Cluster Management Trial

ECECD will shortly be advertising for organisations to become Cluster Managers as part of a two year trial. Undertaking a trial was one of the recommendations of the Brennan Review supported by the NSW government. The model for the trial incorporates feedback from the preschool sector after the previous expression of interest as well as the Victorian and Queensland experience of cluster management.

Community preschools that participate in the trial will need to be a not for profit organisation and have a community based volunteer management committee. Potential cluster managers will need to be able to demonstrate expertise and innovation in working with groups of similar services and be prepared to establish and maintain partnerships with preschools and ECECD.

In Stage two of the trial cluster managers will recruit preschools to the cluster, and work with preschools to develop business and administrative processes, develop marketing strategies, and establish effective partnerships with volunteer management committees.

The expected outcomes of the trial are to optimise the management and administrative functions of participating community preschools, support and promote a professional workforce and increase the capacity of volunteer management committees.

More information will be available on our website.

Operational Support Program

The roll-out of the Community Preschool Operational Support Program will start soon. The Operational Support Program will assist an identified group of preschools to adjust their operations and maximise their alignment with the objectives of the Preschool Funding Model so that they are sustainable into the future. Direct and customised consultancy services will form the core of the program and be delivered through two complementary and integrated channels:

- Business advisory services delivered by SmallBizConnect, which is operated and funded by the NSW Office of Small Business; and
- Customised preschool sector specific advice, tailored to the needs of the individual preschools and delivered by sector experts with a demonstrated effective track record working with community preschool services to enhance sustainability.

Please keep an eye out for more information on our website, in future editions of the EC Extra, and through direct communication with preschools.
Payments to funded services

The first quarter ECEC grant payment for the 2014/2015 Financial Year will be processed on 14 July 2014 (one week later than last year). This is to allow for enhancements to the Department’s SAP financial system to be carried out in the week commencing 7 July 2014.

Phase out of paper applications and notifications

All long day care, preschools, outside school hours care and family day care services should now be registered and using the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQAITS) secure portal. Use of the portal ensures that your applications and other transactions are tracked and appropriate action taken. Forms for occasional care, mobile services and home based care are available on our website. All payments must be made electronically.

Rules for advertising

Providers are reminded that they must not advertise or market a service until it has been approved. The only exception is where a service application has been lodged but not yet decided. In these cases, providers will need to clearly indicate that the application is under consideration and that approval should not be assumed. For family day care schemes, educators who advertise independently need to include the name of the approved provider.

Keeping in touch

Update your contact details by logging onto the NQAITS portal and/or for funded services by logging onto ECCMS.

You can also get in touch with us by:
• visiting our website - www.dec.nsw.gov.au/ecec
• phoning us on 1800 619 113 (regulatory and approval questions and assistance with the NQAITS) or 1300 755 426 (funding and cluster management)

• emailing us on ececd@det.nsw.edu.au (general),
ceec.funding@det.nsw.edu.au (funding),
fees.ececd@det.nsw.edu.au (fees) or
eceextra@det.nsw.edu.au (EC Extra editor).

Congratulations to Kindamindi

Kindamindi Preschool in Inverell recently became the third NSW service to be awarded an Excellent rating.

Kindamindi maintains close links with the local Aboriginal community through the preschool and a supported playgroup to assist with children’s smooth transition into the preschool and overcoming some of the barriers that young Aboriginal parents may experience in accessing an early childhood service.

Kindamindi’s educators have also taken on a leadership role within the local early childhood community, including mentoring, support and resources for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators and community workers.

Michele Penberthy, an educator at Kindamindi, told EC Extra that the Excellent rating:

validates the work we do every day with children, families and community. It’s our relationships, dedication and love of our role that has got us here.

Children at the service were also excited about the rating. Kaden, a child at the service, was quoted as saying:

It’s so good, we need to have a party to celebrate, a run and play party.

Annual Service Fees due on 1 July

As noted in our last issue, annual service fees for providers of long day, family day care, preschools and outside school hours care were due on 1 July. Invoices were sent out on 1 June for payment by 1 July. If you have still not made your payment, late fees will apply. These are detailed on your invoice. More information, including on easy payment options, is available on the Annual Service Fees page of our website. All payments must be made electronically.

ECEC Preschool Census

All funded community preschool services are required to participate in a preschool census as part of their funding agreements. This year the census will take place in July/August and will open on 28 July. The representative fortnight for the census is 28 July to 8 August 2014.

The census will be managed through the Department’s Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation and this means that there will be some minor changes in the data collected.

The HELP phone number for the census has also changed. The census HELP phone number is: 1300 951 381.

As occurred last year, funded providers will be sent an email containing their access code and detailed instructions on how to complete the census. If your service does not receive this email by 15 July 2014 please contact: 1300 951 381 or email ececcollection@det.nsw.edu.au.