Writing quality improvement plan (QIP) notes in the assessment and rating report

One of the aims of the National Quality Framework (NQF) is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in education and care services. The inclusion of QIP notes in assessment and rating reports supports this objective and aligns with “Good regulatory practice” as outlined in the Operational Policy Manual for Regulatory Authorities (OPM). In particular, the sections on Transparency and accountability and Communication and engagement encourage authorised officers to help services understand their ratings and provide suggestions for quality improvement.

What are QIP notes?

A QIP note is a recommendation written in the assessment and rating report by an authorised officer to help a service improve practice and further develop its QIP after an assessment and rating visit. During the assessment and rating process, you can assist services to identify areas of focus for ongoing quality improvement. The assessment and rating report template includes space for you to record QIP notes. The QIP notes assist the approved provider of an education and care service, and the staff, co-ordinators and educators at the service to focus their quality improvement efforts most effectively.

QIP notes may be used in the following ways:

- To provide advice to services regarding their focus for ongoing quality improvement.
- To provide greater clarity regarding the rating decision.
- To identify areas of inconsistent practice.

How do I write a QIP note?

QIP notes are written in different ways depending on the proposed rating and the particular type of education and care provided by the service.

When writing QIP notes:

- Write at the standard level.
- Reference the element of the standard if the point is specific to a particular element.
- Be specific to the context of the service and how quality was displayed on the particular day/s of the visit.
• Provide general information that is not directive or too specific, as issues can be addressed in many ways. How the service addresses the issue is up to them.

• Write without using value judgements, acronyms, abbreviations or jargon.

• Use strengths based language, e.g. *Children’s agency could be supported more extensively throughout routines and transitions to include children in decision making.*

• Highlight inconsistencies in practice between rooms, groups of children or educators. For example, where there is evidence of good practice in one room but not all rooms, the evidence of good practice should be addressed in the evidence box for the standard and the areas of inconsistent practice identified in the ‘however’ section, with suggestions for future improvement referenced in the QIP note.

  o Examples:

  *Evidence for the standard* Standard 5.1 - In the preschool room, educators were observed regularly engaging children in thoughtful exchanges. However, in the infants room there was little interaction with children initiated by the educators during care routines.

  *The QIP note* - The service may wish to consider how educators working with children under 36 months consistently encourage and support every child to engage with educators in meaningful, open interactions that enhance the acquisition of skills for life and learning (Element 5.1.2).

  *Evidence for the standard* Standard 1.2 - There is evidence of critical reflection on group learning.

  *The QIP note* - The service might revisit how they are critically reflecting on individual learning and how this is used to promote further learning (Element 1.2.3)

  *Evidence for the standard* Standard 7.2 - Educators at the service participate in performance reviews and individual plans are developed.

  *The QIP note* - The process for reviewing educators’ performance could include an evaluation of current individual development plans with an emphasis on how performance has or could improve (Element 7.2.2).

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**When do I write a QIP note?**

QIP notes are not mandatory however it is beneficial for QIP notes to be recorded for standards rated as Working Towards National Quality Standard and Meeting National Quality Standard. QIP notes can also be recorded for any standards with a rating of Exceeding National Quality Standard.

If a service is rated Working Towards National Quality Standard for a standard:

• Focus on any elements that were assessed as ‘not met’, making it clear what was not evidenced through observing, discussing and/or sighting.

• Refer the service to information, resources and/or training (these should be agreed best practice from national or state and territory wide accredited programs), such as the Cancer Council’s *SunSmart Early Childhood Policy Guidelines* (which vary across states and territories), *Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services (5th edition)*, or *Get Up & Grow: Healthy eating and physical activity for early*
childhood resources, the Professional Support Coordinators Alliance including the IPSP library (http://pscalliance.org.au/ipsp-library)

- Examples of QIP notes:

**Standard 2.2**

- The service could consider utilising training offered by the Healthy Eating Advisory Service to assist them in planning a menu that is nutritious and appropriate for each child. Visit http://heas.healthytogether.vic.gov.au/training to find out about their free training workshops (Element 2.2.1).

**Standard 4.2**

- The service may consider revisiting the ECA Code of Ethics as a team to open a dialogue about respect, equity and ways of recognising and valuing strengths and skills of colleagues (Element 4.2.1).

**Standard 6.3**

- There is room for the service to further engage in collaborative partnerships with local schools and OSHC services to support children’s transition to formal schooling. See Continuity of learning: A resource to support effective transition to school and school age care (Element 6.3.2). Available from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/pdf_with_bookmarking_-_continuity_of_learning- 30_october_2014_1.pdf

If a service is rated Meeting National Quality Standard for a standard:

- Highlight the areas the service can focus on to reach an exceeding rating.
- Consider the additional requirements in the exceeding descriptors.
- Examples of QIP notes:

**Standard 5.2**

- The service is encouraged to consider providing further opportunities for children to participate in meaningful ways to have group discussions and shared decision-making about rules and expectations, and to contribute to service decisions. (Element 5.2.1).

**Standard 1.1**

- The service could further consider routines and transitions, and strengthen opportunities for continuity of learning, for example, by relating ideas and concepts from other aspects of the learning environment (Element 1.1.3).

**Standard 3.3**

- Educators are encouraged to consistently model sustainable practices and engage children and families in discussions and learning about sustainability as part of the regular program (Element 3.3.1).
If a service is rated Exceeding National Quality Standard for a standard:

- Highlight any areas for future focus.
- Highlight any minor inconsistencies in practice.
- Examples of QIP notes:

  Standard 6.2
  - The service may wish to consider further strategies to promote services that support parenting and family wellbeing (Element 6.2.2).

  Standard 7.2
  - The service may wish to consider further strategies to provide children with opportunities to contribute to the review of the philosophy and self-assessment process (Element 7.2.3).

**Quality improvement plan notes summary**

The QIP notes summary table in the assessment and rating report template is automatically populated, based on the QIP notes that you have included throughout the report. Carefully review the summary to ensure all QIP notes provide information that can contribute to the service’s ongoing quality improvement, ensuring the language and information provided is consistent, transparent and embraces a positive approach to the ongoing journey of continuous improvement.

**Summary comments**

There is also a place in the assessment and rating report template to record an overall summary statement. This statement should draw together themes relating to the individual QIP notes and identify particular areas for ongoing quality improvement.

You should also recommend that the service uses the report and information provided in the QIP notes as a basis for updating its QIP, as stated in the Guide to developing a quality improvement plan, “It is recommended that the service update their QIP after the assessment and rating process is completed and to reflect the outcomes of the assessment and rating process.” (p7).

**References and further reading**

**ACECQA eLearning training portal resources**
- Guidance for authorised officers - assessment and report writing
- GN17: Gathering evidence for effective service assessment and quality improvement
- GN20: Consideration of guides and guidelines

Guide to developing a quality improvement plan

Operational Policy Manual for Regulatory Authorities