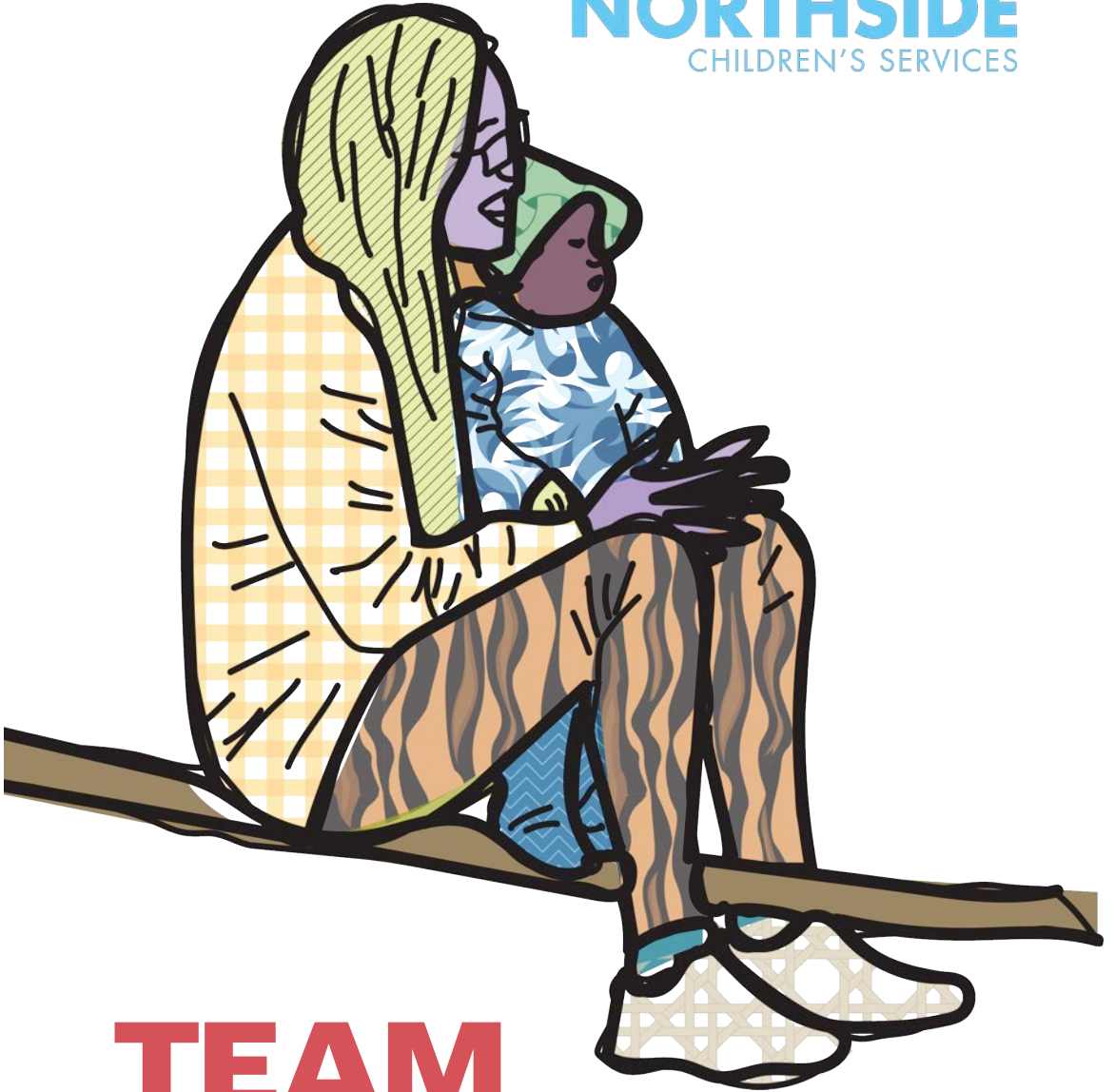


**NORTHSIDE**  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES



**TEAM  
LEADER  
HANDBOOK**

At Northside, we talk a lot about leadership. Working to support young children's learning and wellbeing is a rewarding but complex job.

This is particularly true for Team Leaders. Working as a Team Leader requires you to be an engaged educator with young children, as well as supporting a team of educators to reach their potential as early education professionals.

Team Leaders at Northside are an incredibly important part of our Children's Services Leadership Team. To help you understand what being a Team Leader in a Northside Early Childhood Centre means, this Handbook provides guidance on a range of important areas of practice.

Along with your Educator Handbook, this guide will help you grow and develop as a leader in early education.



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# LEADERSHIP AT NORTHSIDE

**Team Leaders are a very important part of our Leadership Team, and are helped to ensure all educators are supporting children's learning and wellbeing.**



**At Northside, we know that Team Leaders are in a position of influence and responsibility with the teams they work with. We want to ensure that all Team Leaders have the skills and knowledge to uphold Northside’s approach to early education and develop their own approach to leadership.**

### **Understanding our approach to early education**

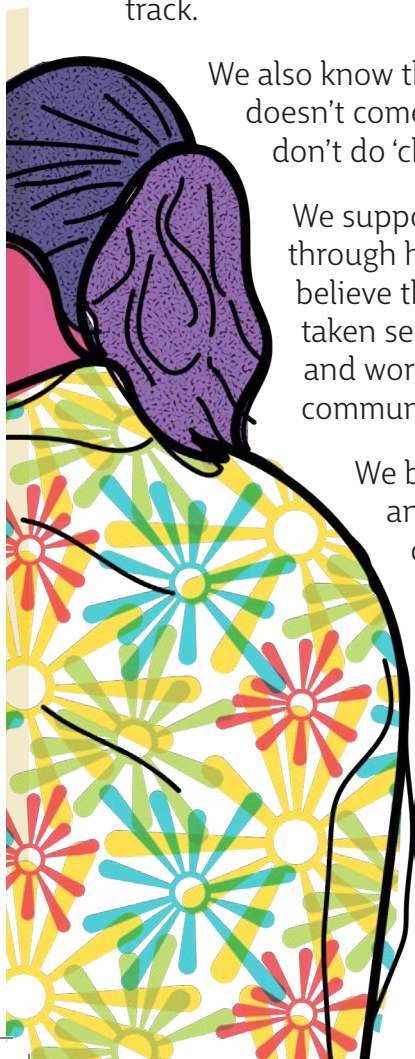
At Northside we have a very clear approach to how, and why, we do the work we do. We know that the first five years of a child’s life is an opportunity to celebrate children for who they are, work with them to develop the skills that will help them succeed at everything they want to do, and help children who may be struggling get back on track.

We also know that five years goes past quickly, and that time doesn’t come around again. That’s why we’re clear that we don’t do ‘childcare’. We don’t employ ‘childcare workers’.

We support and grow children’s learning and wellbeing through high-quality early education. We strongly believe that working in early education should be taken seriously as part of Australia’s education system, and work to raise the profile of the sector in the community.

We believe that children are confident and capable, and that from birth they are active citizens in our communities. We believe that children are the holders of human rights, and must have those rights protected and upheld by adults. We believe that children are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Everything we do at Northside starts from this approach. Team Leaders have a central role in ensuring that this approach is upheld in every classroom.



## **What leadership looks and sounds like**

Leadership in early education is very different to leadership in other fields. Working with young children alongside your colleagues requires a broad range of skills – how to plan for children’s learning, how to manage complex situations, how to role-model approaches, and much more.

At Northside, we have a few principles we expect all leaders to follow. Firstly, we expect leaders to behave with professionalism at all times. This means: conversations with colleagues and families are always respectful, even during challenging situations; personal and professional issues are kept separate; and the way we work demonstrates how seriously we take our work with young children.

Secondly, we expect leaders to uphold standards. This means that Team Leaders work with their team to ensure that health and safety requirements are followed, that all interactions with children are warm and respectful, that all families are welcomed and communicated with, and that the Centre Director is notified immediately if children are at risk of harm.

Finally, we expect leaders to be credible. This means that Team Leaders are actively engaged with their team in supporting children’s learning and wellbeing. Credible leaders work alongside their team, demonstrating their own skills as educators through role-modelling and demonstration.

## **Being part of a Leadership Team**

Centres succeed when the leaders in the Centre – the Centre Director, Assistant Director and Team Leaders – work as a united team to drive improvements and uphold standards. Educators in each Centre look to the Leadership Team to explain and demonstrate high-quality approaches to working with children, and how to uphold the requirements of the National Quality Framework.

Under the direction of the Centre Director, Team Leaders are supported to come together regularly and discuss the important

issues that affect each centre – health and safety, quality improvement, educational programs and more. We expect Team Leaders to contribute positively and professionally to these ongoing conversations, and drive improvements and new approaches in classrooms.

Being part of a Leadership Team means having respectful and robust conversations with the other leaders in the Centre, but when a decision is made it is communicated positively to the rest of the team. Even if you disagree with a particular decision, the Leadership Team has a responsibility to take its leadership role seriously and be seen by all educators as a united group.

### **Supporting the Centre Director**

Under the National Quality Framework, Centre Directors also hold the role of Nominated Supervisor for their service. This means that they have a range of specific legal responsibilities for what happens in the Centre. Northside works hard to support the Centre Director with these requirements, and we expect each Centre's Leadership Team to also provide their support.

The most important way you can support the Centre Director is by ensuring that you uphold the Law and Regulations at all times, and support your colleagues to do so as well. Centre Directors rely on their team to uphold standards and ensure children's health, safety and wellbeing is protected.

#### **Find out more**

**Read:** Our Approach to Early Childhood Education - Northside Children's Services

**Read:** Strategic Priorities - Northside Children's Services

**Watch:** J.K. Rowling Speaks at Harvard Commencement  
[youtube.com/watch?v=wHGqp8lz36c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHGqp8lz36c)

# WORKING WITH THE NQF

**Understanding and upholding the requirements of the National Quality Framework is an important responsibility for every Team Leader.**





**The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides minimum standards for quality approaches to early education. At Northside, we know that Team Leaders are a very important part of ensuring that our Centres meet and exceed those requirements. Here's what you need to know to help make sure that happens every single day:**

### **What is the National Quality Framework?**

The NQF is a framework of laws, regulations, documents and approaches designed to help services ensure children are safe, have their wellbeing supported and are learning. It commenced in 2012, replacing different systems in every State and Territory in Australia.

The key parts of the NQF are:

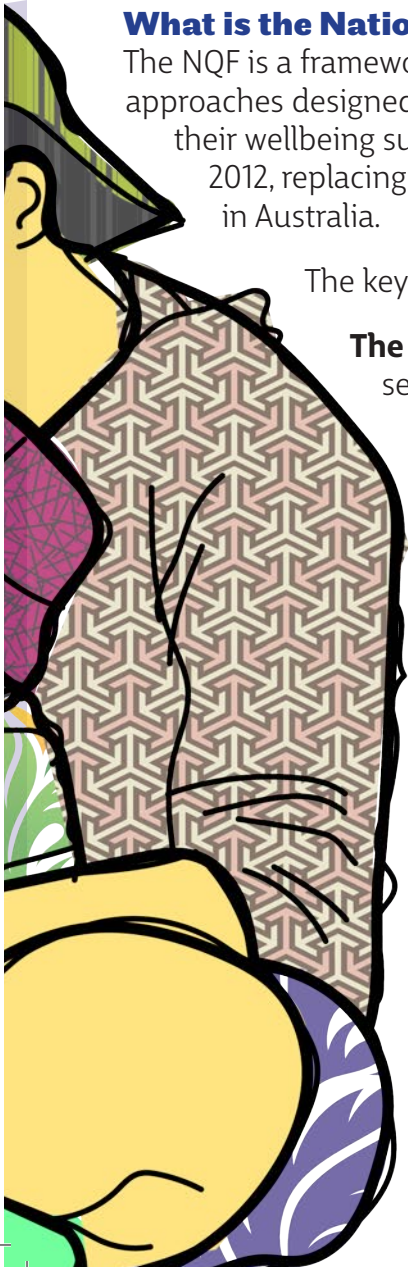
**The National Law:** Laws designed to ensure the set-up and oversight of services is acceptable.

**The National Regulations:** Regulations ensure compliance with minimum requirements to operate a service.

**The National Quality Standard:** A set of 7 Quality Areas, 15 Standards and 40 Elements that ensure a service is providing quality early education to children.

**Assessment and Rating process:** A regular assessment of every service to rate them against the National Quality Standard.

**Approved Learning Frameworks:** The curriculum documents for services that operate under the NQF: Being Belonging Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework; and My Time Our Place: The Framework for School Age Care.



## **Quality improvement and self-assessment**

A key principle of the NQF is continuous improvement. This means that services, professionals and leaders who work with young children commit to always looking for ways to improve. Team Leaders are an important part of this commitment, as you are working directly with children and are able to implement changes in classrooms.

The best way to be engaged in quality improvement is by working with your colleagues and the Centre Director to contribute to and implement the Centre's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Each Centre's QIP outlines goals for improvement and strategies for how to meet them. Make sure you're familiar with the QIP, and talk with your Centre Director about how you can contribute.

## **Compliance with the NQF**

The NQF has a range of legal and regulatory requirements that must be upheld at all times. At Northside, we don't see this as a 'burden' – it's our responsibility to ensure that children are safe, have strong wellbeing and are engaged in play-based learning. We expect all Team Leaders to have a positive and proactive approach to compliance.

In practice, this means ensuring: that all required safety checklists are completed; that staff-child ratios and active supervision requirements are maintained; that educational programs are up-to-date; that children have access to fresh water and food; that children's medical conditions are known and taken into account; and all other compliance tasks as explained by the Centre Director.

But the most important thing to remember about compliance isn't the checklists and the tick-boxes; it's how we approach it. When compliance issues occur, our response isn't about finding someone to blame. It's about identifying what went wrong and working together to make sure we've done everything we can to prevent it happening again.

## **Children's Education and Care Assurance**

Under the NQF, every State and Territory has a Regulatory Authority which oversees compliance and quality. In the A.C.T., the Authority is Children's Education and Care Assurance (CECA). At Northside, we approach our relationship with CECA as a partnership. Just like the team at Northside, the team at CECA is focused on ensuring children's health and safety.

For Team Leaders, this means being professional and respectful during visits from Authorised Officers. When compliance issues need to be addressed, we expect Team Leaders to take on board feedback from CECA and implement any changes that need to be made in a positive way.

It's important to remember that there will always be minor compliance issues that arise in all services that operate under the NQF – working with young children is complex. In some cases, Team Leaders may be required to provide statements or additional information to CECA during a compliance investigation.

### **Find out more**

**Read:** What is the NQF? [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about)

**Watch:** Introduction to the 2018 NQF changes.  
[youtube.com/watch?v=xQj2Brmr1T8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=xQj2Brmr1T8)

**Read:** The Guide to the National Quality Framework Section 4 - Operational Requirements. [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)

**Read:** National Quality Framework. [ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-framework](http://ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-framework)

**Explore:** The ACT's Early Childhood Education and Care Sector.  
[education.act.gov.au/early-childhood/the-acts-early-childhood-education-and-care-sector](http://education.act.gov.au/early-childhood/the-acts-early-childhood-education-and-care-sector)

# KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

**Team Leaders  
are an important  
part of Northside's  
responsibility to ensure  
every child in our  
Early Childhood  
Centres is safe.**



**The health and safety of the children enrolled in our Early Childhood Centres is Northside's first and most important responsibility. Team Leaders are a very important part of this responsibility, as you uphold and role-model expectations for your team. Here are the key things to focus on:**

### **Know children's individual health and wellbeing needs**

We need to make sure that every child in your classroom is kept safe and well, but some children will also have very specific health and wellbeing needs. These kinds of needs often come with medical management plans, particularly if the child's health can be put at risk due to a medical condition.

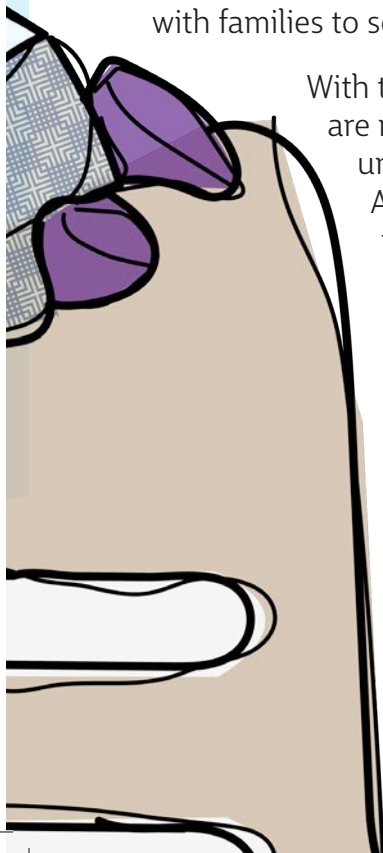
Knowing the children and families in your room really well is maybe the most important part of a Team Leader's job. For children with individual health and wellbeing needs, this means: knowing what those needs are; knowing how to support them; knowing where information about those needs is kept; and regularly checking in with families to see if those needs have changed.

With the team you are supporting, make sure you are regularly checking in with them about their understanding of these needs in your classroom. Ask yourself – how will my team keep ensuring these needs are properly met if I'm away?

### **Uphold child protection requirements**

One of the most critical responsibilities of anyone who works with children in the A.C.T. is their mandatory reporting responsibilities. In the A.C.T. it is a legal requirement for early childhood educators to report any concerns of child abuse and neglect to Child and Youth Protection Services. Northside provides regular training on this requirement to all educators.

As a Team Leader, it's important that you have a strong understanding of your obligations.



This will help you support your team to understand what they need to do if they suspect that a child may be suffering from abuse or neglect.

If you are having conversations with your team about a particular child, make sure you also speak with the Centre Director. It's important that they can support you and your team during this process.

### **Ensure that regular safety checks are being done**

Sometimes it can seem like early education services have a lot of checklists, but it's important to remember that they've been developed to keep children (and educators and families) safe. Centre Directors have individual legal responsibility as Nominated Supervisors to ensure that children are protected from harm and hazards. This means that they need Team Leaders to support them by regularly checking areas and resources within our Centres to ensure that they are safe.

Each Centre will have specific approaches to meet the particular risks and safety requirements in that Centre, but the main things to take responsibility for are: checks of the outdoor environment; regular checks of sleeping children throughout the day; checks of fridge and other food storage areas; and checks to ensure bathroom areas are clean.

As a Team Leader, it's important that you work with your team to ensure they understand how important these requirements are, and that they uphold them at all times. Make sure you speak with your Centre Director about the specific checks required at your Centre.

### **Create and maintain safe learning environments**

We know that how learning environments are planned, set up and used is a huge part of how young children learn. It's also important that these environments are safe for children to play and learn in every day.

Make sure you are regularly working with your team to identify any potential hazards or unsafe areas in your classroom. If you are planning to make changes to your learning environments, it's a great idea to reflect with your colleagues, other Team Leaders and your Centre Director to see if they can help you identify any challenges or opportunities.

If you are concerned about any possible hazards, speak with your Centre Director.

### **Ensure that incidents are properly managed**

Although we do everything we can to protect children from harms and hazards, we know that incidents can and will occur. When they do happen, it's important that we learn from them to make sure we can improve our approaches to health and safety. We also have a range of obligations under the NQF to document and report all incidents that affect children.

As a Team Leader, make sure you and your team know the right way to fill out an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record. In particular, make sure the child's family has been notified and the Centre Director has been made aware.

### **Find out more**

**Read:** The Guide to the National Quality Framework Section 3 - National Quality Standard and Assessment and Rating - Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety. [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)

**Explore:** Early Childhood Research Hub - Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety. [ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-2-childrens-health-and-safety](http://ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-2-childrens-health-and-safety)

**Learn:** Keeping Children and Young People Safe: Free online training. <https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe>

# WORKING WITH FAMILIES

**Team Leaders help ensure that we have positive, professional relationships with families that support children's learning and wellbeing.**





**We know that children learn best when educators and families work closely together. For most families, the Team Leader is the person in the Centre they will most talk with about how their child is going. Making sure that we are building positive and professional relationships with each child's family is very important. Team Leaders can do this by:**

### **Getting to know families**

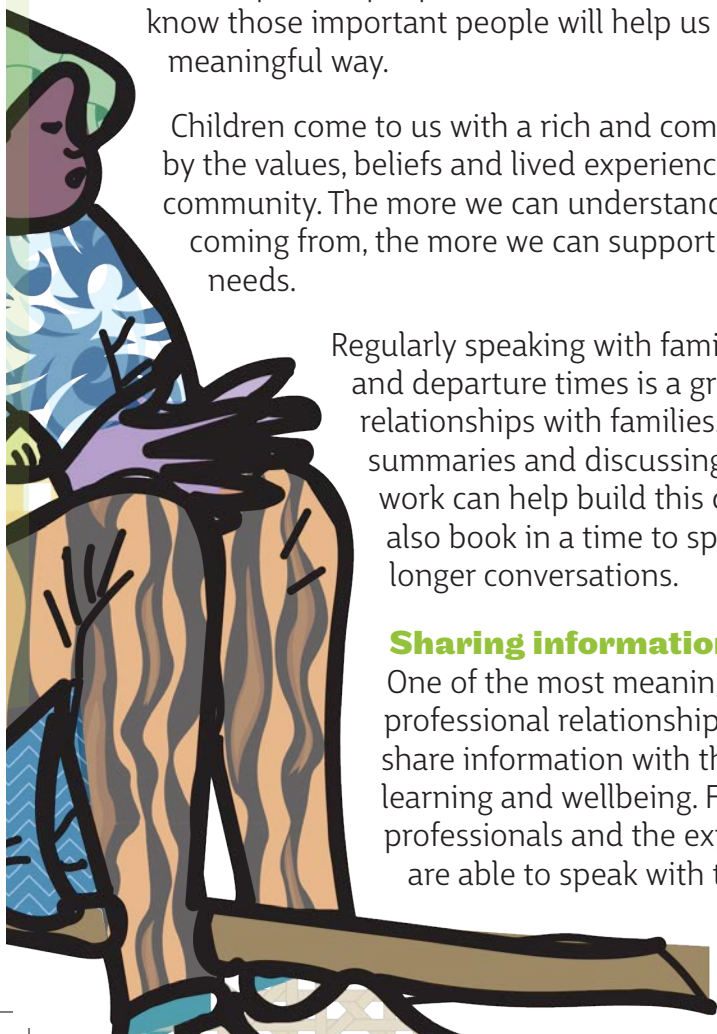
The Early Years Learning Framework describes families as “the child's first and most important teacher”. This means that we need to ensure we work professionally with families to support each child's learning and wellbeing. Children come to the Centre with a lot of important people in their lives – taking the time to get to know those important people will help us support children in a meaningful way.

Children come to us with a rich and complex history informed by the values, beliefs and lived experiences of their family and community. The more we can understand where children are coming from, the more we can support children's individual needs.

Regularly speaking with families during arrival and departure times is a great way to build relationships with families. Sharing learning summaries and discussing examples of children's work can help build this connection, and you can also book in a time to speak with families for longer conversations.

### **Sharing information with families**

One of the most meaningful ways to build professional relationships with families is to share information with them about their child's learning and wellbeing. For families, we are the professionals and the experts in this area – we are able to speak with them about how their



children are progressing, how they are interacting and engaging with other children, and how families could continue to support their learning at home.

At Northside, we've made a considered decision to not use software or 'apps' that share photos and stories of learning with families. We have significant concerns about the privacy and confidentiality of these programs, and ethical concerns about how they represent children and their learning. But we still have a range of ways that we can share information with families – here are just a few:

- Contributing stories of learning to the regular email updates that are sent to families from each Centre;
- Ensuring Learning Summaries are completed for each child every three months;
- Developing displays of project work and other documentation in the classroom;
- Speaking with families regularly about any questions they may have about their child's learning.

### **Advocating for early education**

Northside has a strong approach to advocacy for children and their rights, professional recognition for educators, and the importance of high-quality early education. Team Leaders have an important role to play in helping us advocate for these things as we work with families.

When we speak with families, we can talk to them about how important the first five years are for children and their development. We can let them know that we work to a nationally-agreed curriculum document, the Early Years Learning Framework, that is all about learning through play. We can also let them know that Northside is a strong supporter of the Big Steps campaign for professional recognition and wages for early childhood educators.

There are a lot of advocacy campaigns and messages out there, but the best way to reach families is through the trusted relationships they have with you. Make sure when you are speaking with families,

you are thinking about how you represent yourself, your colleagues, the work you do, and the children you work with.

### **Maintaining strict professional boundaries**

Our work as educators means that we have strong connections to the lives of children and families. It's important that Team Leaders ensure that relationships with families are entirely professional and do not cross boundaries. As leaders, it is also critical that Team Leaders role-model and uphold this requirement with their teams.

Blurring personal and professional boundaries can put educators at risk, as well as undermining the professional respect that families should have for qualified early childhood educators. While we know that many people may see the work you do as little more than babysitting, Northside is a strong advocate for professional recognition for the work you do. This means that the relationship between educators and families must be entirely professional.

In practice, this means only engaging with families in a work context, in person at the Centre or in some cases via email for specific discussions. We cannot connect with families on social media, or at personal events (such as birthday parties or babysitting). Speak with your Centre Director if you need more information about professional boundaries with families.

### **Find out more**

**Read:** The Guide to the National Quality Framework Section 3 - National Quality Standard and Assessment and Rating - Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.  
[acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)

**Explore:** Early Childhood Research Hub - Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.  
[ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-6-collaborative-partnerships-with-families-and-communities](http://ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-6-collaborative-partnerships-with-families-and-communities)

# LEADING A TEAM

**Team Leaders are responsible for working with their team to ensure they are upholding the NQF and Northside's requirements.**



**Team Leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that every child enrolled at Northside is kept safe, is engaged in high-quality learning, and has their rights and dignity upheld. Supporting and guiding your team requires strong leadership skills. You can lead your team effectively by:**

### **Setting and upholding expectations**

Any professional role requires clear expectations that are understood by everyone involved, and regular check-ins to ensure those expectations are upheld. Early childhood education is no different. With the National Quality Standard, the Early Years Learning Framework, and Northside's policies and procedures, there are a range of things that all educators are required to do.

As a Team Leader, your job is to explain these expectations and support your team to meet them. Being clear with your expectations is one of the most important leadership skills – it can be difficult for your team to know how they are doing if they are not sure what you expect of them. Team Meetings are a great time to be clear about your expectations with all of your team, but they should also be reinforced with daily discussion.

When expectations are clear, it becomes much simpler to ensure those expectations are being upheld. Speak with your team regularly and reasonably about what you expect to happen in your room. If any issues are putting children's health and safety at risk, or you aren't seeing improvement, make sure you speak with your Centre Director.

### **Role-modelling professional practice**

One of the best ways you can support your team to understand and uphold your expectations is by role-modelling them. Team Leaders are appointed because of their experience, qualifications and skills as an early



childhood educator. Your interactions and engagement with children are examples for your team, so make sure you are always looking for opportunities to demonstrate high-quality approaches.

Role-modelling is also important as you can't be in your classroom at all times. Demonstrating appropriate practice will give your team the skills to uphold your expectations when you are on leave or aren't working directly in the classroom for other reasons.

### **Communicating clearly and respectfully**

Setting expectations, role-modelling practice and improving performance are complex skills, but they all rely on clear and respectful communication. We all know that early education classrooms are busy spaces and can sometimes be stressful on challenging days. Educators need Team Leaders who remain calm and purposeful while they are working, and can communicate in ways that do not lead to misunderstandings.

The best way to make sure that you are communicating clearly with your team is to have regular Team Meetings. We know these can be challenging to organise, but even meeting for just 30 minutes a week is a great way to be clear with your team. Some teams even do 10 minutes a few times a week – speak with your Centre Director to find a way you can make this work for you and your team.

### **Working with your Centre Director**

As a Team Leader, you are part of the Centre's Leadership Team. This means you need to always be working closely with your Centre Director to understand and uphold their expectations for you and your leadership of your team.

There are some parts of working with your team that are more appropriate for the Centre Director to manage. This includes formal performance management, approvals for leave, managing complaints from families and more. Make sure you feel comfortable with knowing what you need to raise with your Centre Director.

## Looking for opportunities to improve

Leadership is one of the most complex skills to learn, and leadership in early education has its own specific challenges. The strongest leaders are always searching for ways to improve their practice through professional learning and development.

At lot of the best ways to improve your early education leadership don't require formal, paid training. The Educators Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework and the Guide to the National Quality Framework are both free resources approved by Australian Governments that support educators to engage with the requirements of Australia's early education system.

You can also speak with your Centre Director regarding learning more about specific areas of being a Team Leader. Northside has a range of ways to support the professional learning of all educators, but its important that everyone also takes responsibility for their own continuous learning and development.

There are a range of resources below that you can start to use to identify learning opportunities for yourself.

### Find out more

**Read:** Working With Young Children - Northside Children's Services

**Read:** The Guide to the National Quality Framework Section 3 - National Quality Standard and Assessment and Rating - Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership. [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)

**Read:** Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework. [docs.education.gov.au/documents/educators-guide-early-years-learning-framework-australia](http://docs.education.gov.au/documents/educators-guide-early-years-learning-framework-australia)

**Explore:** Early Childhood Research Hub - Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership. [ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-7-leadership-and-service-management](http://ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-7-leadership-and-service-management)

# PLANNING & DOCUMENTING LEARNING

**Team Leaders are responsible for working with their team to ensure they are upholding the NQF and Northside's requirements regarding learning programs.**





**Team Leaders are responsible for the development, review and implementation of learning programs in their classroom, under the direction of the Centre Director as Educational Leader. You should ensure you have a good understanding of what you need to do – here are the important things to remember:**

### **Understanding NQF requirements**

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides specific guidance and expectations for early education services and professionals around educational programs and practice. Informed by research and evidence, the National Quality Standard (NQS) asks services to consider how they assess children's progress, plan for learning, review outcomes and document how they do all this.

These requirements are important, and as an advocate for the NQF Northside is committed to ensuring we meet or exceed these requirements in all of our Early Childhood Centres. As professionals, we understand that we need to be able to demonstrate and provide evidence for how well we are supporting children's learning.

One of the most important requirements of the NQF is that we follow a cycle of planning. The cycle of planning includes observing/collecting information, analysing learning, planning, implementing and reflecting/evaluating. Services and professionals are asked to work out how to engage with this cycle in ways that most make sense for them and best support the children they work with.



## **Understanding Northside's approach**

At Northside, we have an approach across all of our Centres that supports educators to engage with the planning cycle in meaningful ways that reduces the total amount of documentation that needs to be prepared. We know that documentation is only one part of high-quality approaches to educational programs – the most important part is educator practice, in classrooms with children.

So, we've moved away from things like day books, weekly summaries and specific numbers of observations. We focus on longer-term learning and collecting information on a day-by-day basis in a variety of different ways.

The most important part of Northside's approach is the Learning Summaries for every child, completed four times a year. These summative assessments of children's progress towards the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) Outcomes provide a holistic overview of each child, which builds into a comprehensive picture.

We also complete Monthly Intentions, which assess and reflect on the recent period in each classroom and provide a range of learning focuses for the coming month. These are framed through questions that educators are encouraged to think about.

Each classroom also has an Engine Book, which holds a range of different documentation highlighting ongoing thinking, questions and examples of practice. This book is a repository for the complex life of each classroom, with contributions from children, families and educators. Each classroom also provide examples of learning to families through our regular email updates.

Each Centre engages with these requirements in the ways that best suit them. Make sure you're regularly speaking with your Centre Director about how you can approach these requirements.

## **Supporting your team to contribute**

At Northside, it's our shared expectation that all educators contribute to the educational program. All educators are

professionals and either hold, or are working towards, a professional qualification in Children's Services. As a Team Leader, it's your responsibility to support the members of your team to take part.

Each educator will have a range of ways they can contribute. For some, it might be collecting data on children's engagement with the learning program, or a discussion with you about how children are progressing. For others, it might be more detailed writing about children and their progress towards the EYLF Learning Outcomes. You know your team best, so make sure you're regularly meeting with them about how they can meet your, and Northside's, expectations.

### **Collaborating with your colleagues**

The NQS also challenges services to work within a culture of critical inquiry. This means that professionals support each other to improve their practice by engaging in critical reflection and challenging each other to think about different ways of doing things.

This can only happen when Team Leaders, working with the Centre Director, respect and value each other as professionals, and engage in these kinds of discussions professionally and ethically. This can be helped by finding opportunities to share your work with your colleagues, and positively and respectfully discussing the work of your colleagues.

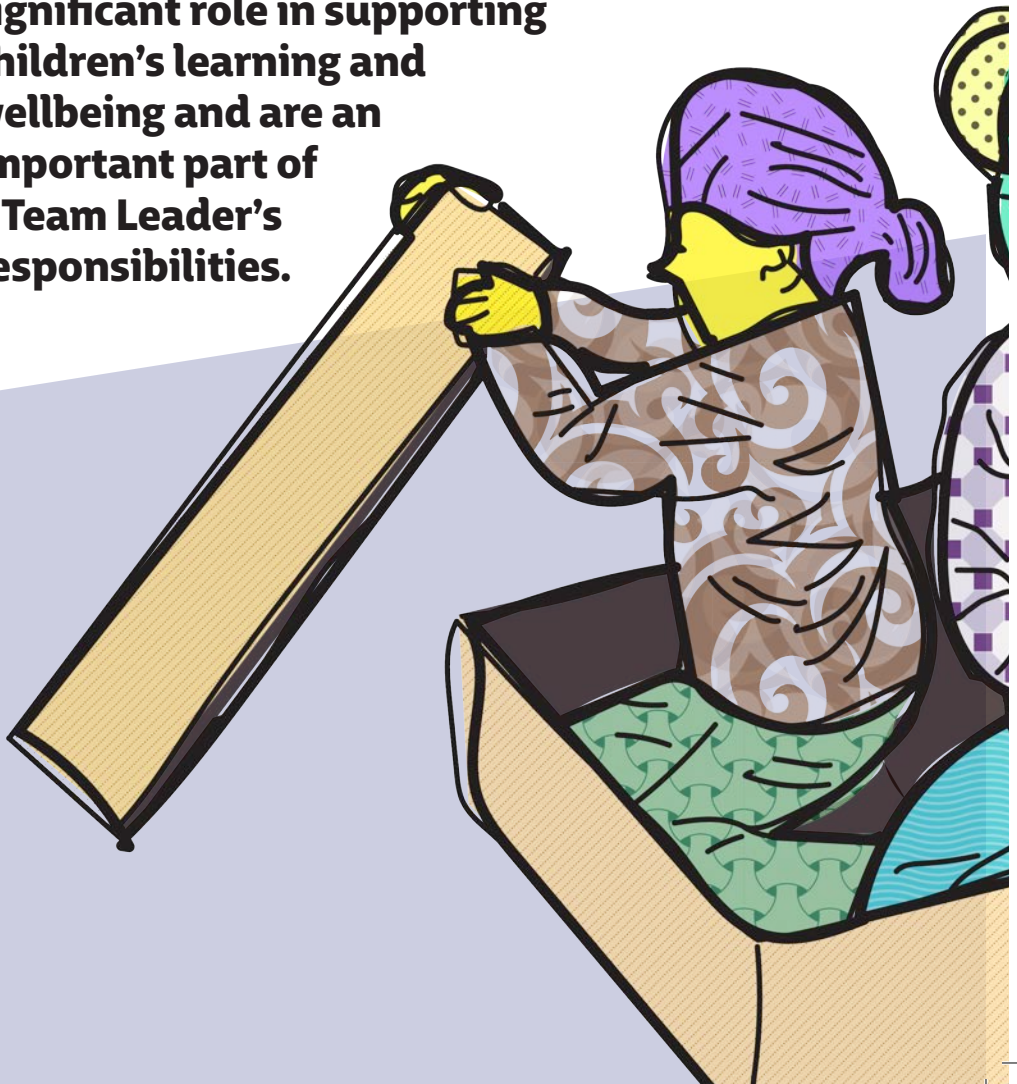
### **Find out more**

**Read:** The Guide to the National Quality Framework Section 3 - National Quality Standard and Assessment and Rating - Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice. [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)

**Explore:** Early Childhood Research Hub - Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice. [ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-1-educational-program-and-practice](http://ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-1-educational-program-and-practice)

# SETTING UP & MAINTAINING SPACES

Learning spaces play a significant role in supporting children's learning and wellbeing and are an important part of a Team Leader's responsibilities.



**Northside's approach to early learning environments is based on modern and progressive approaches to learning and wellbeing in the first five years. Team Leaders have direct responsibility for their own classrooms, under the direction and approval of the Centre Director in their role as Educational Leader. Here are some things to think about as you plan:**

### **How do learning environments support children?**

At Northside, we believe that learning environments play an important role in contributing to children's learning and development. We appreciate that each Team Leader will bring their own experience and knowledge to the design of their classroom. However, Northside strongly believes in the importance of incorporating natural and open-ended resources throughout its Centres.

We know that children investigate and learn about the world around them through their senses, so it's important to have a large range of loose

parts and open-ended materials available for children to explore. This not only allows children to make representations of what they know and understand, but will also allow them the opportunity to further develop and explore their own imagination.

High-quality learning environments invite children to explore and engage with the world around them. They are spaces where children feel safe and valued, and provide opportunities for them to investigate and be challenged.



## **The fundamentals of learning spaces**

To ensure that children get the most out of your classroom, it's vital that the layout is welcoming and fosters creativity. Creating an inviting and welcoming feel will encourage strong connections to be made between educators, children and their families. This will also assist children to develop a strong sense of belonging and security within your classroom.

As Team Leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that your classroom is a space where children want to be. By building strong relationships with the children in your room and knowing them well, you will best be able to consider what this looks like in your classroom. This will vary across each classroom and Centre. Make sure you're also regularly speaking with your Centre Director for support, guidance and ideas.

Observe children in your classroom and pay attention to their actions and how they engage with the space. If you notice that they are no longer interacting with your space as you had planned, include children in redesigning or selecting new resources to use.

Northside strongly believes in literacy being immersed throughout its classrooms and readily available to children of all ages. We expect that high-quality books, in good condition, are always included in your learning spaces, as well as other examples of texts. Work with your team on ensuring that books are always appropriately displayed and that children are supported to use them respectfully. Please talk with your Centre Director about purchasing new books if they become damaged or torn.

## **Maintaining learning spaces**

Throughout each day, it is important that your indoor and outdoor learning spaces are continuously reset. As Team Leader it is your responsibility to ensure that your team, and children, are assisting you in maintaining a clean and inviting classroom. When children have finished with an experience, encourage them to pack away or reset the experience for the next child. By doing so, you will not only

ensure that children remain interested in the experiences that you have on offer, but it will also help in maintaining a calm atmosphere where children are best able to learn.

When incorporating loose parts in your classroom, you will need to ensure that thoughtful planning is considered to avoid them turning into broken, unused pieces that may become a risk to children's safety. Regularly meet with your team and discuss your, and Northside's, expectations on maintaining a clean and inviting space for children that fosters learning.

### **Thinking about health and safety**

At Northside, children's health and safety is our number one priority. If you notice damaged or broken resources within your classroom, speak with your Centre Director about having them fixed or replaced immediately.

Northside also strongly believes in encouraging children to assess and manage risks, and providing them the space and support to do so. As Team Leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that children are engaging with resources in a safe way that also lets them explore and express themselves.

It is important that your team are aware of the differences between risks and hazards and try to incorporate resources that allow children to take risks within your learning spaces.

### **Find out more**

**Read:** The Guide to the National Quality Framework Section 3 - National Quality Standard and Assessment and Rating - Quality Area 3: Physical environments. [acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide)

**Explore:** Early Childhood Research Hub - Quality Area 3: Physical environments. [ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-3-physical-environment](http://ecrh.edu.au/national-quality-standard/quality-area-3-physical-environment)

# PROFESSIONAL GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

**It's important that Team Leaders stay up-to-date with current thinking about children's learning and wellbeing through ongoing professional learning and development.**





**Early childhood education is a complex and diverse field and it's important that those in leadership roles keep up-to-date with their own professional learning and development. Northside provides a range of professional learning opportunities, but professionals must also take responsibility for their own professional growth. Here are some things to remember:**

### **Identifying professional learning focuses**

As early education professionals, we are always learning more about the work we do under the National Quality Framework. As we grow our professional skills and qualifications we learn more about the particular areas we're interested in, the areas we're most skilled in, and also the areas we need more support with.

For leaders in particular, it's important that we identify specific areas of practice that we'd like to learn more about. This can be a product of critical reflection; a key part of our work with the NQF. We need to reflect on what we're doing well, but also areas of improvement. These reflections will help you determine what your professional learning should be focused on.

You can also work with your Centre Director to identify other areas that it's important to learn more about. This could be a new learning focus for the Centre that's being explored, an update to the NQF, or areas of learning that will support you to develop your skills for further leadership roles. Make sure you talk with your Director about your Work Plan and contribute to it to make sure it's working to help you plan your own ongoing learning.



## **Accessing professional learning through Northside**

Northside provides a range of professional learning opportunities for all educators, including Team Leaders. Our approach is to favour long-term and embedded training rather than one-off individual sessions, although these can be made available as well.

The professional learning we make available is directly linked with the requirements of the NQF, and is focused on the key areas of practice that matter most to educators – relationships and interactions with children, supporting children’s wellbeing, and engaging with the principles of trauma-informed practice.

At Northside, we see professional development as being a part of everything we do. This means that Staff Meetings and Team Leader Meetings are not just opportunities to catch up, but are important professional growth and development opportunities.

Our professional learning programs are regularly updated, so make sure you speak with your Centre Director about what is currently available.

## **Accessing other professional learning opportunities**

There is also a range of professional learning events available in the early education sector, and we encourage all educators to let us know if there’s a particular opportunity you feel would be beneficial to you and your colleagues.

When thinking about accessing other professional learning opportunities, it’s important to remember a few things. Does the event reflect professional and current approaches to early education? Does the event align with the NQF? Will you be able to share your learning from this event with your colleagues?

Many professional learning opportunities can be accessed in your own time, as part of your commitment to your own growth and development. There are many useful courses that can be taken online for free, and we have included links to some of them below. As with any profession, your professional development is a joint

responsibility between yourself and your employer. Make sure you take advantage of the opportunities Northside provides you, but remember to devote time to seeking out other opportunities you can access yourself.

### **Sharing professional learning with your team**

One of the most important considerations with professional learning and development as a leader is how you will share what you learn with your team. High-quality early education is provided by motivated and professional teams, so this means that sharing knowledge and ideas is crucial.

As a Team Leader, consider how you share professional learning with your team. How can you use Team Meetings to reflect on professional development opportunities? How can you determine what professional development your team might need? If you attend an event, what do you need to pass on to your team?

When you meet with your other Team Leader colleagues, this is also a great opportunity to share professional learning around leadership, educational programs and practice, and a range of other topics. Think about how you can be a part of regularly sharing and reflecting on professional knowledge.

### **Find out more**

**Explore:** Early Childhood Research Hub. [ecrh.edu.au](http://ecrh.edu.au)

**Learning:** National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - E-learning modules. [childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/learning-hub/e-learning-modules](http://childsafe.humanrights.gov.au/learning-hub/e-learning-modules)

**Learning:** ACECQA - eLearning videos for educators and providers. [acecqa.gov.au/resources/supporting-materials/videos/elearning-videos-educators-and-providers](http://acecqa.gov.au/resources/supporting-materials/videos/elearning-videos-educators-and-providers)

**Learning:** Early Childhood Australia - Webinars. [learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/webinars/](http://learninghub.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/webinars/)

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[northside.asn.au](http://northside.asn.au)

[childrensservices@northside.asn.au](mailto:childrensservices@northside.asn.au)

(02) 6171 8000