

Scheduling

Key areas for conflict include: requests to wake a sleeping child after a certain amount of time and children needing to sleep outside a services scheduled sleep time.

Young children are establishing their sleep cycles and their individual body clocks influence their sleep need. While some family patterns mean that children rise early and enter their ECEC context early, others will have a later schedule. As a result different children will have different needs in terms when they need sleep, how often and for how long. For older toddlers and pre-schoolers, later napping may delay bedtime and increases sleep disturbance at night. Whilst sleep and rest is often offered at a scheduled time within a service, the national quality standard emphasises the need to meet individual children's sleep, rest and relaxation needs. Educators should reflect on how to provide opportunities for children who require sleep outside a scheduled time.

Practice Example 3: The Case of the Woken Child

The parents of Luca, a 20 month old toddler, have asked that he not be allowed to sleep beyond 2pm in the afternoon. Luca is an early riser and, when at home, he usually has a 2 hour nap in the morning from 11am. The service has a scheduled sleep time of 12:30pm and Luca is always the first to fall asleep. When the educator tries to wake Luca at 2 o'clock he is very difficult to wake, gets upset when woken and seem to be tired for a long time afterwards. The educator is concerned that waking Luca is causing him distress and impacting on his behaviour across the afternoon.

Reflective questions:

What does 'genuine partnership' look like in this case?

What advice might you give this educator?

What resources might be useful to help support discussion with the family?

Here is an example of how one educator worked in partnership with the family to resolve this issue:

The educator discussed their concerns with Luca's parents, and how waking Luca seems to be causing him distress and impacting on his learning and behaviour. The educator also discussed with Luca's parents his current sleep at home, including the length and timing of his naps and night-time sleep. Luca's parents indicated that he wakes very early in the morning and needs an early nap for this reason, they also indicated that when Luca sleeps later in the afternoon this disrupts his night-time sleep. Together the educator and parents agreed that Luca be provided with a mat and space for the Luca to sleep earlier in the morning, before the scheduled sleep time, in order to be closer to his regular naptime at home. This allowed Luca the opportunity to sleep longer and wake naturally from his sleep, without being woken. The educator took the opportunity from this example to reflect on ways to provide greater flexibility in regards to sleep times at their service, including identifying potential spaces to be used by children who may need to sleep or rest outside of the scheduled rest time.