**Introduction**

When we're thinking about sleep, historically, we're thinking about a set time, a place, set rituals, a particular way of doing things.

But the National Quality Standard really challenges that and really asks us to think about being responsive to individual children's needs,

to really rethink what we're doing.

**National Quality Standard**

Yeah, I really like that about the National Quality Standard because what that does is not emphasize just sleep, but two other components--rest and relaxation, and different children, particularly, once they're into the preschool years, may not need sleep, but they do need rest and relaxation in a very busy environment and very social environment that we have in ECEC settings.

And those different provisions whereas sleep and relaxation call for us to think very carefully about the utilization of the ECEC environment.

Yes, it's about challenging the sacred cow and really thinking about what we're doing in this space.

**Sleep**

Just like their need for sleep, children may need to have a break or rest at different times of the day, depending on what they have been doing.

And having a safe, comfortable, relaxing environment do that is important.

It can be hard for children to get to sleep if the sleep area is hot, stuffy, noisy, brightly-lit, or uncomfortable.

The use of digital devices can impact on children's sleep because they may be too bright, because they're too distracting.

Lowering the light and noise, as well as providing a cool room temperature and comfortable spaces for children would help to support sleep, rest, and relaxation.

**Environment**

So, I think, in any daycare, in my experience is it's so broad, and there's lots of different environments.

Every educator does it differently, so some educators may have used every room in their house, which I think is a lovely way to embrace family and community so children, you know, may sleep in one of their children's old bedroom or maybe in the same room as one of the children in the family day care.

So...We got a whole range of different ages, so it's not just preschool children.

We have often a range of ages

So that needs to be considered as well in the process.

-That's right.

And so, you know, sometimes the educators have three children on the floor and a cot right beside them.

So all the time, there is the opportunity to put babies in the separate rooms, when they want to have to sleep and the other children are able to have to rest in another room.

So, I think, that's definitely the advantage of Family Day Care where you can have the multiple age groups.

Yeah, and even an opportunity to have rest at different times of the day, so I've set up spaces which you can go to that are away from other children.

It could just be a corner in the room where it could have cushions, it could have a net, it could have-- And that's always there and accessible.

It's about that comfort where it's not formal; it's informal, so I think that's definitely a benefit.

-Yeah, absolutely.

Each case can do so well.

Every room is required to have like a sanctuary area, where there's like couches, cushions, somewhere to read; somewhere for children to be able to just go and be on their own, or when they feel that they need their own space, and they can use that spot any time of the day.

There's no set spot that's going to be used in the mornings or this part that can be used at sleep time.

They're allowed to use that. That allows them to regulate their body as well.

And then, obviously, with sleep time, that's when the lights get dimmed down, might not be turned off, but get dimmed down and just giving that quiet time to just get a bit of quiet.

**Next Year**

One thing that we're hoping to do next year is we're going to have a quiet room.

So those children that want to sleep can go to that quiet room.

And the others, because we think it's important to have some down relaxation time.

So what we're going to do is we're going to get some tea light candles and put them into bottles for safety, and we're going to

set up the tables.

These are going to be the three tables that we have quiet activities.

So the lights will be off and we would just have some calm music, and we'll just light the candles on those tables.

So that's the cue for the children that this is their quiet time.

Yes, you can move around, you can do these activities, but out of respect for what time of the day it is, and I just think as soon as they sit--we've tried it in one group and it's amazing, "Shh, it's quiet. Look at the candle. They've lit the candles."

And so it's powerful for them, and then, they get to blow them out.

So we've really been trialing this in one group, and this is something that we want to implement in big groups next year.

So with some children who will not even have to lie down on a mattress, but we want to have a listening post to put some cushions in a corner that will be one of the areas.

Yes, so we're really excited to have that.

We picked that up by visiting another center.

We're planning rest and relaxation opportunities.

It's important to consider how different spaces might best be used to allow children, who need to sleep, a quiet space without distraction.

And to allow children who don't need to sleep a place to do alternative activities.

So the NQS, if we think about that area, if we take what we've been thinking about in terms of environment, back to the NQS, what it makes provision for is the developmental needs and the individual needs of the child.

When we think about that, and we go back to that history, it's not about a single time, and it's not about a single place, and it's

not just about sleep.

It's about conceptualising the whole gain as being about rest and relaxation, and thinking about the child's needs and giving them the opportunity to retreat if they need to, to rest if they need to, and, of course, sleep if they need to, but it's about all of those things.