

	<b>Policy</b> Corporate Services – Finance	
	<b>Fee Charging and Collection for SDN Children’s Education and Care Centres and Preschools</b>	<b>FIN-OP-5.04</b>

## 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 Preschools, and the families and children enrolled at these Services, 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 Xap. For the safety of staff working in centres and children, and to avoid loss, SDN does not accept cash payments.

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.

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

<b>Minor/legislative amendment or modification history</b> January 2025		<b>Details</b> Optus Group employees priority of access added	
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assistance. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy-if-your-child-absent-from-child-care?context=41186>

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 pages 3 and 4 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 (as outlined below) 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.

### Additional Absence Reasons

(see reasons below as outlined in the Child Care Package <https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/child-care-subsidy/absences>)

Additional absence reason	Evidence required
The child or a member of their immediate household is ill	A medical certificate, or Evidence of a positive COVID-19 test result from a government agency or pathology service
The child is attending preschool	Evidence is not required You must be reasonably satisfied the reason has been met
Alternative arrangements have been made for the child on a pupil-free day	Evidence is not required You must be reasonably satisfied the reason has been met
The child has not been immunised against an infectious disease and the absence occurs during an immunisation grace period	A medical certificate stating that exposure to the infectious disease would pose a health risk to the child
The child is spending time with a person other than their usual carer as required by a court order or parenting plan	A copy of the relevant court order or parenting plan
The child cannot attend because of a period of emergency, for up to 28 days after the emergency	Evidence is not required You must be reasonably satisfied the reason has been met
The child’s carer chooses not to send the child due to a period of emergency, for up to 7 days after the emergency	Evidence is not required You must be reasonably satisfied the reason has been met

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## Late Collection / Late Fees

SDN charges a late collection fee to any family collecting their child or children at the end of their booking time; for half day (as prescribed by each centre) 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*.

## 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 or Preschool 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.

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 Xap.

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 (SDN Children Education and Care Centres only).

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 (SDN Children Education and Care Centres only).

Bonds are not required for SDN Community Preschools.

## Casual/occasional care

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

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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/operational issue 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 to close the service or reduce the operating hours to maintain the safety of all concerned. In the event of a closure, fees may be reduced at the discretion of the Head of Services or a delegated person.

### Overdue accounts

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

- families are notified in writing
- 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 and must complete SDN's *Intention to Terminate Enrolment Form*. 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.

Bookings will cease for all children eligible for school the following year as of the last operational day of the current calendar year. Casual spaces may be offered by the Service for care during the January school holiday period pending availability.

### Centre Transfer

Where a child is transferring from one SDN Service to another SDN Service, the Centre Director will take into account the notice period that suits the families' requirements to facilitate the transfer.

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## Fee review

Families will be provided four (4) weeks' notice prior to the effective date of any increase in fees.

As SDN charges fees two weeks in advance, this notification will be at least 14 days before the new fees are charged or collected.

## SDN managed UNSW centres

- UNSW staff and students, UNSW Affiliates, and staff of Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct (RHIP) will be provided with priority of access to SDN managed UNSW centres (in accordance with *Priority of Access to SDN Services Policy*) and are eligible to the UNSW fee structures.
- The enrolling person must provide proof of employment at the beginning of each calendar year and periodically through the year when requested. 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 and are employed by UNSW).
- UNSW Affiliates will be provided priority of access at the same level as UNSW employed staff and students, above other partners or general public, and are able to access the UNSW staff fee rate.
- 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. Students must provide evidence of enrolment each semester.
- Employees of Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct will be provided with priority of access after UNSW staff, students and Affiliates, but above general community intake, and are able to access the UNSW staff fee rate.
- Where proof of employment or enrolment cannot be met, the fee rate will revert to the community fee for that period of time.

### UNSW Affiliate means employees of:

- The Black Dog Institute (ABN 12 115 954 197)
- Children's Cancer Institute (ABN 41 072 279 559)
- Garvan Institute of Medical Research (62 330 391 937)
- The George Institute for Global Health (ABN 90 085 953 331)
- The Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research (ABN 15 958 063 508)
- Neuroscience Research Australia (ABN 94 050 110 346)
- UNSW Global (ABN 62 086 418 58)
- Other Affiliates of any other entity agreed between SDN and UNSW in writing.

UNSW Affiliates may be asked to provide proof of employment and supporting evidence from their employer or UNSW to confirm that they perform duties or functions for UNSW.

### Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct Staff means employees of:

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- The Sydney Children’s Hospital Network
- South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD)
- Any other entity agreed between SDN and UNSW in writing.

Staff employed or affiliated with the Randwick Health and Innovation Precinct may be asked to provide proof of employment and supporting evidence from their employer to confirm that they perform duties or functions for the above listed employers.

### Optus Group Employees

Optus Group Employees and children of Optus Group contractors will be provided with priority of access to SDN Macquarie Park (in accordance with SDN Priority of Access Policy) and are eligible to the discounted Optus fee structure adhering to the following criteria and requirements:.

- Must be an active employee of Optus
- Must present valid evidence of employment status upon enrolment (Optus Employee ID card, active Optus email account for correspondence)
- Optus employees must check the box for “Optus Group” on the SDN Macquarie Park website when joining the waitlist, this will assist the Family Engagement Team in ensuring accurate communication
- Optus employees must present updated evidence of employment status annually or upon request by the centre staff

SDN Staff will sight and verify the employee ID and supporting documentation during the enrolment phase. If the documentation is valid, the employee will be informed of their eligibility for the discounted rate.

### SDN Community Preschools

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 Xap. For the safety of staff working in Preschools and children, and to avoid loss, SDN does not accept cash payments.

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 SDN Beranga**)
- subject to yearly revision.

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).

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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.

Due to different Government funding requirements children attending Community Preschools are not eligible to receive CCS.

### 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.

### Emergency/critical incident closure

In the event of an emergency/critical incident/operational issue 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 to close the service or reduce the operating hours to maintain the safety of all concerned. In the event of a closure, fees may be reduced at the discretion of the Head of Services or a delegated person.

### Overdue accounts

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

- families are notified in writing
- SDN reserves the right to withdraw a child's place at the Preschool.

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.

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

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## 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: Longer Term Payment Plan Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-09 Request to Write Off Bad Debt Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-11: Bond Payment Plan Form
- FIN-FRM-5.04-01-12: Yearly 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)
- [Child Care Provider Handbook - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

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