



CUMBERLAND
CITY COUNCIL

Education and Care Fee Payments Policy

AUTHORISATION & VERSION CONTROL

Policy Owner	Manager, Education and Care
Approved by	Director, Community and Culture
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INTRODUCTION

Council's Education and Care Services provide a valuable service to the community which operates under a "fee for service" model. The fees charged to families are outlined in accordance with Council's Fees and Charges Policy as adopted by Council resolution and published on Council's website. Families that are eligible for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will pay a reduced gap fee which is dependent on the individual circumstances of the family and is payable to Council for the duration of the enrolment. When families are approved for Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS), a reduced or nil gap fee is payable.

PURPOSE

This policy supports fee for service clients of Council's Education and Care Services to understand their obligations in making ongoing compulsory gap fee payments to Council as a condition of their child's enrolment.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all fee for service clients of Council's Education and Care Services. Expectations around the timing and collection of gaps fees are also included in this policy as well as actions taken when gap fee payments are not honoured, and when care arrangements end.

DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Education and Care Services	Description of services that includes Long Day Care (LDC), Out of School Hours Care (OSHC), and School Holiday Program (SHP)
Child Care Subsidy (CCS)	The Child Care Subsidy is a means tested Government subsidy paid directly to Council, which assist families with the cost of their childcare fees. Parent 1 on an enrolment form must be the same person who is claiming CCS.
Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS)	A payment that provided additional fee assistance to support vulnerable or disadvantaged families and children. There are four different payments under ACCS: child wellbeing, grandparent, temporary financial hardship and transition to work.
Complying Written Arrangement (CWA)	A CWA is a contract between an approved provider and an individual. To be eligible for CCS, an individual must have incurred a liability to pay for childcare under a complying written arrangement with the provider. It is an agreement between a provider and an individual (one or both parents/guardians) to provide childcare in return for fees. A child is taken to be enrolled when a CWA is entered into.
Allowable absences	Under the CCS, families are allowed 42 absence days per child per financial year. These 42 allowable absences can be taken for any reason, and when children are sick, without the need for documentation. A medical certificate should be provided for all illness-related absences once 42 allowable absent days has been reached so that additional days can be applied for. If not, no CCS is payable and full fees will apply.
Fees	All Fees and Charges are adopted by Council resolution and published on Council's website. Fees are charged for each operational day, regardless of attendance, and will not be charged on days the service is closed eg public holidays. Fees must be paid to Council (or FDC educator) by EFT unless eligible for exceptional circumstances.
Enrolment Fee	An Enrolment Fee is a non-refundable one-off payment for all new children enrolling into Council's education and care services
Direct debit	Fortnightly collection of fees payable two weeks in advance from a nominated bank account or credit card, via Child Care Easy pay
Statement of Entitlement	Statement outlining sessions of care at the service for that period of care, CCS or any ACCS applied, gap fees payable and balance of allowable absences for the financial year until the date of issue. Miscellaneous charges will also appear on the statement if they have been charged in that period.
Parent 1	In accordance with Family Assistance legislation, Parent 1 must be someone with legal responsibility for making decisions concerning the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the enrolled child

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy commits Council to:

- Act with fairness and transparency in all dealings with families with regards to financial transactions for fees and charges associated with this service
- Support families to understand their obligations to Council with regards to fee payments and CCS eligibility
- Ensure all procedures associated with this policy are implemented in a timely and consistent manner
- Fulfil all its legislative obligations under Family Assistance Legislation

PRINCIPLES

This policy is guided by the following principles:

- Council's education and care services strive to operate "cost neutral" and as such, requires user to make ongoing fee payments to ensure services remain a financially viable to the community.
- Fees and charges for education and care programs are set in accordance with Council's Fees and Charges Policy, adopted by Council resolution, and come in to affect each year on the first business day in July.
- Council is an approved Child Care Subsidy Provider and operates strictly in accordance with our responsibilities under Family Assistance legislation which includes, but is not limited to, the requirements to collect gap fees from all users and ensure that gap fee contributions are paid by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Under this policy, Council will:

- Charge a non-refundable enrolment fee for every child enrolled into a Council education and care service or Family Day Care service
- Provide all families with a CWA prior to their commencement and provide an updated CWA when enrolment patterns are amended.
- Liaise with the person nominated as Parent 1 on the enrolment form, in relation to all changes or requests for changes in relation to the child's enrolment.
- Ensure all attendances are submitted to the government so that CCS can be applied to the fee account for the correct days
- Provide families with a Statement of Entitlement each fortnight for centre-based families and weekly for Family Day Care families
- Implement a fortnightly direct debit based on estimated fees in advance, based on current CCS eligibility
- Notify LDC/OOSH families immediately of any direct debit dishonours and apply a dishonour fee to their fee account
- Make arrangements with centre-based families to recover fees in arrears owed to Council, and where suitable, offer a payment plan to support compliance with this policy, or notify families of a reduction or cancellation of care where this is not honoured
- Terminate care and send client accounts to debt recovery when non-payment is made after third direct debit dishonour or payment plan not honoured as agreed
- Provide families with 14 days' notice of any changes to this policy before the updated policy is implemented

It is a requirement and responsibility of the fee payer (Parent 1) to:

- To make an EFT payment equivalent to two weeks fees at the time of enrolment
- Apply for Child Care Subsidy (CCS), or where applicable, Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS), and ensure their enrolment is active in myGov in order to receive government subsidies.
- Pay full fees for the service if no government subsidies are payable to Council (this includes when allowable absences have been exceeded, or when CCS has been suspended)
- Ensure their nominated account details are current and always correct, and that sufficient funds are available for the scheduled fortnightly debit
- Ensure their child's fee account is kept at two weeks in advance (LDC and OOSH only)
- Honour any agreed payment plan to avoid cancellation of child's care
- Provide minimum ten business days' notice through the online submission of an Education and Care Request Form to amend the care arrangement or cancel care, and be responsible for all fee payments in that notice period
- Meet their obligations under the Family Assistance legislation to enable continuation of CCS, including updating their annual income estimate each financial year
- Notify Centrelink if you are going overseas and length of period absent from child care, and accept that if they are absent for more than 6 weeks, CCS may be retracted, and full fees may apply for this period
- Inform Council of any parenting orders that come into effect, and provide Council with a copy of any current orders in place
- Request in writing any changes they wish to be made on the child's enrolment form

RELATED LEGISLATION

Name
Education and Care Services National Law (Act) Act 2011 , National Regulations: Part 4.7 Leadership and Service Management, Division Two
Education and Care Services National Regulations , 168 and 172 Notification of change to policies or procedures
Family Assistance Legislation: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 19992. A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 19993. Child Care Subsidy Minister's Rules 2017 (Minister's Rules)4. Child Care Subsidy Secretary's Rules 2017 (Secretary's Rules)5. Any other instruments (including regulations) made under the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 and the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999
Schedules 5 and 6 to the A New Tax System (Family Assistance and Related Measures) Act 2000 .

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COUNCIL POLICY

- Enrolment and Intake Policy
- Fees in arrears procedure
- EDC Request Form