

1. Objective

This policy provides a clear set of guidelines for:

- free kindergarten subsidies for funded sessional kindergarten programs
- reduced fees for children enrolled in a funded kindergarten program in a long day care centre
- the setting, payment and collection of fees
- ensuring the viability of Bestchance by setting appropriate fees and charges
- the equitable and non-discriminatory application of fees across the programs provided by bestchance.

bestchance is an Approved Provider of early childhood education and care services and is committed to supporting children and families to access high quality services that are inclusive, accessible and affordable.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the approved provider, persons with management or control, persons in day-to-day charge and parents/guardians attending Bestchance.

3. Values

bestchance Early Years is committed to:

- supporting the Victorian Government's Free Kinder initiative
- increasing access to quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children
- providing responsible financial management of the service, including establishing fees that will result in a financially viable service, while keeping user fees at the lowest possible level
- providing a fair and manageable system for dealing with non-payment and/or inability to pay fees/outstanding debts
- ensuring there are no financial barriers for families wishing to access an early childhood program for their child/children
- maintaining confidentiality in relation to the financial circumstances of parents/guardians
- advising users of the service about program funding, including government support and fees to be paid by parents/guardians
- providing equitable access for families eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and/or Early Start Kindergarten.

4. Procedures

The approved provider and persons with management or control, nominated supervisor and persons in day-to-day charge are responsible for:

Reviewing the current budget to determine fee income requirements

Developing a fee policy that balances the parents/guardians capacity to pay, with providing a high quality program and maintaining service viability

Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the nominated supervisor and staff, and in line with the requirements of Department of Education (DE), The Kindergarten Funding Guide ([refer to Sources](#))

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- Considering any issues regarding fees that may be a barrier to families enrolling at bestchance Early Years services and removing those barriers wherever possible
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered
- Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families
- Clearly communicating this policy and payment options to families in a culturally-sensitive way, and in the family's first language where possible
- Ensuring that the Fee Policy is readily accessible at the service (Regulation 171)
- Ensuring families are only charged for kindergarten programs hours that are over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 hours per year).
- Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service **nominate and document** which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program
- Ensuring that families are informed of the operating hours including term dates, planned closures and additional hours to account for closures
- Providing all parents/guardians with information about Free Kindergarten (*refer to Attachment 1*)
- Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of fees and charges upon enrolment of their child
- Providing all parents/guardians with a fee payment agreement
- Ensuring families are not charged any compulsory out-of-pocket levies or maintenance fees (voluntary fundraising and payments/donations are permitted)
- Ensuring any voluntary parent payments/donations are explicitly agreed to in writing and receipted
- Ensuring fees are collected and receipted
- Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions (*refer to Definitions*)
- Complying with the service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of fees
- Notifying parents/guardians a minimum of 14 days of any proposed changes to the fees charged or the way in which the fees are collected (Regulation 172(2)), and ideally providing one term's notice
- Addressing any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service in a timely manner
- Ensuring that any surplus funding is used in line with acceptable uses of kindergarten funding, including to promote increased participation and/or enhanced program quality.
- Charging families only for an occasional special event/ excursions that occur outside the normal program/curriculum
- Ensuring that any child that is eligible for Early Start Kindergarten is still enrolled at the service and recorded on the KIM system
- Collecting all relevant information regarding those with entitlement to concessions and recording it on the KIM system
- Providing all parents/guardians with an additional fee payment fee agreement (*refer to Attachment 2*), if applicable.
- Inform parents/guardians of any action that will be taken if fees are not paid.

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Informing the approved provider of any complaints or concerns that have been raised regarding fees at the service

Referring parents'/guardians' questions in relation to this policy to the approved provider.

Long Day Care inclusions:

Ensuring that children enrolled in a kindergarten program are not charged higher fees in comparison to children that are not attracting kindergarten funding.

Directly offsetting the full \$2,050 payment from the fees of parents/guardians with children receiving their funded kindergarten program at the long day care centre (service providers are not required to separately calculate and record the cost of the kindergarten hours separately for integrated programs).

Applying the fee offset regularly (e.g., fortnightly or monthly) and clearly indicating the offset amount (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset) on parent/guardian's invoice statements.

Communicating with parents/guardians that the offsets will not impact their CCS payments

Reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures for late payment and support offered

Considering options for payment when affordability is an issue for families

Providing all parents/guardians with fee information

Ensuring fees are collected and receipted

Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions, where applicable

Ensuring any non-funded positions are enrolled in accordance with the Kindergarten Funding Guidelines

Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service **nominate and document** which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program

Providing all parents/guardians with a statement of additional hours fees and charges (*refer to Attachments 2*) upon enrolment of their child, if applicable.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for:

Implementing and reviewing this policy in consultation with parents/guardians, the Nominated Supervisor and staff, and inline with the requirements of DE's Free Kinder initiative and for LDC the commonwealth Governments Child Care Package (*refer to Definitions*) current budget to determine fee income

Collecting all relevant information and maintaining relevant documentation regarding those with entitlement to concessions (*refer to Definitions*)

Ensuring families that attend both sessional kindergarten and a long day care service **nominate and document** which service the child will participate in the funded kindergarten program

Reading the bestchance Early Years services Fee Information for families (*refer to Attachment 1*)

Notifying the approved provider if experiencing difficulties with the payment of fees

Providing the required documentation to enable the service to claim the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and/or Early Start Kindergarten, if eligible (*refer to Attachment 1*)

Complying with the service's Privacy and Confidentiality Policy regarding financial and other information received, including in relation to the payment/non-payment of additional hours fees

5. Definitions

Approved child care: Approved child care services are services that have Australian Government approval to receive the Child Care Subsidy (refer to Definitions) on behalf of eligible parents. Approved child care includes centre-based day care, including long day care and occasional care, family day care, outside school hours care and in-home care.

Funded Kindergarten: The Victorian Government provides funding to support children to access a high-quality kindergarten program in the two years before they start school. The funding is a contribution towards meeting the cost of the kindergarten program. Funded kindergartens charge fees to help meet the cost of running kindergarten programs. Fees are set by individual kindergartens and depends on things like how many hours children attend and whether there are extra costs such as excursions.

Child care subsidy (CCS): A Commonwealth Government means tested subsidy to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. Payments are paid directly to approved child care providers. Further information can be found at: www.education.gov.au/child-care-subsidy

Children/families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage (in relation to this policy): children are vulnerable if the capacity of parents and family to effectively care, protect and provide for their long-term development and wellbeing is limited. Some factors which may contribute to a child experiencing vulnerability include: a child with a disability; living in a family with a low income, or one which is experiencing problems with housing, domestic violence, substance abuse, or mental health; known to child protection; in statutory out-of-home care; Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, having a culturally and linguistically diverse background; having a young or sole parent, or a parent with a disability (adapted from the Kindergarten Funding Guide)

Concession: A Commonwealth Government entitlement providing concessions for low-income earners and other eligible people. This includes one of the following:

- a Commonwealth Health Care Card
- a Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card
- a Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or White Card
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker visa (200-204, 786 or 866)
- Bridging visas for any of the above Refugee or Asylum Seeker visas
- Multiple Births (triplets or more)

Early Start Kindergarten: A funding program that provides eligible children 15 hours of free or low cost kindergarten program each week for two years before starting school. To be eligible a child must be 3 years old by 30 April in the year they start kindergarten and be from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or the family has had contact with child protection. Details are available at: www.vic.gov.au/early-start-kindergarten. If a child is eligible for ESK, they should be enrolled in ESK. This ensures eligible children have priority access to 15 hours of funded kindergarten provided by an early childhood teacher and that service providers receive additional funding and support. ESK enrolments contribute to School Readiness Funding (SRF) calculations for service providers. It also allows the Department to continue to monitor efforts to engage the most vulnerable children in kindergarten across Victoria and provide additional targeted support where required through SRF or Early Childhood LOOKOUT. These children can also access free year-before-school kindergarten through the ESK Extension Grant regardless of whether they have accessed ESK in the previous year.

Early Start Kindergarten extension grants: provides a free or low cost year-before-school kindergarten program for children:

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- not eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy,
- who participated in Access to Early Learning in the previous year or are from a refugee or asylum seeker background, or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or known to child protection. A child is not required to access ESK in the previous year to access the ESK extension grant.

High priority families: as defined in the Kindergarten Guide this includes:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in Out-of-Home Care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Asylum seeker and refugee children
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- A child or parent holds a Commonwealth Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card, Veteran's Affairs Card, or multiple birth children (triplets, quadruplets)

Children with additional needs, defined as children who:

- require additional assistance in order to fully participate in the kindergarten program
- require a combination of services which are individually planned
- have an identified specific disability or developmental delay

Fees: A charge for a place within a service, for program hours over and above the 15 funded hours per week (600 per year) in sessional and integrated programs.

Free Kindergarten: A Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life initiative providing Free Kinder programs for four-year-old and three-year-old children in funded services, that have opted into the initiative.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- Providing a free 15-hour program to 4-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service
- Providing a free up to 15-hour program to 3-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- Offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees 3 and 4-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service.

Kindergarten Fee Subsidy (KFS): A state government subsidy paid in addition to per capita grants to subsidise the costs of parent fees and enable eligible children to attend a funded kindergarten for up to 15 hours free of charge (The Kindergarten Funding Guide ([refer to Sources](#)))

Late collection charge: A charge that may be imposed by the approved provider when parents/guardians are late to collect their child/children from the program ([refer to Attachment 1](#))

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. Events that are planned ahead and are included as an expenditure item in the service's budget do not incur this additional charge.

Voluntary parent/guardian payment/donation: A voluntary payment/donation for items not directly related to the provision of the children's program. Explicit and written agreement from a parent is required for any voluntary payments. Attendance at the service is not conditional on this payment.

6. Policy

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bestchance is a not-for-profit community organisation, and is responsible for the management of this service, including keeping fees affordable for families. **bestchance** Early Years Management as Funded Agency and Employer of service educators, receives the Department of Education per capita funding for providing a funded program in the years before school. **bestchance** provides for the day-to-day support of the kindergarten service, including collection of fees.

7. Forms

Attachment 1: Fee information for families

Attachment 2: Lond Day Care Fee Information

8. Associated Procedures

SOURCES

- Best Start Best Life: <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>
- The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education): www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- Resources for Funded Kindergartens: www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- The constitution of Bestchance
- Department of Education: Child Care Subsidy (CCS): www.education.gov.au/earlychildhood/child-care-subsidy
- The Child Care Provider Handbook: [Child Care Provider Handbook - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

RELATED POLICIES

- Complaints and Grievances Policy
- Governance and Management of the Service Policy
- Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursions and Service Events Policy
- Inclusion and Equity Policy
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

9. Relevant legislation sources

BACKGROUND

The Best Start, Best Life reform will help all Victorian children dream even bigger through increased access to quality early childhood education and care. A critical part of the reform is Free Kinder, which will support access to two years of high-quality kindergarten programs for all Victorian children. All families with a child enrolled in a funded kindergarten program are eligible for Free Kindergarten, this includes both 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten programs.

Free Kinder supports families to access a funded kindergarten program by:

- providing a free 15-hour program to four-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service

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- providing a free 5-to-15-hour program to three-year-old children enrolled at a sessional service (subject to the length of funded program offered)
- offsetting the funded kindergarten program component of parent fees for three and four-year-old children enrolled at a long day care service

Free kinder supports every Victorian child to get the best start in life no matter where they live. Research shows that play-based learning is a powerful way to support children’s learning and development. Two years of early learning is a crucial part of their educational journey, these benefits last into the school years and beyond.

Regulation 168(2) (n) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that funded services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable fees at the time of enrolment. Any voluntary parent donations and/or fundraising must comply with the Free Kinder subsidy guidelines and be responsive to the local community.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: Regulation 168(2)(n)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)
- National Quality Standard

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: www.legislation.vic.gov.au

Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: www.legislation.gov.au

- Regulation 168(2) (n) of Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 requires that Early Childhood Education and Care services have a comprehensive written fees policy, and the content of this policy must be communicated to families. The policy must include a written statement about the fees to be charged and the payment process. All families must be informed of applicable fees at the time of enrolment.
- Australian families receive help with the cost of child care through the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). The Australian Government, through the Department of Education (DE) and Services Australia, administers the Child Care Subsidy (CCS). Providers must be approved by the department to receive CCS.
- DE is responsible for the legislation that underpins CCS. This legislation is called Family Assistance Law (FAL). All providers that receive CCS must follow the rules under FAL. DE monitors providers’ compliance with FAL.
- The Australian Government considers that immunisation is an important health measure for children and their families, as it is the safest and most effective way of providing protection against harmful and often deadly diseases. To meet the CCS immunisation requirements, children must be immunised according to the standard vaccination schedule, be on an eligible catch-up vaccination schedule or have an approved exemption from being immunised.
- CCS is paid directly to approved providers and passed on to families as a fee reduction.
- Additional CCS provides additional fee assistance to support vulnerable or

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disadvantaged families and children. This support recognises the preventative and protective influence of quality child care on a child's health, wellbeing and development; and the importance of continuity of care.

- There are four different payments under Additional Child Care Subsidy:
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (child wellbeing) – to help children who are at risk of serious abuse or neglect.
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (grandparent) – to help grandparents on income support who are the principal caregiver of their grandchildren.
 - Additional Child Care Subsidy (temporary financial hardship) – to help families experiencing financial hardship.
 - Additional Child care Subsidy (transition to work) – to help low-income families transitioning from income support to work.
- The Inclusion Support Program is designed to assist early childhood education and care services to include children with additional needs by providing support, in the form of practical and tailored advice and strategies on effective inclusive practice, from contracted Inclusion Agencies as well as funding to address more challenging inclusion barriers.
- The Community Child Care Fund is designed to help eligible child care providers address barriers to child care participation, particularly in disadvantaged communities, including Indigenous communities.

ATTACHMENT 1 – FEE INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

1. General information

Kindergarten programs for four-year-old and eligible three-year-old children in Victorian Government funded services will be free as part of the Best Start, Best Life reform.

This investment will save families up to \$2,563 for each child enrolled in a participating funded kindergarten program.

DE also provides funding to assist eligible three-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children known to Child Protection, to access kindergarten programs.

bestchance abides by the [Family Assistance Legislation Amendment \(Jobs for Families Child Care Package\) Act 2017](#). The Child Care Subsidy helps by assisting families with their child care fees and provides greater assistance to low and middle-income families. The Child Care Safety Net provides families and services extra support if they are vulnerable and disadvantaged or located in a regional or remote community.

2. What free kindergarten means at our service

bestchance has opted in to the Free Kindergarten initiative. Applicable parent fees are outlined below:

- Funded sessional kindergarten for 3-year-old children (up to 15 hours per week) – no parent fee
- Funded sessional kindergarten for 4-year-old children (15 hours per week) - no parent fee
- Kindergarten in long day care for 3 and 4 -year-old children – parent fee will be reduced by the Free Kindergarten Funding offset for integrated programs

3. Government assistance and extra support

Kindergarten – Free three- and four-year-old kinder will be available across Victoria at all bestchance services. Free kinder means a saving of up to \$2,563 per child, each year. Our kindergartens will receive funding directly from the Victorian Government, so families are not out of pocket (and don’t have to claim the saving’s back). If your child attends a kindergarten program within a long day care setting, a \$2,050 Free Kinder subsidy will offset the kindergarten component of your out-of-pocket-fees. Our long day care centres will be required to pass on the full amount (up to a maximum of the gap fees) to parents as a direct reduction in their out-of-pocket fees. The Free Kinder offset will be applied fortnightly in arrears and will appear on billing statements labelled as Victorian Government Free Kinder offset beginning from the first billing cycle after the start of the term. This will provide a free program for some families, and a significantly reduced cost for other families depending on service fees, number of days attended, and the amount of CCS received.

Long Day Care – This service meets the requirements for Child Care Subsidy (CCS) to assist eligible families with the cost of child care. CCS is income and activity base tested and some families may not be entitled to any rebate. Contact the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50 if you have any further questions, and also to register for an assessment of your eligibility for the CCS. Please remember to register as a priority, as there are limitations to backdating your Subsidy.

We understand that there can be times when child care fees can become a burden for families. Please do not hesitate to contact the Centre Director or bestchance directly, to make an appointment to discuss

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your options. The sooner we are aware of your family's situation, the sooner we can assist you to seek further government assistance or set up a payment plan. All conversations of this nature are held in the strictest confidence, following our Privacy Policy.

4. Other charges

Other charges levied by bestchance are included on the Statement of Fees and Charges, that will be provided to families upon enrolment.

These include:

- Excursion/service event charge (outside of the 15 hours per week program): At times throughout the year an additional excursion(s) or event(s) may be arranged where it is considered relevant to the service's program and the children's interests. At this time any additional costs to families are taken into consideration before a decision is made (refer to Excursions and Service Events Policy).
- Late collection charge: bestchance reserves the right to implement a late collection charge when parents/guardians are late in collecting a child from the service. This charge will be set at a level determined by bestchance.
- Long Day Care fees: for services at Armstrong Creek East and Noble Park (*see Attachment 2*) and

5. Integrated Services

bestchance will directly offset the full \$2,050 payment from the fees of parents/guardians with children receiving their funded kindergarten program at the centre. bestchance will use any surplus funding on improving efforts for the funded kindergarten program, such as improving quality and supporting engagement of families for the minority of cases where parents are charged less than \$2,050 in out-of-pocket fees for the duration of the kindergarten year.

The fee offset will be applied regularly (e.g. fortnightly or monthly) and clearly indicating the offset amount (labelled Victorian Government Free Kinder offset) on parent/guardian invoice statements)

The offsets will not impact their CCS payments. This will provide a free program for some families, and a significantly reduced cost for other families depending on service fees, number of days attended, and the amount of CCS received.

6. Fundraising and voluntary parent payment/donations

While participation in fundraising/donation is voluntary, the support of every family is encouraged. Fundraising activities are also an opportunity for families and communities to come together.

7. Subsidies

7.1 Child Care Subsidy (CCS)

NB: Armstrong Creek East Childrens Centre (ACE) and Noble Park Community Childcare Centre are the only bestchance Services eligible for CCS.

Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is an Australian Government subsidy that can assist eligible families with the costs of childcare at an approved child care provider. bestchance is an approved care provider.

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Approved child care are providers that meet certain standards and requirements, and are approved by the Australian Government. Approved child care providers must:

- hold the required approvals or licences to provide child care in the state or territory that the service/s operate in
- ensure the provider and any individual who is or will be a Person with Management or Control of the Provider is fit and a proper person to administer the CCS (requirements set out in Section 194E of A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999.
- be financially viable and is likely to remain so
- ensure that required fit and proper checks are carried out for each Person with Management or Control of the Provider, Persons with Responsibility for Day-to-Day Operation of the Service and In-Home Care and Family Day Care Educators

The amount of subsidy received is determined by the circumstances of the applicant's including the family income, the hourly rate cap and the hours of activity undertaken by the parents. Further information for parents can be found here: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

Long day care providers that offer funded kindergarten as part of the long day care program are required to directly offset the full payment of the Free Kindergarten initiative from parents' out of pocket fees (after CCS is applied). Fee reductions will be made proportionally across the year to families' bills, i.e. fortnightly or monthly. Only children receiving a funded kindergarten place at Armstrong Creek East and Noble Park, led by a qualified teacher, are eligible under this initiative.

CCS is income and activity base tested and some families may not be entitled to any rebate. Contact the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50 if you have any further questions, and also to register for an assessment of your eligibility for the CCS. Please remember to register as a priority, as there are limitations to backdating your Subsidy.

All families are required to sign their child in and out of care on a daily basis. This record of attendance and/or absence days is then sent to the Family Assistance Office for CCS payments. Attendance records are legal documents so parents/guardians or authorised persons must ensure the information they provide on the records is true and correct by providing a signature to verify the details provided.

Exclusions and exceptions: Not available for providers that primarily provide an early educational program to children in the year that is two years before grade one of school (preschool or kindergarten).

8. How fees are set

As part of the budget development process, bestchance reviews fees every 6 months for the programs of the service, taking into consideration:

- the financial viability of the service
- the level of government funding provided for the program, including the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy and Early Start Kindergarten
- the availability of other income sources, such as grants
- the fees charged by similar services in the area
- the capacity of parents/guardians to pay fees
- reasonable expenditure in meeting agreed program quality and standards
- Consumer price index (CPI) movements
- requirements of The Kindergarten Funding Guide (Department of Education and Training) available from the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au

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Once fees are set for the year, they will only be reviewed in extraordinary circumstances, for example, if enrolments drop and the service is at risk of not being able to meet its expenses.

9. Statement of fees and charges

A statement of fees and charges will be provided to families on enrolment (*refer to Attachment 2*).

10. Payment of fees

Fees are payable for hours over and above 15 hours per week (600 hours per year) in Kindergarten Programs, Long Day Care and integrated kindergarten programs in Long Day Care.

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

Fees will be automatically debited every fortnight, one week in advance from your preferred payment method – via Direct Debit using your supplied bank account details, or via regular credit card charge via Storypark.

Fees are determined by the Sign-In and Sign-Out times for each session in Storypark. It is important that you sign your child in and out of each session in Storypark, so you are charged correctly. If you fail to sign your child in or out of each session, you may be subject to an Early Arrival or Late Collection Fee, both of which are calculated at \$1/minute.

Families using centre based care will be invoiced fortnightly in advance, and statements can be viewed in the Storypark Guardian Portal.

Parents/guardians experiencing difficulty in paying fees are requested to contact the Centre Director to arrange a suitable alternative payment plan. The *Privacy and Confidentiality Policy* of the service will be complied with at all times in relation to a family's financial/personal circumstances.

10.1 Other Charges

Early Arrival of Children Fee is as follows:

Families will be charged \$1 per minute for children who arrive early for their booked session that day. This fee does not attract CCS and must be paid in full by the parents/guardians.

Our long day care services offer three sessions each day as follows:

12 hour session – 6.30am to 6.30pm

10 hour session – 7.30am to 5.30pm

9 hour session – 8.00am to 5.00pm

Example 1
<p>9 hour session – 8.00am to 5.00pm</p> <p>Child arrives to begin their session at 7.45am. An Early Arrival fee will be charged at \$1 per minute. In this example, a \$15 (15 minutes x \$1/minute) Early Arrival fee will be charged to the parents/guardians account, which does not attract CCS and must be paid in full. This fee is payable on top of your daily fee for the session.</p>

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Late Collection of Children Fee is as follows:

Families will be charged \$1 per minute for children who are not collected by the end of their booked session that day. This fee does not attract CCS and must be paid in full by the parents/guardians.

Example 2:

9 hour session (8.00am to 5.00pm)

If you drop your child off at the service for a 9 hour session at 11.00am, and collect your child at 6.00pm, you will be charged a Late Collection Fee of 1 hour (60 minutes).

60 minutes x \$1/minute = \$60.00 Late Collection Fee payable.

This fee is payable on top of your daily fee for the session.

Regardless of when you drop your child off between the start time (8am) and the end time (5.00pm), if your child is booked in for a 9 hour session for that day and you collect your child after 5pm, you will be charged a Late Collection Fee.

Late Collection of Children Fee is as follows:

Families will be charged \$1 per minute for children who are not collected by the end of their booked session that day. This fee does not attract CCS and must be paid in full by the parents/guardians.

This is the same for the 10 hour sessions. Regardless of when you drop your child off between the start time (7.30am) and the end time (5.30pm), you still need to collect your child by 5.30pm. If your child is booked in for a 10 hour session for that day and you collect your child after 5.30pm, you will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$1/minute for every minute you are late to collect your child after 5.30pm.

If you find that you are consistently paying late fees, it may be more economical for your family to change to a 10 or 12 hour session instead. Please feel free to chat to your Centre Coordinator about adjusting your child's enrolment.

10.2 Casual and Occasional Care Bookings

Families with permanent bookings:

Families that have a permanent booking with the service and are seeking some additional hours of education and care for their child/children can request to book these additional hours and if available will be charged a casual rate per hour with a minimum booking of 3 hours. Two days' notice for these requests is required.

Families seeking occasional care bookings:

Families that do not wish to lock in a permanent booking, but need occasional care of their child/children, can request to book occasional care. In this circumstance families will be charged an occasional care rate and bookings must be a minimum of 3 hours.

Prior to making the first booking the family is required to spend a minimum of 2 by 1-hour sessions at the service to settle their child/children into the service. Families will not be charged for these 2 sessions. Two days' notice for these booking requests is required.

11. Change or Cancellation of permanent long day care booking

If you wish to change or add to your Long Day Care booking please discuss this with the Centre Director. Every effort will be made to accommodate your request, however spaces are limited so you may be placed on a waiting list.

If you wish to reduce your days or cancel your booking, two weeks notice in writing is required. Fees will continue to apply for the two weeks' notice period unless cancellation of booking is due to an illness and a medical certificate is provided with the written notice of cancellation.

12. Change or cancellation of casual or occasional care booking

If you wish to change or cancel your occasional care booking a minimum of 24hrs notice is required or the fee will be charged to you for the minimum booking of 3 hrs.

13. Unpaid fees

If fees are not paid fortnightly (dishonoured) as per your fee payment agreement schedule, the following steps will be taken:

1. Families are sent an automatic email 7 days after the due date if invoice remains unpaid.
2. Guardians have the option to use the pay now feature to settle any amounts owing.
3. If balance still remains unpaid family is contacted directly using listed phone number.
4. Accounts receivable team can enter into a payment plan with the customer.
5. If balance is unpaid for 2 fortnights and is over \$500 Area manager should be contacted and a warning letter sent. Letter to allow one week to settle account or enter into a payment plan, failing which the child's care will be ceased.
6. Accounts receivable team to follow up with Area Manager one week later if no payment is received or payment plan entered into.
7. Area manager to approve ceasing of care pending settlement of account and Centre Director to contact family.
8. Family should be notified in writing that if account is not settled the debt will be lodged with the debt collectors and that they will be charged the debt collectors fee (around 20% of the balance owing) with one week allowance to settle balance.
9. Lodge with debt collectors

14. Refund of fees

Change or Cancellation of booking.

Fees are non-refundable (exceptional circumstances may apply – these are at the discretion of bestchance. There will be no refund of these fees in the following circumstances:

- a child's short-term illness
- public holidays
- family holiday during operational times
- closure of the service for one or more days when a qualified educator is absent, and a qualified reliever is not available
- closure of the service for staff training days
- closure of the service due to extreme and unavoidable circumstances.

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In addition, there will be no refund where a family chooses not to send their child to the program for the maximum number of hours for which they are enrolled.

15. Support services

Families experiencing financial hardship often require access to family support services. Information on these services may be available from the kindergarten service provider or alternatively families may contact the local council.

16. 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 in advance of any required fee increase and will be offered the option to request a payment plan.

17. Public holidays, family holidays and non-attendance days

Full fees apply for all non-attendance due to short-term illness or Public Holiday.

Holiday Discount

Families are able to opt-in to a 20% discount of fees for up to two weeks if child(ren) will be absent on Family Holiday. A further two weeks absence for a child away on a Family Holiday can also be opted-into, however full fees for this extension will apply to hold your child's place. If your child will be absent for longer than four (4) weeks, you can continue to pay full fees to hold your child's place at the service until they return, or your child's place will be cancelled. You are able to then re-enrol your child upon your return from your Family Holiday, if there is a place(s) available on the day(s) required for long day care. The two week Holiday Discount can be used once (1) per calendar year.

18. Closure of service

In the event of unexpected closure of the service, fees will still apply.

Examples of situations where a service unexpectedly must close includes, but is not limited to:

- No suitably qualified relief staff available to deliver the session in the absence of regular staff;
- Health alert such as gastric outbreak;
- Service utility problems (eg. gas leak, no water);
- Unsafe building or grounds;
- Extreme weather conditions (eg. flood, fire).

ATTACHMENT 2 – Long Day Care Fee Information

INTEGRATED KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

In 2024 kindergarten programs for three- and four-year-old children will be subsidised by the Victorian government for all families receiving Childcare Subsidy. The amount of \$2,050 will be applied as a pro rata discount to families’ childcare invoices over 22 fortnights, between 8th February 2024 – 12th December 2024.

Kindergarten programs will consist of 15 hours of kindergarten per week for both 3yo and 4/5yo children. The kindergarten program for children booked into childcare will run from 8.30am to 4pm during the normal childcare hours of 6.30am am to 6.30pm on specified days. The kindergarten staff will inform parents which days kindergarten programs are running to make sure all children can access the 15 hours.

The following table shows examples of how your child care subsidy entitlements and the childcare fees combined with kindergarten programs may be calculated.

Examples ¹	90% CCS	80% CCS	60% CCS
Full fees for 2 Integrated Kinder Days (10-hour session per day)	264.00	264.00	264.00
CCS (with 5% withholdings)	(\$225.72)	(\$200.64)	(\$150.48)
Gap fee after CCS is applied	\$38.28	\$63.36	\$113.52
Free Kinder Offset ²	(\$38.28)	(\$46.59)	(\$46.59)
Net fee payable per week	\$0	\$16.77	\$66.93

1 These figures may be subject to change depending on family’s individual circumstances and CCS entitlements.

2 Free kinder offset is applied up to the lower of \$46.59 or the Gap fee after CCS

BILLING

Families will be provided their invoice on a fortnightly basis. Families are expected to pay the balance shown on the invoice, not allow fees to fall more than one weeks into arrears. Invoices will show all subsidies you receive, and the weekly gap amount due to be paid. You will need to assess your ability to pay this gap amount each week for you to take up a place in Childcare. The invoice will detail the days and times of attendance in childcare, the childcare subsidy paid by the government and any parent payments.

PAYMENT METHODS:

Fees will be automatically debited every fortnight, one week in advance from your preferred payment method – via Direct Debit using your supplied bank account details, or via regular credit card charge via Storypark.

Families are required to provide bank details, for debit charges at the time of enrolment.

FEE SUBSIDY ENTITLEMENTS and CRN

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Australian families will need to satisfy the Australian Governments Activity test to be eligible for childcare subsidy. More information about eligibility can be found at: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>

A calculator on your MyGov page can estimate your entitlements or you can ring the MyGov hotline on 132 307 if you have any subsidy queries.

Before your child starts, you will be required to lodge a Child Care Subsidy claim through Centrelink and confirm your child’s enrolment details. Centrelink will notify us when your claim is confirmed. We will also require you to sign a Complying Written Arrangement confirming your childcare days and fees.

The CRN is a 10-digit number allocated individually to you and your child/ren from the Family Assistance office (Centrelink).

This number is required for both you and your child on this form if you wish to claim the Child Care Subsidy.

CENTRE FEE SCHEDULE and BILLING

Long Day Care 12 hour session (6.30am to 6.30pm)	\$134.00 per session
Long Day Care 10 hour session (7.30am to 5.30pm)	\$132.00 per session
Long Day Care 9 hour session (8.00am to 5.00pm)	\$130.00 per session
Occasional Care 3-hour session	\$20 per hour - casual booking families \$15 per hour - permanent booking families

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

bestchance believes that ongoing professional development and training is vital for our staff to remain at the forefront of their profession and continue to provide quality early childhood education and care.

bestchance may close the service one day per year to allow all educators to attend a professional development day. On this day all bestchance Services will be closed. Families will need to arrange alternative care for their children on this day and will be notified of the day in advance. Families will not be charged for services on this day.

ALL SERVICE CLOSURE DAY: Wednesday 8th of May 2024

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS, FAMILY HOLIDAYS AND NON-ATTENDANCE DAYS

Full fees apply for all non-attendance due to short-term illness or Public Holiday.

When a child does not attend the service for reasons such as illness or holidays, families will continue to be charged for services according to the child’s regular booking. If a child is to be absent for the day, parents are requested to telephone the service as soon as possible to inform educators. If the child is sick, it is important to inform the service of the nature of the illness, symptoms and any diagnosis is helpful in containing the spread of illness. Parents are still expected to pay for these sessions. If you receive the childcare Subsidy (CCS) you will receive a subsidy for a limited number of days per year. For more information please visit:

<http:https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-if-your-child-absent-from-child-care?>

HOLIDAY DISCOUNT

Families are able to opt-in to a 20% discount of fees for up to two weeks if child(ren) will be absent on Family Holiday. A further two weeks absence for a child away on a Family Holiday can also be opted-into, however full fees for this extension will apply to hold your child’s place. If your child will be absent for longer than four (4) weeks, you can continue to pay full fees to hold your child’s place at the service until they return, or your child’s place will be cancelled. You are able to then re-enrol your child upon your return from your Family Holiday, if there is a place(s) available on the day(s) required for long day care. The two week Holiday Discount can be used once (1) per calendar year.

BOOKINGS

Once your child’s enrolment is fully completed with the Armstrong Creek East and Noble Park Long Day Care Centres your booking will be confirmed.

Additional casual or occasional care bookings can be requested in consultation with your Centre director or by scanning the relevant QR code at the centre.

An email will be provided to you to confirm or decline the booking depending on availability of places at the service. Please ensure you have received the confirmation email prior to attending with your child/children.

CHANGE OF PERMANENT LONG DAY CARE BOOKING

If you wish to change or add to your permanent Long Day Care booking, please discuss this with the Centre Director and complete the relevant QR code at the service.

An email will be provided to you to confirm or decline the booking depending on availability of places at the service. Please ensure you have received the confirmation email prior to attending with your child/children.

Every effort will be made to accommodate your request, however spaces are limited so you may be placed on a waiting list.

CANCELLATION OF PERMANENT LONG DAY CARE BOOKING

If you wish to reduce your days or cancel your booking, two weeks’ notice in writing is required. Fees will continue to apply for the two weeks’ notice period unless cancellation of booking is due to an illness and a medical certificate is provided with the written notice of cancellation.

Please discuss this with the Centre Director and complete the relevant QR code at the service.

Please note that if you end your care on an absence, Centrelink will recover ALL your Child Care Subsidy (CCS) from the last day your child physical attended care.

CANCELLATION OF CASUAL OR OCCASIONAL CARE BOOKING

If you wish to change or cancel your occasional care booking a minimum of 24hrs notice is required or the fee will be charged to you for the minimum booking of 3 hrs.