



FEES

Children's Services Policy No 1.2

Date issued: April 2015

Replaces issue: Payment of fees; Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate

Date effective: 10 November 2015

Date revised and updated: February 2019; and October 2020

Aim:

- To provide quality education and care services that are affordable and accessible.

Background Information:

Fee levels are assessed and set each year for Long Day Care, Out Of School Hours Care, and Vacation Care in accordance with Willoughby City Council's annual budget process; please refer to the annual [Fees and Charges](#) document on Council's website.

Fee Assistance is offered to families in the form of the [Child Care Subsidy](#). The Department of Human Services administers the Child Care Subsidy.

Relevant Legislation:

- [Child Care Act 1972](#)
- [A New Tax System \(Family Assistance\) Act 1999](#)
- [A New Tax System \(Family Assistance and Related Measures\) Act 2000](#)

Resources:

- [Australian Government - Department of Education, Skills and Employment - Child Care Service Handbook](#) [Willoughby City Council – Fees and Charges](#)

Note: In this policy "staff" and "educators" refers to staff employed within Children's Services by Willoughby City Council.

Statement of Fees and Charges

Council reviews its' Operational Plan and Budget annually. The proposed fees and charges for Council operated Education and Care Services are published for feedback from parents utilising the services and the wider community. These fees and charges are open to community comment and submissions.

The schedule of fees and charges are provided to all parents on enrolment and throughout any review period.

Practices:

Long Day Care (LDC) and Out of School Hours Care (OOSH) (*excluding Vacation Care)

1) Bond

A bond is to be paid upon enrolment at the service (the equivalent of two weeks full fees). The amount will be adjusted should the fee level change or if the care requirements change.

If the amount of the bond exceeds the final fees owing by the parent, then the Nominated Supervisor will provide a refund. The bond may be forfeited as a result of unpaid fees or failure to provide written notice within the designated period as stipulated in the Children's Services Policy No 1.1 - Admissions, Enrolment and Orientation.

2) Placement Fee

A placement fee is payable as a 'one off' payment in Long Day Care services. This fee is non-refundable and covers the administrative requirements of enrolling the child in the service.

3) Payment of Fees

Upon enrolment families are to provide Direct Debit information with bank account or credit card (excluding Amex) details for the payment of fees. Once the Direct Debit is set up, fees will be deducted on a weekly basis.

Fees are required to be paid for all days of enrolment, including when the child may be absent due to illness, holiday or Public Holidays.

Fees are not payable:

- during the December/January shut-down period; or
- for the annual Staff Development Day when the Centres are closed.

Fees are payable in advance by Direct Debit each week and must remain 1 week in advance.

NOTE:

**** An administration fee of \$19 applies for the late payment of fees.**

**** Failure to provide Direct Debit details, will jeopardise your child's enrolment at our services.**

4) Direct Debit fees

The following fees are determined by the third party direct debit provider:

- Direct Debit establishment fee (one off payment per family)
- Child Care Management System Provider Transaction fee (per transaction)
- Bank Account Transaction Fee (per transaction)
- Credit Care fee (per transaction)
- Rejection/Dishonor fee (per transaction)

Casual Bookings for LDC & OOSH Services

A casual booking is where a child who normally attends care is booked in for an additional day of care during a week, or where a child that does not have a permanent booking is booked into care. The additional fee for casual bookings will be added onto the family account.

****Cancellation of a casual booking requires 24 hours' notice, otherwise fees will still apply.**

Change of Permanent Bookings for LDC & OOSH Services

A family is required to provide a minimum of 4 weeks' written notice for any changes to permanent bookings.

**** Please note that during December or January the 4 week notification period does not apply. Where a family has a confirmed booking for December and January the centre will not accept any cancellation or changes to the booking pattern and the**

family is liable for all fees incurred. No refunds will be given should a family decide to leave the centre early, take a holiday, or access other services, such as Vacation Care prior to their child starting school.

Changes to, cancellation of or suspension of permanent bookings for families wishing to take holidays then return to the service after their holiday will not be accepted. Parents are required to pay for care during absences including holidays. Where a family cancels their booking to take a holiday their place will not be held and if the family wishes to return they will be placed on the waiting list for the service. Waiting list fees will apply.

Overdue Fees

- Parents are encouraged to discuss any difficulties related to payment of fees with the Nominated Supervisor. Payment plans may be established to assist families during difficult times.
- An Administration Fee applies when fees are in arrears and no discussion has been held with the Nominated Supervisor.
- Continued failure to pay fees will result in the matter being referred to Willoughby City Council's Finance Team for debt recovery. The child's placement at the Centre will be forfeited.

Late Pick-up Fee

- Children are to be collected before the closing time to allow time to sign out and communication with staff.
- The procedure for late pick up is:
- Any parent who collects their child after 6.00pm will be charged a late fee of \$20 for the first 10 minutes or part thereof and then \$2.00 per minute thereafter.
- Parents will be required to sign a 'late form' to acknowledge the departure time from the Centre. The Late Pick-up Fee is calculated up to the time until the parent leaves the premises with the child.
- Where possible, parents should advise the Centre if they are running late to collect their child. This ensures that staff do not commence contacting the Emergency Contacts and that they are able to provide reassurance to the child.
- If a parent continues to collect their child after 6.00pm, the Nominated Supervisor will make the parent aware that they risk forfeiting their child's placement at the Centre, and discuss alternative care options where possible.

OOSH Search Fee

- OOSH staff **will not** leave the school premises at collection time unless all children are accounted for.
- If a child is enrolled but is not present, then staff will commence a search for that child which includes contacting the parents/emergency contacts. It is the responsibility of the parents to advise the OOSH service prior to 3.00pm if their child will not be present at the school for collection on any day that they are normally enrolled. Failure to do so will result in a Search Fee of \$20 being charged to parents.

Vacation Care

1) Payment of Fees

Parents are required to pick days carefully as no refunds or credits will be given for incorrect bookings or changes in care requirements.

Fees are required to be paid for all days of enrolment, including when the child may be absent due to illness.

Enrolments and bookings for Vacation Care are taken via the My Family Lounge portal on our [website](#).

Bookings open for families currently utilising Council's OOSH centres, families of children with special needs, and Council staff, three weeks prior to Vacation Care commencing.

Bookings open for all other families two weeks prior to Vacation Care commencing.

2) Fee Estimates

The Federal Government's Child Care Management System administers the Child Care Subsidy fee relief to parents. This is a live data link that our vacation care program has with the Department of Human Services.

At the time of booking, parents are charged an estimated fee. We are unable to guarantee that the fee will not change by the time the vacation care program runs. In the event that during this time the Department of Human Services adjusts a family's Child Care Subsidy entitlements, a family's accounts may be in credit or arrears.

Where the amount is either in credit or in arrears of less than \$30, Council will run the credit or debt until the next time the family books into vacation care.

Where the amount of credit or debt is greater than \$30 the family will either receive a refund or have their account debited by the outstanding amount.

Any outstanding amount is due for payment; failure to pay this outstanding amount may prevent any further bookings being taken for vacation care.

3) Late Pick-up Fee

Children are to be collected before the closing time to allow time to sign out and communication with staff.

The procedure for late pick up is:

- Any parent who collects their children after 6.00pm will be charged a late fee of \$20 for the first 10 minutes or part thereof and then \$2.00 per minute thereafter. The parent will be invoiced for the total amount owing at the end of the Vacation Care period.
- Parents will be required to sign a 'late form' to acknowledge the departure time from the Centre. The Late Pick-up Fee is calculated up to the time until the parent leaves the premises with the child.
- Where possible, parents should advise the Centre if they are running late to collect their child. This ensures that staff do not commence contacting the Emergency Contacts and that they are able to provide reassurance to the child.

If a parent continues to collect their child after 6.00pm, the Nominated Supervisor will make the parent aware that they risk forfeiting their child's placement at the Centre, and discuss alternative care options where possible.

Parent Entitlements for Fee Assistance

Willoughby City Council's Children's Services are approved to offer the Child Care Subsidy to eligible families, which reduces the cost of care.

Practices:

1) Eligibility

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is a means-tested payment based on family income. All parents who meet Australian residency requirements, comply with immunisation requirements, meet the work study test and who have children attending care in any approved child care service, may be entitled to apply for Child Care Subsidy.

2) Customer Reference Numbers

Each family member is allocated a Customer Reference Number. Families are asked to nominate on their enrolment form which **Parent CRN** will be used to claim the fee relief. This is known as the CCS Claimant and it must be the parent registered with the Department of Human Services as the CCS Claimant.

3) Applying for CCS (Child Care Subsidy)

Families who wish to apply for the CCS should do so prior to or within 28 days of their child starting care.

Families should contact the [Department of Human Services](#) and the application can either be made directly over the telephone, online or an application form will be sent through the mail.

If a family is not entitled to claim the CCS, they must still register for CCS with the Department of Human Services as the service is required to report usage on a fortnightly basis

**** In all instances, it is the responsibility of the family to ensure the Department of Human Services is notified of any changes to their financial circumstances, changes in child care arrangements, or of anything else that might affect their eligibility for the CCS.**

4) Child Care Management System

All services operate under the Government's Child Care Management System. This system provides a direct link from the Government to the child care service for the exchange of attendance details of children and CCS entitlements for each individual family. This system automatically applies the CCS percentage to the family account and accordingly adjusts the amount of fees to be paid by the family.

Services provide parents with a monthly account of the "estimated" fees for that period. Where a change occurs in the family's level of entitlement, the fees will be adjusted and the family notified of any variance.

5) Child Care Subsidy

Where a family meets the eligibility criteria for the CCS, they are eligible for assistance from the Government for out-of-pocket child care expenses, up to a maximum amount per child per year. The percentage of subsidy a family is entitled to is based on their combined annual income, with more financial support available to lower income families.

Families can access the [CCS Estimator](#) at to determine what the family is entitled to.

6) Limits on Eligible Hours

There is a limit on CCS of 24 hours per child per week except where both parents (and the sole parent) are working, studying, training or looking for work. In this instance, a limit of 50 hours per child per week is granted. The Department of Human Services determines the limit on eligible hours and provides this information to the education and care service. Please speak to the Nominated Supervisor if you require more information about this section.

7) Record Keeping

All centres are required to maintain accurate records of attendance to meet the recording and accountability requirements of the Department of Human Services.

Each child is to be signed in and signed out every day of attendance by the responsible adult accompanying the child. If a parent has forgotten to 'sign out', an educator must 'sign out' or their behalf.

If the child is normally enrolled but does not attend for any reason except where the centre was closed, the parent/guardian is required to note and initial the reason for the absence on the attendance sheet for each applicable day (OOSH services exempt).

8) Absences

Initial Absence 42 days

CCS is paid for up to 42 **Initial Absence Days, including public holidays**, for each child per financial year across all approved child care services (including those not provided by Willoughby City Council) that the child attends. These days are for the initial absence of 42 days, regardless of the reason. Once each child has reached 42 Initial Absence Days, CCS is not paid for any further absences, unless the absences are taken for an Additional Absence Day reason. Therefore parents will be required to pay full fees on any future absences not supported with reasons as outlined below.

Additional Absence Days may be taken for the following reasons and must be supported by appropriate documentation:

- Illness (with a medical certificate)
- Non-immunisation
- Rostered days off (of parent/guardian)
- Rotating shift work (of parent/guardian)
- Temporary closure of a school or pupil-free days
- Public holidays
- Periods of local emergency
- Court ordered shared custody
- Attendance at preschool

Evidence must be provided to the service Nominated Supervisor to claim absence under these categories.

Notification on Intent to Withdraw the Child From a Service and CCS Payments:

Families are required to provide a service with 4 weeks' written notice of withdrawing or changing a child's enrolment pattern.

**** Please note that during December or January the 4 week notification period does not apply. Where a family has a confirmed booking for December and January the centre will not accept any cancellation or changes to the booking pattern and the family is liable for all fees incurred. No refunds will be given should a family decide to leave the centre early, take a holiday, or access other services, such as Vacation Care prior to their child starting school.**

Where a family provides such notice and attends the service for each remaining session, the CCS will still apply to this notice period.

If during the notification period a child is absent, the parent is still required to sign the enrolment form attesting to this. In this case the CCS applies to these absences.

However, in the event that a family provides notice and does not attend for the remaining sessions, or the last day of care only, the CCS does not apply and parents will be required to pay full fees for this period.

Services are required to comply with the Government's funding guidelines to be able to provide CCS to families. Services are subjected to Compliance Audits by the Government and if found to be in breach of these guidelines risk losing their CCS eligibility.

Similarly where a parent receives CCS from the Government, they too are agreeing to abide by the CCS responsibilities for parents. Where a family fails to inform a service of such changes to their circumstances based on these responsibilities, and where the service receives a lesser amount from the Government as a result of this, the centre will adjust the family account to recoup the loss. Information on parental responsibilities for receiving the CCS can be found on the Government's website.

Additional Child Care Subsidy

If you're eligible for Child Care Subsidy you may be able to get extra help with the cost of approved child care.

Eligibility basics:

- meet the eligibility requirements for Child Care Subsidy, and
- be an eligible grandparent getting an income support payment
- be transitioning from certain income support payments to work, or
- be experiencing temporary financial hardship

You can only get 1 type of Additional Child Care Subsidy at a time. If you meet the criteria for more than 1 type, Department of Human Services will pay you the one that benefits you the most.

For more information please see

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/additional-child-care-subsidy>