

Environmental Responsibility Audit

Service Name: _____

“We have become, by the power of a glorious evolutionary accident called intelligence, the stewards of life’s continuity on earth.”

- Stephen Jay Gould

The National Quality Framework asks education and care services to take an active role in caring for environments and to contribute to a sustainable future. This can be achieved by embedding environmentally responsible practices into service operations, and supporting children to become environmentally responsible and to show respect for the environment.

Principles to consider in relation to your services approach to environmental responsibility:

- Children of all age groups learn about environmental issues
- Items and materials are appropriately reused or recycled in an environmentally responsible way
- General waste and hazardous materials are disposed of in an environmentally responsible way
- Food scraps are discarded in an environmentally responsible way
- Energy consumption is controlled to reduce impact on the natural environment
- Water is promoted as a precious natural resource
- The environmental footprint of the production and transport of certain products is assessed against sustainable development principles
- The protection and conservation of biodiversity is promoted.

Definitions:

Biodiversity refers to the health of ecosystems

Conservation refers to the protection and management of biodiversity.

Energy efficiency refers to the efforts to reduce the amount of energy required to provide products and services. Energy ratings are the measurement of a product or services energy efficiency.

Environmental footprint refers to measuring the impact we are having on the environment.

Sustainable practices refer to the practices that meet the needs of the present generation, without compromising the resources available to future generations.

2018 NQS. Standard 3.2 Use – Questions to guide reflection

- What messages are given to children about how the service cares for the environment?
- What strategies can we implement to support educators to model environmentally responsible practices, and foster children's capacity to value and respect the broader environment?
- How can we access additional information, ideas and strategies to support children to take an active role in caring for the environment and contribute to a sustainable future?
- How do we foster children's capacity to understand, care for and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land? (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 14; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 13)

Focus: Air Quality

Reflective Question	Current practices and comments
Air conditioners? How many, used how often?	
Any signs of mould anywhere? In particular check wet areas, all ceilings and external walls	
Does the building contain asbestos?	
Are known irritants and aerosols avoided?	
Soft furnishings such as couches and cushions are maintained in a dust free manner?	
Do children always have access to fresh air?	
Do we have indoor plants? Are these plants beneficial to indoor air quality?	

Action Plan

What <i>(Including what you will need)</i>	Why <i>(People don't 'buy' what you do, they buy WHY you do it)</i>	How <i>(Including teaching intentions/strategies)</i>	When <i>(Timeline)</i>

Focus: Biodiversity

<i>Reflective Question</i>	<i>Current practices and comments</i>
Do we have an active vegetable/herb garden? Do we have bush tucker?	
Children are taught how to care for plants? Are there ongoing opportunities for children to be involved in the planting and nurturing process?	
How are plants selected for the outdoor environment? Are native plants and trees are preferred?	
Natural materials that reduce the impact on the environment are the preferred choice?	
Working bees are held periodically in order to encourage community involvement in maintaining the outdoor environment?	
Do children have access to natural elements including; water, grass, soil, sand, rocks and sticks?	
Do we have indoor plants? Are these plants beneficial to indoor air quality?	

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Focus: Cleaning

Reflective Question	Current practices and comments
What cleaning practices are currently occurring? Are these sustainable?	
What natural alternatives are available?	
How much washing do we do? Can this be reduced?	
Are we using a dryer or clothesline? How can children be involved in using the clothesline	
What do our cleaning practices look like in practice?	
Do we have cleaning chemical and supplies wastage? Eg. Tipping out spray bottles throughout the day.	
Other;	

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Focus: Energy consumption

Reflective Question	Current practices and comments
All appliances turned off at the power points each night? Any exceptions?	
We choose the most appropriate energy saving methods available taking into consideration the energy ratings on a range of equipment such as white goods and general electrical items?	
Children are encouraged to turn off lights and equipment?	
Lighting and cooling is turned off when not in use?	
Natural light is the preferred option throughout the day?	
Products with batteries are avoided where possible	
What types of light globes are being used throughout the centre?	

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Focus: Waste

Reflective Question	Current practices and comments
Do we have recycling bins? Are they used effectively?	
Where possible children and staff utilize crockery at meal times as opposed to plastic?	
Children are encouraged to scrape bowls and plates into a scraps bowl after meals? Are these scraps added to a worm farm or compost?	
Is there a philosophy of repairing torn books or broken toys with the children?	
How much printing occurs on an average day? Is it all necessary? Is there effective paper recycling in place?	
Is the printer capable of 2-sided printing? What type of paper are we using? Is it recycled paper?	
Other;	

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Focus: Water

Reflective Question	Current practices and comments
Do we have any water tanks? If so, are they effective? How is the water used?	
Have we had water saving toilets installed?	
Do we encourage the children to turn off taps and save water?	
Do children know why they should save water?	
How do children dry their hands in the bathroom? Is this the most sustainable option?	
What is our philosophy around water play? How do we implement the most sustainable options while supporting play and allowing children to cool off?	
How and when are gardens/lawns watered? Is this seasonally adjusted? Eg. Automatic watering systems adjusted so they come on less frequently in the wet season.	

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Focus: Global citizenship

Reflective Question	Current practices and comments
Are educators confident in including sustainable practices in all areas of learning?	
Are children given opportunities to explore concepts such as seasons, life cycles, weather, environmental issues and cultures in ways that are authentic and meaningful?	
Do we use food in play? Eg. Pasta necklaces, potato stamping. How do we feel about this? Is it respectful and sustainable? Does this extend to play dough? How do we make these decisions?	
Do we encourage children to help in day-to-day processes? How?	
Are children learning how to share and take turns? How?	
Are we having contextual conversations with children about where their food comes from?	
Are we sourcing local, unprocessed foods? How can we limit our use of processed foods and as a result the use of chemical additives?	

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