



Australian Children's  
Education & Care  
Quality Authority

## QUALITY AREA 7

# SUPPORTING PERFORMANCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONALS



In education and care services, the approved provider is responsible for ensuring that each team member's roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, performance is regularly evaluated, and that individualised learning and development plans are in place (Element 7.2.3). These are essential to building a cohesive team in which every member values and supports one another and works professionally towards collective goals. This will, in turn, lead to the effective operation of the service and positive outcomes for children and families.

An open and respectful performance review process can:

- create meaningful connections between an individual's daily work and the larger goals and vision of the service
- show team members they are valued and their contributions are appreciated
- strengthen bonds and build better communication between staff and management
- help team members maintain motivation and see the impact their work has on the lives of children and families
- be collaborative and allow team members to take ownership of their professional development
- refocus the team on their key priorities
- provide managers with insight into how the team member views their work.

To support both performance review and professional development, service leaders can provide team members with:

- an up-to-date position description, reflective of their role and responsibilities
- an induction process that supports them to understand their role and responsibilities

- a code of conduct and professional standards to guide practice
- opportunities to engage in ongoing critical reflection of practice and to receive regular unbiased feedback on their performance
- opportunities to be involved in shaping policies, procedures and systems that impact their work
- an individual, well-resourced professional development plan, based on their goals
- support for their learning and development goals.

The team member has an important role to play, including:

- regularly engaging in professional conversations with service leaders
- creating individualised goals and identifying areas for professional development
- participating openly in critical reflection and self-assessment
- taking ownership of, and being accountable for, their professional development.

## LINKS TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

The importance of establishing clear roles and responsibilities and an inclusive approach to performance management is reflected in Quality Area 7 of the National Quality Standard, in particular:

**Standard 7.1:** Governance supports the operation of a quality service.

**Element 7.1.3:** Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service.

**Standard 7.2:** Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

**Element 7.2.3:** Educators, coordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

## DEFINING PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Performance review** is a conversation between a team member and their supervisor where their job performance is reflected upon. This process may include identifying strengths and areas for improvement, providing feedback, and setting goals for future performance. Documenting this process will provide a record of performance, skills developed and contributions made during a team member's employment.

Where there is underperformance or serious misconduct, services should address these issues promptly, clearly and respectfully. Having a performance management policy that outlines how these issues will be managed and resolved is a good starting point.

**Professional development** refers to the processes of developing knowledge and skills in identified areas and

keeping up-to-date with emerging research and best practice. Team members can engage in professional development through informal methods such as networking with other professionals, team meetings and personal reading, or through formal methods such as training, workshops, conferences, and mentoring.

## LAY STRONG FOUNDATIONS THROUGH INDUCTION

The induction process is pivotal in laying strong foundations and setting clear expectations with team members. Having a systematic, documented, induction process can support new team members to understand job expectations and introduce them to the service culture. It can also set clear standards for performance which form the foundations for a workplace with open and honest communication. The induction can include opportunities for the employee to ask any questions and for the supervisor to identify professional development opportunities.

### Reflect on how effectively...

- your current induction process outlines the service's commitment to, investment in, and expectations relating to, professional development for the team member, and builds a clear understanding of how their role supports the aims of the service.
- existing position descriptions and performance review systems reflect the service philosophy, reflect professional code of conduct expectations, and align with the principles and practices of the Approved Learning Framework.
- current processes provide opportunities for a buddy or mentoring system to support new team members.
- your induction process provides the opportunity for reflection and feedback by the team member.





## PERFORMANCE REVIEW SYSTEMS

Ensuring time is given for regular and ongoing communication and reflection with team members, including performance reviews, allows educators, staff and management the opportunity to build positive and respectful relationships, celebrate achievements, consider areas for improvement, and to develop plans for professional development. The aim is to create a positive learning community where team members feel safe, secure and competent, and have the opportunities to refine and build new skills.

The structure of a performance review system will vary between services. Services should first consider who is best placed to lead the performance review and provide training on the process. Consider development opportunities for those who are educational leaders/room leaders/senior educators to build capabilities in this area.

Reflecting on your team objectives and what you hope to achieve through your performance reviews can help create a system that works best for your service. Ensure team members are involved in all stages and there is transparent communication about the process. Encouraging collaboration among team members can facilitate sustained shared thinking, improved self-esteem, create a sense of ownership, and provide a forum for the development of stronger relationships with colleagues, children and families.

The performance management process may be a stressful experience for some team members. Consider how language can be framed towards the positives of the process and be ready to respond to individual needs. Popular performance review methods, which can be used individually or combined, include:

**Self-assessment**, where educators and staff reflect on their strengths and areas for development. Helping to embed the practice of critical reflection, self-assessment can be incorporated into any review structure and provides team members with a sense of agency within the review process and ownership of professional development. Reflections may include: key performance indicators; professional standards; and relationships with children, families, stakeholders and team members.

**360 Degree feedback surveys**, where educators and staff get feedback, not just from their immediate supervisor, but from co-workers, families, children and even the broader community. Different stakeholders are likely to notice and value different skills than management. Consider strategies you might use to gather the feedback of others in the performance review.

**Management by Objective**, where supervisors and team members work together to develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-based) goals, by planning and taking actions within a specific timeframe. You might align the goals with development areas, professional standards, key performance indicators or goals linked to the service's Quality Improvement Plan.

### Reflect on...

- Whose views and perspectives might be missing in your current performance review process?
- How might a supervisor's personal biases impact performance reviews?
- What steps could you take to address bias/inequity?

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Support educators and staff to play an active role in the process of developing their goals and professional learning plans. Investing in the professional growth of educators and staff at all levels of the service, and at various stages of their careers, requires a time and/or financial commitment. Developing a cycle of learning with team members can cultivate a culture of continuous improvement and lifelong learning that ultimately facilitates continuous improvement within the service.

An individual's professional learning and development plan could include:

- face-to-face or online courses in an area of professional interest, or where a training need has been identified through the performance review
- mentoring (formal or informal) within the service, or with an external mentor who might provide different perspectives
- participating in a professional network to gather with peers and generate new ideas through sharing and collaboration
- participating in team training that allows collective upskilling on a shared goal/purpose
- opportunities for project work or practical leadership development within the service
- research and sharing sessions during team meetings
- individual support provided by the Educational Leader.

The professional development plan will be documented and reflect the team member's individual learning goals. You should also reflect on how the goals align with the service philosophy. It should be developed collaboratively by the team member and their supervisor and reviewed regularly in order to monitor the team member's progress against their performance goals and assess further support they may require.

### Reflect on...

- What opportunities are provided for educators and staff to make decisions about their learning, the service and the program?
- How can you motivate educators and staff and support the goal of lifelong learning?
- How are both individual skills and team development promoted and supported?
- How regularly are performance plans reviewed?

### A FINAL THOUGHT

Supporting the team, both in performance reviews and as part of professional development, is an opportunity to listen to them, draw on key areas for growth, celebrate achievements and strengthen their motivation to learn. This can benefit the individual team member and the service, as well as the children, families and broader service community.

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at [acecqa.gov.au](http://acecqa.gov.au) to download:

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

[The Educational Leader Resource](#)

Find other useful resources:

[Educational leadership and team building](#)

[Supporting educator wellbeing through these challenging times](#)

[Mentoring matters](#)

[Australian Government - Business – Employees \(Managing and developing staff\)](#)

[Practical strategies for reviewing, planning and improving team performance](#)

[Professional development planning](#)

[Information sheet: Belonging, Being and Becoming for educators](#)

[Enhance professional conversations](#)

[Best practice guides](#)

