

# Improvement Framework



## Introduction

The Improvement Framework is designed to lead the sector in improving outcomes for children by delivering high-quality, accessible early childhood education and care services.

It supports Early Years Management (EYM) organisations to use data and other information to find ways to continuously improve. It also allows the Department, in its EYM stewardship role, to aggregate organisational and other data sets to support understanding and improvements for the sector.

The EYM Improvement Framework has five domains, illustrated on this page. The first domain, 'Governance and sustainability', is the foundation that all other domains rely on for success. Good governance and leadership systems, financial viability and sustainability, and responsiveness to local communities, put EYM organisations in the best position to improve learning and development outcomes for children.

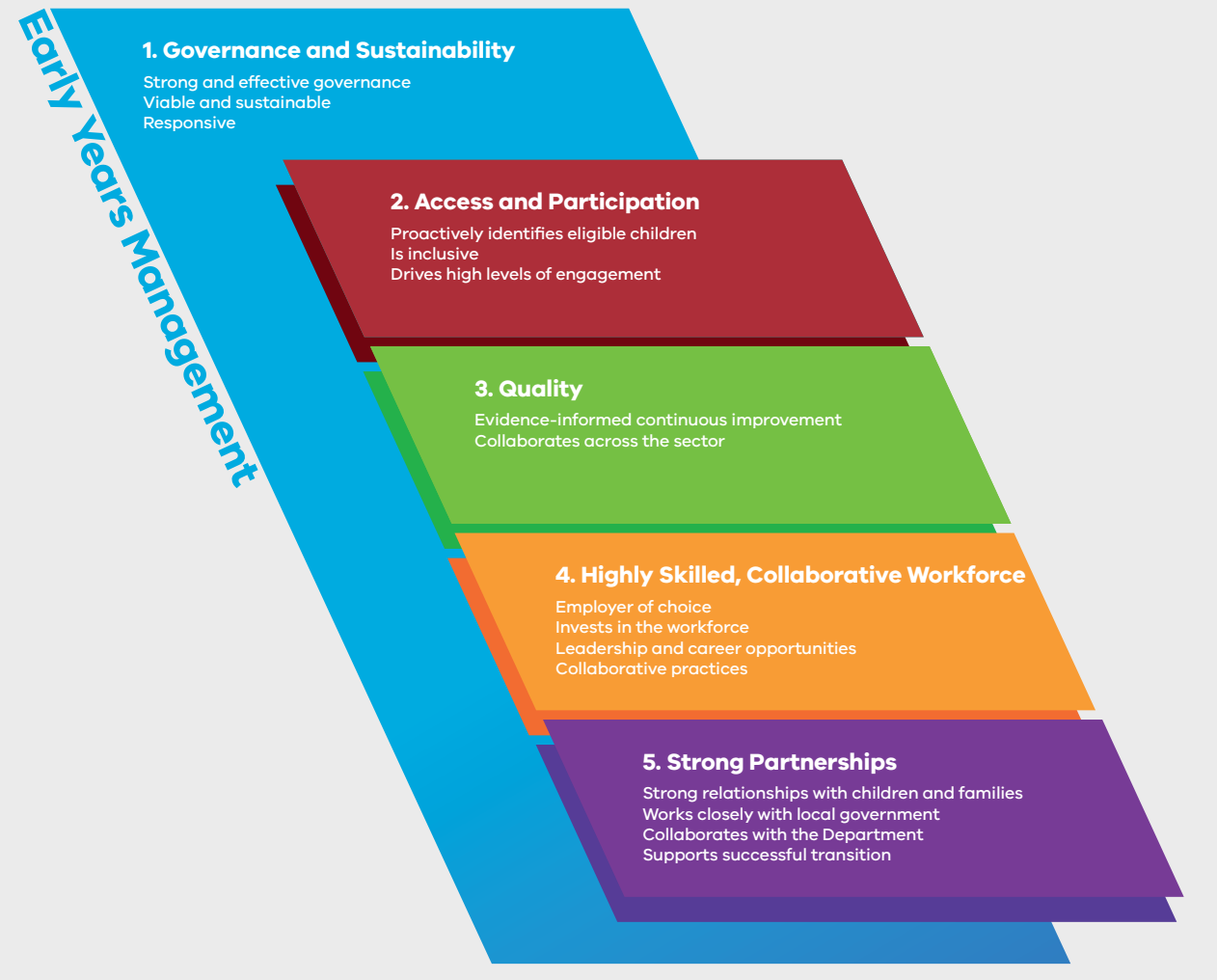
Each of the five domains in the Framework detail:

- **Outcomes:** What EYM organisations strive to achieve
- **Enablers:** How EYM organisations can achieve the outcomes
- **Indicators:** What would be seen when an organisation improves (noting that some organisations are performing at a high level already)
- **Example DET data reported in EYM profiles:** Used to indicate performance and improvement over time, using data\* that the Department will collect and collate annually for each EYM.

\* Data is interpreted in context – for example, in relation to socioeconomic and demographic characteristics and the local kindergarten market - and is not directly comparable between localities.

Some concepts in the Framework are common to multiple domains. The whole framework, rather than individual domains, should be considered for improvement planning purposes.

Click on the topic on the right to view more details.





### USING THE FRAMEWORK

The Framework is implemented through the Service Improvement Planning (SIP) process to give a cohesive picture of the quality improvement program of each EYM organisation. Through the SIP process, EYM organisations and the Department meet regularly to review EYM service delivery and identify areas for organisational improvement. This process draws on the enablers, indicators and data as well as organisational documentation and contextual information to help identify gaps, challenges and strategies for improvement.

The SIP is used in conjunction with the Department's Funded Organisation Performance Monitoring Framework (FOPMF) which uses specific monitoring tools and processes to assess an organisations' performance against the Service Agreement Requirements. Supporting tools include the Desktop Review, Service Agreement monitoring checklists and live monitoring. Whilst the SIP is focussed on organisational improvement, it draws on information from the FOPMF process to provide a cohesive view of challenges and strategies for improvement.

Use of the Framework is supported by:

- **Implementation Guide:** Detailed information for using the Framework, including information about other useful data sources and how to interpret data within different organisational contexts to inform continuous improvement
- **SIP template:** Used to capture the assessment of the organisation's service delivery against the Framework and record the specific strategies and actions to drive improvement
- **Data profiles and guidance materials:** Annual profiles developed by the Department presenting data on key measures (such as enrolment data, National Quality Standards (NQS) rating) at an organisational and sector-level, to support the SIP process and sector level analysis.

## 1. Governance and Sustainability

EYM organisations are sustainable, viable and respond to the needs of children, families and communities. They are built on strong and effective governance and partnership arrangements. This domain underpins the successful delivery of all the other domains.

EYM organisations have strong governance systems that:

- support, develop and empower early childhood educators and staff to deliver quality services to suit their local context and needs.
- manage financial, regulatory and reputational risks to ensure the viability of the EYM organisation and the services it manages
- establish and maintain productive partnerships with stakeholders, so all parties understand their role in supporting the provision of quality early years services and improving outcomes for children.

Outcome (What is achieved)	Enablers (How it's achieved)	Indicators	Example DET data reported in EYM Profiles
<p><b>1.1 EYM organisations have a strong, effective governance model.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has an effective model of governance that supports transparent management and decision-making, and ensures compliance with all relevant regulations, legislation and kindergarten funding requirements (such as the National Quality Framework, Child Safe Standards, and the Child Information Sharing and Family Violence Information Sharing schemes)</li> <li>• operates in alignment with the EYM four-way partnership model, where partners understand and perform their role with confidence</li> <li>• has a strategic plan developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders that addresses challenges and opportunities for the organisation and the local community and sets out a strategy for future changes to its kindergarten portfolio</li> <li>• maintains a risk register that includes key operational and financial risks, captures risk mitigation strategies, and identifies residual and acceptable risk ratings</li> <li>• defines roles, responsibilities and accountabilities that are appropriate for its size (number of services) and structure, and support it to manage its services effectively</li> <li>• has a partnership agreement with each kindergarten service that includes roles and responsibilities, communication and reporting processes and how any reserve funding is to be utilised</li> <li>• has an established transition process, including communications plan, for new services joining the organisation</li> <li>• maintains a suite of approved policies and procedures that underpin high quality service delivery and ensure ethical and responsible practices.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• at least 50 per cent of board members have independence from the organisation e.g. to avoid conflicts of interests</li> <li>• all positions on the board are filled and succession planning ensures changes to incumbents in line with board terms</li> <li>• there is an appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and experience on the board to help the organisation achieve its goals and objectives</li> <li>• there is demand from standalone kindergarten services to join the EYM</li> <li>• the National Quality Standard (NQS) ratings of services improve with each ratings review (or are maintained at a high level)</li> <li>• there is a decrease in the issues identified over time, through the Funded Organisation Performance Monitoring Framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of services meeting or exceeding NQS 7: Governance and Leadership</li> </ul>

<p><b>1.2 EYM organisations are viable and sustainable.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has financial monitoring and reporting processes, including a budget for each service, cash flow performance and forecasting, to provide timely, appropriately detailed information and analysis that supports effective decision-making across the organisation</li> <li>• uses all kindergarten funding streams effectively and efficiently and within policy guidelines, including opportunities to maximise the use of School Readiness Funding (SRF) across services</li> <li>• conducts effective due diligence, including financial assessment, for all potential partnership arrangements with kindergarten services, in-line with its growth strategy</li> <li>• applies flexible approaches to kindergarten program structures and models to maximise capacity and the use of resources including community facilities and revenue, whilst balancing community needs.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the organisation can demonstrate that its early years portfolio is financially viable and sustainable and can quantify its management costs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory financial assessment in the Service Agreement Compliance Certification</li> <li>• Satisfactory submission of SRF end-of-year-acquittal</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.3 EYM organisations respond to the needs of children, families and communities.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses a Stakeholder Engagement Plan to identify all stakeholders, and the best type and frequency of communication or other engagement activity</li> <li>• seeks feedback from families and children to inform improvements to services and across the organisation</li> <li>• has processes for incorporating feedback and lessons from complaints into organisational development and improvement processes</li> <li>• embeds community engagement in EYM operations, so that services are responsive, accessible, culturally safe and inclusive for all families</li> <li>• regularly reviews parent fees and charges to ensure they are sustainable and appropriate in the local context.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demand for kindergarten services increases relative to population characteristics</li> <li>• complaints are effectively managed and resolved</li> <li>• children's satisfaction increases</li> <li>• parent/carer satisfaction increases (or is maintained at a high level)</li> <li>• two years of kindergarten are offered in all services</li> <li>• every service has an active Parent Advisory Group or mechanism for parents to input into the kindergarten service in place (that operates in line with parent engagement policy).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining or increasing enrolment numbers at each service</li> <li>• Proportion of respondents who agree that 'the service involves parents and children' (Kindergarten Parent Opinion Survey)</li> <li>• Proportion of services meeting or exceeding NQS 6: Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities</li> </ul>

## 2. Access and Participation

EYM organisations drive high levels of participation for all children, including those with disability or those who are experiencing the highest level of vulnerability and disadvantage.

Outcome (What is achieved)	Enablers (How it's achieved)	Indicators	Example DET data reported in EYM Profiles
<p><b>2.1 EYM organisations work with local partners to proactively identify and engage all eligible children — particularly those with disability or who are experiencing the highest levels of vulnerability and disadvantage and other barriers to access and participation.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establishes formal links with services that support children and families, such as The Orange Door, Child Protection, Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Aboriginal organisations and other support services, to proactively identify and enrol children with disability or who are experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage</li> <li>regularly reviews Australian Early Development Census data about local kindergarten participation and development needs. This shapes engagement and participation policies and strategies, including for the use of SRF</li> <li>participates in service coordination processes, such as Central Enrolment (if applicable), the Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home Care, including LOOKOUT and legislated child information sharing schemes</li> <li>collaborates with local government and other providers to ensure enrolment processes, including waiting lists, are managed consistently</li> <li>takes part in place-based, multi-disciplinary initiatives such as Supported Playgroups or Best Start (where available).</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more children are referred to and/or enrolled in services</li> <li>parent/carer satisfaction increases (or is maintained at a high level)</li> <li>participation of children with disability and who are experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage increases</li> <li>enrolments better reflect the diversity of the local community, including cultural and linguistic diversity</li> <li>all children known to Child Protection or in Out-of-Home Care have an Individual Learning Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of services participating in Central Enrolment schemes (where available)</li> <li>Proportion of Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) enrolments (relative to demographic profile)</li> <li>Proportion of Aboriginal children enrolled</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.2 Kindergarten programs meet the individual needs of children and families, driving high levels of engagement and participation.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>works with children, family and community support services (such as The Orange Door, Child Protection, MCH, Aboriginal organisations, disability support services, allied health and multicultural organisations and other services) to maximise engagement and ongoing participation of all children, including those with additional needs</li> <li>embeds culturally inclusive approaches and practices at an organisational and service level to maximise access and participation through all aspects of operations</li> <li>ensures all facilities are fit-for-purpose, support access for every child, and create a welcoming, inclusive environment</li> <li>uses documented strategies to support attendance, engagement and re-engagement of children and families (particularly those most vulnerable), including out-reach to families and collaboration with relevant agencies and professionals.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children's attendance at services increases (or is maintained at a high level)</li> <li>family disengagement with services decreases</li> <li>parent/carer satisfaction with supports provided increases or maintains a high level</li> <li>enrolments and attendance of children with additional needs, disability or complex medical needs increases or maintains a high level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of respondents rating satisfaction as satisfied or very satisfied (Kindergarten Parent Opinion Survey)</li> <li>Proportion of services meeting or exceeding NQS 3: Physical Environment</li> </ul>

### 3. Quality

EYM organisations lead an exemplary early years system in Victoria by implementing contemporary, evidence-based improvements in teaching and learning, by continuously improving organisational capacity, and by contributing to the capacity of the broader sector.

Outcome (What is achieved)	Enablers (How it's achieved)	Indicators	Example DET data reported in EYM Profiles
<p><b>3.1 EYM organisations continuously review and improve their practice, capacity to deliver services, and the quality of those services.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provides educational leadership to build capacity across the organisation and support teachers and educators to continually assess the impact of their practice</li> <li>draws on the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), current research, evidence-based practice improvements and data when reviewing and considering ways to improve programs and service delivery</li> <li>monitors and evaluates its capacity and effectiveness in delivering services, and uses strategies to make continuous improvements</li> <li>supports leaders and managers to provide effective leadership to staff, ensuring pedagogical leaders have appropriate qualifications and experience, and that leadership roles and responsibilities are documented</li> <li>encourages and supports networking across the organisation and with other organisations to reflect on and critically evaluate practice.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>parent feedback shows increased engagement of children in the program</li> <li>programs align better with children's individual needs</li> <li>NQS ratings of services improve with each rating review (or maintained at a high level across all services)</li> <li>staff are more confident to access, interpret and use data to inform their practice</li> <li>SRF underspend is minimal or reduced.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of respondents rating the overall quality of education as 'good' or 'very good' (Kindergarten Parent Opinion Survey)</li> <li>Proportion of services meeting or exceeding NQS 1: Educational Program and Practice and NQS 7: Governance and Leadership</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2 EYM organisations work collaboratively to contribute to the development of an exemplary early years sector in Victoria.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contributes to the design and development of policy and reforms through participation in sector and Department-led forums</li> <li>implements high-quality, innovative policies, projects and practices, sharing insights with others in the sector, including in relation to implementing reforms</li> <li>embraces opportunities to share with and learn from others about effective pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, and to early years management.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff are more confident to lead, engage and share insights with the broader sector</li> <li>levels of engagement in kindergarten forums and networks increases (or is maintained at a high level).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average number of professional development hours completed per FTE staff (teachers and educators)</li> </ul>

## 4. Highly Skilled, Collaborative Workforce

EYM organisations attract, retain and invest in a highly skilled, collaborative workforce.

Outcome (What is achieved)	Enablers (How it's achieved)	Indicators	Example DET data reported in EYM Profiles
<p><b>4.1 EYM organisations are an 'employer of choice' – respected by and attractive to employees.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has a strategy for attracting and retaining high-quality staff who reflect the diversity of the local community</li> <li>• forecasts staffing and skills needs and plans recruitment (including backfill) and professional learning accordingly</li> <li>• ensures there are effective induction processes for new and returning staff to build a culture of excellence, support consistency and to drive professional growth</li> <li>• ensures there are equipped staff to effectively engage with and support all children and families, to build safe and inclusive services</li> <li>• uses workforce satisfaction data to inform organisational practices and processes.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proportion of suitable candidates applying for vacancies increases</li> <li>• workforce diversity and appropriate representation increases (for example, in terms of cultural background or gender)</li> <li>• waivers (ratios and qualifications) decrease</li> <li>• staff satisfaction improves or maintains high level.</li> <li>• staff turnover decreases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of services meeting or exceeding NQS 4: Staffing Arrangements</li> <li>• Annual retention rate for educators</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.2 EYM organisations invest in highly skilled staff.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourages and provides support that allows all staff to take part in appropriate, high-quality professional development opportunities that respond to individual and organisation needs</li> <li>• supports staff to undertake further learning to 'upskill' or gain additional qualifications</li> <li>• uses structures and processes that support high-quality student placements.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff participation in ongoing learning and professional development activities increases</li> <li>• the proportion of provisionally registered teachers transitioning to full registration increases</li> <li>• increased number of supported student placements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average number of professional development hours completed per FTE staff (teachers and educators)</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.3 EYM organisations provide leadership and other career opportunities.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• uses workforce planning and structures to support career progression, internally and beyond the organisation</li> <li>• uses mentoring programs to support new staff and create career progression and leadership opportunities</li> <li>• encourages staff to take part in sector leadership forums.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proportion of staff taking on internal training including on the job training and career opportunities increases</li> <li>• the proportion of staff participation in mentoring programs increases or maintains high levels.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4.4 EYM organisations are structured to support collaborative work practices.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides opportunities for team planning, reflection and review</li> <li>• encourages and supports staff to take part in 'communities of practice' and networks, internally and across the sector, to support collaboration, share best practice and reduce professional isolation.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proportion of staff engaging in team planning and review of programs increases</li> <li>• staff engage more frequently with 'communities of practice' and networks, internally and beyond.</li> </ul>	



## 5. Strong Partnerships

EYM organisations collaborate with all EYM partners, community organisations, schools and other early years stakeholders, to lead the development and coordination of quality services that improve outcomes for children.

Outcome (What is achieved)	Enablers (How it's achieved)	Indicators	Example DET data reported in EYM Profiles
<p><b>5.1 EYM organisations have strong, collaborative relationships with families accessing their services.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has established processes with families to communicate and facilitate parental involvement in their child's educational experience and to share contextual information about their child's learning and development</li> <li>encourages all families, including those from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, to engage with and contribute to the service and their child's education</li> <li>uses mechanisms such as Parent Advisory Groups, with clear terms of reference, to act as the voice of families attending kindergarten services and to represent their interests.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>parent/carer participation and engagement with organisations increases or maintains a high level</li> <li>every service has an effective Parent Advisory Group in place or mechanism for parents to input into the kindergarten service</li> <li>parent and community satisfaction with the service increases maintains a high level).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of respondents rating satisfaction as satisfied or very satisfied (Kindergarten Parent Opinion Survey)</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.2 EYM organisations work closely with local government to plan and coordinate the delivery of services.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has structures to ensure regular, effective communication with local government and close collaboration on planning</li> <li>participates in local government planning processes, such as Municipal Early Years Plans.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>participation in local government planning processes increases or maintains a high level.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.3 EYM organisations work with the Department to coordinate and provide high-quality services that meet local needs.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has structures in place to support effective collaboration with the Department</li> <li>collaborates with the Department to improve service provision, including the implementation of significant kindergarten reforms such as Three-Year-Old kindergarten and SRF</li> <li>initiates discussions with the Department about issues that may significantly affect service delivery, to enable collaborative problem solving</li> <li>drives service delivery changes to ensure programs are developed and run efficiently to meet local needs.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>engagement in quarterly Service Improvement Planning (SIP) processes improves</li> <li>timely completion of SIP improves</li> <li>issues, including potential changes to service delivery communicated to the Department in a timely manner</li> <li>issues, including potential changes to service delivery communicated to the Department in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5.4 EYM organisations support children and families to successfully transition to school, or another early childhood service as appropriate.</b></p>	<p>The organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has transition processes that support children's continuity of learning – from playgroup or other early childhood settings, to kindergarten and then to school</li> <li>has documented partnership goals for all stakeholders including families, children, schools and other professionals</li> <li>establishes relationships with transition partners through planning, and shares information to support the effective transition of all children, including vulnerable children.</li> </ul>	<p>Improvement can be seen when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collaboration with transition partners, including local schools, community organisations and other early years services improves</li> <li>transitions for all children, including vulnerable children, are supported more effectively</li> <li>the number of transition statements completed for ESK enrolments and children in Out-of-Home-Car increases or maintains a high level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proportion of transition statements completed</li> </ul>



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