



DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

TITLE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES
DOCUMENT NUMBER:	DPO-COM-CHI-044
DEPARTMENT:	Community Services
UNIT:	Children's Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Children's Services Manager <i>Checked</i> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

APPROVED BY:	Director Community Services
APPROVAL DATE:	17 June 2019
EXPIRY DATE:	Not applicable
REVIEW DATE:	<i>This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by any legislative or council changes.</i>

AVAILABILITY:	Staff - Unit only	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff - Department only	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Staff - Organisation wide	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Public	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Internet	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ADVISE AVAILABILITY:	Media Release	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Sou Wester (Author to prepare article)	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Email designated Groups & Staff	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

REFERENCES: (If applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSC Annual fees & Charges Schedule • Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic), as amended 2012 • <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i> • <i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i> • Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 • <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)</i> • DEEWR Child Care Service Handbook 2012 - 2013 • National Quality Standard, Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management - Standard 7.3: Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service • Kindergarten Enrolment Administration Fee Procedure DPR-COM/CUL-CHI-107 • Accounts Receivable Debt Collection Procedure • Credit Risk Management – Debtor (other than Rate or Scheme) Organisation Policy OPO-CORPS-FI-002 • Children's Services Complaints and Grievances Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-008 • Children's Services Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
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	<p>DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Services Enrolment and Orientation Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-016• Children's Services Excursions and Service Events Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-019• Children's Services Inclusion and Equity Policy DPO-COM/CUL-CHI-024• Privacy Policy CPO-CORPS-GE-006• Records Management Policy OPO-CORPS-RECM-001 <p>Reference Documents</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1: Fees and Charges for Child Care (DocSetID: 2317020)2: Fees and Charges for Kindergarten (DocSetID: 2415743)3: Agreement to pay by instalments (DocSetID: 2418055)4: Kindergarten Fees Payment Agreement (DocSetID: 2309475)5: Care and Education Enrolment Form (DocSetID: 2309471)6: Outstanding Account Letters – Friendly Reminder (DocSetID: 2422313); Request Payment in 7 Days (DocSetID: 2422314) and Cancel Care (DocSetID: 2422312)7: Late Collection form (DocSetID: 1522851)
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1. Purpose

Fees and charges are set in order to balance affordability for families and ongoing service sustainability. Fees are set within the limits of the Glenelg Shire Council budget and funding authorities. Fees are reviewed annually and documented within the Council annual fees and charges document.

In developing fees and charges, Council balances the following considerations:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program
- the availability of other income sources, such as grants, and
- the fees charged by similar services in the area

This policy will provide clear guidelines:

1. For setting, payment and collection of Children's Services fees.
2. To ensure the viability of services offered by the Glenelg Shire Council, by setting appropriate fees and charges.
3. To ensure the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by the Glenelg Shire Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Children's Services staff and parents/guardians with an enrolled child, or who wish to enrol a child at any of the services managed by Council.

3. Definitions

Approved care

Care given by a service provider that has been approved by the Department of Human Services to receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) payments on behalf of eligible families.

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

Families are able to apply to the Department of Human Services (DHS) via Centrelink to be assessed for Child Care Subsidy (CCS).

CCS is a subsidy provided by the Commonwealth Government to assist families with their Child Care Fees. The subsidy is generally paid directly to service providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families make a co-contribution to their child care fees and pay to the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount.

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-0>

Child Care Subsidy withholding

Child Care Subsidy withholding is designed to help families avoid or minimise debts at reconciliation, which could occur due to changes in circumstances throughout the year (for example, changes to family incomes or activities). Families are responsible for updating their information in relation to any change in their circumstances that will potentially affect their eligibility or entitlement.

Early Start Kindergarten

A funding program that enables three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection to attend a kindergarten program that is planned and delivered by an early childhood teacher for a specific number of hours.

Details are available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/learningdev/Pages/default.aspx>

Kindergarten Enrolment Administration Fee

A charge to cover administrative costs associated with the processing of a child's enrolment application for a kindergarten place in a program at the service, which is in addition to kindergarten fees.

Excursion/service event charge

An additional charge required to meet the cost of special events or excursions that occur in response to emerging children's program needs.

Fees

A charge for a session of care/place within a program at a specific service.

KidsXap

Third party software implemented to comply with the Child Care Subsidy system and facilitate service use by Children's Services families.

Quickpay

Third party payment platform linked to KidsXap. Quickpay is responsible for administering the Direct Debit payments and BPAY payments in KidsXap.

Quickpay Fee Schedule:

Payment Account	Direct Debit Transaction Cost	BPAY Transaction Cost
Bank Account	\$1.00	\$1.40
Visa/Mastercard	\$1.00 + 1.8%	\$1.40 + 1.8%
Amex/Diners Card	\$1.00 + 3.6%	\$1.40 + 3.6%

Declined Transaction Fee - \$8.80 per instance (levied by Quickpay)

Health Care Card / Pensioner Concession Card / DVA Card (Gold or White)

A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people.

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS)

A Government subsidy paid directly to the funded service to enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten program for 15 hours free of charge.

This funding enables eligible families to attend a funded kindergarten program at no cost (or minimal cost) to promote participation.

The Government subsidy is paid under the National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, where the State Government provides funding for 10 hours of care and the Federal Government a further five hours. The Federal Government proposes that the 5hrs of funding will now "conclude" on 30 June 2020.

Details are available in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide*.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy – Fees Policy

Provides operational guidelines for services administering the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and can be found in *The Kindergarten Funding Guide*.

Kindergarten Funding Guide

Details are available at:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/funding/Pages/kinderfundingcriteria.aspx>

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Late Collection Charge

A charge imposed by the Approved Provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program.

4. Policy

4.1 Table of Responsibilities:

Procedures / Guidelines	Approved Provider	Nominated Supervisor	Educators/ staff	Finance	Administration Support
1. reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements	✓			✓	
2. developing a fee policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, while providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability	✓			✓	
3. implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff	✓	✓		✓	
4. considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at Glenelg Shire Council children services and removing those barriers wherever possible	✓	✓		✓	
5. reviewing the number of families experiencing financial hardship and the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered	✓			✓	
6. considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families	✓	✓		✓	✓
7. clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible	✓	✓		✓	✓
8. providing all parents/guardians with a copy of the document containing fee information for families (refer to DocSetID: 2317020)	✓	✓		✓	✓
9. providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges (refer to DocSetID: 2317020 and 2415743) upon enrolment of their child, and ensure that the <i>Fees and Charges Departmental Policy</i> is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)	✓				✓
10. providing parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement, if requested (refer to DocSetID: 2309475)	✓	✓		✓	✓

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Procedures / Guidelines	Approved Provider	Nominated Supervisor	Educators/staff	Finance	Administration Support
11. collecting and receipting all fees	✓			✓	
12. collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable	✓	✓		✓	✓
13. complying with the service's <i>Privacy Policy</i> regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees	✓	✓		✓	✓
14. notifying parents/guardians electronically within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2))	✓	✓		✓	✓
15. ensuring a notice outlining fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to each Glenelg Shire Council children's service	✓	✓			✓
16. informing the Approved Provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service		✓	✓	✓	✓
17. referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider		✓	✓	✓	✓
18. assisting the Approved Provider, as required, in sighting and copying supporting documentation		✓		✓	✓
19. Maintaining the Child Care Management System (CCSS) to ensure collection of all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to CCS etc, where applicable				✓	✓
20. assisting the Approved Provider in developing this policy, and ensuring that this policy is based on the principles of the standards outlined in the National Quality Frameworks		✓		✓	✓
21. implementing and reviewing this policy, in consultation with parents/guardians, the Approved Provider and staff, and in line with the requirements of DET requirements				✓	✓
22. considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling and discuss the barriers with the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor				✓	✓

4.2 Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- 4.2.1 Reading the Glenelg Shire Council Fee information for families, the relevant fee payment arrangements/agreements and the Statement of Fees and Charges.
- 4.2.2 If applicable, families are responsible for undertaking a Child Care Subsidy assessment and notifying Centrelink of any changes that may affect their assessment (this does not apply to Kindergarten families or Occasional Care families)
- 4.2.3 All families are to decide on their fee payment preference.

Fee payment options are Direct Debit payments via Bank account or Credit Card; or BPAY payments via Bank account or Credit Card transfers from the families account. Please note that all of these options have associated administration fees.

Kindergarten families also need to complete and return a payment agreement form that indicates their fee payment preference being either Annual, Term or fortnightly fees.

Other Fee payment options relate to frequency. Families can be invoiced weekly or fortnightly. This will also dictate how often their Direct Debit payments are incurred, if applicable.

Families can log on (through KidsXap) to their web portal to setup their own payment preferences, or they can complete a form and return it to the service.

- 4.2.4 Notifying Finance if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.
- 4.2.5 Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim subsidies for eligible families.
- 4.2.6 Where applicable, signing a Late Collection Fee notice and payment of the Late Collection Fee
- 4.2.7 Families are responsible for all amounts outstanding on their account at cessation of their care. Your final account balance may change due to adjustments in Child Care Subsidy calculated by Centrelink after care has ceased.

4.3 Process

- 4.3.1 On enrolment families are to be advised that a copy of the Fees and Charges Departmental Policy is accessible from the Policy Folder at the foyer of each service. Upon enrolment families are required to sign their child/ren's enrolment forms to acknowledge their understanding of and commitment to follow this Policy.

4.3.2 Families are responsible for the payment of full fees until the family is assessed by DHHS (Centrelink) and Child Care Subsidy is received by the service on behalf of the family.

4.3.3 Child Care Subsidy will not be paid for absences where a provider charges a family to reserve a place for a child who has not yet physically started care. If a child is booked in to start at a service on a particular date, and does not start on that day, no Child Care Subsidy will be paid until the child physically attends a session of care (excludes kindergarten and Occasional Care)..

Similarly, a child care service is taken to have permanently ceased providing care for a child on the day the child last physically attends a session of care. This means that Child Care Subsidy will not be paid for absences submitted after a child last physically attends a session of care.

4.3.4 From time to time, Centrelink may adjust a prior amount of Child Care Subsidy that was applied to a session or sessions of care. This could be due to a change in circumstances, absences, immunisation status, residency status etc. This may result in either an increase or decrease in the amount of fees payable by a family. Families are responsible for updating their information with Centrelink as any change in circumstances may potentially affect your current and/or prior eligibility or entitlement to Child Care Subsidy.

Absences

When a child is absent from care, parents are required to notify the service as soon as possible, and by 8:30am on the day of care.

Day Care

All absences will be charged at full fee less any entitled CCS to maintain the child's booking

CCS can only be claimed for the first 42 days absence (for any reason). For additional absences, supporting documentation may be required to claim CCS (excludes Occasional Care).

Kindergarten

All absences will be charged at full fee to maintain the child's booking

Occasional Care

Casual booking cancellations

Families with a casual booking must notify service administration on 5522 2211 before 8:30 am on the day of the requested care or the fee for the session will be charged.

If a child is signed into their casual booking session but subsequently had to sign out of the session, then the family will still be charged at full fee less any entitled CCS (if applicable).

Late Fee

\$1 per minute will be charged for children picked up after the program operating times or agreed booking time.

Prior to the end of the booked session, families are required to ring the service to inform of alternative arrangements for the collection of their child.

A Late Collection Fee form will be completed by staff and signed by the parent to verify the collection time and reason for delay.

Withdrawal of Care

Families wishing to withdraw their child/children from care are required to provide notification in writing to the service two weeks prior to ceasing enrolment.

If a family withdraws their child/children without appropriate notification full fees will be charged in lieu of the two weeks' notice period.

Please note that as per the Family Law legislation, if a provider submits absences after a child's last physical attendance, no Child Care Subsidy and/or Additional Child Care Subsidy can be claimed for those sessions. If Child Care Subsidy and/or Additional Child Care Subsidy is paid for those sessions, it will be recovered by the Child Care Subsidy System and parents will be liable for the full fees.

Payment of fees

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

Invoices will be sent either weekly or fortnightly to parents/guardians directly and must be paid within 14 days of the invoice date. .

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact Finance Unit Representative on 03 5522 2515 to arrange a suitable payment plan. The *Privacy Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

4.4 Invoicing of Fees

Kindergarten

Fees for kindergarten are calculated according to the Children's Services 'Fees and Charges for Kindergarten' Fact Sheet.

Parents/Guardians nominate their preferred Fee Payment option (Annual, Term or fortnightly) and fees will be invoiced accordingly.

Invoices will be issued to parents/guardians directly electronically and must be paid by the due date.

Each invoice will be accompanied by payment instructions.

Occasional Care

Fees for Occasional Care are calculated according to the Council's Fees and Charges schedule and will be charged weekly.

Invoices will be issued to parents/guardians directly electronically and must be paid by the due date.

Long Day Care

Fees are charged in arrears. Invoices will be issued to parents/guardians directly electronically and must be paid by the due date.

For families that are registered with Centrelink and eligible for the Childcare Subsidy, Centrelink will advise both parents/guardians and the service of the percentage of the Childcare Subsidy and number of hours that they are entitled to. This is a tiered system of relief based on family income; and the assessment may be affected by an activity test. **Full fees are payable until the Child Care Subsidy is received by the service. Centrelink will backpay families directly for fees already incurred.**

Child Care Subsidy payments will be credited against the account once fees have been processed by CCSS and notification has been received from the Family Assistance Office. Please note that these amounts are subject to change.

4.5 Collection of Fees

All fees are due for payment 14 days after being invoiced (invoice date is the transaction date on the statement). All fees must be promptly paid.

Direct Debit payments or BPAY payments administered through KidsXap is mandatory for all families at all services (commenced 31 October 2018).

In addition to making due payments within 14 days after being invoiced, residual account balances must be cleared (paid) by 30 June (end of Financial Year) and by 22 December each year (This means that account balances will be zero on 1 July and 23 December each calendar year).

4.6 Debt Management - Unpaid Accounts Process

Where accounts are not paid within the required 14 days, the following process will occur:

14 Days – Friendly Reminder Notice

If fees are unpaid 14 days after the invoice date, a Friendly Reminder message will be forwarded to the Parent/Guardian advising that the fees are overdue and notifying the date the overdue payment is due.

21 Days – Suspension of Care until payment is made Notice

If fees are unpaid after 21 days from the invoice date (1 week after the due date), parents/guardians will be contacted by the Children's Services Team Leader to advise that they cannot continue to access care until payment is made, or until a Payment Plan is entered into. Parents/Guardians will also be advised that their place may be cancelled if the account becomes two weeks overdue.

Parents/Guardians will also be sent an electronic message confirming the above arrangements.

If this situation occurs with a Parent/Guardian on more than one occasion, then Parents/Guardians will be required to attend a meeting with a representative of the Council's Finance Unit to decide on the viability of continued care provision.

28 Days – Cancellation of Care (until payment is made) Notice

If fees are still unpaid after 28 days from the invoice date (2 weeks after the due date), and if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, the child's place will be cancelled by the Children's Services Team Leader. Parents/Guardians will be contacted to advise that their child's place at the service has been cancelled.

A message advising that the place has been cancelled will be issued. The correspondence will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the Finance Unit representative.

35 Days – Past Due Notice

If fees are still unpaid after 35 days from the invoice date (3 weeks after the due date), and if no arrangements to pay have been made or kept, a Past Due Notice will be issued.

A message advising that the fees are Past Due will be issued. The correspondence will include a reminder that parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss payment difficulties and make suitable arrangements to pay with the Finance Unit representative.

42 Days – Final Notice – Letter of Demand

If fees are unpaid after 42 days from the invoice date (4 weeks after the due date), and no Payment Arrangements have been made or kept, a Letter of Demand will be issued

Council's Debt collection process will commence at this time.

Until the outstanding fees have been paid, no education and care services will be provided by any Glenelg Shire Council Children's Service (Note: exception for Kindergarten Fee Subsidy paid by DET).

4.7 Fee Payment Plans

A Fee Payment Plan includes the current balance of fees owing, and future fees likely to be incurred. It also takes into consideration the requirement that all residual account balances are to be paid by June 30 and December 22 each year.

When setting the Payment Plan amount consideration should include:

- Parent/Guardian's ability to meet Plan payments
- Temporarily cancelling care until costs can be met (financial viability) and current debt is paid

If a Payment Plan is entered into and a payment amount is unpaid, the Parent/Guardian will be contacted and the following will apply:

First Default on the Payment Plan

In consultation with, and in agreement by the Team Leader, and the Finance Unit representative, the Parent/Guardian revises the payment amounts and makes the revised payment. If payment is made as per the revised Payment Plan, care continues. However, if a payment is not made, care will be suspended until the Payment Plan payments resume.

Second Default on the Payment Plan

If the Parent/Guardian defaults a second time, they may, in consultation with the Finance Unit representative, re-negotiate the Payment Plan payment amounts and make the revised payment. If payment is made as per the revised Payment Plan, care continues; However, if a payment is not made, care will be suspended until the Payment Plan payments resume.

Third and Final Default on the Payment Plan

If the Parent/Guardian defaults a third time the Payment Plan will be suspended requiring immediate payment of the balance outstanding. If immediate payment of the balance outstanding is not received, care will be cancelled immediately and the account placed in the hands of a debt collection agency with any associated costs on-charged to the Parent/Guardian.

4.8 Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship may require access to family support services. Information on these services is available from the Child Development Officer 5522 2165 and a list can be supplied to those families who request it.

4.9 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 14 days prior to any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

5. Records Management

All Council records created and managed as a result of implementing this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Records Management Policy.

The Records Management Policy assigns responsibilities for records management to employees, supervisors, volunteers and other specific positions.

No Council records are to be destroyed without consideration of the requirements of the Act(s) that govern the functions relevant to this policy. Prior to destruction, advice must be sought from the Records Management Unit, with consideration to the requirements of the appropriate Retention and Disposal Authority (RDA).