



NCAC

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Putting Children First
Reader Survey Analysis
2009

Executive summary

The *Putting Children First Reader Survey* is conducted regularly to gain feedback from stakeholders about NCAC resources and publications and the NCAC website.

The 2009 four page survey specifically requested feedback on Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) *Factsheets, Quality Companions, NCAC Policy Development Guide* and *Policy Templates*, brochures and online services.

Overall the responses to the survey provided positive feedback about NCAC resources, with the majority of respondents indicating that they find these to be effective, accessible and use-friendly.

However, the overall level of responses to the 2009 survey were lower than with the 2007 survey. This may be due to services using NCAC resources to a lesser degree while they await confirmation of the impending changes to the CCQA systems, announced following change of Government at the November 2007 Federal election. Alternatively, services may be feeling less enthusiastic in relation to NCAC resources as the majority of these have remained largely unchanged while NCAC also awaits confirmation of changes to the CCQA systems.

Many respondents also identified that they would like to see NCAC address topics and issues in future publications and resources that have already been addressed since the 2007 survey. This suggests that a strategy is needed to further promote and assist services to access previously developed articles and resources particularly for people new to NCAC resources.

Responses to the section regarding NCAC's online services and the online habits of respondents indicate that NCAC's current initiatives for updating the website and expanding online services and resources are in accord with needs of users.

About the Survey

The *Putting Children First Reader Survey* is conducted regularly to gain feedback from stakeholders about *Putting Children First*, NCAC resources and publications and the NCAC website. Feedback received assists with future improvement and development of these resources. The 2009 four page survey specifically requested feedback on Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) *Factsheets*, *Quality Companions*, *NCAC Policy Development Guide* and *Policy Templates*, brochures and online services. These sections expanded upon similar questions asked in the 2007 survey.

Previous *Putting Children First Reader Surveys* were conducted in:

- October 2007
- March 2006
- April 2003
- March 2000
- April 1998

Timeframes for conducting the survey have been altered over time to assist in forward planning for NCAC publications and resources.

14,806 copies of the survey were distributed with the June 2009 issue of *Putting Children First* (Issue 30) and it was also made available on the NCAC website throughout June and July 2009. The amount of surveys distributed this year decreased slightly from the 2007 survey (15,073). The response rate to the 2009 survey of approximately 11% (1661 respondents) is the same as the percentage of respondents to the 2007 *Survey*.

Distribution

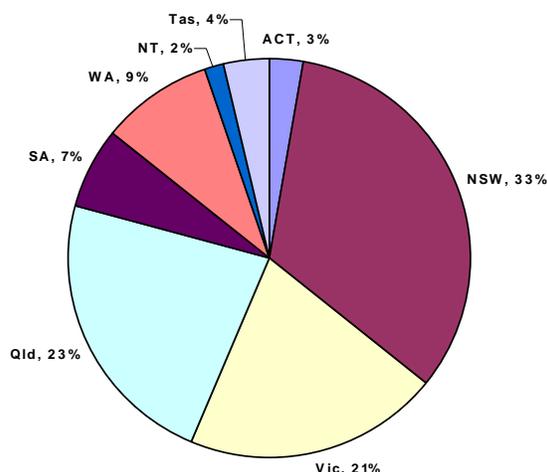
The 2009 survey was distributed to:

- Family day care schemes
- Long day care centres
- Outside school hours care services
- Family day care carers
- Endorsed QA Trainers
- Peak bodies
- Registered Training Organisations
- Educational institutions
- Child care associations
- Other *Putting Children First* subscribers

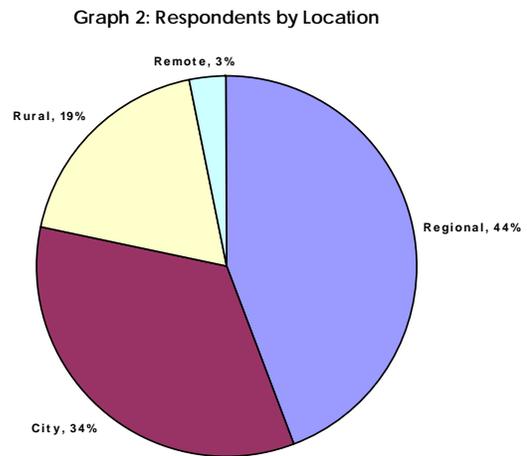
Respondents

NCAC received 1,661 responses to the 2009 survey. 164 respondents completed and submitted the survey electronically. As illustrated in Graph 1, the majority of respondents were from services in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, aligned with the proportion of services in those states.

Graph 1: Respondents by State/Territory



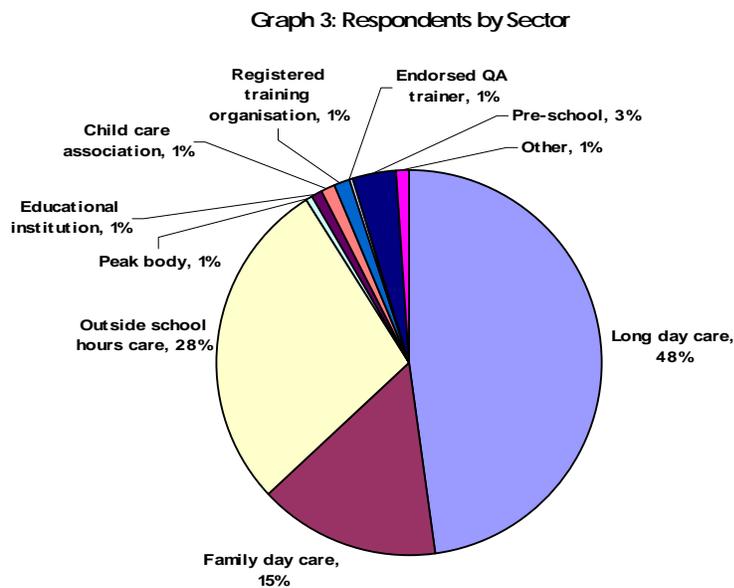
As shown in Graph 2, 44% of respondents identified that they were from regional areas, 34% from city locations, 19% from rural areas and 3% from remote locations. The breakdown of respondents illustrated in the graph below is similar to that of the 2007 survey, where the majority of respondents were also located in regional (44.5%), rural (17.5%) and remote (2%) locations.



Of the respondents, 48% were involved in long day care, 28% in outside school hours care and 15% in family day care. Graph 3 shows that the remainder of respondents were from educational institutions, peak bodies, registered training organisations and child care associations.

Where *Other* was selected responses included '24 hour respite accommodation house', 'Early learning school within a school', 'Social policy consultancy', 'occasional care', 'Trainer PSC' and 'Montessori based'.

The 2009 survey received a slightly increased percentage of responses from the long day care sector, increasing from 46.5% in 2007 to 47.7% in the 2009 survey. Family day care (17%) and outside school hours care (28%) respondents decreased slightly for the 2009 survey.



Putting Children First

Putting Children First is NCAC's quarterly flagship magazine. It aims to provide information and support to children's services participating in the CCQA systems.

In response to feedback to the 2007 survey, article topics have been diversified and broadened to include articles on current issues and trends in the early and middle childhood fields.

External authors have regularly contributed articles to *Putting Children First* since March 2008 to help ensure that information is being provided to readers through professionals with a range of specialist experience and expertise. The use of external authors has also aimed to ensure that the magazine includes some variety in its style and content.

From March 2008 a series of articles were included in a special feature on supporting each domain of child development. This series is due to be completed in the December 2009 issue of *Putting Children First*.

From June 2008, as part of NCAC's green initiatives, NCAC began printing the magazine on recycled paper, and reduced the number of copies being printed and sent to services. Each service now receives one copy rather than two.

Readership

As shown in Graph 4, the majority of *Putting Children First* readers were directors/coordinators and child care professionals.

Where *Other* was selected the majority of responses provided could be grouped within the categories already listed in the *Survey*.

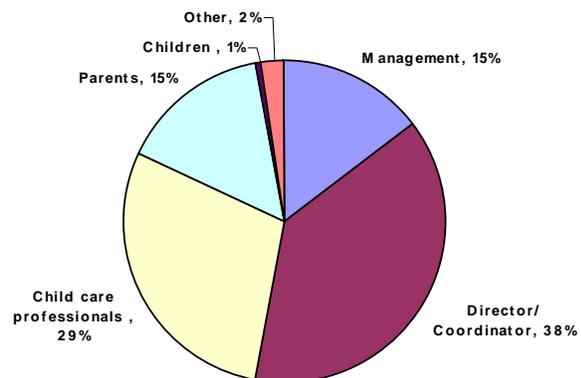
Additional responses included 'lecturer', 'trainer', 'cleaner' and 'administration'.

Distribution

Respondents were able to select multiple responses to describe how *Putting Children First* is shared throughout their service:

- 76% made *Putting Children First* available to read at the service
- 43% photocopied relevant articles of *Putting Children First* to distribute throughout the service
- 8.5% referred stakeholders to electronic copies of *Putting Children First* on the NCAC website
- 5% of respondents selected *Other*. Responses to this question included:
 - Put information in monthly newsletter
 - Take parts and place in the newsletters updating families and carers
 - Display in foyer, next to Accreditation display
 - Signed up all carers to the mailing list
 - File it for future reference

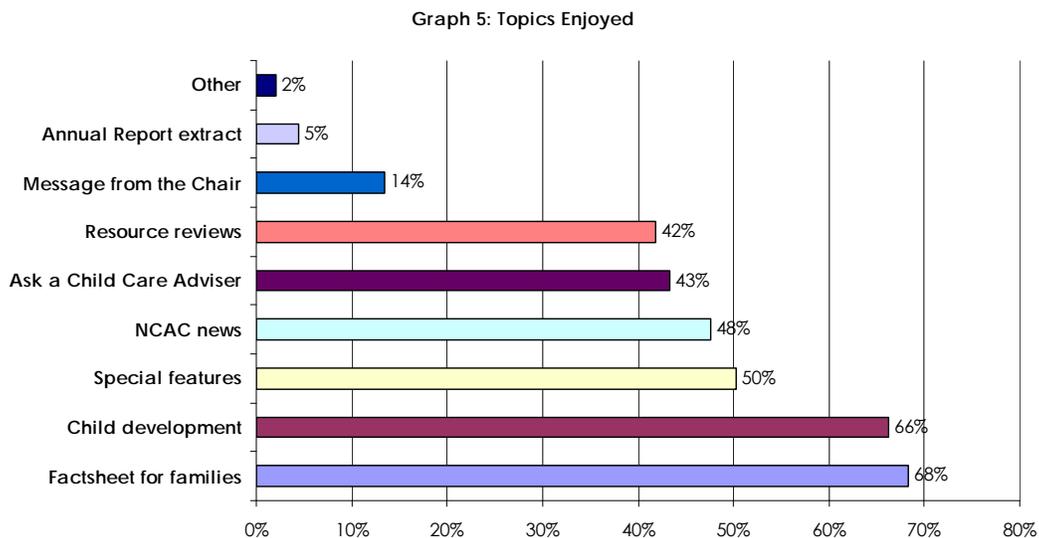
Graph 4: Readership



The majority of respondents indicated that they made *Putting Children First* available to read at the service and/or photocopied relevant articles for distribution throughout their service. This indicates that the magazine provides useful information to services and it should therefore continue to be printed and distributed to services.

Topics enjoyed

Respondents were asked to select which *Putting Children First* topics they enjoyed reading. The following graph illustrates the responses received and shows that the Message from the Chair and the *Annual Report* Extract features are not widely read. As with the 2007 survey, the majority of respondents enjoyed reading the Factsheets for Families. The special feature series on supporting children's development was also popular with readers, as were other general special features. Where *Other* was selected, the majority of respondents noted that they enjoyed articles that focused on CCQA processes such as Validation and quality improvement.

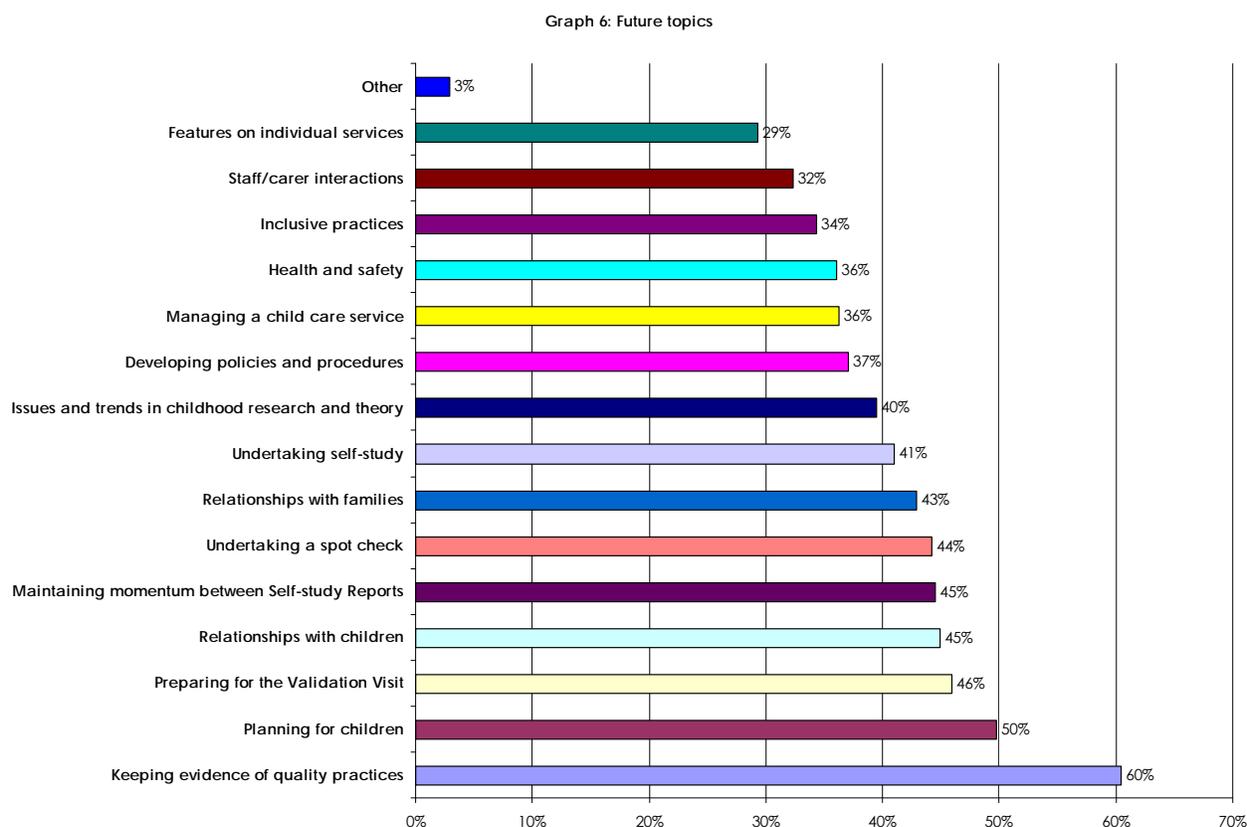


The overall enjoyment levels for all topic areas has decreased since the 2007 survey. It is not clear why this decrease has occurred.

Article planning for *Putting Children First* for 2010 will take into consideration the most popular features identified by respondents. The Factsheet for Families and articles on child development will continue to be regular features of *Putting Children First*.

Future topics

Readers were asked which topics they would like to see in future issues of *Putting Children First*. Similar to the October 2007 survey, respondents requested more articles on keeping evidence of quality practices and preparing for the Validation Visit. A significant number of responses also indicated that readers would like to see articles on planning for children, relationships with children, maintaining momentum between *Self-study Reports* and undertaking Spot Checks. Graph 6 illustrates the responses received to the 2009 survey.



The overall number of respondents requesting future topics on specific areas decreased significantly compared to responses to the 2007 survey. This may be due to NCAC expanding upon the range of articles included in *Putting Children First* to reflect the feedback and suggestions received to the 2007 survey.

While the topic suggestions indicated in the October 2007 survey were covered in subsequent issues of *Putting Children First*, these are still high interest areas and will continue to be covered in 2010. During 2008 and 2009, a series of articles were published as a special feature on each domain of children's development. Future articles on child development and planning for children will include information about specific issues affecting child development, as well as updates on best practice in planning for children.

In March 2009 all services were sent a set of *Factsheets*, which included information on gathering evidence of quality practice. Spot Checks and preparing for a Validation Visit have been covered in recent issues of *Putting Children First* and from June 2009 a *Quality Companion* titled *Maintaining Momentum* was sent to services receiving an Accredited decision. The *Quality Companions* are also available to download from the NCAC website. Promotion of these resources will be enhanced through the NCAC website and other resources to increase understanding of these topic areas and to cater for interests as indicated by the survey results.

Content of *Putting Children First*

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed with a number of statements about *Putting Children First*. The following table summarises their responses:

Table 1: <i>Content of Putting Children First</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Topics addressed in <i>Putting Children First</i> are relevant to me	39%	55%	5%	≤1%	≤1%
Articles are clear and easy to understand	41%	55%	3%	≤1%	≤1%
Articles in <i>Putting Children First</i> encourage me to reflect on my daily practice	39%	52%	8%	≤1%	≤1%

As shown in the above table, an overwhelming majority Strongly Agree/Agree that *Putting Children First* provides articles that are relevant, clear, easy to understand and encourage reflection on daily practice. NCAC will maintain a consistent tone and style in *Putting Children First* to cater to the preferences indicated in this section of the survey. Approximately 10% of people chose not to respond to this question.

Comments from readers about *Putting Children First* included:

- *Articles are used for reference and discussion*
- *Read everything in the magazine, look forward to getting them. As I read the articles, I take notes about what I can do at the centre, buy books that are recommended. Learn a lot from this reading.*
- *It would be good to have an index of articles on particular topics for easy finding 12 months later*
- *Issues are easy to read and very professional. Keeps me in touch with Australia and what tis going on in other FDCs, full of great info and ideas*
- *Too much reading, simple points better*
- *I find PCF is very informative and many articles can be used for professional development purposes and for family related matters*
- *Most articles have helped me in my studies*
- *It is very comprehensive but in my busy job I rarely have the time to sit and absorb the literature*
- *Separate publication for OSHC would work well-- most info towards younger chn*
- *I look forward to reading each issue and usually photocopy one feature article and give to staff to read and then have a discussion at next staff / Accreditation meeting*
- *I find this magazine very informative with helpful advice and interesting info -- more trends and research would be great*

Factsheets

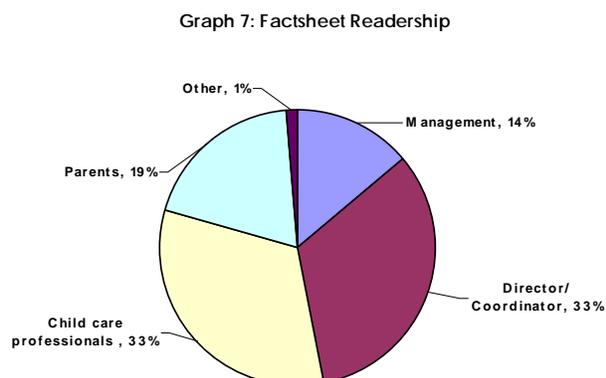
NCAC has developed a range of Quality Assurance *Factsheets* for services. Each *Factsheet* lists the Quality Areas and Principles to which it applies and provides child care professionals with explanations, practical examples, issues to consider, reflective questions and further reading to assist them to provide quality child care.

There are currently 20 *Factsheets* available for outside school hours care and long day care services, and 26 *Factsheets* available for family day care schemes. The *Factsheets* cover a range of topics that address aspects of quality practice in ways that are relevant to specific service types. In March 2009 a further set of 5 *Factsheets* were forwarded to services with the March 2009 issue of *Putting Children First*.

All *Factsheets* are available to download from NCAC's website. Complimentary copies of *Factsheets* are sent to services when they are published as printed documents, as well as upon registration with NCAC. They are also sent to family day care carers who join NCAC's mailing list.

Readership

Directors/coordinators and child care professionals made up the majority of *Factsheet* readership as shown in the Graph 7. Where *Other* was selected, respondents included volunteers, students, committees and older children in outside school hours care settings.



Content of Factsheets

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed with a number of statements about the *Factsheets*. Table 2 illustrates their responses:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The <i>Factsheets</i> are clear and easy to understand	42%	55%	2%	≤1%	0%
The information provided in the <i>Factsheets</i> helps me provide quality care	40%	54%	6%	≤1%	≤1%
The <i>Factsheets</i> are a useful professional development tool	46%	49%	4%	≤1%	≤1%
I access the suggested resources and further reading provided in the <i>Factsheets</i>	27%	46%	21%	5%	≤1%
I read all <i>Factsheets</i> sent to me	32%	48%	15%	4%	≤1%

This feedback indicates that the style, tone and content of the *Factsheets* are relevant to readers and are considered to be a useful resource.

Topics for future publications and resources

A free text section was provided where respondents could indicate what topics they would like NCAC to address in future publications. Responses to this question were combined and grouped into broad topic areas as detailed below. 64.7% of respondents provided a response to this question.

A sample of respondents' suggestions on the most requested topics is provided below:

Programming and documentation (19%)

- *Programming -- ideas for OSHC – where children may only be in the service 1 day a week and for a short time or very young*
- *Emergent curriculum*
- *Documentation of children's learning*
- *Planning/programming for individuals and the difference between planning and evaluation or day book*
- *Curriculum, observations*
- *Program planning for smaller groups (FDC) in different age groups*
- *Planning for children and keeping evidence/records of this*

CCQA processes and requirements (18%)

- *Preparing for Validation Visit, Spot Checks*
- *Self-study Report*
- *More on Validation preparation visits*
- *Surviving accreditation and Self-study Reports – collecting evidence*
- *Continual referral to the principles with suggestions and ideas*
- *Evidence for QIAS – variety to prove principles, evidence ideas and samples*

Working with families (11%)

- *Information that can be provided to families that will assist with consistency of care between the child's home and our service, eg nutrition, safety objects/chemicals/plants, behaviour issues, health/dental etc*
- *Working constructively with families where policies and values of service may conflict with family values on gender and culture*
- *Dealing with difficult parents. How to host a parent info evening successfully*
- *Involving parents from NESB*

Health and safety (11%)

- *Asthma, Allergies – medication, emergencies, etc*
- *Nutrition, head lice, sun smart*
- *Child restraint/ car safety*
- *Health issues*

Other topics of interest were guiding children's behaviour (10%), children's development (7%) and inclusion and diversity (6.5%).

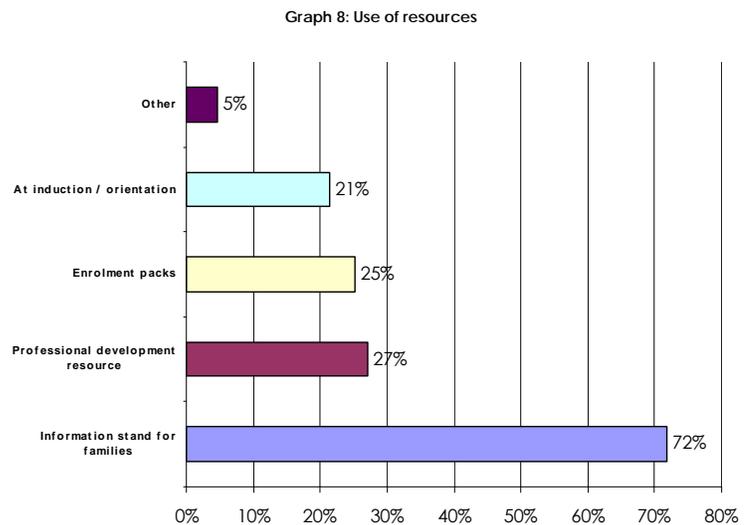
NCAC resources for families and children

NCAC produces a variety of resources to assist services to communicate with families about CCQA. These publications include:

- *Pocket Guide for Families*
- *About NCAC* brochure
- Quality Assurance in FDC/LDC/OSHC brochure
- Quality Assurance Communication Poster
- *Lodging a Complaint about a Child Care Service* brochure
- Quality Poster series
- *Choosing Quality Child Care* brochure

How NCAC resources are used

72% of respondents indicated that they provide these resources at an information stand for families. Respondents also provided them as a professional development resource (27%), in enrolment packs (25%), and at induction/orientation (21%). Almost 5% of respondents indicated that they use NCAC brochures in other ways. Comments describing alternative uses of NCAC brochures included: 'presentations to parents', 'newsletters', 'noticeboard' and 'for training students at TAFE'.

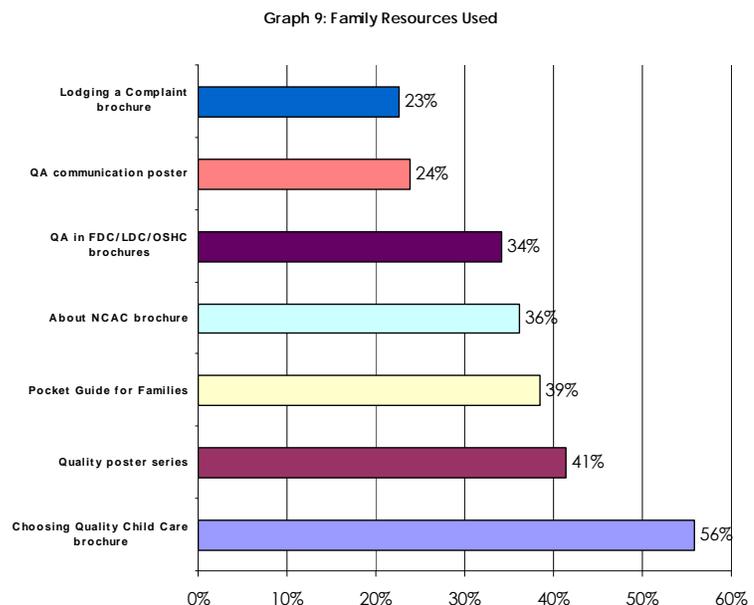


Resources used

Of the publications available, the majority of respondents indicated that they use the *Choosing Quality Child Care* brochure to inform families about CCQA. Graph 9 describes the usage of these resources.

There has been an overall decrease in the use of NCAC brochures since the 2007 survey. This may be due to services not using these as they are awaiting information on the impending and significant changes to the CCQA systems that were announced following the change of Government in the Federal election November 2007.

Alternatively, services that may have used these brochures in 2007 may feel that these are now not current and lacking in novelty for families.



Quality Companions

In 2009 NCAC developed *Quality Companions* to replace and expand upon the information previously provided in the CCQA Support Documents for Steps 1–5.

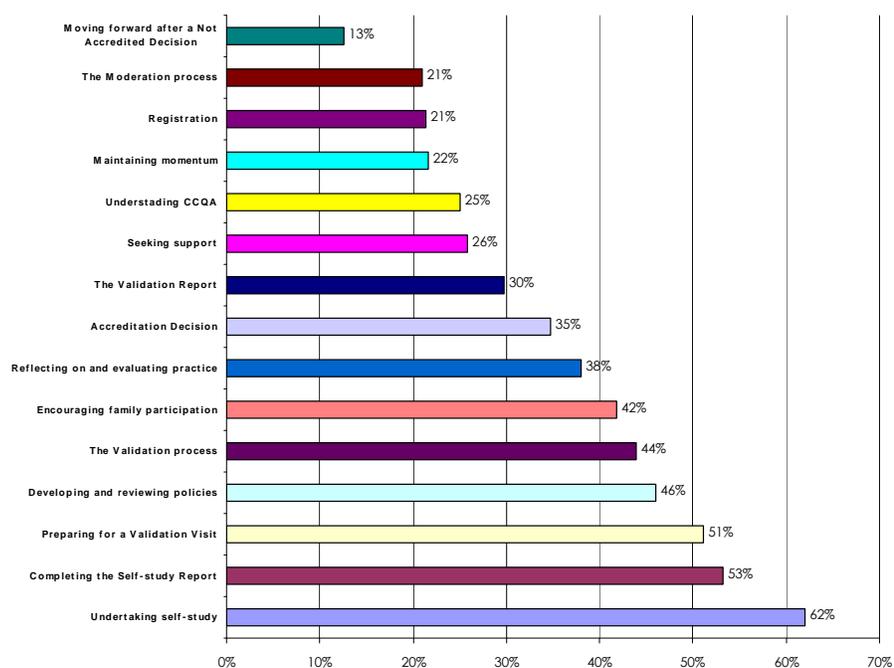
28% of respondents indicated that they had seen a *Quality Companion*, while 48% responded that they had not seen a *Quality Companion*. 24% of respondents did not provide a response to this question. These results may be attributed to the fact that the resource is new and that all of the *Quality Companions* had only been forwarded to New Registration services at the time of the survey.

The communication phasing for the remaining *Quality Companions* for services is based on each service's stage of progress in CCQA, and this commenced from June 2009. It is therefore likely that only a relatively small proportion of services would have received a *Quality Companion* at the time the 2009 survey was conducted. *Quality Companions* are also available to download from the NCAC website.

Respondents who indicated that they had seen the *Quality Companions* were asked to identify which of these they had found useful. Graph 10 shows that Undertaking Self-study (62%) and Completing the *Self-study Report* (53.2%) were the most useful.

A free text section was provided where respondents were asked what topics they would like NCAC to address in future *Quality Companions*.

Graph 10: Quality Companions



Responses to this question were combined and grouped into broad topic areas. Only 1% of respondents provided comments to this question, indicating that the topic areas for *Quality Companions* are currently meeting the majority of stakeholders' needs.

A sample of comments is provided below:

- *Health and safety*
- *How to keep nerves at bay when a validation Visit is taking place. It doesn't matter how prepared you are, nerves appear*
- *Formatting ideas for continuing improvement (eg systems, recording ideas)*
- *Types of evidence to provide for each quality area/indicator*
- *More on how to set up a continuing improvement plan*

Policy Templates

The *NCAC Policy Development Guide* and Policy Templates aim to help services develop and review policies on a regular basis. The *Policy Development Guide* assists services by identifying the need for a policy as indicated in the *CCQA Quality Practices Guides*. Services can use the Policy Templates to create policy documents which support daily practices.

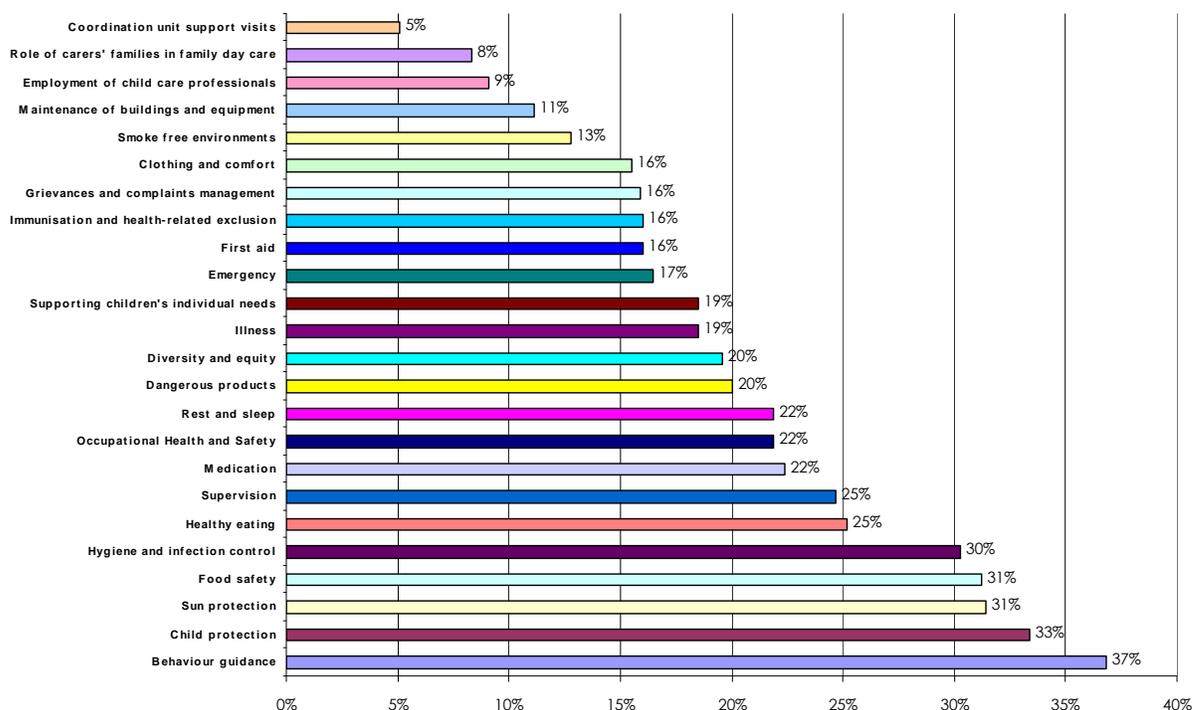
Respondents were asked to indicate if they agreed with a number of statements about the *Policy Development Guide* and Policy Templates. The following table collates their responses to statements regarding these resources:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have found the NCAC <i>Policy Development Guide</i> useful when developing policies for the service	21%	51%	25%	2%	≤1%
The NCAC <i>Policy Development Guide</i> is clear and easy to understand	21%	54%	22%	2%	≤1%
The Policy Templates have prompted me to develop new policies and regularly review existing policies	21%	40%	34%	4%	≤1%
The Policy Templates are clear and easy to understand	20%	52%	25%	3%	≤1%
The Policy Templates have assisted me to develop policies	19%	46%	31%	4%	≤1%

Accessed Policy Templates

Respondents were asked to identify which Policy Templates they had accessed. Graph 11 shows the most accessed Policy Template is Behaviour Guidance (37%).

Graph 11: Policy Templates



The Role of Carer's Families in Family Day Care and Coordination Unit Support Visit Policy Templates are only relevant to family day care schemes. This would attract a lower access rate due to the targeted audience, which may account for these being the least accessed Policy Templates.

All of the Policy Templates have been accessed significantly less than was indicated in the results of the 2007 survey. This is perhaps because policies have already been established by services.

Future Policy Template Topics

Respondents were asked what other policy templates NCAC should develop. 7% of respondents provided suggestions for future topics. Responses to this question were combined and grouped into general topic areas. Common topic areas suggested included:

- Use of television
- Excursions
- Head lice
- Food Restrictions/Allergies
- Cultural inclusion
- Children with additional needs
- Death of a child in care
- Lockdown
- All policies required for CCQA

Additional NCAC resources for services

Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for additional resources that NCAC could develop. Common resource suggestions included:

- Resources specifically for managers/directors/coordinators
- Resources to support family involvement in services
- General information and posters to support communication with families

NCAC website

The NCAC website (www.ncac.gov.au) contains information about NCAC and the CCQA systems, including a search facility of all services registered with NCAC, an Online Store, NCAC resources, online training modules, statistical information, reports and papers presented by NCAC and links to child care related organisations.

The usability of the NCAC website has been improved in a number of ways since the 2007 survey was conducted. Initiatives have included:

- The addition of an 'Ask a Child Care Adviser' (Frequently Asked Questions) section for families and child care professionals (commenced July 2008)
- Translated information made more readily accessible by use of footers in translated languages (commenced September 2008)
- Users able to complete and submit 2009 *Putting Children First Reader Survey* online (from June 2009)
- Facility to pay Annual Registration fees online (commenced July 2009)
- Capacity to adjust font size on website to improve readability.

Many of these initiatives have been undertaken in response to feedback received from the 2007 survey. To further guide the development of the website, questions in the 2009 survey sought feedback from respondents to gauge how often they visited the website and why, and to determine what further resources/facilities they would like on the NCAC website.

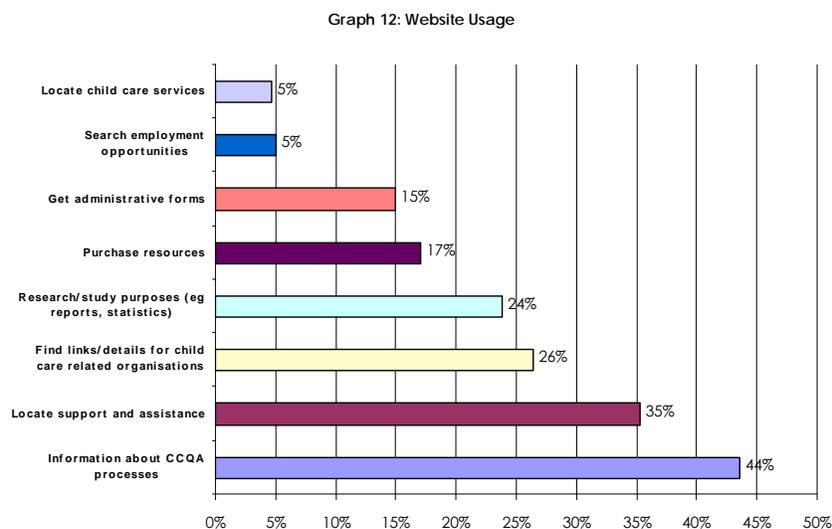
Frequency of website use

Respondents were asked how often they visited the NCAC website. The majority of respondents either visited the NCAC website less than once a month (40%) or visited it 1–3 times a month (36%). 11% of respondents do not access the NCAC website, while 9% of respondents visit the website once week and 4% visit more than one a week.

Reasons for visiting website

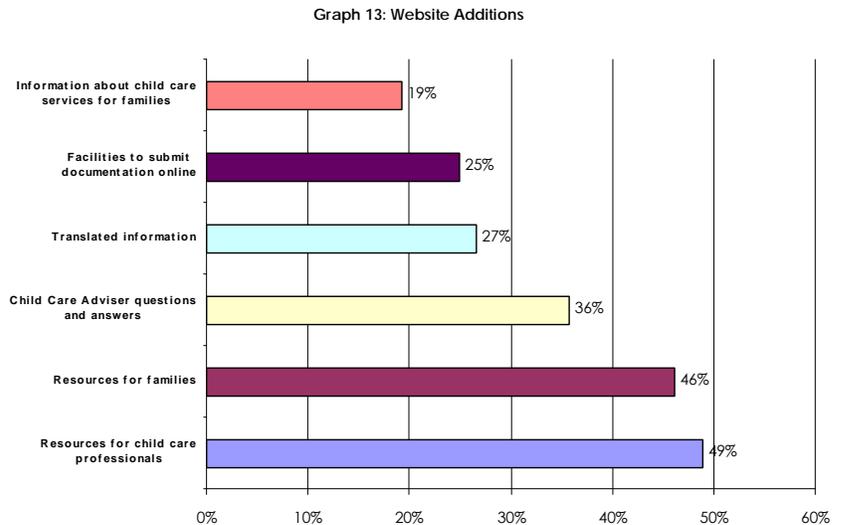
Respondents were asked to tick one or more reasons for visiting the NCAC website. Responses are summarised in Graph 12.

The main reason for visiting the NCAC website was to either seek information about CCQA processes (43.6%) or to locate resources or services that provide support (35.3%).



Website Additions

Respondents were asked what they would like to see more of on the NCAC website. As shown in Graph 13, the majority of respondents indicated that more resources for child care professionals (49%) and families (46%) would be useful. A large proportion of respondents (36%) also indicated that they would like to see more NCAC Child Care Adviser questions and answers.



NCAC will continue to increase and update the information provided in these areas on the website.

General internet usage

Respondents were asked about their internet usage. The following table shows their responses to statements regarding their use of the internet:

Table 4: General internet usage

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I prefer using online services to paper based services (such as completing forms)	23%	30%	33%	12%	3%
I generally print information I find online to read at a later date	20%	51%	18%	9%	2%
I use e-mail for work related purposes	37%	41%	14%	6%	1%
I participate in online communities (such as forums or online discussions)	7%	19%	32%	34%	9%
I use the internet to research best practice related to children's services	35%	44%	15%	5%	1%

With regard to using online services, 53% of respondents preferred online to paper based services and only 15% disagreed with this statement. This response suggests that NCAC's current initiatives in making more services available online should continue to be planned for and implemented.

The popularity of printing information found online (71%) for later viewing indicates that NCAC should continue to provide information for services in print-friendly formats such as PDF and Microsoft Word.

The data also shows that while the internet is popular for research purposes (79%), the majority of respondents have little interest in participating in online communities.

Experience with the NCAC Website

Respondents were asked about their experience when using the NCAC website. The following table shows their responses to statements regarding their use of NCAC's website:

Table 5: Experience with NCAC website	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I find pages and documents on the NCAC website slow to load compared to other sites I visit	2%	12%	51%	31%	4%
My computer has difficulty opening documents such as PDFs or Word documents from the NCAC website	2%	8%	32%	47%	10%
I generally only visit the NCAC website to find specific NCAC resources or information.	11%	56%	21%	11%	1%
I find information I am looking for quickly	9%	52%	32%	6%	1%
Information on the NCAC website is generally where I would expect it to be	8%	56%	32%	3%	1%
It is difficult to find information by browsing the pages on the NCAC website	1%	10%	43%	41%	5%
The appearance of the NCAC website makes it difficult to use	1%	5%	36%	51%	7%
I visit the NCAC website to find general information related to child care	14%	59%	21%	6%	1%

The results tabulated above indicate that the majority of respondents find the appearance and facilities on the NCAC website user friendly and accessible. While 67% of respondents indicated that they only visit the website to find specific NCAC resources or information, 73% of respondents also said that they visit the NCAC website to find general information related to child care. The apparent discrepancy in this data may possibly be attributed to respondents' misinterpretation of 'only' in the statement 'I generally only visit the NCAC website to find specific NCAC resources or information'.

Additional comments from website users

Respondents were asked to provide additional comments regarding which resources or facilities are not available on the NCAC website that they would expect to find there. Just 3% of respondents provided comments for this section.

- *Video or DVD's*
- *More details on professional development for rural areas, also distance learning*
- *Supporting and training. Seminars for the Quality areas. After using the website for years I can now source most areas but sometimes I have to search a while*
- *A sample of the Validator's spot check report*
- *The site is very user friendly*
- *Childcare associations*
- *I don't think it is NCAC's role to develop general resources not specifically related to the CCQA process. This is for other agencies.*
- *Changing trends in child care.*

These comments will inform future planning for website facilities.