinators and staff, families and children, in order to create the right conditions for continuous improvement. The aim is to operate as a learning community with shared values, clear direction and a commitment to ongoing reflective practice.

Quality Area Seven in the National Quality Standard deals with the leadership and management of services.

Quality Area Seven includes three Standards.

Standard 7.1 is that ‘Effective leadership promotes a positive organisational culture and builds a professional learning community’.

Standard 7.2 is that ‘There is a commitment to continuous improvement’.

Standard 7.3 is that ‘Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service’.

Let’s take a closer look at the Standards.

Standard 7.1 is about creating a culture of trust and openness where management, educators, co-ordinators and staff are motivated to continuously improve the service for the benefit of children and their families.

Standard 7.1 contains five Elements.

The first Element is that ‘Appropriate governance arrangements are in place to manage the service’. This means that the way the service operates is in line with legal requirements set out in the National Law and the National Regulations.

The second Element is that ‘The induction of educators, co-ordinators and staff members, including relief educators, is comprehensive’. The ways in which educators, co-ordinators and staff new to the service are given information, and the types of information given, are very important for creating and maintaining a positive, professional culture and providing a good quality experience for children. Each new person needs to have a clear understanding of their role and expectations from the beginning. They should also understand the philosophy and the main ways in which it is implemented. Leaders and managers in services need to think carefully about what new employees need to know right at the beginning and what types of information can wait until later.

The third Element of Standard 7.1 is that ‘Every effort is made to promote continuity of educators and co-ordinators at the service’. Keeping the same educators and co-ordinators at the service over time helps to ensure consistency of practice and processes, and plays a significant role in promoting children’s learning and development. In addition, hiring and inducting new people takes a lot of time and energy. Services that value continuity and put in place deliberate strategies to reduce turnover are well placed to attract and retain educators, co-ordinators and staff.
The fourth Element is that ‘Provision is made to ensure a suitably qualified and experienced educator or co-ordinator leads the development of the curriculum and ensures the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning’. Developing a curriculum requires ambitious goals and a clear sense of purpose, coupled with a view of children as capable and competent learners. The role of the educational leader is to work with educators to provide curriculum direction that supports children to progress their learning and development.

The fifth Element is that ‘Adults working with children and those engaged in management of the service or residing on the premises are fit and proper’. This is a requirement of the National Law and the National Regulations. A ‘fit and proper’ person is someone suitable for involvement in an education and care service, because they are considered to pose no risk to the safety and wellbeing of children. The approved provider and the nominated supervisor must be assessed as ‘fit and proper’ in order to operate the service. This involves checking criminal history, often in conjunction with a ‘working with children’ check. The requirement to be a ‘fit and proper’ person also applies to every adult who lives in a family day care educator’s home while the education and care service is provided to children.

Let’s move on to the next Standard.

Standard 7.2 is about having effective evaluation and self-review processes, to enable the service to continuously improve its policies, procedures and practices.

Standard 7.2 contains three Elements:

The first Element is that ‘A statement of philosophy is developed and guides all aspects of the service’s operations’. The statement of philosophy outlines the principles under which the service operates, and it underpins all the decisions, policies and daily practices of educators, co-ordinators and staff. For these reasons, it is very important that all educators, co-ordinators and staff— as well as families and children— have a shared understanding of what the statement of philosophy means and how it translates into daily practice. Equally important is that everyone involved in the service is committed to the philosophy.

The second Element is that ‘The performance of educators, co-ordinators and staff members is evaluated and individual development plans are in place to support performance improvement’. A cycle of regular performance review and planning ensures that the knowledge, skills and practices of all educators, co-ordinators and staff are up-to-date, and that anyone who requires additional support to perform adequately receives it. Equally important is that everyone involved is encouraged to identify topics of interest or areas they want to know more about, and that there are ways to ensure everyone has access to ongoing professional learning, no matter how experienced they are or what level of qualification they have.

The third Element is that ‘An effective self-assessment and quality improvement process is in place’. In order to provide children and their families with a high standard of education and care, services need to review their own performance on an ongoing basis and make judgments about how they are meeting the National Quality Standard, and how well they are implementing their approved learning framework. A Quality Improvement Plan is an essential part of this self-assessment.
The final Standard of this Quality Area is about providing efficient and effective administration at the service, so that educators, co-ordinators and staff members can devote as much time as possible to planning, delivering and improving the program for children and families.

Standard 7.3 contains five Elements.

The first Element is that ‘Records and information are stored appropriately to ensure confidentiality, are available from the service and are maintained in accordance with legislative requirements’. In doing this, the service demonstrates a high level of professionalism with respectful attention to families’ privacy, which builds families’ confidence in the records management practices at the service.

The second Element is that ‘Administrative systems are established and maintained to ensure the effective operation of the service’. This is partly the role of the nominated supervisor, who works to ensure that the service complies with all elements of the National Quality Framework. In addition, all other educators, co-ordinators and staff at the service share the responsibility of ensuring that their administrative systems are effective.

The third Element of this Standard is ‘The Regulatory Authority is notified of any relevant changes to the operation of the service, of serious incidents and of any complaints which allege a breach of legislation’. This is required by law, and all educators, co-ordinators and staff must be aware of the types of incidents that require notification to the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority—ACECQA.

The fourth Element is that ‘Processes are in place to ensure that all grievances and complaints are addressed, investigated fairly and documented in a timely manner’. An effective system for managing complaints and grievances confirms to educators, co-ordinators, staff members, families and the community that complaints and grievances are taken seriously by the service and investigated promptly, professionally and thoroughly. This is essential for maintaining trust in the relationships at the service and within the broader community.

The final Element of Standard 7.3 is that ‘Service practices are based on effectively documented policies and procedures that are available at the service and reviewed regularly’. Policies follow on from the service’s statement of philosophy and inform practice directly. Policies and information about the service’s practices—and how they link to policies—need to be clearly documented and accessible. Policies should be reviewed regularly in collaboration with families. This supports a shared understanding—between educators, co-ordinators, staff, families and children —of the service’s practices and the philosophy behind them.

And that’s Quality Area Seven—Leadership and service management.

But there are two more things you need to do:

First, read the Guide to the National Quality Standard. It contains more detailed information on Quality Area Seven, and it has suggestions for how to apply the standards.
Second, think carefully about your own practice. Now that you know more about Quality Area Seven, what do you already do well? What might you do differently? You will have your own questions, but here are some to get you started:

- What do you know about the reasons for turnover of educators, co-ordinators and staff members in your service?
- How can the induction process at your service be improved?
- How do you, or can you, use the roles of the educational leader most effectively?
- How do the service’s performance management processes support continuous improvement?
- What are all the ways you access new information and ideas?
- What are the strengths of the management and administration systems at your service that contribute to delivering high quality for children and their families?

**Quality Area 7—Leadership and service management: resources guide**

**Assessment and self-assessment**

| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 16 2011: Reviewing practice |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 21 2011: Thinking about practice |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 51 2013: The cycle of self-assessment and continuous improvement |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 56 2013: Assessment against the National Quality Standard (NQS) |

**Talking about practice** (video & supporting document): Self-assessment, reflective practice and quality improvement processes

**Educational leaders**

| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 33 2012: The educational leader |

**Talking about practice** (video & supporting document): The role of the educational leader

**General**

| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 5 2011: Voices from the field |
| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 17 2011: Conversations |

**Service philosophy**

| EYLF PLP e-Newsletter No. 15 2011: Our 'philosophy' |
| NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 28 2012: Revising the service philosophy |

**Talking about practice** (video & supporting document): Revising a Service Philosophy

_Getting to Know the NQS_
Staffing

NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 32 2012: Staffing for quality
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 46 2012: Continuity of learning
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 54 2013: Employment practices—a link to quality
NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 62 2013: Talking about practice: Recognition of Prior Learning Pathways

Talking about practice (video & supporting document): Recognition of Prior Learning pathways