

## FEES POLICY

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### NQS:

QA2	7.3	Administrative systems enable the effective management of quality service
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### NATIONAL REGULATIONS:

Regs	168 (2)(n)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to the following – payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service
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### RATIONALE

The payment of fees is the means by which the Edinburgh Early Learning Centre is able to operate, therefore this policy will provide clear guidelines for:

- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by Edinburgh Early Learning Centre

### AIMS

Edinburgh Early Learning Centre is committed to:

- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their 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
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy.

### DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

**Approved care:** Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Family Assistance Office to receive Child Care Benefit payments on behalf of eligible families. Most long day care, family day care, before-and-after school care, vacation care, some occasional care and some in-home care

childcare services are approved providers. Details are available at:  
[www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit)

**Child Care Benefit (CCB):** A Commonwealth Government payment to help families who use either approved or registered childcare services. All eligible families can receive some Child Care Benefit. Details are available at: [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit)

**Enrolment application fee:** A payment to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a place in a program at the service.

**Fees:** A charge for a place within a program at the service.

**Late Payment Fee:** A charge will be added to fee statements for overdue fees. This charge will be listed on the fee statement sent out to families and will be added for each week overdue. The Late Payment fee amount will be determined by Edinburgh ELC Management Committee (see also Parent Handbook and Terms and Conditions).

**Late collection charge:** A charge that may be imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program (refer to Attachment 1 – Fee information for families).

## IMPLEMENTATION:

### The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements
- developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability
- implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of DEECD's *The Kindergarten Guide*
- ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy*
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Edinburgh Early Learning Centre and removing those barriers wherever possible
- reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement
- collecting and receipting all fees
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees
- notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2))
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Edinburgh Early Learning Centre.

### **The Nominated Supervisor is responsible for:**

- implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DEECD's *The Kindergarten Guide*
- considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Edinburgh Early Learning Centre and removing those barriers wherever possible
- considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way and in the family's first language where possible
- providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families
- providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (as set out in Parent Handbook) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the *Fees Policy* is readily accessible at the service
- collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable
- complying with the service's *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees
- notifying parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected
- ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to Edinburgh Early Learning Centre.

### **Certified Supervisors and other educators are responsible for:**

- informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service
- referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Nominated Supervisor

### **Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- reading the fee information in the Parent Handbook
- complying with the Terms and Conditions of enrolment for paying fees.
- notifying the Approved Provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees

## **SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES**

*Victorian kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria:*

[www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecprofessionals/kindergarten/)

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* (Cth)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic)

### **Service policies**

- *Complaints and Grievances Policy*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Enrolment and Orientation Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Inclusion and Equity Policy*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy*

## EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness, particularly in relation to affordability, flexibility of payment options and procedures for the collection of fees
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy
- monitor the number of families/children excluded from the service because of their inability to pay fees
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures (Regulation 172(2)).

## AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Edinburgh Early Learning Centre on 14/08/12.

**REVIEW DATE:** AUGUST 2017

<b>Staff Meeting</b>	<b>Management Meeting</b>	<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Website</b>
May 2016	June 2016		July 2016



# ATTACHMENT 1

## Fee information for families

### Edinburgh ELC

#### 1. Why fees are necessary

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) provides per capita funding as a contribution toward the costs of providing a four-year-old kindergarten program. Services meet the balance of costs through charging fees and fundraising activities.

DEECD provides a Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) that enables children from eligible families to attend a four-year-old kindergarten program free of charge, or at a minimal cost.

DEECD also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

[Service Name] provides a range of support options to parents/guardians experiencing difficulty with payment of fees (see below).

#### 2. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, the Management Committee sets fees each year for the programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- the availability of other income sources, such as grants
- the fees charged by similar services in the area
- the capacity of parents/guardians to pay fees
- reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards
- requirements of the *Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy* (details in the *The Kindergarten Guide*: (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) available under *early childhood / service providers* on the DEECD website: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au))

Fees set for the year are only reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point.

#### 3. Other charges

Other charges levied by Edinburgh ELC are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges. These include:

- **Kindergarten fee deposit:** This payment secures a child's place at the service and is payable on acceptance of enrolment. The deposit is retained as part payment on term fees. Families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (see below) are not required to pay the deposit. Families experiencing hardship should also discuss any difficulties with the service.
- **Late collection charge:** The Management Committee reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are frequently late in collecting a child from the service. This charge will be set at a level determined by the Management committee.

#### **4. Statement of fees and charges**

A statement of fees and charges for four-year-old or three-year-old kindergarten will be provided to families on enrolment.

#### **5. Fundraising**

Not all service costs are covered by DEECD per capita funding and the fees charged. Fundraising is undertaken to meet the balance and/or pay for additional items for the service. While participation in fundraising is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

#### **6. Subsidies**

##### **6.1 Child Care Benefit (CCB)**

Child Care Benefit (CCB) is an Australian Government payment that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved or registered care provider. Edinburgh ELC is an approved care provider with the Family Assistance Office (FAO).

Approved care is childcare that meets certain standards and requirements, and is approved by the Australian Government. Approved care providers must hold a licence to operate, have qualified and trained staff, be open certain hours and meet health, safety and other quality standards. Most long day care, family day care, before-and-after school care, vacation care, some occasional care and some in-home care childcare services are approved providers.

Registered care is childcare provided for work-related purposes, including training and studying, maternity leave, sick leave or voluntary work, and the work-related purpose must have occurred at some time during the week in which the registered care was used. Registered care is provided by individuals registered with the Department of Human Services and may include care given by kindergarten staff.

The amount payable is set by the Australian Government. Further details are available at: [www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/themes/families](http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/themes/families)

#### **7. Payment of fees**

The Management Committee will regularly review payment options and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive and sensitive to families' cultural and financial situations.

Fees will be invoiced to parents/guardians directly and must be paid by the date indicated on the invoice. Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions. The first invoice must be received in full prior to the child commencing at the service. For children enrolled after the commencement of a term, a pro rata invoice will be issued and must be paid in full within 14 days of the child's commencement at the service. Receipts will be provided for all fee payments.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Director to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

#### **8. Unpaid fees**

If fees are not paid by the due date, the following steps will be taken.

- An initial reminder letter will be sent to parents/guardians with a specified payment date, and will include information on a range of support options available for the family.
- Where payment is still not received, families will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the range of support options available and establish a payment plan.
- Failure to attend the meeting and continued non-payment may result in a second and final letter notifying parents/guardians that the child's place at the service may be withdrawn unless payment

is made or a payment plan is entered into within a specified period of time. This letter will also include information on a range of support options available for the family.

- The Management Committee will continue to offer support and will reserve the right to employ the services of a debt collector.
- If a decision is made to withdraw the child's place at the service, the parents/guardians will be provided with 14 days' notice in writing.

not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

## **9. Support services**

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the kindergarten service provider and a list can be supplied to those families who require it. If your service does not already have this information a good place to start is with your local council.

## **10. Notification of fee changes during the year**

Fees set for the year would only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if attendance rates fall below the budget 'break even' point. Parents/guardians will be notified one term in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.