

1. PAYMENT OF FEES AND PROVISION OF A STATEMENT OF FEES CHARGED BY THE SERVICE POLICY

1.1. Policy statement

We are committed to providing all families the opportunity to enroll their children at our Service, with a clear, transparent, fair and inclusive fee structure.

1.2. Background

Under the Education and Care Services National Regulations, education and care services must have policies and procedures in place in relation to the payment of fees.

1.3. Legislative requirements

Reg 111	Administrative space
Reg 168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures
Reg 170	Policies and procedures to be followed
Reg 171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
Reg 172	Notification of change to policies or procedures

1.4. Principles to inform our policy

- We are committed to providing all families the opportunity to enroll their children. Our fee structure aims to be fair, and we accommodate payment plans for families requiring greater flexibility.
- We value our families and ensure there is two-way communication with them at all times. We ensure they are familiar with our fees at enrolment, and we provide at least two weeks' notice of any changes to the fee structure.
- We prioritise good governance and quality management. Our fee structure is clear and transparent, and our systems and practices ensure that payments are processed correctly, and receipts and statements are provided to families.

1.5. Key terms

Term	Meaning	Source
ACECQA – Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority	The independent national authority that works with all regulatory authorities to administer the National Quality Framework, including the provision of guidance, resources, and services to support the sector to improve outcomes for children.	
Child Care Subsidy	The main payment to assist families with the costs of education and care for their children. It is, with some exceptions, paid directly to providers to be passed on to families as a fee reduction. Families make a co-contribution to their fees and pay the provider the difference between the fee charged and the subsidy amount.	https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-provider-handbook/child-care-subsidy

Term	Meaning	Source
Notice period (fees)	The length of time stipulated by a service to notify families before making any changes that will affect the fees charged or the way in which fees are collected. The notice period must be at least 14 days.	National Regulations (Regulation 172)

1.6. Links to other policies










Refer to related policies and procedures, for example:

- Enrolment and orientation
- Governance and management of the Service

1.7. Induction and ongoing training

Hatchling House Family Day Care has twice received, (2013 & 2019), the Exceeding Rating against the National Quality Standard.

To maintain this standard, our induction and ongoing training for our Educators and Coordinators, includes: -

-  an induction process specific to the role of educator or coordinator,
-  Annual legislative trainings as required by the authorities,
-  Annual service specific trainings - as outlined in our Policies & Procedures where required,
-  Educator/ coordinator may self-source training,
-  Discussions during home visits on topics to support professional development,
-  Monthly zoom meetings / Chat & Chew meetings,
-  Newsletters to educators and families,
-  Coordinators regularly attend community meetings/training to keep up to date with the sector,
-  Regular correspondence with other stakeholders to assist with ongoing knowledge and development of the Service.

2. PAYMENT OF FEES AND OF A STATEMENT OF FEES CHARGED BY THE SERVICE PROCEDURES

2.1. Reference to policy and philosophy

Our procedures reflect our Service's overall philosophy, your Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service policy, and quality practices for the notification, payment and collection of fees.

2.2. Fee Structure

To ensure fair, transparent, and effective practices are undertaken when charging processing and collecting childcare fees.

Hatchling House Family Day Care has a responsibility to comply with all legislation and guidelines in the administration of childcare fees and undertakes to ensure fairness, transparency and accountability is maintained when charging and collecting childcare fees and processing payments.

Making a Complying Written Arrangement (CWA) with a Family

"Family Assistance Law requires the service to make a written (electronic or hardcopy) care arrangement with each family using the service".

This arrangement is in the form of the educator's individual fee schedule.

Charging Fees

HHFDC has a fee charging schedule in place and the standard hours (8:00am – 6:00pm) ranges from \$8.00 to \$19.00 per hour per child, including the HHFDC administration levy.

The range of all services provided by the educator and the charges for those services will be detailed on the educator's individual fee schedule and Terms & Conditions, which is given to parents.

Educators will charge the same fee to all parents who are receiving the same Service, regardless of their Centrelink entitlements, as per individual educator's fee schedule.

The Service will monitor the charging practices of the educators.

Payment of Fees

Fees are payable to the educator on behalf of the Service as agreed with each individual educator.

A record of the EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) for gap fee payments from parent or guardian is submitted to the Approved Provider as per the Commonwealth government requirements, as of 1st July 2023.

The Educator must submit, on a Monthly basis or in accordance with the Approved Provider's schedule, his or her EFT Record for evidence of the payment received from parent or guardian, as of 1st July 2023.

Educators failing to collect the family fee is considered an act of fraud.

Debt Recovery

It is important that fees are paid promptly via EFT, on the day agreed by parent and FDC Educator.

Your fees are your FDC Educator's income.

Care will not commence if fees are owed to another HHFDC Educator, until the debt has been paid unless the Educator has informed the parent that they will waive the fees associated with the notice period.

If the parent or guardian does not pay the gap fee for care their CCS entitlement can be withdrawn with timesheets reversed and full fee payable to the educator.

Hatchling House Family Day Care will support the educator to set up a payment plan for fees owed by parent or guardian if required.

If fees are overdue by more than two weeks, placement may be forfeited. If, after discussion between educator and parent (as the educator collects the gap fee on behalf of the Service) the matter is not resolved, legal action may be taken.

In the event of exceptional circumstances, the Educator may cease care at their discretion, without notice.

Invoicing

Educators will provide each family with an invoice at least fortnightly.

Receipts

Educators are required to provide a receipt following any payment from the families.

A copy of the receipts is to be accessible for inspection by HQ staff or the 'compliance team' from the Department of Education who periodically attend the Service to complete audits of service requirements.

The receipt is issued via electronic software or manual triplicate document.

Statements

HHFDC will regularly provide each family using the Service with a statement about their childcare usage, fee and government entitlements paid to the educator on behalf of the family. This informs families about their care usage, how much it costs and how much financial assistance they are getting from the Australian Government.

Family's Responsibilities

When a family's circumstances change and this affects their eligibility and/or entitlement, they are required to notify Centrelink of the change as soon as possible. Changes to a family's entitlement will generally take place from the beginning of the next Child Care Subsidy fortnight after the change occurred. Where a parent is late in reporting a change in their circumstances resulting in an overpayment of Child Care Subsidy for previous sessions of care, a debt may be raised. Parents will be notified through their Centrelink online account where debts are raised by Centrelink due to changes in their entitlement, for example, if their activity test result changes.

When subsidy may be paid directly to parents

While Child Care Subsidy/Additional Child Care Subsidy (CCS/ACCS) is generally paid to providers to pass on to parents as a fee reduction, it may need to be paid directly to parents in some specific scenarios, particularly where there is a change in circumstances after session reports have been submitted.

In all cases where a payment is made directly to the parent, the parent will be able to see a record of this payment through Centrelink Online or the Express Plus mobile app.

As a family with Hatchling House Family Day Care, you are required to;

- Complete and sign attendance records (electronic or hardcopy), recording the actual time of arrival and departure of their child into care each day and any absences. The attendance record is a legal document and must be accurately completed and signed.

- Each signing authorised contact must print their NAME at least once for the fortnight.
- Do not sign blank attendance record/timesheet and/or sign in advance.
- Sign the attendance record at the end of each week and record the payment amount paid to the educator.
- Where a child is booked but does not attend care due to public holidays, sickness, family holidays, etc. normal fees apply, and an absence will be recorded.
- Sign for any extra hours, other than booked hours, used for the week at the bottom of the attendance record.
- Supply the Service with relevant Customer Reference Numbers (CRN) and dates of birth as necessary for the Service to process government entitlements.
- Until the enrolment process is completed, FULL FEES are payable to educator.
- Parent fee is payable to the educator, on behalf of the Service. Fees should be paid within the week that care has been provided and at no time be in arrears.

Educator Responsibilities

- Provide parent with a copy of the signed fee schedule, including terms and conditions.
- Determine the families' total fees and inform the Service via completed and signed CWA.
- Give the Service and families at least two weeks written notice of any change to their fee schedule and/or terms and conditions.
- Educators are required to issue an invoice for care provided and a receipt following any payment.
- Ensure the parents sign the correct times in and out of care, daily.
- Charge for the booked hours on the fee schedule.
- Ensure parents complete the CWA for a School Holiday booking, for school children, if they intend to use hours in the holidays. If the parent does not intend to use care, there is no charge.
- Write any extra hours used or explanation of changes to days/hours for the week, other than the booked hours, in the comments section of the attendance record / timesheet and get the parent to sign.
- Give families and the Service the required notice, as per individual terms and conditions, if they wish to stop providing care, change any booked hours or take leave.
- Inform the Service if a family has not paid all outstanding fees when ceasing care. The Service will not place this family with another educator until all monies have been paid.
- As a self-employed operator, ensure your obligations in relation to any taxation processes or regulations are met.
- Check educator pay advice fortnightly to ensure the correct fee entitlements are being passed onto the parent. Any corrections to the estimate fee should be recorded on the timesheet tally sheet or similar.

Service Requirements

- Provide parent with a regular statement of childcare usage, charges and subsidies as detailed in the Child Care Provider Handbook.
- Work together with educators to ensure all entitlements as prescribed in the current Child Care Provider Handbook are made to educators in a timely manner.

- Give the educators corrections to attendance records/timesheets, via email to ensure all records are accurate.
- Undertake a full investigation of any suspected fraudulent claim in relation to childcare fees and government subsidies. Any fraudulent activity will be referred to the relevant authorities.
- Investigate a complaint lodged by a family regarding the educator's practice:
 - Inform the parent about the required notice period and the fees payable.
 - Complete an investigation with all parties.
 - Assist the parties to come to an agreement about the period of notice of cessation of care.
 - The payment of fees.
 - If the parent and educator are not able to come to an agreement, make the final determination.

Educator remuneration arrangements are set out in a clearly defined written agreement between the educator and the service operator.

The educator remuneration is agreed between the Service and the educator, not between the educator and the families.

It is important to understand that families to whom you provide care, on behalf of the Service, make payments to the Service and not to you personally.

Many educators collect money from families, however when doing so, they are collecting on behalf of the Service.

This parent fee collected by educators, on behalf of the Service, forms part of their remuneration.

An Educator's remuneration is made up of the parent fee, collected on behalf of the Service and the government entitlements for each family being CCS for example, paid to the Service and forwarded to the educator from HHFDC.

Educators will revisit their remuneration agreement in June each year or as required, with the service operator.

2.3. Relief Care

If an educator is unavailable due to illness or injury or is on holidays the educator and/or coordinator will endeavour to provide alternate care suitable to the family's needs, however parents are encouraged to consider their own back up care option.

Any relief/emergency arrangements made by the educator are to be communicated to the Service immediately.

The parent/usual educator are to complete the Interview checklist with all relevant information. The educator advises the parent of any regular outings or excursion and appropriate forms are signed.

The Service operates within a de-regulated fee environment. Fees may differ from educator to educator and parents need to discuss the fees to be charged by the alternate educator prior to confirming with the alternative educator. A booking form is completed for the days and hours required.

3. FRAUD, THEFT AND CORRUPTION POLICY

Hatchling House Family Day Care (Hatchling House FDC) has a commitment to high legal, ethical and moral standards. Hatchling House FDC takes the issue of fraud, theft and corruption very seriously and will not tolerate fraudulent or corrupt acts or theft by any party under the scope of the Fraud, Theft and Corruption Policy.

To help prevent fraud and theft within Hatching House FDC, and to manage any suspected fraud, theft or corruption that occurs.

This policy applies to all stakeholders- staff, educators, volunteers, parents and guardians within Hatchling House FDC.

Hatchling House FDC requires all involved in the function of the service, at all times, to act honestly and with integrity and to safeguard the Service's resources for which they are responsible.

Any fraud or corruption committed against the service is a major concern and as a consequence all cases will be thoroughly investigated and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any stakeholder who is found guilty of corrupt or fraudulent conduct. This may include referral to the appropriate law enforcement or regulatory agencies for independent investigation.

3.1. Definitions

For the purposes of the Fraud, Theft and Corruption Policy:

Fraud is defined as an intentional act by one or more individuals among the stakeholders of the service, involving the use of deception to obtain an unjust or illegal advantage, or "wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain" or "dishonestly obtaining benefit (either tangible or intangible) by deception or other means".

Theft is defined as a criminal act of dishonest assumption of the rights of the true owner of a tangible or intangible property by treating it as one's own, whether or not taking it away with the intent of depriving the true owner of it, or "dishonestly appropriating property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it".

Corruption is defined (for the purposes of this policy) as a dishonest activity in which a Stakeholder of Hatchling House FDC acts in a manner that is contrary to the interests of the Service and abuses his/her position of trust in order to achieve some personal gain or advantage for him or herself or for another person or entity, or "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain", or "wrongdoing on the part of an authority or powerful party through means that are illegitimate, immoral, or incompatible with ethical standards

Examples of corrupt practices under this definition include, but are not limited to:

Theft of equipment or resources	Accounts receivable fraud
False invoicing and/or false payment requests	Theft of funds other than by way of false invoicing
Theft of intellectual property or other confidential information	Obtaining a financial advantage or any other benefit by deception
Falsification of financial statements to obtain improper financial benefit	Making, using or possessing forged or falsified documents
Provision of false receipts to acquit cash advances	Coercion and intimidation of colleagues and stakeholders for personal, social or political gain
Release of confidential information, for other than a proper business purpose, sometimes in exchange for either a financial or non-financial advantage	A staff member manipulating a tendering process to achieve a desired outcome

A conflict of interest involving a stakeholder acting in his or her own self-interest rather than in the interests of Hatchling House FDC.	Misappropriation of funds
--	---------------------------

3.2. Hatchling House FDC will:-

Foster an environment that makes active fraud, theft and corruption control a responsibility of all stakeholders involved in the service.

Articulate clear standards and procedures to encourage the deterrence of fraud, theft and corruption – as listed in Attendance Record/Timesheet Procedures within this Policy.

Detect and report offences should they occur.

Ensure all stakeholders are responsible for complying with service policies and procedures, codes of conduct and ethics, avoidance of conflict of interest and maintaining vigilance in early detection, reporting and prevention of fraud, theft and corruption.

Establish and maintain adequate internal controls that provide for the security and accountability of the service and prevent/reduce the opportunity for fraud, theft and corruption to occur by communicating and raising awareness of the risks relating to fraud, theft and corruption with educators.

Determine whether immediate termination or suspension of registration will occur whilst an allegation of fraudulent or corrupt activity or theft is being investigated by relevant authorities.

Formally advise police and/or the Department of Education and Training, as and when required.

3.3. All Stakeholders (Staff, Educators, Volunteers and Parents / Guardians) will:

Inform Hatchling House FDC of any fraudulent or corrupt activity or theft and any other irregularities witnessed or suspected, by any stakeholder of the service.

Maintain the ethical and moral standards expected by Hatchling House FDC.

For example, an educator would be committing fraud if they record attendances and charge a fee with no intention to charge the parent the gap fee.

3.4. Reporting

Reporting can take any number of forms; communicated face-to-face, by telephone or in writing. The following information may be included in any report or allegation:-

- Who the allegation is made against, the foundation for the allegation, the circumstances surrounding the allegation. Specific details about the conduct of the person against whom the allegation is being made.

An investigation will be carried out and all information received is treated confidentially. Investigations will not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than those who have a legitimate need to know.

The appropriate collection and preservation of evidence is very important therefore timesheet records and relevant forms will be subpoenaed for hand writing analysis and verification especially in cases where the matter will be handed over to police or Department of Education and Training tip off line.

Investigations will be referred to a third party for advice and recommendations of which could be the Police or the Department of Education and Training tip off line.

Further action will be taken as recommended by third party advice.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles	Responsibilities
Approved provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure that obligations under the <i>Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations</i> are met ▪ set fees for children to enroll at the service and ensure policies and procedures are in place relating to the fee schedule and payment options ▪ take reasonable steps to ensure that nominated supervisors, educators, staff, and volunteers follow the Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service policy and procedures ▪ ensure that copies of the policy and procedures are readily accessible to nominated supervisors, coordinators, educators, staff, and families, and available for inspection ▪ notify families at least 14 days before changing the policy or procedures if ▪ the changes will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
Nominated supervisor/ Responsible person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure that regulatory obligations are met in relation to payment of fees ▪ implement procedures for the payment of service fees ▪ communicate with families at enrolment about fees, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amounts charged • payment periods and methods • how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy (e.g. from your jurisdiction) will be applied • notice periods • how they can access a statement/receipt • financial hardship considerations and payment plans ▪ ongoing communication with families about their account ▪ ensure families receive receipts for fees paid ▪ monitor the application of the Child Care Subsidy or other government ▪ subsidy
Centre-based educators (and FDC educators if the service is responsible for fee collection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be familiar with the <i>Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service policy and procedures</i> ▪ support families to approach the person whose role it is to collect fees with any fee-related questions
Family day care (FDC) educators (if the service is not responsible for fee collection)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ be familiar with the Payment of service fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the service policy and procedures ▪ implement procedures for the payment of service fees ▪ communicate with families at enrolment about fees, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amounts charged • payment periods and methods

Roles	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the Child Care Subsidy or other government subsidy (e.g. from your jurisdiction) will be applied • notice periods • how they can access a statement/receipt • financial hardship considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ongoing communication with families about their account ▪ ensure families receive receipts for fees paid
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensure they understand the service's fee requirements and expectations at enrolment and any ongoing changes ▪ meet the fee requirements ▪ raise any fee-related questions with the person responsible for fee ▪ collection at the service