How is KidsMatter Early Childhood implemented?

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services implementing KidsMatter Early Childhood are provided with:

- **A framework:** A guiding framework for the initiative and detailed information about each Component of the initiative can be found in the book *KidsMatter Early Childhood: A framework for improving children’s mental health and wellbeing*. Further information about each Component can be found in the Component Literature Reviews.

- **Tools:** Implementation tools such as surveys and planning templates are found in this book—*KidsMatter Early Childhood: Tools and guidelines for implementation*.

- **Support:** A state- or territory-based KidsMatter Early Childhood Facilitator to work with the service to support implementation. You will meet your Facilitator at your ‘Getting Started’ workshop, and they will be available to you by phone and a range of online options.

- **Professional Learning:** Staff will receive Professional Learning in each of the four KidsMatter Components, which will be provided by the Facilitator through a range of methods.

- **Information resources:** A set of information resources for families and educators about a range of topics relevant to young children’s mental health.

- **Programs Guide:** A range of programs targeted at children from birth to five and their families are outlined and explained for those services interested in purchasing programs, getting further training, or finding out more about programs that are being run in their area.

- **Newsletters:** A regular KidsMatter Early Childhood e-Newsletter will provide relevant information to services, linking them to implementation support resources and keeping them updated about the initiative.

- **Posters:** ECEC services receive copies of the five KidsMatter Early Childhood A3- and A4-size posters for display in their service or school.

Some of these resources will be provided to you in hardcopy, and all are available online to download or print at www.kidsmatter.edu.au.

Implementing KidsMatter Early Childhood requires a coordinated approach from service directors, management, staff, and parents and carers. Services will nominate a KidsMatter Leadership Team which will be assisted by a state- or territory-based KidsMatter Early Childhood Facilitator. The KidsMatter Early Childhood tools and resources provided will help services assess their strengths and identify areas for improvement in each of the four Components of KidsMatter Early Childhood.

KidsMatter Early Childhood involves a continual process of service development that includes celebrating and sharing achievements, relationship building, staff commitment, professional learning, planning, implementation and monitoring. Services are guided through repeated ‘Plan-Do-Review’ cycles, as described on the following page, and are supported through this process by their KidsMatter Early Childhood Facilitator.
Look for the ‘Plan-Do-Review’ symbol throughout this book to help you identify the specific needs and concerns within your service in relation to addressing this component; and to develop, implement and review strategies that best address these.

The planning that results from the KidsMatter Early Childhood ‘Plan-Do-Review’ process is central to achieving service development. During this process your service will be guided through the following phases of planning:

- Getting Started
- Planning and setting goals
- Developing an Action Plan
- Implementing the Action Plan
- Reviewing the Action Plan

This will involve individual staff reflecting on their own practices, as well as group discussions among staff to reflect on how the service as a whole operates. There are also Staff and Family Surveys to help you identify what your service is doing well and areas for development.

The planning phase will lead you through setting your service goals, including addressing any potential concerns and exploring possible strategies. This information can then be used to develop Goal Maps and an Action Plan specific to your service.

During this phase your Action Plan will be implemented. This involves all staff being supported and working together to enable your service to achieve its goals. At regular stages during the implementation of your Action Plan, you will be guided to review its progress, share and celebrate your achievements, and make adjustments where necessary.

Once you have implemented your Action Plan and completed its review, you will be ready to begin a new planning stage of the KidsMatter Early Childhood continuous development cycle.
‘Plan-Do-Review’

The following will guide you through the sequence of steps you will need to take to implement KidsMatter Early Childhood. There are a range of resources available to help you with implementation, both included in this book and online.
Part 1: Getting started

Establish KidsMatter Early Childhood Leadership Team

Implementing KidsMatter Early Childhood requires a planned and coordinated approach. To achieve this, your service will need to establish a KidsMatter Leadership Team who will plan and lead the implementation of the initiative at your service. Initially, the KidsMatter Leadership Team will include:

- your service’s director or coordinator
- a representative from the management committee, or a parent or carer
- a staff member.

Your KidsMatter Leadership Team will attend a ‘Getting Started with KidsMatter Early Childhood’ session that will be run in your local area, to help you become familiar with the initiative and show you how to use our tools and resources. You can expand the core KidsMatter Leadership Team to include any other staff members, parents and carers or interested parties who are important to your service. It will be important to schedule regular times to meet, which will help you plan and keep track of timelines, goals and achievements.

Membership of the team can be revisited at any time—at the beginning of a new year, a new Component, or when new staff or families express interest in becoming part of KidsMatter Early Childhood.
Provide all staff with KidsMatter Early Childhood introductory information

KidsMatter Early Childhood emphasises a whole-service approach in promoting mental health and addressing mental health concerns. It is important to engage all staff in the initiative, including administrative and support staff and any new staff. Introductory information about KidsMatter Early Childhood can be provided in written form, shared at a staff meeting or special presentation given by the KidsMatter Leadership Team, or a combination of all of these. It will provide your staff and anyone who needs more information with the rationale for the initiative and summary information about the four KidsMatter Early Childhood Components.

Giving new staff the material in written form, whether they attend a verbal presentation or not, is a good idea as staff can refer back to the material. It will also help them to begin thinking about the initiative and how they can play a role in promoting mental health for all children.

Provide all families with KidsMatter Early Childhood introductory information

Involving families is an important part of KidsMatter Early Childhood. Providing all families with introductory information about the initiative will help to foster communication and a shared understanding about what is happening in your service. This may be done in a variety of different ways, such as including information in your regular newsletter, providing a link on your website, or leaving written information for families to take home. A handy summary of the initiative is available at www.kidsmatter.edu.au.
Part 2: Plan

Distribute the relevant KidsMatter Early Childhood Component Staff Survey

Consulting with staff to ensure their opinions and concerns are heard and valued is an important part of KidsMatter Early Childhood. Staff will be asked to complete a KidsMatter Early Childhood Staff Survey at the beginning of each Component, which provides the opportunity for them to express their views on the current situation within the service, in relation to the areas covered by each Component. It is part of the role of the KidsMatter Leadership Team to provide the survey to all staff and ask them to complete it. They should be able to return it anonymously. A Staff Survey for each Component is included in this volume. Wording for a letter explaining the survey to staff is also provided.

Distribute KidsMatter Early Childhood Family Survey to all families for completion

KidsMatter Early Childhood encourages partnerships with families. The KidsMatter Early Childhood Family Survey provides another way to engage families and encourage them to reflect on issues that your service will be addressing. All families whose children attend your service can be given the chance to share their views. All families are invited and encouraged to complete and return the survey, to ensure you have an accurate picture of how your service is perceived. There is also a letter for families who may wish to complete the Family Survey, which explains how the information collected will be used. It is important to advise families that the survey is anonymous and that it is possible to return the survey without having to hand it to a staff member (for example, via a ‘survey return box’). If you feel that written surveys are not the best or most appropriate way to engage or receive feedback from families at your service, talk to your KidsMatter Facilitator or look on the KidsMatter website for other ways to give families an opportunity to share their views.
Becoming informed about the Component

Information about each Component is available in the document *KidsMatter Early Childhood Framework*. Each Component is also available as a PDF document at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au). At this point, the KidsMatter Leadership Team should become familiar with this information. In addition, Professional Learning is also provided about each Component of KidsMatter Early Childhood. This may be scheduled at a particular time or accessed online during staff team meetings. The planning process can continue before, during and after the Professional Learning.

Share Component information with all staff

Now that the KidsMatter Leadership Team is familiar with the information about the relevant Component, it is important to share this information with all staff. This will help them to understand what your service will be working on over the next few months and how it is important for children’s mental health and wellbeing. There is a range of different ways to convey this information, including:

- information sheets provided by KidsMatter Early Childhood
- KidsMatter Early Childhood Professional Learning delivered by your Facilitator or online
- opportunities for staff to discuss and reflect on the information
- further reading recommended by your Facilitator or available online.

Share Component information with families

Families are an important part of the early childhood community. KidsMatter Early Childhood provides information on our website and in hardcopy that can be distributed to families. Services might like to consider other types of information that could be provided to families to help them understand more about the Target Areas of the Component, and how the service will be promoting their children’s mental health through addressing these Target Areas.

Summary

By now you will have:

- established the membership of your KidsMatter Leadership Team
- attended a ‘Getting Started with KidsMatter Early Childhood’ session
- provided introductory information to all staff
- provided introductory information to all families
- distributed KidsMatter Early Childhood Surveys to all staff and families.

Throughout the rest of this book, you will be guided through a series of ‘discussion points’ that will help you during the ‘Plan-Do-Review’ process.

**Summary**

By now you will have:

- read the information about the Component
- shared Component information with staff and families
- distributed Component Surveys to staff and families, collated responses and produced your Component Survey Profiles.
Discussion point: Setting some discussion guidelines

Before you begin this process it is important to agree on some guidelines. Guidelines are a set of agreements staff make to ensure everyone feels comfortable and confident about participating. Spend some time discussing with your staff what these guidelines might be, so that you all have an agreed understanding.

You might like to consider the following suggestions:

1. Value all contributions—when brainstorming, encourage creativity and avoid judgement, because even the wildest ideas may trigger a more practical suggestion in the end.

2. Quantity then quality—it is important to generate as many ideas as possible so you can select the most helpful ones.

3. Take turns—some staff may have several ideas or comments they wish to contribute. However, it is important that everyone is given an opportunity to be heard.

Some tips:

- Around five guidelines will probably be enough. If you have more than five, perhaps some of them can be grouped.
- Try to word your guidelines positively (for example, instead of ‘Don’t judge’, use ‘Value all contributions’).
- Make sure everyone feels they have contributed to these guidelines.
Your strengths

By now your KidsMatter Leadership Team, staff and families will have a better understanding of the Component you are working on, and have been introduced to the Component Target Areas.

KidsMatter Early Childhood acknowledges that ECEC services are already doing a lot in relation to the Components addressed by our Framework. In this section you will look at the current situation in your service in relation to the Target Areas, identify what you are already doing in these areas and celebrate your service’s existing strengths. Information from the KidsMatter Early Childhood Component Staff and Family Surveys will help you with this process.

DISCUSSION

Discussion point: What do you already do in your service in relation to this Component?

Now you are ready for your KidsMatter Leadership Team to meet with all of the staff in the service to consider the current situation. Find the Target Areas for the Component you are working on in the Framework book, and use the following table to write down the group’s general views around what the service is already doing in relation to each Target Area. You could also use a whiteboard, butcher’s paper or any other planning tool you already have.

Brainstorm what you are already doing in your service under the Component Target Areas.

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<th>TARGET AREA 3</th>
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Having a good understanding and awareness of your individual and collective strengths is essential, as your strengths can be used to help address the Target Areas.

Look at the information gathered in the table above and highlight:

- What are you particularly proud of as a service?
- What do you do really well?
How to use information from the Component Staff and Family Surveys

Responses to the Staff and Family Surveys can also be used to identify areas of service strength with regard to the Component Target Areas. Collate the information gathered from the surveys to create Staff and Family Component Profiles for your service. These can also be used to help you set goals for your service development for the Component.

DISCUSSION

Discussion point: What do your Staff and Family Component Profiles tell you about your strengths?

Together with your staff, look at the Component Profiles. In which Target Areas:

- ... do staff think you do well?

- ... do families think you do well?

- Are there any differences in staff and family responses? And what does this tell you?

- Were there any surprises in the findings?

Now, look at individual questions where your service has rated highly. What are your particular strengths? You can use both the results from your discussions and surveys to come up with these. Use the following table (or another method of your choice) to record your areas of strength.
Our strengths in helping children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families:

TARGET AREA 1

TARGET AREA 2

TARGET AREA 3

We manage to achieve these strengths by (for example, personal qualities, existing policies, creative ideas):

It is important to acknowledge and celebrate your strengths. With staff, think about: What are you particularly pleased with, or proud of? You could do this as individuals (for example, everyone writes something they are pleased with on a sticky note and sticks it on a wall), or in whole group discussion. You can collate your responses below, or on a large piece of paper to display in your service.

Celebrate

We are particularly pleased and proud of:

- ..................................................
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Summary

By now you will have:

- identified with staff what you are already doing in your service in relation to the Component Target Areas
- collated survey information and created the Component Staff and Family Profiles
- identified your service’s existing strengths in helping children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families
- celebrated your service’s existing strengths when helping children experiencing mental health difficulties and their families.

In the next section you will use the survey information and discussion with staff to set your service goals for the Component.
Setting your Component goals

In the previous section you identified your service’s strengths in relation to the Component Target Areas. The next step is to work with staff to determine what your service could do to enhance staff practice in relation to the Component.

Now that you are more aware of your service’s strengths in this area, it is time to begin identifying areas for development. Your Component Profiles on p. 27 are one source of information you can use. You may like to refer to these during your Component planning discussions.

**DISCUSSION**

**Discussion point: What could your service work on to enhance staff practice in this Component?**

Together with your staff, discuss the following. You might like to use the Component Profiles to guide your discussions. In which Target Areas:

- ... do staff think you don’t do as well?

- ... do families think you don’t do as well?

- Are there any differences in staff and family responses? And what does this tell you?

- Were there any surprises in the findings?

Now, look at individual questions where your service has rated lower. Considering these questions together with staff discussions, identify what areas you need to develop. Use the space on the following page (or another method of your choice) to record your areas for development.
**Areas for development:**

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<tr>
<th>TARGET AREA 3</th>
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Now that you have identified areas for development, you are ready to work together with your KidsMatter Leadership Team and staff to decide on your Component goals.

**DISCUSSION**

**Discussion point: Deciding on your goals**

With your KidsMatter Leadership Team and staff, decide on your goals based on the areas you have identified above. Try to make your goals **SMART**:

- **Specific**—Your goals should be well-defined and clear (for example, all staff will greet parents and carers as they arrive in the morning and afternoon).
- **Measurable**—How will you know when your goal is achieved? What will you see? What will be different?
- **Achievable**—Your goals should be realistic and take into account your current situation and service environment.
- **Relevant**—Your goals should meet the needs of your service—think about why your goal is important in your context.
- **Time specific**—Be clear about when you expect your goals to be achieved.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGET AREA</th>
<th>OUR COMPONENT GOALS</th>
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Possible concerns for your service in achieving your goals

It is important to identify any potential concerns that could hinder your service in achieving your goals. Concerns may be related to:

- staff attitudes (for example, how they feel about the proposed changes and their role in bringing them about)
- staff skills, knowledge and confidence (for example, whether they think they will be able to do what is proposed)
- staff perceptions (for example, about the support that will be offered by, and to, the service)
- children, parents and carers or broader community
- a lack of resources (for example, time, money, space, or staff capacity).

Consulting with your staff, and taking their concerns into account, will ensure that staff feel listened to, valued and included in the planning process. In addition, if concerns are identified and addressed as part of the planning process, they are less likely to become challenges later on.

Your service can brainstorm ways to address your concerns. During this process you may like to think about:

- highlighting to staff that they are already doing a lot in their everyday practice, and that KidsMatter Early Childhood is about enhancing, sharing and coordinating this practice
- fostering a sense of ownership of the initiative by communicating benefits for staff, such as:
  - improving children’s wellbeing and behaviour
  - strengthening staff morale and reducing stress levels
  - improving relationships.
- identifying how KidsMatter Early Childhood helps your service achieve the aims of the *Early Years Learning Framework* and the *National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care Quality Areas*.
DISCUSSION

Discussion point: Brainstorm strengths in achieving your goals, possible concerns, and strategies to address these concerns

The next steps are to spend some time:

- Brainstorming what strengths and resources you already have as an organisation (for example, people, support networks, resources and knowledge) that will help you achieve your goals. List these in the space provided in the table below.

- Thinking of possible concerns about addressing the goals you have set with your KidsMatter Leadership Team and staff. It is important to listen to and acknowledge these concerns so that everyone feels ready to move forward. Look at your goals and use the space provided below (or a method of your choice) to record concerns that are raised.

- Generating strategies for tackling these concerns. Consider how the strengths you have identified might help you overcome these concerns. List these in the space provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUR STRENGTHS (PEOPLE, KNOWLEDGE, RESOURCES)</th>
<th>OUR CONCERNS</th>
<th>STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THESE CONCERNS</th>
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</table>
Discussion point: Brainstorm strategies for achieving your goals

The next step is to generate a broad range of strategies to work towards achieving each agreed goal. At this stage it is important to brainstorm as many strategies as you can. This will ensure that you are looking at all possibilities, and not simply settling on an obvious choice. It might be a good idea at this point to revisit your Discussion Guidelines to remind staff that all ideas are accepted without judgement or criticism, as well as to encourage creativity and originality.

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<tr>
<th>TARGET AREAS</th>
<th>OUR COMPONENT GOALS</th>
<th>STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING OUR GOALS</th>
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Summary

By now you will have:

- identified goals that can be achieved in your service
- highlighted and acknowledged strengths and any concerns in reaching your goals
- brainstormed strategies for addressing these concerns
- brainstormed strategies for achieving your goals.

In the next section you will put your goals and strategies together into individual Goal Maps which will form your Action Plan.
Developing your Action Plan

You have now identified your goals for the Component. You have also brainstormed a range of different strategies for achieving your goals. In this section you will use this information to create an Action Plan and decide how it will be implemented.

**DISCUSSION**

**Discussion point: Selecting strategies for achieving your goals**

The next step is to weigh up your options and decide which strategies you will use in your service at this time. One way to do this is using the traffic light system below.

![Traffic Light](image)

Red = Not now  
Amber = Maybe  
Green = Go with this strategy now

Look at the strategies you have generated to address your concerns and achieve your goals and colour code them according to the traffic light system. You will need to do this for the two previous discussion points:

- Brainstorm strengths in achieving your goals, possible concerns, and strategies to address these concerns.
- Brainstorm strategies for achieving your goals.

Review your list of ‘green’ and ‘amber’ strategies and select strategies that you will implement for each goal. How many strategies you select will depend on your individual service’s needs and resources at this time. Remember that you will have an opportunity to revisit this list after your first cycle of ‘Plan-Do-Review’.

Creating your Goal Maps

The Goal Maps will help you plan the implementation of strategies that you have selected to achieve each goal. Your KidsMatter Leadership Team and staff should work together to complete each Goal Map. This will involve addressing the following:

- **How** are you going to implement your strategies?  
- **What** resources are needed?  
- **Where** will implementation take place?  
- **Who** will be involved?  
- **Who** is responsible?  
- **When** will your strategies be implemented?  
- **When** will your goals and strategies be reviewed?
### Goal Map template

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<th>Target Area:</th>
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<td>Goal:</td>
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<td>Strategy:</td>
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What additional resources are needed to implement the strategy?

Who will be involved in the implementation? What is their role/responsibility?

When will it be implemented?

Where will it be implemented?

When will it be reviewed? (Short-term review date, for example, one month’s time)

Longer term review date (for example, six months’ time)
Creating your Action Plan

The Action Plan is a summary of all of your Goal Maps for the Component. You may like to use the table below to summarise all of your Goal Maps into an Action Plan for the Component. You could use these headings to design your own plan, or use the templates provided on the KidsMatter website: www.kidsmatter.edu.au.

**Summary**

By now you will have:
- decided which strategies you are going to use to achieve your goals

Now you are ready to start implementing your Action Plan.

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<th>TARGET AREA</th>
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<td>GOAL</td>
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<td>STRATEGY</td>
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<td>RESOURCES</td>
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<td>WHO IS INVOLVED/ RESPONSIBLE</td>
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<td>REVIEW</td>
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Part 3: Do

Implementing your Action Plan

Now that you are ready to implement your Component Action Plan, begin by putting into practice the strategies outlined in each of your Goal Maps according to the agreed time frames. During this time it is important to monitor the progress of your plan so it can be adapted as necessary. It is a good idea to arrange regular meetings for the KidsMatter Leadership Team to monitor the progress of your Action Plan, Goal Maps and strategies. During these meetings you could revisit your plan, discuss its progress and make any adjustments as necessary.

You can write proposed dates and times for regular meetings in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>ATTENDEES</th>
<th>AGREED ACTIONS</th>
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Summary

By now you will have:

- started implementing your Action Plan
- met regularly as a KidsMatter Leadership Team and with staff
- monitored the progress of your Action Plan.

Next you will continue to review your progress in more depth.
Part 4: Review

Reviewing your Action Plan

Along with checking your progress while you are implementing your Action Plan, you can review your progress in other ways, including:

- documenting your achievements
- reflecting on what you have learned, including new skills you have gained
- considering what worked well
- considering what didn’t work well, or as well as you hoped, and considering why this might be
- deciding what could be done next (this may form the basis of your next Action Plan)
- involving families and other key people in the review process.

Some ideas for documenting and sharing progress include taking photos and displaying your achievements on posters. You could also write your thoughts in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT WORKED?</th>
<th>WHAT DIDN’T WORK WELL? WHAT COULD HAVE WORKED BETTER?</th>
<th>WHAT COULD BE DONE NEXT? WHAT COULD BE DONE DIFFERENTLY?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It is important to take time to celebrate how your service has developed and share your achievements with all staff and families.

Summary

By now you will have:

- reviewed your first Action Plan
- thought about what worked and what didn’t work
- started to think about putting together a new Action Plan.
What’s next?

Congratulations. You have now completed your first KidsMatter Early Childhood ‘Plan-Do-Review’ cycle for this Component. This is a good time to think about where you would like to head next. This means beginning a new planning stage involving:

- assessing your new current situation
- setting new goals
- forming a new Action Plan.

Turn to the flow chart on p. 3 to see where to go to next.

Implementing KidsMatter Early Childhood is a process of continuous improvement, and it is always helpful to review your progress along the way. Don’t forget to check the website for updates and keep in touch with your Facilitator, who can share stories from other services to give you some new ideas.

Remember to make some time to review the plans you make under each Component. When you move onto a new Component the focus of your planning will shift, but the changes you made under previous plans will continue. When you have completed a planning cycle for all four Components, you can establish a regular schedule of review for all the plans you have made.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>WAS GOAL ACHIEVED?</td>
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<tr>
<td>IF NOT, WHAT PREVENTED THIS?</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHANGES TO IMPLEMENTATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>WILL WE CONTINUE WORKING ON THIS GOAL?</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTHER COMMENTS</td>
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Goal evaluation sheet
Survey collation and Component Profiles

The instructions below will guide you through collating your Staff and Family Survey responses and producing Component Profiles for use as part of your planning.

Download the Excel Survey Component Profile Tool from www.kidsmatter.edu.au or contact your Facilitator, who can provide you with the file.

1. Enter individual staff responses for each question in the ‘Staff Tally’ Excel sheet.
2. Enter individual family responses for each question in the ‘Family Tally’ Excel sheet.
3. Staff and family summary tables providing the average response per question and per Target Area will be automatically generated in the Excel file, as will your Component Profiles by Component and by Target Area.
4. Print out a hardcopy of your profiles and use them in your planning, as outlined in this book. Copies of the Staff and Family Surveys are provided in the following pages.