

# ASSESSMENT AND RATING VISIT EXPERIENCES

Community Child Care recently spoke with three family day care services that have been part of the first services to go through an assessment and rating visit. We share their answers to our questions and thank each service for sharing their experience with us.

## SERVICE ONE

### Where is your service located?

Regional greater Shepparton – spanning Dookie, Mooroopna, Shepparton, Kialla, Tatura, Murchison, Toolamba and Seymour.

### Can you tell us about your assessment and rating visit?

It was very relaxing, very much focused on observation of practice and interaction. We had two assessors. They spent a couple of hours in the office on day one, up to three hours with five educators across four days and then finished the assessment at the office, which was also about two hours.

### As a team, how did you prepare for the assessment visit?

As a team! We are such a unique service in our relationship as a single team not two separate entities – it enables such amazing results. The coordination unit meet fortnightly to discuss quality areas and items raised by the educational leader.

Ongoing surveys, notes, reflective questions, the assessment and rating tools, power points at meetings and other methods were used with educators and families to gather input for the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

As a group our improvement is decided and redistributed and we would follow up and discuss each area on a three weekly cycle of visits. We began looking at the NQF in its draft stage and began implementation from that date. This really helped in familiarising ourselves with the terminology.

We put a lot of focus on our philosophy and wanted to ensure it truly reflected us. We asked questions of all our stakeholders including the community, we brainstormed, we reviewed and we came together again as a group with our combined vision. This approach gave us unity, a real sense of belonging.

### What was the best thing you did to prepare for your assessment visit?

Communicate, take time to listen to one another, and approach everything individually.

### How were staff and educators feeling prior to undergoing assessment?

We were all nervous, we didn't know what to expect.

### Were there aspects of the visit that you feel you will be better prepared for next time?

We really wanted to showcase more of ourselves. Next time we would make sure we really showed them what we've got ... we are so proud!

### How are staff and educators feeling after your assessment visit?

Relieved and extremely happy and proud: we are meeting the quality standard in the first six areas and exceeded the standard in Area 7. We also exceeded in single elements across Areas 4 and 6.

### What will you continue to do or change as a result of your assessment?

We will continue to be a service that engages in deep reflection and improvement. We will keep working together and unite to work toward exceeding all the areas!

### What advice would you give to other services to prepare for an assessment and rating visit?

Be real, the assessment was very interactions focused and highlighted all our environments. The assessors observed, chatted with children and had a real knack for drawing out information ... so don't be nervous. Believe your philosophy and work together.

## SERVICE TWO

### Where is your service located?

Regional Victoria.

### Can you tell us about your assessment and rating visit?

It was a positive experience, very thorough and informative.

### As a team, how did you prepare for the assessment visit?

We have been having focus groups and much training for two years.

### What was the best thing you did to prepare for your assessment visit?

Focus groups and attending training sessions and sharing our ideas.

### How were staff and educators feeling prior to undergoing assessment?

They were a little nervous, not really knowing what to expect.

### Were there aspects of the visit that you feel you will be better prepared for next time?

We now have a clear direction of what areas we need to work on and what will be going into our QIP.

### How are staff and educators feeling after your assessment visit?

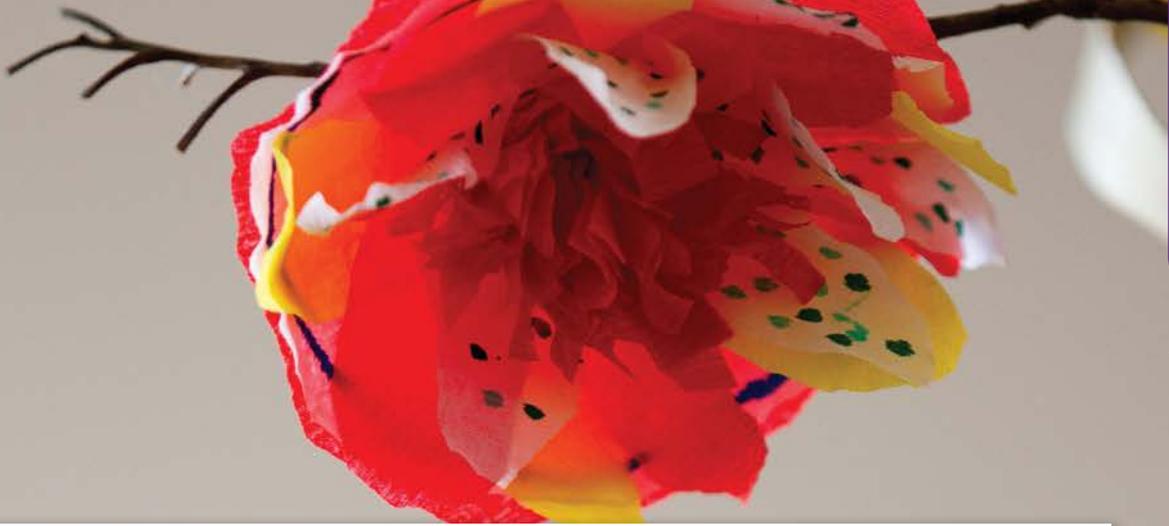
Everyone feels good about the process. The assessors were very experienced and knowledgeable and made everyone feel at ease.

### What will you continue to do or change as a result of your assessment?

We will continue with our focus groups and training.

### What advice would you give to other services to prepare for assessment?

Keep working towards getting high quality improvements, working as a team and keeping up with current and best practice.



## SERVICE THREE

### Where is your service located?

Metro office, with educators and field workers based metro and regional.

### Can you tell us about your assessment and rating visit?

The visit was a really positive experience. The assessor made a huge effort to be respectful and not intimidating. She went out of her way to ask questions in 'conversation style' to find out about our service and how we work. Educators gave the same feedback at the end.

### As a team, how did you prepare for the assessment visit?

Preparations started at least two years prior as we began to prepare our staff and educators for the coming changes. Our coordinator and staff started attending training sessions, reading information and increased our networking to gain as much knowledge as possible.

The information was then passed on to educators and families and so the additional support commenced.

Whole service training sessions were provided as well as paid access to online training. Information was circulated to staff, educators and family through regular newsletters, updates, relevant sector information circulated via email, phone and face-to-face visits.

Coordination staff started by doing a written observational visit with each educator; this gave them written information on what they were already doing and what outcomes they were achieving. We then made individual suggestions on how they could extend on this.

Individual time was given to each educator on an ongoing basis, by the field staff and the educational leader, as well as ongoing phone support and advice from the coordination team. Where requested we spent time with educators assisting them to create their own formats for planning and documenting so that it would suit their particular service. Staff spent time assisting each educator through the reflection process and supported them with the planning cycle.

We also spent time celebrating our successes, and feel that this was crucial to keeping everyone motivated. We acknowledged the educators who had amazing ideas and processes and we share them with everyone in the service.

From day one, staff and educators were provided with the documents they would need to become familiar with to do the job.

### What was the best thing you did to prepare for your assessment visit?

Be familiar with what was required, the process and our obligations. Preparation really began two years before ensuring that we were familiar with the expectations and the process and that we had spent as much time as possible preparing our educators. There was nothing 'last minute' that could be done, we were either doing 'it' or not if that makes sense. We spent a lot of time explaining that the visit was like a snapshot of where our service was at a particular point in time; the bulk of the work is done in between the assessment visits with ongoing work towards our QIP.

### How were staff and educators feeling prior to undergoing assessment?

Our staff felt surprisingly relaxed. It was a different feeling to the NCAC [National Childcare Accreditation Council] process. We felt that we had worked really hard towards the new system and that the whole process was a better system. Our educators were still quite nervous and commented they were feeling pressure that they would 'fail it for the service.'

### Were there aspects of the visit that you feel you will be better prepared for next time?

I guess just knowing what to expect; you really need to go through the whole process to gain a good sense of how it all unfolds. Of course, the next time we will have had even more time to work with educators on their programs and documentation, and we will be focusing on different areas with our QIP but will have a good understanding of the process.

### How are staff and educators feeling after your assessment visit?

We are still waiting on our draft results, so we are not quite at the end of the process yet, but so far I feel we had a really positive experience, and plenty of opportunity to 'showcase' what we do.

### What will you continue to do or change as a result of your assessment?

When we get our assessment, we will consider the feedback and look to create some new targets on our QIP this will be something that is ongoing regardless of the results and time between visits.

### What advice would you give to other services to prepare for assessment?

I felt that it was really important to put the resources and time into ongoing improvement and preparations rather than a last minute panic. The visit is a small snapshot of where your service is at a particular time; if you are working hard on your QIP all year then the visit is a valuable opportunity to gain some insight and feedback from someone looking at your service from an external perspective. ●