

Rationale

SDN is committed to the effective management of resources and provide high quality educational care for all families, the organisation sets its fees to reflect the cost of providing such care. In order to remain financially viable and to avoid cash flow difficulties, fees need to be collected from families on time.

Scope

This policy, and its associated documents, applies to the entirety of SDN Children’s Services and the entirety of its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to SDN Children’s Education and Care Centres, and the families and children enrolled at the Centres, including children of SDN staff.

Policy

SDN Children’s Education and Care Centre Fees

Fees are paid fortnightly in advance at the start of SDN’s payment fortnight.

Fees are payable by direct debit (from bank or credit card accounts), by a Centrepay arrangement or using the Paynow option in Storypark Manage. For the safety of staff working in centres and children, and to avoid loss, SDN does not accept cash payments.

SDN staff and staff of UNSW with children enrolled at a SDN centre may choose to pay by salary sacrifice only if they are enrolled under the correct arrangement type. Where childcare fees are paid via salary sacrifice, CCS is unable to be claimed.

Fees are:

- payable for all booked days of care. This includes absences for any reason, including family leave and illness. SDN reserves the right to fill absences with another placement on a casual basis.
- charged according to SDN’s fee schedule
- charged for declared public holidays (this does **not** apply to preschools)
- subject to yearly revision.

<p>Minor/legislative amendment or modification history 5 February 2021 October 2021 26 April 2022</p>	<p>Details Reference to Childcare Provider Handbook & Family Assistance Law. Defined half day 3pm and full day 6pm Policy amended to reflect SPM, Paynow, fortnightly payment schedule, 6 monthly fee review, UNSW Staff requirements, bonds \$50 occasional care enrolment fee removed.</p>		
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In some instances, families may be eligible to claim Child Care Subsidy (CCS) for up to seven (7) consecutive days before a child attends their first day of care, or up to seven (7) consecutive days after their last day of physical attendance. Supporting evidence will be required to prove that the absent days are in accordance with the prescribed reasons as outlined in the Childcare Provider Handbook for CCS assistance.

Should the family require days of care different from booked days, casual care can be requested subject to the conditions as per casual/occasional care section (refer to page 3 of this Policy).

Fees and accounts are to be paid up to date. Continuation of a child's place at any centre is contingent upon the family's account being up to date.

All SDN Children's Education and Care Centres are approved for CCS purposes. It is the responsibility of the family to submit all necessary documentation to the centre to ensure CCS can be claimed. Where CCS has not been confirmed or where the eligibility criteria have changed, full fees are charged.

Families can claim CCS (if eligible) for 42 absence days, including public holidays, per child each financial year. These can be for any reason and do not require proof.

CCS may also be received for additional absence days (above the 42 days) for specific reasons only per child each financial year. There is no limit on these days, however, families are required to provide documentation to support the absence, such as a medical certificate; otherwise, full fees are charged.

SDN charges a late collection fee to any family collecting their child or children at the end of their booking time for half day (3pm) bookings or after the close of the service at the end of the day for full day bookings as referenced in the *Arrival, Departure and Late collection of Children Policy*.

UNSW staff and students must provide proof of employment and/or enrolment at the beginning of each calendar year and periodically through the year where required. For example: letter from employer, payslip eligibility for salary sacrifice. (Salary sacrifice is only applicable where the child is enrolled in one of the SDN managed UNSW Centres). Where proof of employment or enrolment cannot be met, the fee rate will revert to the community fee for that period of time. For UNSW students to be eligible for the student rate of fees, students must be enrolled for at least 75% of a fulltime student load.

Families are notified at least 14 days prior to any changes that will affect the fees charged or the way fees are collected.

Changes to family circumstances

Families must advise SDN of any changes to their childcare subsidy entitlements at time of enrolment.

SDN staff with children enrolled at an SDN centre must inform the Centre immediately if they are ending their employment with SDN but continuing their child's enrolment.

Bonds

Families, any third-party agency, and SDN staff with children enrolled in a centre are required to pay a bond on the confirmation of enrolment. This amount will equate to two (2) weeks of full fees for the days of attendance and will not consider any CCS payments and/or reduced fees.

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Payment plans for bonds can be arranged for families, if required. All arrangements will be negotiated with the Centre Director and managed by the Centre. The bond is payable prior to the child commencing at the centre.

Where there is financial hardship, requests for waiving of family bonds may be requested and are considered by the relevant Operations Manager and approved by the Head of Services for Priority 1 families, in line with SDN's *Equity, Social Justice and Social Inclusion Policy*.

SDN reserves the right to offer the place to another family if the bond payment is not received prior to the date of commencement or a payment plan is not agreed upon.

Bonds are payable by direct debit, from bank or credit card accounts or via the Paynow option in Storypark Manage.

Under no circumstances, is the bond to be used to offset overdue fees, for the continuance of a child in care.

Bonds are adjusted for any changes in days of care.

Bonds will not be refunded unless the child has physically attended the service for a minimum of 2 weeks. If a bond is paid for a place that is not utilised, the full amount may be non-refundable. This will be at the discretion of the Centre Director.

Bond and fee refunds are processed after CCS is finalised and processed 2 to 3 weeks after a child/children leave the centre. Refunds for remaining credit are processed after the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) has paid attendance to the last day of care.

Casual/occasional care

Casual/occasional care bookings can be made provided there are available places and staff to accommodate the additional booking.

SDN reserves the right to refuse a casual booking in the case of unavailability of staff to accommodate the additional booking. SDN will contact the requesting individual to inform whenever a casual booking is not confirmed.

To ensure that families have fair access in taking up vacancies, cancellation for casual/occasional care bookings will require at least 24 hours' written notice. Full fees are charged for families who provide cancellation notice less than 24 hours and whose children are absent for their booked casual care.

Emergency/critical incident closure

In the event of an emergency/critical incident which has an impact on our ability to care for or educate children, it may become necessary to protect children, staff and families by making a decision not to operate and close the service to maintain the safety of all concerned. In the event of a closure of more than 48 hours, fees may be reduced at the discretion of the Head of Services.

Overdue accounts

If payment is more than one (1) week overdue:

- families are notified in writing

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- SDN reserves the right to withdraw a child’s place at a centre.

Where there is financial hardship, a payment plan may be negotiated and will need to be in place before fees are in arrears, to avoid the child’s place being withdrawn. Agreement to a payment plan is at SDN’s discretion and can be supported by a direct debit or Centrepay authority to pay the agreed amount. If the agreed direct debit amount is dishonoured, the child's place may be withdrawn.

Reducing days

Families are required to provide at least four (4) weeks prior notice in writing to reduce the number of days they are enrolled for. The notice period starts from the date SDN is notified in writing.

Termination notice

Families are required to provide at least four (4) weeks prior notice in writing by completing SDN’s *Intention to Terminate Enrolment Form*. The notice period starts from the date the Form is received by SDN. The termination notice period does not include close down periods.

If a family leaves the centre within the four weeks’ notice period, any balance of fees owing is deducted from that family’s bond.

Centre Transfer

Where a child is transferring from one SDN Centre to another SDN Centre, notice periods may be negotiated at the Centre Directors’ discretion to facilitate the transfer.

Fee review

SDN will review the fee schedule every 6 months. Families will be provided one (1) months notice prior to any increase in fees.

Related SDN Documents

Policies

- GI-HLP-1.04: Equity, Social Justice and Social Inclusion
- SD-HLP-2.01: Priority of Access to SDN Services
- SD-OP-2.07: Enrolment, Orientation and Transition into SDN Services
- SD-OP-2.09: Arrival, Departure and Late Collection of Children
- HR-OP-3.10: Enrolment of Children of Staff Members
- HR-OP-3.27: Closure of Services due to Emergency

Procedures

- SD-PRO-2.07-01: Enrolment, Orientation and Transition into SDN Services
- SD-PRO-2.09-01: Arrival, Departure and Late Collection of Children

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- HR-PRO-3.10-01: Enrolment of Children of Staff Members

Forms/Templates

- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-01: Bond/Fee Refund Request Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-02: Intention to Terminate Enrolment Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-03: Letter to Parent – Warning
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-04: Letter to Parent – Termination
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-05: Letter to Parent – No Longer at the Centre with Outstanding Debt
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-06: Weekly Statement of Monies
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-07: SDN Child Care Fees Direct Debit Request Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-08: Payment Plan Form

Other SDN Documents

- SDN Family Preservation Invoice Template for SDN Centres

Relevant Legislation/Regulations

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations, regulations 168 (2)(n) and 172(2)
- Schedule 1: National Quality Standard, quality area 7, standard 7.3 and element 7.3.5
- A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999 (or equivalent)
- [Childcare Provider Handbook](#)

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