

## **Analysis of Validation Evaluation Forms**

### **Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA) and the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)**

**Validation Visits Conducted October / November 2004**

The National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) has conducted an analysis of the *Validation Evaluation Forms* received from services having had a Validation Visit (Step 3) during October and November 2004.

63 outside school hours care services and 293 long day care centres which had a Validation Visit during October and November 2004 returned their *Validation Evaluation Forms* to NCAC, a total of 85% of the services visited in this period. With the introduction of the Family Day Care Quality Assurance (FDCQA) *Quality Practices Guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2004) in July 2004, no FDCQA Validation Visits took place during this period.

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.

NCAC aims to have at least 85% of services satisfied with the professional standard of Validator's work. The results show that on average, over a range of measures of Validator's performance, more than **96%** of outside school hours care services and long day care centres indicated that they were satisfied with the professional standard of their Validator.

*Please note: All figures in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole percentage.*

## Outside School Hours Care Quality Assurance (OSHCQA)

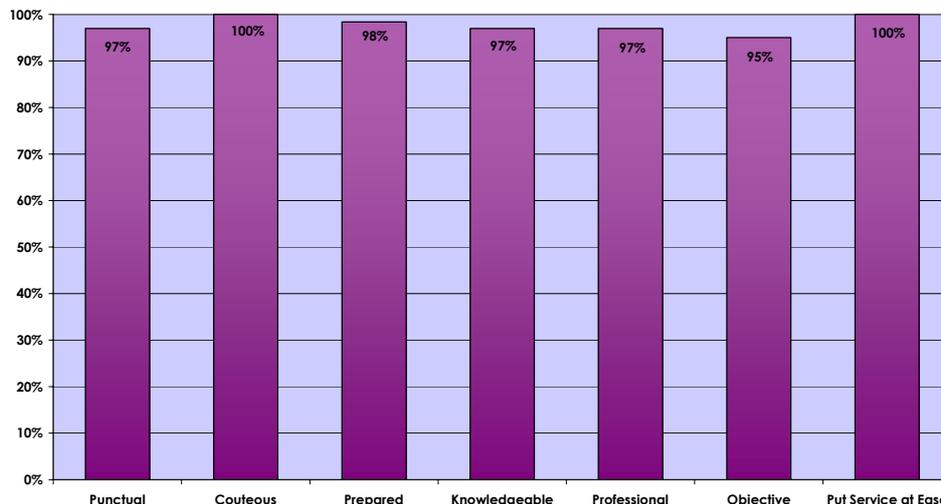
The first OSHCQA Validation Visits commenced in September 2004. 63 outside school hours care services returned their *Validation Evaluation Form* following their Validation Visit in October / November 2004.

The data collected on the *Validation Evaluation Forms* received by NCAC for OSHCQA Validation Visits occurring during October and November 2004 indicates that the majority of outside school hours care services are positive towards OSHCQA and the Validation process. This is a significant achievement as, with the implementation of OSHCQA in July 2003, all outside school hours care services are currently undergoing their first Validation Visits.

### Perceptions of OSHCQA Validators:

Services are asked a range of questions regarding the professionalism of the Validator. On average, **98%** of outside school hours care services were satisfied with the professionalism of their Validator during the Validation Visit. 100% of respondents felt that their Validator was courteous and put them at ease (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Perceptions of OSHCQA Validators



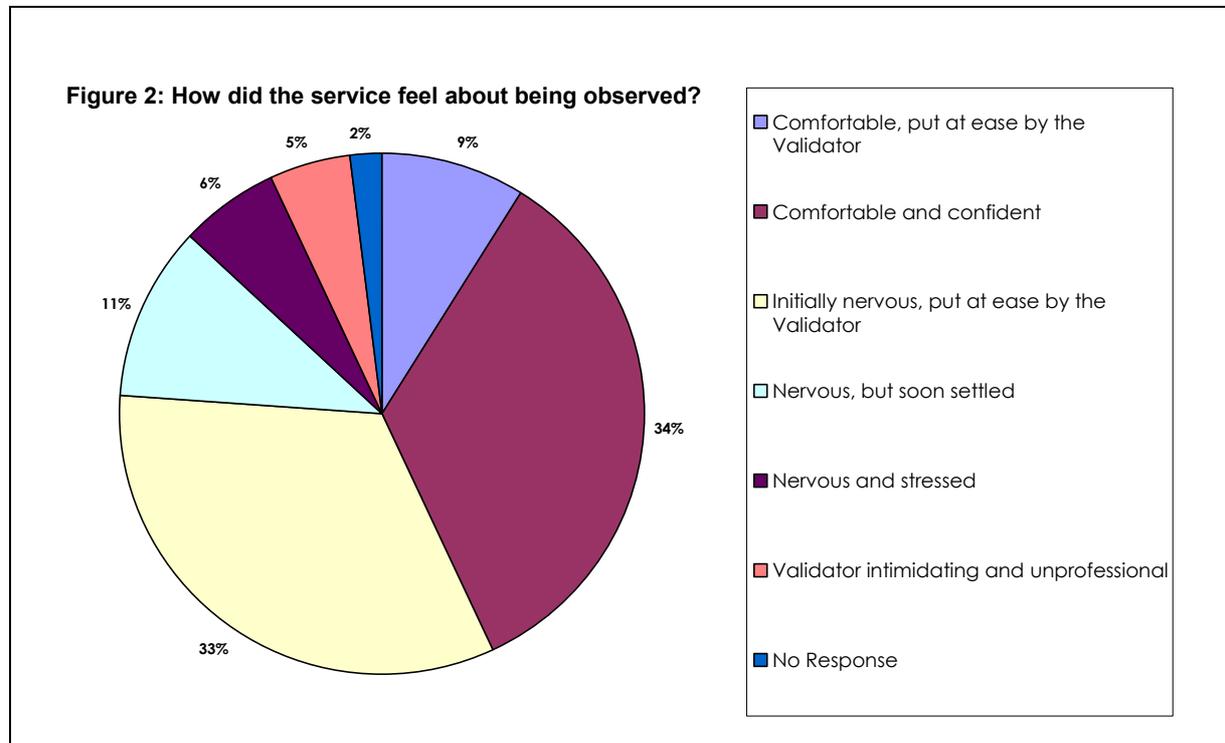
### The Validation Visit:

Services are asked if they were satisfied with the Validation Visit process. On average, **89%** of outside school hours care services were satisfied with the Validation Visit process:

- 98% of services were contacted a few days before the visit, 2% were not.
- 75% of services felt that the Validator had observed enough of the service to get a true picture, 23% did not. 2% of services did not respond to this question.
- 91% of services felt that the Validator has seen the available resource materials and equipment, 9% did not.
- 95% of services agreed that they were given the opportunity to make comments on the Principles and that their comments were recorded in the *Validation Report*, 3% did not. 2% of services did not respond to this question.
- 84% of services felt that there was enough time for the Validator to complete the required tasks, 16% did not.

## How did the service feel about being observed?

As the first OSHCQA Validation Visits commenced in September 2004, all outside school hours care services are experiencing their first Validation Visits. However, as demonstrated by Figure 2, 47% of services were comfortable and confident throughout their Validation Visit, while a further 44% of services were initially nervous but soon settled down or were put at ease by the Validator.



### Examples of comments made by services in relation to this question include:

- *The service enjoyed our visit by NCAC, the Validator was very friendly and obviously used to being in a childcare centre. The children always like someone new to share their news with or show them something they have done today. The Validator took time to listen to the children and was interested in what they were doing. The staff found the Validator easy to relate to and the centre had no problems being observed.*
- *A little nervous as it was a new process but happy to be involved and have someone from the outside evaluate what we do.*
- *Staff were feeling anxious about the process – fear of the unknown! Children were relaxed.*
- *The staff felt very nervous. The children asked who the new person was and were conscious of the Validator not being part of the staff team.*
- *Although we feel we are a very good service, the staff were nervous and being observed felt a bit strange. [Our Validator] was good, didn't 'stand on top of us' or obstruct us from our duties; she was friendly and easy to talk to.*
- *The children were inquisitive with many questions for our visitor. The staff had a positive view in that this was a part of the system in which an independent organisation was to assist us to move forward and grow. Families were introduced and were happy with the process.*

## What suggestions does the service have for improving the Validation process?

Outside school hours care services provided a range of suggestions for improving the Validation process:

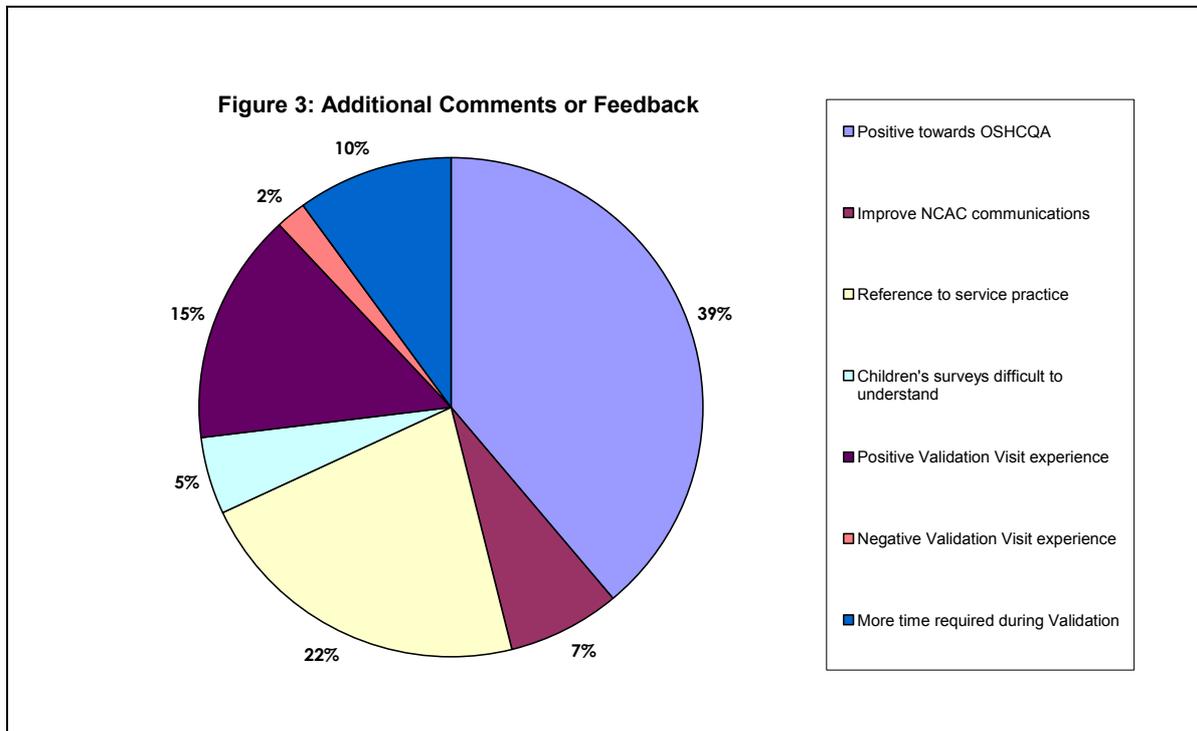
- 20% of respondents had concerns regarding the duration and scheduling of Validation Visits. Many felt that the Validation Visit was not long enough, and that time between before and after school care sessions could be used to view supporting documentation.
- 17% of respondents provided general suggestions for improving the Validation process. It was suggested that some of the Indicators overlap and that more flexibility should be allowed for the variety of circumstances in outside school hours care settings.
- 16% of respondents felt that NCAC communication could be improved to provide services with more support, advice and an understanding of what to expect during the Validation process.
- 9% of respondents suggested that Validator training could be improved to ensure greater objectivity and a thorough understanding of alternative programs.
- 8% of respondents suggested that the OSHCQA *Surveys for Families* and *Surveys for Children* could be improved. Particular reference was made to difficulties of families and children understanding the surveys.
- 5% of respondents provided other comments.
- 25% of respondents did not provide suggestions for improving the Validation process.

### Examples of comments made by services in relation to this question include:

- *Further allocated time for display, or showing of documentary evidence could be given during the day, i.e. in between sessions for before and after school care. During sessions it seemed at times rushed in provision of such documents.*
- *From a professional view an extra day would have been great. Thinking of becoming a Validator.*
- *We feel the process should have been longer and perhaps a little more flexible.*
- *I had several discussions with the Validator about differences in interpretations of several aspects of Indicators. Clarity was also sought re how these interpretations reflected differences between regulatory requirements between the Validator's experience and the current situation of this service ie we are currently not regulated and the Validator's service is, due to different to State Legislation and requirements.*
- *To advise the Directors or Coordinators to roster on an extra staff member as they are busy answering questions for the Validator as well as getting out related data.*
- *We felt that some of the questions were a bit difficult to understand and numerous parents also felt that some of the questions on the parent survey were difficult to answer.*
- *As States and Territories differ so much in their support agencies and responsible organisations of the sector it would be beneficial to point out to services and Validators that some explanation of governing bodies/operators and how they operate should occur. Some services could be disadvantaged if their management process is misunderstood.*

## Do you have any additional comments or feedback on your service's participation in OSHCQA?

Services were asked to provide feedback on their participation in OSHCQA. 64% of services provided a response to this question. Of those respondents, a large proportion of services had a positive response to the OSHCQA Validation process, as demonstrated by Figure 3. Some suggestions for improving the process included increasing the length of the Validation Visit, making the OSHCQA Survey for Children more user friendly and improving NCAC communication with services.



### Examples of comments made by services in relation to this question include:

- *The overall team find this process extremely valuable as they are committed to providing quality care and look for opportunities to make improvements.*
- *It has been an amazing and worthwhile journey. Totally exhausting at times but as people we have been rewarded by gaining in life skills ie self-evaluation and the ways we deal with others and issues.*
- *All our team felt comfortable once the Validation Visit started. Up to this point we were very anxious. We spent a long time preparing. Learnt a lot and enjoyed participating. Each staff member has enjoyed the challenge and think it a very worthy exercise. All children deserve the best.*
- *Parents of children 5 to 8 years felt children found their surveys above their cognitive level. Some did not understand the 'staff' concept and the smile indicators were too small.*
- *Staff were very disappointed that all evidence was not sighted by Validator. Expectation that all staff would be asked questions, and some staff members disappointed they were not approached.*
- *It was helpful to know exactly what the Validator would be doing each session; informed of this one week prior to Validation Visits. The staff have all put a lot of hard work into ensuring all principles of QA are being implemented, maintained and improved.*
- *A fantastic concept. I can't believe it has taken so long to come into play. Obviously the glitches will be ironed out with time. Keep doing a good job and supporting services.*

**Additional Comments:**

Outside school hours care services are provided with the opportunity to attach additional information to the *Validation Evaluation Form* for consideration at Step 4, Moderation. 19% of services provided additional information.

- 14% of respondents provided information regarding centre practice in relation to Indicators and Principles marked to be Not Occurring in the *Validation Report*.
- 2% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their Validator during the Validation Visit.
- 3% of respondents suggested extended Validation Visits and more time outside of service hours.

## The Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)

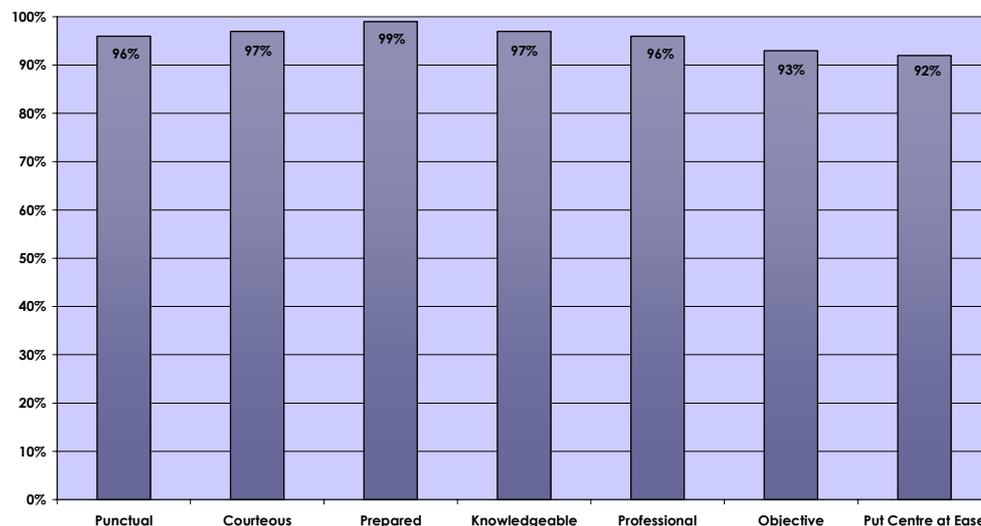
293 long day care centres returned their *Validation Evaluation Form* following their Validation Visit in October / November 2004.

The data collected on the *Validation Evaluation Forms* received by NCAC for QIAS Validation Visits occurring during October and November 2004 indicates that the majority of long day care centres are positive towards the QIAS and the Validation process.

### Perceptions of QIAS Validators:

Centres are asked a range of questions regarding the professionalism of the Validator. On average, **96%** of long day care centres were satisfied with the professionalism of their Validator during the Validation Visit (Figure 4). 99% of respondents felt that their Validator was well prepared for the Visit and 97% found their Validator to be knowledgeable.

Figure 4: Perceptions of QIAS Validators



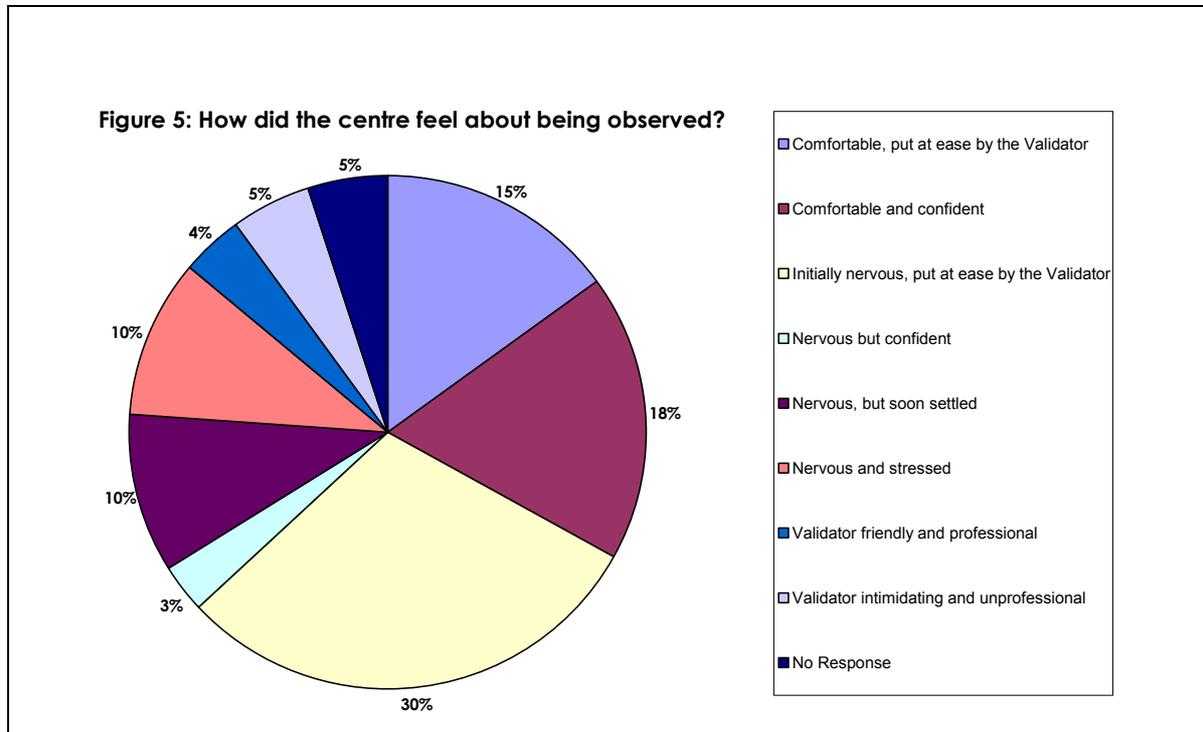
### The Validation Visit:

Services are asked if they were satisfied with the Validation Visit process. On average, **94%** of long day care centres were satisfied with the Validation Visit process:

- 99% of services were contacted a few days before the visit, 1% were not.
- 91% of services felt that the Validator had observed enough of the service to get a true picture, 8% did not. 1% of services did not respond to this question.
- 93% of services felt that the Validator has seen the available resource materials and equipment, 6% did not. 1% of services did not respond to this question.
- 94% of services agreed that they were given the opportunity to make comments on the Principles and that their comments were recorded in the Validation Report, 5% did not. 1% of services did not respond to this question.
- 95% of services felt that there was enough time for the Validator to complete the required tasks, 5% did not.

## How did the centre feel about being observed?

As demonstrated by Figure 5, 35% of centres were comfortable and confident throughout their Validation Visit, while a further 40% of centres were initially nervous but soon settled down or were put at ease by the Validator.



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

- *The Validator was very unobtrusive and was very pleasant in all interactions with staff. This made the staff more relaxed and less stressed about being observed. The Validator's quiet and approachable nature made the Validation process a positive experience and allowed our staff the opportunity to show and explain aspects of their work of which they are most proud.*
- *Fine! We were a little anxious but it is a learning process which we feel that can be used to improve our service (As well as others).*
- *Observation is part of the process and staff were aware of this, the Validator just blended into the rooms without disruption to routines or program, staff enjoyed the experience understanding it to be an ongoing part of our working day. It improves the standard of care for all children.*
- *Obviously it is a normal reaction to be nervous when a stranger is observing you, this had been discussed at a staff meeting and staff were prepared for it. What we weren't prepared for was the way in which staff were observed. The majority of the time the Validator stood in the room watching staff for long periods of time.*
- *Nervous and anxious at first, then quickly settled into normal routine and behaviours.*
- *Our Validator was very friendly and made all the staff feel very comfortable during her visit.*
- *Initially some staff were anxious due to it being the first time they had been through the process, however [the Validator] soon put them at ease and the day became business as usual. The feeling at the end of the day was positive and no staff member felt uncomfortable or stressed excessively as a result of the validation visit. Although a little nerve racking, staff enjoyed sharing their service with the peer Validator.*

## What suggestions does the centre have for improving the Validation process?

Centres provided a range of suggestions for improving the Validation process:

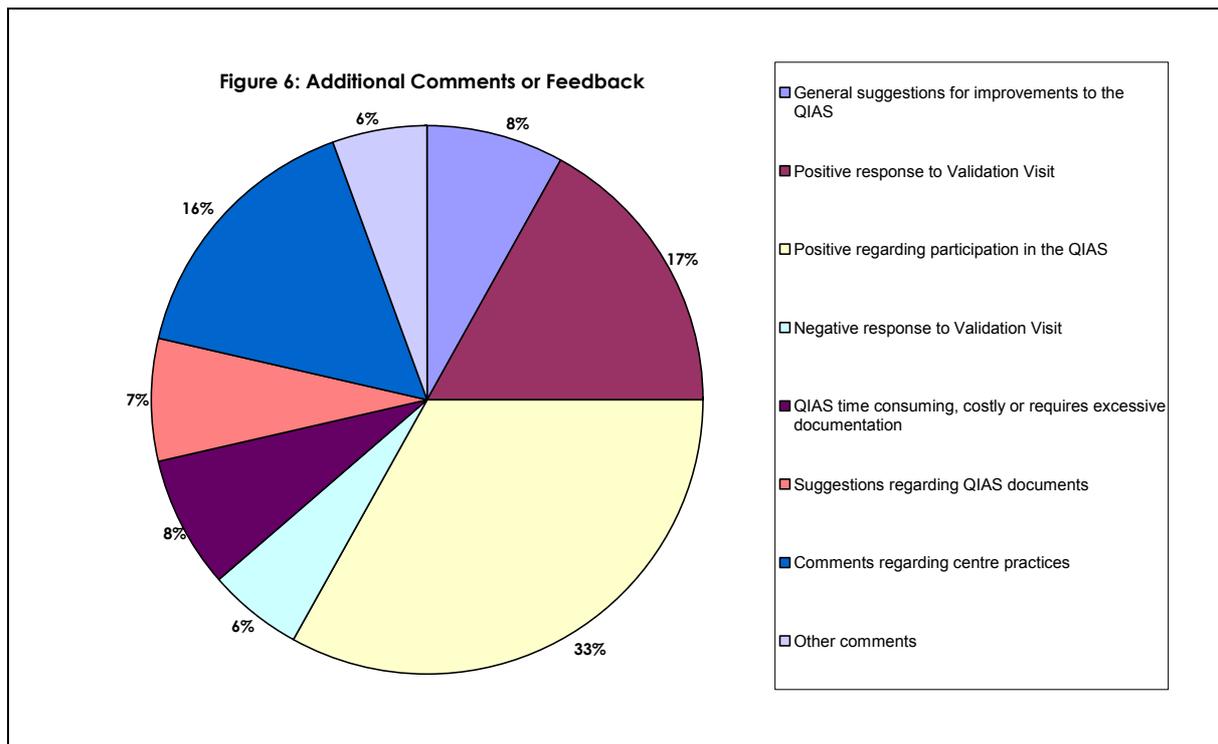
- 15% of respondents suggested general improvements to the QIAS, such as reducing the length of the *Validation Report*, introducing 'spot checks' and limiting repetition within the *QIAS Source Book*.
- 10% of respondents felt that Validator training and consistency could be improved.
- 8% of respondents were critical regarding the *Survey for Parents*.
- 7% of respondents were positive towards their Validation Visit and were satisfied with the Validation process.
- 6% of respondents made recommendations for improving the Validation process, including providing more time for checking the *Validation Report*, allowing the Validator to comment on centre practice and providing centres with a *Validation Report* in advance.
- 6% of respondents were positive regarding their participation in the QIAS and were satisfied with the Validation process.
- 5% of respondents felt that improvements could be made to the scheduling and duration of the Validation Visit.
- 4% of respondents suggested that NCAC provide more information and resources to centres.
- 4% of respondents provided other comments.
- 35% of respondents did not suggest improvements to the Validation process.

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

- *Possibly regular visits, with less time in between. This will ensure centres are providing quality care to children and families all of the time.*
- *Some of the principles outlined were quite repetitious, thus when collecting evidence we felt as if we were doubling up. Perhaps the validation report needs to be simplified and reduced in size.*
- *We are very happy in the process and format of this validation. Although at times to the lead up it can be at times stressful, the process also helps you gain extra knowledge, and experience.*
- *The expectations and requirements of the QIAS process in general and the Validation in particular are readily available and clearly expressed.*
- *Ensure that all Validators sent to centres are professional and supportive and are aware of NCAC code of conduct.*
- *The Validation process could be greatly improved by all Validators approaching Validation from the same perspective.*
- *The centre's experience was positive throughout. The new system requiring supporting evidence was a challenge at first, however this has made validating the indicators easier for the Validator.*
- *It would have been good to have more time to write comments. I suppose this depends on how organised a service may be. However, the process did seem to be rushed.*
- *The Validation Report could be further adjusted to allow areas with common evidence to be easily linked.*
- *Make the family surveys more relevant to the knowledge and understanding of families.*
- *The centre feels that nothing needs improving as the process ran smoothly and was relaxing while the Validator was at the centre, but we do wish for a quicker result.*

## Do you have any additional comments or feedback on your centre's participation in the QIAS?

Services were asked to provide feedback on their participation in the QIAS. 55% of centres provided a response to this question. Of those respondents, a large proportion of services had a positive response to the QIAS Validation process, as demonstrated by Figure 6. Some suggestions for improving the process included reducing the documentation required at Validation, ensuring Validator consistency and making the QIAS Survey for Families more user friendly.



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

- *The QIAS is an excellent process to check our centre's practices. Have found the NCAC team very supportive, efficient and friendly over the phone. Keep up the good work. Have had the opportunity of seeing the system develop, grow and improve. Thank you on behalf of the children in care, parents who use the centre and staff who work in them.*
- *The QIAS process is really great for country centres as you can feel very isolated at times.*
- *Being in a rural area it is very difficult getting good resources or information to support some of the high quality principles. We are a single independent centre that has to work hard to gain appropriate resources and in lots of cases, in-services.*
- *All staff were horrified at the Validator's complete lack of professionalism. They felt she let your organisation and the whole NCAC process down in her lack of understanding of OH&S, her failure to check with staff and her inability to do basic observations.*
- *As our Validator was warm and easy going and friendly to both staff and children, she presented as a great peer model. As a Director she has inspired me to look into doing the Validator training.*
- *We are happy to participate in the quality improvement process. It helps us to update and improve the services to the children. We have come a long way in the last 20 years of operation of this centre!*

- *I think QIAS is a really good way to improve team building and force staff to seek more ingenious ways to provide opportunities for parents to give and receive info about processes, policies and programming.*
- *Participation on QIAS is a good idea and should continue. But it has become a 'paper storm'. Many centres complain that without tons and tons of paperwork, one could fail – paperwork is taking staff and management away from actual caring of the children.*
- *We are happy with this validation process, the documentation is important and helps us with our continuing improvement plan. This process assists the staff in being constantly aware of the centres policies, procedures and encourages them to evaluate their work standards and professionalism.*
- *Some parents made comment that the family surveys asked a lot of questions that it was difficult for parent to answer.*
- *Parent surveys need to be re-written to be parent friendly (taking into account parents who are not 'childcare literate' our parents felt it was too jargonistic and many felt it should be based on areas parents directly deal with (even though we do provide much information to them).*
- *We found this validation visit and related progress throughout the QIAS very satisfying – it was gratifying for staff to progress through the self evaluation process.*
- *The QIAS is an important process. It is an additional motivator to maintain the quality provided at the centre but aim to continually improve it.*

#### **Additional Comments:**

Long day care centres are provided with the opportunity to attach additional information to the *Validation Evaluation Form* for consideration at Step 4, Moderation. 17% of centres provided additional information.

- 13% of respondents provided information regarding Indicators and Principles marked to be Not Occurring in the *Validation Report*.
- 2% of respondents provided explanatory information relating to centre practice.
- 2% of respondents were critical of the Validation Visit or their Validator.