

Resource Sheet

BEING CLEAR ABOUT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FAMILY DAY CARE

Designed for Family Day Care (FDC)

Acknowledgement



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As of 1 January 2013, Gowrie Victoria commenced as the Professional Support Coordinator (PSC) for Victoria. Gowrie Victoria is committed to ensuring continuity of quality support to services and has commenced a planned transition to ensure this occurs. As part of this transition, and in partnership CCC, services can access a number of resources as developed by CCC.

BEING CLEAR ABOUT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN FAMILY DAY CARE

National Quality Standard Quality Areas 1, 3, 4, 6, 7

Being clear about roles and responsibilities is vital for strong, cohesive and complementary partnerships between educators, families, coordination units and operators. Quality care and education relies on the strength of these partnerships.

Family Day Care (FDC) forms part of the formal Commonwealth funded child care system. It has some characteristics which delineate FDC from other forms of Early Childhood Education and Care:

- Care and education is provided by an approved educator in the educator's home, in geographically dispersed areas
- The children can range in age from birth to 12 years of age, with older children in exceptional circumstances
- Children are cared for and educated in small groups by a single educator, occasionally with the support of an educator assistant
- Hours of care and education are flexible – providing core hours, out of core hours, overnight care and weekend care
- There are coordination units in place to monitor and support educators
- Educators are largely self-employed and often operate their own small business.

The FDC service is a partnership between families, educators, the approved provider and the coordination unit. In order to provide a professional service for children and their families, educators, coordination units and service operators need to understand and practice their particular roles and responsibilities within the partnership.

A successful partnership embodies reflection, respect, trust, communication and a shared balance of power. For example, educators need to value the trust given to them by families and trust that the coordination unit will treat them as equal partners. Similarly, the coordination unit need to trust that educators will honour the service requirements. Power is equally shared and is not reliant on all partners being equally involved in the day to day operation of the service.

Each partner will respect and work within the boundaries of their role. This is an important part of working as a professional, as is reflecting on the effectiveness and power equality of each role. All partners have the care, education, development, health and well-being of the child as central to their roles; however each has quite different responsibilities within the FDC service.

The role of families

Families are the principle carers and first educators of the child, and the key decision makers. They are also the users, or 'customers' of the FDC service. They enter into a contract with educators, and pay for the care provided. They are expected to follow guidelines provided by the service and fulfil their responsibilities as required for receiving fee subsidies, known as Child Care Benefit (CCB).

The role of the educator

The educator is the supplier of the service. Educators are the professionals who provide a quality, safe, developmentally appropriate program for the children in care. This program is documented and linked to the service's philosophy and the approved early year's framework/s chosen by the service. The educator provides care and education to meet the requirements of the Government, the service's standards and policies and the care and education contract with families.

Educators discuss the education and care needs of the children with the families and the coordination unit. They maintain a professional working relationship with families and the coordination unit and process child and family records including those required for CCB purposes.

Educators are usually covered for workplace injuries by their service; however they have a responsibility to themselves, the family, the child and their service to do everything reasonable to

maintain a safe working environment. They have a responsibility to their service to report any unsafe situations, with a view to them being made safe. Educators are responsible for making sure they engage in safe work practices to meet occupational health and safety requirements. Every worker has similar responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.

Educators participate in professional development, sourced from both their service and other organisations, and other services' activities. If they are contractors running their own business, educators are responsible for meeting taxation and other small business legal requirements.

The role of the coordination unit

The coordination unit is made up of professionals who operate the FDC service on a day to day basis on behalf of the legal operator – who may be local government, a community organisation or a commercial provider.

The coordination unit recruits, monitors and supports educators by regular visiting, phone contact, training and other networking opportunities. It 'places' children according to the needs of families, in accordance with Priority of Access and the eligibility requirements, monitors their development and provides service information, support and referrals for families. The unit is responsible for periodically checking the home where care and education is being provided, to ensure it is being maintained as a safe working environment and to ensure any maintenance that is required has been completed for the safety of both the child and the educator. It processes CCB payments on behalf of families and administers government funds. It provides reports to the operator to enable it to meet legal and accountability requirements to Government and service users.

The role of the approved provider

The approved provider is legally responsible for the service. It is required to meet all legislative and regulatory requirements, such as the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011, Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and the In Home Care Interim Standards. It is responsible for financial operations of the service, the

administration of CCB and other government funds. It is also responsible for ensuring the service meets all other requirements such as completion of utilisation reports.

The operator undertakes strategic planning of the service to ensure it meets the changing needs of families. It contracts or employs educators and coordination unit staff.

Because FDC placements are geographically dispersed and the operator and coordination unit are physically removed from the education and care taking place, it is particularly important to consistently reflect upon and review roles and responsibilities and communicate these to all parties. This will ensure the partnerships remain strong, cohesive and complementary, and that high quality care and education is provided to young children and their families.

References and further reading

Community Child Care Association (CCC) 2012, *My Home, My Business – Family Day Care Business Manual*, Community Child Care Association, Melbourne

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) 2009, *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years*, State of Victoria, Melbourne

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