Family involvement is essential to cohesive and quality service provision. Having families involved in the service is not only integral to the National Quality Standards and features in the National Law and Regulations, it also improves the service for the benefit of the children attending and creates a sense of community. Parent-users are in a unique position as they receive direct feedback about the service from their children, which can give valuable insights to the service.

Here are some simple ways families can be involved in your service delivery...

**KINDERGARTEN ORIENTATION**
First impressions count and often the initial contact between families and service staff is at Kindergarten orientations. Ensure a staff representative attends the orientations where possible, is able to give a short summary of the service’s philosophy and practices and distributes take-home information for families to consider. Develop some good information for parents to take away, invite them over to the service for a visit or consider an open day. Let them know about your website and your current enrolment situation – honestly is the best policy. Sometimes using an EOI (Expression of interest form) can be the most effective way to establish your new enrolment numbers.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE**
Services are required to have comprehensive enrolment and orientation procedures documented, but how well are they implemented? Ensure time is allocated to each enrolling family to exchange information, discuss their preferences for the care of their child and look around the service. This may have to be organised for a time suitable to ensure necessary staff are supervising enrolled children such as prior to a session commencing. Have all necessary paperwork available for families such as your Family Handbook and relevant policies and procedures. Inform families about your management structure and ways that they can become involved such as committee, or in other ways event organisation, working bees, trades etc. (often there are many ways).

**USING A VARIETY OF COMMUNICATION METHODS**
What might work in regards to communicating with one family may vary dramatically with another. Many services have embraced email as a fast, extensive and convenient way to communicate with families who are busy and on the run. Service newsletters are also popular and you could provide a combination of emailed and printed copies to cover family preferences. Of course, speaking to families regularly in person can never be replaced and is a great way to both share information and build relationships. Ensuring families are always greeted when entering the service can often open the door to further discussions. Having a space that is available to be used for private discussions is also important, even if this is managed by stepping outside the service when able.

**PARENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (PMC)**
If your service is run by a PMC, it is crucial for your operation to have families involved in the committee. The PMC is your Approved Provider and therefore the management structure of your service. It is important that all families using your service understand this structure and the roles and responsibilities of the committee executives. All families should be notified of upcoming PMC meetings and provide mechanisms for their involvement - have some meetings open for all to attend. Encourage families to become members of the committee even if they do not wish to be part of the executive, provide them with information about the election process and consider members mentoring each other into the various roles.

**ADVERTISING THE AGM**
To ensure you get as many families at your AGM as possible, advertise the date, time and location well in advance. If having your AGM in March you may want to flag the date now. Give as much notice as possible especially if you want to get new parents involved. The current committee should be available to communicate about what is required and time commitments. People need to know what is expected and the skills required. Use all methods available to you to advertise the event such as emails, newsletter and memo reminders, and speaking to families personally.

**TIMING YOUR MEETINGS**
Consider the times your meetings are held and the families you have in your service. Many families use OOSH because they work late so try to give families enough time to collect their children, take them home and have dinner then return to the service. A survey of what times families would prefer to attend meetings may be useful if you are unsure. You could consider providing food, drinks and child minding services if your families need further encouragement! Also plan meetings ahead – set a 12-month meeting schedule.