

ECD Quality Toolkit Pilot Project 2016 Site Visit Guidelines for Mediators

Purpose of these Guidelines

These Guidelines have been developed for the ECD Quality Toolkit Pilot Project. They are aimed at giving you as the mediator guidance on what to do at a site visit and how to use the resources.

Mediators from a number of ECD NGOs around the country will be visiting different ECD sites to test the Quality Reflection Tool. As a mediator in the pilot project you have an important role to play.

You will visit selected ECD sites in different contexts to:

- talk to practitioners and principals about their ideas on quality, and record what they say;
- observe parts of the ECD site, and record what you see;
- show practitioners how to use the Quality Reflection Tool to help them to think about their own practice.

The Site Visit Pack

The pack contains everything you need to carry out a site visit at an ECD centre in support of the goals of the pilot. The process guidelines below will discuss how to use these.

Resource	Purpose
Permissions form	To get permission to use interview results without attribution to an individual or site.
Resource 1: Overview	To explain the ECD Quality Toolkit and the aims of the pilot project.
Resource 2: ECD Quality Reflection Tool	To support self-reflection on different dimensions of quality.
Resource 3a: Mediator Prompt Resource	To provide ideas for prompts and what to listen for in support of the conversation with the practitioner and principal.
Resource 3b: Quality Conversation Template and Record	To guide and record your conversation with the practitioner and principal.
Resource 4: Observation Checklist	To record observations of teaching and learning in action during your site visit.
Resource 5: Mediator Reporting and Reflection Template	To record your feedback on the pilot processes and instruments.

Visiting the sites: process guidelines

Before the visit

- Make sure the site is informed of you visit
- Prepare yourself and your resources (60 minutes)

Make sure the site is informed of your visit

The NGO working with the ECD Site/s that you are visiting has informed the site/s that you are coming, and has given them Resource 1, the overview of Quality Toolkit and pilot process. We suggest that before you go you confirm the date and time of your visit, and who you will interview during the visit.

Prepare yourself and your resources (60 minutes)

Obviously, an important part of preparing yourself is reading these Site Visit Guidelines. Make sure that you are familiar with the purpose and content of all the documents that you will use during the visit. It is especially important to work through the Mediator Prompt Resource (3a) beforehand, and be aware of what you should listen out for during the conversation session. Be aware that all the documents are in English, and you might need to translate as you go, if you are having your conversation in a language other than English.

If you think you will need copies of any of the documents make enough copies to take with you. Prepare any other resources that you will need, such as pens, a clip board, extra paper, and maybe even a bottle of water.

You will probably spend the whole morning at the site. Take 10 minutes before you visit to think about what you plan to do, how long you will spend on each activity, and what contextual issues you need to be aware of during your visit.

During the visit

- Do an introduction session (15 minutes)
- Hold a conversation session (up to 120 minutes for both practitioner and principal)
- Carry out an observation session (30 to 40 minutes)
- Leave the ECD Quality Tool at the site, and discuss follow up (30 minutes)

The introduction session

When you arrive at the ECD site you will use your experience as a field worker to introduce yourself and make yourself welcome at the site. Check that they are expecting you, that they have received some information about the pilot, that the people to interview are available.

Before you conduct the interview and observations, spend a few minutes introducing the project to the practitioner and principal. The introduction session should take about 15 minutes. You will use the following documents from the Site Visit Pack during the introduction:

The permission form

In the Site Visit pack there is a permission form for the practitioner and the principal to sign. The permission form is a courtesy, asking permission for us to use the information that we get from the visit in a report about the pilot. Explain that even though the practitioner is signing to give permission, the information will not be linked to the name of the practitioner or the name of the ECD site. Ask the practitioner to sign the permission form.

Ask permission to take photographs. Explain that you will only take photographs of things that the practitioner chooses. Be careful not to take photographs of the children because we do not have permission from their parents.

Resource 1: Overview of the Pilot Project

Share this with the practitioner and/or principal during the introduction. You can leave a copy for them to read later.

Resource 2: The ECD Quality Reflection Tool

Explain briefly to the practitioner and the principal what the ECD Quality Reflection Tool is. It is important for the practitioner to understand that it is **not** a checklist. It is a set of questions for practitioners to ask themselves, to reflect, and to answer honestly, for themselves. We think that this will help practitioners to identify their own good practice and to find areas that they need more support with.

You can use the first question in the conversation schedule as an example. The practitioner can ask herself the question “What are my views on how children learn?”. How does she answer that for herself? When she thinks about her answer, what does she learn about herself, and her work, what she knows and what she does not know? Use one other example from the Reflection Tool that is not in the conversation schedule.

The conversation and observation sessions

You will decide if you want to do the interviews first or the observation first. This might be different at different sites, depending on what time you arrive and how the ECD programme is organised. Be sensitive to not disrupt the programme too much. For the conversation and observation you will use the following documents from the Site Visit Pack:

Resource 3 (a and b): The Mediator Prompt Resource and the Conversation Schedule

The main purpose of your visit is to have a conversation with the practitioner and/or principal about what they understand by quality in ECD. Remember it is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We are all trying to understand what we mean by quality in different contexts. The main point of the conversation is to introduce the practitioner to the actual ECD Quality Tool that you will leave at the site, and to the idea of using this to reflect on her own practice.

You will have a conversation with one practitioner and the principal (if there is one). It is best to have separate conversations so that each person feels comfortable and free to talk openly. Ask if there is a quiet space available where the children’s activities will not be disturbed and children will not interrupt the conversation. If there is only one practitioner at the site sit somewhere that she can still observe the children while she is talking to you.

We have chosen only some of the reflection questions from the Quality Reflection Tool for you to use to guide your conversation. These are in the Conversation Schedule.

During the conversation you will listen more than you will talk. Encourage the practitioner to speak about her answers to the questions. While she is talking listen for the ideas suggested in the Mediator Prompt Resource. If she does not talk about those ideas you can ask additional questions to prompt her or encourage her to speak more.

Also, while you are listening to the practitioner, look at the reminders and use the space next to each question to record her/his key ideas.

Resource 4: The Observation Checklist

For the observation you will decide beforehand which areas you want to observe, and request permission from the practitioner and/or the principal. While you are observing, try to behave as if you are not really there. Try not to distract the children from what they are doing. You want to be able to observe the environment and the children as it is on a regular day.

Use the Observation Checklist to guide you in your observation. You will see that there is some match between the Observation Checklist and the Conversation Schedule. This means that you will observe the practitioner doing things she spoke about in the conversation.

Go through the list of items in the Observation Checklist and write down key words or phrases in the right hand column. In this way you will not forget what you were thinking at the time.

When you have finished these activities, explain that you will leave a copy of the Reflection Tool with her. Ask her to spend some time in the next few weeks, thinking about her answers to some of the questions in the tool. We would like to know if this tool helps her to understand her own good practice, and to discover things that she needs support with.

After the visit

- Do a self-reflection on your mediation of the site visit (45 minutes)
- Write a report on the site visit (120 minutes)

There are two tasks you need to carry out after the site visits as part of your responsibilities as a mediator. One is to give us feedback on various aspects of the pilot, and the other is to carry out your formal reporting responsibilities.

Your own self-reflection and feedback

Resource 5: Mediator Reporting and Reflection Template

Use this resource after the site visit to record your own reflections, thoughts and ideas about the process. This is an important reporting tool for the pilot as it gives you an opportunity to give suggestions for improving the process and pilot resources. It also asks you to note any insights you want to share on the issue of quality in ECD. Later on in the pilot you will attend a feedback workshop to share your views.

Reporting on your site visits

You will need to capture and transcribe the results of your conversations, observations and reflections to feed into the pilot data capture and analysis process. You will be provided with an electronic reporting template that will guide you on how to do this, using the categories given in the various resources. This should be submitted to kaley@bridge.org.za within five working days after the relevant site visit.