

What are the characteristics of the service?

The service is a 54 place long day care centre located in a semi-rural location. The centre is open 7am -6pm. There are 3 units catering for children 0-2 years, 2-3 years and 4-5 years. Each room has favourable staffing ratios: baby room 1:4, in toddlers 1:5, in preschool 1:7. The staffing is accredited as an important factor in the service's strategy that is flexible and responsive to child and family individual needs.

What are the services current sleep practices?

The philosophy of the service is that sleep-rest time should be pleasant and responsive to child and family need. The sleep program has been developed over a period of 7 years from a standard sleep time for all children to a flexible and responsive practice based on parent's reports of home routines made every 6 months and request made by children and families based on daily need. While the service has a cot room for babies it does not have a separate sleep room for older children. A sleep room is created from the 2-3 room in the middle of the day during which non sleeping 2-3 year olds either join the older or younger room (depending on age and preference) if they do not sleep. For non-sleepers activity is provided at all times. The 3-4 year olds have a restful activity such as yoga and then choice of activities to follow, while the 4-5 year olds engage in activities that are centred on preparation for school transition. Any child in the 4-5 year old group can opt to sleep or rest as required. Daily decisions about sleep options are made in consultation between child and educator; sometimes the educator may suggest a sleep if a child is noted as tired.

How did the service arrive at these sleep practices?

The sleep program has been developed over a period of 7 years from a starting point of a standard sleep time for all children. The director instigated change having seen that older children did not sleep at sleep time, that staff conflict with parents was often focussed on sleep and that, at times, she had observed children being patted with educator leg across the child. The change process focussed on reflective practice within the service and involved the engagement of two educators in the service who expressed a desire to lead change and to give up the idea of the 2-3 room as being "their room" only. Consultation with parents and children has increasingly been possible as structural changes in use of the physical environment and more reflective practice has grown among educators. The process has also been supported through recruitment of new staff, where committed to the responsive sleep policy is a key feature. Once change was instigated possibilities of responsive practices have grown. The service continues to reflect on their ongoing practices.