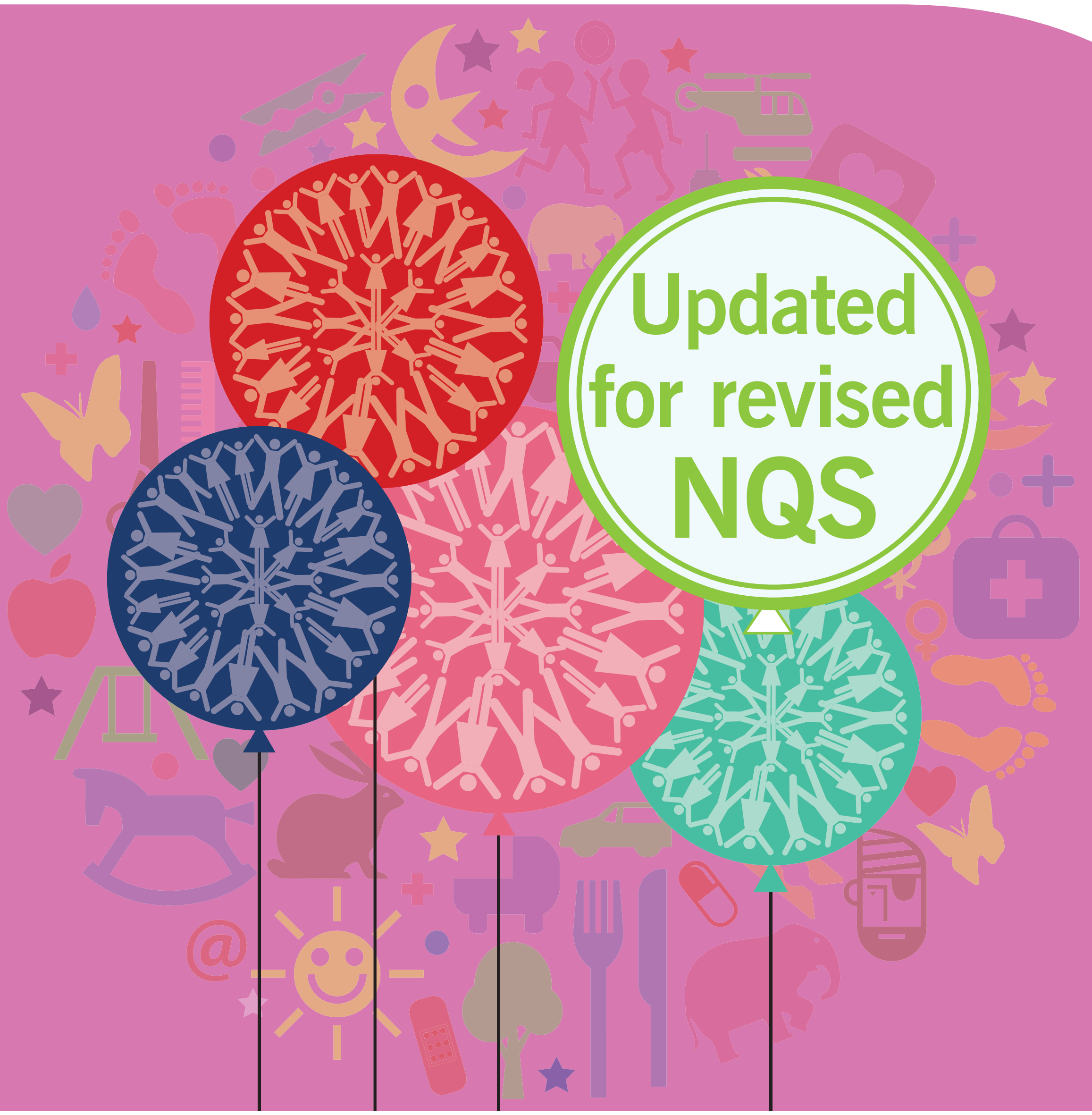
CHCMGT003
Lead the work team



Learner guide

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CHCMGT003

Lead the work team

Release 1

Learner guide

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CHCMGT003 Lead the work team, Release 1

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Contents

Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCMGT003 Lead the work team,* Release 1. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au.

How to work through this learner guide

This learner guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the learner guide you need to read, and which practice tasks and learning checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the learner guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	▶ Read each topic in this learner guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	▶ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into practice. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	▶ Where QR codes appear, you can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help. v1234
Summaries	▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	▶ There are learning checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

Contribute to and promote effective work practices

If you are a team leader or senior staff member, you need to be aware of the personal qualities of an effective leader. Leaders are involved in developing and implementing strategies to ensure the workplace operates in a positive and efficient manner. Senior staff and managers must model effective leadership and maintain a cohesive team. In this topic you will learn about ways of working to sustain health and morale, processes that promote cooperative work practices and maintain effective working relationships, and taking responsibility for your own behaviour. You will also learn about work plans, strategies to maximise work performance and outcomes, and effective measures to inform staff of workplace requirements.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
Early Years Learning Framework		**My Time, Our Place**
Principles		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

1A Leadership in an education and care service

Children flourish when they can form meaningful relationships with their educators. Well-run education and care services should have staff stability, with low staff turnover. Employees should be able to manage their workloads with minimum stress and maximum professional fulfilment. Encouraging and maintaining good staff health and positive morale requires perceptive leadership based on observation and skilled communication.

Leadership

Effective leadership is associated with good workplace morale, minimal staff turnover and high-quality outcomes for children and families. By contrast, poor leadership results in low morale, stress and discontent among staff, high staff turnover and poor delivery of education and care. Good leaders have a clear perception of their own goals and their goals for the service and the staff they supervise. Whether you are a service director, a team leader or in charge of other staff, you are still a leader.

Effective leaders in education and care services are involved in the day-to-day running of the centre and contribute in measurable ways to protecting the health, wellbeing and morale of team members.

Examples of ways to maximise work performance include:

- ensuring staff have a clear vision
- using effective communication skills
- providing feedback and support
- demonstrating respect and fairness
- encouraging teamwork and innovation
- mentoring, advocating and acknowledging staff
- encouraging sustainable practices.

Ensure staff have a clear vision

An effective leader provides team members with a set of goals that enable them to link their role and responsibilities with the service philosophy. For example, the director may link the educators' roles to the service's vision, which is 'to provide education and care services that reflect the models of best practice'. By providing the link to the service's overall objectives and mission, team members are aware of how their skills, knowledge and responsibilities fit within the organisation's vision.

Use effective communication

Communication is critical to building effective working relationships. Once communication channels are established, they need to be constantly maintained so that the relationship grows and the people communicating are ready to deal with changes in the service. Open, effective communication is critical, and the service director should schedule regular meetings at which all staff members are present. Encourage team members to raise any issues that are important to them. All staff should feel confident that they will be listened to respectfully and that their input will be valued.

Provide feedback and support

Providing ongoing, quality feedback is a key responsibility of managers and leaders. Ongoing performance, job satisfaction, morale and employment retention are influenced by a manager's ability to provide effective feedback.

Positive coaching is a method adopted in education and care settings, and in many successful teams and organisations. If poor performance becomes an issue with a team member, an effective leader will handle it in a constructive manner in a private setting. Alternatively, if a team member demonstrates exemplary behaviour, they should be acknowledged.

Characteristics of positive and effective feedback:

- Attentive to the needs of the person receiving it
- Purpose is to help, not to hurt
- Given at an appropriate time and place, as soon after the event as possible
- Based on observable behaviour, rather than on your own feelings or conclusions
- Positive and constructive; 'sandwich' negative statements or criticisms between positive statements or praise
- Specific
- Documented, where possible

Demonstrate respect and fairness

A leader must demonstrate respect and fairness to all team members, as well as to children and families. There are state/territory and national requirements that dictate this, such as the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth).

Encourage teamwork and innovation

In work teams, a common purpose and a clear understanding of the role, responsibilities and individual goals of individual members and the team as a whole are essential to ensuring a quality outcome. A leader can foster teamwork by investing time and effort in ensuring the team understands its focus and purpose. As team members bring their own skills, knowledge and abilities to the group, a leader can encourage teamwork by supporting all team members to have active input in planning, decision-making and operational aspects of team activities.

Encourage sustainable practices

Sustainability means reducing our ecological footprint – our use of the earth's resources balanced with the earth's capacity to regenerate – without affecting our quality of life. All industries, including education and care services, have the opportunity to incorporate sustainability principles and processes into day-to-day operations. Sustainability principles are broadly applied to the workplace in terms of environmental, economic and social aspects. An additional principle is that of workforce sustainability: how staff are trained and retained. This has a direct impact on staff morale.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability means using the earth's resources without substantially affecting the ability of future generations to access them, including maintaining the beauty of the natural environment. Environmental sustainability is about taking things from the natural environment at a slower rate. For example, using less paper in your workplace may reduce tree logging, which may in turn reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. You can demonstrate this by using the three Rs – reduce, reuse and recycle – as described in the information below.

Reduce

Print or copy as few things as possible. You probably don't need a hard copy of most documents. Printing or copying on both sides of the paper dramatically reduces the amount of paper you use. Buying paper made from recycled products also reduces the environmental impact.

Reuse

Wherever possible, use the same paper again. If you have finished with a copy of something, use the reverse side for notes. If it is something that several people need to read (for example, a copy of an interesting article), consider setting up a system to circulate one copy for everyone to pass on when they have finished.

Recycle

Use a box to collect your paper for recycling at your desk, then transfer it to the recycling bin when it is full. Remember that, for some documents, it is important to comply with your organisation's requirements for storage and disposal. Some documents may need to be shredded before they are recycled to maintain confidentiality.

Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability means identifying ways to ensure all resources are used in the most efficient, beneficial and responsible way.

Ways to demonstrate economic sustainability:
Efficient use and acquisition of resources, such as securing ongoing and recurring funding.
Purchase equipment that meets quality standards, is fit for purpose and can be reused or recycled when no longer needed.
Recruit and retain qualified staff.
Establish operational processes and procedures to appropriately and efficiently define and organise work.
Reduce wasted or duplicated effort wherever possible.

Social sustainability

The aim of social sustainability is to create healthy and liveable communities through the development of formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships. In education and care services, this is achieved by embracing practices that promote cooperative and effective relationships. These concepts are further illustrated here.

Social sustainability practices

- Ensure all children and families have equal access to service participation.
- Support diversity in the community and service.
- Ensure staff, children and families enjoy a safe and healthy care environment.

Cooperative and effective relationships

- Communicate clearly with children, families and educators.
- Establish trusting, collaborative and professional relationships.
- Follow health and safety policies and procedures.
- Incorporate cultural and linguistic diversity requirements.

Managers' responsibilities

- Ensure all policies and procedures support a fair and equitable workplace.
- Ensure all policies and procedures support a safe and secure workplace.
- Communicate effectively with staff, children and families to promote the service's social ethos.
- Support staff to implement sustainability, access and equity in the workplace.

Workforce sustainability

Workforce sustainability means retaining the right people with the right skills to meet current and future business requirements. Consider workforce sustainability in terms of recruitment, motivation, job satisfaction, stress, career paths, staff turnover and job design. These concepts are further illustrated below.

Workforce sustainability elements

Policies and procedures

- Provide access to education and training.
- Access external expertise and advice.
- Report work health and safety (WHS) concerns or issues.

Worker responsibilities

- Understand what is expected of them.
- Follow workplace policies and procedures.
- Report any improvements or deficiencies they become aware of.

Management responsibilities

- Create and sustain a positive workplace culture.
- Model open and ethical communication and professional practice.
- Implement appropriate recruitment strategies.
- Provide ongoing support and professional development opportunities.
- Contribute to the development of workforce sustainability policies and procedures.
- Support staff to adhere to workforce sustainability policies and procedures.

Stress and low morale

Stress in an education and care setting can be particularly damaging, as stressed staff may not interact with children in an appropriate manner. Stress and low staff morale must never be ignored. While individuals may experience stress as a result of personal factors outside the team leader's control, stress and morale issues affecting a work group or staff member should still be identified and dealt with. Low morale can lead to reduced productivity and burnout.

A certain level of stress may be unavoidable in some situations or at particular times, but team leaders and managers have a responsibility to provide staff with ways of managing stress. This includes communicating with staff about the issues that cause stress and identifying ways of dealing with or removing the sources. Organising a workshop on stress management techniques may be useful.

Recognise stress and low morale

Staff members experiencing any form of ill health, including low morale and stress, are unable to perform at their optimum level. Since the success of an education and care service relies heavily on the commitment of all team members, whenever this commitment wavers, so too may the quality of care. Many people may experience the symptoms of workplace stress and low morale at some stage in their working lives. The signs are not always obvious.

Some signs you might observe include:

- general job dissatisfaction
- decreased concern for work colleagues
- detachment from team leaders or management
- reduced quality of care
- a cynical approach to the job
- greater use of sick leave
- high staff turnover.

Causes of staff discontent

There are many causes of staff discontent and low morale, including a poor organisational climate; for example, a lack of communication, climate of blame or fear, or unrealistic expectations.

Sources of discontent and low morale include:

- inadequate resources
- under-staffing or insufficient, unreliable relief staff
- insufficient time to complete tasks satisfactorily
- conflict or dysfunctional relationships with supervisor or peers
- poor organisational climate
- a lack of involvement in decision-making
- poor rewards, including a lack of promotional opportunities and recognition.

Mentor, advocate and acknowledge staff

Leadership that places a high value on staff health, wellbeing and morale is fundamental to a positive work environment. While management style and approach plays a significant part in shaping staff satisfaction, coordinators and team leaders also make a vital contribution to long-term morale. High staff morale is obviously an advantage to any workplace: people take less sick leave, perform more efficiently and take maximum pride in their work. People need to feel accepted and appreciated. Praise and encouragement can foster a healthy individual and group work ethic.

Acknowledgment, recognition and involvement in decision-making can be highly effective morale builders. Participative decision-making fosters a sense of involvement and ownership.

Examples of participative decision-making include:

- asking colleagues for input before making decisions that will impact their roles or work
- responding to colleagues' questions or requests promptly
- encouraging an open-door policy and sense of accessibility
- conducting regular feedback sessions with staff to discuss concerns and procedural issues.

Delegation

Delegation is when a manager hands some of their responsibilities and duties to another person. The main function of delegation is to allow day-to-day operations to run smoothly where people can make decisions within the scope of their delegation. For example, a service director has the responsibility for approving expenditure, but they may delegate an educational leader to approve expenses up to a set limit. This allows the educational leader to operate effectively without needing to seek approval from the director for every single expense, and allows the director to focus on other tasks.

Delegation also plays an important role in work team activities, where a leader distributes some of their daily tasks to members of the team. Not only does effective delegation ensure the leader does not become overloaded with work, but it allows the team members to share in the higher level tasks and responsibilities required to make a team work.

Delegation needs to be clearly defined to ensure that people understand their role and responsibilities. Unclear delegation can cause operational disruption and may result in a legislative breach or failure to comply with organisational procedures.

Here are some steps to carry out positive delegation.

Choose the right person

- Consider the person's strengths and weaknesses, and delegate to someone who is capable or who can be supported to become capable.

Set a goal

- Make it clear what you want the person to do and achieve.

Communicate clearly

- Consider your tone of voice and body language.
- Ask questions to see that the person understands what you want.
- Ensure you have the person's full attention.

Provide important information

- Include the following details in your explanation of the delegation:
  - guidelines
  - legislation
  - safety issues
  - ethical dilemmas that might be faced.

Resource the person

- Provide materials, equipment, time and space as appropriate to the task.

Organise feedback times

- Set times for feedback and catch-ups. This helps the person feel supported and allows you to check everything is on track.

Set time lines

- Give times for review and completion, and make these clear.

Roster

Depending on the size of your work team and the hours of your service operation, rostering may be simple or extremely complicated. Rostering not only ensures that you meet staff-to-child requirements for supervision, but it also allows staff to understand when they are to work, for how long, when their allocated breaks will occur and the time that they will be going home. These staff aspects are vital to the contentment of staff; unclear rostering and late changes can be stressful and cause staff to feel neglected.

Rostering can be challenging as individuals all have differing personal needs and preferences. Rotating shifts can be used to meet these needs, or permanent shifts can be established with individuals if agreed upon.

Your service needs to operate for a specific number of hours each day. Staff will need to open and close, cover colleagues' breaks and adhere to correct child-to-staff ratios throughout these opening hours.

Rostering is one of the most important responsibilities in an education and care service. It is often managed by a coordinator/director to ensure these requirements are met each day; however, another team member with strong organisational skills may lead this process.

Timetabling

The timetabling of routines is an essential aspect of each education and care service. To run successfully, the timetable needs to reflect the individual needs of children and preferences of families.

Flexibility within the foundation of a timetabled routine ensures that specific needs and issues are considered. Adjustments to the timetable may be needed to respond to factors such as changes within the service on the day or unexpected incidents.

Develop a work plan

When changes are required, it may be necessary to develop a work plan. A work plan is an outline for how a change or project will be completed by a team. How the work plan is developed depends on its purpose. For example, a work plan for creating improvements in the food preparation area will differ from a work plan focusing on building an outdoor structure. Some work plans focus on legislative compliance, while others may focus on the needs of the individual service. Regardless of the purpose, a work plan outlines the procedures related to the overall goal and provides detailed instructions relating to the tasks involved.

Information to include when developing a work plan includes:

- overall objective of the service
- objective of the proposed adjustment/change
- project management committee
- individual responsibilities of project management committee
- delegation of tasks, accountability and reporting procedures
- time requirements for project
- financial allocations for resources, such as human resources, equipment and time
- human resources, such as team members, skills and expertise
- terms of engagement for human resources
- relevant legislative guidelines
- contingency plans
- review processes.

Implement the plan

Once the plan is developed and approved, it needs to be implemented. The management team will delegate responsibilities to the members based on the actions or processes decided in the work plan. These are the specific tasks and actions that must be undertaken to advance the project. When executing the plan, organisational policies and procedures must be adhered to, including WHS and any legal requirements.

Example

Address personal issues that intrude on work

Jenna is a team leader at a long day care centre. She and Sheila are responsible for the two- and three-year-old room.

Over a period of a few days, Jenna notices that Sheila is looking pale and tired and is not her usual happy, energetic self. Jenna discreetly turns the conversation to give Sheila an opportunity to talk about how she's feeling, but Sheila doesn't respond. Jenna notices that Sheila's personal issues continue to intrude on her work.

After several days, when the situation hasn't changed, Jenna takes Sheila aside to find out what's wrong. Sheila has family problems and is struggling to balance the extra pressures at home with work. Sheila is embarrassed to be what she calls 'a burden' to her team mate. She also says she's aware that the centre finds it hard to get casual relief staff, so she's reluctant to take time off. Moreover, while she loves the children dearly, at the moment she is struggling to cope with the energetic toddlers in this age group.

Jenna consults with the service director and proposes that a meeting be held with Sheila to discuss her situation, with the suggestion that she be moved into an older group and her shifts rearranged to try to accommodate her immediate needs.

Jenna also suggests that the service focus on finding reliable casual relief staff so that regular staff don't feel as though they are unable to take any time off when they need it.

Practice task 1

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

You are a team leader in an education and care service, where you note that there is increasing general dissatisfaction among the staff. People are complaining to each other in the staffroom, mainly about being asked to work late at short notice and about feeling that the work they do is no longer appreciated. After listening unobtrusively, you identify that the person most upset by the situation is Tina, a relief educator who has worked at the service for many years. The senior staff are currently preoccupied with preparations for a forthcoming assessment inspection and have not noticed the developing problem.

1. Suggest how you would address this situation.

2. If it was decided that a work plan was required, what steps would you take?

1B Promoting compliant work practices

Education and care services are subject to a range of Commonwealth and state and territory legislation relating to WHS, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and anti-discrimination in the workplace. Conforming to this legislation is mandatory for all workplaces; education and care services should have policies and procedures in place that reflect legislative guidelines. As a leader, you must have a clear understanding of the relevant legal framework and apply this information when developing and implementing strategies to maximise work performance and outcomes.

Promote legislatively compliant practices

Providing quality education and care calls for services and their staff to comply with a range of state/territory and national legislative requirements.

Some of the most important aspects of operating an education and care service relate to ensuring that WHS obligations are met, and that everyone is treated equally and without discrimination. Coordinators and team leaders can act as role models for appropriate workplace practices and as advocates for improving WHS, EEO and inclusive practices. All staff must be familiar with their obligations under relevant legislation.

Relevant legislative obligations for education and care services

Below are some relevant legal responsibilities and obligations with examples of how each relates to your work role.

Relevant legislative obligations

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)

WHS legislation ensures a safe working environment. This legislation is designed to reduce work-related accidents and illness, and their related costs.

Education and care services coordinators must ensure all team members understand and apply the service's WHS policies and procedures, which are based on legislation, codes of practice and industry standards.

EEO and anti-discrimination acts

It is unlawful to discriminate against people based on age, gender, race, colour or ethnicity, disability or impairment, marital status, sexual preference, political or religious belief, physical features or personal association.

Workplaces must promote equality for everyone. Your co-workers, and children and families at the service must be given the opportunity to communicate, feel valued and be respected. Everyone must have equal access to services.

Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Privacy and confidentiality are legislative requirements. Each state and territory in Australia has laws and regulations regarding the collection, content, storage and availability of records.

Children, families and staff have a right to expect that their developmental, personal and health information will remain private and secure. Documentation must be collected and archived according to your workplace's policies and procedures, which are guided by legislation.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Freedom of information gives people the right to access government documents.

Whenever you collect or document information about children, their parents or guardians have a legal right to view all that has been written about them.

Health and safety legislation

Health and safety policies and procedures are based on legislation, regulations, codes of practice and standards. The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Cth) came into effect on 1 January 2012. All states and territories except Victoria and Western Australia have harmonised with this national law. Each state and territory has its own health and safety legislation. Investigate the laws and regulations that apply in your state or territory.

Health and safety legislation in all states and territories specifies that employers must take practical and reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of employees at work, and that all workers must demonstrate a general duty of care to ensure they work in a manner that is not harmful to their own health and safety or the health and safety of others.

Some practical strategies for making your workplace safe are listed below.

Ways to make your workplace safe:

- Take reasonable care of your own health and safety at work.
- Identify, report and respond to potential hazards or personal physical problems in the workplace.
- Take reasonable care not to affect the health and safety of others by your acts or omissions.
- Work with your employer and other staff in any action taken to make your workplace safer.
- Report and act on any injury immediately according to proper procedure.
- Alert a senior staff member if you see a colleague working unsafely.

Workplace harassment, bullying and intimidation

Workplace harassment, bullying and intimidation also breach health and safety legislation and duty of care. Harassment is any conduct that humiliates, offends or intimidates people. Bullying behaviour can range from very obvious verbal or physical assault to psychological abuse.

It may include:

- yelling, screaming or offensive language
- assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job
- excluding or isolating people
- deliberately changing work rosters to inconvenience particular employees
- undermining work performance by deliberately withholding information.

All services are required to have policies in place to minimise and deal with all types of harassment. These may include identifying and reporting harassment immediately, training staff to observe and identify instances of harassment and running training sessions to promote positive behaviour.

Further details can be found on Safe Work Australia's website at: http://aspirelr.link/safeworkaustralia, or your state or territory's work safety authority website.

Anti-discrimination and equal opportunity

Employers must create a workplace free from discrimination with equal access for all to employment and education and care. There is federal, state and territory legislation relating to anti-discrimination and EEO in the workplace. It is important to understand people's rights and responsibilities under human rights and anti-discrimination law in Australia. The legislation outlines service and management responsibilities to ensure that employees, children and families have the opportunity to communicate, feel valued, respected and have equal access to your services.

Further details can be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission website: http://aspirelr.link/human-rights-commission

Legislation includes:

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth)
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)
- *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)

Communicate information about legislation

Given the importance of WHS, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies and procedures, staff and management should receive regular updates about developments in this area and their ongoing responsibilities.

All staff should sign off to acknowledge they have received induction and training in these areas.

Some examples of ways to keep up to date about developments in health and safety and other legislation are outlined in the following table.

Ways to get regular updates about legislation:
▶ Management committee or board meetings. ▶ Staff meetings and in-service training sessions designed to deliver specific information on policies and procedures. ▶ Subscriptions to government newsletters or trade magazines providing information on policies, procedures and legislation. ▶ Posters and displays providing information on specific changes or amendments to policies, procedures or legislation. ▶ A staff handbook detailing policies, procedures and compliance issues that all staff must observe.

Promote compliant practices

Simply providing information about policies and procedures is not enough: staff must be actively encouraged to comply with them. Some examples of what this means in practice include the following:

- Staff awareness of policies, procedures and legislation, and consequences of non-compliance or duty of care breaches
- Senior staff modelling safe and compliant work practices and advocating on behalf of teams for a safe, compliant workplace
- Enforcing WHS, equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policies and procedures
- Regular policies and procedures review to ensure currency and validity
- Regular training to ensure staff compliance and competence in carrying out policies and procedures

Implement work practices within guidelines

Ensuring a healthy and safe workplace, and providing a work environment that is equitable and embraces diversity is a legal obligation for service management. To achieve this, work practices that are based on standards set by the service and the government must be developed, implemented and continuously improved. In some instances, these work practices can be developed in collaboration with staff; in fact, reviewing work practices in conjunction with staff is often the most timely and effective way of achieving compliance.

Compliant work practices

All staff must comply with service policies and procedures, which are written to be compliant with legislation and industry regulations.

Areas with guidelines for appropriate work practices include:

- health and safety legislation to ensure that all service stakeholders can work in an environment free of risk or harm
- safe use of information technology, such as designing the office to prevent musculoskeletal injuries and avoiding prolonged use of computers
- EEO and anti-discrimination legislation; all staff, children and families are treated equally and with respect
- specific education and care service legislation and quality standards
- policies and procedures to ensure consistently high service standards, and guidelines on acceptable work practices and behaviours
- legislation, policies and procedures in relation to gathering and retaining personal information.

Maintain compliance

Observation is a valuable tool in ensuring compliance in the service. As a team leader, you may observe a co-worker conducting themselves in a manner that is not compliant with regulations or procedures. Communication within the service is key to ensuring all staff understand their obligations in maintaining compliance.

Services may conduct internal audits or gather feedback from families or the community to ensure compliance. The service should also provide ongoing professional development, and up-to-date forms, templates and checklists.

Continuous improvement

Government education and care policy can change; likewise, a service may introduce new policies or working arrangements. Services should regularly monitor policies and procedures, and then review, update or write new ones when required.

The continuous improvement process is a formal way of ensuring that a service constantly reviews its policies, procedures and work practices. The way this is carried out differs between services: it may be the sole responsibility of management, supervisors may be consulted or all staff may be invited to contribute.

There are a number of ways you can contribute to the review and development of policies, procedures and work practices, depending on your job role and responsibilities.

This may be done in line with the service's quality improvement plan (QIP) where staff work together to raise their quality in all areas of the National Quality Standard (NQS) for their assessment and review process.

Contribute to policies, procedures and work practices review and development by:

- gathering information for review
- acting on feedback from children, families, staff members or your own experiences
- surveying staff
- regularly evaluating work practices and identifying areas of improvement
- participating in management meetings or supporting team meetings
- keeping up to date with new legislation, standards, developments and practices.

Gather information

It may be your role to collect information to contribute to the review or implementation of a work practice, policy or procedure. As a coordinator or team leader, you are in a good position to pass on comments about the effectiveness of policies and procedures, as you have the opportunity to observe them in action every day. Some information-collection methods and corresponding implementation examples are outlined here.

Following up on feedback

Staff members may tell you that a procedure is not working or that a policy is impractical. Get as much information from them as you can, including examples, and write this up clearly.

Using observation to gather information

You may notice people operating equipment incorrectly, behaving unethically or working unsafely. First, check the policy and procedures. If they are unclear or missing important facts, record this and act on it. Rewrite the procedure in a way that eliminates confusion and makes it more comprehensive.

Responding to a complaint

A staff member or family member may make a complaint about a work practice. Record the complaint, then see if a policy or the work practice itself needs to be modified.

Using surveys

Management may have prepared questionnaires or asked you to speak with team members about their work tasks.

Following up on discussions

Issues may arise at a team meeting or in an informal discussion. For example, team members may comment about unfair work practices or policy, or tell you a procedure needs to be rewritten. Record comments and explain what you will do. You may need to prepare a brief report for management.

Reading to keep up to date

Keep up to date with changes and developments. Then find out how the development, standard or legislation affects your work role and tasks.

Develop compliant work practices

When applying policies and procedures, and developing compliant work practices, team leaders and supervisors must ensure staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities and that they work within the appropriate legal parameters. Work practices, policies and procedures should be based on legislation, standards and individual service needs, and should be developed in cooperation with the various care facility stakeholders, including staff members and families.

Stakeholders can assist in determining:

- what is appropriate practice in complying with legislation and service guidelines
- whether the service's current general practices comply with legislation and service guidelines
- what steps need to be taken to ensure compliance, including establishing appropriate internal benchmarks and quality standards
- any special requirements for implementation, such as training or additional resources.

Document and communicate individual workers' rights and obligations

Every service has the responsibility to ensure that its workplace is an environment free from harm or risk. Workers have the responsibility to ensure they work safely and comply with the service's policies and procedures. These rights and responsibilities must be communicated to staff clearly.

Workers' rights and obligations and the methods of communicating these to staff are outlined in the following information.

Worker rights

Employees have the right to be treated fairly and to a safe work environment.

Employer responsibilities to workers have a significant WHS focus and include:

- establishing policies and procedures consistent with government legislation that detail how the service will provide for the health, safety and security of workers by minimising or controlling risks and hazards, and providing safe work areas and equipment
- providing information, instruction, training and supervision that allows staff to carry out their jobs safely
- providing adequate welfare facilities such as wash rooms, lockers and dining areas.

Worker obligations

All workers are obliged to work in a safe manner and comply with relevant legislation. In addition, staff in education and care services must comply with statutory requirements specific to the sector, NQS and industry best practice. This means maintaining workplace safety and equitability in accordance with guidelines set out in the service policies and procedures, and following continuous improvement processes.

All staff also have a duty of care that requires them to be constantly vigilant about the safety of others. They are expected to do whatever is reasonable and practical to prevent accidents, illness or injury to anyone in the workplace.

Communicating to staff

Employers are obliged to communicate workers' rights and obligations to them in an easily understood manner. Methods of accomplishing this include:

- staff meetings, in-service days and training sessions
- plain-language versions of work instructions, job descriptions, policy and procedural documents; this includes catering for the needs of employees who do not speak English as a first language
- explanatory notes on how particular tasks or activities are to be carried out
- posters and other visual means of conveying information.

Act on breaches of workplace legislation

Breaches of workplace legislation can occur in any education and care service. Although these services and educators are expected to maintain certain standards, there may be times when standards are not met. While some breaches may be minor, some may be serious, with significant consequences for individual staff and the service. Regardless of whether a breach is minor or major, it must be taken seriously, acted on and corrected as soon as possible.

Breaches of legislation, regulations or industry standards should be reported and acted on promptly and decisively, as some situations may endanger lives. Inadequate risk management procedures and subsequent breaches of legislation or regulations can result in fines or deregistration, or even imprisonment in severe cases.

Breach of legislation

A breach of legislation occurs when a service or individual fails to comply with any aspect of relevant workplace legislation, regulations or standards.

The scope of this kind of failure is wide and covers a variety of issues such as the examples outlined below.

Substandard health and safety procedures

- Incorrect handling and storage of chemicals
- Insufficient facilities for ensuring hygiene
- Inadequate safety precautions
- Inadequate procedures in the case of emergencies, incidents and accidents

Substandard EEO and anti-discrimination procedures

- Poor or inadequate facilities for people with physical or mental disabilities or illnesses
- Poor or inadequate assistance for people from other cultures

Breaches in procedure

A breach in procedure is any action or inaction that does not adhere to service policies or procedures, or that violates broader education and care service standards, legislation or regulations.

A breach may be accidental or deliberate; injury or harm does not have to result for a breach to have occurred. A breach may occur at individual or organisational level.

Some of the breaches you may encounter in an education and care setting are summarised below.

Duty of care
Duty of care is the obligation of a person to act in a way that does not cause harm. A breach of duty of care is to act in any way that a reasonable person (based on their experience and training) considers may cause harm. It is still a breach of duty of care even if no harm actually occurs. For example, not washing your hands after using the toilet and then handling food.
Confidentiality
A breach of confidentiality is intentionally or unintentionally collecting, storing or using confidential information in a way that does not adhere to privacy legislation or a service's confidentiality and privacy policy. For example, sharing private information about a child without their parent's consent.
Professional ethics
A breach of professional ethics is behaviour that is contrary to a professional code of conduct, code of ethics, the expressed values of a service or the commonly upheld professional standards in the education and care sector. For example, an educator showing favouritism to the child of a family friend.
Procedure
A breach of procedure is any action or inaction that is not aligned with service procedures. For example, not following guidelines for petty cash and expenditure.

Recognise a breach

There are a number of ways a team leader or supervisor can identify a breach of legislation, regulations, duty of care, confidentiality, ethics or procedures.

Questions to determine whether a breach has occurred:

- Would a reasonable person (with the same level of knowledge and training) behave in this way?
- Is this action aligned with regulations, the service's code of conduct or the NQS?
- Is there legislation that governs the specific situation?
- Is the behaviour consistent with the service's policies and procedures?
- Is my behaviour (or the behaviour of another person) in keeping with the job description and boundaries of the role?
- Is the behaviour of the service consistent with what is required of a quality educator?

Respond to a breach

When you observe or become aware of a breach, you have an obligation to respond. Remember, however, to act within the limits of your responsibility. If in doubt, consult management or the service's policies and procedures.

Examples of how to respond to breaches

Intervene

Intervene immediately if you observe a critical breach, as long as it is safe to do so.

For example, a child is outside with another educator in summer without a hat or sunscreen. Approach the educator and the child and remind them about the sun-safe policy.

Report

Report observation or information about a breach to the relevant person.

For example, an educator arrives to find the filing cabinet that contains confidential child and family information unlocked. She writes an incident report and gives it to her supervisor.

Seek advice

Seek advice from senior staff members when unsure of how to respond to a potential breach.

For example, a colleague tells another educator that she intends to visit a family in the service in her own time on the weekend to discuss the child's progress. The educator is not sure what to do or if she should make a report, so she makes an appointment to speak with her coordinator to ask for advice.

Take action

Take action when a staff member under your own supervision contributes to a breach.

For example, a supervisor walks into the staffroom where educators are talking about a client's family situation inappropriately and unnecessarily. She reminds each educator of their obligations in relation to confidentiality and the disciplinary consequences if confidentiality breaches continue.

Maintain records

Accurate record-keeping is an essential component of compliance.

Each service will have forms and templates to use when reporting an incident or issue of noncompliance. It is very important that these are completed for each incident that occurs as they provide a record of how the service deals with breaches in policy and the steps it takes to ensure continuous improvement of their systems.

Records should also be stored correctly.

WHS records must be kept on the topics of:

- hazard identification
- risk assessment, monitoring and review
- maintenance history
- accidents, incidents, hazards and near misses
- WHS training
- ongoing improvement strategies.

Example

Ensure workers comply with correct work practices

Sally is the coordinator of an education and care service. She finds that staff use disposable gloves inappropriately. Some staff are unnecessarily using gloves for almost every task, leading to a shortage of gloves. Other staff do not use gloves in situations where it would be safer to do so, potentially compromising the hygiene of the service.

Sally reads the workplace procedure relating to personal protective equipment (PPE), infection control and the use of disposable gloves, and finds it is lacking detail. It needs to be rewritten to include appropriate use of disposable gloves.

She rewrites the procedure in collaboration with the cook, a team leader and an educator. In addition, Sally suggests that the topic be raised in a meeting with all staff and that posters be placed at the site of all dispensers to encourage the safe and appropriate use of gloves.

Practice task 2

1. Outline how to actively promote compliant practices.

2. What actions can you take to collect information that contributes to the review or implementation of a work practice, policy or procedure?

1C Addressing planning problems

Most workplaces have strategies in place to provide staff with guidelines that promote effective work performance. For example, the goals, objectives and responsibilities of all service employees will be outlined. While the service coordinator is responsible for developing broad strategies, team leaders are involved in supporting the service's overall goals and objectives within their team. This may include developing strategies to maximise performance and address factors that are inhibiting effective work performance.

Develop and implement performance strategies

Ensuring work objectives and outcomes are met is essential to the success of the service. The service's objective focuses on providing quality care, which is linked to legislative requirements and guidelines. A team member's position description and role is designed to support the service's objective of providing quality care. Therefore, when measuring a team member's work performance, the appraisal is made against the requirements of their position description. Developing and implementing strategies to maximise work performance in line with the position description helps ensure service outcomes are met.

Developing and implementing performance strategies requires that you consult appropriately, and identify and address barriers and constraints.

Consult appropriately

When developing strategies to maximise a team member's work performance, you should consult with the team member to develop a plan. When consulting with the team member, encourage and acknowledge their input. This fosters a culture in which the team member feels valued and respected. Consultation skills work hand in hand with communication skills. Many limitations can be resolved by perceptive leaders who effectively communicate with their staff.

Barriers and constraints

As strategies are developed to maximise work performance and achieve outcomes, you may encounter barriers and constraints. These may include a wide range of organisational, systemic or personal factors. It is important to manage these limiting factors for the service to meet their objectives.

Barriers and constraints in the workplace may include:

- the budget available for human and physical resources
- poor working relationships between staff and management, or between individual staff members
- resistance to change
- inadequate knowledge or skills among staff
- poor communication.

Example

Encourage staff participation in strategy development

Patrizia, a team leader, is responsible for supervising staff in two rooms. She notices an undercurrent of tension among a number of educators: they are doing the bare minimum of what is required. This is unusual because she normally has a positive relationship with the educators and feels she has their respect.

With prompting, two of the educators reveal that the source of the tension is a proposal to introduce a series of new procedures without directly consulting the people responsible for implementing them. The staff members believe that aspects of the proposal will either be unworkable or make their jobs more difficult.

Patrizia knows that the staff members in the two rooms do not have a lot of respect for the coordinator. She also realises that she owes it to her staff to take their suggestions to the leadership committee meeting. Patrizia organises a meeting with her room staff to hear their suggestions regarding the proposal.

Practice task 3

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Raylene is the team leader supervising four other educators. Raylene wants to alter the roles each educator plays in the planning process, but she is concerned that the educators might not feel happy about this change if she just tells them what to do. Raylene knows that the educators are capable of completing the tasks, and also knows that the team usually has a collaborative approach to other work tasks.

1. What are **three** barriers or constraints that Raylene might be facing?

2. What benefits would Raylene find if she consulted with her team?

Summary

- Effective leadership can foster a positive work environment by promoting staff health, wellbeing and morale. Coordinators and team leaders can contribute to morale by using their communication skills and their knowledge of the staff they work with to develop a supportive, trusting environment.
- Work plans are aligned to the service's overall plan and its strategic goals.
- Most workplaces have strategies in place to give all staff direction in what they do. While coordinators may be responsible for developing broad strategies to help achieve organisational outcomes, team leaders are often responsible for linking a team's activities to the overall goals and objectives of the service.
- Education and care services must meet health and safety, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination legislative requirements. Coordinators and team leaders are responsible for ensuring staff understand and apply their obligations under relevant legislation.
- In providing a work environment that is safe, equitable and embraces diversity, employers must develop and implement work practices based on suitable policies and procedures that comply with legislation, regulations and national standards.
- A continuous improvement process is a formal way of ensuring that policies, procedures and work practices are constantly reviewed by a service and remain compliant with external requirements.
- In every workplace, workers have rights and responsibilities, including being able to work in a safe workplace that is free from harassment and discrimination, working in a safe manner and complying with workplace policies, procedures and instructions. These rights and responsibilities must be communicated to staff clearly and unambiguously.
- Barriers to good work performance include a wide range of organisational, systemic and personal factors. Effective leaders recognise the importance of overcoming these barriers for the team to achieve its goals.

Learning checkpoint 1
Contribute to and promote effective work practices

Part A

1. Imagine you are the team leader. Provide examples of how you would demonstrate **three** qualities of a leader in your service.

2. List **five** things ensured by implementing a work plan.

3. What are **three** strategies that can be used to maximise work performance?

4. Describe **three** methods by which staff can be made aware of the legislation, regulations and national standards that apply to their service.

5. Describe one way a team leader can ensure work practices remain compliant with relevant legislation and standards.

6. List **three** methods a team leader could use to inform team members of their rights and obligations.

Part B

As part of continuous improvement in your service, the director asks you to review WHS requirements regarding workplace harassment and bullying. She has asked you to develop a strategy to ensure all staff are aware of the relevant legislation and in-house policies and procedures.

Outline the plan and strategies you will use to:

- increase staff awareness of the regulations, and their rights and obligations
- encourage staff suggestions and input into the effectiveness of the policies and procedures
- document any changes to procedures that may be made as a result of staff input, and document staff attendance at staff meetings/training sessions
- encourage staff to adopt safe and efficient work practices to avoid compliance breaches
- deal with any breaches that do occur.

Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

2A **Maintaining confidentiality in relation to staff processes**

2B **Addressing staffing and resourcing needs**

2C **Participating in recruitment processes**

2D **Implementing effective induction**

2E **Providing information and support to staff and families**

2F **Promoting staff access to training and development**

2G **Collaborating with other service providers**

Develop and implement staffing processes

The success and effectiveness of program delivery depends on the quality of the staff, the service's capacity to recruit, induct and develop them, and the effectiveness of performance monitoring, training and development. Most supervisors and managers play a lead role in developing and implementing staff processes, so understanding the principles of staff management is important. You need to be able to identify human and physical resource requirements, and manage the performance and development of members of your work team.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

	National Quality Standard	
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
✓	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

2A Maintaining confidentiality in relation to staff processes

All education and care services are required to collect information relating to staff and staffing processes. Due to the sensitive nature of work within children's services, more information may need to be collected and kept about staff than in other workplaces. Children's services are monitored and required by legislation to keep specific information about staff to ensure compliance.

Service policies and procedures should clearly detail how to handle and store confidential information. In addition, a coordinator and anyone else involved in staffing processes should have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to confidentiality.

Privacy and confidentiality

All personal information collected is protected by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). Information is collected by the service in order to carry out its functions.

Here is a summary of what confidentiality refers to and how it applies.

What is confidentiality about?

Confidentiality refers to managing access to private information. Confidentiality includes how information is:

- collected
- stored, and for how long
- destroyed when it is no longer needed
- accessed and released to other parties.

What does confidentiality apply to?

Confidentiality applies to written and verbal information and is applicable to staff information, as well as client information. Staff information that may be protected includes:

- contact details, medical information, contact information and salary
- incident reports
- consultation notes, informal discussions, meeting minutes, letters and emails relating to a person
- individual plans, goals and reviews.

When can confidential information be shared?

Some occasions when information may be shared with a third party are when:

- consent has been given
- disclosure is required by law
- disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious or imminent threat to life or health.

Education and care legislation requirements

Regulated education and care services all operate under national legislation. Education and care legislation determines what records must be kept and the circumstances under which information is to be retained. All of these records must remain confidential. Paper files should be locked in a filing cabinet and computer files should be password-protected so only authorised personnel can access the records.

For example, the Education and Care Services National Regulations require centres to keep staff records detailing:

- completed qualifications
- evidence of qualification enrolment and progress in a course of study where they are being recognised as working in this level role
- first-aid qualifications
- evidence of compliance with working with children requirements
- contact information.

Confidential service operations

Certain aspects of a service's operations must be kept confidential. Some examples are provided below.

Management

- Administrative processes
- Management and decision-making processes
- Financial information, such as income and expenditure
- Action taken on WHS issues
- Intellectual property, including policies, processes and systems; for example, grievance, complaints and discipline procedures

Personnel

- Details of recruitment, induction and termination procedures; career development and progression; and training and development practices
- Contracts
- Employment conditions
- Recruitment and employment practices
- Rosters, monitoring and accountability documents and role descriptions

Privacy and confidentiality laws

Each state and territory has different laws that govern privacy and confidentiality, though the guiding principles are similar. Most states and territories have laws designed to regulate how information is managed in education and care services. You should be familiar with the main points in the legislation that govern the state or territory you work in. There are also Commonwealth Acts that apply to the whole of Australia; for example, the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) protects all personal information handled by businesses.

Privacy legislation, including 13 Australian Privacy Principles, regulates how information is handled by businesses and Australian government agencies.

Find more information about privacy laws at: http://aspirelr.link/oaic

Why is confidentiality so important?

Releasing service information could compromise the privacy of children, families, staff and the service as a whole. It may even compromise people's reputations, professional standing or personal safety. It is also detrimental to the image of the service.

All education and care services have a confidentiality or privacy policy to ensure information held by the service is managed in accordance with relevant legislation. Some services may also have a social media policy to monitor and regulate who may comment publicly about service matters.

Example

Dealing with personal information about staff

Ellie is currently experiencing personal difficulties. In addition to caring for an elderly parent whose recent illness has required her to take time off work, Ellie has also been diagnosed with a tumour which, while now confirmed as benign, has caused her considerable anxiety. During this time, Ellie has been taking antidepressants to help manage her mental health.

Other staff are commenting on Ellie's below-par performance and rumours are floating around the centre about why Ellie is like this.

Assistant director Joanne, who is aware of the reasons behind Ellie's absences and performance issues, decides to deal with the rumours. With Ellie's permission she tells Ellie's colleagues of the benign growth and the medication Ellie is taking to stabilise her moods.

When staff become aware of the difficulties Ellie is dealing with, they immediately rally round to support her as much as possible.

Practice task 4

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Kathy, a team leader, answers the phone to a parent. They exchange greetings and then the parent asks Kathy if she could talk to the coordinator, Harlem. Kathy explains that Harlem is away today on a rostered day off. She tells the parent that she is unable to provide the private numbers of staff, and offers to help if she can.

The parent insists on speaking to Harlem and explains that she did have Harlem's number earlier, but she has lost it. She also says that she must speak to her before the end of the day.

Apparently Harlem has forgotten that she agreed to help the parent with a very important issue that could see the family homeless without her help today.

1. What might Kathy do in this situation? Should she give the parent Harlem's phone number, try to call Harlem herself, or tell the parent she will have to wait? Explain your answer.

2. Why is it inappropriate for Kathy to provide Harlem's number even if the parent says they had the number earlier?

2B Addressing staffing and resourcing needs

Providing quality education and care requires adequate human and physical resources, which in turn requires arranging resourcing and staffing. Legislation outlines many requirements for quality care, including building and structural requirements and staff-to-child ratios. Always follow service policies and procedures when identifying and responding to areas of need.

A common responsibility of children's services supervisors or coordinators is to monitor processes and systems already in place. The smooth running of a service is determined by the staff's ability to follow these processes and maintain the standards, conditions, qualifications and skills necessary to successfully fulfil their roles and provide quality care.

Good planning is required to identify when and where needs are likely to arise, and to develop proposals to meet these needs. Needs may arise in staffing, resources and equipment, or perhaps major resources such as buildings and accommodation.

One significant area requiring a planning response from education and care providers is government policy.

Respond to government policy

Education and care services must keep up to date with current trends in children's services practice, processes and systems. Supervisors and coordinators respond to changes by evaluating current policies, processes and procedures, and amending or developing proposals for new systems.

The National Quality Framework (NQF) for education and care services requires providers to meet minimum standards of care for children and families.

More information about the NQF can be found on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website at: http://aspirelr.link/nationalqualityframework

Underpinning education and care are the learning frameworks *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF) and *My time, our place: The framework for school age care in Australia* (MTOP), focusing on the principles, practices and outcomes required to support children's learning.

More information about the approved frameworks can be found on the ACECQA website at: http://aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks

NQF and approved learning frameworks

The NQF requires that the service must amend policies and procedures to ensure compliance with new legislation and standard requirements. The main priorities of the NQF and EYLF/MTOP are shown in the following information.

NQF

- Universal access for all children to a quality early childhood program that is conducted by a trained early childhood teacher
- A quality standard for early childhood education and care providers in Australia with:
  - improved staff-to-child ratios
  - a requirement for nationally consistent qualifications necessary to work within children's services
  - a quality rating system

EYLF and MTOP

- Emphasises play-based learning.
- Acknowledges the importance of communication, language, social and emotional development.
- Ensures delivery of high-quality, nationally consistent early and middle years childhood education across all jurisdictions.

Staff-to-child ratios

Staff-to-child ratios vary from state to state. Maintaining this ratio requires close monitoring by the service to ensure that the number of staff is always appropriate for the number of children. Education and care facilities nationally are required to meet staff-to-child ratios when planning supervision.

Staffing needs arise for a number of reasons, including:

- annual, maternity or sick leave
- short-term absences due to personal circumstances
- dismissal of a staff member or a departure from the service
- secondments and work exchanges
- increased number of children attending the service.

You can find information detailing all educator-to-child ratios for education and care services at: http://aspirelr.link/educator-to-child-ratios

Appoint new staff

You may engage a staff member on a contract basis – short-term, renewable or long-term. The contract may be tailored to the role and requirements of the staff member and the service. Contracts may be used to address a specific project, a special need or when other types of employment are not suitable.

When additional or replacement staff are required, consultation with management is necessary to establish financial parameters, and to agree on outcomes and performance requirements. Decisions then need to be made about the nature of an appointment.

Here are some examples of staffing appointment considerations.

Examples of considerations	Ways of filling staffing gaps
▶ Implications of the new appointment for the service ▶ Additional resources or equipment needs ▶ Induction requirements ▶ Ongoing mentoring or support	▶ Full-time, part-time, permanent, casual or short-term staff ▶ Temporary or contract basis ▶ Volunteers from among parents ▶ Engaging a trainee

Assess requirements for qualifications

Supervisors need to be aware of the requirements for qualifications and assess the current qualifications of the staff at the service. Improving staff qualifications enhances outcomes for children through the provision of programs that are staffed by educated professionals. The continuous upskilling and employment of more qualified staff and, in some cases, increasing staff-to-child ratios may have a financial impact on the service and will mean a review of current resources and processes.

For many centres it may mean:

- a reallocation of work for some employees
- changes to rosters
- changes to the number of children in a room
- the potential for higher wages commensurate with skill
- provisions for extra study time.

More highly skilled staff also means a greater understanding of and commitment to health and safety issues, which will enable educators to engage children in a range of safe and stimulating activities for their learning and development.

Manage building and equipment resources

Major resources like buildings and structures may occasionally require upgrading in order to continue providing quality care and to meet legislative requirements. Other resources such as toys and play equipment may also require upgrading.

Some services also view policies and procedures, and training and professional development as administrative resources.

The capacity of a service to access or purchase additional resources is usually determined by funds that are immediately available and government or community agency grants.

Building and equipment needs are generally determined by factors such as:

- size of a service
- number of children it supports
- space available
- type of program being run
- focus areas.

Access new resources

Developing or accessing new resources for staff is an ongoing part of a supervisor's role. The NQF places emphasis on providing quality facilities and equipment as part of a commitment to quality care. For example, as a supervisor or coordinator you may be required to prepare proposals for purchasing new equipment or other resources.

Most services have policies and procedures that help staff determine what they are allowed to purchase and protocols for identifying and purchasing resources.

When coordinating resources you may be required to:

- order educational supplies
- subscribe to journals and educational publications
- coordinate information technology equipment so staff have access to a computer
- ensure proper WHS processes are followed when technology is used
- support the professional development of staff
- supervise staff participation in the review of programs, policies or procedures.

Example

Solve resourcing issues

During a staff meeting, many of the room leaders commented about the lack of resources available to implement their programs. Trish, the director, agreed that this was a problem but also pointed out that it would be difficult to solve the issue due to insufficient funds. Several staff commented on the NQF and the emphasis this makes in relation to providing quality equipment and facilities. Trish agreed with this statement, then asked if anyone had ideas on how they could purchase additional resources.

The group discussed this in detail and lots of ideas where circulated. As a team the decision was made that the service would have an outdoor working bee next month and ask the community for volunteers and any donations to construct a vegetable and herb garden for the children.

Mimi agreed to organise two fundraiser events; one selling children's books and the other a flower and vegetable seed fundraiser. Bridget planned to approach businesses in the community to see if they could donate recycled and eco-friendly resources. Jen and Ronny decided to go to the baby and children's market to purchase some books and toys at a lower cost.

Practice task 5

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Camilla, a diploma-qualified educator, works with a full ratio of preschool-age children on her own in a centre-based service. She wants to run a fundraising drive to enable her to purchase some new equipment.

1. How many preschool children does Camilla work with if she has a full ratio?

2. What information should Camilla present to the director of the service about the fundraising idea?

2C Participating in recruitment processes

Coordinators and supervisors are often required to participate in recruiting new staff. This may involve:

- reviewing a position description to ensure it still aligns with the actual job role
- advertising the position
- shortlisting candidates
- interviewing and then selecting the best candidate.

Education and care involves significant responsibility for the social, emotional and physical development of young children. The recruitment process is critical as the people you choose need to have the knowledge, skills and qualifications to do the job, and also the right attitude and demeanour.

Recruitment process

Your service's recruitment policies, procedures and strategies define how you recruit staff and should focus on attracting the best candidate for the role. You must always follow your state or territory equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws as well as diversity principles to ensure that all people are treated with equity throughout the recruitment process. Make sure you are familiar with the wording you can and cannot use.

The recruitment process generally involves following a series of defined steps, beginning with the tasks shown here.

Steps in the recruitment process

1. Identify the need for additional staff.
2. Review or prepare a position description.
3. Advertise the position.
4. Take applicants through a selection process.
5. Select the best applicant.

Methods and techniques for recruitment

Each service may have its own methods and techniques of staff recruitment. Depending on the position to be filled, there are a number of options for advertising employment opportunities, including association and industry publications, websites or newspapers. The service may hire a new staff member through a word-of-mouth referral or by headhunting an employee from another service.

For most government jobs, the department or section involved has a legal obligation to externally advertise any position that becomes vacant as well as advertising via the relevant internal government publication or website.

Job description

A job description is a comprehensive statement that defines duties, responsibilities and level of authority, and sets out the functional framework of the job. They are required so that you and the applicants understand the role. A job description forms part of the employee contract. Without a formal job description it is not possible for a person to properly commit to, or be held accountable for, a role.

The content and format of job descriptions differ between services. Some services include specific information such as hours of work, work conditions and salary in the employee's contract of employment instead of in the job description. Some services set out the selection criteria in a separate document.

Features of job descriptions

While there are differences between services, the following aspects generally feature in most job descriptions.

Job description features:

- Position title
- The hours of work and employment status; for example, ongoing, permanent or temporary
- The physical location of the work
- The key relationships and the supervision, reporting and accountability arrangements
- The relevant award or workplace agreement, and the salary and benefits
- An overview of the service's business activities and structure
- The purpose/objectives of the role and any performance requirements
- The key responsibilities, duties and tasks, and how these relate to the team and the service
- Any specific requirements, such as a working with children check or educational qualification
- Selection criteria – a profile of the knowledge, experience, skills and aptitudes for the role

Selection policies

Selection policies, procedures and strategies guide you in selecting the best person for the job. The selection process is very important as the cost to the service for choosing the wrong person can be considerable and the service's image can be damaged by an unwise selection. The selection process opens the service to public scrutiny; it therefore needs to be fair, equitable and well documented.

Selection policies should include the different strategies and techniques you will use to select the best person – matching the individual's knowledge, skills, attitude and experience to the job requirements.

Selection processes depend on the job level; for example:

- you may convene a selection panel or use the manager of the department plus a senior staff member
- candidates may be required to undergo specific assessment and personality tests
- you may screen candidates by phone before selecting a shortlist
- referees may be interviewed at length or you may rely on a brief phone discussion.

The interview process

An initial interview is usually conducted by the director or their deputy and possibly the relevant team leader. A productive interview must consist of more than just a friendly chat. In an education and care setting, as in most other work situations, it is essential to assess each candidate against the position description or key selection criteria. In addition to a candidate's knowledge and skill in the practical aspects of the job, assessment of their skills in interpersonal relationships often features prominently in the interview process.

Sometimes a second round of interviews may be required to reach a final choice. A useful method of comparing candidates at this final stage can be to allow each candidate to spend time at the centre, in the room where they would be working if appointed. Observe them interacting with the children and other staff. This may be long enough for an experienced observer to assess how the candidate responds to the children as well as the children's responses to the candidate.

Ask questions during the interview

For consistency, reliability and transparency, you should ask the same questions of every candidate. Targeted questions give the candidate a chance to demonstrate their capacity to meet the requirements of the service and the job. You need to assess certain skills.

Skills to assess of the interviewee include:

- their knowledge of the job requirements
- evidence of the skills they have
- how they use problem-solving skills in the workplace
- their capacity to deal with interpersonal conflict in the workplace
- what motivates them
- in what type of working environment they are most productive.

Example

An interview process

An education and care service's group leader, Arlene, is leaving the service soon. Arlene is asked to participate in the recruitment of her replacement because she knows the children in her group so well and has a good understanding of the type of person best suited to the role.

During the interviews, Arlene is able to ask job-specific questions. One of the children in her group has autism, so during the interview Arlene asks targeted questions to establish each candidate's skills and knowledge for assisting children with autism, as well as getting a feel for whether the candidate has the capacity to work in the education and care setting.

Finally, time is allocated for each candidate to visit Arlene's room where she observes each one interacting with the children.

Practice task 6

1. Write a job description for a diploma-level educator position using this template. Include all relevant information. Ensure that your information is current (use the internet to check for appropriate legislation).

Job description
Job title:
Salary:
Location:
Classification and position number:
Overview of service's business activities and structure:
Purpose of job:
Key relationships and accountability:
Key duties and tasks:

Selection criteria:
Qualifications:
Desirable skills:
Position contact:

2. Prepare a series of questions you could use to interview someone for your position.

2D Implementing effective induction

A coordinator in an education and care service may be responsible for the orientation and induction of new team members or personnel moving into new or different roles. An induction is a critical part of preparing a staff member for their role. This process highlights the relevant service policies, procedures and legislation that must be followed and provides the framework for their work practices. The induction process will also include work details and reporting procedures.

Employers have a legal and ethical obligation to ensure all new team members are aware of their workplace and work role responsibilities. Team members must also be informed of the scope of their role, the limits of their authority and what is expected of them.

Induction and orientation

The terms 'induction' and 'orientation' are often used interchangeably when referring to joining a new service. Management may make a distinction between the person's orientation to the new work environment and their induction into the job. Generally, however, the objective is the same: to ensure a new team member is provided with the necessary information, resources and motivation to succeed in their role, or to equip an existing team member with the knowledge they need to make the transition into a new, perhaps more senior role.

Orientation may comprise a short one-off briefing session and provide the worker with basic information, including the broad aspects of their role. It may include giving a tour of a work area or having the new team member shadow an experienced member. Depending on the role, an extended induction may be required to ensure a person is aware of the necessary knowledge, skills and resources for their role.

Common objectives of induction programs

Induction provides a detailed introduction to a job role. If you are responsible for a new team member's induction, you may spend a period of time with them initially and then follow up with subsequent appointments.

Common objectives of an induction program are to explain:

- the service and its goals, values and culture
- the person's obligations and expectations of them as a team member
- how the team member's performance contributes to the success of the service
- how the team member can contribute to the ongoing review of workplace practices
- the people, networks and resources that are available
- service policies, procedures and philosophy.

Induction to policies and procedures

Depending on the role of the new employee, the induction may include organisational policies and procedures, which may apply to many different areas.

Policy and procedure areas covered during induction:	
▶ Accountability, including monitoring practices and procedures and reporting processes	▶ Opportunities for career advancement, progression and pathways
▶ Management and decision-making processes	▶ Administrative processes relating to their role
▶ Budgetary reporting of the service's income and expenditure	▶ Training and development practices
▶ Regulations and standards of case management	▶ Recruitment, employment and termination practices
▶ WHS requirements	▶ Use of relevant equipment
▶ Employment conditions, contracts and rosters	▶ Grievance, complaints and disciplinary processes

Support mechanisms

Support mechanisms may also be made available and promoted to any new staff member when commencing employment. The way this is communicated should include both verbal and nonverbal presentation. This may include reading a policy or procedure, having the key points discussed, then being shown how to implement the information in the work role.

To enable new staff to receive information in these ways, it is useful to assign more experienced staff to support them. If the new staff member can become familiar with this person, they will become the first point of reference should issues or dilemmas arise. Support is required if a new staff member is able to become an asset to the service.

Ongoing support

Ongoing support must be available to all staff working within the service; the way in which this is provided will vary depending on your organisation's structure. Generally senior staff, team, room or educational leaders will take on this role and help staff members to increase their current skill levels. Additionally, specific mentors may be assigned to individuals undertaking training; this person's role will be to help, assist, guide and direct that staff member to extend in all areas of their job role and requirements.

When support isn't readily available and ongoing to all staff, it is possible for morale, work effort and work attitudes to fall.

The following is an example of a procedure for orientation and induction.

Procedure for orientation and induction

Purpose

The orientation procedure is designed to provide new employees with information about how the service operates, how it contributes to the community and the importance of individual job performance to meet operational guidelines. The formal procedure begins on the first day with a scheduled appointment and includes future strategies to familiarise the employee with their job and the service.

Implementation

Induction, orientation and ongoing professional development may include a combination of on-the-job training, workplace mentoring, professional development and formal qualification training.

Induction occurs over a minimum of three months and may be extended at the discretion of the coordinator in consultation with the employee.

Providing information

The coordinator/supervisor provides information to the employee in the order shown below.

1. Contact details of key stakeholders – people they may need to contact in an emergency. This will include the coordinator/s, opening and closing staff members, police, ambulance, fire, poisons information hotline and child protection agencies.
2. Job role expectations, including a copy of their position description with all aspects clearly explained, and details of how their job role contributes to the overall operation of the service and the achievement of service goals.
3. The centre's structure, philosophy and mission – the staff member is provided with a staff handbook and these aspects are explained to ensure thorough understanding. The staff member will be given 24 hours to read, sign and return the staff agreement form for employment.
4. Relevant legislation – the staff member will be informed of their responsibility to act in accordance with education and care service regulations and Acts, and WHS and child protection laws. This includes explaining where relevant policies and procedures are located and the implications of this legislation for their job.
5. Duty-of-care responsibilities – the purpose and meaning of duty of care that relates to their work role will be explained.
6. Centre policies and procedures – the purpose of these policies will be explained. Particular attention will be given to policies on health and safety and child protection. The employee will be given a copy of these policies and procedures.
7. Health, infection and immunisation for educators, including Department of Health immunisation recommendations for educators – the employee will be shown where to access the publication *Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services* at the centre, and how and when to wash hands effectively to reduce the spread of infection.
8. Centre communications – where to access staff communications will be explained; for example, emails, newsletters, memos, noticeboards, staff communication books, diaries and meetings.
9. Relevant industrial relations – the relevant award will be explained, including the terms and conditions of employment. Wages will be clearly defined along with staff member rights and responsibilities under the award. The employee will be shown where to access the award in the centre and be provided with contact information of relevant union/s.

Work plan

The coordinator/supervisor and selected mentor will collaboratively develop a written work plan for the employee's induction. The work plan will form the basis of ongoing development and knowledge in the service.

Example

An induction procedure work plan

The coordinator/supervisor and selected mentor will collaboratively develop a written work plan, which will form the basis for ongoing development and knowledge. The work plan will comprise:

- the role of supervisors and mentors to provide practical, personal and professional support throughout the induction process
- the role of the employee to commit to ensuring work is carried out in accordance with service guidelines
- dates and times for weekly and monthly meetings and work plan review; these may be altered in future meetings as determined by the employee's progress
- strategies for future training needs, which may include formal qualifications
- strategies for gaining further knowledge on relevant legislation; in particular, education and care service regulations and Acts, health and safety and child protection legislation, as applicable to children's services
- strategies for gaining further knowledge on centre policy and procedures
- strategies for gaining sufficient skills and knowledge to work in a manner that promotes their own health, safety and security at work and that of others
- strategies to develop effective and efficient communication and working relationship skills; this may require formal training or professional development
- areas of interest for future professional development or training
- effective procedures to maximise staff work performance
- provisions for contributing to the ongoing review of workplace practices
- dates for performance appraisal during induction
- anticipated end date for the induction work plan and development of a full work plan.

Practice task 7

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Skye feels that new staff members are not clear about their job role. They often ask what to do, are unsure who to ask questions and seem to lack understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities. She decides to look at the induction process to determine whether it has enough information.

1. What information should be provided during the induction?

2. If Skye wanted to ensure she communicated how policies and procedures were implemented in the workplace, what **three** methods should she use to communicate clearly?

2E Providing information and support to staff and families

When you provide instructions and additional support to all staff, this gives staff the ability to extend on and evaluate their current performance levels and the opportunity to get assistance in those areas needing some specific attention. This instruction and support in turn helps promote the level of quality, commitment and adaptability of staff.

Information sessions

Information sessions provide opportunities for all staff to collaborate, join together and learn or discover details relevant to their job role. These sessions may consist of meetings in which all staff focus on standards or outcomes they are currently working towards.

In-service training using an external organisation, a community member or a specialist can provide specific information relevant to the industry or service. A collaborative meeting where all staff come together to reflect on information they have obtained from individual learning strategies such as reading or researching can also create a sharing working community.

The way in which information sessions are implemented, organised and run can determine the desired outcome. Topics, an agenda and specific time frames can be incorporated so that everyone stays on topic. This helps meetings to run for their intended duration. If these factors are not monitored you may find that not all topics will be addressed and staff may become frustrated about the waste of time.

Information sheets

Information sheets are a valuable resource that can provide staff with up-to-date information. When particular changes, trends or practices are identified, information sheets can be used to share details concisely. How you use information sheets will determine their effectiveness.

To gain the most from an information sheet, try the following tips.

Tips for writing information sheets:

- Provide clear information with paragraphs and spaces for easy reading.
- Include enough detail to convey the information, but not so much that it is too lengthy to read.
- Add a sign-off page, so staff can initial when they have read the sheet.
- Long complicated information might be shared using a different method.
- Encourage feedback by adding the topic to the meeting agenda or asking questions.
- Place the information sheet in places where staff are able stop and read it, for example, in the staffroom or at the sign in/out register.
- Add the information sheet to a display where key points are pulled out to highlight the content.
- Use a digital method to share the information sheet.

Intranet information

An intranet is an internal website that is used by an organisation to provide staff with information and ready access to policies, procedures and forms. The advantage of an intranet is that it becomes a primary source of organisational information and ensures that only the most current information is available. Changes to policies and procedures can easily be promoted over the intranet.

When using this type of information exchange, it is essential that all staff have the appropriate resources and time within working hours to access the information.

One-to-one meetings

In some situations it may be necessary or beneficial to conduct a one-to-one meeting. This may be needed particularly when you are working closely with one person and regular catch-up times to discuss progress or evaluate goals must occur. One-to-one meetings offer a more personalised and direct form of information exchange and offer the opportunity for individuals to be more open and honest. One-to-one meetings can also help individuals learn from each other, and express their feelings and emotions without being intimidated by others listening or watching.

One-to-one formal exchange is useful for performance review. It allows the supervisor and the worker to discuss their goals, strengths and weaknesses, and to plan ahead for training and professional development.

Individual meetings can have a negative effect on some individuals as they may feel threatened, placed in a spotlight or think they are in trouble. Often staff may feel that the purpose of an individual meeting is for a disciplinary process.

To ensure staff have an understanding of why one-to-one meetings are conducted, it is essential to inform them of the reason you are meeting with them. If individual meetings are common practice, staff will look forward to the support and mentoring they provide. If one-to-one meetings are only used for discipline, they may pose a threat or become confusing.

Professional advice

There will be times and situations when professional advice is needed. Individual children, families or staff may require the expertise that another more experienced or knowledgeable person might bring. This may relate to a medical, emotional, social, physical or other issue.

When you provide professional advice you should first complete some research to check your sources and details are up to date. A phone call or meeting with another expert might play a role in this research phase. More commonly you might check the latest research, look into a regulation or standard, or see if you can access written material to support your verbal or demonstrated information.

Example

Provide information

Kimmy has just found some useful information online about interactions with infants. She feels all staff and families working with the babies would really benefit from reading this. She remembers that her last attempt at providing information to staff and families was a failure, because no one took the information sheets she had printed out. Kimmy decides that rather than print copies, she will upload the information on the service's staff intranet and external website so both staff and families can access this at any time. She adds a response section, encouraging others to take the time to read the content, then add their own thoughts and ideas in relation to incorporating this information into the working environment.

Practice task 8

1. List actions that can be used to provide information and instruction to others in the workplace.

2. What should you do prior to providing professional advice and support?

2F Promoting staff access to training and development

A key responsibility for a coordinator is to ensure the work group has the skills and knowledge needed to perform their duties correctly, efficiently and safely. Remember, you may be responsible for full-time, part-time or casual employees who may or may not be qualified.

Professional development is a core component of being an early childhood educator and is fundamental to the provision of high-quality care for children. Professional development and training should extend staff skills and knowledge in ways that enhance program outcomes for children.

To get the best performance from a work team, you need to follow a structured process that allows you to systematically identify the learning needs of team members and meet desired workplace outcomes.

Professional development

All staff must be encouraged to undertake professional development throughout their career. The type of training they attend will generally be based on quality requirements, skill needs or identified gaps in performance. Attendance at training is also encouraged when there is a change of policy, procedure, legislation or new development in the education and care sector.

A performance appraisal is a common way of collaborating with staff to identify their perceived training needs and encourage them to be responsible for their own training. However, correctly identifying learning needs is crucial: if the identification is inadequate or wrong, you may end up providing ineffectual or inappropriate training.

To ensure information you collect is reliable, valid and unbiased you may need to use the following process.

Process for collecting information about training needs:

- Clarify your service's strategic plan so you know the skills required of staff.
- Look at job descriptions to determine the skills and knowledge each position requires.
- Conduct a workplace skills assessment/audit to identify current skills of team members.
- Match people's skills against the skills required for their role as outlined in national units of competency.
- Carry out a training needs analysis to compare the needed skills with existing skills.
- Observe people performing their duties to see first-hand where gaps lie.
- Arrange discussions and personal appraisal sessions.
- Gather third-party reports and feedback.

Training needs analysis

A training needs analysis (TNA) is an effective way of identifying skill and knowledge development needs. A TNA is best conducted in consultation with staff members to encourage them to take ownership of the plan and be proactive in accessing and attending training. Here are some factors that need to be taken into account during TNAs.

TNA considerations

- Requirements needed to fulfil a position competently or meet new requirements of the role
- Current skill levels of employees
- Gaps in skills and knowledge
- Training possibilities to address skill or performance gaps
- The staff member's future aspirations with the service
- Areas of performance that could be developed for future positions

Conduct a simple TNA

Some simple steps for conducting a TNA are shown here.

Job description

- Obtain a copy of the staff member's job description.
- Help the staff member identify each of the requirements of their position; that is, what they actually do in the role.

Industry trends

- Highlight any new industry sector trends or issues that the staff member may require training in to do their job more effectively or to meet quality standards.
- Help the staff member identify any tasks they perform that are not on the job description.
- Record these in a dot-point list.
- Identify any trends, developments or quality issues that the service identifies as a skill development need.

Current skills

- Assess the staff member's current skill level.
- Ask the staff member to rate their current skills levels from 1–5, with 1 being inadequate and 5 being excellent.
- Alternatively, use questionnaires or conduct interviews.

Identify gaps

- Identify gaps between the skills and knowledge possessed and those needed.
- Support the staff member to analyse the information carefully to determine training needs.
- Have them list these in the order of importance.

Training

- Identify training possibilities to address gaps in performance.
- Consider all options for training and help the staff member decide the best methods.
- Provide information about where to access the training or professional development, and advise on the support they will receive from the service.

Develop a learning plan

Once a person's learning needs are identified, you need to prepare an individual learning plan. This outlines the objectives of the training and shows when and how learning needs will be met. It should indicate:

- priority areas
- the time frame for achieving the objectives
- training methods to be used
- specific skills or knowledge to be taught or developed.

It is useful to have a formal process in place to organise a learning plan and to help team members understand the need for the skill and how it will benefit them in their work. Encourage them to contribute to solutions for their learning.

Consult to finalise the plan

Finalise the learning plan together so both you and the employee understand what has been decided. In consultation with the team member, discuss the issues outlined below.

Skills, goals and needs

- The skill or learning need
- Learning goal/s
- How the skill corresponds with tasks
- How the skill corresponds with learning and team goals
- How the skill corresponds with the service's objectives
- How the skill will benefit the individual, team and service

Learning support

- Options available to address the need
- Preferred learning style
- How skill achievement will be demonstrated
- Resources needed, including facilities, equipment and time
- The cost of training
- Arrangements that need to be made in the workplace

Learning development options

When you have both agreed on the skill need and its value, discuss the various options available and what the person prefers.

Learning options may include:

- accredited courses
- demonstrations and informal training
- formal in-house training or off-site training sessions
- short courses
- coaching and mentoring
- attending conferences and seminars
- job rotation to experience different roles
- joining professional networks.

Good planning and organisation skills are necessary to design and schedule training with minimum disruption to the work of the team and to organise the resources required.

Additional training opportunities

In addition to training opportunities identified through a TNA, most services have a policy on staff attendance at training relating to mandatory or regulated requirements, particularly those that relate to legal and WHS requirements.

When facilitating access to training, always follow workplace policy and procedure. Records of all discussions in relation to training needs and training conducted must be placed in the staff member's file.

The following information outlines examples of some additional training opportunities that could be considered.

WHS training

WHS training covers:

- the use of fire extinguishers
- emergency procedures
- first aid and CPR
- manual handling.

In-house training

In-house training may also include:

- quality management systems
- record-keeping procedures
- contact management
- computer hardware and software.

Emergency procedures

During an emergency, everybody needs to follow the emergency procedures, know where exits are located and participate in emergency evacuation drills so they know how to get themselves and others out of the building quickly.

People may have different responsibilities during an emergency because they have received special training.

You may need to use emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers and hoses, fire blankets and first aid kits.

Watch this video to learn about what constitutes an emergency.

v0076

Example

Record the training need

Peta has been at the service for 12 months. She is enrolled and progressing well in Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Gina, the centre's director, meets with Peta to discuss additional training needs for the next six months. Peta is feeling motivated to access training through internal and external methods. Peta's record of training needs is shown below.

Training and development record

Staff member: Peta				**Date:** 1 June 2018	
Task required	**Skill level required**	**Skill level possessed**	**Training to achieve desired work outcomes**	**Who is responsible**	**By when**
Lift children out of cots	Knowledge of correct manual handling of children	Basic	Formal instruction in-house at next staff meeting	Gina	12 June 2018
Assist with behaviour management	Sound knowledge of child development and behaviour management strategies	Beginning	Attendance at workshop	Peta	30 July 2018
Gain understanding of EYLF	Basic	Nil	Read EYLF	Gina to provide documentation. Peta to read and discuss with Gina and team leader.	1 August 2018

Manual-handling procedures

Manual-handling incidents are common in childcare workplaces due to incorrectly lifting and carrying children or equipment.

Injuries to your back, shoulders, neck, wrists and knees can occur in tasks requiring lifting and/or carrying, because you lift, lower and carry infants and young children in your daily work. Lifting and carrying children who are distressed can pose particular risks.

Your organisation will have procedures about how to identify, assess and control manual-handling hazards and risks.

Watch this video to learn about manual-handling procedures.

v0079

Practice task 9

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Nell, a senior group leader at a large education and care centre, is given additional duties to prepare her for career progression in the future. She will now be assisting the service director in human resource management issues. As part of this role, Nell is required to:

- monitor and maintain staff records, keep records up to date, and maintain confidentiality and security
- assist the director in ensuring that quality care is provided by securing a pool of regular casuals and volunteers, and networking with local employment service providers
- participate in the recruitment, selection and induction of new staff
- carry out performance appraisals with junior members of staff
- support the director in carrying out performance counselling.

Most importantly, and to Nell's delight, she is also to look after staff training and development. To supplement Nell's formal qualification, she will also undertake a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment so that she can understand how staff training occurs and assist in the development of new and existing staff.

Nell familiarises herself with the centre's mission and vision, and spends some time with the director clarifying staffing policies and procedures.

One of Nell's first acts is to carry out a TNA for the centre. As part of this process she meets with each staff member to establish their skill needs and set up a learning plan for them. A key focus is to ensure that each staff member has the skills and knowledge they need to provide quality care. This includes staying current with developments in the education and care sector, and having a clear understanding of their obligations to clients and the centre.

1. How is staff participation in training encouraged in an education and care service?

2. What should Nell do to encourage and facilitate staff access to training?

2G Collaborating with other service providers

Collaborating with other service providers enables you to meet children's needs and form a base for referrals as needed. The way you or others in the workplace use both verbal and nonverbal means of communication in collaborating with other service providers may influence the outcome. Written submissions and/or reports may also be involved. It is imperative that positive relationships are formed.

Regardless of the reasoning and factors as to why you or a family may need the support, assistance, opinion or guidance from another service provider, it is essential to keep the lines of communication open.

Other service providers

Service providers outside of your organisation can be valuable, knowledgeable and provide creative ideas. They can also link you to resources and support that may otherwise be inaccessible. For example, a child with a learning difficulty or a family who is experiencing financial hardship may require you to refer them to an external service.

Other service providers may also help you to gauge a level of best practice, and provide new knowledge, techniques or methods. They may provide more cost-effective practice ideas and encourage you to reflect on your own practice or production from a different perspective.

Advantages of collaboration

Regardless of why and how you interact and access information from others, collaboration methods – when used appropriately and professionally – are vital in determining future quality outcomes. Collaboration empowers you to be your best.

The advantages of collaborating with others include:	
▶ gaining new and useful information	▶ seeing how others interact
▶ reflecting on specific aspects of delivery	▶ becoming aware of differences and similarities
▶ gaining feedback or guidance	▶ being offered help and support
▶ identifying best-practice actions	▶ learning new ways to do things
▶ furthering your own knowledge and skills	▶ forming positive and extended working relationships or partnerships
▶ analysing quality improvement strategies	▶ extending networks or contacts into new areas.

Service and referral needs

Different staff, families and children may require referrals or assistance from external services at different times and levels. To ensure needs are met in a timely, effective and constructive manner, referrals may need to occur with external agencies.

Some referral services you might form relationships with are listed below.

Services with whom you may form a relationship:

- Interpreter and translation services
- Inclusion Support Programmes
- Employment recruitment agencies
- Registered training organisations

Example

Support and information from an external agency

Casey has a new family commencing at the service next week. She has been advised by their family case worker that the two boys will require lots of additional support integrating into the program. They have developmental delays, including limited speech, and have experienced abuse in the past.

The family case worker informed Casey of some specific agencies she can contact to gather additional support and information so that the staff are prepared and able to provide the best possible care and education to the boys. Casey rings these contacts and finds them to be useful. They take her details and later email some information, including some training opportunities she and the other staff can participate in.

Practice task 10

1. What are the benefits of collaborating with other service providers?

2. What are some common service and referral bodies you may collaborate with?

Summary

- Education and care services collect and store sensitive information relating to staff and staffing processes. Policies and procedures should clearly detail how to handle and store confidential information.
- Coordinators and supervisors need to understand privacy and confidentiality obligations and responsibilities.
- Adequate human and physical resources are required to provide quality education and care. Legislation, government policy and service policies and procedures outline the requirements for quality care, including building requirements, staff-to-child ratios, and the materials and equipment required.
- Coordinators need to be able to identify and plan to meet the resource needs of their workplace.
- Recruiting, selecting and inducting new staff may involve reviewing position descriptions to ensure they align with the actual job role, advertising the position, identifying candidates for short-listing, interviewing and then selecting the best candidate.
- Service procedures should identify how to conduct the recruitment process.
- The objective of orientation and induction is to ensure that new staff members are provided with the necessary information, resources and motivation to succeed in their roles.
- Orientation and induction processes can also be used to equip an existing staff member with the knowledge they need to transition into a new or more senior role.
- When you provide instructions and additional support to all staff, this gives staff the ability to extend on and evaluate their current performance levels and the opportunity to work with assistance on those areas needing some specific attention.
- When you provide professional advice you should first complete some research to check your sources and details are up to date.
- Professional development is central to quality early childhood education, and should offer a structured process for extending staff skills and knowledge in ways that enhance program outcomes for children and offer a career pathway for staff.
- Other service providers may help you to gauge a level of best practice, and provide you with new knowledge, techniques or methods.
- Regardless of why and how you interact with and access information from others, collaboration is vital for ensuring future quality outcomes.

Learning checkpoint 2
Develop and implement staffing processes

Part A

1. State which Act applies to privacy and confidentiality and mention one example of when confidential information may be disclosed to a third party.

2. Explain what is meant by staff-to-child ratios. List **three** factors that can impact the ratio.

3. Provide a brief overview of the steps taken in the recruitment process. Include an example of a recruiting technique.

4. Explain what a training needs analysis is and provide an example of how this would apply in your service.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

A position has been created in your service for a new team member. They will be working in the toddler room. Consider the policies and procedures and the information regarding the service's goals, philosophy and legislation that should be included in their induction program.

1. Prepare an outline of what will be covered in the new employee's orientation and induction.

2. Design a timetable for the first day of the orientation program detailing time frames, information and who is responsible for providing the information.

3. Outline the steps you will take to ensure the new team member remains motivated and participates in cooperative work practices.

4. When advertising for a new staff member, what outside services may help? Explain why these may be useful.

Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

3A **Reflecting on your own practice**

3B **Aligning your leadership practice with the organisational philosophy**

3C **Maintaining professional boundaries**

Maintain a professional approach to leading a work team

As a leader, you need to take responsibility for your own professional conduct, but also guide others in your service to maintain professionalism. By reflecting on your practice and making positive decisions, you are able to support your colleagues and lead the service to deliver best practice.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
	Early Years Learning Framework	**My Time, Our Place**
	Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
	Practice	
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
	Outcomes	
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

3A Reflecting on your own practice

To work effectively in a leadership or supervisory role, you need a high level of self-knowledge, self-respect and emotional maturity. Confident, positive leaders are prepared to take responsibility for their failures as well as credit for their successes. Effective leaders also have clear goals and a sense of purpose; this includes a commitment to ongoing professional development. By consistently modelling healthy, positive responses to challenging situations, you can shape the attitudes of your team members.

Self-awareness and accepting responsibility for your own actions is fundamental to being a good supervisor. The quality of care a centre provides depends on the effectiveness of work teams, and the quality of leadership and leadership decisions. As a supervisor you should be aware of your limitations and how your actions and limitations affect team dynamics and workplace relationships. Leaders who apply empathy and understanding alongside sound judgment and clear standards earn the respect of those around them.

Reflect on own practice

When you reflect on your own practice you are looking at yourself and rating the quality of your own work. Self-reflection helps you to identify your strengths and weaknesses, and where you may be able to improve or extend your knowledge, skills and experience.

Self-reflection often includes the process of critical reflection. Critical reflection occurs when you analyse and challenge the validity of the ideas or commonsense beliefs that underlie your thoughts and actions. It allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to real-life experience and use this to inform your future actions and practices.

Take responsibility for your own behaviour

Supervisors who consistently model the positive values and attitudes they expect from others will rapidly earn the respect, trust and cooperation of their team members. These qualities are the foundations of building effective working relationships. Supervisors who expect their team members to follow policies, procedures and guidelines and complete tasks that they do not do themselves rapidly lose the respect of the people around them. As a supervisor, you need to lead by example.

As a supervisor, you need to:

- model positive actions
- demonstrate standards of ethical behaviour
- use good communication skills
- encourage participation by all staff
- act in a respectful and courteous manner
- promote positive attitudes to cultural inclusivity.

Accept responsibility

Accepting responsibility for negative work outcomes or unsatisfactory performance means not laying blame on others. Regularly shifting blame or responsibility onto others for leadership or organisational failure will undermine your position as a leader and erode the respect of your staff. Effective leaders focus on the cause of a failure or issue and use the experience to improve workplace practices.

You can use a negative experience as an opportunity for growth by:

- analysing the process that was used
- investigating the appropriateness of strategies used
- examining the role you played or should have played
- determining why you did not foresee the outcome.

Self-reflection of skills and knowledge

Self-reflection is an ongoing process of reflection and change that allows you to continuously update your skills and knowledge.

Self-reflect by asking yourself the following questions:

- What happened?
- How and why did it happen?
- How do you feel about it?
- What have you learnt from this?
- What is the significance of this?
- What will you do next?
- How will this alter your future actions and values?

Methods to update skills and knowledge

Self-reflection, along with self-evaluation, involves looking at what you are doing, analysing its effectiveness, and changing to create a more suitable outcome or practice. Once you have reflected and evaluated, you may want to update your skills and knowledge to meet your expectations.

Methods for updating skills and knowledge:

- Completing some professional development through training, workshops, webinars, etc.
- Working with a mentor or gaining professional supervision and feedback
- Completing further study or higher qualifications
- Seeking advice and support from an external body or expert
- Reading articles, journals, newsletters and websites
- Networking internally in your service and externally, at conferences, meetings or online through social media
- Asking questions
- Visiting other services

Example

Take responsibility for your own actions

A delivery of essential supplies has not arrived at the centre. The director calls in Judy, the staff member responsible for preparing the order and asks her to follow up with the suppliers.

When the suppliers indicate that no order has been received, Judy is asked to explain what has gone wrong. Judy says that she put the signed purchase order form on the director's desk over ten days ago. The director denies receiving the form, making her annoyance plain. She calls the supplier to place a priority order for the supplies, knowing this will incur an additional fee. Judy is annoyed because she knows she followed procedure.

Days later, when filing some papers from her desk, the director finds the purchase order among some personnel files. The director immediately calls Judy in to admit her mistake. Judy's feelings of concern are soothed by this swift apology. Judy is aware of the director's heavy workload and knows how easily mistakes are made by people under pressure.

Both agree that ordering supplies should be a delegated responsibility – in future, Judy will place the orders herself, with the director only needing to sign off on purchases above a certain cost.

Practice task 11

In this table, there are skills you need to learn if you are to develop and maintain effective working relationships. For each of the skills listed, provide **two** strategies you can use to improve your abilities in each area.

Skill	**Strategy to develop**
Modelling positive values and attitudes	1.
	2.
Demonstrating respect to everybody	1.
	2.
Being self-aware	1.
	2.
Having good interpersonal skills	1.
	2.
Recognising barriers to performance	1.
	2.

Skill	**Strategy to develop**
Sharing information promptly and correctly	1.
	2.
Offering support and encouragement	1.
	2.
Accepting responsibility for own behaviour	1.
	2.

3B Aligning your leadership practice with the organisational philosophy

All education and care services will have a philosophy from which you will derive and align your ethical guidelines. The service will also have a range of policies and procedures, which all staff must work towards and use as a basis for implementing their roles and responsibilities. Your leadership style and practices must also align with these.

Organisational values

Your organisation will have set values that have been established, which will include information about the goals your service strives to deliver.

These values may include the following:

- To be dynamic, innovative and successful in all our endeavours
- To provide service excellence at all levels
- To be responsive, flexible and child-focused
- To offer children and families education and care that reflects current thinking and meets best practice
- To found all our practices on ethically sound principles and values
- To implement policies, practices and programs that recognise our responsibility to the environment
- To follow and work in line with the NQF, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Organisational mission

A mission statement is generally a brief outline describing the purpose of the service. It is usually inspiring in nature and aims to reflect how the employees work toward their goals.

An example mission statement might be: 'To provide best practice education and care to all children.'

Organisational philosophy

Your organisation's philosophy represents the reasoning, values and theories behind what it does. The philosophy will reflect what is important to the service, what it is aiming to achieve and how this will occur.

The National Quality Standard (NQS) Element 7.1.1 indicates that: 'A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations'. This makes an effective philosophy mandatory within regulated education and care services. To make a philosophy meaningful, not just one philosophy should be in place. A large organisation should have a general philosophy identifying its position. Each service that operates under this umbrella should have a philosophy that reflects the service staff and community needs. For greatest effect, each room or educator should then have its own personal philosophy.

While it is important that an organisation has staff that understand and follow the overall philosophy, it is also important that an organisation recognises the importance of individual strengths and needs, and encourages educators to express themselves in professional ways. By bringing individual philosophy together with organisational philosophy, each service will become responsive and reflective of the community.

When writing a personal philosophy, include what is important to you, what you are aiming to achieve and how you will do this. This philosophy should reflect your own personal values, goals and objectives that will be portrayed in your interactions and attitudes.

Policies and procedures

Policies and procedures reflect not only your organisation's philosophy, values and ethical considerations, but legislation and guidelines as well. Legislative requirements play a big part in the specific steps or processes that are to be used by all staff. In light of this, a policy or procedure that is not followed may lead to disciplinary or legal action.

On commencement of employment all staff must be given the opportunity to read through policies and procedures. They must show that they understand the content, and ask questions to guide or clarify any concerns or uncertainties they may have.

Policies also need to be available to all families using the service. Placing them on your service's website or having a handbook in the foyer can be beneficial.

Ethical guidelines

Ethical guidelines relate to elements of ethical responsibility. Ethical guidelines will be underlying within your service's philosophy, policies and procedures.

The ECA Code of Ethics provides a guide for reflection relating to the ethical responsibilities of those working with young children. Its content covers guidelines in relation to children, families, colleagues, community and society, and yourself as a professional. Each of these elements is very specific based on the fact that, as a professional educator, you must reflect and advocate constantly, using the Code of Ethics as a basis of your actions, reactions, care practices and duty of care responsibilities.

Leadership styles

Each individual you work with will have their own leadership style or a combination of styles. Some of these may be very similar to yours while others will be the complete opposite. Just as you have your own personality, ideas and beliefs, you will also have your own way of leading others.

Your leadership style may need to vary based on the people you are working with. Personalities play a role in determining its effectiveness along with certain attitudes and experience of individuals. Some people require a strong leader who makes a lot of decisions while others are more comfortable with a leader who is open and sharing.

A capable leader will adapt their leadership style to match the climate of the organisation at any time.

Some leadership styles you might use are outlined here.

The task master
Places heavy emphasis on the task or results and little emphasis on relationships or morale
The friend
Places heavy emphasis on relationships and morale but little on the task or results
The motivator
Places strong emphasis on both the task and relationships
The casual
Places little emphasis on either results or relationships

Application of leadership styles

When applying a leadership style, you must consider the attributes that you are conveying. You will most likely have a natural style; however, to deal with situations effectively you should attempt to match your leadership style with the situation.

Leading any team can be quite a challenge, as individuals you work with will all possess different skills, attitudes and abilities. For example, if staff have lost direction they may need a task master to help them get back on track. If they are burnt out or morale is low then they may need a friend. If they are striving to meet goals and achieve best practice, a motivator is more appropriate.

If you continually direct and instruct staff, telling them what to do and limiting their autonomy, people may feel less ownership of their roles and responsibilities, and become less productive.

A strong leader must be able to delegate, share the load, be fair and reasonable and not expect others to do anything they would not. As you continue working with specific staff or groups of people you will become more familiar with their needs, personalities and the best ways to approach them.

Leading others becomes easier with time, as you gain familiarity with the group and share common experiences.

To lead any team effectively you must be flexible, approachable, understanding and open to enable others to respect and follow you to achieve goals and objectives together.

Example

An organisation's philosophy

At One World for Children's Centre our philosophy is to support children to develop to their maximum potential in their social, emotional, moral, cognitive and physical growth. We are committed to enhancing children's self-esteem through daily interactions, developmentally appropriate experiences, and relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Further, we honour the child's right to play in acknowledgement of the major contribution of play to development, in a safe and stimulating environment. The centre aims to equip children with the life skills that will enable them to experience fulfilling and rewarding participation within their community, through providing opportunities to work together cooperatively, to explore human relationships and to practise non-violent conflict resolution strategies.

At the centre we strive to develop positive, supportive relationships with families based on open communication and sharing of knowledge and skills. We consider each family unique in its structure, culture and values, and respect the special relationship between children and their families, incorporating this perspective in all our interactions with children.

We recognise staff as our most precious resource and aim to provide them with a satisfying and safe working environment. We believe that together the staff and the parents create a partnership that provides for the best interests of young children and families. The centre aims to develop and implement environmentally sound practices that recognise our responsibility to protect and preserve the environment, and to foster in children an ongoing commitment to caring for the world in which they live.

Practice task 12

1. What key points of information should an organisation's philosophy contain?

2. What are **four** qualities you need to demonstrate in order to lead any team effectively?

3C Maintaining professional boundaries

You will face a variety of challenges as a leader. Your ability to manage these will be demonstrated by the depth of respect you gain from your team. To help you create a clear professional persona, a line needs to be apparent between your friendships and work relationships. When leaders are unclear about their boundaries, team members can be confused and may feel that some staff are preferred over others or that you are being less responsive to some people.

To combat this unclear status, it is wise to keep your personal and social contact separate from your job role and those individuals and groups you work closely with. This does not mean that you cannot participate together in social activities; it means that you should remain professional at all times, rather than moving between your professional self during working hours and your social self outside of work. It may be difficult to separate the two, and may take some careful consideration and reflection.

Develop effective working relationships

The working relationships you develop in an education and care service are vital to the quality of education, care and children's wellbeing.

Here are some examples of how you can foster effective relationships.

Ways to foster harmonious and effective relationships:

- Communicate effectively and being aware of how you speak, the words you choose, your tone of voice and body language.
- Keep communication respectful and culturally appropriate.
- Listen actively and attentively; show interest in what staff have to say.
- Consider the cultural backgrounds of team members and be sensitive to individual needs.
- Know your terms of employment, job, role and the level of responsibility and accountability you hold.
- Be guided by the service's mission and philosophy, knowing and understanding its structure.
- Apply policies and procedures clearly, consistently and impartially.
- Share responsibility and provide opportunities for team members to use their skills and knowledge to improve work outcomes.
- Value the strengths, abilities and input of others; acknowledge and appreciate all efforts.
- Show respect for everyone.

Develop a positive and cohesive work unit

Maintaining effective working relationships requires effort and genuine interest in developing a positive and cohesive work unit.

Ways to maintain effective working relationships include:

- treating team members courteously and acknowledging their contributions
- offering support and encouragement to team members to maintain motivation, morale and an efficient working environment
- assisting your team members when you can and being seen as active in the working environment
- sharing information promptly, as confidentiality allows
- resolving difficulties in workplace routines and relationships promptly and in a positive manner
- taking responsibility for your own behaviour and actions.

Conflict of interest

You may frequently be faced with a conflict of interest while working in an education and care service. A conflict of interest occurs if you have an interest or relationship that compromises or affects your judgment in a certain situation. Any potential conflicts of interest are influenced by both the past experience of your service and the nature of the community it serves.

You can recognise a conflict of interest by thinking about how you feel when you are making a decision. When a conflict of interest is occurring you will be able to identify that people might benefit from the situation depending on a decision. The conflict occurs because the person chooses a decision that benefits them or people they are emotionally, socially or financially connected with.

A decision made that is a conflict of interest might make the outcome easier for those involved despite it being unfair to others.

Examples of conflicts of interest:
A relationship within the service where one person is a supervisor and promotes or supports their friend or partner unfairly.
An educator recommends an alternative service to families they care for based on financial gain or perceived quality rather than on the family’s individual needs.
A family friend is enrolled from a waiting list ahead of others who have been waiting longer.
A supervisor does not report a breach of legislation as they are partly responsible for the breach.

Equity and fairness

Equity and fairness need be considered when you are dealing with any form of conflict, idea or request that requires you to act. As a leader it is your role to model equity and fairness by creating clear inclusive messages. When communicating, you should use open body language, a pleasant tone of voice and positive words to show others you are listening and giving them your full attention.

When conflicts occur, you should consider the point of view of the other person. Show flexibility, respect, fairness and that you are taking the other person's best interests into consideration by accommodating them as much as possible. Use reflective listening, ask open-ended questions and repeat what the person is telling you back to them; this shows that you are listening and you understand what is being discussed. Always clarify concerns and give people ample time to discuss how they are feeling and share their reasoning.

When you provide as much open communication as possible you will be able to work positively with others to find a common ground. Agreeing to disagree might be an option but, if this isn't possible, the use of a third party or mediator may be required.

Workplace conflict

Workplace conflict can occur due to a range of actions that you or others have done. Regardless of how well everyone gets along there will be times when conflict occurs. Often there are underlying factors that contribute to the conflict, such as stress, feeling unwell, being irritable, having one's patience tested, not agreeing with someone else's ideas, choice of words or actions, bringing personal issues into the workplace or feeling that you have been spoken to rudely.

To deal positively with workplace conflict you will need to demonstrate confidence, fairness and the ability to negotiate and compromise. These abilities are often not natural to leaders and this can make some conflict situations hard to resolve, particularly if the leader avoids the issue in the hope it will resolve itself.

When you are faced with any form of workplace conflict you need to follow your service's policies and procedures to enable correct actions to occur. Be honest and forthcoming with information if it is relevant. Document what happened and, if possible, get the other person or people to document their thoughts also; this sometimes brings up information that verbal discussion misses. Revert to a supervisor if needed and, where the situation is extreme, consider the use of a disciplinary process as warranted.

To resolve an issue or argument where the other person is irate and unwilling to listen, you may find that listening without talking works best. If you use your open listening skills, the other person will see you take their comments seriously.

You may find the need for a third party or a mediator is necessary in some situations. As a team leader you must endeavour to work on your conflict resolution and negotiation skills, and remember that when you ignore a conflict it is unlikely to go away; in fact, it is more likely to worsen and become uncontrollable.

Example

Workplace conflict

Educators Prim and Leoni are not talking. They work together each day with Millie, the room leader in the pre-kinder room. As they are ignoring each other, Millie is getting very frustrated as errors are being made, tasks are not being completed and no one is working together to meet the needs of the children and their families. With permission from the director, Millie arranges for the three of them to have a meeting out of the room.

In the meeting, Millie explains to Prim and Leoni that the tension between them is unacceptable and very unprofessional. She tells the educators that they have uninterrupted time to discuss the issue and that she will act as a mediator. Millie explains that neither party is to comment or interrupt while the other is speaking.

Once both Prim and Leoni have had a chance to speak, Millie clarifies the points she has written down. Both Prim and Leoni agree. Millie then asks each of them to suggest how this conflict situation can be resolved so the three of them can work together again as a confident and well-adjusted team.

Practice task 13

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Indy is a lead educator who supervises two other educators. One of the educators, Jaya, has similar interests to Indy and they go out together socially at least twice a month. Calais, the other educator, feels there is a conflict of interest. She sees that Indy and Jaya are close friends. Calais feels that Indy gives her the worst jobs. She also feels that she is left out of the program planning as Indy never speaks to her about it; however, Jaya always seems to know what to do and what is planned.

1. Do you think that there is a conflict of interest between Indy and Jaya? Why/why not?

2. What are **two** things Indy could do to create an equitable and fair work situation?

Summary

- To work effectively in leadership or supervisory roles, you need a high level of self-knowledge, self-respect and emotional maturity.
- Supervisors who consistently model the positive values and attitudes they expect from others will rapidly earn the respect, trust and cooperation of their team members.
- Self-reflection, along with self-evaluation, involves looking at what you are doing, analysing its effectiveness, and changing to create a more suitable outcome or practice.
- While it is important that an organisation has staff who understand and follow their overall philosophy, it is also important that an organisation recognises the importance of individual strengths and needs.
- A capable leader will adapt their leadership style to match the climate of the organisation at any time.
- Coordinators and team leaders can contribute to morale by using their communication skills and knowledge of the staff they work with to develop a supportive, trusting environment.
- To lead any team effectively you must be flexible, approachable, understanding and open to enable others to respect and follow you to achieve goals.
- As a leader, it is your role to model equity and fairness by creating clear inclusive messages.
- To deal positively with workplace conflict you must demonstrate confidence, fairness, and the ability to negotiate and compromise.

Learning checkpoint 3
Maintain a professional approach to leading a work team

Part A

Explain why it is important for a leader to take responsibility for their own behaviour. How can an effective leader achieve this?

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

You are the group leader of a room in a long day care service. The service has just been taken over by new owners and you are concerned that the members of your team will be stressed and unsettled by the change. Your priority is to help make the transition as smooth as possible. The new management is also planning to extend the kitchen to separate the meat preparation area from the raw food preparation area.

1. Explain how you could ensure your team's morale is maintained during the transition period.

2. What types of relationships with staff could affect your potential to lead the team, and how could this occur?

3. What processes and practices could you implement to ensure the team remains effective and that there are good relationships between staff and management, while promoting the service philosophy?

4. How could you show management that you are able to take responsibility for your own behaviour, develop effective working relationships and continually update skills and knowledge?

Topic 4

In this topic you will learn about:

Promote effective workplace relations

A healthy and harmonious work environment is fundamental to the success of any service, and to the quality of education and care children receive. Fostering good communication and interpersonal relations, and managing conflict is the basis of promoting effective workplace relations. By working together and accepting other people's ideas, backgrounds and beliefs, it is possible to create a healthy, happy and efficient workplace in which staff will thrive.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
Early Years Learning Framework		**My Time, Our Place**
Principles		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

4A Promoting cooperative work practices

Working cooperatively with others is fundamental to establishing positive working relationships between staff and management. Effective leaders manage their teams in a way that promotes positive and cooperative work practices.

Your daily interactions with others affect your ability to contribute to and promote effective workplace practices within an education and care service. As a team leader or coordinator, you need to be able to develop and implement strategies to ensure staff and management feel confident in your ability to be a leader, and maintain positive work relationships and cooperative work practices.

Skills needed to promote effective work relationships include:

- interpersonal skills that support cooperative work practices
- participative decision-making and collaboration
- sharing information, including listening to and contributing ideas
- maintaining positive, friendly relationships.

Cooperate with others

As a member of a work team, you need to work cooperatively with others. This includes showing respect for people's individual differences and valuing cultural differences and diversity when working with others. You need to identify and show respect for different roles and responsibilities, and behave appropriately to promote cooperation. You also need to share information with others to complete set activities.

Watch this video to find out more about promoting cooperative work practices.

Interpersonal skills

You need well-developed interpersonal skills to be able to promote cooperative work practices and enhance relationships. Interpersonal skills differ from communication skills. Communication involves reading, writing, listening and speaking – all of which you need if you are in a leadership role. Interpersonal skills adapt these communication skills to manage relationships and situations so they do not escalate into conflict, misunderstandings or disagreements.

To promote cooperative workplace relationships, be aware of the needs of your colleagues, and treat them with integrity, respect, empathy and understanding. Always consider how your actions and words will be perceived by others. Critically evaluate and reflect on your work and social behaviour.

Some common sources of disagreement include different priorities and expectations, uncooperative behaviour or work practices, and different values, beliefs and understandings.

Participative decision-making

Participative decision-making offers team members the opportunity to be part of a change process or decision that directly affects their working environment before it is implemented. People are more likely to follow instructions, directions and guidelines if they have been an active participant in developing them. The process of making these decisions together also builds working relationships. In education and care services, there are many decisions that should be made in collaboration with others. Often these decisions involve processes for completing tasks to create better outcomes for children and families.

Job satisfaction is also improved when coordinators and supervisors involve team members in decision-making and provide a sense of belonging. Most team members want to be involved in decisions that have an immediate effect on their jobs.

Maintain positive relationships

Team development and cooperative work practices rely on maintaining trusting and respectful relationships. It is important to maintain positive relationships between staff and people in leadership positions.

Tips for maintaining positive relationships:

- Model professional and ethical behaviour at all times.
- Behave respectfully toward everyone.
- Keep social relationships separate from professional relationships.
- Treat everyone equally and never take sides in conflict between team members.
- Deal with issues immediately; do not allow them to escalate.
- Always remain positive.
- Never use aggressive confrontation, manipulation or revenge to get your point across.

Organisation structure and communication protocols

Your organisation's structure will outline the hierarchy of roles and responsibilities of each staff member or group. The way that it is structured will depend on whether the service is privately owned, franchised, community-managed or part of a local government facilitated group. Often services will have a director or manager that all staff report to, with a second in charge (2IC) working to support the director.

Community-based services may be run by a parent-based committee, committee of management or a range of individuals with specific job roles, such as administration officer, staff support officer, programming coordinator or educational leader.

Communication protocols, including who each staff member must report to, will follow the organisation structure, and this should be clarified in your job description.

Example

Introducing a potentially divisive care strategy

Jill's manager asks her to notify staff of a change to the type of program being offered. The manager recently attended an education and care conference and was impressed with the philosophy of the High/Scope Program, which she wants to introduce as soon as possible at the service.

Jill is concerned with the way the proposal is being implemented, particularly because most of the staff are comfortable with the program currently being used and some are apprehensive of change. As far as Jill is aware, few of the educators are familiar with the new philosophy and many probably haven't heard of it. Jill believes the new program may be a way to reduce the competitiveness that currently dominates the environment, where a few teams claim to be running the best program. She thinks the High/Scope Program is a way of bringing teams together with a common purpose.

Jill realises that for the proposal to win acceptance, staff need to have an informed discussion. She schedules team meetings for a week's time and circulates information about High/Scope. This will be followed by a full staff meeting the following week. Prior to the team meetings, Jill meets with team leaders to 'sell' the concept to them and win their support.

Prior to the staff meeting, there is a lot of discussion about the proposal; some positive, some negative. Jill attends each meeting to introduce the concept and set the ball rolling, then leaves so that teams can have an open discussion.

As expected, a few staff are concerned with the extent of change; however, the program is well understood and fully discussed, and the majority of staff are interested. They ask Jill to get the manager's approval for all staff to attend training sessions so that they have a full understanding of the program and strategies for its implementation before going to the next stage.

Practice task 14

Outline some practical suggestions for maintaining positive relationships between staff and coordinators or team leaders.

4B Communicating effectively with staff

Maintaining effective workplace relations requires effective communication skills, including open body language, active listening, and skills in conflict resolution and management. Staff need clarity about their own role and to understand expected standards. There should be acceptance of diversity, and fair and equitable working conditions for all.

To be an effective communicator, you should use methods that are positive, respectful, person-centred, empowering and responsive. Positive communication promotes the dignity and rights of the person being communicated with or about. A coordinator is legally and ethically obligated to respect the rights of staff and clients during all communication. Empowering language focuses on the person, and their goals and positive attributes.

Effective and positive communication

Communicating effectively means more than simply talking to someone; it requires active listening, observing for congruence between words and body language, and accepting others' rights to express their points of view.

An overview of the key characteristics and advantages of effective communication and listening are shown here.

Effective listening

- Actively listening to what the other person has to say
- Understanding and reading nonverbal signals, such as body language and facial expressions
- Using active, reflective and open-ended questions
- Recognising the signs of potential conflict

Effective communication

- Indicating that you value the other person
- Showing respect
- Helping to build rapport
- Assisting in developing a trusting relationship
- Giving the other person confidence that their perspective is valid and is being heard
- Helping to resolve situations of conflict

Active listening

Listening is perhaps the most fundamental of communication skills and is vital to empathetic understanding. The most effective listening technique is active rather than passive. Below is a summary of the key features of active listening and tips on how to listen actively.

Key features of active listening

- Paraphrasing – Reflecting back the content and feelings of what the person expressed.
- Summarising – Repeating what the person said in a few words. This gives the person the opportunity to correct your understanding.

Tips for listening actively

- Briefly recap the speaker's message in your own words.
- Soften your summary with phrases like, 'You feel …', 'It sounds like you …', 'You think …', 'It seems to you that …'
- Try to use paraphrasing statements more than questions.
- Allow sufficient time and pauses for the speaker to add to what they are saying.
- If more than one feeling is expressed, focus on the most prominent one.
- Use neutral words, body language and tone of voice.

Nonverbal communication

Good communication also involves an awareness of nonverbal language, as a large portion of communication takes place nonverbally through tone and body language.

Body language is often displayed subconsciously; look for congruence between words and actions, as people may say one thing but express another with their body language. Body language can be open and positive, or closed and negative. The tone, pitch of voice and the rate at which a person speaks can also be indicators of a person's emotional state.

Open discussions

Effective communication is about gaining understanding and agreement. This requires open discussions. To achieve this, people in a discussion should:

- put forward their ideas and suggestions equally
- allow others to have their say without interrupting
- treat others respectfully
- provide positive, constructive comments and feedback.

Group facilitation processes

When facilitating any group process it is essential to be organised and have an understanding of the content and subject. Your role as a facilitator requires you to remain neutral during a discussion and to refrain from taking a particular position or side during the process. You need to also ensure the group understands their common objectives and discusses ways they can all work towards achieving these.

Important details that a facilitator should know:

- Number of participants
- Nature of the topics for discussion
- Type of involvement you want the participants to take
- Background and experience of participants
- How well everyone knows the subject or topic to be discussed
- The time you have available for the group discussion

Facilitation

You should have the group's objective clearly in mind when you develop an appropriate agenda. This may also help with using the right approach for the discussion.

Other factors that need to be considered include information and materials that may be needed during the discussion, a venue and other supplies such as printouts, projector, whiteboard, paper and pens.

The process that should occur will include:

- opening the meeting and clarifying the purpose
- introducing the topic
- using a technique for sharing information
- coming to an agreement
- closing the meeting
- documenting what happened and providing this to participants for clarity.

Techniques for facilitating group discussions and meetings

As the facilitator of a group discussion you will need to select the appropriate techniques that best suit the group's needs to work towards the outcome. During this phase you will be guiding and controlling the group to ensure mutual understanding and effective participation is enabled.

Techniques to use when facilitating a group discussion will differ depending on the subject of focus and the people involved. Some examples of techniques are outlined in the following.

Group facilitation techniques

Brainstorming

- Ask all participants to think of or record some ideas (silent brainstorming).
- Allow each participant to provide their ideas and write these down on a whiteboard or flipchart so everyone can see. Avoid discussing the ideas at this stage. Accept all ideas.
- Discuss the ideas.
- Eliminate ideas that are not suitable or attractive to the participants.
- Discuss and eliminate until an agreement is reached. Voting may need to occur.

Consensus

- Conduct a discussion about the issue, allowing participants to put forward their own point of view in favour of or against the options for resolution.
- Continue to discuss and negotiate until all participants agree on the one outcome.
- Consensus is reached when all members feel comfortable with the outcome, even though it may not be their most suited or preferred outcome.

Webs, mind maps or spider diagrams

- Webs or mind maps are diagrams that demonstrate the thought process of the participants around one topic.
- Write the topic in the centre and then ask the participants to link their ideas.
- Main ideas connect with branches to the central topic, then subtopics link with branches from these.
- The mind map shows the thought processes and can explore many aspects.

Knowledge cafe

- Break the participants into small groups of no more than four people.
- Ask the small groups to discuss issues and write down their ideas and comments. Each group may focus on a different aspect of the issue.
- After a certain amount of time, ask the participants to change groups.
- Allow time for discussion and note-taking to occur again.
- Continue changing groups after the designated time until all participants have worked in each group.
- Bring the participants together as a whole and ask them to share the things they have found.

Blue sky

- Ask each participant to write down 20 ideas with the beginning 'I would love it if …'
- Share the statements and use them to help resolve an issue or to get ideas for improvements.

Three star rating

- Provide each participant with three star stickers.
- Ask them to place their stars on the ideas for resolution that they most agree with. They can choose one or more ideas.
- Use the visual representation to see which ideas for resolution most suit the whole group.

Example

Facilitate group discussion

Liz wants to get the team of staff she is currently working with involved in a group discussion regarding the policy on choosing cooking activities to be completed with children. She has noticed that sugary and salty foods are often chosen for cooking activities and this breaches the nutrition policy guidelines of foods to provide children.

Liz writes an agenda, arranges a suitable location and sets a time for the discussion. She notifies all staff and lets them know the topic by providing the agenda.

Once the meeting commences, Liz explains the purpose of the meeting, topic of discussion, goals and objectives. She includes a fun ice breaker to help staff feel relaxed.

Liz opens the discussion and then gives each staff member the chance to voice their thoughts. The discussion begins well and staff agree that the recipes they use should be more nutritious; however, they are unsure where to find suitable recipes.

Liz clarifies the group position and suggests they brainstorm ideas for collecting healthy recipes. The group shares their ideas and then each participant goes away from the discussion with a research task to complete.

Practice task 15

Read the case study and answer the questions that follow.

Case study

You are the room leader supervising Billy, who is training to be an educator. You notice that each time you request that Billy completes a cleaning task, he asks another staff member to do this for him. When you ask the other staff member what is happening, they tell you that Billy doesn't know how to complete many of the cleaning duties so they are helping him out by doing the task for him. You decide that you must have a meeting with Billy to find out about his skills and to identify any support he may need.

Take the role of the room leader and role-play this meeting with a colleague or fellow learner taking the role of Billy.

Ask a third person to evaluate the role-play with you and give you feedback about how effective your communication skills were. Summarise their response using the following observation checklist to record points for discussion.

Feedback	Yes and feedback	No and feedback
Did you display active listening skills?		
Did you watch for negative nonverbal language and react to defuse potential conflict?		
Did you allow Billy to express ideas and opinions without interrupting him?		
Did you conduct the conversation in an open and friendly manner?		
Did you achieve your objective by finding a solution to the problem?		

4C Addressing conflict

Conflict in the workplace is not always a bad thing. Healthy conflict occurs in workplaces where people are able to share ideas and engage in robust discussion that is not based on anger or hostility.

By contrast, negative conflict that springs from dislike and disrespect can be corrosive, disrupt the workplace, erode team spirit and weaken the service.

Effective leaders need to be able to identify and respond to conflict situations that have the potential to escalate and undermine good working relationships.

Conflict demotivates team members and diverts their focus from their work role. It can escalate with alarming speed from an occasional grumble to a staff member resigning, and can stem from relatively minor beginnings. Conflict may be isolated to one or two team members or be widespread across the service. It is important that the cause of a conflict is identified and addressed to prevent relationships from deteriorating.

Identify potential conflict

Find out what is causing the conflict by talking to the person concerned, observing and asking others. Possible reasons for conflict are outlined here.

Personal factors

- Personal friction between team members may develop from poor attitudes, personality issues, cultural or religious differences, or personal or work-related issues.
- It may also be due to stress caused by overwork.
- Personal circumstances may be affecting the person's work.

Management practices

- Poor management practices may result in:
  - frequent staff changes or under-resourcing
  - lack of consultation in decision-making
  - perceived or actual unfairness or favouritism, such as unevenly shared or excessive workloads
  - staff insecurity or anxiety about future workplace changes
  - people feeling ignored or sidelined.

Systemic factors

- A lack of opportunities for professional growth.
- A lack of recognition or reward for effort and input.
- Excessive demands and expectations.
- Dissatisfaction with pay levels or career opportunities.

Sources of stress

Stress is a common cause of conflict. When a person feels stressed they may look at situations differently and react in a way that is out of character. Overwhelming stress can cause low staff morale and create further stress for yourself and others. Dealing with situations or events quickly and competently can benefit all.

The following is a short list of some of the things that educators are responsible for each day, that at times can become overwhelming and cause stress.

Causes of stress include:

- Dealing with issues, attitudes and behaviours of others
- Lacking resources
- Supervising staff, volunteers or students and providing support
- Additional expectations of time and effort
- Being placed in unfamiliar situations and lacking knowledge
- Complying with legislation
- Meeting parental requests
- Maintaining child-to-staff ratios
- Supporting children with specific needs
- Directing and leading others, and modelling appropriate practice

Identify difficulties

You need to identify areas of tension or conflict in relationships, as well as contributing factors and issues, and address them professionally and promptly. Communicating openly and quickly about issues that involve the service and its staff and families is important. You need to be aware of negative conflict before it affects morale and work outcomes.

An effective coordinator or team leader has a range of strategies and techniques to handle difficulties as they arise. These include:

- referring conflict to the relevant person if the situation is outside the scope of their role, authority or expertise
- using communication and interpersonal skills to develop and maintain good relationships with the people they work with, minimising potential or real conflict
- continuing to increase their own expertise with training and professional development.

Strategies to address real or potential conflicts

Most services have a formal grievance procedure. Team members should be familiar with the service's policy and procedure for this.

Negotiation, mediation, conciliation, counselling and training are strategies that can be used to handle potential and actual conflicts. You need to organise the most appropriate method as soon as possible. Arrange times for people to meet. Research the situation so you are prepared with questions and possible solutions. Write down what happens so you have a record of what occurred and the action you and the people concerned are going to take.

When dealing with conflict situations, encourage the people involved to:

- focus on finding a solution
- let the other person have their say without interrupting
- find some common ground; look for something you can agree on to keep the process positive
- avoid jumping to conclusions
- avoid placing blame
- stick to the facts and do not let emotions get in the way
- show courtesy and respect, and be mindful of individual differences
- ensure all the issues are covered.

Example

Addressing potential conflict

Jane and Sue are educators who work together. Lately, Sue has become more and more careless in packing up equipment in the outdoor play area after her group has used it. This affects Jane, as her group uses the area immediately after Sue. Sue seems unaware of the effect of her carelessness on Jane and equally unaware that Jane is almost always asked to do the pre-lunch clean-up of the area.

After some weeks of this, Jane becomes frustrated and her relationship with Sue begins to suffer. Jane becomes very short with Sue and increasingly critical of her. In an effort to understand why her colleague is behaving so negatively, Sue confronts Jane and an argument ensues, with Jane accusing Sue of being lazy and inconsiderate.

The service director, hearing the argument, intervenes and takes both women to a private area where she explains the negative impact their behaviour is having on the children and other staff. She arranges for them to meet later in the day to discuss these issues quietly and privately. The director also speaks to Jane about using assertive communication skills to speak up about issues that are bothering her.

Practice task 16

There is conflict between two educators, which is evident from the way they avoid each other and move away when the other approaches. Outline a strategy that could be used to address this workplace conflict while respecting rights and responsibilities of all parties.

4D Managing the conflict resolution process

When conflict occurs, understanding how to provide appropriate support to the people involved helps to ensure the healthy resolution of the conflict and contribute to a more productive work environment.

Coordinators and room leaders can contribute to effective conflict resolution by encouraging team autonomy to identify problems and act collectively to work out ways to resolve them. However, good leadership also demands that you know when to take control of a situation, and act promptly and decisively to resolve conflict situations.

Resolve issues

An important objective is to develop skills and strategies to resolve issues for yourself and your work group. Here is a five-point plan of action to manage work difficulties.

1. **Recognise the symptoms**
   Be alert to early warning signs. Establish a culture for regularly highlighting and addressing issues, such as daily or weekly team meetings. Early symptoms include increased staff absences, staff avoiding each other, team members arguing or disagreeing more than usual, team members looking unhappy or bored, people being non-communicative or families making comments about negative situations. These situations are easier to handle if there is established trust between team members, and a process for airing problems and finding solutions.

2. **Identify the problem**
   Gather the facts to identify the problem. Encourage the staff member to tell you as much as they can. It can be easy to jump to conclusions and base your response on incorrect information. Collect as much detail as possible. Base your knowledge on the information given to you and what you have observed. Find out the following:
   - How long ago did the problem arise?
   - When and where does it occur?
   - Who is involved?
   - Who else is affected by the situation?
   - What effect is the problem having?
   - What are the likely consequences if the problem is not addressed?
   - Determine who is involved and who should handle the issue. Talk to the relevant people before you make any assumptions. Establish the causes.

3. **Analyse the problem**
   Be wary of acting too quickly. A rapid reaction may create further problems. Some problems seem straightforward, but may have underlying causes that are not immediately apparent. Evaluate the extent of the issue in consultation with the staff. Determine its potential implications. Consider the interests of those affected by the issue and its outcome. Ascertain the processes that need to be followed and any relevant legislative requirements.

4

Define the options for resolution

Define and evaluate options in consultation with those at the centre of the problem. Determine the best course of action; there are probably several ways to resolve the problem. Aim for a situation in which all parties are happy with the outcome. Although each case will be different, you should develop a range of options to address difficulties.

Collaborative problem-solving with your work team or the parties involved encourages lateral thinking and helps people accept compromises. Possible options include training, counselling, redistributing the workload, rotating tasks between team members, taking disciplinary action or changing work conditions to become more flexible.

5

Take action

Develop a plan of action. Many proposed solutions fail because they are not followed through. The plan should indicate what each person is expected to do and when they need to do it by. It should also indicate how the solution will be monitored so everyone can see whether it has been successful.

Implement the solution within the service's processes. Make sure you do this promptly so the team remains productive. Follow up to ensure implementation and monitor outcomes.

Negotiation and conflict resolution

Negotiation means all parties discuss the situation and decide on the most appropriate way to resolve the issue so everyone is satisfied. This can be difficult to achieve, so everyone must be prepared to compromise and agree on the solution that best solves the problem. Your role is to make sure everyone feels they have been listened to and that you have worked with them to resolve the situation. Remember, in almost every case there will be more than one way to achieve your goal. Discuss the various options. You may decide to try one way for a certain period of time and then meet again to evaluate the outcome.

Mediation and conflict resolution

Each workplace will have policies for dispute resolution and grievance procedures. These clearly set out the service's chosen process for resolving conflicts and will apply to all members of staff. These policies often stipulate that while the process is continuing, work must still continue normally with minimal disruption to the service.

Mediation is a process in which an independent person acts as a kind of referee or umpire to resolve a disagreement between two or more people. Participation is generally voluntary and mediation only works when the people concerned genuinely want to heal the situation. This is a useful option when two colleagues are having difficulty working together. The mediator's role is to listen, summarise the different perspectives, be impartial, not make judgments and help the people reach a mutually agreeable decision. Everything said during the mediation session must remain confidential.

Provide facilitation support

Providing support to parties who are in conflict can mean:

- providing a private environment where affected staff can discuss the issues between them; conflicts and disputes should never be played out in view of children, parents or other staff
- offering unbiased opinions and suggestions to the parties concerned without taking sides
- keeping emotions in check and exploring the issues of concern in depth
- providing guidance on policies and procedures dealing with conflict resolution.

The final stage in conflict resolution should include a debrief. This is done to check whether anything has been left unsaid. Even minor issues that have not been dealt with or resolved satisfactorily can fester and spring up again without warning. Debriefing allows you to confirm that all parties are satisfied with the resolution, and that they understand the course of action for resolution and what is required of them.

Example

Policy on relationships with colleagues

In their relationships with colleagues, the approved provider, nominated supervisor, certified supervisor, educators, students and volunteers will demonstrate collegiality by:

- developing relationships based on mutual respect
- demonstrating equity and fairness
- working in partnership in a courteous, respectful and encouraging manner
- valuing the input of their peers
- sharing expertise and knowledge in appropriate forums
- respecting the rights of others as individuals
- giving encouraging and constructive feedback
- respecting the value of different professional approaches.

Practice task 17

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Lyn, an educator, expects to be promoted to a room leader position when Karen takes maternity leave. Instead, the service director, Ali, appoints Sally, who is highly qualified and very experienced, but quite new to the service.

Lyn's normally positive attitude changes dramatically. She is resentful, determined to undermine Sally's performance by complaining about her to other staff, and she deliberately withholds certain information from Sally.

Ali becomes aware of the situation and calls both staff members into her office to discuss the issue. Ali states her own view of the situation, and then invites each person to express their point of view. Sally says she feels that Lyn resents her appointment to group leader, which Lyn vehemently denies.

After both have put forward their point of view, Ali suggests that if Lyn feels strongly that she can't work with Sally, it would be best if she works in a different room. At this, Lyn becomes upset, saying how fond she is of the children in the group. Ali says that is a good starting point, as both staff obviously care about the children in the room.

Sally tells Lyn that she had been hoping to rely on Lyn's experience and knowledge, and is disappointed they have not been able to work well together.

Later that day, Lyn sees Ali alone, and admits that she had expected the promotion. Ali explains that to be a group leader, Lyn needs a diploma qualification to complement her experience.

Analyse the conflict resolution approach in the case study using the **five** steps for resolving issues.

4E Resolving issues in the work unit

You need to be able to identify and act on any barriers or issues that are preventing your team from functioning well, find out what is causing the difficulty and then deal with the issue. Barriers to team effectiveness often come from within the team, though there may also be personal, management or organisational barriers as well.

Poor resource allocation, staffing problems, disruptive behaviour and low performance are all common disruptions to work unit activities. Observe team members at work and listen to what they are saying at team meetings.

Issues that may disrupt work activities

Here are some everyday barriers and issues that can disrupt work activities.

Poor communication

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- lack of communication skills
- speaking English as a second language
- cultural differences.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Instructions are unclear and misunderstood.
- People don't say what they are really thinking and messages are misinterpreted.

Lack of skills or knowledge

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- a new staff member has not been properly inducted
- new roles have been assigned, but people do not have the skills required
- inadequate training.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- The team works more slowly and may not achieve its goals.
- There are more problems between group members.

Language difficulties

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include speaking English as a second language.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Information is misinterpreted.
- Group members do not feel they really belong to the team.
- Work takes longer to get through.

Inadequate resources

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- insufficient funds to purchase equipment
- equipment is poorly maintained and regularly breaks.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Team members constantly complain about the lack of equipment or resources.
- Quality of work is affected.
- Group members blame the coordinator.

Poor team spirit

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- not delegating work to match a person's skills and knowledge
- lack of motivation.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Team members are bored and frustrated because their skills are being wasted.
- Team members may make mistakes because work is too repetitive and not challenging.

Poor employee behaviour

Examples include lateness, rudeness, complaining about small issues, offensive language, racism, picking on another person or talking behind a person's back.

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- employee does not know service policies and standards
- personal circumstances may affect a person's attitude or reliability
- a team member thinks more about themselves than about the team.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Team member is often late so others have to take on their tasks.
- Team member is distracted and doesn't perform well.
- Team members are hostile to each other.

Negative attitude

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- overwork
- clash of personalities
- stress
- not understanding what is being asked.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Negativity affects other members' morale.

Unrealistic expectations

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- pressure from the service to increase workload
- not understanding what is required in a task
- not understanding the circumstances.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Team members feel pressured and may not complete work on time.
- Stress may cause frustration and short tempers.

Poor leader behaviour

Examples include inappropriate behaviour from coordinator/team leader, such as inconsistency, not being fair, lack of support and motivation, or not intervening in a conflict.

Causes or factors contributing to the barrier include:

- overwork
- not considering how actions affect team members
- the coordinator does not understand the situation, so cannot provide the support needed
- the coordinator does not have the skills to provide the support needed
- the coordinator avoids conflict.

Effects the barrier has on the team:

- Team members are unsure of what to do if expectations alter from one day to the next.
- The team feels a lack of trust.
- Team members feel they are left to their own devices.
- Conflict is overwhelming.

Resolve issues

When barriers and issues present themselves, you need to work out the most appropriate way to deal with them. For example, a brainstorming session may encourage team members to open up and discuss ways to resolve one situation, and a private discussion with a team member may be appropriate for another.

You may need to provide counselling support, or implement a change in work arrangements, a procedure or a particular work condition to remove issues that are affecting the team. Seek training or expert advice from a more experienced coordinator if you find that you lack the necessary leadership or management skills.

Example

Resolving an issue arising from changed work arrangements

Two room groups at an education and care service share a bathroom, which is located between the rooms. Until recently, the groups had staggered meal and snack times, so access to the bathroom was easy. However, a recent timetable change means that both rooms have the same hand-washing times.

Using the bathroom is now chaotic as the area is overcrowded several times a day.

The two room leaders urgently need to adjust their timetables; to do so, however, requires changes to other timetables as well. Both room leaders are reluctant to request such a change without consulting the service coordinator.

The coordinator hears the room leaders' concerns and undertakes to review the timetabling arrangements for the centre by the end of the week.

Practice task 18

Read the case study, then answer the question that follows.

Case study

A minor but significant problem is disrupting workplace efficiency. Supplies of wipes, tissues and disposable gloves in the group bathrooms and the outside play areas are not being replenished often enough. The purchasing policy allocates this job to the second in charge, who has been away for three weeks.

It seems that everyone thinks someone else should do it. As a result, nobody does and inappropriate comments about laziness and failure to perform duties are causing conflict.

Write a brief explanation on how to resolve this issue.

Summary

- It is important that leaders consistently model the high level of communication skills required to maintain an effective working environment.
- An effective communicator should use respectful, person-centred, empowering and responsive communication.
- Effective communication needs active listening, attention to body language and other nonverbal cues, and assertiveness.
- Good leadership demands that you know when to take control of a situation, and act promptly and decisively to resolve conflict situations.
- Workplaces generally have policies and procedures covering dispute resolution and grievances. These may require you to provide mediation, facilitation and debriefing, perhaps with the support of a person experienced in conflict resolution.
- Barriers and issues that can disrupt team effectiveness may come from inside or outside the team, from personal, management or organisational sources.
- You need to be able to identify and act on any barriers or issues that are causing problems within a team by finding out what is causing the difficulty and then resolving the issue.

Learning checkpoint 4
Promote effective workplace relations

Part A

1. Briefly describe **two** features of active listening and provide an example of each.

2. Provide an example of when and how you have demonstrated positive communication to your team members.

3. Describe how you would engage in effective communication with team members and parents.

4. Summarise one cause of conflict in your workplace and describe the process for conflict resolution.

5. State **three** ways a leader can support conflict resolution in the workplace.

6. Identify an issue that may disrupt work group activities.

Part B

You are responsible for inducting a new team member into your workplace. You have been asked to prepare a short information session about resolving issues in the workplace. The information session should include the following:

- the five-step plan of action for managing work conflicts
- policies and procedures that relate to managing and resolving conflict situations, including grievances
- procedures for providing support, mediation and debriefing
- issues that may disrupt the work unit
- use of digital technology for presentation.

Describe your presentation, including the information you would include and the way you would present it.

Topic 5

In this topic you will learn about:

Evaluate plans

Work group activities must be properly planned, explained, facilitated and implemented if the group is to be successful and effective. Coordinators and team or room leaders are responsible for facilitating effective and efficient work group activities. They need to be able to conduct effective meetings and interactions with their staff as an integral part of the work role. Team meetings are a common avenue for gathering feedback and suggestions for change. Constructive feedback is essential – without it, teams and individuals cannot be sure they are performing their tasks correctly or know how well they are contributing to organisational goals.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
Early Years Learning Framework		**My Time, Our Place**
Principles		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

5A Meeting to discuss the effectiveness of plans

Providing team members with accurate and timely information is integral to maintaining the effective functioning of the workplace. Information is easily disseminated using noticeboards and emails; however, to foster discussion of issues, you may need to schedule meetings. Because meetings take valuable time out of a busy work day and have to be scheduled around rosters, perhaps requiring relief staff, they can be costly in terms of time and financial resources. Meetings must therefore have a definite purpose and allow for maximum staff input.

Set agendas

Meetings must have a clear purpose and goal. The purpose should be clarified so the meeting's agenda can be developed.

The agenda sets the direction of the meeting and keeps it on time. It focuses on the purpose and order of the meeting, provides a framework that the meeting will follow and sets out responsibilities for the meeting, such as who will chair and take minutes. Issues, items and topics to be addressed are outlined. The team member responsible for each item is specified.

The agenda should be distributed to all relevant staff before the meeting as this ensures that everyone is prepared to contribute and carry out their roles.

Items to be included in the agenda

Topics may include details of expected input or action, such as staff members' reports, decisions to be made and actions to be assigned.

Main items to include in meeting agendas:

- Administrative details such as time, date and venue
- A statement of the meeting's purpose and intended outcome
- A summary of decisions made at the previous meeting with an evaluation of progress
- A list of topics to be addressed
- An indication of attachments or required reading

Plan the meeting

Adequate preparation for meetings is essential. Careful planning of meetings requires attending to the areas outlined below.

Negotiating roles and responsibilities

Roles within a meeting may change and need to be negotiated. Depending on the size of the meeting, there may be several roles. There may be an agenda coordinator, a minute taker, a chairperson, a time keeper or a facilitator. These roles need to be negotiated and agreed on before the meeting. Your workplace may use a rotating roster to allocate the roles.

Scheduling meetings

Meetings may be formal or informal, regular or ad hoc, and may be used for various reasons such as planning, reporting, administration or problem-solving. Personal meetings may be arranged for one or two staff members, or a whole staff or team meeting may be required. All meetings should be kept within the time allocated. If agenda items are not covered in this time frame, a follow-up meeting may be scheduled.

Ensuring equality of participation and input

The meeting chairperson must be aware of any areas of potential conflict, emerging needs or difficulties, and take steps to deal with them. If you are chairing a meeting, be mindful of the agreed topics and ground rules, and be prepared to intervene when necessary. Remember to practise active listening throughout the meeting and observe participants' body language, which may convey nonverbal signs of unexpressed need.

Evaluating meetings

Prior to evaluating plans and practices, you should reflect on your meetings and identify how productive they were, if they were beneficial to team communication and capability, and whether all team members were contributing.

When meetings are useful and productive, members will feel inclined to attend, be prepared to participate and will volunteer to support actions to be taken between meetings. An effective meeting will enable you to involve stakeholders in evaluation processes, whether these are related to plans or work practices.

Here are a number of ways in which you can evaluate your meetings.

Evaluating meetings

Look at the minutes

See how well issues were dealt with, check that you worked within the allotted time, ensure all members participated, and make sure your goals were completed between meetings.

Ask others

Use a survey or ask in person to find out if they felt the meeting was worthwhile and valuable, and if they were confident contributing.

Check your achievements

Does the meeting set actions in place that are achieved or worked on prior to the next meeting? Are the actions and goals meaningful, and do they support productive outcomes?

Evaluate plans

Plans need to be evaluated regularly and meetings are excellent methods for doing this. You will meet to review the steps of the plan, make decisions, identify actions, set time lines and improve on your outcomes.

A plan is likely to be more successful if you use regular evaluation procedures, document and discuss findings, and clarify objectives. Plan evaluation can also guide other staff to draw a clearer picture of the direction and achievements they have made, and the areas they still need to improve in.

Joint evaluation processes are a good way for a group to improve their teamwork, as they meet and discuss their achievements and any challenges they may be facing. Evaluation is useful for setting contingencies and options to overcome these.

Evaluate work practices

Within education and care services there are many work practices that need to be implemented each day. All staff will have different skills and abilities in relation to these practices and the ways they implement them.

As a leader and qualified member of the work group, you are responsible for helping, guiding and assisting those you are working with. You will evaluate your own and your team's work practices and ensure quality, continuous improvement. By reflecting on and evaluating work practices you will identify and clarify specific areas or skills that may be lacking. You can then follow up with training or professional development, along with policy and procedure adaptation.

Example

Managing meetings through careful planning

The service where Lisa works holds monthly staff meetings to keep staff up to date with any developments and issues that require explanation; these meetings are chaired by staff on a rotational basis. General information is regularly posted on staffroom noticeboards so that meetings are focused and don't run overtime. Staff understand this and, if discussion gets off track, the chairperson must redirect the speaker back to the subject at hand.

This week, a special planning meeting is to be held to discuss arrangements for an internal quality audit prior to the service commencing its assessment and rating process. Because she has been tasked with maintaining quality status, Lisa, the assistant director, will chair the meeting, and prepare the agenda and meeting materials.

This is a major undertaking and Lisa needs to delegate tasks. Prior to the meeting, she asks group leaders and senior staff for expressions of interest in taking charge of particular portfolios. Staff responsible for portfolios will each make a presentation at the meeting, while Lisa keeps proceedings on track and provides the overall perspective.

Practice task 19

You have been asked to lead a focus group meeting about curriculum development for two- and three-year-olds at your service. Write an agenda that clarifies the purpose of the meeting and clearly outlines topics for discussion. Identify any required reading to be done prior to the meeting.

5B Identifying areas for improvement

Many workplaces rely on work groups and team processes to achieve organisational goals. Providing quality care in an early childhood education service requires a commitment from the whole staff and individual work groups. Effective work teams rely on sound leadership, group cohesion and a commitment to organisational outcomes. In a positive work team environment, team leaders seek feedback about the effectiveness of group processes and foster an environment that is open to change.

Team meetings, whether formal or informal, are a common avenue for gathering feedback and suggestions for change. Effective leaders can use positive team energy to drive and implement change.

Effective teams

A work team is a group of well-organised, interdependent individuals who share responsibility for specific organisational outcomes. For a team to be effective, team leaders and supervisors need to focus on the tasks, relationships and attitudes of team members.

A well-formed, effective work team that is clear about its goals works best with a leader who is prepared to delegate tasks and solicit feedback from the team to inform decisions. Effective team leaders see themselves as part of the work team, not apart from it. Some characteristics of work teams are outlined in the following information.

General characteristics of work teams

- Established structure
- Interdependence between team members and a sense of team identity
- Particular, recognisable roles, values and norms
- Clearly identified common goals and tasks
- Patterns of communication and behaviour

Team member characteristics in effective teams

- Listen to each other to understand and empathise, rather than to defend or explain
- Speak openly, honestly and spontaneously about the ways in which their interaction is or is not fulfilling organisational objectives
- Deal with specific, task-related behaviours
- Openly inquire about how they can improve their work together as a team

Team member characteristics in ineffective teams

- Respond defensively to feedback by explaining, justifying or defending
- Use 'hurt feelings' as a defence against understanding
- Share information only in a manipulative way, saying what they think others want to hear and using information to achieve personal objectives
- Inappropriately competitive, using their energy to diminish one another, rather than working towards common objectives

Encourage suggestions for change

Managing and adapting to change is a significant part of any group process. Sometimes the original group goal will change. Conditions may have changed since the work group was formed; for example, someone may have left, or new legislation or a new program may have been introduced.

Team leaders and coordinators need to regularly and objectively review team performance, or provide the foundations for review to occur. Seek feedback on group processes to encourage staff to make suggestions on how to make improvements. Gathering feedback about work and team processes can provide useful anecdotal information about your team's current performance. Ideally, you should gather feedback as objectively as possible.

Use regular team meetings to gather feedback and hear ideas. Ask general questions such as:

- Is the work on track?
- Does anyone need assistance?
- Are there problems that need to be dealt with?
- What adjustments are needed, if any?

Innovation

Innovation should be encouraged in group processes at it allows team members to offer ideas, new concepts and suggestions of ways to improve current practices. New ideas and concepts put forward by individuals can create exciting and meaningful change within your service. Team leaders must be willing to listen to new ideas and, by using group processes, determine those that offer potential for growth or improvement for your service.

Example

Innovation

Paula, a team leader, attends a professional development session on 'Keeping children challenged' via an online workshop. During the two-hour presentation she networks with other individuals from a variety of services across Australia. She discovers lots of alternative practices and challenges that services are implementing regarding specific aspects of their curriculums and programs.

Paula prints off the slides from the workshop and prepares to share the content of these, along with the notes and examples she has obtained, at the staff meeting next week. Meanwhile she informs her colleague of some activities she thought would work really well with the group of girls in the program who enjoy art and craft, but often get frustrated due to lack of resources and space. She implements the experience with the children and finds it works really well. The children are excited and their reactions prompt several other team members to suggest additional resources and ideas that can be used to extend on the experience.

Practice task 20

1. Describe how innovation can be applied to work practices.

2. Outline some questions that a leader should ask to evaluate the need for change in a team's work practices.

3. What are some characteristics of effective team members?

5C Revising plans to ensure continuous improvement

The NQF guides the practice of continuous improvement through the requirement of all regulated education and care services to record goals within a quality improvement plan (QIP).

Regular revision of a QIP helps stakeholders to identify and determine direction, and to recognise their achievements.

Revision of plans and practices helps determine whether specific actions are beneficial and valid. This applies to all areas in relation to your own and others' job role requirements. It is essential to validate, evaluate and reflect on all plans to ensure continuous improvement is being achieved. All educators have the responsibility to ensure they are kept up to date and participate in a variety of learning opportunities to ensure this is occurring through the QIP.

Continuous improvement processes

A QIP is the tool used by education and care services to record their continuous improvement process. As such, reference to the QIP is made in the following areas.

Education and Care Services National Regulations

- Regulation 31 – Condition on service approval
- Regulations 55, 56 and 238 – Quality improvement plans
- *Guide to the National Quality Standard*

National Quality Standard

- Element 7.2.1 – There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority

- *Guide to developing a quality improvement plan*
- ACECQA website: http://aspirelr.link/acecqa-improvement-plans

The continuous improvement cycle

The continuous improvement process can be summarised as a cycle of steps that continually revolves in an upward direction. The QIP follows a plan, do, check and act process in line with reflection of the service philosophy, and self-assessment against the standards.

Self-assessment and planning

The first step of this cycle is to plan. The planning process takes place to enable all stakeholders to gain an understanding of requirements, actions and practices needed in order to work towards continuous improvement in a specific area.

In the QIP this is a reflective action where you:

- evaluate the current practices through self-assessment against the NQS and in line with the service philosophy
- summarise your service strengths
- identify key improvements
- set a goal
- prioritise the goal.

You will also set a time frame for completion at this step.

If you create goals that are simple and clear to understand, stakeholders will be more likely to acknowledge them and work toward their completion. If you set out clear and reasonable time lines for completion, staff will see that the goal is achievable.

Do

The stage of doing relates to developing and testing a potential solution. When setting out any continuous improvement plan you need to reflect on the needs and improvement areas, and also on the foundations relating to how this will be achieved.

In the QIP, you explain this in the section 'How will we get to this outcome?' (Steps). This section is where you clarify the actions you will take and ensure they sound realistic, simple and easy to reach. If you have created goals that are reasonable, staff will independently work towards achievement if appropriate.

By adding a success measure, you will also clarify how you know the goal has been achieved.

Check

As you work towards specific steps or goals, you need to check regularly to ensure you are working in the right direction, that your steps and success measures are adequate and that progress is being made. The QIP provides for recording these checks by including a 'Progress notes' section.

Once it is established that your goal is progressing adequately, it may be possible to move forward to completing the test or development phase and implementing the action fully.

Act

The improvement process is dynamic, and the QIP is an evolving document that does not have a final step. The 'Act' stage is marked as the time when you implement your continuous improvement goals; however, these need regular review and you will be planning, doing, checking and acting continually.

At times you may find that issues arise at the 'Act' stage. Your goals may not quite be reached or obtained. When this occurs you need to return to the planning stage. Discuss with staff why goals are not being achieved, then evaluate and hypothesise. Once you have identified the issue or problem you are facing you must then rectify, alter or change direction.

In some cases this may mean simply applying some additional short-term goals in a bid to reach your long-term goal, extending the time frame set for reaching your goal, or changing it to reflect specific issues that may be causing a barrier.

Additionally, you may need to conduct further research or gain support from others to be able to work towards your area for improvement.

Example

Continuous improvement

Kian has little knowledge relating to the inclusion of children with additional needs as he has never worked with any child or family in this situation before. He works with his team leader and together they document a plan for Kian to work towards continuous improvement in this area.

The plan consists of small short-term goals with attached time frames and a long-term goal to be reached within six months. Each of the short-term goals has a one-month time frame.

Kian commences working towards his first goal of 'Internet research'. He does this competently and finds many useful and insightful pages, which he prints off and places in a folder, and decides to share with his colleagues.

Kian then commences working towards his next goal within the plan, which is 'To make contact with a range of community groups available within the community who offer support to those families and children with additional needs'.

Kian struggles to find any in his local community, so he decides that it's too hard and to just leave it for now. When evaluating his second goal with his team leader he is honest and comments on the difficulties he faced when trying to find sources. His team leader documents this and together they set a more achievable goal that Kian thinks he could work towards instead over the next month. His team leader reminds him that he needs to check that his goals are able to be reached. He must ask for assistance and act to alter or tweak his goals if the need arises.

Kian agrees and continues for the duration of the proposed six months to reach his desired goal; he then meets with his team leader again and, together, they set another range of smaller goals for him to work towards to enable continuous improvement of his work practices.

Practice task 21

Briefly describe the **four** steps of the continuous improvement process.

5D Relevant documentation

Many of the outcomes in your job role are documented and reported. The QIP usually identifies service goals; your planning for children is documented through records of observation, evaluation and planning processes; and your performance is documented through your performance review. Alongside these records is a plethora of reports for various purposes, such as illness, accidents, attendance, health and safety, hazard and risk, trauma, allergy and anaphylaxis.

Organisational procedures for documentation

Your service will have specific documentation that you must clearly, accurately and routinely complete in relation to your own and others' work outcomes. You must use forms or databases as set out within your role and responsibilities. Failing to do so can cause a breach.

The methods used to complete documentation will vary and will include skills that you have been taught either during your nationally accredited training, your induction into the workplace or through training processes directly relevant to the specific record. Each service is different; however, some recording remains the same despite the method used to record.

Your service will have its own way of reporting different aspects of your daily role and responsibilities. You may be required to complete the following types of documentation.

Examples of documentation

Forms

- Illness records
- Injury reports
- Attendance records
- Timesheets
- Performance reviews
- Service QIP documents

Checklists

- Milestone checklists
- Cleaning checklists
- Hazard checklists

Charts

- Records of care including when children eat, use the toilet and have a nappy change

Diaries and reflective journals

- Reflections on the day
- Reflections on your practice
- Communication notes to parents

Emails and social media

- Sharing learning stories
- Updating on room or service activities

Staff intranet

- Sharing ideas
- Asking for help
- Notifying of changes

Digital records

- Recording learning
- Planning and evaluating learning

Organisational reporting requirements

Your service is governed by reporting requirements set out by legislation relevant to regulated education and care services. These reporting requirements must be taken seriously, followed and completed as defined by each report.

Your service will have procedures in place to guide and direct you with regard to these reporting mechanisms and requirements. You must read these and ensure you have an understanding of each, applying these regularly or when instructed. This includes understanding the service QIP.

If you are unsure of how to complete a record or participate in its development, you must ask for assistance. Completing documents inadequately could cause a breach that results in legal action or issues, and miscommunication between families and the service.

Example

Injury reporting

Mira attends the Best Care Early Learning Service. She has fallen off some play equipment, but does not appear to have injured herself. Even though there are no obvious injuries, as per the service's policy and procedure, the staff record the incident and any action taken as a result. Following the service's policy and correctly completing documentation ensures they have met the legal requirements.

Practice task 22

1. What methods are used at your service to record children's learning and development?

2. Name **two** other daily practices and their related methods of documentation.

Summary

- Meetings may be held with individuals or groups to provide information about policies or procedures, resolve problems, acquire information, make decisions, set goals or provide training.
- Make the purpose of the meeting clear to all participants in advance and ensure meetings are only held when necessary.
- Establish ground rules for the meeting and practise active listening throughout.
- Providing quality care in an education and care setting requires a commitment from the whole staff and individual work groups.
- For a team to be effective, team leaders and supervisors need to focus on the tasks, the relationships and the attitudes of team members.
- Leaders need to regularly and objectively review team performance, or provide the foundations for review to occur.
- When a team is innovative it is a sign that they are cohesive and are working together strongly to achieve their goals. The members feel valued when they offer ideas, suggest new concepts, or consider ways to implement and tweak current practices.
- A quality improvement plan (QIP) is the tool used by education and care services to record their continuous improvement process. The QIP follows a plan, do, check and act process.
- You may be required to use a computer, whiteboard or paper-based strategy depending on resources, philosophy and priorities.
- If you are unsure of how to complete a record or participate in its development, you must ask for assistance. Completing documents inadequately could cause a breach that results in legal action or issues and miscommunication between stakeholders.

Learning checkpoint 5
Evaluate plans

Part A

1. List **six** functions of an agenda.

2. Describe **three** characteristics of an effective team member.

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

The Daisy Chain Early Childhood Service has appointed a team to research, develop and implement new curriculum learning and development programs for the service's preschool children.

The first team meeting to be held monthly is on 3 July at 10.00 am with two hours allocated. Janice is chairing the meeting, five educators (Sarah, Anne, Neil, Jacinta and Erin) are attending and Dina is taking the minutes.

During the first meeting Sarah and Neil discuss their research findings, Anne talks about development ideas, Jacinta speaks about implementation strategies and Erin discusses curriculum improvements.

During the meeting, when Neil presents his research, the other educators listen carefully. Sarah encourages him by showing she is impressed with the thoroughness of his research. She reflects on how his research links with hers.

1. Create an agenda using the information from the case study. Include all of the required information.

2. What indicates that Sarah is an effective team member?

3. Janice has identified an area for continuous improvement. What goal was she hoping to work towards in this meeting?

4. As the service is a regulated education and care service, where would they record this continuous improvement goal?

5. What stage of the continuous improvement process is the team currently at?

Topic 6

In this topic you will learn about:

Review individual performance

You may be skilled at evaluating your own actions and rating the quality of your own work; however, as a leader you must review the individual performance of those you supervise. By reviewing the performance of others you are identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and guiding them to improve or extend their knowledge, skills and experience.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice	
	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety	
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment	
✓	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements	
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children	
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
✓	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership	
Early Years Learning Framework		**My Time, Our Place**
Principles		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
	Partnerships	
	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

6A Implementing and documenting performance management processes

Performance management strategies are about linking the objectives of the service with the abilities of the staff.

The performance management process takes the common performance appraisal process and applies regular feedback and planning. It includes a range of strategies for helping you to identify any areas for improvement in the people you supervise. The processes you use are not just about finding weaknesses, setting goals and sending people off to finish a plan. Performance management offers the opportunity to share successes and celebrate strengths as well, something that is often overlooked during a normal day. In addition, performance management includes regular review and adjustment that makes appraisal an ongoing process of learning and review.

Performance management processes

Performance management processes require all staff to reflect, gain feedback and work towards individual and group goals in the workplace. When each staff member works towards their own growth and development, best-quality service practice can occur. As all staff need to gain additional skills and knowledge constantly to meet the needs of children and families, performance management is vital in supporting staff to meet their goals and the goals of the service.

Under the NQS, Element 7.2.3 relates to performance management with the descriptor: 'Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development'. This element highlights the necessity for planning regular cycles of review and the development of performance plans.

While individual performance reflection is part of the principles educators abide by within the NQF, formal performance review is conducted by a supervisor and will mostly follow a pattern of steps.

Organisational procedures

Performance review procedures provide benefits, including the offer for staff to participate in professional development sessions or workshops, work with a particular person or mentor, access support hours for further study, work with specific age groups of children or step up and take on different tasks and roles. In addition, a true performance management process will include regular review and feedback to encourage the staff member to continue working toward their goals, to reflect and ensure the goals are still relevant, and to provide timely support. These continual actions make the process active and robust, showing that it is not a token task.

While each organisation will have its own performance review practice, there are main steps to the process. These steps will include how and when you will be involved in performance review. The process will outline particular actions that staff members must participate in.

A common performance review procedure will have the following steps.

Performance review procedure

1. The employee completes self-evaluation based on a questionnaire.
2. The supervisor and employee get together and discuss the questionnaire and any other performance-related information.
3. The supervisor and employee put together a performance development plan listing a range of goals and methods for achieving these.
4. Review points are set. At these times the goals and activities will be reviewed and adjusted for relevance.
5. The goals and activities in the performance development plan are achieved.
6. A new self-evaluation commences.

Sources of information

Within the education and care sector, the NQF provides the most relevant and appropriate information to guide performance.

The NQF includes regulations, standards and frameworks, each contributing toward best practice.

The NQS outlines specific expectations that all services must work towards and aim to deliver. Quality Area 4 (Staffing arrangements) and Quality Area 7 (Governance and leadership) provide the baseline of quality standards.

The EYLF and MTOP also provide essential performance indicators to work towards.

Best practice techniques for performance management

Adding performance management goals into your service QIP ensures that the process occurs, and that it is reviewed and improved regularly.

Reflecting on each of the standards in the NQS also supports the development of a best-quality performance review process.

When planning out the year, include performance review in your calendar. In addition, once performance appraisal occurs, add evaluation and checkpoint dates.

Remind those you supervise that you are thinking of their performance management plans and add to these as goals or needs change.

Performance management requires continual monitoring and evaluation of progress measured against agreed outcomes over a set period. At the end of the time period a formal review is conducted and a new set of goals is agreed to.

Some methods of monitoring and evaluating performance, using both formal and informal methods, are shown here.

Informal meetings

Informal meetings can gather valuable information when a manager wants to find out more about a person's ability to complete tasks or about issues arising in the workplace. This method can be highly successful when changes or isolated requests for performance feedback are made by the individual.

Peer assessments

Peer assessments add a broader set of perspectives to performance review. Feedback is gathered from those dealing with the employee in different capacities to gain a holistic understanding of their performance. This technique assists in analysing the individual's approach to different tasks and their ability to deal with different people.

Reviews and appraisals

Regular reviews and formal appraisals form the backbone of the performance management process. These tasks capture and impart job-specific performance information about the individual's role. During these sessions employees are encouraged to:

- give feedback regarding their performance
- suggest new approaches to their work
- justify limitations of performance or issues experienced during the period
- review the goals set during the previous session
- set new goals or improvement plans.

Improvement plans

Improvement plans (or corrective action plans) are usually used as a result of ongoing poor performance. The plans are negotiated between the employee concerned and their immediate supervisor as a means of agreeing to future corrective performance actions.

Records of conversation

Improvement plans are used in conjunction with records of conversation or other recording instruments to ensure legal requirements are complied with. These instruments form part of the service's due process if termination becomes necessary.

Development plans

Professional development plans (PDPs) provide the opportunity for the employee and supervisor/manager to establish personal and professional short- and long-term goals. PDPs are an important monitoring tool for the service and the employee. Encouraging the employee to refer to their PDP regularly can improve morale by motivating them to achieve the set objectives.

Example

Performance appraisal

Magdalen supervises three educators. At the start of each year, she meets with them as a group and they discuss the goals for the year. Following this she meets with each educator individually and they talk about the goals and any support or training each educator might need. This might be specific training related to the goals, or support linking to an area of interest that could benefit the group.

Magdalen supports the educators to research and book any professional development needed. She notes these sessions in her diary and following any educator's involvement in training, they schedule a meeting so that the information can be shared while it is fresh in the educator's mind.

At this point Magdalen identifies whether further training or support is needed and she talks to the educator about their performance reflections.

Magdalen includes a six-month performance appraisal; however, if an educator achieves their goals earlier, she brings the appraisal process forward.

Practice task 23

1. Where could you find information regarding performance requirements of an educator's job role?

2. Explain why it is important to reflect, monitor and document an individual's performance within the workplace.

6B Developing performance improvement plans

All education and care services must meet standards through the assessment and rating process, and audits and checks by regulatory bodies. These standards cannot be compromised. To do so may mean jeopardising children's wellbeing, health or safety.

A challenge for leaders is dealing with the poor performance of underperforming staff. Poor performance may range from having a negative attitude to consistently failing to reach key performance indicators. Most leaders are required to provide performance counselling to under-performing staff members and therefore need to know how to go about the task. Regardless of the size of the service, your role will involve establishing effective procedures for maximising staff work performance.

Reasons for poor performance

Assuming staff have been given the appropriate orientation, induction, training and ongoing support through performance management processes, unsatisfactory performance is generally related to personal behaviour or not meeting work targets.

Some reasons for poor performance are listed here.

Behavioural traits	Work targets
▶ A lack of motivation ▶ Refusing to take on challenges ▶ Stress or burnout ▶ Personal issues ▶ A lack of concern ▶ Conflict in the workplace	▶ Not completing administrative tasks in a timely manner ▶ Inaccurate reporting ▶ Not completing reports ▶ Arriving late for work

Take appropriate and necessary action

As with any conflict issue, it is necessary to act on minor problems before they become major. Poor performance in an education and care service can lead to a serious incident, so must be addressed immediately. Minor performance issues may be resolved by advising the staff member of their job expectations and encouraging them to see where they could improve.

Your workplace will have documented procedures to follow when dealing with performance issues. You must be familiar with these procedures and follow them when counselling a staff member.

Performance issues differ between centres because managers, supervisors and coordinators have different expectations of how tasks should be performed. There is, however, consistency in expectations in some areas, as poor performance may relate to compliance, child safety, and health and hygiene. These raise concerns that require immediate formal counselling. All staff have a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.

Act on poor performance

As soon as poor performance is identified, it is important to react promptly and appropriately. From an organisational perspective, action must be taken to remedy the problem. From an employee's perspective, the situation should be handled in such a way that the employee is not embarrassed, harassed, belittled or unfairly treated. Informal discussion with the employee in private is an appropriate first action. In some instances, the poor performance may be due to circumstances outside the work environment. More serious performance issues require you to implement steps to improve performance through counselling.

If you are reporting or acting on poor performance, you need to complete the appropriate documentation to provide evidence of the poor performance. In some circumstances, follow-up actions may include dismissal, so you need to ensure your report is factual, concise and clearly written, and that it includes any accompanying evidence. The employee may be asked to sign the report as being an accurate account.

Steps in performance counselling

When behaviours and actions are not critical, performance counselling should initially be used as a motivational tool, a structured process to correct a problem and a means to a foreseeable end. When this initial action does not influence the performance positively, it should lead to a process of formal counselling and even disciplinary action that can, at worst, end in termination of employment. Leaders must determine when formal counselling is necessary; this is a judgment made by the leader based on their understanding of the situation. As for any conflict issue, it should not be delayed or avoided as this enables the issue to grow and deepen.

To choose the right action, leaders should ask themselves if the issue observed requires a formal approach or whether it can be dealt with in an informal manner. The leader's objective should be to intervene early so the matter can be resolved with no escalation of the problem. Suggested steps to follow when formally counselling a staff member are shown below.

1. **Clearly identify the issue**
   Enter the counselling session with a well-documented problem and clear expectations of the target behaviours that you want the employee to display.

2. **Call a meeting**
   Meet in private with no interruptions. Give the employee sufficient notice to prepare, but not so much that they become distressed. Allow the employee to have a support person present if they wish. Counselling sessions should allow one hour, but are often completed within 30 minutes.

   In cases of compliance or child safety, address the issue immediately.

3. **Describe the concern and state the expected performance**
   Focus on the performance that needs to be improved, not the person. Make clear the impact that the performance is having, but do not dwell on this. The focus of the meeting is to improve in a positive, supportive environment.

   Before improvement can occur, the staff member needs to acknowledge that the performance needs to be improved. Once agreement is reached on the need for improvement, ask the staff member to explain why they are not meeting the required standards. If agreement and the steps to address it cannot be reached, then a formal warning may be warranted.

4

Listen to what the staff member says
Is there a barrier to performing tasks to required standards, such as, materials, resources or training? If so, discuss these and develop strategies to remove barriers.

If performance issues are behavioural, turn the focus to the employee and ask them for ideas on how to improve and move toward targeted work outcomes. Ask the employee how you can help and what role they would like you to play.

5

Agree on actions and record as an action plan
This plan states who will do what, how it will be done and the outcomes expected. It also states the consequences for continuing non-performance.

Once agreement is reached, set review dates.

6

Sign a formal agreement
Both parties sign the record and a copy is given to the employee.

Counselling etiquette

The objective of counselling should be to work collaboratively with the staff member to arrive at a mutually acceptable approach to dealing with a performance issue. If you can agree on what the problem is and an acceptable solution, the long-term outcome should be positive.

If it is not dealt with in a constructive and positive manner, non-performance can manifest itself in ways that can be detrimental to the service, team, families and children. Supervisors and coordinators must have the confidence and abilities to perform counselling to address non-performance and minimise the impact on the service.

Strategies for conducting a counselling session

Effective strategies that you can use when conducting counselling sessions are outlined below.

Put the other person at ease

Put the staff member at ease. You are there to help and improve their performance.

For example, use appropriate body language and open communication. Do not use blaming language.

Clearly explain the reason for the session

There should be no ambiguity about the reason for the session. Be specific and factual.

For example, 'Iggy, in the last two weeks you have been late four times to your shift. We are here to discuss this and determine how we can stop this from occurring in the future.'

Express your thoughts clearly and honestly

Express your thoughts and feelings about the situation, emphasising its importance.

For example, 'I think we urgently need to address this due to the impact it is having on the children and the effectiveness of transitions into rooms.'

Use paraphrasing to confirm understanding

Have the employee paraphrase what you have said to display their understanding of the purpose of the session and what the problem is.

For example, 'From the centre's perspective, what do you see the problem being, Iggy?'

Use open-ended questioning to gather information

Use open-ended questioning to enhance the information-gathering process.

For example, 'Tell me how you think this may affect the children and other staff in the centre.'

Identify causes of the problem

Encourage the employee to identify the reasons behind the behaviour or non-performance.

For example, 'Is everything okay, Iggy? Is there something I can help with?'

Trust the employee

Put your trust in the staff member's ability to solve the problem.

For example, 'Going by what you are telling me, there is a concern. I know you can arrive on time and I know you will amend this situation with guidance and support.'

Consider alternative solutions

Encourage the staff member to advise you of alternatives to solve the problem and improve performance.

For example, 'Now that we know there have been some problems with your car, what do you propose we do to resolve the issue?'

Provide assistance with decision-making

Provide assistance with the decision-making by ensuring adherence to policies and procedures.

For example, 'I'm not sure that altering the roster would suit everyone, Iggy. What other alternatives may work?'

Seek input on future action

Seek input on what to do if performance does not improve with suggested strategies.

For example, 'Great, we are agreed then. You will borrow your father's car until yours is repaired. What if this does not happen and there is still an issue? What do you feel the consequences should be?'

Set and agree on time frames

Reach agreement with the employee on time frames for resolving the issue or problem and for demonstrated performance improvement.

For example, 'Your car will be fully repaired by next Wednesday. We will continue to monitor your arrival times for a week after that. Are we in agreement?'

Example

Effective performance counselling

Randall has been the after school care educator for 18 months. He is generally a happy person and gets on well with the families, children and staff.

However, Randall's performance starts to lapse. He is short-tempered with staff, does not provide a program for two weeks and throws a football over the fence when two children are arguing over it, saying, 'Now you can't fight about it. Go without.'

Randall's supervisor organises a counselling session. A documented action plan is the outcome of a well-planned and effective counselling session conducted by the supervisor of the program.

Counselling action plan

Name: Randall Kipling	Date: 24 May 2018
Improvements necessary	▶ Communications with staff are to be courteous and respectful ▶ Programs to be displayed by 3 pm each Monday ▶ Improved interactions and communications with children
Strategies to improve	▶ Attend a communication/interaction professional development session. ▶ Review the centre code of conduct. ▶ One hour program time to be spent at centre. Randall is not to leave the centre.
Review date and evidence required	▶ 24 June 2018 – copies of programs viewed ▶ Certificate of attendance at PD session
Support and resources	▶ Provide code of conduct. ▶ Access training and make booking. ▶ Ensure provision of programming time and check programs weekly.
Staff member name:	
Signed:	Date:
Supervisor name:	
Signed:	Date:

Effective feedback

Effective feedback is well-timed, specific and performance-based. It is not about advice, but involves sharing observations on what was done or how it was done. Providing feedback is vital to the development of good working relationships. It must, however, be done in a positive and constructive manner. Telling a staff member that they did a terrible job or reprimanding them for not completing a task on time will not help them get it right in future and may discourage them from trying to improve.

Positive feedback involves something good about a person's efforts. This may simply mean acknowledging the fact that the person tried to perform a task, even though they did not complete it correctly or on time. Positive feedback also means acknowledging people when they have performed well. When people receive recognition for good work, they are more likely to strive to maintain a high level of performance.

Constructive feedback

Constructive feedback is not criticism, and should never involve blame. It highlights aspects of an individual's or group's performance that need improvement. It must focus on the action rather than the person or group. All feedback must be based on observed behaviour, and be concerned with things the person can control and change. The aim of giving constructive feedback is to help the person identify the problem and reach agreement on how best to improve their performance.

Feedback should help rather than hurt others; therefore, remember to give positive feedback for successful behaviour as well as constructive feedback to improve performance.

Look for cues that indicate a person or group wants feedback; they will be most receptive to hearing your comments.

How to provide constructive feedback:

- Use positive and constructive language instead of negative language.
- Be specific; don't make general statements.
- Make a few suggestions at a time rather than overloading with information.
- Use 'I' statements such as, 'I felt disappointed when...' instead of accusatory statements.
- Avoid generalisations and personalisation.
- Discuss observed behaviour or results; focus on manageable behaviour.
- Share information about what you saw or heard; do not speculate.
- Verify understanding of your feedback. Do not assume everything is clearly understood.

Documentation

When providing counselling you must document what has been discussed. This may follow a format you prepare for the task. The documentation needs to include the time, date and who was involved. At the end of the record those involved should sign to show they understand and agree with the information recorded.

The record should include the following points that describe the actions taken:

- improvements necessary
- strategies to improve
- review date and evidence required
- support resources.

By creating this record it can be used for later reflection or evidence of the meeting that has taken place. It will also create a record that ensures that each person involved has the same strategies and goals. The record ensures that the staff member and the leader follow through on their agreement, and should the issue escalate it will be evidence of the actions that have been used to resolve the issue.

You must always document the conversations or communication exchanges you have with staff that involve work performance or planned assistance. Without this proof of conversations, it may place you in a situation where it is simply your word against the other person's. This is especially important if further assistance is required from your own supervisor or if disciplinary action of any sort needs to be implemented.

Example

Provide constructive feedback

June, a permanent part-time educator, consistently ignores centre protocol requiring part-time staff to stay for team meetings when they are rostered on.

The other staff find June's practice annoying, but they tolerate it because it is difficult to find part-time educators to back-fill positions at the service. By not attending meetings, June misses a lot of relevant information about children and strategies to manage some of the challenges facing educators. Team meetings are also a time when changes to rostering arrangements are discussed.

When one of the senior staff members mentions the meetings to June, June laughs her off with a casual, 'Oops, forgot, sorry!'

Lucy, the service coordinator, knows from feedback during team leader meetings that June is very efficient and good at her job, but that other staff find June's attitude annoying.

Although she doesn't want to alienate June and lose her services, Lucy decides it is time to formally address the issue. She calls June into her office, saying she would like to give her some feedback about an issue that is causing concern.

'Is this about team meetings?' asks June, as she enters the office, her face sullen and her arms folded.

'Yes,' says Lucy, recognising June's hostility. 'We really have to work on structuring your roster so you're able to attend these meetings.'

Lucy explains the importance of the team meetings to the way the team operates, adding that if the team becomes ineffective because of June's inability to attend meetings, the quality of care may suffer. She then explores with June the barriers to her attending team meetings, asking June for her input on how the centre can help structure her time and team meeting arrangements so that she can attend.

At the end of their discussion, June has a better understanding of the importance of attending meetings and the impact her absences are having on the team.

Practice task 24

1. What are **three** behavioural reasons why a staff member might show poor performance?

2. What are the **six** steps of performance counselling and setting plans?

6C Monitoring and evaluating performance

Monitoring staff performance and addressing any issues is imperative to maintaining a well-functioning service. A high standard of staff performance brings many benefits to a service, most notably quality education and care, and high staff morale. Staff need to know how they are performing and have the opportunity to participate in reviewing their performance and setting goals for ongoing development.

You need to be familiar with your state or national employment awards and industrial relations processes when dealing with performance issues to ensure that workers' rights are maintained.

A performance appraisal is a common action that occurs in education and care services. It links with NQS Element 7.2.3: Educators, co-ordinators and staff members performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

Performance appraisal process

The performance appraisal process must be carried out in line with service policies and procedures. This process includes complying with a number of other procedures, some of which are outlined below.

Procedures to comply with during performance management:

- Conducting informal reviews throughout the year
- Timing of formal appraisals
- Informing workers of a formal review
- Conducting the review appropriately
- Providing information if there is a dispute
- Taking follow-up action after a formal review
- Documenting and storing performance appraisals

Monitoring performance through appraisals

Most performance monitoring is conducted through performance appraisals. Performance appraisals deal specifically with an employee's performance over a given period of time and their ability to fulfil specific personal, team and service goals.

A performance appraisal is a tool for measuring performance against selected criteria. The criteria will be both quantitative and qualitative, providing a measure for the quality of performance as well as quantity (for example, meeting specific targets).

Performance may be measured against:

- punctuality
- honesty and integrity
- interactions with children
- relationships with families
- team commitment
- team performance
- career development
- service goals
- professional development and advancement.

Adhere to policy and procedure during appraisals

Staff may also be assessed against their ability to follow and adhere to particular policies, procedures and standards; for example:

- the centre's policies and procedures
- relevant state and federal regulations
- the seven quality areas in the NQS
- the ECA Code of Ethics
- current employment contracts.

Provide feedback during appraisals

Ideally, appraisals are a positive experience, providing feedback on progress since the last meeting. Strategies may be developed to improve performance. Non-performance should be discussed separately from performance appraisals in specific counselling sessions.

Feedback should be honest and allow the employee opportunity for response. Progress since the last performance appraisal should be examined for achievement of goals.

All staff need to be up to date with current trends and developments, so performance appraisals are an ideal time to identify any gaps in professional development and provide assistance for professional growth and understanding.

Prepare for a performance appraisal

Performance appraisals have clear aims and purposes, as outlined below. It is also useful to encourage pre-appraisal preparation to ensure the aims are met.

Performance appraisals

The aims of performance appraisals are to:

- provide employees with open and honest feedback on their performance
- facilitate discussion between staff members and their managers about mutual needs
- validate quality practices
- identify training needs
- provide a basis for workplace decisions on pay increases, promotion and professional development.

Pre-appraisals

A few days prior to conducting a performance review, have the staff member complete a pre-appraisal based on their perception of how they are performing. This gives the employee time for critical reflection of their practices, interactions, relationships and professional growth. A pre-appraisal provides you with valuable information as to how the meeting may proceed and what the staff member may wish to discuss or need support with. Likewise, a review of previous appraisals gives an indication of progress or regression.

Conduct a performance appraisal meeting

Some tips for conducting a performance appraisal meeting are shown below.

Tips for conducting a performance appraisal meeting:

- Make the appointment and stick to it. Allow one hour per employee.
- Meet in private with no interruptions.
- Discuss whether the previous objectives were met, excelled or not met. If they were not met, determine what extra help may have been required for success.
- Communicate personal issues and give feedback.
- Discuss interactions with staff and children, and probe their feelings about team interactions. Do they feel their contributions are valued and respected?
- Determine how they feel about their role. Are they happy in it? Why or why not? What can be done to improve this?
- Discuss career advancement and professional goals. What does the staff member hope to achieve over the next six or 12 months?
- How will they achieve their goals? What resources and support are needed? Is training necessary?

Post-appraisal commitments

Following through is imperative for ensuring any performance issues are addressed and progress is made. Document the discussion; ensure the staff member receives a copy and signs it. If you have committed to assisting the staff member, make sure this happens.

Staff appraisals can be motivational, uplifting and positive experiences when handled well, and they allow you to address performance issues in a fair and non-discriminatory way.

Example

Performance appraisal

Nancy is in her office waiting for Agatha to arrive for her performance appraisal. She has a copy of Agatha's pre-appraisal form and Agatha's previous appraisals, as well as the service procedure and checklist to follow, so the appraisal is fair and carried out according to policy. Nancy also has notes and comparisons from their last meeting.

Agatha has moved forward in her professional development and excelled in her studies. She had hoped to complete her Certificate III by this meeting, which she achieved, and she is now studying towards a Diploma qualification. In the last 12 months, she has been promoted to group leader and has attended four professional development sessions relating to current trends in the industry. Her personal attributes are exceptional, as is her team performance.

Nancy is looking forward to this interview.

Practice task 25

List **five** criteria against which performance may be measured.

6D Identifying and responding to poor performance

When poor performance is identified, this needs to be addressed promptly. Your service will have specific guidelines, policies and procedures, and the employee's award conditions will also provide guidance on the process. Upon commencement of employment staff should be made aware of the processes involved when their actions or attitudes displayed are below expectations.

Procedures for managing ongoing poor performance

Signs of poor performance need to be addressed promptly. Actions relating to poor performance can cause other staff to feel uncomfortable, dampen the spirit of the team, create disharmony between team members, and create a negative image of the service in the community. Poor performance can result in important roles and responsibilities of a work role to be jeopardised, creating a safety hazard or breach.

Actions you may use to address poor performance include:	
▶ communicating through informal meetings	▶ developing improvement plans
▶ providing training	▶ linking staff with a mentor or coach
▶ conducting mediation meetings	▶ holding group or staff meetings
▶ setting goals and objectives	▶ creating a reflective journal
▶ making a change in the working environment	▶ changing group dynamics through alteration of teams.

Disciplinary action

Disciplinary action can result if any member of staff fails to follow direction, breaches a service policy and procedure, or continually demonstrates poor performance. Actions that may be taken when these issues occur include:

- verbal warnings
- written warnings
- a requirement to take paid or unpaid leave for a specific period of time
- a requirement to make a private or public apology
- being forced to pay for repairs for any damage that has been caused.

There may be other actions that your service takes when specific situations or boundaries are crossed; these will be documented in a grievance or disciplinary policy and in the relevant industry award.

Termination of employment

When terminating a staff member's employment, specific processes and procedures must take place to avoid legal breaches. A staff member being disciplined will most likely need to be given a number of written warnings before termination can legally and ethically take place. These warnings may follow a series of verbal warnings; however, unless these are documented, dated and signed, they do not hold any legal value.

Often newly appointed staff will be given a probationary period: a set time they will be on trial for. During this period the individual will be observed, monitored and assisted where needed to ensure they are capable of carrying out their prescribed job role. At any time during this period if the individual is deemed not fit for the role or lacks specific skills or knowledge, then termination can take place without giving any previous warnings. Most services inform the individual of their poor performance before a termination becomes a possibility, which assists the person in trying to meet the employer's expectations.

In severe instances a staff member may receive an immediate termination of employment. These circumstances generally will be considered on an individual basis and may include severe breaches such as:

- leaving children unattended
- implementing a severe unsafe act resulting in an injury to another person
- using drugs or alcohol while working
- using offensive or inappropriate language
- aggressively dealing with a child.

Immediate termination will usually follow an action that is inexcusable and will not be tolerated in any service.

Disciplinary action policy

The following is an example of a disciplinary action policy.

XYZ Childcare disciplinary policy

Should a staff member breach regulations or service protocol, disciplinary action will be taken. A first incident will incur a verbal warning. A second incident will incur a first written warning. A third incident will incur a second written warning and a fourth incident will incur a final written warning with a notice of dismissal.

The following actions may result in instant dismissal:

- Leaving the centre during hours you are assigned to supervise children without alerting the Managing Director
- Handing over a child to a non-custodial person without appropriate authorisation
- Verbal or physical abuse of a child
- Leaving a child unattended or unrestrained on changing bench or any play equipment with height
- Failure to report and record any illness or accident involving a child
- Stealing
- Falsification of records or making untrue statements
- Negligence
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Receiving three formal official warnings
- Habitual lateness
- Failure to attend to the physical and emotional needs of children
- Smoking in the service
- Wilful disobedience or insubordination
- Use of bad language or shouting at children
- Failure to perform duties as prescribed in the job description supplied

This list is not exhaustive and the employer reserves the right to dismiss summarily for any act of misconduct.

Practice task 26

Read the case study, then answer the question that follows.

Case study

Monika, an educator, has failed to provide records about children's learning. This is the third week in a row. Her supervisor, Kim, is upset as the records help her to create an appropriate program of experiences for the children, and without them she is missing vital details that help her understand the children well. Kim has not spoken to Monika about the issue yet, but feels she must act now to ensure that Monika provides the records for next week.

What could Kim do to try to deal with Monika's poor performance?

6E Mentoring and coaching individuals to improve performance

An effective way to improve someone's performance is to monitor and coach them. Assigning a staff member a person they work well with often helps people who are discouraged to turn their behaviour around, and feel empowered and worthy. When staff members feel valued they perform to their best.

Techniques for improving performance

Techniques used to encourage, engage and enable others in the workplace include coaching and mentoring. These strategies improve practice, refine skills and help people to extend on their current performance levels. Your service's policies and procedures will play a role in your chosen delivery method and technique. Your supervisor will also participate in any decision about formal coaching and mentoring that occurs.

Leaders who coach and mentor effectively have teams that respect their actions and who are willing to participate in service activities to achieve goals.

Mentoring

Mentoring is beneficial for yourself and others. When mentoring you must first establish a positive relationship with the staff member you are working with. In addition, you need to have knowledge and skills that benefit the other person. Without these, the mentoring will struggle to be effective, and the relationship will be strained and inevitably unsuccessful.

Once you have formed a positive relationship you can then meet to discuss goals to work on. They may ask for additional guidance, knowledge or skill development. When you document these goals you can use this for later reflection and evaluation purposes.

Mentoring can be either formal or informal depending on the type of support others need. Formal situations may include private meetings, setting goals with time frames and meeting regularly to discuss progress and further skill requirements. Informal situations may include working alongside the other person, offering support and encouragement as they show improvements or master a specific task.

Setting goals

When mentoring, it is imperative to set goals and objectives with the person to help guide their actions to a level of competence. Working with them to reach these and providing ongoing support mechanisms within the working environment will enable effective mentoring to take place.

Mentoring is about helping someone to gain skills so that they can learn independently. It relies on mutual respect and trust. The mentor, as a leader, must allow the mentee to work at their own pace; however, the mentor will guide, suggest and provide avenues for extension.

Mentor relationships may occur naturally when a staff member finds they connect well with another more experienced or knowledgeable person. The relationship may continue for a long period of time.

Coaching

Coaching and mentoring are often confused. Coaching is the assistance you may give regarding the achievement of a specific goal. This can be an informal or formal relationship between a more experienced person who offers support or guidance to the other based on a certain task or objective. It focuses on what the individual needs to do more of to develop in a specific area. It is a one-on-one process normally implemented in a personalised approach.

A coach will work to break down barriers that may exist for the person trying to achieve a goal. This will allow them to gain clarity.

Coaching is a process of self-leadership that enables individuals to gain an understanding of who they are, what and why they are doing something, and where they want to go.

Example

Coaching and mentoring

Clare supervises a small group of educators. She is also responsible for the students that complete placements in her service. When working with her colleagues, Clare implements a mentoring approach. She wants the other educators to trust her, respect her, and learn to think and develop independently under her direction and support.

When working with students, Clare implements a coaching style. She takes time to understand their placement goals and supports them to achieve these in the short time they are in her service. She provides more concrete and demonstrative support, knowing that the trainer/assessor of the students would provide further modelling and guidance.

Practice task 27

Describe the difference between mentoring and coaching.

6F Providing additional support or referral

On occasion every staff member will need additional support or referral. When you work with a diverse range of individuals with varying beliefs, ideas and attitudes it is not always possible to meet their needs or assist them to grow without the support of other leaders or specialists.

Additional support

When the need for additional support is identified it is ideal to first determine the type of support required. This may mean referring to your guidelines, policies or procedures, or discussing the situation with another leader, your supervisor or an external body.

Additional support may come from:

- other members within the team who are experienced in a specific area
- professional development training opportunities, including seminars, conferences, webinars or workshop sessions
- nationally accredited training (certificate, diploma or advanced diploma levels)
- speaking with or meeting a specific community group or agency
- sharing research of resource materials.

Referral networks

Referral networks are a good source of additional information and ideas. They are able to provide alternative views on practices and processes which might benefit a person or your whole team. Referral networks can be found online and may include a community group or organisation, specialist or training provider. Other networks may be established within your organisation and may include other related providers, forums or community services such as:

- psychologists
- community workers
- social workers
- multicultural support centres
- housing services
- translators and interpreters
- registered training organisations that deliver nationally accredited qualifications
- other community-focused supports.

Professional support

Most valuable to the support of educators is the Inclusion Support Programme (ISP) with Inclusion Agencies (IAs) providing professionals for each state and territory. Their goals are:

- to assist eligible services to build their capacity and capability to provide and embed inclusive practice in their delivery of early learning and care programs
- to provide an inclusive environment for children with additional needs, including children with a disability, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children from a refugee background and Indigenous children
- to provide funding for early childhood and childcare services to address a barrier to inclusion through the Inclusion Development Fund (IDF), such as subsidising the employment of an additional educator.

Practice task 28

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Erika is a qualified dietitian working in a large education and care service. She loves creating nutritious meals and menu plans for the children and enjoys helping out voluntarily when children are participating in cooking activities.

Erika would like to work with children in the room, but the regulations state that she must hold, as a minimum, a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care or be actively working toward this qualification.

1. What type of service could you refer Erika to so that she could complete her Certificate III qualification?

2. If an educator you work with is unsure whether a recipe is nutritious or not, would it be appropriate to refer them to Erika? Why/why not?

Summary

- Performance management strategies are about linking the objectives of the service with the abilities of the staff.
- A challenge for leaders is dealing with underperforming staff. Poor performance may range from having a negative attitude to consistently failing to reach key performance indicators.
- Use constructive feedback to improve individual or team performance. Always present feedback in a positive way, focusing on specific behaviours or actions.
- When poor performance is identified, prompt action must be taken to remedy the problem confidentially and professionally.
- Performance counselling may be an informal chat or a formal process; in both cases the conversation should be recorded in the staff member's file.
- The objective of performance management should be to reach agreement on the nature of the performance issue and the corrective action to be taken.
- Techniques used to encourage, engage and enable others in the workplace include coaching and mentoring.
- When you work with a diverse range of individuals with varying beliefs, ideas and attitudes, it is not always possible to meet their needs or assist them to grow without the support of other leaders or specialists.

Learning checkpoint 6
Review individual performance

Part A

What is the goal of constructive feedback?

Part B

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Cassandra is a leader in a new education and care service. One of her most important responsibilities is helping to develop policies and procedures. She is currently working on a performance review policy.

In Cassandra's last role, a colleague, Lalita, displayed poor performance by refusing to work toward the service QIP goals. Cassandra was required to follow procedures in this case.

1. Where in the NQS would Cassandra find information about performance management plans?

2. What types of methods could Cassandra include in her procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance?

3. What strategies for conducting counselling sessions might Cassandra have used with Lalita?

4. What behavioural traits might have caused Lalita's refusal to participate?

5. Do you think Lalita would be allowed to continue to avoid working to the QIP goals, or would a disciplinary process need to be commenced? Explain your response.

6. If Lalita wanted to participate in working towards the QIP goals, but was afraid that she wouldn't be able to understand everything, should Cassandra provide mentoring or coaching support? Why/why not?

7. Where could Cassandra find additional support for Lalita if she needed to refer to an external source?