Introductory Guide to the Service Support Plan 2009

Building the Capacity of Child Care Services to Include All Children

Contents

The initial research and writing of this document was completed by Jennifer Burgess.

1. Introduction

In the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' 2009-12 IPSP Guidelines a new Service Support Plan (SSP) template has been included. The format of the new template was developed in response to feedback from the child care sector and research on the effectiveness of the SSP in building capacity across a range of services in urban and rural areas.

This introductory Guide aims to build an initial understanding of the new SSP template to facilitate the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS) application process.

New ISS Application Forms have also been developed to link with the new SSP and their separate functions are outlined below:

- SSP – This is now clearly focussed as a staff capacity building document, and is not driven by the need to apply for ISS.
- ISS Application Form – This form clearly demonstrates why the service requires ISS support and how it will assist services to meet the needs of children with ongoing high support needs.

This Guide includes documents designed as an introductory resource to assist Inclusion Support Facilitators and Child Care Services that are developing a Service Support Plan for inclusion. These resources are not intended to cover all elements of implementing the SSP and seek to act as an introduction only. Resources and forms to support the ISS Application process can be downloaded from the National ISS Provider's website www.ku.com.au

Resources in this Guide include:

❖ SSP Content Guide:
   Guide to the expected content of the SSP
❖ Guiding Principles for ISFs:
   Key changes introduced in the 2009 SSP
❖ SSP Stage Guide:
   Process for each stage of the SSP development process to support the start of a reflective practice cycle
❖ SSP Reflective Questions Guide:
   Sample questions to assist the development of the SSP.

2. What is Inclusion?

The IPSP 2009-12 Guidelines describe the philosophy of inclusion as follows:

"Inclusion philosophy for child care services is based on:

- *universal access for all children*
- *services being ready for children*
- *support being based on the needs of the total care environment*
- *staff developing the capacity to meet all children's needs."*

What might this philosophy look like in practice?

Inclusion is universal

The Australian government has an aim to provide access and support to all children in all eligible child care services. These diverse settings include children from a range of age groups. Inclusion occurs within the child's regular child care environment supported by all staff and within a play or recreation based program.

Inclusion is about all children

Inclusion is for all children and all their needs arising from their diverse abilities, ethnicity, sexuality, resilience, status, family structure, community poverty and so on.

Inclusion requires the service to adapt

The onus is not on the child to adapt to or develop in ways that fit with the mainstream setting. It is the role of the service to provide a program which continues to adapt and change to provide for the access and participation of all children. The service has to adjust by creating a climate that is *receptive*, *reflective* and *reflexive* through being *sensitive and responsive*, *open to new ideas* and *adaptable in all aspects of inclusion.*

3. Policy to Practice: *Introduction to the new SSP*

The new Service Support Plan (SSP) combines the Assisted Inclusion Readiness Plan, SSP and SSP Evaluation into one document. These three documents have been consolidated into a single 6 section simplified document that meets the aims of the original documents. The sections have been titled to reflect their purpose and the underlying processes.

- The SSP works at a *service level* as well as an *environment level*.

- The SSP can be used for a wide range of issues related to inclusion and quality.

- The SSP is focussed on Staff Capacity Building. A child may trigger the development of a SSP however the SSP focuses on staff needs and goals, and goals are focussed on what staff will do. The SSP is not an Individual Education Plan or an Individual Family Service Plan. These documents assist the family and other professionals working with the child, including child care service staff, to identify and plan to meet the developmental needs of the child.

- The SSP is not the direct justification for the Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS). The process of completing the SSP will lead a service and ISF to consider whether the service needs to progress to complete an ISS application. The SSP is not to contain the hours or days that the service is considering applying for an ISS funded additional worker, nor does it contain child details as all this information is now included in the new ISS Application Form.

- The thinking underpinning the SSP has moved from the Social Work model to an Educational Change model. This move has been informed by research conducted on SSPs.

- The SSP is underpinned by the processes of reflective practice. The design of the SSP supports the development of reflective practice and learning communities within child care services. The SSP promotes the idea of the staff team. Research undertaken found that most SSPs are implemented by between 3 to 5 members of a staff team. Where a core group of staff undertake to implement new actions, change is more likely to be successful.

- The format of the vertical columns supports the visible alignment of Needs/Goals/Resources across the page and will be suitable for use as an e-document. The Action Plan/Progress and Future Directions page has been designed to align the goals/actions with their evaluation.

- The presence of the evaluation (Progress and Future Directions) supports a service to regularly record progress as part of a reflective process. This will allow the service and ISF to track progress on one document.

4. Service Support Plan: *Content Guide*

The following Service Support Plan (SSP) outline has a guide for the expected content of a SSP embedded in each section. The content for each section has been guided by the analysis of Phase 1 Service Support Plans and is focussed on the capacity building of staff. This content guide covers expected content however it should not limit a service's response, as it does not cover all possible situations.

Service Support Plan: *Content Guide*

The following Service Support Plan (SSP) outline has embedded in each section a guide for the expected content of the SSP. The content for each section if focussed on the capacity building of service staff. *This Content Guide covers expected content however it should not limit a service's response as it will not cover all possible situations.*

A.   Service Information

Child Care Service details	
Child Care Service Name:	
Care type:	No. of approved places:
Name of Coordinator/Director:	
Telephone: ( )	Fax: ( )
Email:	
Location Address:	
Postal Address:	

Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) details	
ISA Region Name:	
Name of ISA:	
Name of Inclusion Support Facilitator:	
Telephone: ( )	Fax: ( )
Email:	
Location Address:	
Postal Address:	

B.   Service Review

Overview of the SSP

Inclusion is a *whole of service practice* where all aspects of the service have the potential to facilitate or act as barriers to the inclusion of all children and their families. The commitment of a child care service to ensuring all children have equal access to participate in its program is shown in staff's interactions, practices and attitudes. Effective leadership and opportunities for professional growth are needed to ensure quality inclusive service provision.

The SSP is a tool for improving quality through staff capacity building. A child with additional needs may trigger a SSP but is not the focus of the SSP. The SSP assists the service to reflect on its practices and identify areas where change will enhance service delivery for all children, including those with additional needs. Changes may include modification to practice, implementation of new ideas and increased staff knowledge and skill. The SSP can also support the identification of resources from across the IPSP including Specialist Equipment and professional development opportunities.

B Service Review

What are the issues and dynamics that impact on the child care service's capacity to include children with additional needs?
Consider the physical environment, the daily program, the number of children from IPSP priority groups, the needs and/or impact of children, family and community factors, relevant service policies and practices, management and/or staff experience and dynamics

This section supports a service to explore the range of inclusion issues and dynamics that may impact on their ability to successfully include all children. Changes at a service level may support changes at the environment level.

This is a reflective process where the service considers the Service Review question across the suggested areas listed below.

Services may consider:
1) What happens at our service?
2) Why does it happen? and
3) What could we do differently?

Also consider these questions from the perspective of all staff, children and families including those who want to come to your service.
Issues and needs that arise from the Service Review (Part B) are followed up on the Staff Capacity Building Plan (Part C).

Service Support Plan: *Content Guide*

C.   Staff Capacity Building Plan

Staff Needs	Team Goals	Resources available to support goal implementation

What are staff needs in relation to enabling them to support children to access their service and be engaged in all areas of the program?
 	
The staff have identified the need to address:
 	
• Modifications to practice, routines, activities and planning which will support development of all children in areas such as social interactions, communication, active engagement in all areas of the program;
• Increased support and supervision;
• Modifications to the physical environment;
• Development of inclusion skills such as use of communication strategies;
• Development of a team approach;
• Increasing knowledge through building relationships with other staff, family, therapists and professional learning opportunities and training;
• Increasing knowledge of inclusion in areas such as diversity of ability or culture or challenging behaviours;
• Development of a service policy;
• Development of community linkages;
• Support from Professional Support Program (PSP) services such as Specialist Equipment; and
• Implementation of quality initiatives such as the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).
	What would staff like to introduce, change or achieve in relation to their identified needs?
	
	Goal Focus
	
	Capacity building goals are staff and team focussed.
	
	Goal Type
	
	Goals should be specific so all staff can understand the reason for the goal and the intended outcome.
	
	Goals can address a number of related needs such as the need for effective teamwork or the need to use a range of team communication strategies.
	
	Goal Subject
	
	The area of need will be evident in the goal and may relate (but is not limited) to:
	
	• New practices for staff;
	• Modifications to current practice, or routines or programs or activities;
	• Increase in knowledge or skills;
	• Relationships they will build;
	• Inclusion support services;
	• Professional development; and
	• Policy updates.
	Goals are to reflect quality practice as represented in the Quality Assurance processes and EYLF.
		Explore and identify the range of resources (both internal and external) that are available to support the service to utilise and build on their current capacity to address their needs and meet their goals for this plan.
		
		This may include:
		
		• Skills and experience of staff within the service;
		• Family, kin and their extended network;
		• Local community support services;
		• Specialist support services or organisations;
		• Therapists or medical practitioners;
		• Professional development opportunities including PSC training options;
		• Specific websites, texts, articles and other reference materials;
		• PSP/IPSU;
		• Other relevant ISA support:
		   o Bicultural Support
		   o Specialist Equipment
		   o General Resource Library; and
		• ISF contact details if Part A is not being printed out.
		
		Limit this list to relevant resources for this SSP.

Service Support Plan: *Content Guide*

Action Plan	Progress and Future Directions
Goal or Focus heading: *(list implementation strategies)* *What steps the staff will implement to address identified goals including accessing identified resources (column 3)* *While it is recognised that implementation of the Action Plan will be a service's responsibility it may also include further ISA assistance to support, evaluate and/or to facilitate access to other services such as Bicultural Support.* *Actions may be specific to a staff member or time fame but only where relevant.* **Goal or Focus heading:** *(List implementation strategies)*	Evaluation is a process to guide and support the capacity building of staff and is part of a reflective professional learning cycle. A SSP evaluation may occur at a time that the staff and/or ISF deem it would support and progress inclusion in the environment or when needs change. Services are encouraged to record progress as it occurs in readiness to review the SSP with the ISF. Review dates are to be omitted from the SSP Progress column as they may limit the service regularly and independently reflecting on the plan. The SSP Progress and New Directions process is a reflection on the goals and actions that identifies: • actions that have been successfully implemented; • new knowledge or skills staff have gained and implemented; • actions that were unsuccessful and why; • barriers to successful implementation; • staff attitudes to changes; • new issues, needs or emerging priorities; and/or • the reason for continuing goals. What follow up action is required? Review the SSP progress and add any new issues and needs *or* where circumstances have changed significantly, commence a new SSP.

Signatures:

_____   _____   _____   _____   _____

Coordinator/Director   *Child Care Staff/Carer*   *ISF*   *Date*   *Review Date*

5. Guiding Principles for Inclusion Support Facilitators: *Key changes in the 2009 Service Support Plan*

Capacity Building Approaches

Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) have a key role in facilitating the capacity building of child care staff.

Capacity building is a way to change what people do, to improve practice.

High quality inclusion is high quality practice.

Encouraging a service to review issues at a service level supports the breaking down of barriers to the capacity building of staff, includes management and staff teams in this process and promotes leadership and inclusion readiness.

ISFs will still commence the process with the story of the child but will now convert these concerns into Staff Needs and Team Goals.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practice and reflective conversations will support the development of Service Support Plans (SSPs). Once child care staff learn these skills they may be able to continue to independently improve and change.

Strengths Based Practice

Identifying staff strengths is important. However, when a staff member is encouraged to identify a strength early in the reflective cycle, during Staff Need and Goal development, it can become a barrier to change, e.g. "Like we said I run a good group time, I don't know why he wanders." If a strength has been identified it can be difficult to suggest that reflection and change may be needed, e.g." How could the organisation and content of group time be changed so that the child remains engaged?" Focus on strengths during the development of the Action Plan when identifying strategies and practices which will support the implementation of the SSP.

New Service Support Plan Template

The format of the 2009 SSP does not have a separate 'Steps Implemented' column as a written process. However, it is still part of the reflective process. During the development of the Action Plan discuss and acknowledge steps already taken. Identify service strengths and use this knowledge when developing new actions and strategies.

The horizontal columns have been retained to encourage the alignment of Staff Needs/Team Goals/ Resources so the relationship can be tracked across the page. It will also allow those who work on e-copy to have related information on the one screen.

In the Action Plan section the Goals and/or Focus are repeated to facilitate the evaluation process as all the information will be together.

The Progress and Future Directions column is next to the Action Plan and expands to allow for adequate space for recording progress for each Goal/Focus area. It is titled "Progress" to encourage the service to independently and frequently reflect on small achievements and to record these rather than leave them blank until an ISF returns to review the plan.

At the bottom of the page the review date can be a proposed appointment, however encourage services to undertake recording their own progress. The review date can also be the ISS Review Commencement date, when this is known as a prompt for the staff team.

6. Service Support Plan: *Stage Guide*

The Stage Guide has been developed to support Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) and Child Care Services to adopt a process that is underpinned by the *Reflective Practice Cycle*. The reflective practice cycle is an effective change or capacity building process for child care staff.

The *Reflective Practice Cycle* can be used to develop the capacity of staff who work directly with children as well as staff in leadership positions.

As suggested by the title the process is *reflective* as it supports staff to think about what they have implemented and to evaluate before they plan the next goal and actions. This process will encourage staff to be reflective as they will be supported in examining their practice and beliefs, like looking in a mirror. They will think about what they did, how they felt, if they changed, what they changed, did it work and why not. They will also look at issues from other perspectives, so looking through the mirror to see how someone else might view the issue. It is also a *cyclical* process for, as it reaches the last stage, it commences back at the beginning.

The Service Support Plan (SSP) Stage Guide encourages a cycle of:

- Sharing the story
- Revealing
- Reviewing from other perspectives
- Reflecting
- Identifying the issue
- Goal setting
- Identifying resources
- Action planning
- Implementing the Action Plan
- Recording progress
- Reflecting on progress
- Describing and identifying new issues and directions for change.

A simple summary of reflective practice is:

- Stop
- Think
- Change (O'Connor & Diggins, 2002)

The SSP Stage Guide describes the process for each stage. Following the Stage Guide and using the SSP Reflective Questions will support a *reflective practice cycle*.

Service Support Plan: *Stage Guide*

The Service Support Plan (SSP) Stage Guide describes the process for each stage of the SSP development process. The use of the Stage Guide, combined with the SSP Question Guide, will support the start of a reflective practice cycle.

Stage 1: Sharing the Story
In this stage staff share their story describing the events, problems and concerns they are experiencing. It is an essential but pre-phase to the writing of a SSP. The ISF actively listens for or elicits the Who, Where, When and Interactions within each event or concern and acknowledges the staff emotions relating to the 'story'.

Stage 2: Filtering Issues
From the sharing stage the ISF will support the staff to identify and filter two groups of issues:
Service wide issues - recorded in Part B. Service Review.
Staff Needs - recorded in Part C. Staff Capacity Building Plan

Stage 3: Write about the Service Issues
The Service Review supports the SSP to work at a service level to assist in identifying service barriers to inclusion. This section also supports a service to identify broad issues in the areas of inclusion for all priority groups and service quality. Issues requiring change in the Service Review will transfer to the Staff Needs column so they become part of Part C. Staff Capacity Building Plan.

Stage 4: Identify Staff Need
From the information discussed use reflective conversation to convert child focussed issues into staff needs e.g. staff may describe the impact of a child at afternoon tea. The staff needs could be to review the structure of the routine and development of practice that will support social interactions. Sometimes needs can be grouped together around a common issue.

Stage 5: Develop Team Goals
Goals are staff focussed and aim to address a subject area identified in the Staff Needs column. Team goals will guide all staff in their daily practice. Goals are to reflect high quality practice.

Stage 6: Identify Resources to Support Goal Implementation
Explore and identify a range of resources that may support the team to achieve their goals. This may include other staff, family, therapists, ISA/ISF resources, websites and training. Record only those related to this SSP rather than long resource lists.

Stage 7: Develop an Action Plan
Identify strategies that will be implemented by the team. Be guided by the team goals and resources identified. Be guided by the present capacity of the team. In this stage, identify what has been working well, review strategies related to the goal that staff have trialled and if they are to be adopted or extended include them as well as new strategies in the Action Plan. Analyse unsuccessful strategies. On SSPs for an environment with multiple children, a child may be identified with a particular strategy if this will help with implementation.

Stage 8: Progress and Future Directions
Evaluation of the SSP has been included as part of the SSP. ISFs should encourage services to record their progress, as it occurs to support self reflection. New issues or goals may lead to a new SSP.

7. Service Support Plan: *Reflective Questions Guide*

This Reflective Questions Guide was developed to support Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) and Child Care Services and can be used in multiple ways.

For example:
- To guide the ISF with sample questions that they may ask when supporting a service to develop a Service Support Plan (SSP).
- It may also be sent to services as a pre-visit prompt for child care staff to think through the plan and possibly prepare responses prior to their ISF visiting to develop the SSP with them.
- It may be given to services that are independently developing their own SSPs prior to discussing them with the ISF.

The questions in each section of the SSP are designed to support reflective practice. ISFs can ask these questions when supporting child care staff. Child care staff can use the questions to guide their own reflective process. ISFs who use this guide will be facilitating staff to follow a reflective process. When ISFs ask these questions and work through each stage of the SSP process they will be modelling reflective practice.

The questions are designed to allow the ISF to use the *reflective conversation* process, as the questions are open in style. They aim to challenge staff to think about the issues and yet not to be directly confronting to staff. The open style of question is designed to be flexible to the range of service types ISFs work with and to allow staff to give a range of responses that reflect their context and situation.

When ISFs or child care staff undertake a role to support the capacity building of staff through the SSP and utilising this guide they are undertaking the role of *external mentor* or *change facilitator* or *critical friend*. This role has the potential to bring about meaningful change.

Service Support Plan: *Reflective Questions Guide*

This Reflective Questions Guide was developed to support Inclusion Support Facilitators (ISFs) and Child Care Services. The questions in each section of the Service Support Plan (SSP) are designed to support reflective practice. It can be used in multiple ways, for example:

- To guide the ISF with sample questions that they may ask when supporting a service to develop a SSP.
- It may also be sent to services as a pre-visit prompt for child care staff to think through the plan and possibly prepare responses prior to their ISF visiting to develop the SSP with them.
- It may be given to services that are independently developing their own SSPs prior to discussing with the ISF.

A.   **Service Information**

Child Care Service details	
Child Care Service Name:	
Care type:	No. of approved places:
Name of Coordinator/Director:	
Telephone: ( )	Fax: ( )
Email:	
Location Address:	
Postal Address:	

Inclusion Support Agency (ISA) details	
ISA Region Name:	
Name of ISA:	
Name of Inclusion Support Facilitator:	
Telephone: ( )	Fax: ( )
Email:	
Location Address:	
Postal Address:	

Service Support Plan: *Reflective Questions Guide*

B.   Service Review

What are the issues and dynamics that impact on the child care service's capacity to include children with additional needs?

Consider the physical environment, the daily program, the number of children from IPSP priority groups, the needs and/or impact of children, family and community factors, relevant service policies and practices, management and/or staff experience and dynamics.

For each issue or dynamic impacting on the service's capacity to include children with additional needs consider the following questions:

Stage 1. Sharing the Story
Describing the situation: What happens when...?   *Explore*: Who is involved, when and where it happens, interactions of staff and children.

Revealing: How did you and/or others react? What feelings do you and/or others have when this event occurs? What makes a good day happen?

Reviewing from other perspectives: What is this like for the child and/or other children? For team members? Other staff? For families?

Reflecting: Why do you think this event occurred in this way? What could have been done differently? What other factors contributed to the situation? (O'Connor & Diggins, 2007)

Stage 2. Filtering Issues

o   Would this be an issue to review at a **service level**? Does it involve policy or procedures? Is the service management a factor? Would this issue impact on our families and families that may be considering enrolling in our service? **Record this information in the Service Review.**

o   Is this an issue for a particular environment or staff team? If so, refer to questions in the **Staff Needs column**.

Stage 3. Write about the Service Issues

Describe the issues and dynamics as per the question above and the suggested areas for review.

C.   Staff Capacity Building Plan

Staff Needs	Team Goals	Resources available to support goal implementation
Stage 4: Identify Staff Needs How does *the issue* (e.g. Ella hitting other children or children not initiating play) impact on staff? How do staff have to respond to *this issue?* What do staff need to know about *the issue* (e.g. young children with Autism)? How do staff feel about *the issue?* What beliefs or attitudes do staff have about *this issue* (e.g. parenting practices)? Does *this issue* impact on planning, programs, routines and specific experiences such as excursions or group time? What could management review to support staff with *this issue*?	**Stage 5: Develop Team Goals** What are we going to do differently? What are we intending to change? What do we want to learn? Do our goals reflect quality practice?	**Stage 6: Identify Resources to Support Goal Implementation** Who do we want to build relationships with? Who can share their knowledge with us? What other resources will support us? What professional development opportunities are we interested in? Would training in a particular area be of assistance?

Service Support Plan: *Reflective Questions Guide*

Action Plan	Progress and Future Directions
Goal or Focus heading: **Stage 5: Develop an Action Plan** What can you do to achieve this goal? o How will you increase awareness and understanding of this issue with staff, children and/or families? o How can you modify routines, practice, programs and/or play experiences? o What has worked well? Acknowledge strengths. o Do you need to develop a policy, procedure or guideline for practice?	**Stage 6: Progress and Future Directions** Encourage staff to record their progress. o Date and provide a brief comment for each strategy implemented. o Record positive outcomes as well as unsuccessful implementation. o For unsuccessful strategies comment on why the team felt they were unsuccessful. o Identify the issue in unsuccessful implementation. o Identify new issues. o Reflect on continuing issues and goals. Identify the reason for this.

Signatures:

_____   _____   _____   _____   _____

Coordinator/Director   *Child Care Staff/Carer*   *ISF*   *Date*   *Review Date*