Supporting an engaging induction process

Inducting new team members (including educators) to your service is a valuable process that "plays a critical role in creating and maintaining a positive and professional culture" (Guide to the National Quality Framework, p.297).

The main focus of an induction is providing the team member with the required knowledge, guidance and support to commence at your service and set them up for success. It is important they have a thorough understanding of all aspects of the service (including the service philosophy, policies, procedures and expectations), the regulatory requirements, and their roles and responsibilities.

The induction is also an opportunity to answer their questions, seek their feedback, understand their motivations and aspirations, and inspire them to work towards goals that support their professional growth.

Key considerations

When designing your induction, it is important to customise information content according to the new team member's needs as these may vary depending on qualifications, experience, role and responsibilities.

Allocating sufficient time to cover the intended content supports the transition. You could consider staggering the induction over several days or weeks. Also consider suitable methods of delivery to help support different learning styles and reflect on how the induction can be engaging, such as in-person discussions, time learning on the floor, and online modules.

An induction is most effective when revisited on a regular basis. Supporting new team members through regular check-ins is important to review the induction content, support wellbeing, and revisit any goals that you have set together.

Consider implementing a buddying system, linking new team members with a more experienced team member who can answer questions and support the new person to feel valued and welcomed. Alternatively, implementing a

mentoring program that begins at induction can support professional growth and learning. Collaborating with the team and new person will assist in identifying a suitable mentoring partnership. To maximise the benefits, it is important to allocate time for mentoring to take place on a regular basis.

A welcoming environment

For some, starting in a new position can be daunting. Creating a welcoming environment will set the tone of the induction and introduce new team members to the culture of your service.

Some suggested activities to support a smooth induction include:

- ensuring a freshly cleaned and labelled place for their belongings

- a celebratory morning tea with the team

- inviting the new team member to share experiences and identify the strengths they bring to, as well as aspirations they may have, for their new role

- conducting a tour of the service (if a centre-based service), identifying key health and safety features, discussing evacuation plans and the storage of medication for children with medical needs

- introducing them to other professionals working with the service, such as Inclusion Professionals

- facilitating the opportunity to meet with families (which also provides the opportunity to discuss the service's commitment to collaborative, respectful partnerships with families).

Sharing information

There is a considerable amount of information that a new team member needs to be provided with to improve their confidence in their new role, so it is important to think about strategies to build knowledge and understanding without it being overwhelming.

Key documents the new team member will need to build understanding about their role, responsibilities and expectations (NQS Element 7.1.3) include:

- the position description

- performance planning documentation (including information about probationary periods and processes, if relevant)

- professional development opportunities

- relevant administrative forms and documents (such as leave forms).

Discussion of their role, goals and expectations will give you the opportunity to explain how performance planning relates to their role and responsibilities (NQS Element 7.2.3).

Once they have a clear understanding of their role, provide them with a copy of a document such as a service or **staff handbook** and discuss the service's rosters, team meetings schedule, management structure and any reporting requirements. You can also discuss **professional standards** and expectations and reflect on Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics and the service's code of conduct and how important these are to their success (NQS Standard 4.2).

To assist the team member to meet all service and regulatory requirements when carrying out their responsibilities, share with them the service **policies and procedures.** Among these will be those required under Regulation 168 (and Regulation 169 for Family Day Care), and any accompanying forms, templates or checklists your service may use. It is important to explain the policies and procedures and the legal requirements in detail so the team member has a clear understanding of their responsibilities and obligations (NQS Element 7.1.2).

Information about **individual children** is an important area of discussion, including children with a health care need, allergy, disability or medical condition, and those with dietary requirements. You may also need to discuss children impacted by special family circumstances, such as parenting or court orders (NQS Quality Area 2). It is also important to look at the needs of all the children in the service in the context of the educational program (NQS Quality Area 1).

Communicating your service's approach

Conversations with the new team member about the service's **vision and statement of philosophy** have the potential to be inspiring and motivating. These documents will help them understand how their personal beliefs align with those of the service, and how they can make a difference to the outcomes for children and families (NQS Element 7.1.1). You can also discuss how quality practices at the service fit with the vision, philosophy and the relevant approved learning framework. Sharing the service's Quality Improvement Plan can also build an understanding of the service's priorities and goals.

A discussion regarding the service's **educational program, processes, practices and daily routines** can be conducted with, or by, your Educational Leader. It's important there are opportunities to revisit these conversations as the educator learns about the service's documentation and their responsibilities and expectations.

Moving forward

Careful planning of your induction process will have ongoing benefits. Consider how you support team members to experience an induction that is meaningful, informative and beneficial, leaving them confident, empowered, engaged and well placed to make a solid contribution to your service and the education and care of the children.

Reflective questions

- What is the purpose of the induction?

- In what ways can you make the induction meaningful and engaging?

- How can you design your induction to 'begin with the end in mind'? That is, how do you want this new team member to feel during and after the induction process?

- How can you engage your team in reflection on your current process, and provide them with a voice to inform any changes?

Supporting documents

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/22961

https://www.acecqa.gov.au/newsletters/acecqa-newsletter-issue-10-2018

https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2018/10/08/mentoring-matters/

http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/