SUPervision in out of school hours Care services

As we head towards the school holiday period, many services will be making preparations to provide vacation care over the summer break. If they have not done so already, these services should be taking the opportunity now to review their systems and procedures for ensuring adequate supervision at all times, particularly for when children are taken on excursions. The key is good planning and in particular, effective risk assessment and mitigation. Services should refer to Regulation 168 for details of the range of policies and procedures that they are expected to apply, including policies for risk assessment and excursions.

Prosecution for childcare offences

As regulator of the State’s early childhood sector, the Department takes child safety very seriously. If the Department becomes aware that a child or children may be at risk, it will not hesitate to act.

Section 270 of the National Law allows the Regulatory Authority to publish enforcement actions taken under the National Law, include the name of a person prosecuted for an offence. Enforcement actions are indexed on the Department’s website under the name of the approved provider of the service at which the incident or breaches took place. These remain on the Department’s website for three years.

As a result of a recent prosecution mounted by the Directorate, Southern Star Inn Pty Ltd, the provider of Star Shine Childcare Centre in Goulburn, was convicted of failing to adequately supervise a child; failing to notify a serious incident within 24 hours; and for giving the Directorate a document which it knew to be false or misleading. The sole director of the company, Ms Julie Kelly, was also convicted for the same offences. Fines for both defendants totalled more than $40,000.

Emergency and evacuation procedures

Regional and rural parts of the State often experience extreme weather events at this time of year, such as heatwaves, bushfires, or floods. We have also seen the emergence recently of a new type of emergency event, where a police operation or lockdown is involved.

The circumstances of these types of incidents and the disruptions they cause can be upsetting for children and service staff. A way of minimising this is to practice procedures so that an evacuation or emergency procedure is seen as routine and works smoothly.

All services are required to rehearse their emergency and evacuation procedures every three months.

A good resource on developing and maintaining an emergency policy and procedure framework is the “Managing Emergency Situations” guide developed in 2012 by Children’s Services Central. The guide, which covers planning and strategies for all types of emergency situations is available at www.cscentral.org.au/Resources/mt-emergency-situations.pdf
ACCREDITATION 2016 – PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION FOR NSW EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

The Quality Teaching Council and the Board of the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) recently endorsed the Accreditation of Early Childhood Teachers Policy.

The policy will be implemented in 2016 and supports the professional recognition of NSW early childhood teachers.

In 2016, NSW early childhood teachers will be invited to go to the Teacher Accreditation website (www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au) and register for accreditation.

After registering teachers will be asked to provide BOSTES with certified copies (Justice of the Peace signed) of these documents:

- an Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) approved or recognised early childhood teaching qualification
- a current Working with Children Check clearance
- two forms of identification (eg passport, drivers licence or birth certificate), and
- a Statement of Service on employer letterhead to confirm they are employed as an early childhood teacher.

Teachers have until 18 July 2016 to register for accreditation. After 18 July, eligible early childhood teachers will be accredited at Proficient Teacher.

Information kits to further assist early childhood teachers will be distributed to services in the new year.

NEW EDUCATOR TO CHILD RATIOS FOR 24 TO 36 MONTH OLD CHILDREN FROM 1 JANUARY, 2016

The last significant change to child-to-educator ratios will be introduced in 2016 to the 24 month to 36 month age group of children, and will see the number of children per educator reduce from eight to five.

The Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria have already successfully transitioned to the new ratio arrangements for this age group. New South Wales transition will see ratios across all jurisdictions being implemented nationally.

The importance of having proper attention and care for young children in this age group is well documented and it is why this change is so critical for ensuring all children get the best start in life.

NSW QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN WORKBOOK

As part of the improvements to our assessment and rating process, the Early Childhood Education and Care Directorate has developed a new Quality Improvement Plan template to assist services preparing their quality improvement plans. The new template follows a workbook format which is designed to step through the requirement for a quality improvement plan. Use of the template is optional as services can develop their own quality improvement planning formats as long as they include a service philosophy, a self-assessment and a plan for improving your service.

You can obtain a copy of the NSW Quality Improvement Plan template here.

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL FUNDING WEBINAR

Thank you to those of you who were able to attend our webinar on Community Preschool Funding 2015/16 on Friday 11 December 2015.

A recording of this webinar is now available now to view on demand here: http://www.webcasts.com.au/DEEC111215/

The webinar covered the following key points

- Overview and update on funding for 2016
- New initiatives:
  - Preschools for Sustainable Communities
  - Preschool 600 Hour Incentive

Once again we thank all of those who provided feedback during the live webcast. If you would like to provide feedback, you may do so here.

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:

- phoning us on 1800 619 113 (general) or 1300 755 426 (funding)
- emailing us on ececd@det.nsw.edu.au (general), ecec.funding@det.nsw.edu.au (funding) or eceextra@det.nsw.edu.au (EC Extra editor)