

Funded Kindergarten Registration and Enrolment Procedure

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Approval by:	CEO	Responsible Officer:	Manager Family and Children's Services
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1. Purpose

This procedure outlines Knox City Council's Registration and Enrolment System for current and future families who wish to have their children enrolled in a Council managed kindergarten service.

The procedure provides clear advice for families, educators and Council staff on the kindergarten registration process, allocation of places and enrolment of eligible children through the Knox Early Years Service portal, KEYS online.

2. Context

In Victoria, kindergarten is completed the year before entry into primary school. Funding is provided to the kindergarten provider by the Department of Education and Training (DET). The Registration and Enrolment process provides a single point of entry for families, simplifying the kindergarten registration process and improving equity of access.

3. Scope

This procedure applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisors, Educators, Staff, Families and eligible children in the two years before they enter school, in the delivery of both sessional and integrated funded kindergarten within a long day care program.

4. References

4.1 Community & Council Plan 2017-2021

- **Goal 5 – We have a strong regional economy, local employment and learning opportunities.**
 - 5.4 Increase and strengthen local opportunities for lifelong learning, formal education pathways and skills development to improve economic capacity of the community.
- **Goal 6 – We are healthy, happy and well.**
 - 6.2 Support the community to enable positive physical and mental health.
- **Goal 8 – We have confidence in decision-making.**
 - 8.1 Build, strengthen and promote good governance practices across government and community organisations.

4.2 Councils Key Life Stages Plan 2017-2021

Council's vision for children and families in Knox is that:

- Knox children are enjoying a fun, happy, safe childhood where they are loved, supported and nurtured. They are engaged towards optimal health, wellbeing and are active participants in their own learning, development and community;

- Childhood in Knox is an important and recognised stage of life, where children play and explore and are part of the neighbourhoods, as their learning is supported by their family, friends and wider community; and
- Knox families are richly diverse, and their role as their child's first and most important teachers is acknowledged and valued. They are supported, encouraged, connected, informed and empowered to be nurturing, confident and thriving families.

4.3 Relevant Legislation and Standards

- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic);
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic);
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment Act 2015;
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Regulations 2017;
- Child Safe Standards (Vic);
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992;
- Early Years Management Policy Framework 2016;
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010;
- Education and Care Services Regulations 2011, incorporating Amendments 2017;
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004;
- No Jab No Play Legislation.

4.4 Relevant Policy and Data Sources

- Australian Early Development Census;
- Early Childhood Agreement for Children in Out-of-Home-Care 2014;
- Education State Early Childhood Reform Plan;
- National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education;
- National Partnership Agreement for Early Childhood Education;
- National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development;
- National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care;
- National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education 2018-2020;
- National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education 2018-2020 – Victorian Implementation Plan;
- National Early Years Learning Framework;
- National Quality Standards for Early Childhood;
- Reportable Conduct Scheme;
- Victorian Kindergarten Early Years Management Policy Framework;
- Victorian Kindergarten Policy, Procedures and Funding Criteria;
- Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework;
- Victorian Child Safe Standards'

4.5 Charter of Human Rights

- This procedure has been assessed against and complies with the charter of Human Rights.

4.6 Related Council Policies

- Local Government Act 1989 or Local Government Act 2020 as applicable – Conflict and Interest Provisions.
- Funded Kindergarten Policy

4.7 Related Family and Children Services Documents

- Enrolment and Orientation Procedure
- Fees and Fee Payment Policy and Procedure
- Kindergarten Fees and Charges – Family Factsheet
- Kindergarten Registration – Family Factsheet
- Kindergarten Registration and Enrolment – Standard Work Practice

5. Definitions

Acceptable Immunisation Documentation	Documentation as defined by the Immunisation Enrolment Toolkit for early education and care services as acceptable evidence that a child is fully vaccinated for their age, or is on a recognised catch-up schedule if their child has fallen behind with their vaccinations; or has a medical reason not to be vaccinated; or has been accessed as being eligible for a 16-week grace period.
Ballot	The process of a random selection via KEYS online to determine which registered applicants are offered a place in their nominated kindergarten group. This occurs in situations where there are a greater number of registrations with the same Priority of Access criteria than there are places available in the preferred kindergarten group.
Registration and Enrolment Scheme	Knox City Council’s process of registering and enrolling children in kindergarten for families, ensuring the process is simple, consistent, inclusive and equitable for the Council Funded Integrated Kindergartens.
Deferral	When a child does not attend kindergarten in the year they are eligible for a funded place. DET is notified that this child has not accessed a year of funded kindergarten and is therefore eligible for DET funding in the following year.
Eligible Children	Children who are eligible for funded kindergarten, whose parent/guardian have nominated a Council funded kindergarten program for their child’s kindergarten service.
Enrolment	Is when a family completes the required contact, personal and medical enrolment information for their child. Once all information is received, the child can attend the funded kindergarten service.
Kindergarten Funding Subsidy (KFS)	Promotes participation by enabling eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program free of charge in the year before school.
Maternal Child Health Service	A free, universal primary health service for all Victorian families with children from birth to school age. It includes the Universal MCH program, Enhanced MCH program and the MCH Line, a 24-hour telephone support service.
Preferences	List of top five preferred kindergarten centres and groups provided by families during the kindergarten registration process.
Priority of Access (POA)	Council will ensure that Council managed funded kindergarten services are accessible to Knox residents, reflect the State Government Priority of Access criteria and funding requirements.
Registration	The process of families and carers giving initial information about the child to initiate their intention to enrol in kindergarten. This includes collection of basic contact information, kindergarten preferences and details on potential disadvantage or vulnerability and any other details that may inform prioritised allocation in kindergarten.

6. Procedure

Council implements an annual cycle for the registration, allocation and enrolment process. (See figure 1).

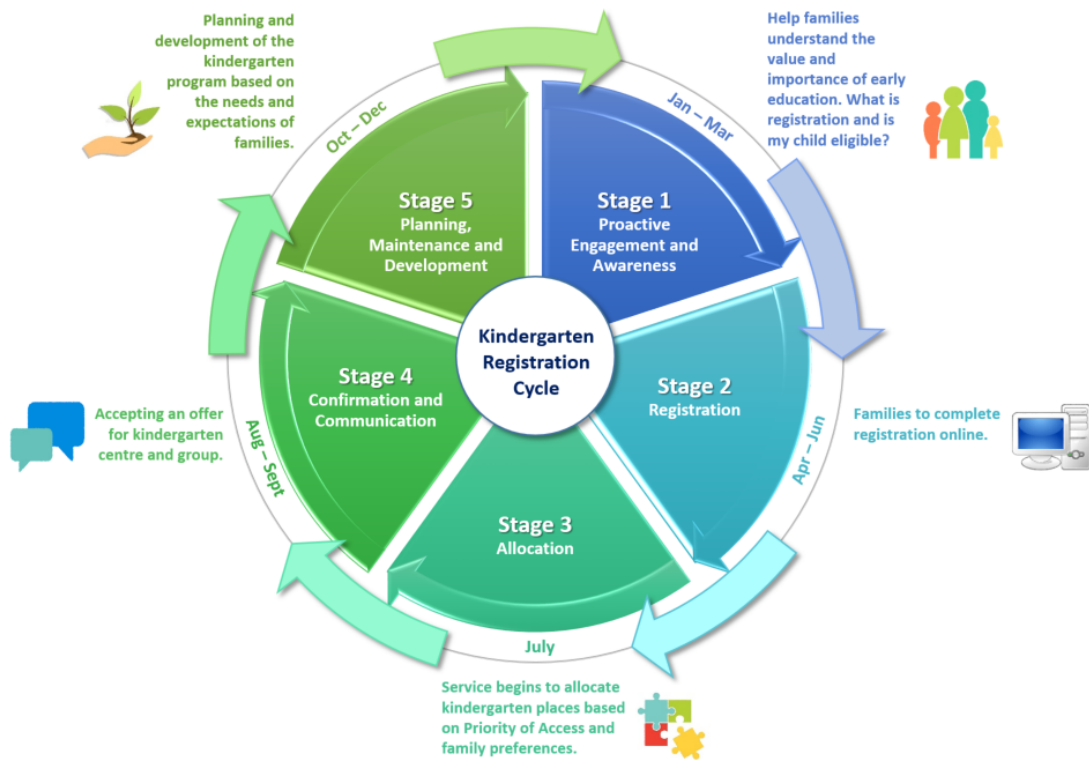


Figure 1: Knox City Council Kindergarten Registration annual cycle

6.1 Stage 1 – Engagement and Awareness

Council is committed to building strong relationships with other early year’s practitioners and partners to support and engage with families on the importance of kindergarten and to promote available support to families, carers and their children who would otherwise face barriers to enrolment in kindergarten.

All children registering for Council Funded Kindergarten or Council Funded Kindergarten in a Long Day Care service must be eligible to attend kindergarten in the year they intend to enrol.

6.1.1 Eligibility for Three-Year-Old Kindergarten (available from 2022)

A child must be 3 years of age by April 30 in the year they attend a funded kindergarten service.

Please Note: A child must be 3 years of age, before starting 3-year-old kindergarten. If a child turns 3 years of age between the start of Term 1 and 30 April, families have the option of accepting a place and confirming that their child will commence in Term 2. Alternatively; a child can be placed on the waiting list and offered a place (if one is available) once the child turns 3.

6.1.2 Eligibility for Four-Year-Old Kindergarten

A child must be 4 years of age by April 30 in the year they attend a funded kindergarten service. In Victoria, a child cannot attend more than one State Government funded Kindergarten program at the same time.

6.1.3 Group Size

All three-year-old and four-year-old groups will vary in size according to licensed capacity, up to a maximum of 33 children with a 1:11 staff/child ratio. All kindergarten groups incorporate a small team of educators who work together with children to deliver the kindergarten program.

6.1.4 Second Year of Funded Kindergarten

It is recognised that some children may benefit from a second year of funded kindergarten prior to commencing school.

In these circumstances, an Early Childhood Educator will use DET guidelines to assess if a child has developmental delays in at least two key areas of development and are likely to achieve better outcomes attending an additional year of kindergarten rather than going to school. The areas assessed include;

- Self-care – a child’s ability to look after themselves sufficiently;
- Ability to speak and/or understand language;
- Cognitive (intellectual) development;
- Social development – how a child interacts with other children;
- Emotional development

Eligible applications are sent to the Department of Education and Training (DET) by the kindergarten administration team for second year approvals. Where an application for a second year of kindergarten is not approved by DET, the child will not be eligible to enrol for a second year at a Council managed kindergarten.

6.1.5 Early Start Kindergarten

Early Start Kindergarten provides free kindergarten to eligible three-year-old children. Council may be able to offer eligible children a kindergarten place in a four-year-old program. Children are eligible for Early Start Kindergarten if they are aged three by 30 April in the year they will be attending a kindergarten program, and;

- The child is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; or
- The family has had contact with Child Protection (or been referred by them to Child FIRST)

6.1.6 Immunisation – ‘No Jab No Play’

The ‘No Jab No Play’ legislation came into effect on 1 January 2016. Under the legislation:

- Children are required to have their immunisation up to date or have an approved exemption in order to commence kindergarten.
- Families must provide their approved kindergarten provider with an immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) prior to a child commencing kindergarten. The statement must confirm that the child is fully immunised for their age.

Please Refer to ***Family and Children’s Enrolment and Orientation Policy and Procedure*** for further details.

6.2 Stage 2 – Registration for 3 and 4-year-old Kindergarten

Before completing the registration process, families are encouraged to visit a few kindergartens to help them determine the most suitable centres and group times for their needs.

When registering for the first time, [KEYS Online](#) allows families to indicate up to 5 preferences for centres and groups at the one time. Families are not required to register for each individual service.

Families are encouraged to register eligible children to attend a Council managed kindergarten service in the year prior to kindergarten attendance.

- Registrations received between 1 April and 30 June will be included in round 1 allocations.
- Registrations received after 30 June will be included in subsequent allocation rounds.
- Any changes to registrations including change of preferences received after 30 June will be processed after the first round allocations.
- If a child has attended a Council managed 3-year-old kindergarten and needs to register for 4-year-old kindergarten, families will need to register in the year prior to each kindergarten attendance, using the original family account logged in KEYS online.

If families believe an account should exist but the details cannot be found or, if a family has previously had a child registered but do not have a portal log in, the Knox Kindergarten Services can be contacted on 9298 – 8000 or kindergarten@knox.vic.gov.au.

For registration timelines please refer to [Factsheet -Kindergarten Registration Dates](#).

6.2.1 How to register a child for kindergarten

Families can register their child for Council managed kindergartens and kindergarten within Council managed Long Day Care services through the KEYS online portal:

Step 1: Visit [KEYS Online](#);

Step 2: Create an account;

- Enter child and family details

Below are examples of the documentation needed as part of the registration process:

Criteria	Documents
Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran’s Affairs Card.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of Card (photo or scan copy)
Priority of Access Child at Risk of Abuse or Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral letter if applicable from DHHS/case worker.
Proof of Address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of a Rates Notice/Lease Agreement or Utility Invoice; for example, a mobile phone or electricity bill (issued in the last 3 months); • Copy of a Drivers Licence or current Health Care Card or Pension Concession Card displaying your current address.

Step 3: Register for services using KEYS Online– applying for 3-year-old or 4-year-old kindergarten;

- 1.1 Families are encouraged to indicate up to 5 kindergarten centre and group preferences as part of the registration process.
 - 3.1.1 Preferences must be listed in order from 1 to 5, starting with number 1 being the most preferred centre and group.
- 1.2 It is important for families to only list preferences that they are **willing to accept** if a place is offered.

Please Note: As part of the registration process, KEYS Online will automatically generate a list of kindergartens based on the family residential address. If a family selects one of these kindergartens as their first preference, they will be given a higher priority for allocation. (Refer to figure 2).

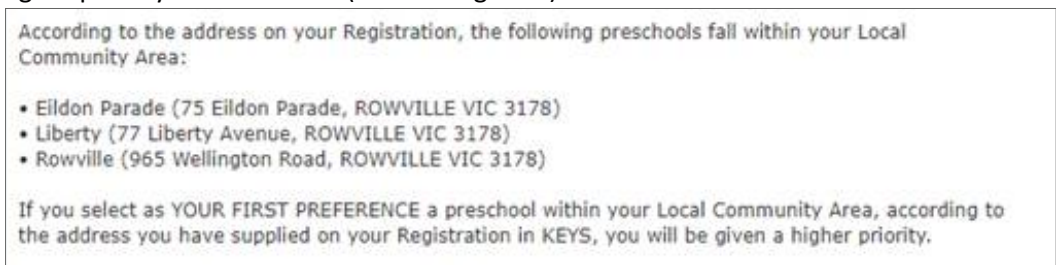


Figure 2:
Extract from KEYS online portal, local centre listing.

- 1.3 To select your centre and group preferences, families must click and drag their choice from the list of kindergarten centres and groups on the left side of the screen) over to the right side, under selected groups. (Refer to figure 3).

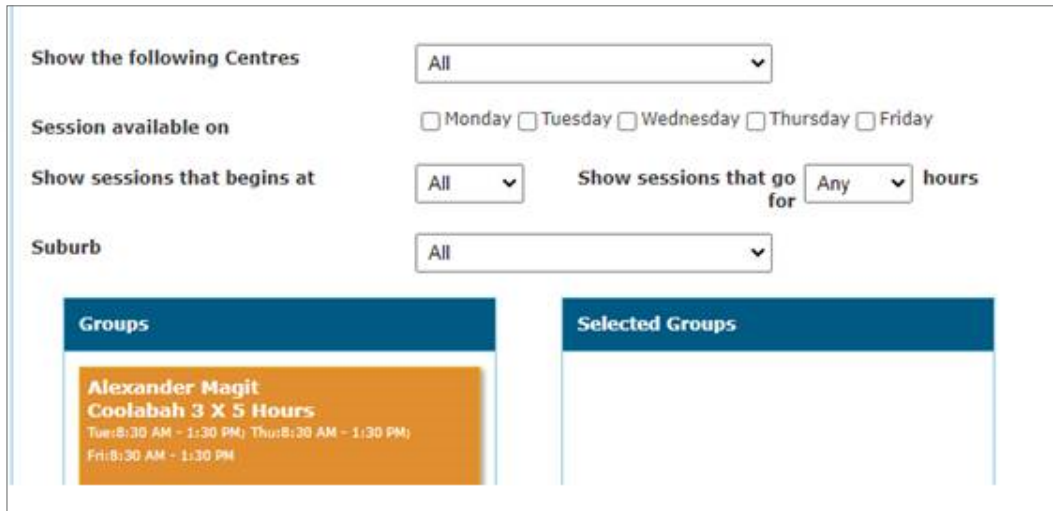


Figure 3: Extract from KEYS online portal, selecting preferred centres and groups.

Step 4: Answer the Priority of Access Questions

Council managed kindergartens and kindergartens located in Council managing Long Day Care services have an approved 'Priority of Access Criteria' in line with Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) Priority of Access Guidelines to prioritise registrations and to allocate places.

Set out below is the Priority of Access Criteria and the process that could be used to verify needs;

Priority One – High Priority Children	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including Out of Home Care.	<p>The child is;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. attending a three-year-old kindergarten program through Early Start Kindergarten (ESK) or is; 2. Referred by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child Protection ○ Child and family services (family services referral and support team, Child FIRST/Integrated family services/Services Connect case worker) ○ Maternal Child Health nurse, or ○ Out of Home Care Provider;
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the enrolment process, service providers must respectfully ask families 'is your child Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' and record this information.
Asylum seeker and refugee children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An appropriate visa identifies the child and/or parents as a refugee or asylum seeker.

Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy

- A child or parent holds one of the below cards;

- A Commonwealth Health Care Card	- In-country Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 201)
- A Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card	- Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202)
- A Department of Veterans' Affairs Gold Card or White Card	- Temporary Humanitarian Concern visa (subclass 786)
- Refugee visa (subclass 200)	- Protection visa (subclass 866)
- Emergency Rescue visa (subclass 203)	- Women at risk visa (subclass 204)
- Bridging visas A-E	



- Multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets).

Children with additional needs, defined as children who:

- Require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
- Require a combination of services which are individually planned
- Have an identified specific disability or developmental delay

The child:

- Is assessed as having delays in two or more areas and is declared eligible for a second funded year of kindergarten
- holds a Child Disability Health Care Card
- has previously been approved for Kindergarten Inclusion Support Package, or referred by: –
 - the National Disability Insurance Scheme
 - Early Childhood Intervention Service
 - Preschool Field Officer, or
 - Maternal and Child Health nurse

Priority Two

Process that could be used to verify need(s)

Siblings.

An elder sibling must have attended a Council operated kindergarten service within 5 years of the new registration. The sibling must have attended the centre selected as the 1st preference for the new registration.

Local Community Area.

A Local Community Area recognises that:

- Families living within an area in Knox, often want to attend a local kindergarten, and also have strong links to primary schools in that area;
- Local transport and walkability are important factors for families; and
- Families make better social connections if they have attended first parent groups and local community and supported playgroups within their Local Community Area.

Please Note: Families that select a kindergarten within their local community area **as their 1st preference** will receive a high priority allocation.

Integrated Long Day Care attendance.

Child is currently utilising Council's Long Day Care Services on the same site as their first preference for four-year-old Kindergarten.

Attendance at a three-year-old Council managed kindergarten

Child has attended a three-year-old Council program on the same site as their first preference for four-year-old kindergarten.

Note: Only Applicable for 2023 registrations and thereafter.

Priority Three	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
All eligible children who are Knox Residents	Eligible children of residents living in Knox.
Priority Four	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Non Knox Resident	Eligible children of families who work or study in Knox
Priority Five	Process that could be used to verify need(s)
Non Knox Resident	Eligible children of families who have no connection with Knox.

6.3 Stage 3: Allocation of places and offers

To act in the best interests of all children and families, Council reserves the right to consider factors such as group size, group dynamics and other special circumstances when allocating kindergarten places.

Kindergarten registrations are only processed and included in the allocation process once all information including supporting documentation is provided. Incomplete registrations will be followed up by the kindergarten services team and may be subject to processing delays.

6.3.1 First Round Allocations

- First round allocations are prepared and based on centre and group first preferences, are processed through the KEYS online portal and offers sent to families in August.

6.3.2 Second Round Allocations

- Second round allocations are prepared, based on all 5 preferences, are processed through the KEYS online portal and offers sent to families in September.
- Any further subsequent allocations will be processed on a monthly basis.

6.3.3 Inability to fulfil first round preferences

- First round allocations are based on first preferences. If a family doesn't receive their first preference, they will remain on the waiting list and must wait for the next round of allocations.
- For second and subsequent round allocations, if a first preference has no vacancies, KEYS online will default to the second, third, fourth and fifth preferences (if more than one has been selected).

6.4 Stage 4: Confirmation and communication

6.4.1 Responding to an offer

KEYS online allocates places according to the priority of access criteria. If a family is allocated a place at one of their preferred centres and groups, they will receive an email directing them to view and respond to the offer via the KEYS Online portal. A response must be provided via [KEYS Online](#) to within 5 business days;

Accept: if a family is happy with the offer, it is accepted.

Decline: if a family does not wish to accept the place offered, they may decline the place. They must then log onto KEYS Online to change their preferences. A child will remain on the waiting list and any new preferences will be considered in the next round of allocations.

Withdraw: if a family decides that they do not wish their child to attend any of the Council managed kindergartens in Knox or the kindergartens located in Council managed Long Day Care services, they may withdraw their registration and will be removed from the wait list. The registration will become inactive.

If a response to an offer is not received by the due date and/or Council are unable to contact the applicable family, the child's registration will be deactivated and the family will receive an email accordingly.

6.4.1 Waiting List

If a child was not offered a place, they will remain on the waiting list and will be considered during the next round of allocations.

A child's position on the waiting list is constantly changing, depending on factors including but not limited to;

- New Registrations
- Families who have chosen to decline an offer and remain on the waiting list for a place at a different kindergarten and/or group.
- Where 2 or more children have the same Priority of Access points, the KEYS system will allocate the place using the ballot process.

If a child has not been offered a place due to no further vacancies, Council highly recommend that the applicable family consider changing their centre and group preferences to give their child the best opportunity of a securing a place. Preferences can be changed by logging onto [KEYS Online](#).

Please Note: Changing preferences will not guarantee a place.

6.4.2 Reserved places for high priority children

The Department of Education and Training (DET) specifies that registration processes must assist children at risk of disadvantage to access a funded Kindergarten program.

A specific number of places will be reserved until the end of January to accommodate 'high priority' children who do not receive a place in accordance with the standard priority of access process outlined above in this document.

Council will make every effort to provide a funded kindergarten place to all 'high priority children'. However, this may not be at their first preferred kindergarten group.

6.4.3 Exemption from School

Children who turn six at any time during the kindergarten year, including children attending a second year of funded kindergarten, must receive an exemption from attending school. Families are advised to apply for an exemption before the child starts kindergarten by submitting an '[Exemption from school due to attendance in a funded kindergarten program](#)' form to the appropriate DET regional office by 1 November in the year prior to the child turning six. For further information, refer to [DET](#) or [council's website](#).

6.5 Enrolment

Enrolment occurs at the beginning of the year at the kindergarten or Long Day Care service.

Refer to **Enrolment and Orientation Procedure**.

Refer to the Knox City Council website for all Family and Children Services [Policies and Procedures](#)

6.6 Administrative Updates

From time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for administrative changes to this procedure. Knox City Council Kindergartens operate under a set of guiding principles and has a funding and service agreement with DET. Changes of intent will be consulted about under the Local Government Act however changes to administrative processes to simplify activities without a negative cost impact on Council will be completed by Executive Management.

Where an update does not materially alter this procedure such a change may be made administratively. Examples of 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.