

POLICY & PROCEDURAL STATEMENTS

Topic: Early Learning – Payment of Fees

Policy: Avenue Neighbourhood House at Eley Inc. (ANH@E) is committed to providing quality, affordable, and equitable early learning services. Every effort will be made to keep the early learning fees to a minimum.

Relevant Legislation:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations (Regulation 168).
- National Quality Standard 7.

Payment of Accounts: Payment of a full term's fees in advance is **preferred**.

Parents will be advised what their payable fee is after taking into account:

- Any application of the Government Child Care Subsidy at their child's initial enrolment.
- At the commencement of a child's enrolment into early learning.
- At any change of enrolment.
- Whenever fees are amended at the Centre.
- Whenever their Child Care Subsidy changes.

The Government Child Care Subsidy is paid direct to the Centre and will be offset against the Centre's fees.

Parents will be provided with a statement at the beginning of the term which will indicate what fees they have been charged for care and what payments have been made. Statements will be on the sign in table or handed to parents.

Bus Transport Fees:

Avenue Neighbourhood House has been providing a bus service to and from local kindergartens for almost fourteen (14) years. The service has been made possible via the use of our community bus and the appointment of an additional early learning worker to accompany children to and from kinder.

Bus Transport fees, as determined by the Board, will be charged at the beginning of the term. No refunds will be given for a missed trip.

Procedure for Payment of Fees:

All fees are to be paid as specified below unless alternative arrangements are approved by the House Manager.

For **regular continuous bookings**, fees must be paid either a term in advance or on a fortnightly basis.

For **one-off/occasional care bookings**, upfront payment of fees is required on the day.



Options for payment of fees include:

- Direct Debit.
- EFTPOS (for debit or credit cards).
- Cash.

Late Fees:

This fee applies to people who are late collecting a child or children from Early Learning. The current rate is as follows:

- \$2.50 for the first five (5) minutes parents/carers are late.
- \$1.00 for each minute after the first five (5) minutes.
- Parents/carers will be given a verbal warning in the first instance.
- In addition, Department of Education registration conditions clearly stipulate that Avenue Neighbourhood House @ Eley Inc. is licenced to mind children for one eight (8) hour period in any one day.
- If a parent/carer has a concern with this issue they may speak directly to the Co-Ordinator of Childcare or the Manager.

Non-Payment of fees:

Failure to pay fees in the time stipulated, or if the outstanding amount reaches \$500 and/or 1 month of unpaid fees will result in the following action by the House:

- An emailed reminder from the Co-Ordinator of Early Learning requesting payment within five (5) business days from the date of the email, and stipulating that no payment within this time will result in future payments being subject to a direct debit arrangement.

If no payment is received within the five (5) business day extension period, or no satisfactory payment arrangement made between the parent(s) and the House, the parent(s) will be sent a formal letter (by Registered Mail) advising them that their child or children may not be permitted to continue to attend our Early Learning Centre until such time as the outstanding fees are paid in full.

However, it is recognised that for some families in our community the financial cost of care can be a barrier to accessing our service. Anyone experiencing financial difficulty is encouraged to discuss the matter with the Childcare Co-Ordinator.

In the case of ongoing financial difficulty, a fee payment schedule may be an option, but any such arrangement must be agreed to by the House Manager.

The details of any resulting arrangement will be put in writing and signed by the parent(s) of the child/children and the House Manager on behalf of ANH@E.

Any discussions and subsequent financial arrangement regarding payment of fees will be strictly confidential.

The House reserves the right to take whatever collection action it deems necessary for fees that remain unpaid after the email reminders and formal letter, and where a suitable payment arrangement has not been negotiated.

Variations to days:

From time to time your family's early learning needs may change, either temporarily or permanently, and therefore, we understand that you need a flexible early learning service that is responsive to your family's changing needs. With your assistance, the Co-Ordinator of Early Learning can co-ordinate the changing needs of families to better respond to individual requests for additional care, and to enable permanent changes to bookings to take place smoothly within the Centre.

You will understand that due to our high utilisation of Early Learning places we cannot always accommodate all requests; however, we have a commitment to providing you with a flexible and responsive service, so you can be confident that we make every effort to do so.

To assist us in responding to your and other families' needs, please direct any notification of temporary or permanent cancellation of care, requests for additional care or forthcoming changes to your child's attendances to the Co-Ordinator of Early Learning as early as possible.

Absences:

To ensure accurate child/staff ratios and to give parents/carers on the Early Learning waiting list the offer of a place, it is imperative that we are given twenty-four (24) hours' notice if a child is going to miss a session. If no notice is given that a child will not be attending Early Learning, it is expected that we will receive full payment for that session.

If less than twenty-four (24) hours' notice is given that a child will not be attending Early Learning, half fees for that session may be charged, depending on the circumstances. If a child is unwell in the morning they are due to attend, parents/guardians are asked to ring before 8:00am using the after-hours answering machine service or via email, and they will not be charged for that session.

Families who take three (3) or more consecutive weeks of holiday absence would be eligible for a reduced fee of 50% for the duration of that absence, provided the absence is advised in advance (in line with our usual notice requirements).

Cancelling care:

Should a parent require to cancel their child's care, two weeks' notice must be given during which time normal fees will apply. Failing this, a cancellation fee equivalent to the cost of two weeks care will be charged to the family's final account. Should the child be absent on their last day of care full fee will apply.

If a child does not attend the Centre for more than two consecutive weeks without any notice to the Co-Ordinator of Early Learning, then the booking will be automatically cancelled, and the child's place will be offered to another family on the waiting list.

Levies:

It is expected that all families will pay an annual toy and maintenance levy fee that will be set by the Board. Levies will be added to fee invoices and charged by term. For families who access the service mid-year, a *pro rata* levy will apply.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed **annually** unless there are any regulatory or legislative requirements and/or any feedback from staff, parents, and the community that require an earlier review(s).

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Enquiries	9808 2000