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Analysis of Validation Evaluation Forms Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) and Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) Validation Visits Conducted October /November 2003

An analysis was conducted of the *Validation Evaluation Forms* received from services having had a Validation Visit (Step 3) in October and November 2003. Sixty family day care schemes and 442 long day care centres visited in this period returned their *Validation Evaluation Forms*.

The report that follows summarises the responses collected from these *Validation Evaluation Forms* and reveals that the majority of services participating in the Quality Assurance (QA) systems had positive experiences at Validation.

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) aims to have at least 85% of services satisfied with the professional standard of Validator's work. The results are that on average, over a range of measures of Validator's performance, more than 90% of services indicated that they were satisfied with the professional standard of the Validator.

Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA)

Sixty family day care schemes returned their *Validation Evaluation Form* following the Validation Visit in October / November 2003.

- 1) When asked whether the Validator contacted the scheme a few days before the visit, 93% of respondents replied that they were contacted a few days before the visit, 5% were not.
- 2) Schemes were asked a series of questions about the Validator appointed by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) to conduct the Validation Visit.
 - a) 100% of respondents reported the Validator to be on time to conduct the visit.
 - b) 100% of respondents considered the Validator to be courteous.
 - c) 97% of respondents considered the Validator to be prepared for the visit.
 - d) 90% of respondents considered the Validator to be knowledgeable, while 3% of respondents indicated the Validator was not
 - e) 93% of services were satisfied with the level of professionalism displayed by the Validator, 3% were not.
 - f) 92% of respondents were satisfied with the level of objectivity displayed by the Validator, 3% were not.

- 3) When asked about the level of comfort felt with the Validator, 100% of schemes reported that they felt comfortable and at ease with the Validator.
- 4) 87% of respondents were satisfied that the Validator had observed enough of the scheme/program to get at true picture, while 7% felt that this had not occurred.
- 5) 100% of respondents were given the opportunity to make comments on the Principles which were recorded in the FDCQA *Validation Report*.
- 6) 92% of respondents felt that the Validator had adequate time to complete the required tasks, 5% felt that there was not enough time.
- 7) Schemes were asked how they felt about being observed by the Validator. As demonstrated by the chart below (Figure 1), while 60% of schemes were nervous before their Validation visit took place, most schemes responded positively to the visit. 13% of schemes felt well prepared and confident before the visit took place, while others felt that the Validator put them at ease. It was considered that validation was an opportunity for carers to be recognised for their work.

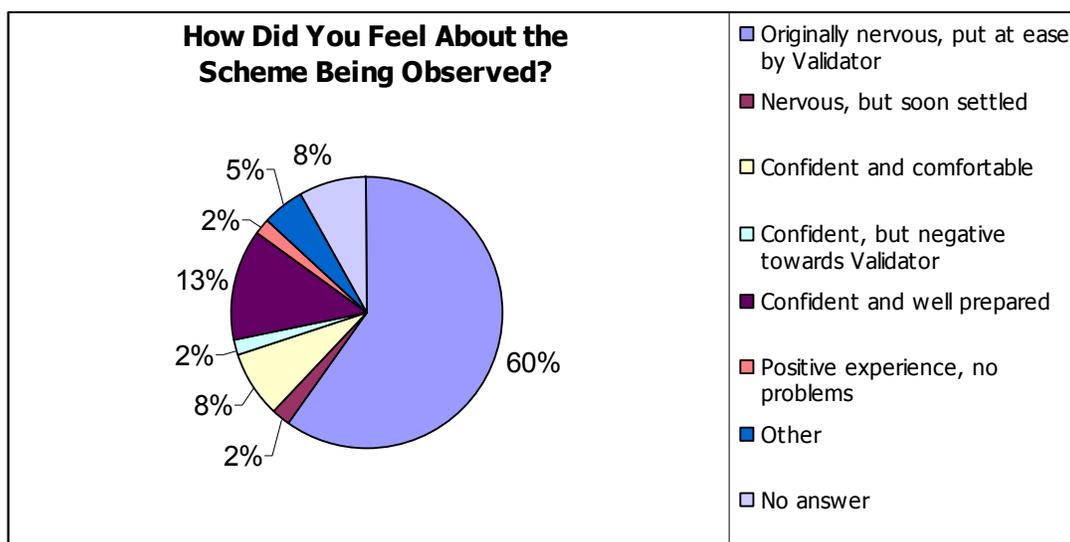


Figure 1: Scheme responses to how they felt about being observed.

Examples of comments by schemes in relation to this question include:

- *Very nervous prior to the visit. The Validator was wonderful at putting carers at ease.*
- *The scheme was nervous at the start but soon settled down. We were pleased to be given the opportunity to present our scheme to an outside validation process.*
- *The scheme felt at ease and comfortable with being observed. The Validator was pleasant and courteous. The carers and staff were comfortable with her presence.*
- *We feel 2 hours with a care provider is long enough as this can be a stressful time for them.*
- *Very positive and excited to have the opportunity to be assessed for quality. The carers in particular felt there was an opportunity to be recognised for their work – although many were disappointed to have not been chosen.*

- 8) When asked what other suggestions the scheme has for improving the validation process, schemes has a variety of suggestions:
- 30% of respondents felt that FDCQA could be improved. It was suggested that some of the indicators in the FDCQA *Quality Practices Guide* should be amalgamated to avoid overlap.
 - 15% of respondents felt that the Validation process could be improved if the visit was longer, allowing the Validator more time to complete tasks.
 - 7% of respondents suggested improvements to Step 3. It was suggested that surveys should be received sooner to allow more time for completion.
 - 7% of respondents were negative towards the *Validation Report*.
 - 7% of respondents proposed other improvements to the system, including less emphasis on cultural requirements for remote schemes.
 - 3% of respondents held a positive attitude towards the validation visit.
 - 3% of respondents suggested that Validator conduct could be improved. One service felt that the Validator was isolated and should have had more freedom to interact socially during the visit.
 - 2% of respondents indicated that greater access to NCAC information resources would be beneficial, including the ability to verify a Validator's experience.
 - 2% of respondents suggested positive recommendations towards the *Validation Report*.

Examples of comments by schemes in relation to this question include:

- *A carer suggested more time for visits so as Validator would not need to be rushed*
- *If felt very wrong to have the Validator so isolated. The very professional side of us said that once the visit day was over we should have been able to invite Validator home to dinner. The isolation and loneliness for a whole week must be extreme. This could be different.*
- *The surveys could be sent earlier so as there is more time to mail them out and get them back – thus having a better chance of getting the required %. The surveys are not user friendly – we had many frustrated parents.*
- *Many of the indicators overlap. Perhaps some could be amalgamated.*
- *I feel if the Validators have passed criteria to be a Validator, then they should be able to verify to the service their experience.*
- *Very confident, however carers and staff were a little unsure of what to really expect.*
- *Indicators need to be clear, and give examples for indicators that are not applicable.*
- *There was a lot of emphasis on cultural requirements – being rural and remote we felt as a scheme a lot did not apply to this scheme.*

9) Schemes were asked to provide feedback on their scheme's participation in FDCQA. Nearly all feedback regarding schemes' participation in the QA system was positive, as demonstrated by the chart below (Figure 2). Suggestions for the improvement of QA included the possibility of providing a scale of assessment ranging from satisfactory to high quality care; giving more time to complete surveys after validation; and placing less focus on cultural diversity for remote and rural schemes.

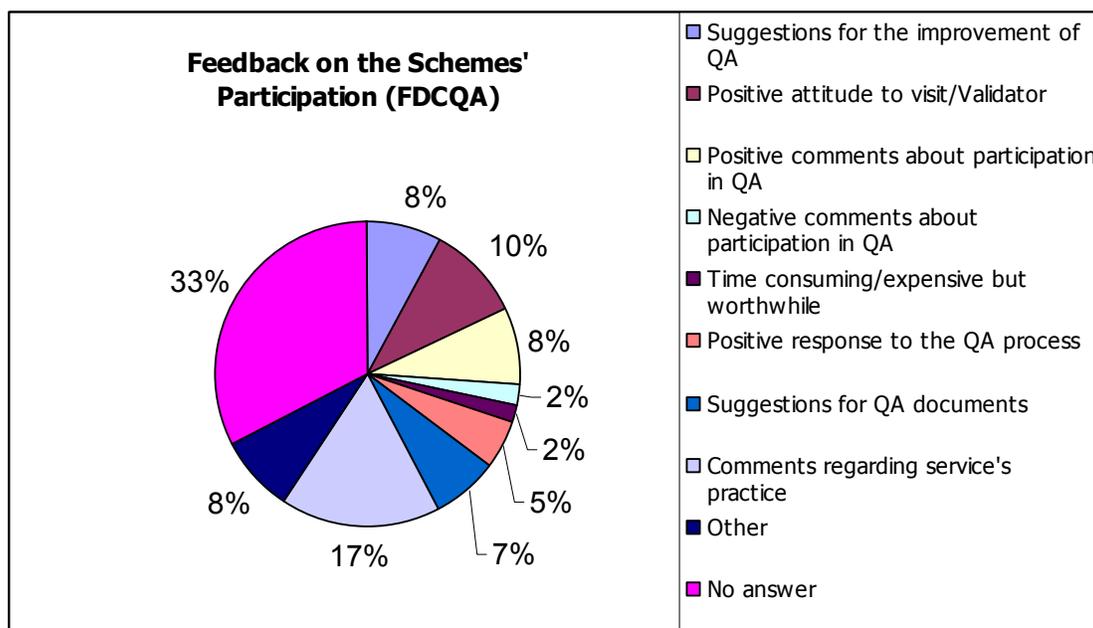


Figure 2: Scheme feedback on their participation in FDCQA

Examples of comments by schemes in relation to this question include:

- *I felt that the Validator displayed a lot of empathy toward the carers. She appeared open and honest and this created a lot of trust & respect from carers & staff. In turn, this made her visit very enjoyable.*
- *It was excellent to have someone else observing the carers, being a sole coordination scheme we don't have this opportunity.*
- *We were disappointed that although FDCQA places a large emphasis on translations and communication with people from all backgrounds, the Validators had such difficulty communicating with carers.*
- *It was a positive experience but the increased workload did cause some concerns.*
- *All members of the scheme have found the process delightful.*
- *Our scheme felt that the surveys needed to be tailored to each group e.g. Different questions for parents, carers & coordination unit as some questions were not relevant to each.*
- *Need to know in advance what working space for Validators is needed.*
- *We felt uncomfortable in asking to see the Validation Report. After carer 6 had been visited we were given the report to read for 15mins. We felt the Validator did not appreciate or find it appropriate that we saw the report at that stage. Carers 7, 8, 9 were visited after we saw the report. Playgroup is an extremely important part of a FDC scheme – little focus on this in Validation Report.*

Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)

442 long day care centres returned their *Validation Evaluation Form* following the Validation Visit in October / November 2003.

- 1) When asked whether the Validator contacted the centre a few days before the visit, 97% of centres were contacted a few days before the visit, 3% were not.
- 2) Centres were asked a series of questions about the Validator appointed by the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) to conduct the Validation Visit.
 - a) 95% of respondents reported that the Validator was on time, 5% reported that they were not.
 - b) 98% of respondents considered the Validator courteous, 1% did not.
 - c) 98% of respondents considered the Validator to be adequately prepared for the visit, 2% did not.
 - d) 95% of respondents considered the Validator to be knowledgeable, 2% did not.
 - e) 95% of respondents were satisfied with the level of professionalism displayed by the Validator, 4% were not.
 - f) 90% of respondents were satisfied with the level of objectivity displayed by the Validator, 8% were not.
- 3) When asked about the level of comfort felt with the Validator, 89% of centres reported that they felt comfortable and at ease with the Validator, 9% reported that they did not.
- 4) Centres were asked whether the Validator observed enough of the program equipment and the resources.
 - a) 88% of respondents were satisfied that the Validator had observed enough of the program to get a true picture, 10% felt that the Validator did not observe enough of the program.
 - b) 93% of respondents reported that the Validator had seen the available resource materials and equipment, 6% reported that this did not occur.
- 5) 94% of respondents were given the opportunity to make comments on the Principles which were recorded in the *Validation Report*, 4% said they were not.
- 6) 92% of respondents felt that the Validator had adequate time to complete the required tasks, 7% did not.
- 7) Centres were asked how they felt about being observed. While many centres were nervous in their anticipation of the validation process, the majority responded positively to the visit. Many centres felt confident before the visit and some felt that it gave them the opportunity to demonstrate and be recognised for their capabilities. A small number of centres found that the Validator was intimidating and contributed to their anxiety, making them uncomfortable with the process. The chart below details how centres responded (Figure 3).

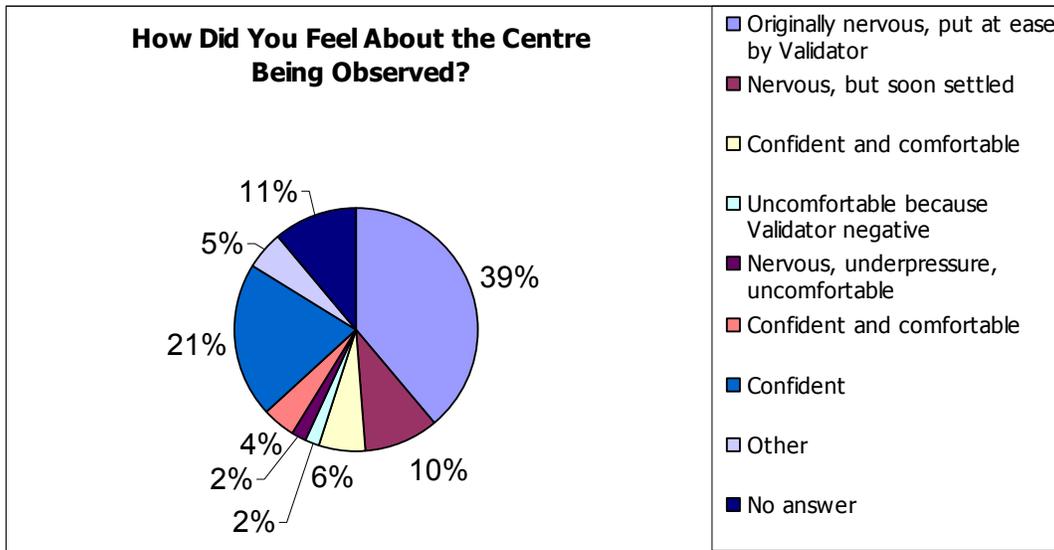


Figure 3: Centre responses to how they felt about being observed.

Examples of comments by centres in relation to this question include:

- All of the staff felt at ease with the Validator being in the room but she was friendly and helpful to all staff.
- At bit unnerving, but confident in our ability & have adapted a positive attitude to accreditation system.
- Slightly nervous but confident.
- Only one staff member had been through accreditation before. They were extremely nervous and felt really unsure about being observed. The Validator was very, intimidating to the girls in the rooms. She didn't say anything in the rooms or ask the staff any questions. Staff felt very nervous with her silence in the room compounding their nervousness of being watched. Staff felt very uneasy through the whole process. The Validator spent less than 10-15 minutes with the group leaders looking at planning. This wasn't long enough.
- Initially we felt very uncomfortable as staff felt very anxious with every move or comment they made. As the visit continued they became more familiar with the Validator however it is a very stressful time because it is unknown.
- Relaxed and confident, the Validator did an excellent job not to obstruct the natural working of our routine and daily programme. Although staff were apprehensive prior to the visit, we all quickly went about our work normally once we met the Validator face to face and enjoyed being able to demonstrate what we are capable of doing.
- Our centre staff were happy to be observed however they did feel uncomfortable by end of day 1 & day 2, as they found the Validator difficult to talk to at times unapproachable.
- We didn't mind at all, it gave us a chance to show all the hard work we do throughout the year to someone who understands and appreciates why we do it.
- We felt very comfortable, the Validator was not intrusive to the rooms and children.
- The Validator's approach was very unobtrusive so we were able to carry out our normal duties with out the feeling of being pressured.
- The staff team have undergone many months of reflection, observation by other professionals and agencies and also professional development training. This has supported us to present well and be comfortable with observers.

- 8) When asked what other suggestions the centre has for improving the validation process centres had a variety of suggestions:
- 41% of centres did not respond to this question.
 - 24% of respondents suggested general improvements to QA, including a broader time frame given for validation visits to ensure that the Validator is exposed to the true standard of care.
 - 8% of respondents gave other responses, including positive comments regarding the Validation process.
 - 7% of respondents were positive towards their validation visit.
 - 6% of respondents felt that the Validation process could be improved if the visit was longer, allowing the Validator more time to complete tasks.
 - 4% of respondents were not satisfied with the consistency in Validator training, with some centres suggesting that Validators were unable to answer their questions.
 - 3% of respondents suggested that Validator conduct was improper. One service felt that the Validator was trying to catch them out in their answers.
 - 2% of respondents suggested greater access to NCAC information resources would be beneficial.
 - 1% of respondents suggested improvements to step 3, including a reduction in paperwork and an increased focus on observation.
 - 1% of respondents were negative regarding the *Validation Report*.

Examples of comments by centres in relation to this question include:

- *Perhaps a 2.5 to 3 day process would be more beneficial so as to prove consistency.*
- *The Validator asked staff members many of the same questions, it was as though she was trying to catch us out. We were all very honest so generally gave the same answers; we felt this was not ethical.*
- *Possibly less focus on paperwork and more on observation.*
- *Ensure Validators understand the process i.e. I asked if we got a tick when the question had "U" did that mean we failed that quality area. She did not know.*
- *To get a clearer picture of each centre's everyday provision of quality care, we suggest that centres are given a broad range of time when their validation visit would occur eg "we have received your self study, your Validator will be and they will visit your centre by date" This would give a truer picture of the standard of care being provided. Anyone can fake it for 1 day.*
- *Have workshops on some principles to explain what evidence could be used for some sections.*
- *As our Validator was fair and extremely professional in his validation. I have to say we have no suggestions for improvement as his ways were fantastic!*
- *This was a comfortable review and would not suggest any improvement at this early stage of the new process.*
- *We feel that the Validation Report should be more condensed, since the time limit required to complete the report by the Validator and the time for the staff to make their comments was a bit rushed at the end. Eg The final documents/report was completed at 7pm (which is after working hours).*
- *The entire process was excellent and proceeded in exactly the way we anticipated. We felt well informed throughout.*

9) Feedback on the centres' participation in QA was positive overall, with centres suggesting that validation gave them confidence in the changes they had made, that they had had positive training experiences and that QA contributed to their personal professional development. Some centres expressed negative views towards their visit experience, including concerns regarding the amount of paperwork and the cost of the process, the ambiguity of certain indicators and the stressful nature of the Validation Visit.

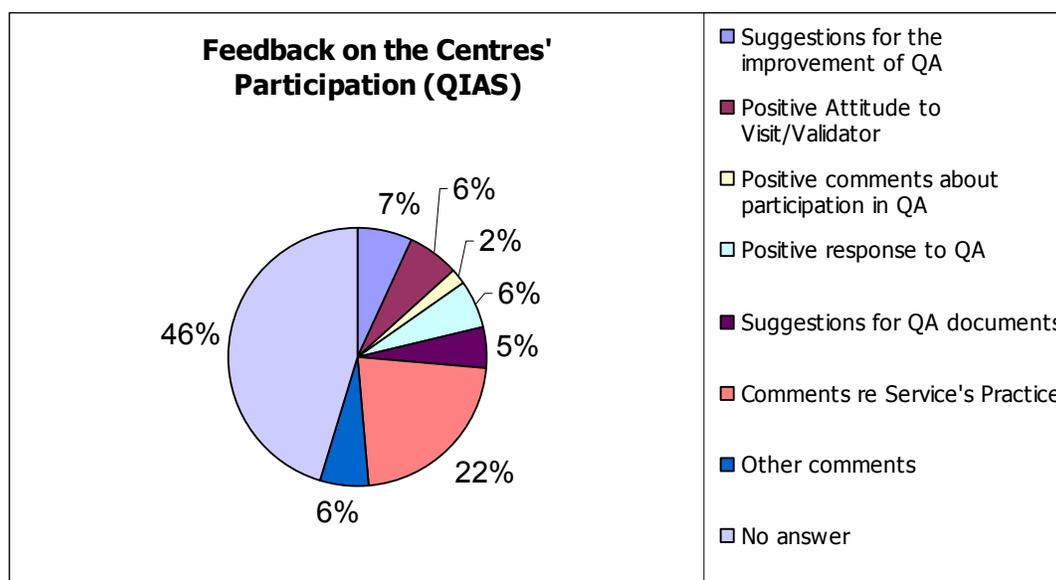


Figure 4: Feedback from centres on their participation in the QIAS

Examples of comments by centres in relation to this question include:

- *The feedback from staff was that the Validator needs to be more approachable with staff in the rooms, the silence of the Validator was very unnerving to staff, making them feel even more, uncomfortable while being observed. Didn't tell staff what was required to look at during planning observations. Just said what have you got to show me?? Wasn't specific.*
- *I would like to say that the training I attended which was run by Lady Gowrie at Mulgoa in April was very helpful. Also every time I have rang someone at the NCAC they have been helpful, informative and always friendly.*
- *We feel glad about our validation. It gave us the confidence and knowledge to keep going through the changes that we had in place since last year.*
- *Our Validation Visit experience was unnecessarily stressful and we feel that it should not have been like that. The Validators conduct and behaviour was unprofessional and we feel that she was purposely going out of her way to make us feel uncomfortable. She was sarcastic and criticized parents, staff and children. It is very disappointing to think that people who should be helping us improve only make us feel incompetent. This experience has only taught us that next time someone comes into our centre with a bad attitude we will not hesitate to ask them to leave and it doesn't matter who they are or where they are from.*
- *We felt it was a worthwhile experience. It increased & fostered the team work at our centre as we all worked hard together to reach all the necessary standards. We believe our service is now functioning at its best possible standard.*

- *Our biggest concern is that the amount of paperwork involved with QIAS affects the "hands on" time spent with the children.*
- *I found the accreditation process extremely valuable for my own professional development as well as my staff's. The process was definitely a positive experience.*
- *Some parents found their survey very difficult to fill out due to way questions were worded. The new Validators Report is great! Very easy to read & provide the Validator with feedback from.*
- *Paying \$15.50 to get report photocopied – what is our annual fee for? We didn't even ask to get accredited. If an organisation charges yearly fee any expenses should out of this??!!*
- *I was pleased to see the centre's growth during this accreditation review. Staff and family validation surveys outlined our improvements and an increased awareness about the quality areas and how our centre meets each principle. This view is also reflected in our ratings from our self study to my director's surveys. We continue to review and improve our practices e.g. policies, procedures and other aspects of service delivery with the aim to improve and refine our standard of care on an ongoing basis.*
- *Make some of your indicator points in the validation report less ambiguous or open to interpretation e.g. 9.1.4, 6.6.13 and 6.6.18.*