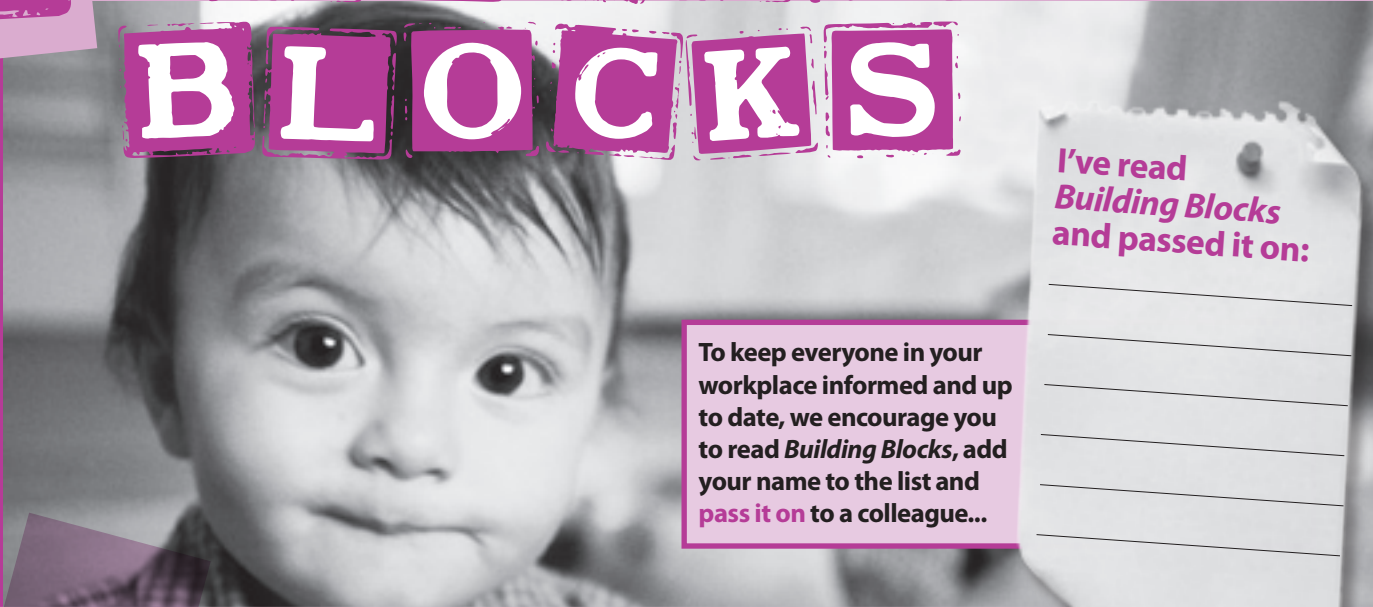


BUILDING BLOCKS

Winter 2010

Children's Services newsletter

Human Services
Community Services



I've read *Building Blocks* and passed it on:

To keep everyone in your workplace informed and up to date, we encourage you to read *Building Blocks*, add your name to the list and pass it on to a colleague...

National early childhood education and care workforce census

Get involved in the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Census during June and July 2010.

The census is vital to guide workforce planning for the children's services sector. It will support the National Early Years Workforce Strategy, which the Australian Government is developing in partnership with states and territories.

The census will gather workforce data on qualifications, employment and retention of staff from children's services that will be covered by the National Quality Framework across Australia from 2012. It will also seek information about children's access to preschool programs. Some individual child care and preschool staff will also be contacted to get more specific data.

The Workforce Strategy will help the sector meet the National Quality Standard (NQS) which introduces, amongst other things, new requirements for all early childhood educators and carers to have formal qualifications (see information in table).

Good quality information about the education and care workforce is crucial to forward planning by employers, training organisations and universities, regulatory agencies and government funding bodies.

If you work in a children's service, you can play an important role by taking part in the census.

The Early Years Workforce Strategy will provide a blueprint to improve recruitment and retention in the sector, and make sure children and their families benefit from high-quality services.

All children's services providers are strongly encouraged to take part in the census and promote it to their staff. Services should have recently received details about the census. Visit www.deewr.gov.au/earlychildhood.

If you have any questions please contact the National Workforce Census hotline on FREECALL 1800 639 098 or email nwc@srcentre.com.au.

New staff qualification requirements that apply from January 2014

SERVICE TYPE	New NQS staff qualification requirements for all services
Long day care & preschool	50 per cent of staff will need to have (or be actively working towards) a diploma-level early childhood education and care (ECEC) qualification or above.
	Other staff will need to have (or be actively working towards) a Certificate III level (ECEC) qualification or equivalent.
	Services with fewer than 25 children will need an early childhood teacher for some of the time while children are there. Services with 25 to 29 children will need an early childhood teacher in attendance. Existing NSW requirements for early childhood teachers in larger services will still apply.
Family day care	All carers will need to have (or be actively working towards) a minimum Certificate III level qualification. All coordinators will need to have a diploma-level ECEC qualification.
Outside school hours care	No requirements for staff qualifications are yet proposed.

Information about the specific qualifications that will meet the NQS requirements will be provided during the transition to the new system.

New child protection training

Anyone who is an authorised supervisor of a children's service must have successfully completed an approved child protection course. Children's service licensees also have obligations under the Children's Services Regulation 2004 to ensure that their staff are aware of their responsibilities under child protection legislation.

Here is an update on courses:

CHCCHILD401A *Identify and respond to children and young people at risk* is a new national unit of competency which is now an approved child protection course under the Regulation. Children's services staff (especially those who would like to be considered for an authorised supervisor position) who have not already done a child protection course should ensure they enrol in one that will give them a certificate of attainment in CHCCHILD401A.

CHCCHILD401A has replaced CHCCHILD1B and CHCCHILD1C, which are no longer being taught. If you already have one of these old competencies you are encouraged to do the new course, but you do not have to under the Regulation.

For more information please read the *Child protection training FAQs* on the Community Services website at

www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCSWR/_assets/main/documents/CHILDCARE_CHILDPROTECTION_TRAINING_FAQS.PDF

To find out what you now need to do as a mandatory reporter under the *Keep Them Safe* requirements, visit www.KeepThemSafe.nsw.gov.au/training/chcchild401a.



COOKS' QUALIFICATION GUIDELINES UPDATED

The licensee of a centre-based or mobile children's service must ensure that a qualified cook is employed, if meals are prepared and served to children on the service's premises. Guidelines on the qualification requirements for cooks have been updated and can be found on the Community Services website

http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/childcare_cooks_qualifications.pdf

Kidsafe playground advisory unit regional visits

The *Kidsafe NSW* Playground Advisory Unit gives impartial technical, design and safety information services to children's services, local government and schools across NSW. Regional Playground Safety and Inspection workshops and on-site inspection services for 2010, will take place at:

- Parkes – 30 June 2010
- Dubbo – 4 August 2010
- Tamworth – 15 September 2010
- Port Macquarie – 10 November 2010.

The one-day workshops include a practical assessment of playgrounds, looking at maintenance and compliance issues and an information package for services. The workshops will encourage proper inspection and maintenance of playground equipment and promote an understanding of the current Australian Playground Safety Standards.

Workshop participants will get information about:

- playground challenges and hazards for children and playground injury statistics
- current Australian/New Zealand Surfacing and Playground Equipment Standards
- how to ensure playground equipment is maintained to meet the Australian Standards
- planning and developing safe and creative play spaces
- keeping information about inspections and accidents.

The on-site inspections include a one-hour consultation and a full playground safety inspection. The service is given a written report and a copy of the *Kidsafe NSW* Resource Directory.

Go to the Playground Advisory Unit's section of the *Kidsafe NSW* website at kidsafensw.org for more information, or call **02 9845 0890** or send an email to kidsafe@chw.edu.au.

Download an expression of interest form today and return it to *Kidsafe NSW* to reserve your place in a workshop or book a playground inspection.

Services named when they don't meet standards

With a strong focus on maintaining standards for children's services across NSW, three services that failed to meet standards set by children's services legislation were named on the Community Services website in April 2010.

This service was set up in September 2008 so that parents could make more informed decisions about services they choose for their children. It also increases industry awareness of areas of non-compliance that have led to enforcement action.

Information about convictions under the *Children's Services Regulation 2004* since September 2004 and major licence changes or events since 1 July 2007 are listed on the website.

The three services named were convicted and fined a collective total of more than \$43,000 for nine offences. They included inadequate staff: child ratios, unhygienic facilities and failing to keep up-to-date records of children's and visitors' attendance and departures at the service.

Importantly, the licensee of a family day care service was convicted and fined for failing to develop and maintain policies and procedures. Their purpose was to ensure that the authorised supervisor and the carers met requirements for the safe conduct and supervision of children being taken on an excursion.

"Parents place an incredible amount of trust in their childcare providers, and most services do an excellent job in keeping children safe and helping them learn and grow," said John Mason, Acting Executive Director of the Children's Services Directorate.

"While Community Services prefers to work with children's services to fix problems early, it will take appropriate enforcement action, including prosecution, if there is ongoing non-compliance or serious breaches of children's services legislation."



AROUND THE COURTS

From time to time, *Building Blocks* will bring you news of prosecution outcomes for breaches of the legislation, to give licensees and authorised supervisors some insight into how courts respond to them. In this issue, we bring you the results to date.

January 2010	FDC – Community Services Northern Region		
Defendant	Offence (clause in Children's Services Regulation 2004)	Plea entered by defendant	Penalty
Licensee	cl.77(4) Authority for excursions	Guilty	\$13,000
Licensee	cl.79(3) Conduct of excursions: Water hazards	Guilty	\$13,000

January 2010	Centre-based – Community Services Metro Central Region		
Defendant	Offence (clause in Children's Services Regulation 2004)	Plea entered by defendant	Penalty
Licensee	cl.40(1) Development and play equipment	Guilty	\$750
Licensee	cl.45(2) Fencing	Not guilty – but found guilty	\$750
Licensee	cl.47(1) Cleanliness, maintenance and repairs	Guilty	\$750
Licensee	cl.53(1) Staff: child ratios	Guilty	\$1,000
Licensee	cl.56(2) Supervision by authorised supervisor	Guilty	\$900
Licensee	cl.92(1) Records in relation to children	Not guilty – but found guilty	\$800
Licensee	cl.93(3) Records in relation to staff and visitors	Not guilty – but found guilty	\$500
Licensee	cl.92(1) Records in relation to children	Not guilty – but found guilty	\$2,000
Authorised Supervisor	cl.92(1) Records in relation to children	Not guilty – but found guilty	\$600

February 2010	Centre-based – Community Services Metro South West Region		
Defendant	Offence (clause in Children's services Regulation 2004)	Plea entered by defendant	Penalty
Licensee	cl.45(4) Fencing	Guilty	\$2,000
Licensee	cl.66(2) Supervision of children	Guilty	\$5,000
Licensee	cl.91 Copy of Regulation to be kept on premises of service	Guilty	\$2,000
Licensee	cl.94(1) Records in relation to attendance at children's service	Guilty	\$1,000

New 1:4 ratio for under-tuos from 2011



The Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney has announced that a 1:4 staff: child ratio for babies will be mandatory in all licensed centre-based and mobile children's services in NSW from 1 January 2011. This is ahead of the new National Quality Standard (NQS) which starts in January 2012.

The change will carry out the NSW Government's announcement in November 2008 that a 1:4 ratio for babies would come in with the next round of amendments to the Children's Services Regulation 2004.

"NSW is changing the staff: child ratio from 1:5 to 1:4 for children under two years of age in centre-based and mobile children's services to offer optimum safety and care for babies," said John Mason, Acting Executive Director Children's Services.

"Early childhood experts have asked for this change for many years and there is

significant research that shows the benefits of the 1:4 ratio for child development."

Families are also increasingly expecting this level of care. An independent report commissioned by Community Services found that one third of childcare centres across the not-for-profit and commercial sectors already operate at a 1:4 ratio. Since the time of the study, more services have said they are introducing the 1:4 ratio voluntarily.

"The new ratio will also improve conditions for workers in the industry. With fewer babies to care for, staff are likely to be less stressed and more fulfilled in their

work, according to the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union that represents childcare workers," John said.

Community Services is now consulting with the new NSW National Quality Framework Reference Group on related changes to the Regulation that can help providers comply with the new ratio requirement from next year.

For more information, visit www.community.nsw.gov.au/for_agencies_that_work_with_us/childrens_services/regulation/review_of_the_regulation.html.

Universal access roundtable – April 2010

Community Services held the second Universal Access Stakeholder Roundtable meeting on 23 April 2010. The roundtable provides a forum for government and non-government stakeholders to discuss the roll-out of the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed this National Partnership Agreement (known as 'Universal Access') in February 2009. It gives \$278.6 million over five years to NSW to achieve universal access for children to a quality early childhood education program in the year before school by 2013.

NSW is using some of this funding to boost its existing Preschool Investment and Reform Plan (PIRP), which began in July 2008. The PIRP gives money to preschools to create new places and improves access for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Participants in the roundtable included service providers, peak groups and unions. Senior representatives of the NSW and Australian governments also attended the meeting.

John Mason, Acting Executive Director, Children's Services Directorate, gave an update on the roll-out of the agreement in NSW. It included some early findings

from the 2009 Annual Report to the Commonwealth Government.

Catherine Moore, from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) reported that the Australian Government had received the 2009 Annual Report from each jurisdiction. She said that when they had been reviewed, DEEWR would publish them around July 2010.

A key action under the NSW Bilateral Agreement is to set up an Early Childhood Teacher Costs Contribution Scheme by 1 July 2011. At the roundtable, Community Services gave a draft outline of the scheme

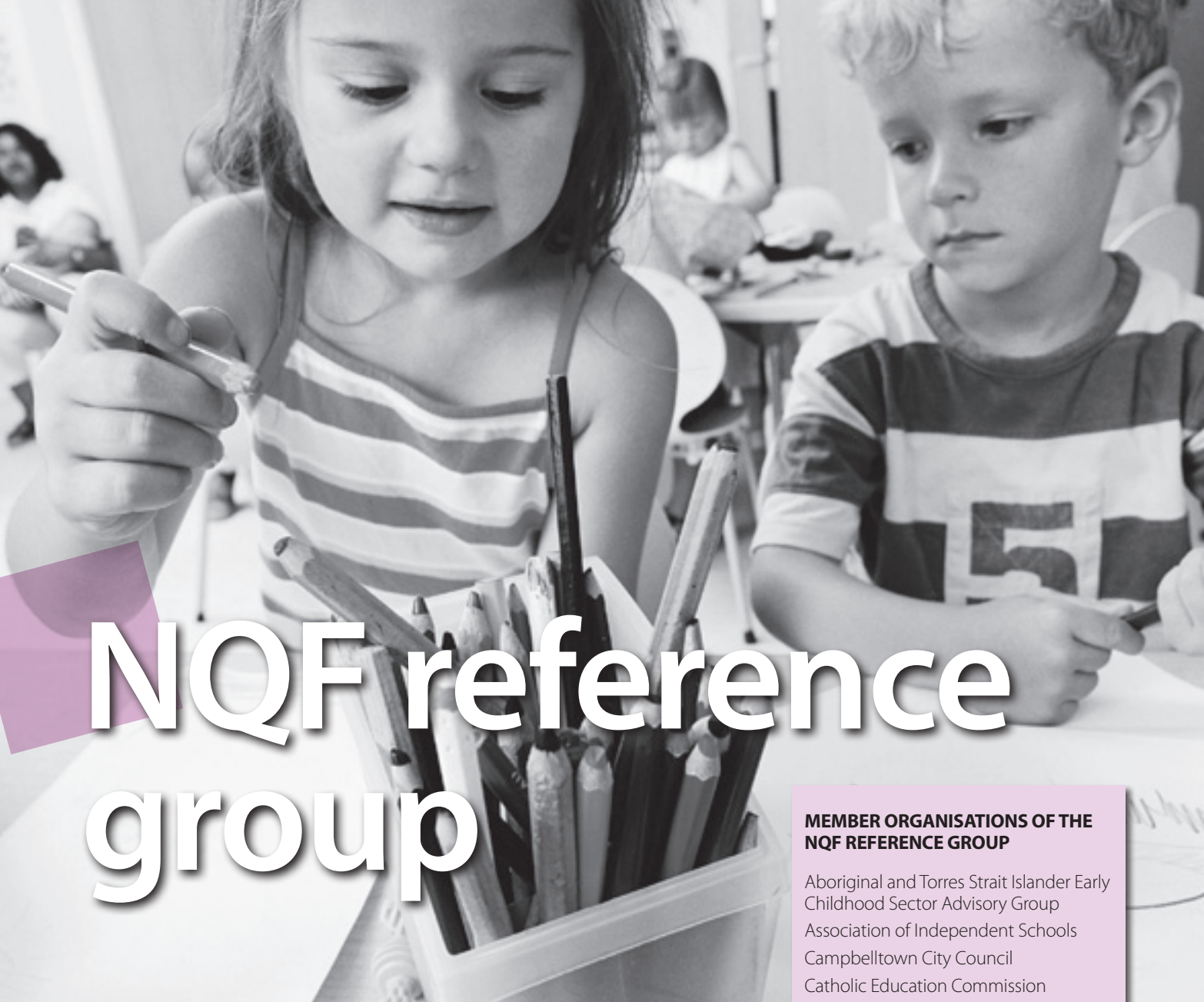
and asked participants to comment on how it could best be implemented.

During the discussion, attendees spoke about a range of issues that affect the Universal Access commitment, such as:

- availability of appropriately qualified teachers
- logistics of providing 15 hours of preschool per child each week
- access and affordability, particularly for children in rural and remote communities, and hard-to-reach families.

Community Services agreed to work with people who have a particular interest in tackling these important issues.

For more information about Universal Access, including the Early Childhood Teacher Costs Contribution Scheme and the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan, visit www.community.nsw.gov.au/for_agencies_that_work_with_us/childrens_services/about_the_preschool_investment_and_reform_plan.html



NQF reference group

NSW has embraced the National Quality Framework (NQF) with the creation of a new NQF Reference Group.

The Framework is a new national standards and ratings system, which will come into effect from 1 January 2012. The NQF stems from the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the agreement on 7 December 2009. It will see an essential realignment of responsibility for children's services regulation.

The reference group will assist the Minister for Community Services, Linda Burney and Community Services in the lead-up to the start of the NQF. It will provide industry knowledge and expertise on how best to roll-out the framework in NSW.

The NQF Reference Group will be the primary forum for consultation between the early and middle childhood education and care industry and the NSW Government, as the framework is implemented. The group's membership

covers all relevant sectors of the children's services industry, including service providers, peak groups and major sectoral interests.

The group's first meeting, which the Minister attended, was held in March 2010.

The group's main area of work over the next 18 months will be to identify and address the major issues for NSW in the NQF transition process. Issues such as:

- training and retention of a suitably-qualified workforce
- how to regulate services, such as occasional care and mobile services, not included in the initial NQF roll-out.

Another significant task for the group is consultation and communication with the industry. The group will provide input on the best way to inform different stakeholder groups as the framework is introduced. It is hoped that member organisations will also play a leading role in promoting and supporting the NQF roll-out in NSW.

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF THE NQF REFERENCE GROUP

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Sector Advisory Group
Association of Independent Schools
Campbelltown City Council
Catholic Education Commission
Child Care NSW
Community Child Care Co-operative
Community Connections Solutions Australia
Early Childhood Australia – NSW Branch
Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Co-op. Ltd
GoodStart Childcare Limited
KU Children's Services
Local Government and Shires Associations
Network of Community Activities
NSW Department of Education & Training
NSW Family Day Care Association
Occasional Child Care Association
SDN Children's Services
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
The Family Day Care Carers' Association of NSW
Mobile Children's Services Association of NSW
Unions NSW
UnitingCare Children's Services

Thinking of adding an OSHC to your children's service? Some things to remember

Most outside school hours care (OSHC) service providers would be aware that they must be registered with Community Services. But there are additional Community Services requirements to remember if you are thinking of running an OSHC service from the same premises as a centre-based or mobile service.

The requirements – which are conditions of the centre-based or mobile service licence – mean you must ensure that:

- the access of any non-OSHC child attending the service, to facilities and staff, is not diminished
- any programs provided for the non-OSHC children are not adversely affected by the OSHC service
- if all the school children attending the service are in kindergarten or Year 1, the total number of school children cared for at the premises is not greater than 20% of the number of children specified in the service's licence
- if any school child attending the service is in a grade higher than Year 1, the total number of school children who are cared for at the premises is not greater than 10% of the number of children specified in the service's licence.

The 10% and 20% quota can be exceeded only if the following conditions are met:

- the indoor and outdoor areas and amenities that the school children use are not used at the same time by the non-OSHC children
- the staff providing the service to the school children are not at the same time providing the service to the non-OSHC children.

Finally, the total number of children (OSHC plus non-OSHC) in attendance at any one time must not exceed the total maximum number specified in your licence, unless Community Services grants your service specific approval to do so.

For full details of these requirements go to clause 62 of the Children's Services Regulation 2004.

Stay on top of record keeping

A record of attendance must be made for each child, staff member, casual employee, contractor or visitor who is at each service. It must be up-to-date, accurate and include the person's given and family names, and their time of arrival and departure.

Staff attendance records must also include any absences from the service during the day. Staff and visitors must sign the records of their attendance. The person dropping off or collecting a child from the service must also sign the child's attendance record. It is important to remember that in family day care, the record keeping requirements apply to all children receiving the service, including the carer's own children.

Children's Service Officers pay close attention to attendance records when visiting services. Some of the most common weaknesses in record keeping include:

- children missing from attendance records

- records showing a person's given name only
- staff and visitors' attendance records not being signed
- staffs' shift times recorded rather than actual arrival and departure times
- departure times recorded when the arrival time is recorded, rather than at the time of departure
- staff absences during the day not recorded.

The last point is particularly important if staff work in two services and move between them throughout the day, such as an authorised supervisor (AS) approved for two services. For example, if the AS attends service

A and then later goes to service B before returning to service A. The AS must sign in their time of arrival and departure at A, then do the same at B, and once again when they go back to service A.

Failing to record all these arrival and departure times would create inaccurate attendance records at both services. For instance, the records could show the AS was at A for the entire day or alternatively that the AS was at both services A and B simultaneously!

In a scenario like this, a licensee was fined \$10,900 for failing to ensure the AS of the service made and kept records in line with clause 93 of the Regulation. The actual times the AS was at each service could not be worked out from the staff attendance records. In fact, the records showed that the AS was at both services at the same time.

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