

Family and Children’s Services – Leadership and Service Management

Fees and Charges

Council Early Years Services

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| Procedure Number: | D23-333029 | Directorate: | Connected Communities |
| Approval by: | Manager Family Children’s Services | Responsible Officer: | Senior Coordinator Early Years Services |
| Approval Date: | 6 June 2024 | Version Number: | 7 |
| Review Date: | 3 years from the approval date | Service Type: | <div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">K</div> <div style="background-color: #0070C0; color: white; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">LDC</div> </div> |
| ACECQA Quality Area: | Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management | | |

Purpose

This procedure provides clear guidance to educators, staff, parents and any other authorised person in relation to the management of fees for Council Early Years Services, including:

- The setting, collection and payment of fees.
- Responsible, financial management of services.
- Complying with the Free Kinder initiative.

Policy Statement

Council Early Childhood Education and Care Services are committed to:

- Supporting the Victorian Government’s Free Kinder initiative for funded kindergarten programs.
- Providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially sustainable service.
- Providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts.
- Where possible, reducing or removing financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for the child/children.
- Maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians.
- Advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians.

Scope

This procedure applies to the approved provider, person with management and control, nominated supervisor, responsible person, early childhood teachers, educators, staff, parents/guardians attending a Council Early Childhood Education and Care Service.

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| Responsibilities | Approved provider and persons with management or control | Nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge | Early childhood teacher, educators and all other staff | Relief staff, additional assistants, volunteers and students | Parents/guardians |
|--|--|---|--|--|-------------------|
| R indicates legislation requirement, and should not be deleted | | | | | |
| Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place for the payment of fees and the provision of a statement of fees charged by the service (Regulation 168), and take reasonable steps to ensure those policies and procedures are followed (Regulation 170) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, and staff, and in line with the requirements of the Victorian Department of Education’s (DE) Free Kinder initiative (refer to Definitions) and the requirements of the Commonwealth Governments Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy (refer to Definitions) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Setting Long Day Care fees inclusive of Bond payment through the council budget process | R | | | | |
| Communicating a Bond payment is required at the time of accepting a Long Day Care enrolment and clearly identifying the terms and conditions of the bond | R | ✓ | | | |
| Developing a fee procedure that balances the parent’s/guardian’s capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service sustainability | R | ✓ | | | |
| Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to parents/guardians in a culturally sensitive way | R | ✓ | | | |
| Providing all parents/guardians with fee information (refer to related resources below) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child/ren in long day care | R | ✓ | | | |
| Providing parents/guardians with information about Free Kinder | R | ✓ | | | |
| Fee policy and procedures are readily available and accessible in all Council Early Childhood Education and Care Services. (Regulation 171) | R | ✓ | | | |

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| Requesting parents/guardians to complete a Funded Kindergarten Place Declaration form to nominate which service their child will participate in the funded kindergarten program | R | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Applying the Free Kinder fee offset in Long Day Care and clearly indicating the offset amount (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset) on parent/guardian's fortnightly invoice statements (refer to resources Best Start Best Life Guide for parents) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Directly offsetting the full Free Kinder Offset amount from the fees of parents/guardians with children receiving their funded kindergarten program in Long Day Care (service providers are not required to separately calculate and record the cost of the kindergarten hours separately for integrated programs) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Communicating with parents/guardians that the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy offset will not impact their CCS entitlement | R | ✓ | | | |
| Complying with Council's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees | R | ✓ | | | |
| Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system (refer to Definitions) | R | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Collecting all relevant information and where applicable, maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording on the KIM System (refer to Definitions) | R | ✓ | | | |
| Providing parents/guardians with a minimum of 14 days notice before any proposed changes to fees or the way in which fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)). | R | ✓ | | | |
| Informing parents/guardians of the operating hours including term dates and planned closures | R | ✓ | | | |
| Ensuring that any person with management or control and any person responsible for the day-to-day operation of the service, (where applicable) are fit and proper persons to be involved in the administration of Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy | R | | | | |
| Background checks are carried out for particular personnel administering Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy - including criminal history police checks | R | | | | |
| Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner (refer to Council's Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy) | R | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Informing the Nominated Supervisor or Team Leader of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service (refer to Council's Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy) | | | ✓ | ✓ | |

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| Reading the relevant Fees and Charges Family Fact Sheet <i>(refer to related resources)</i> | | | | | ✓ |
| Abide by the Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) confirmation of Child Care Agreement as part of your long day care offer | R | | | | ✓ |
| Contacting the early years' service if they are experiencing difficulties with payment of fees | | | | | ✓ |
| Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy or Child Care Subsidy for eligible parents/guardians | | | | | ✓ |
| Ensuring your child's immunisation is up to date. If we need to hold your child's enrolled place due to immunisation lapsing, there will be a requirement to pay full fees. <i>(refer to Dealing with Infectious Diseases procedure)</i> | | | | | ✓ |

Background

[Regulation 168\(2\) \(n\) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011](#) requires that Early Childhood Education and Care services have a comprehensive written fees and charges policy and procedure, and the content must be communicated to parents/guardians. Parents/guardians must also be provided with a regular statement of fee and charges.

The Best Start, Best Life reform will help all Victorian children increase access to quality early childhood education and care. A critical part of the reform is Free Kinder, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children at participating services. All families with a child enrolled in a funded kindergarten program are eligible for Free Kindergarten, this includes both 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing a free 15-hour program to four-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- providing a free 5-to-15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service
- any fundraising must comply with the Free Kinder subsidy guidelines and be responsive to the local community

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Australian parents/guardians receive help with the cost of child care through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). The Australian Government, through the Department of Education (DE) and Services Australia, administers the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Providers must be approved by the department to receive CCS.

DE is responsible for the legislation that underpins CCS. This legislation is called Family Assistance Law (FAL). All providers that receive CCS must follow the rules under FAL. DE monitors providers' compliance with FAL.

The Australian Government subsidises the cost of child care. State and territory governments are responsible for the health, safety, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children.

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The Australian Government considers that immunisation is an important health measure for children and their parents/guardians, as it is the safest and most effective way of providing protection against harmful and often deadly diseases. To meet the Child Care Subsidy immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the standard vaccination schedule, be on an eligible catch-up vaccination schedule or have an approved exemption from being immunised.

CCS is paid directly to approved providers and passed on to parents/guardians as a fee reduction.

Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCs) [refer definitions](#) provides additional fee assistance to support vulnerable or disadvantaged parents/guardians and children. This support recognises the preventative and protective influence of quality child care on a child's health, wellbeing and development; and the importance of continuity of care.

Related Resources

- Best Start Best Life <https://www.vic.gov.au/kinder-quick-guide-parents>
- Department of Education: Child Care Subsidy (CCS): www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/child-care-subsidy

Related References

- Community Plan (2021–31)
- Council Plan (2021–25)
- The Child Youth and Seniors Plan (2021–25)

Related Policies & Procedures

- Family Fact Sheet – Fees and Charges Long Day Care)
- Family Fact Sheet – Funded Sessional Kindergarten Fees and Charges
- Feedback, Compliments and Complaints
- Registration, Enrolment and Orientation – Long Day Care
- Registration, Enrolment and Orientation – Funded Kindergarten
- [Dealing with Infectious Diseases](#)
- Governance and Management of the Service
- Inclusion and Equity
- Privacy and Confidentiality

All staff working for Knox City Council Early Years Services are required to read and understand all Knox City Council Early Years Policies and Procedures. We strongly recommend all parents/guardians enrolling in Knox City Council Early Years Services read the Knox City Council Early Years Services Policies and Procedures

Relevant Legislation and Standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard

Charter of Human Rights

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- This policy has been assessed against and complies with the Charter of Human Rights.

Sources

- LOOKOUT Education Support Centres <https://www.vic.gov.au/lookout-education-support-centres>
- Services Australia <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>
- Victorian Government – Early Start Kindergarten www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten
- The Child Care Provider Handbook: www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/child-care-provider-handbook

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

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Definitions

Please see Family and Children’s Services Quality System Glossary and Definitions for further glossary and definitions.

| Term | Meaning |
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| Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCs) | <p>If you’re eligible for Child Care Subsidy you may get extra help with the cost of approved child care if you also meet one of the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an eligible grandparent getting an income support payment • transitioning from certain income support payments to work • experiencing temporary financial hardship • caring for a child who is vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. <p>Additional Child Care Subsidy - Services Australia</p> |
| Approved child care | Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) on behalf of eligible parents. |
| Approved Provider | Individual, organisation or company with management or control to operate the education and care service/s, through the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations. |
| Bond Payment | A charge applicable to new enrolments when accepting a place that has been offered in a long day care program at the service. Services must ensure that families understand that the Bond Payment will be refunded after the last date of care when four (4) weeks’ written notice has been provided to cease care, and when all accounts are paid in full including CCS, and no fees remain outstanding. This may take up to 6 weeks. Where the bond payment poses a barrier to the family enrolling at the service, the bond may be waived at the Manager Family and Children’s Services discretion. |
| Child Care Subsidy (CCS) | A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers. Further information can be found at: Child Care Subsidy - Services Australia |
| CWA | Complying Written Arrangement: A written agreement between the parent/guardian of the child and child care provider, confirming details of care sessions and fees. |
| Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) | A funding program that provides eligible children 15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten program each week for two years before starting school. To be eligible a child must be 3 by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with child protection. Details are available at: www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten If a child is eligible for ESK, they should be enrolled in ESK, even where Free Kinder and/or 15 hours per week of funded three-year old kindergarten is offered. This ensures eligible children have priority access to 15 hours of funded kindergarten provided by an early childhood teacher and that service providers receive additional funding and support. ESK enrolments contribute to School Readiness Funding (SRF) calculations for service providers. It also allows the Department to continue to monitor efforts to engage the most |

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| | vulnerable children in kindergarten across Victoria and provide additional targeted support where required through SRF or Early Childhood LOOKOUT. LOOKOUT Education Support Centres |
| Fees | A charge for a place within a long day care program at the service. Further information on Bond Payment and Late Collection Fees (<i>refer to Definitions</i>) |
| Free Kinder | A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative. Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a free 15-hour program to 4-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service • providing a free 5 to 15-hour program to 3-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered) • offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service. |
| Funded Kindergarten | The Victorian Government contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Funded kindergartens charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual kindergartens and depend on things like how many hours children attend and whether there are extra costs such as excursions. |
| KIM System | Kindergarten Information Management System (KIMS). |
| Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS) | A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parents' fees and enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten for 15 hours free of charge. |
| Late Collection Fee | A charge that may be imposed by the approved provider when a family is late to collect their child/children for the program. |

Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this procedure. Where an update does not materially alter this policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples of minor administrative changes include changes to names of Council departments or positions, change to names of Federal or State Government departments or a minor amendment to legislation that does not have material impact. Where any change or update may materially change the intent of this policy, it must be considered by Council.