



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
Policy Reviews:	February 2019, October 2020; December 2022; and August 2024

Aim

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

Background Information

Willoughby City Council aims to keep fees as affordable as possible whilst ensuring financial viability of the service.

The setting and payment of fees comply with the Education and Care Services National Regulations, Australian Tax Office, Privacy Act, and the guidelines in the [Australian Government Child Care Provider Handbook](#).

Fees for Long Day Care, After School Care, and Vacation Care are reviewed annually in accordance with Willoughby City Council's Operational and budget planning process.

Council's annual [Fees and Charges](#) are located on Council's website.

Fee assistance is available via the Services Australia [Child Care Subsidy](#) scheme.

Relevant Legislation

- [Family Assistance Legislation Amendment \(Child Care Subsidy\) Act 2023](#)
- [A New Tax System \(Family Assistance and Related Measures\) Act 2000](#)
- [Family Assistance Legislation Amendment \(Jobs for Families Child Care Package\) Act 2017](#)
- [A New Tax System \(Family Assistance\) \(Administration\) Act 1999](#)
- [A New Tax System \(Family Assistance\) Act 1999](#)
- [Child Care Act 1972](#)

Resources

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

Statement of Fees and Charges

Council reviews its Operational Plan and Budget annually. Proposed fees and charges are exhibited on Council's website by April each year. Residents and can provide submissions prior to the adoption of the fees and chargers.

The schedule of fees and charges is provided to guardians upon enrolment and any changes are communicated annually

Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

The [Child Care Subsidy](#) is Federal Government assistance to help families with child care fees.

To be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy, guardians must meet specific requirements such as:

- Care for a child 13 years or younger not attending secondary school (unless exempt);
- Use an approved child care service;
- Be responsible for paying the child care fees; and
- Meet residency and immunisation requirements.

Applying for CCS

Guardians must apply for the CCS before or within 28 days of starting care.

Applications can be made via [Services Australia](#) over the phone, online, or by mail.

All guardians must register their child with Services Australia as the service is required to report the attendance of children on a fortnightly basis, regardless of eligibility for a subsidy.

Guardians can access the [CCS Estimator](#) to determine what they are entitled to. Information on guardian's responsibilities for receiving the CCS can be found on the [Government's website](#).

It is the responsibility of the guardian to ensure that Services Australia is notified of any changes to their financial circumstances, changes in child care arrangements, or of anything else that might affect the eligibility for CCS.

Customer Reference Number (CRN)

Each family member is allocated a CRN. Guardians must nominate a CRN on their enrolment form for claiming CCS.

Limits on Eligible Hours

The number of hours of subsidised care families can access will be determined by an activity test. The higher the level of activity, the more hours of subsidised care families can access, up to a maximum of 100 hours per fortnight.

Services Australia determines the limit on eligible hours and provides this information to the education and care service.

For more information, please refer to [Services Australia](#).

Payment of Fees

Guardians must complete a Child Care Agreement (CCA) upon enrolment, accepting responsibility for payment.

Fees are deducted weekly via direct debit.

Fees must be paid for all enrolled days, including absences due to illness, holidays, or Public Holidays.

Bond

A bond is to be paid for Long Day Care upon enrolment at the service. The bond amount is the equivalent of two weeks' full fees.

When a child is exiting the service, if the bond exceeds the final fees owing, Council will provide a refund within 4 – 6 weeks. This period enables the Australian Government to make any final fee adjustments.

The bond will be forfeited if there are unpaid fees or failure to provide written notice within the required period as stipulated in the [Children's Services Policy No 1.1 - Admissions, Enrolment and Orientation](#).

Placement Fee

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

Direct Debit Fee Charges

Guardians pay the following third-party fees:

- Direct Debit establishment fee (one-off per family)
- Child Care Management System Provider Transaction fee
- Bank Account fee
- Credit Card fee
- Rejection/Dishonour fee

Overdue Fees

Guardians are encouraged to discuss any difficulties related to the payment of fees with the Nominated Supervisor of the service. 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 of the service.

Continued failure to pay fees will result in the matter being referred to Willoughby City Council's debt recovery and the child's placement at the service will be forfeited.

Casual Bookings for Long Day Care and After School Care

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.

24 hours' notice is required to cancel a casual booking otherwise full fees apply.

December/January Bookings for Long Day Care & After School Care

No changes will be accepted to the booking pattern during December and January periods.

The guardian will be liable for all fees over this period.

No refunds will be given should a family decide to leave the service prior to the end of a year.

Families are required to provide a minimum of 4 weeks' notice for any changes to permanent

bookings outside the December to January period.

Attendance during notice period

Where a guardian provides notice and the child continues to attend the service, CCS will still apply.

If during the notification period a child is absent, the guardian is still required to confirm the absences and CCS will apply to those absences.

For further information on CCS and absences please visit the [Services Australia website](#).

Absences for family holidays

Guardians are required to pay for care during absences, including holidays.

Late Pick-up Fee

Children should be collected prior to closing time to allow time to sign out and to enable communication with staff. Any guardian who collects their child after 6.00pm will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$20 for the first 10 minutes or part thereof, and then \$2.00 per minute thereafter. The Late Pick-up Fee is calculated up to the time until the guardian leaves the premises with the child.

Guardians should advise the service if they are running late to collect their child. This ensures that staff do not commence contacting the emergency contacts and are able to provide reassurance to the child.

If a guardian continues to collect their child after 6.00pm, the child's placement is at risk of being cancelled.

After School Care – Search Fee

After School Care 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 guardian/s and emergency contacts.

It is the responsibility of the guardian to mark their child as absent in the My Family Lounge portal on our [website](#), or via the My Family Lounge mobile app prior to 3.00pm on the day of absence. Failure to do so will result in a Search Fee being charged to guardians.

Vacation Care - Payment of Fees

Guardians 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](#), or via the My Family Lounge mobile app.

Vacation Care - Fee estimates

At the time of booking, guardians 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 Services Australia adjusts a guardian's Child Care Subsidy entitlements, 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 guardians 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.

Late Pick-Up Fees also apply to Vacation Care.

Child Care Management System

All services operate under a Government approved 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 guardian. This system automatically applies the CCS percentage to the guardian's account and accordingly adjusts the amount of fees to be paid by the family.

The service will provide guardians with a weekly statement of the "estimated" fees for that period. Where a change occurs in the guardian's level of entitlement, the fees will be adjusted and the guardian notified of any variance.

Guardians can access CCS when their child is absent from a session of care they would normally attend for up to 42 days per child, per financial year.

Guardians can use their absence days for any reason. No evidence is required.

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.

Guardians will be required to pay full fees on any future absences not supported with reasons as outlined below.

Additional Absence Days

These may be taken for the following reasons and must be supported by appropriate documentation:

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

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

Emergency Absences

During a [period of emergency](#), families won't have to use their annual allocation of allowable absences.

Help is available for families and early childhood education and care services in an emergency, like bushfires, storms, or floods. Support includes gap fee waivers, extra absences and support for service closures.

Children who live or attend a service in an affected region will get extra allowable absences for the duration of the period of emergency.

These absences will be automatically applied in the Child Care Management System if a period of emergency is declared.

After a period of emergency, families may receive additional absences if they have exhausted their annual allocation of allowable absences.

The Australian Government provides a range of payments and services for individuals recovering from a major disaster. Find information about payments during an emergency on the [Services Australia website](#).