

## ECECP Procedure 26.2

### Fees, bookings and payments

Controlled Document

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Policy attached to this procedure	Fees Policy
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Our Service is committed to providing quality education and care to all children at an affordable fee for families. Working in conjunction with the Fees Policy, this procedure aims to ensure families understand the fee schedule, booking arrangements, and payment processes required for education and care to be provided for their child.

*Education and Care Services National Law or Regulations (R.168 and 172) NQS QA 7: Element 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 Governance practices and procedures*

#### Procedure

The service will only deal directly with the account holder when dealing with accounting matters. CatholicCare staff will not discuss accounts with any other person other than the account holder.

#### Outside School Hours Care:

- Before making changes to any fees, the service will provide 14 days' notice to families.
- Bookings may be either permanent or casual.
  - Permanent bookings are an ongoing booking with a consistent weekly pattern that remains the same each week.
  - Casual bookings are a one-off booking that can be booked up to 24 hours prior to the day required, provided that there are vacancies.
- Fees represent the total cost per child per session before any government subsidy is applied. If a family is eligible for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS), the amount they pay will vary depending on subsidy percentage and individual circumstances.

### **Payment of Fees**

- CatholicCare Wollongong (ELC and OSHC) use the online program Xplor for processing fees, CCS and Lodgements.
- Fees are set up using the Service's direct debit system (Debit Success). The family is required to provide banking details to facilitate set up of the direct debit account.
- Fees and charges associated with Debit Success are outlined in their terms and conditions on application.
- A dishonour fee will apply for direct debit transactions where there are insufficient funds to cover the fees – this is charged by Debit Success.
- Families will be issued with a Fees Statement on a weekly basis in accordance with the fee payment and Regulatory requirements.
- The Fees Statement will include details of the sessions of care provided and the resulting fee reduction amounts.
- The Fees Statement is generated using our CCS Software (Xplor) which meets all requirements as per Family Assistance Law legislation.
- Alternatively, families can pay their fees using the pay now function on their Xplor profile. NB: Payments must be received by Wednesday in full to halt the direct debit occurring automatically on the Thursday.

### **Early Learning Centre**

- Families are required to pay fees for public holidays that fall on their regular booked day. The only exception is that fees will not be charged for Public Holidays that coincide with Easter or Christmas.
- Before making changes to any fees, the service will provide 14 days' notice to families. Fees are reviewed regularly, and the fee outline can be made available on request.

### **Before and After School Care**

- Before and After school care fees are not payable on Public Holidays.
- Before and After school care fees are not payable during school holidays, vacation care fees will apply during this time.
  - The operational term times will be determined as per the school's calendar.

### **Child Care Subsidy**

- Parents/guardians can register for CCS through their [myGOV](#) account linked to Centrelink and provide documentation to support the CCS payment.
- There are set requirements that must be satisfied for an individual to be eligible to receive Child Care Subsidy. Further information can be found by visiting the Services Australia (Centrelink) website.

- Child Care Subsidy will be provided directly to the Service and this amount deducted from the parent/family account, leaving a gap fee payable by the parent/family.
- Families must regularly check their details are correct and report a change in circumstance to Centrelink- (family income, activity levels, relationship changes or any other changes to their circumstances).
- Any disputes with CCS payments are the responsibility of the family. The family will be referred to contact Centrelink directly for any enquiries regarding CCS payments.

### **Vacation Care Fees**

- Fees are charged during the school holiday period.
- Vacation care bookings are charged as a daily session fee, families will be notified of this rate prior to school holidays commencing.
- Additional fees related to incursion/excursions will apply in addition to the daily session fee.
- Vacation care bookings are accepted and confirmed upon request.
- The service requires a minimum of 24 hours' notice if their child cannot attend a confirmed vacation care session or will be absent on a scheduled day. Failure to provide 24 hours notice will result in charges for the booking (including any additional fees such as incursion/excursion).

### **Late Payment / non-payment and suspension of care**

- If a direct debit payment fails, the family will receive an email of a first direct debit rejection notice.
- If a direct debit payment is rejected for a second week in a row, a \$20 late payment fee will apply.
- If fees remain outstanding after four (4) weeks, a letter of demand/suspension of care will be issued.
- High-Risk Status: If an account is issued a suspension of care, it will be classified as high risk, and specific conditions will apply on the family returning:
  - If an account is suspended due to overdue fees, a bond of \$150 per child will be applied to the account and be payable before the child/ren can return.
  - The bond will be held until the enrolment ends. If the account remains up to date, the bond will be fully refunded.
  - If fees remain outstanding after four (4) weeks and the family chooses not to enter in to a payment plan, the service reserves the right to cancel the enrolment.
- Families will be offered a payment plan to assist with outstanding fees. The

repayment plan will provide information as to the duration and amount of the repayments as well as steps that will be taken if the repayment plan is not adhered to. Families will need to accept or decline the payment plan via email.

- Exceptional circumstances need to be brought to the accounts team who will consult with the Manager for consideration. Continuous suspensions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and it's important to understand that repeated suspensions may impact your child's enrolment in our program.
- Casual booking such as Vacation Care are only accepted if the account is up to date.

### **Vacation care**

- If your account is outstanding at the end of term you will not be able to access vacation care until your account is paid up to date.

### **Provision of statements/invoices**

- The Accounts Team at CatholicCare will take on the tasks of -
  1. sending all families weekly statements
  2. answer statement and fee related questions
- Invoicing is sent weekly via Xplor App with due dates included. Parent/guardians will make sure funds are available for Debit Success arrangements.
- Parents can access their statement each week via Xplor for care attended the previous week. It is the responsibility of the account holder or person who enrolled the child with the service to ensure that invoices are paid by due dates.
- Confirmation of payment, as required by Australian Government guidelines, will be recorded in families' weekly statements

### **Late Collection Fees**

- Late fees will start accruing if the child remains on site after licensed hours and will be charged to your account.
- The initial late fee rate is \$20. In addition to the initial late fee, \$5 per 5 minutes will be charged per child in 5-minute increments. For example, 7 minutes late will be charged: \$30 for one child \$60 for two children. This will be documented on the late collection form by the responsible person and will be forwarded to accounts to be applied to the family's statement.
- If families are anticipating that they will be late they must call the service as soon as practicable to notify staff and where possible arrange for an alternate authorised person to collect the child/ren.

### **Non-Notification Fees - OSHC**

A Non-Notification Fee of \$10 will be charged per family to your account if parents/guardian's do not inform the service by 1:30pm on day of the booked session that the child will not be attending a confirmed After School Care session with the service.

- For example, If the child is absent from school or goes home early on a day, they are due to attend the service then parent/guardians must notify the Coordinator/Nominated Supervisor of the service directly of their absence PRIOR to the session commencing (preferably via the Xplor app).

**Absences, Changes and Cancellations:**

- For information regarding absences, changes, or cancellations to bookings, including notice periods and fee implications, families should refer to the *Absences, Changes and Cancellations Procedure*.

**Strategies for monitoring and implementing procedures**

- Make sure policy and procedures are accessible.
- Ensure the fee structure is part of the discussion with families at enrolment.
- Develop a reminder system to inform families of the fee structure around public holidays, family holidays and absences.
- Develop a communication plan for informing families if and when fees are to be changed.
- Ensure digital and accounting systems can effectively process payments, support the Childcare Subsidy or other government subsidy, and provide statements/receipts for families.
- Develop a system for families who do not pay their fees, e.g. a template reminder for overdue fees, debt collection, payment plans.

**Related policy and/ or procedures**

- Enrolment Policy
- Governance Policy
- Fraud Prevention Policy

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Roles	Responsibilities
<b>Approved Provider</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure the fees set are endorsed by CatholicCare Wollongong, in line with the Operational Plan before being implemented.</li> <li>● Set the fees based on budget requirements to ensure the required income will be received to run the service efficiently to meet legislative requirements. This will involve the CatholicCare Finance team.</li> <li>● Keep all stakeholders informed during this fee setting process.</li> <li>● Notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or</li> </ul>

procedures if the changes will:

- affect the fees charged or the way they are collected or
- significantly impact the service's education and care of children or
- significantly impact the family's ability to utilise the service.
- Provide information to staff on developing the fee schedule.
- Require outstanding fees due to a service be paid before the family can be placed with another CatholicCare service.
- Process all Child Care Subsidy claims.
- Monitor accuracy of claims for Child Care Subsidy.
- Provide fee statements to families.
- Ensure fee schedules are given to families at the initial interview.
- Only provide care for children who are registered with the service.
- Ensure the service operates in line with the Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations and the Family Assistance Law.
- Develop a Fee Policy that balances the parent's/guardian's capacity to pay, with providing a high-quality program and maintaining service viability.
- Consider any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at the service and removing those barriers wherever possible.
- Provide parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges.
- Ensure that the Fees Policy is readily accessible at the service.
- Ensure a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service.
- Enter into a Complying Written Agreement (CWA) with a parent or guardian, to provide education and care services in exchange for fees. A CWA is an agreement between the education and care service and a parent or guardian. It will include:
  - The provider and parents contact names and details
  - The date the arrangement is effective from
  - The child or children's full name and date of birth
  - Session days and start/end times
  - Details of the fees to be charged

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update any changes to the CWA as required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nominated Supervisor/ Coordinator</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide parents/guardians with a regular statement of fees and charges.</li> <li>• Collect all relevant information and maintaining relevant documents regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable.</li> <li>• Notify parents/guardians within 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected.</li> <li>• Ensure a notice outlining the fees charged by the service is displayed prominently in the main entrance to the service.</li> <li>• Ensure that regulatory obligations are met in relation to payment of fees.</li> <li>• Implement procedures for the payment of service fees.</li> <li>• Communicate with families at enrolment about fees, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the amounts charged</li> <li>○ payment periods and methods</li> <li>○ how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy will be applied</li> <li>○ notice periods</li> <li>○ how they can access copies of statements/receipts</li> <li>○ financial hardship considerations and payment plans</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ongoing communication with families about their account.</li> <li>• Monitor the application of the Childcare Subsidy or other government subsidy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Educators</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor.</li> <li>• Be familiar with the Fees policy and procedures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Families</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure their children being provided with care are registered with the service.</li> <li>• Pay fees in accordance with the fee policy.</li> <li>• Read this policy and referring any questions, queries, or concerns to the nominated supervisor.</li> <li>• Obtain a Customer Reference Number from Services Australia (Centrelink) as soon as practical before enrolment at the service.</li> <li>• Record the arrival and departure times of their child or children attending care.</li> <li>• Early Learning Centre families ensure all fees are kept two weeks in</li> </ul>

advance at all times.

- OSHC families ensure all fees are kept up to date.
- Provide documentation for additional absence days as required.
- Provide 2 weeks' notice of withdrawal during the months of February to November and 4 weeks' notice during the months of December and January from service. If child does not attend during the notice period full fees will be chargeable.
- Notify the CatholicCare accounts if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees.