

## Fees and Fee Payment Policy and Procedure

### Council Early Years Services

<b>Policy Number:</b>	D21-3892	<b>Directorate:</b>	Connected Communities
<b>Approval by:</b>	Head Integrated Services – Family and Children's Services	<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Coordinators - Integrated Kindergartens and Early Years Hubs
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**ACECQA Quality Area** Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management

### 1. Policy Statement

Council Early Childhood Education and Care Services are committed to:

- 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 families.
- Advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by families.
- Providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Child Care Subsidy.

### 2. Purpose

This policy and 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.
- Outstanding accounts.
- Late collection of children.
- Notice of Withdrawal from an Early Years Service.

### 3. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to the approved provider, person with management and control, nominated supervisor, responsible person, educator, and family with an enrolled child, or who wish to enroll a child in a Council Early Childhood Education and Care Service.

## 4. Responsibility



Responsibilities for this procedure are as outlined.

### 4.1 The Setting, Payment and Collection of Fees:

Person	Responsible for
Approved Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting the fees through the council budget process. This is open for public feedback and consultation on an annual basis.</li> <li>Developing a fee procedure that balances the family's capacity to pay, with providing a high quality program and maintaining service sustainability.</li> <li>Implementing and reviewing the procedure in consultation with families and in line with legislative requirements.</li> <li>Ensuring the fee procedure is readily available and accessible in all Council Early Childhood Education and Care Services. (Regulation 171)</li> <li>Providing all families with fee statements/invoices.</li> <li>Collecting all relevant information and where applicable, maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions.</li> <li>Providing families with a minimum of 14 days' notice of any proposed changes to fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)).</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Ensuring background checks are carried out for particular personnel administering Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy - including criminal history police checks.</li> </ul>
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing the Nominated Supervisor or Team Leader of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service.</li> </ul>
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading the Council Early Years Services Fees and Fee Payment Policy and Procedure.</li> <li>Contacting the early years' service they are experiencing difficulties with payment of fees.</li> <li>Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy or Child Care Subsidy for eligible families. Providing proof of their child's immunisation status and a medical action signed by a registered medical practitioner. A child cannot attend a service if they have an out of date immunisation schedule or an out of date medical action plan. This is due to legislative and/or Council Early Years Policy and Procedures requirements. If the family wants to hold the child's enrolled place within the Council Early Childhood Education and Care Service there will be a requirement to pay full fees.</li> </ul>

## 4.2 Outstanding Accounts

The timely payment of fees is important for the financial sustainability of the service.

Person	Responsible for
 Families attending <u>Long Day Care ONLY</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring fee payments do not fall into arrears. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families with accounts in arrears will be contacted to bring the account up to date immediately and discuss an alternative payment plan (if necessary).</li> </ul> </li> <li>Adhering to an agreed payment plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If accounts are not paid within the agreed timeframe or the family do not adhere to the term of their payment plan, the child's place at their service will be cancelled.</li> <li>Upon cancellation, outstanding accounts will be referred to Council's Debt Collection Agency. The cost of debt collection is added to the outstanding account.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> We understand that at times there may be competing priorities for families. Families experiencing financial hardship are asked to make an appointment at the service to discuss payment options.</li> </ul>
 Families attending <u>Kindergarten ONLY</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring fee payments do not fall into arrears. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For families whose kindergarten accounts remains in arrears, and opportunity to pay fees has been offered with no resolution, no further family siblings or children accessing a second year of kindergarten will be offered a place until full payment of arrears is received.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>PLEASE NOTE:</b> We understand that at times there may be competing priorities for families. Families experiencing financial hardship are asked to make an appointment at the service to discuss payment options.</li> </ul>

## 4.3 Fees for Late Collection of Children

- If a child is collected outside normal Early Years Service operating hours or scheduled session times, a late fee will be imposed. The fee charged is calculated at \$1 per minute with a minimum fee of \$15 per child.
- Late collection fees will not have the Child Care Subsidy or Kindergarten Funding applied due to the fact that these charges are outside of the approved Early Years Service operational/scheduled session hours.

## 4.4 Fundraising

Not all service costs are covered by funding and service fees. Fundraising is undertaken to meet the balance and/or pay for additional items for the service. Whist participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged.

## 4.5 Kindergarten Fees and Charges and Keys Online

For further information regarding the kindergarten registration, offer process, fees and charges, please visit Knox City Council Website: [4 Year Old Kindergarten and Keys Online](#) and/or ask your service for the latest version of the Family Fact Sheet - Kindergarten Fees and Charges.

## 4.6 Knox Children & Family Centre Fees and Charges

For further information on fees and charges: please visit Knox City Council Website: [Fees and Charges](#) and/or ask your service for the latest version of the Family Fact Sheet - Knox Children and Family Centre Fees and Charges.

## 5. References

### 5.1 Community & Council Plan 2017-2021

- We have confidence in decision making.

### 5.2 Relevant Legislation

- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- Kindergarten Funding Guide 2016, Department of Education
- National Quality Standard, including Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership
- National Competition Policy and Local Government Act 1989

### 5.3 Relevant Sources

- Child Care Provider Handbook – Online Version

### 5.4 Charter of Human Rights

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

### 5.5 Related Council Early Years Policies & Procedures

- Family Factsheet Knox Children and Family Centre Fees and Charges
- Complaints and Feedback Procedure
- Delivery and Collection of Children Procedure
- Governance and Management of the Service including Confidentiality of Records Procedure
- Funded Preschool Policy
- Late Pick of Children Procedure
- Leadership and Service Management Policy
- Family Fact Sheet – Kindergarten Fees and Charges
- A Guide to Family and Children's Services in Knox – Integrated Parent Handbook

### 5.6 Related Council Policies & Procedures

- Payment Assistance Policy
- Long Term Financial Forecast

## 6. Definitions

<b>Approved Provider</b>	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.
<b>Child Care Subsidy (CCS)</b>	A government program to assist families with their child care fees.
<b>Fees</b>	A charge for a place within a program at the service.
<b>Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)</b>	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.
<b>Late Collection Fee</b>	A charge that may be imposed by the approved provider when family are late to collect their child/children for the program.
<b>Family</b>	For the purposes of this policy and procedure the term 'family/parent/guardian' does not include a parent/guardian who is prohibited by a court order from having contact with a child.

For further glossary and definitions please see: *Family and Children's Services Quality System Glossary and Definitions*.

### 7. 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.

Refer to D19-275224 (Quality System Document Control Register) for further clarification regarding the review and amendment of this document.