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Validation Evaluation Form Analysis

Validation Visits Conducted October / November 2007

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) conducts an annual analysis of the *Validation Evaluation Forms* received from services who have had a Validation Visit. The *Validation Evaluation Forms* demonstrate the satisfaction of services participating in the Child Care Quality Assurance (CCQA) systems with Step 3: Validation.

The results of this analysis inform Validator feedback and NCAC processes of continuing improvement in the revision of the standards of quality care, developments in the administration of the CCQA systems and the provision of resources to services, families, Validators and key stakeholders.

Validation Visits October / November 2007

NCAC is responsible for the administration of the following CCQA systems:

- Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) for family day care schemes
- Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) for outside school hours care services
- Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care centres

After a service's *Self-study Report* has been received, NCAC selects a Validator to conduct the Validation Visit of the service. A letter is sent to the service advising the Validator's name, the duration of the Visit (depending on size of the service) and a timeframe of six weeks within which the Visit will occur. The service is not advised of the specific date that the Validator will attend the service.

Validators are trained by NCAC to validate the quality practices of the service, based on the indicators of quality specified in the relevant *Quality Practices Guide*. Ratings are determined through observation and discussion with staff and carers.

During October and November 2007, 682 Validation Visits were completed. NCAC received *Validation Evaluation Forms* from 86% of those services which had a Validation Visit during this period, as follows:

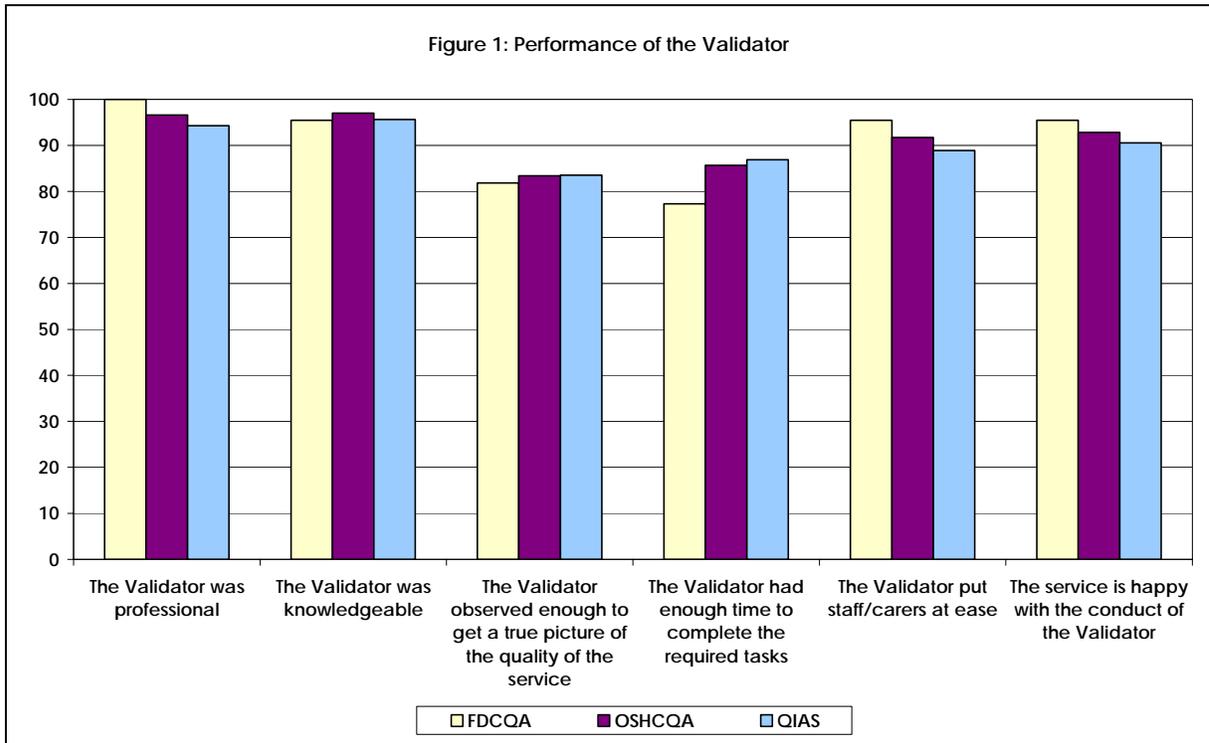
Validation Visits: 1 October 2007 – 30 November 2007			
	Validation Visits completed	Validation Evaluation Forms received	Percentage Received
FDCQA	22	22	100%
OSHCQA	313	265	85%
QIAS	347	297	86%
Total	682	584	86%

The following report summarises the responses collected from all *Validation Evaluation Forms* returned by services that received a Validation Visit during October and November 2007, and demonstrates that the majority of services participating in the CCQA systems had positive Validation experiences.

Perceptions of the Validator

NCAC aims to ensure that at least 85% of services are satisfied with CCQA processes. Services are asked a range of questions regarding the performance of their Validator and the completion of their Validation Visit.

On average, over a range of measures of the Validator's performance, more than 90% of child care services indicated that they were satisfied with the completion of their Validation Visit (Figure 1).



Service comments about the performance of the Validator:

Family Day Care

VF562: *Validator contacted NCAC to confirm process because of the unusual nature of our scheme. Validator friendly without being familiar. While understanding the unique situation of the scheme, still maintained objectivity. Not enough time again due to nature of scheme being spread over two states and new coordinator.*

VF602: *The most positive aspects included the way that the Validator made the carers feel at ease during the visits to their homes and the variety of strategies that she used to obtain/find information for the Validation Report.*

VF672: *The Validator was professional, organised, fair and thorough. She retained information given and listened to our point of view. She was understanding of individual circumstances and nerves and had a flexible approach within her guidelines.*

Outside School Hours Care

VC3577: *The Validator introduced herself and took the time to explain the whole process in a positive way. My staff and I were very comfortable with her. The Validator also took time to talk to the children.*

VC3821: *I felt pressured and so did the rest of the school. This was due to the Validator expecting us to prove high rating. We were happy to have satisfactory to good achievement.*

VC4203: *The Validator conducted herself in a professional manner. However, I feel the visit was not long enough to get a true sense of the service's day to day running. A lot of focus was on the paperwork. I would like to get more feedback for staff and their performance, how well we are caring for children.*

VC5595: *The Validator was very professional and knowledgeable. She showed an understanding of the running of an after school care that put myself and my staff at ease that has left us with a new confidence in ourselves as child care workers.*

Long Day Care

VQ20075: *The Validator that visited our service was extremely easy going yet professional and was able to put staff at ease. She explained the process of the system, her role and final report in a clear and concise manner making everything easy to understand.*

VQ20119: *The Validator presented herself in a very professional manner. Overall knowledge was good although she did contact NCAC on an issue to support her belief. With regards to having enough time to get a complete and true picture, maybe for this Validator 3 days would have been better. The Validator put staff at ease and the service was happy with her conduct.*

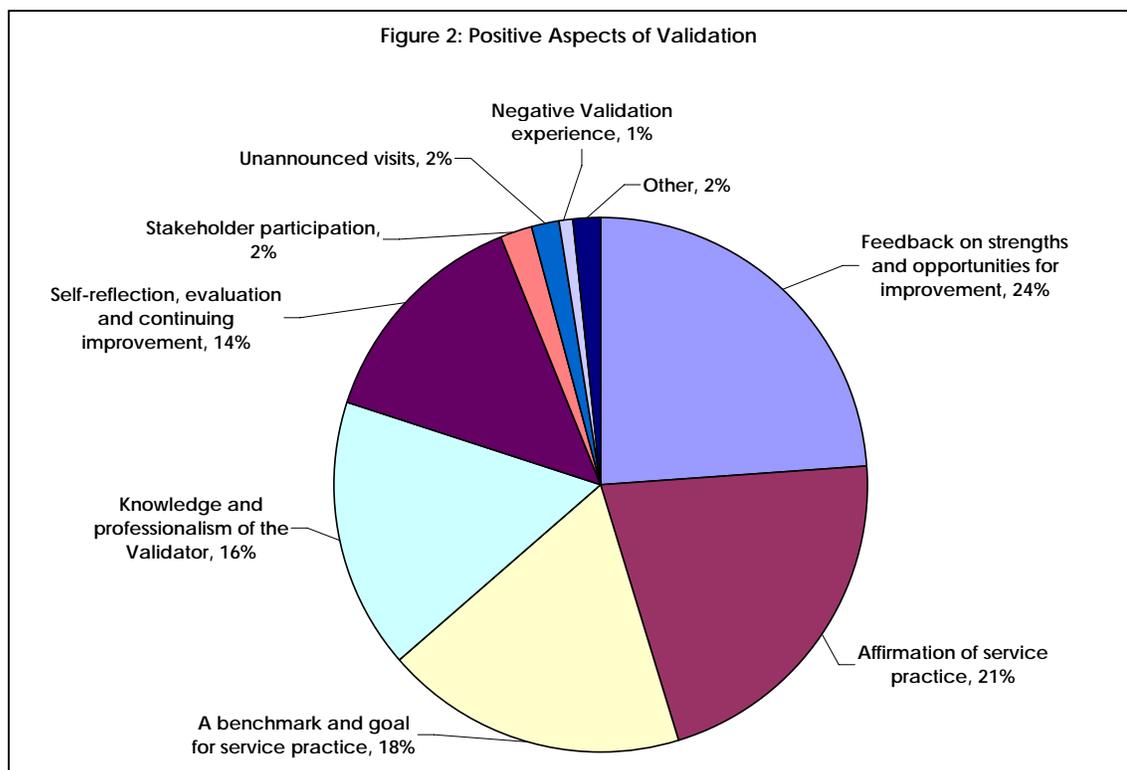
VQ20216: *The Validator seem to be bogged down in policy, procedures and hygiene and did not appear to value interactions with children, staff and families.... The Validator did nothing to put staff at ease and did not offer a positive comment throughout her entire visit.*

VQ23563: *The Validator was unbelievably calming for all my staff and made them be able to relax and do things the way they normally would. She was very thorough and was able to tell me why things weren't occurring and gave me a chance to prove otherwise.*

Positive Aspects of the Validation Process

Services were asked to comment on the most positive aspects of Validation. 89% of services provided a response to this question.

99% of those services which provided a response to this question were positive towards the Validation process (Figure 2). Most services identified Validation as an opportunity for recognition of their practice, guidance, evaluation and consultation.



Notable differences in the data included:

- A higher proportion of outside school hours care services than family day care schemes or long day care centres appreciated Validation as an opportunity to receive feedback on both the service's strengths and weaknesses.
- A higher proportion of family day care schemes than outside school hours care services or long day care centres felt that Validation provided affirmation of service practice.
- A higher proportion of long day care centres than family day care schemes or outside school hours care services provided positive responses regarding unannounced Validation Visits.

Service comments about positive aspects of Validation

Family Day Care

VF683: *Guide and assist scheme to identify quality practices that are in place and also assists to identify areas that need improving by implementing Continuing Improvement Plan. It is a journey through which the scheme, families and staff and carers work together and share a partnership.*

VF699: *Idea of how I am going as a carer. The improvements I can make. Gives us a perspective from fresh eyes. I enjoyed being part of the big picture and showing and talking about our service to an outside colleague.*

Outside School Hours Care

VC5595: *The 8 Quality Areas are a clear guide as to how to run an OOSH centre. We look at the 8 areas as the way we want to run our centre, not the way we have to run it.*

VC3617: *I found the most positive aspects were satisfaction that service was providing quality care and some of the most simple things worked best.*

VC3800: *That OOSH child care is now being recognised as a true entity and bringing the status of its workers forward.*

VC3894: *The self-study and self-assessment has been the most positive aspect as we feel our program has progressed in leaps and bounds because of this. It has also taught us to take the program more seriously. There has been a great increase in parent, child and community involvement. The realisation of the importance of staff being kept aware of their responsibilities. The great deal of satisfaction felt by all staff of a job well done.*

Long Day Care

VQ19839: *We feel the most positive aspects of the Validation process are the opportunity for our centre to better itself with positive feedback as well as assure our staff and parents that the centre is a wonderful place to be. And staff do a wonderful job. The visit helps them as it is an independent report.*

VQ19994: *I feel the whole process is a positive one, it gives us opportunities to show and prove what we do and it gives us an external review to raise issues that need to be addressed, providing a higher quality of care and education for children and their families.*

VQ20334: *The self-reflection process involved with Accreditation is an important method which not only made us aware of improvement but also areas in which we do quite well. That is a very positive aspect of Accreditation - making us take an honest look at not only what we are doing, but how we are doing it.*

VQ23927: *To be frank, we don't find Accreditation a positive experience. It's overly focussed on paperwork as an indicator of quality. Staff don't feel valued by the process.*

Suggestions for Improvement

All services were invited to provide suggestions on how the Validation process could be improved. They were also asked to provide additional comments or feedback on their participation in CCQA. Responses to these questions have been combined, due to the similarity in the comments received. 64% of respondents provided a response to these questions, as follows:

Positive Aspects of Validation:

- 26% provided positive feedback regarding their Validation Visit, referring to the professionalism of their Validator, affirmation of the quality of care that they provide and identification of opportunities for further improvement.
- 7% felt that further training would enhance Validator consistency, objectivity and knowledge.
- 2% found the Validation Visit stressful for child care professionals.

QA Processes:

- 10% felt that the CCQA Standards could be improved through reduction in repetition, greater detail and greater flexibility in interpretation.
- 8% suggested that the duration of Validation Visits should be extended to provide more time to complete the Validation Visit and gain a true picture of the service.
- 3% suggested that shorter timeframes between *Self-study Report* submission and Validation would improve the process.
- 4% provided suggestions to improve CCQA processes.

Unannounced Validation Visits:

- 6% suggested that NCAC should provide services with the exact date of their Validation Visit. Additional stress placed on staff waiting for the Visit, and additional staffing to allow a staff member to spend time with the Validator on the day of Validation were cited as primary concerns.
- 7% suggested a reduction in the 6 week timeframe for unannounced Validation Visits, with suggestions ranging from a period of 4 weeks to 24 hours notice prior to a Visit.
- 2% provided positive responses regarding unannounced Validation Visits.

NCAC Resources and Support:

- 6% suggested that NCAC could provide more information to services about the Five Steps of Quality Assurance. Suggestions included training sessions for staff, information for families and lists of required policies and/or evidence to support quality practice.
- 3% suggested that a collegial approach allowing Validators to comment on service practice and provide guidance for continuing improvement would be beneficial.
- 3% felt that the *Validation Surveys* for families and children needed to be amended to be more effective.

Explanation of Service Practice:

- 9% provided additional information regarding service practice and circumstances.

Other

- 4% of services provided other general responses.

Suggestions for improvement of the Validation process

Family Day Care

VF1063: *I would like to see a discussion time maybe after the visit is complete. I would like to hear ideas from other services for improvement, not necessarily a direction, but ideas. I do like the random selection of carers and not knowing who they are, I feel this is fairer for all carers.*

VF672: *More time to view playsessions. Minimise the 6 week timeframe. It feels too long, staff want to be involved and available. Having the Validation Report explained at the start of the visit.*

Outside School Hours Care

VC3467: *I think a shorter date period of when a Validator is expected to arrive. If a service is not prepared then they never will be. I understand the concept and reasons for being unannounced visits, but it is hard to plan for extra staff on the day at short notice. It would have been good for me to have more opportunity to liaise with our Validator.*

VC3604: *I like that there is no exact date. As it can identify services that are doing the right thing all the time, from services that are only doing the right thing when the scheduled Validator is visiting. And good job with creating spot checks.*

VC3740: *I feel that it is important to make the Quality Assurance process feel more like a collaborative process between services and NCAC. In our case, on this occasion it felt like this.*

VC5487: *I think the process works well, although longer visits and visits during different sessions will help to get a more overall picture of the centre.*

VC5495: *The Validator was great and did put us all at ease. Nevertheless, this is our second visit and there is a lot of tension attached to the process. An ongoing collegial approach would perhaps meet the needs of both parties and lessen the tension brought about by a 'testing' situation.*

Long Day Care

VQ19998: *One day notice of Validator's visit so additional staff can be arranged to cover for staff to be taken off the floor. School aged children attending long day care be included in the same process.*

VQ20006: *Eliminate unannounced visits. Continue with spot checks but don't put unrealistic expectations on staff when at times there isn't an 'extra' staff member to go through the report and find evidence for the Validator.*

VQ20435: *For some staff who have not been through Accreditation previously, they have learnt many things which they will carry with them from here on. At times QA has been stressful but the outcome is the perfect reward for jobs we believe we do well.*

VQ20676: *The last day of the process was very rushed towards the end. There was not enough time for discussion or clarification of some issues.*

VQ21329: *Although it was a long process that included a lot of paperwork, it has helped us develop systems to improve the quality of our centre. It was a valuable experience.*

VQ24989: *The Validator the centre had this time was able to discuss the indicators with the staff and director more thoroughly than on previous occasions. Her understanding and knowledge was easily related to our service without bias in anyway. My point being the level of understanding and knowledge of the Validators is so varied.*

Additional Information

Services are provided with the opportunity to attach additional information to the *Validation Evaluation Form* for consideration at Step 4: Moderation. Moderators consider information in the service's *Self-study Report*, *Validation Surveys*, *Validation Report* and *Validation Evaluation Form* to determine patterns of typical practice at the service.

- 15% of respondents provided information regarding service practice in relation to the Indicators and Principles marked Not Occurring in their *Validation Report*.
- 85% of respondents did not provide additional information with their *Validation Evaluation Form*.

NCAC Support for Stakeholders

NCAC consistently seeks the views of the child care community about all aspects of CCQA. The constructive feedback provided by child care services on their *Validation Evaluation Form* informs the developments in the administration of the CCQA systems and the provision of resources to services, families and other stakeholders.

NCAC support for services provided in response to the feedback from *Validation Evaluation Forms* includes:

- The ongoing development of *Policy Templates* to assist services to achieve Satisfactory standards.
- Continuing improvement of Validator Training, to ensure greater consistency and objectivity.
- The publication of articles in *Putting Children First*, NCAC's quarterly newsletter, to assist services as they progress through quality assurance, covering issues such as unannounced Validation Visits, inclusion and professional support for services, policy development and NCAC support and resources for services.
- The development of resources to assist services with issues identified in the *Validation Evaluation Forms*.