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Centre Handbook

Building Partnerships with Families and Community

www.elderstreetehc.com

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The Centre

1.1 INTRODUCTION

We welcome your family to Elder Street Early Childhood Centre. Elder Street ECHC is a 39-place long day care centre, catering for children between the ages of 6 weeks and 6 years. Elder Street ECHC is a privately owned service established in January 2005. Dr. Melissa Duffy-Fagan is the Approved Provider and works with the leadership team of the centre as the Research and Curriculum Mentor. Kate Hewat is our Nominated Supervisor and co-Director along with Paula Guy. Our directors Kate and Paula also share the role of Educational Leader alongside our Early Childhood Teacher, Bree Creighton.

Our Commitment to Reconciliation

The Awabakal and Worimi peoples are acknowledged by Elder St ECHC as the traditional custodians of the land and waters of Newcastle. Aboriginal people lived a very rich and vibrant existence in and around *Muloobinba* (Newcastle) and the *Coquon* (Hunter River).

Food was abundant in marine life and bush tucker. Ceremonies and feasting were generally times for sharing of resources and trading of implements with inland clans. Shell middens at Meekarlba (Honeysuckle) and a tool-making site at *Pillapay Kullaitaran* (Glenrock Lagoon) are remnants of those communal gatherings. As a part of Elder Street ECHC's, ongoing commitment to reconciliation in June 2024 our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was approved by Narragunnawali which allowed us to publish our official RAP document and statement of reconciliation. A RAP is a formal commitment to reconciliation. It documents how our early childhood service will strengthen relationships, respect, and provide opportunities in the classroom, around the centre and within the community in support of Reconciliation.

Our History

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre was opened in August 2002 as Blinky Bill Child Care. Melissa and her husband Tony purchased the business in December 2004, and it was from then known as Elder Street Early Childhood Centre. The centre's building although not a purpose-built centre has been fully renovated to meet the needs of all children, parents, and staff. Some of the many features of the centre are 3 playrooms, 2 playground areas, a separate atelier space, an extensive selection of resources, books, age-appropriate equipment, and a fully ducted reverse cycle air conditioning system. All playroom floors are either floor boards or lino with mats for comfort and toilet/nappy change facilities are provided. We also have two lovely outdoor play areas with ample shade and space for the children to explore and engage in outdoor fun.

This handbook is designed to provide families with as much information as possible in relation to the policies and operation of the centre. This handbook does not contain all the policies however they are available at the centre for your viewing upon request. Please read this handbook thoroughly and keep it on hand as it is intended as a reference point for all your future questions.

1.2 HOURS OF OPERATION

The centre is open from 7.00am until 5.50pm Monday to Friday, for 50 weeks of the year. We are closed on Public Holidays, and for the period between Christmas and the first week of the New Year. We request that parents arrive at the centre no later than 5.50pm to collect their children.

1.3 CENTRE ROOMS

All children enrolled at Elder Street ECHC receive the benefit of age specific grouping in small manageable numbers with consistency of educators being of optimum importance. The groups are as follows:

NURSERY (POSSUMS) – has a maximum of 8 children between the ages of 6 weeks and approximately *24 months – the staff ratio is 1:4.

2-3 YEARS (JOEYS) – has a maximum of 10 children between the ages of approximately *18 months and *3 years the staff ratio is 1:5

PRESCHOOL (WALLABIES) – has a maximum of 21 children between the ages of *3 years and school age the staff ratio is 1:10.

*Please note that the centre's license allows for children to enter the Joeys and Preschool rooms at ages approximate to those mentioned above. The decisions to place children within the centre are dependent upon spaces available and will happen at the discretion of the Approved Provider /Director in consultation with families and educators.

1.4 COMMUNITY PHILOSOPHY

A community philosophy is a living document that underpins the decisions, interactions, culture, planning and implementation of all that happens at a children's service. It is a document that belongs to the entire community of the children's service and therefore requires review by the community regularly. A Centre Philosophy can be thought of in the same light as a set of family values, guidelines or even "how things are viewed around here", philosophically speaking!

ELDER STREET COMMUNITY PHILOSOPHY

The beliefs and values of the children, families, and educators at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre have been consolidated to form our philosophy on the wellbeing, care, and education of children aged birth to five years. Our philosophy is what we believe best represents, based on continually evolving evidence and collaboration, what is most important for children's experiences in their early years. Through guiding values of accountability, collaboration and courage we commit to the principles shared in this philosophy statement.

THE CHILD

Each child's wellbeing, safety and potential are at the core of our purpose. The child is not an abstract concept. Each child, no matter how young, comes to us already connected and a part of the world. Our image of young children and childhood shapes our relationships with them.

As the human brain is at its most adaptable form in early childhood, what occurs during this formative period matters a great deal, affecting children's further life potential. Children will have a strong start when they have rich contextually meaningful early experiences and when their families thrive within supportive communities. Therefore, we view all children as curious, competent, intentional learners who are knowledgeable, culturally, and socially connected meaning makers. Positive outcomes are achieved for children by teaching and caring with happiness, joy, and love, and creating environments that are calm, flexible, authentic, and warm, open ended, ethical and democratic.

PLAY AND LEARNING

Learning through play provides opportunities for children to search for knowledge, solve problems, take risks, and think critically. Play is complex and requires a child focused contemporary and diverse teaching approach to make children's rich learning outcomes visible. Our educational program is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework (AGDE, 2022) and the Reggio Emilia approach to project work and documentation of children's learning. This type of learning enables interpretation and assessment of children's creativity, curiosity, needs and interests as they play.

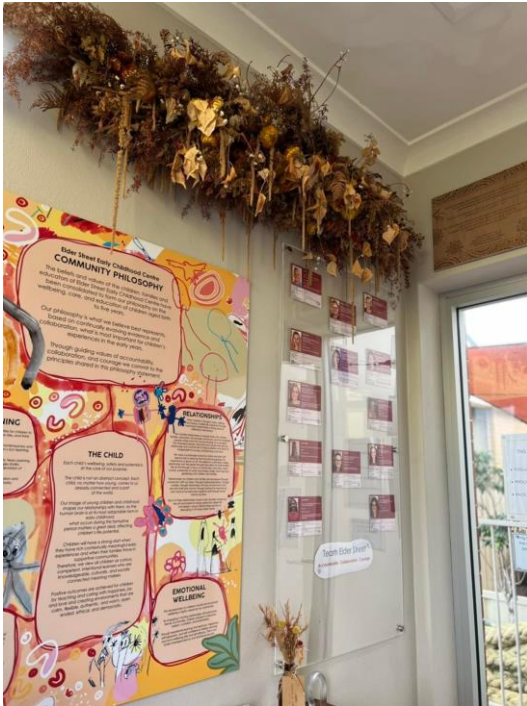
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

We are guided by the international agreement for children's rights outlined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Along with many articles contained in the convention, we are committed to ensuring children are seen as knowledgeable and capable. Each day children are empowered to make their own choices, to be celebrated for who they are individually and to be heard and included within the community. Along with their rights we also believe young children can understand the responsibility associated with these rights and the rights of others.

RELATIONSHIPS

When children's thoughts, ideas, feelings and beings are holistically supported through meaningful relationships a strong sense of wellbeing is developed. We consider relationships to include those with children, families, educators, the broader community, and the Awabakal people whose land that we are situated on is unceded. The Awabakal people, their land and culture motivate our relationship and commitment to Reconciliation and form an integral part of our play and learning curriculum. We value a sustainable feature for culture and land with approaches to learning that includes recognising the importance of equality for all. We believe in cultivating a deep relationship with the planet through Education for Sustainability. We do this through a focus on nature play, recycling, waste control, awareness of water and energy usage, land care and gardening with children and families. Relationships for children and families are developed through connection with our team, through building friendships, through cuddles, through relationships with play environments that are both built and natural, through sharing the importance and value of our educators explicitly and through sound communication. Each of these relationships needs to be nurtured, reciprocal, secure and based on being respected, respectful and deeply valued. Relationships are key to belonging to the Elder Street Family.

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING



The development of children's social and emotional wellbeing is highly valued by our community. By engaging in trusting relationships with educators, friends and families, children will grow to become resilient, confident and empathetic. Through experiential learning, that elicits joy, happiness, self-expression, and self-confidence, children develop practical wellbeing skills and self-efficacy. This in turn fosters interdependence and emotional security.

***You will find this significant document in its full design and home in our front foyer. This document was designed and written by children, educators, families and local aboriginal artist Jasmine Craciun.**

1.5 EDUCATION AND CARE

The care and education of children enrolled at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre is the focal point of the centre's operation.

We believe that the young child needs interesting and stimulating contextual experiences that will challenge curiosity, excite creativity, and instill a love for learning. We maintain a flexibility that allows us to take advantage of any spontaneous learning situations whilst also drawing from our national curriculum framework to guide planned learning in consultation with children and families. Our pedagogy and program are based on children's strengths, interests, ideas and knowledge of the world.

Ongoing professional learning drawing from knowledge of early childhood educational theory and research, child development and observational skills, facilitates the formulation and evaluation of appropriate learning focuses and objectives designed to promote each child's development and sense of self.

Elder St ECHC offers children an innovative play-based curriculum that is guided by the Australian National Quality Framework, informed by internationally recognised best practice and current research and underpinned by the importance of nurturing strong relationships.

1.6 STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Elder St ECHC's teaching team and other qualified staff work with families to create a program for your child based on family context, your child's strengths and interests supported by the Early Years Learning Framework (AGDE, 2022).

All staff employed at the centre are committed to the wellbeing of the children. Teams work collaboratively to provide a stimulating program in the following ways: they provide learning environments that are safe and aesthetically inspiring; build trusting and respectful relationships with each other, the children and families; promote diversity, equity and social justice; engage in ongoing and regular professional development; provide regular, clear and reflective feedback on children's progress; and finally ensure they are assessing and reflecting on their pedagogy and connection to the community.

The team at Elder Street ECHC includes early childhood teachers, educators, a food manager/cook, gardener, handyman and cleaners. Staff are listed on the notice board in the foyer, along with photographs and bio profiles.

2025 TEAM

Dr. Melissa Duffy-Fagan	Approved Provider/Research & Curriculum Mentor Doctor of Philosophy in Education Master of Early Childhood Education Bachelor of Children's Services
Kate Hewat	Early Childhood Teacher Nominated Supervisor/Director/Educational Leader Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education)
Paula Guy	Director/Educational Leader/ Educator Responsible Person Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
Bree Creighton	Early Childhood Teacher/ Educational Leader/ Responsible Person Bachelor of Education (Birth to five years)
Lauren Berwick	Educator/ Responsible Person Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
Sarah Jenkins	Educator/ Responsible Person Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
Olivia Hancock	Educator/ Responsible Person Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
Leisa Drayton	Educator/ Responsible Person Diploma of Children's Services
Roxi Heywood-Hayes	Educator Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
Casey Boyce	Educator Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care
Carley Chippington	Educator Certificate III in Children's Services
Hannah Higgins	Educator Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

Chloe Loader-Weston	Educator Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
Sarah Sims	Educator Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
Carla Purdon	Educator Certificate III in Children's Services
Catherine Wilkinson	Food Manager/Cook Certificate III in Residential Food and Family Services
Kim Pomfrett	Administration Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood Education)

We support our permanent team and the broader early childhood education and care sector by engaging in an annual traineeship program. Each year we have between 1-2 trainee educators work with us fulltime whilst studying for their Certificate III in Early Childhood Education with TAFE NSW.

1.7 COMPLIANCE & REGULATIONS

Our service is licensed under the National Quality Standard, National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.

1.8 CHILD SAFE STANDARDS AND CULTURE

The Child Safe Standards (CSS) are the result of recommendations by the outcomes of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The CCS provide a framework for making organisations safer for children. The CCS provide tangible guidance for organisations to create cultures, adopt strategies and act to put the interests of children first, to keep them safe from harm.

Below are the ten Child Safe Standards all NSW early childhood organisation must apply to safe guard the children we are working with;

- Standard 1 Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
- Standard 2 Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
- Standard 3 Families and communities are informed and involved
- Standard 4 Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account
- Standard 5 People working with children are suitable and supported
- Standard 6 Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
- Standard 7 Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children Safe through continual education and training
- Standard 8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
- Standard 9 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
- Standard 10 Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

The Standards have been designed to:

- Help drive cultural change in organisations
- Be principle-based and outcome-focused
- Be flexible enough that they can be adapted by organisations of varying sizes and characteristics
- Avoid placing undue burden on organisations
- Help organisations address multiple risks
- Balance caution and caring
- Be a benchmark against which organisations can assess their child safe capability and set performance targets
- Be of equal importance and interrelated.

How are the CSS supported at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre?

At Elder Street ECHC we are committed to protecting all children who attend our service. We are committed to continual engagement in relevant training and information provided by our regulatory bodies, the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian and the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Child Safe Culture

We understand that the CSS need to exist within a strong culture of child safety. A child safe culture is a set of values and practices that guide the attitudes and behaviour of all staff. Elder Street ECHC has developed our own way of operationalising a culture of safety through the development of 5 Pillars of Child Safe Culture. These are:

1. Professional Development
2. Child safe curriculum
3. Family and community education
4. Online safety practices
5. Staffing and supervision

Please refer to the Child Safe Culture handout that has been included in your enrolment pack. This information expands on each of our 5 pillars.

Online safety practices

We would like to highlight here the issue of online safety practices. On enrolment families will be given a Digital Image Permission Form to read and sign. This form explains our commitment to a child safe culture and Child Safe arrangements under the advice of the eSafety Commissioner and the National Quality Framework in relation to online environments. The permission form explains our daily practices, use and storage of children's images within the service and online to help families make decisions about giving permission for the use of their child's images.

1.9 ASSESSMENT AND RATING PROCESS - NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

The National Quality Standard is a schedule to the National Regulations. The NQS sets a new national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. It gives services and families a better understanding of a quality service. This enables families to make informed decisions about the service providing education and care to their child.

The new NQS brings together seven key quality areas that are important to outcomes for children.

Quality Area 1 – Educational Program and Practice

Quality Area 2 – Children's Health and Safety

Quality Area 3 – Physical Environment

Quality Area 4 – Staffing Arrangements

Quality Area 5 – Relationships with Children

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities

Quality Area 7 – Governance and Leadership

Our centre is currently rated (2019) as Exceeding the National Quality Standard through the Assessment and Rating process.

This process is designed to recognise the strengths of a service, to help centres determine where improvements are needed and to guide continuous planning and implementing for these. We do this by the development of a Quality Improvement Plan.

There are 5 steps to this process which are as follows:

- Self-Assessment Tool & Quality Improvement Plan submitted by the service,
- Observations of the service through a visit,
- Consideration of information held by the regulator regarding compliance history and discussion with the Director and the provider of the service.

Following an assessment, a service will be advised of its rating in each of the seven quality areas and its overall rating.

- Changes to the QIP may be recommended.

For more information about the NQS process please talk to Kate or Paula or visit the www.acecqa.gov.au website.

Attendance at the Centre

2.1 ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

We ask families to visit the centre before enrolment so that they can see our centre and discuss their education and care requirements.

We encourage visits to a number of centres before making a final decision on a centre that best suits their family's needs. Enrolment at the centre is confirmed by the completion of an enrolment form and a bond being paid (see Section 5). We also require a copy of your child's birth certificate and immunisation records, as all children enrolled at the centre must be fully immunised for their age (see further information on immunisation in Section 7).

2.2 WAITING LIST

A waiting list is available for families interested in a place at the centre. Registering on the waiting list does not guarantee a place at the centre, but once registered on the waiting list, families will be contacted as soon as a position is available. We ask that families update their interest in the waiting list every 6 months by emailing the centre. Waiting list applications can be made via our website by clicking on the Contact Us tab and then scrolling down to Wait list application that will take you to the Hubhello site where the Waitlist tab is.

2.3 ORIENTATION

Leaving your child in somebody else's care can be an anxious time for children and families. Orientation is designed for children and families. It is extremely important that families feel comfortable with the centre's philosophy, staff and policies. This is why we encourage families to visit the centre before beginning formal care.

Once the enrolment documentation has been completed families` are encouraged to bring their children to the centre for planned visits to become familiar with the environment and staff.

During the orientation visits we ask that you stay with your child and bring along the completed paperwork from the enrolment pack. Staff then have the opportunity to ask about routines such as sleeping, dietary requirements and all the special things about your child that only you can tell us.

2.4 SEPARATION

Children's adjustments into early childhood education and care may vary; some children take only a day or so to feel comfortable whilst others may take several weeks. Educators at the centre will consult with you on the best way to support your child throughout the settling in period. Please remember this is a new experience for both of you. We will ensure that the transition is handled with consistency, empathy and care.

Throughout the settling in process feel free to stay with your child as long as you wish. However, once you and staff decide it is the appropriate time to leave, we encourage you to do so quickly and farewell your child in a positive manner. For families that wish to regularly stay for extended periods of time we request you provide a Working With Children's Check (WWCC) to meet our Child Safe Culture and Standards. A free volunteer WWCC can be applied for online from the Office of the Children's Guardian should you not already have one.

Staff are always available to keep you informed on how your child is settling either at the completion of your child's day in care or throughout the day by telephone or email.

Ongoing awareness of your child's well-being is imperative, therefore please communicate with staff about any change in family circumstances, important events or changes in your family routine which may impact your child.

2.5 ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Please always ensure a staff member is aware of your child's arrival and departure. It is a regulatory requirement that the authorised person sign the child in and out on the digital sign in, located on an IPAD in each room. The sign in and out process cannot be completed by the child or siblings and must be done so by the adult collecting the child.

If it is intended that a person unfamiliar to the staff is to collect your child, then this information needs to be clearly stated to a staff member verbally, as well as via email. If a family wants a teenage sibling (aged between 16 and 18) to collect or drop off their child, please speak to the Directors first to have this approved. Any person who is not approved to collect your child or who is unfamiliar to staff are required to produce proof of identification and must be nominated by the parents in the appropriate section of the enrolment form. Any person who is not nominated is not able to collect the child without prior communication with the Director/responsible person. These procedures are rigidly adhered to in order to protect each child during the transfer of legal responsibility. Parental/guardian cooperation and support in these matters are essential.

2.6 CUSTODY

Enrolment of any child at this centre should be established by the custodial parent or the parent/carer who has interim custody pending a hearing of the Family Law Court of Australia. Documented evidence of custody and access orders must be presented with the Centre's records on enrolment and the collection of children from the centre must be in accordance with these arrangements. Unless copies of such orders are held by the centre we are obliged, if requested by the non- custodial parent to release your child into their care at any time, provided he/she can prove their relationship to your child by means of photo identification, such as a driver's license.

This centre recognises the entitlement of non-custodial parents/carers to have access to information booklets, newsletters etc. and to arrange discussions with staff regarding their child's progress.

2.7 PARKING

The leadership and governance of Elder Street Early Childhood Centre supports the neighbors of the centre and acknowledges that these residents may sometimes experience difficulties due to their proximity to the centre. Leadership and governance do not condone any imposition of the immediate community by families' utilising this service.

The centre is in a primary residential area and all families should respect the residents of Elder Street by ensuring that parking is conducted in a safe and responsible manner. There is a 15-minute parking limit pick-up and drop-off area at the front of the centre. Parents can assume that they are able to remove children from the car, take them into the centre, sign in, place their children's belongings, communicate with staff, and return to their cars in a brief period. It is not acceptable to park in, across, or even too close to any designated driveway area near the centre at any time.

Please ensure siblings are not left in vehicles when dropping off children to Elder Street. Leaving a child or a young person unattended in a motor vehicle is an offence under section 231 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW).

Please note:

***Families of Elder Street Early Childhood Centre must enter and leave the building from the Elder Street entrance only, as the car park area in DeVitre Street is strictly for staff parking or pre-arranged disability/wheelchair access only.**

2.8 ALLOWABLE ABSENCES

If you receive Child Care Subsidy (CCS) through the Family Assistance Office (FAO), it is very important that you sign your child in and out on available iPads consistently as our attendance records are directly linked to your childcare subsidy eligibility. They are legal records that the FAO can audit at any time.

In one financial year families receiving CCS are allowed 42 days of "allowable absences". This means that if your child is away from the centre for 42 days in a financial year, then on the 43rd day away from the centre you will not be entitled to receive CCS for that day and will be responsible for paying full fees. To reduce the number of allowable absences, if your child is away due to sickness you can supply a medical certificate, and that particular day will not be counted. There are other allowed absence criteria, if you wish to know more, please see the Director.

2.9 COMMUNICATION BETWEEN FAMILIES AND STAFF

Communication is the key to a successful partnership with families. The service aims to achieve high levels of communication through a variety of methods as follows:

Room information: All rooms have areas of information for families. We display our weekly menu, the children's meal and rest records and our daily slideshow on the laptop in each room (daily photo slideshows are emailed out Monday-Thursday with the weekly Pedagogical Journals emailed each Friday).

Meal and Rest Records detail what the children were offered for morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and late afternoon tea. They also detail how much food and water/milk was consumed. Rest records share an indication of how long your child slept or rested.

You will also see "pedagogical documentation" displayed around the centre from time to time. These are for families to read and learn about the children's ongoing interests and learning projects. They may be displayed for short periods of time or for many months. Pedagogical documentation is added to as the children's interest in the project grows.

Email: This mode of communication is one of the most used forms of communication at Elder Street EHC. All fee receipts, account invoices/statements, surveys, information flyers etc. will be sent to families digitally via email. We ask families to provide an up-to-date email address for communication with the centre and request they check it regularly for communication. We also ask that families ensure their email account mailbox is checked regularly for storage space so our communications can be received.

Weekly Communication Check-in: Each Friday an update from the centre is emailed to all families and staff. It is important that families read through this each week to know about any service changes, important announcements, surveys, excursions etc that may be taking place in coming weeks.

Family involvement: Families are encouraged to be involved in the centre in many different ways. You are welcome at the centre at any time to observe and/or join in with activities for as long or little as you like. Our educators encourage families to consult, collaborate and become involved in the design of their child's educational learning focuses and the overall curriculum within the centre.

We have many opportunities to join in with contributing skills, knowledge, culture, and ideas for our learning projects. Family involvement enriches the learning so much more. We request family engagement in conversations with educators about their child's learning. Your contribution of ideas and knowledge helps us develop meaningful experiences and feedback in their learning records. Families are welcome to attend excursions; your support in these experiences is greatly appreciated. If families have any special talents they could share to enhance our program we would love to hear from you. Some examples that the children would benefit from are; knowledge of another language and other cultural information, artefacts, performance of a musical instrument, storytelling or puppetry, dance/exercise sessions, bringing in a pet for a visit, art activities with the children.

Elder Street EHC also hosts several family events throughout the year. We hold an annual family day which is a get together of all currently enrolled families in a location around Newcastle. We also host our end of year celebration which is held within Elder Street EHC.

Family and Educator meetings: Families and/or educators may at times feel the need to make an appointment to discuss a child's wellbeing or development.

Meetings may include for example learning interests, behaviour support or allied health areas. To be able to communicate freely and effectively, it is best for the involved parties to make a time to meet that is convenient to all. Families can phone or email to arrange this type of meeting. We are more than happy to discuss any issues or concerns. We ask that notice is given to allow us to collect any information that may be of use during the discussion and to organise our staffing roster to cater for educators to be out of the classroom.

Centre Policies: The centre's policies are available for families to read on request. On enrolment a portion of the centre's important policies will be included in the enrolment pack along with a summary statement of these policies' important elements for parents to read and sign off. The centre's policies have been developed in consultation with regulations, staff, children and families. All policies are regularly reviewed in light of our stated goals, philosophy and regulatory requirements. A list of our policies can be found in Section 7 of the handbook.

Concerns and Complaints: Please feel free to discuss with either of our Directors any problems or concerns you may have. Children's classrooms are not always suitable for these discussions, so we are happy to organise a time to meet. Ideally a parent/carer would make an appointment with the Director so that we can give you our undivided attention. Please refer to our Dealing with Complaints policy for more information.

Children's Daily Requirements

3.1 MEALS

Food is freshly prepared on the premises by our resident food manager. Breakfast, if requested (for children who arrive between 7.00am – 7.45am) morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and late afternoon tea are prepared observing any special dietary requirements for your child. We respect different preferences, cultures and religions and ask that these be noted on enrolment to ensure that no dietary needs are overlooked.

Our seasonal 6-week rotating menu is comprised of a range of meals following the Hunter New England Health's Good for Kids Good for Life healthy eating guidelines. We record children's food intake daily. A list of children's preferences and allergies are kept (and updated as necessary) in each room and in the kitchen. Liquids supplied daily are milk and water. Our weekly menu is displayed in each room.

3.2 NAPPIES

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre provides good quality disposable nappies for all children that are not toilet trained. Elder Street ECHC will provide alternate nappies should a child have sensitivity to those nappies regularly purchased. If families choose to provide their own reusable nappies, we ask that there are up to 6 nappies are provided, along with a sealable nappy bag to send nappies home in.

3.3 FORMULA

If your child drinks infant formula, please supply bottles and formula each day. Infant formula and bottles need to be clearly labelled, and bottles should be placed in the fridge or bench located in the prep kitchen on arrival. All bottles are rinsed (not sterilised) and put back in your child's bag each day. Our staff will be happy to help you with any questions you have about how this process works in our nursery preparation kitchen.

3.4 BOTTLES AND DUMMIES

It is necessary for you to supply bottles and dummies which should be clearly labelled. If your child drinks cows' milk (or any milk products other than formula), please place their bottle as mentioned above in the fridge or on the bench in the nursery preparation kitchen.

If your child uses a dummy, please place them in your child's cot or if sleeping on a mat, leave them in your child's sleep bag. Dummies will be returned to your child's bag each day. For babies still drinking sterilised water (usually under 12 months) water is boiled and cooled for drinking.

3.5 CLOTHING AND SUN PROTECTION

Children often dress and undress throughout the day both at home and in care. We like to focus on dressing in our program and we believe that if some special attention is given, dressing can become a valuable learning experience.

The following simple guidelines will make dressing and undressing easier for your child and staff:

- Supply at least two (extra) labelled sets of clothing each day.
- Ensure your child's bag and all clothing is labelled to alleviate the problem of lost or misplaced belongings.
- We ask that children wear t-shirts that cover the shoulders and mid-drift (no singlet tops) and that shoes be either sandals or runners (no thongs).
- Clothing supplied should not interfere with children's enjoyment of activities. Please supply everyday clothing that children can move in and keep good clothing for special occasions. The centre provides smocks for messy play.
- Clothing with elastic waists are easier for children than zips and buttons.
- For the cost of \$15.00 the centre provides each child with an Elder Street bucket style, UPF50+ sun hat. The hat is yours to keep when leaving the centre. The hat remains at the centre during enrolment, and it will be laundered and stored by the centre.
- We ask that you apply sunscreen to your child each morning on arrival. Sunscreen is available in classrooms and in the playground. Staff will apply the sunscreen to all children again at other intervals during the day when needed. Our centre uses SPF50+ sunscreen. If your child is sensitive to certain sunscreen, please advise the centre as it will be necessary for you to supply your own and fill out appropriate medical conditions forms.

3.6 SECURITY TOYS AND COMFORTERS

We understand that making connections with home and early childhood education and care is very important for the children. Special possessions can carry significant meaning for children as they make their daily transitions. We do ask that families minimise toys from home to only those that are a special security item or comforter. When not in use, we encourage the children to store these items in their bag and to access them when needed (usually sleep/rest time). Please try to limit comforters to soft toys and not a different one for each day. Elder Street Early Childhood Centre provides wonderful educational and age/stage appropriate toys for all age groups to ensure there is plenty of fun times to be experienced.

3.7 TOILETRIES

The centre provides liquid hand soap and paper towel in all bathrooms. We supply face washers and wipes so children can wash their hands and faces after mealtimes. A separate face washer or wipe is used for each child. We encourage children to have a drink of water after meals to rinse away any leftover food.

3.8 BEDDING

The cots used in the nursery are Australian Standards approved with well-fitting mattresses. We supply a mattress protector, fitted sheet for each child using a cot as well as a top sheet/blanket if required. Children have their linen changed on a rotating basis.

Children in the toddler and pre-school rooms sleep on mattresses supplied by the service. We ask that you supply a bed bag containing a single flat bottom sheet and lightweight blanket or bed roll/sleeping bag. The mattresses are washed down on a weekly basis. Please feel free to supply a pillow for children sleeping on a mattress. Red Nose Australia (SIDS and Safe Sleep) recommends waiting until a child is two years of age and is no longer sleeping in a cot or portable cot before introducing a pillow for sleep.

If your child attends the centre on consecutive days, the sleep bag can remain at the centre until the final day of attendance for the week. We ask that the sleep bag go home for the linen to be washed and returned back for the next day's attendance. If your child does not attend consecutive days, we ask that you take the sleep bag home at the end of each day to relieve congestion in storage. Children in the preschool room who do not have a day sleep do not need to bring any sleep bedding.

3.9 CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

As stated in our Inclusion and Social Justice Policy and the EYLF (AGDE, 2022), we are committed to equity for all children to have the right to participate in inclusive early childhood experiences regardless of their circumstances, strengths, gender, capabilities, or diverse ways of doing and being. To support all children's inclusion, we recognise and respond to barriers that some children may face.

Such barriers can be related to disability, family, diversity, cultural and linguistic diversity, neurodiversity, and children with families living through trauma and adversity (AGDE, 2022).

The staff enjoy a good professional relationship with community support agencies and undertake to liaise with such agencies. We utilise each agency's expertise in its given field ensuring that the best possible individual program is formulated for every child. Individual programs will be formulated by a Learning Support Team consisting of parents/caregivers, Elder Street ECHC staff and relevant staff from outside agencies e.g., Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists, case workers etc. These programs will be regularly reviewed. Individual needs of each child are considered when assessing the suitability of the environment at the centre. Possible adaptations needed would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Daily Routine

4.1 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY POLICY

Staff at the centre acknowledge the absolute necessity for the maintenance of confidentiality in all aspects of care and record keeping. All enrolment information, personal and family details, medical and health records, incident forms, protective care records, children's individual programming and progress records while being readily available to respective families will be kept in a secure locality in order to ensure family's confidentiality. It is our policy that all staff and students will maintain confidentiality with respect to family issues and the individual development of any child enrolled at the centre.

This centre abides by the National Privacy Act 1988. Any information collected is used purely for the purpose of administration, communication, planning, programming, and evaluation. Information may be disclosed to the NSW Department of Community Services, Family Assistance Office, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and if requested by families' other professional agencies.

All information obtained will be handled sensitively and securely in accordance with the National Privacy Principles. When no longer required, information will be appropriately filed or disposed of.

Personal Information Protection

In NSW, private businesses are subject to the Mandatory Notification of Data Breach (MNDB) scheme under the Personal Information Protection Act 2009. This scheme requires businesses to notify the NSW Privacy Commissioner and affected individuals when an 'eligible data breach' occurs. Data breaches are when there is unauthorized access to or disclosure of personal information, or where the information is lost in circumstances where such access or disclosure is likely. The breach must also be likely to result in serious harm to individuals whose information is affected. Whilst it is unlikely that any data breaches will occur at Elder Street ECHC, our leadership and governance processes ensure that we are aware of our responsibilities in this area.

4.2 CURRICULUM PLANNING – EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

To properly understand the program and planning that takes place at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre, we must first explain the educational theory behind the practice. To do this we will introduce you to the Reggio Emilia educational approach.

In April 2015, Mel, our Approved Provider and research and curriculum mentor travelled with the Australian REAIE group of teacher delegates to take part in an educational study tour with 400 other delegates from around the world. The tour took place in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Mel wanted to understand more and see for herself how this wonderful approach looked in practice in its original Italian context (please see our Resources tab in our website to read her report of this learning experience).

Our own education and care service is influenced and inspired by the educational approach that takes place in Reggio Emilia. However, it is important to note that our context is very different to that of an Italian town. We draw from their philosophy and theory to build our own educational program within our own context.

Reggio Emilia is a city in Northern Italy. It's infant or toddler centres and preschools are regarded as some of the best in the world. After World War II, the people of Reggio Emilia, inspired by a local philosopher – Loris Malaguzzi, decided that they wanted to provide high quality programs for children. The financial support from the government and dedication from the community led to the development of centres that are an inspiration to early childhood professionals around the world.

The Reggio Emilia approach to education is committed to the creation of conditions for learning that will enhance and facilitate children's construction of "his or her own powers of thinking through the synthesis of all the expressive, communicative and cognitive languages" (Edwards & Forman, 1993). The Reggio Emilia approach can be viewed as a resource and inspiration to help educators, parents, and children as they work together to further develop their own educational programs. Further information can be learned about the Reggio Emilia approach in Australia by visiting <https://reggioaustralia.org.au/>.

Our educational program is based on a mix of elements from the Reggio Emilia approach, Being Belonging and Becoming: The Australian Early Years Learning Framework, and our own pedagogical approaches to formative and summative assessments for young children. These include the following:

Individual Learning Records: The learning year is broken up into three learning rounds. For learning rounds one and two, educators and each individual child's family collaborate on a learning focus for the child. A detailed written record of each individual child's learning and development is recorded and shared with the child's family when the round finishes.

The third learning round is a summative assessment where educators will record an overview of all the documentation collected through reflecting and evaluating the individual child's progress over the year.

Project-based learning: Projects are emergent and in-depth studies of concepts, ideas, and interests which arise within the group of children. This form of learning recognises the potential of young children and their ability to question, reflect, problem solve, theorise, experiment, and express their findings through 'the hundred languages'. The hundred languages is a key principle of the RE approach. Project work is considered a journey where educators work alongside children to make decisions about the direction of study and representational mediums. Throughout this project work, educators create progressive documentation displays for children, families, and educators to support the process of cyclical learning in our environment.

Emergent Curriculum: An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interests of the children. This form of learning is captured from children's interests, through community and/or family events, as well as known interests of children. Team planning is an essential component of the emergent curriculum. Educators work together to formulate teaching intentions, intended outcomes, proposed teaching strategies, and educational reflections each month during their collaboration meetings.

The environment: The physical and natural environment is known as 'the third teacher' and a crucial part of our teaching and learning experiences. Educators carefully plan for and organise the learning environments throughout the year to align with the children's interests, individual learning records, project-based learning, and emergent curriculum. A well-planned learning environment that is rich in beauty, supports social interactions, and arouses curiosity, fosters the development of creativity, imagination, meaningful learning, and self-identity. This form of planning for both indoors and outdoors is intrinsically embedded in our individual learning, project work and emergent curriculum planning.

Documentation of children's learning: To support our educational program, documentation of children's work in progress is viewed as an important tool in the learning process of children, educators, and families. Photographs, videos, and pedagogical documentation is curated by educators in both digital and physical forms and placed in the learning environment. This pedagogical practice invites a more sensitive and diverse way of understanding and making assessments for and of the children's learning. The practice of pedagogical documentation intentionally focuses on becoming closer to the children's lived meanings. Documentation demonstrates why things matter and how they are experienced, understood, and worked through from the children's perspectives.

4.3 PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

At Elder Street we have a full-time preschool program. Being a long day care centre means that we can offer preschool experiences throughout the day when children are ready to learn rather than having set preschool hours. This way, it is not necessary for all children to be learning about the one experience or topic at the one time.

Small groups are encouraged rather than large ones. We also have a Transition to School Program specifically for the children who are going to school the following year. This learning takes place throughout the whole year but is focused on specifically over an 8-week period in Oct/ Nov each year. Families with children eligible to attend school the following year will receive further information on the Transition to School Program around August.

4.4 SLEEP, REST & RELAXATION

Children are encouraged to sleep or rest and relax after lunch. Children's sleep times will vary according to the children's age and needs. If your child does not need a sleep, then resting and relaxing is the alternative. Our preschool room set up stations of quiet experiences for the children to engage in. For families or children that request a sleep, mats and supplied bedding will be put out for them.

4.5 TOILETING

Educators will consult with families regarding toilet training. If both parties agree that a child is ready, training can commence both at home and at the centre. Educators will encourage confidence, routine, and hygiene. Staff will use whatever training method families and children feel comfortable with. Your child may wish to start off with a potty or straight onto our child size toilets. Both methods make toilet training an easier transition. Educator's access peers as role models to encourage children to use the potty or toilet. Educators may also encourage children, whilst still in nappies, to have a try on the potty or toilet during nappy changes. Consistent encouragement and reminders will be given for children to go to the toilet. Children's progress will be shared with families so there is consistency and continued success with training at home.

4.6 BEHAVIOUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre's behaviour intervention and support policy guides our pedagogy and planning when educators and families identify children who require explicit support and guidance due to behaviour concerns. Educators, educational leaders and directors alongside families and allied health professionals will work through the steps of this policy with the intention to achieve positive outcomes for the child, educators and families.

Behaviour intervention and support involves the teaching and learning of self-regulation taking into consideration children's age, that determines executive function abilities and expectations. Behaviour intervention is also the way we teach children about respect for the rights and feelings of themselves and others. By guiding children's behaviour, we help them to learn emotionally sound and socially acceptable ways to express their feelings, how to act assertively in social situations (i.e., to say no, to request what they want) and how to cope differing situations supported by caring and responsive educators.

The behaviour and guidance techniques used by educators at our service are designed to give children the opportunity to expand their experiences of life in a productive, safe environment. This experience provides individuals the right to safety, tolerance, self-expression, cultural identity, dignity and self-worth. Children benefit from knowing that their environment is stable and that a competent adult is taking care of them.

For more information on behaviour intervention and support practices at Elder Street, please refer to our Behaviour Intervention and Support policy located in your enrolment pack.

4.7 BIRTHDAYS

We love to celebrate the children's birthdays. Families can bring in a cake for the group to share. The cake will be covered with cling wrap for when the candles are blown out. This is to prevent the spread of germs.

An alternative is to provide individual cupcakes etc. for each child to eat. We ask that families please provide a cake that is nut free.

4.8 EXCURSIONS

Excursions are a great way to interact and learn about the community, our environment and to build on learning projects. Elder Street Early Childhood Centre organises excursions throughout the year for our children.

Local incidental excursions

Educators often engage in 'local' incidental excursions along Elder St. Upon enrolment families are asked to provide permission for children to take part in these local incidental excursions. Local excursions along Elder St, are documented on a separate form noting the time, date and number of children attending from the centre. Families with children under the age of 2 years will be asked for permission on the day, prior to children leaving the service. There is no obligation for families to give permission for children to attend local incidental excursions. Any children without permission will remain at the centre engaged in our usual program.

Excursions using private or public transport

For all excursions involving the use of transport or crossing of major roads, a permission form must be signed by parents, and the minimum adult/child ratio for these excursions is 1:4. Family members are encouraged and welcome to attend these excursions. We communicate about these excursions through email and direct conversations between educators and families.

4.9 LOCKERS

Each child has their own locker for storage of their bag. Children's items must be labeled. Please see that you or your child place their belongings in their locker on each visit and collect them on leaving. If your child attends full time, you are welcome to leave their bag each day. However, please ensure that any wet or dirty clothes in plastic bags are taken home, and spare clothes are replaced for future use. If your child attends the centre for part of the week, they may share a locker with another child who attends on different days. In this instance, belongings are to be taken home on each visit.

Fees and Assistance

5.1 PAYMENT OF FEES

When a place is offered for enrolment, families need to complete all necessary documentation. To secure the enrolment a bond must be paid. The bond secures your child's place at the centre. The bond payment is \$100.00 per day of attendance. So, for example, if your child is enrolled for 2 days, the bond due is \$200.00. The bond at the time of enrolment is non-refundable if you change your mind about your choice of early childhood education and care. However, on leaving the Centre, after giving 2 weeks' notice and full payment of any fees due, the bond is fully refundable.

*Please note 2 weeks' notice is not applicable after 31st October. After this date families are required to pay for their child's placement until the last day of operation of that year. This is because it is very difficult for enrolment places to be filled late in the year. If families increase their children's attendance at the centre for the following year, the bond will also need to be increased.

5.2 CONDITIONS OF PAYMENT OF FEES

Daily fees can be subsidised through Child Care Subsidy administered by the Family Assistance Office with income assessments carried out by Centrelink.

Fees are charged for each enrolled day, except for Public Holidays. Since the fee level calculation is based on averages, fees must be paid even if the child is away sick or on holidays. Only the centre's annual closure period is exempt from fee payment.

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre has a discretionary 'Buy and Sell' policy (see below for further instructions), which is offered to families who are already enrolled at the centre. This can be used for family holiday periods and pre-advised rostered days for families. NB. Due to the high incidents of families taking their vacation during school holidays, it is highly unlikely that these dates will be sold. For days that are sold, both the buying and selling families will be charged \$3.80 per day's transaction.

Fees may be paid by direct deposit in the Centre's working account (details of which are included in this enrolment package). Fees can be paid weekly, fortnightly or monthly. Receipts for all fee payments will be emailed to the families email address recorded in our system.

If there are any problems with payments, please discuss this matter with the Directors. Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCs) may be granted to families experiencing hardship. Further information on ACCs can be found at <https://guides.dss.gov.au/family-assistance-guide/1/2/7>.

Whilst we try and help whenever possible, we cannot carry debts. If fees become more than two weeks in arrears the service will adhere to our Fee Policy which could result in termination of position.

We encourage you to discuss your child's day with educators, so please ensure that you arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the end of your child's care to do this. We ask that families arrive at the centre by 5.50pm. Families should phone the centre if you are going to be late, for whatever reason.

We understand that life as a working family is busy, but please remember that the centre's operating hours cease at 6.00pm. If your child remains at the centre after this time a fee of \$10.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$1.00 per minute thereafter will need to be charged to your account.

5.3 TERMINATION OF PLACEMENT

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre can cancel a child's placement at any time once 2 weeks' notice has been given to the family. This could happen due to the following instances:

- a) Falling behind in fees
- b) Repeatedly failing to comply with our policies and requirements stated in this handbook, including repeatedly arriving late for pick-up of children
- c) Giving us false information.

5.4 ASSISTANCE WITH CHILD CARE COST

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that Australian families are able to access affordable, flexible and high-quality early childhood education and care. The Government provides a number of subsidies and programs to help with the cost of childcare, with the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) being the main type of assistance that most families will use.

The amount of CCS a family can get depends on their circumstances. Services Australia looks at:

- a family's income
- how many children a family has in care
- the age of the children in care
- a family's activity level
- the type of care a family uses.

Family income

Services Australia works out a family's CCS percentage based on their family income estimate.

A family's CCS percentage is the amount the government will subsidise. It will apply to the hourly fee or the relevant hourly rate cap, whichever is lower.

Family income	Subsidy rate
Up to \$85,279	90%
More than \$85,279 to below \$535,279	Decreasing from 90% The percentage decreases by 1% for every \$5,000 of income a family earns
\$535,279 or more CCS rates 2025-26	0%

Number of children in care

Families with more than one child aged 5 or under in care may get a higher subsidy for their second child and younger children. Siblings do not need to attend the same service to get the higher subsidy.

The rates for each child are worked out using two separate income tests.

- The 'standard rate child' is usually the eldest CCS eligible child aged 5 or under. The standard rate child will get the standard CCS rates.
- The 'higher rate child' is the second and any younger children aged 5 or under. The higher rate for second and younger children is calculated using the rates for second and younger children.

Family income	Second and younger children subsidy rate
\$0 to \$143,273	95%
More than \$143,273 to below \$188,273	Decreasing from 95% The percentage decreases by 1% for every \$3,000 of income a family earns
\$188,273 to below \$267,563	80%
\$267,563 to below \$357,563	Decreasing from 80% The percentage decreases by 1% for every \$3,000 of income a family earns
\$357,563 to below \$367,563	50%
\$367,563 or more	Higher CCS rates no longer apply, all children in the family will receive the standard CCS rate

Rates for second and younger children 2025-26

Combined families are where both members of a couple get CCS for different children in their family. Services Australia counts all CCS-eligible children in a combined family when determining entitlement to the higher rate for second and younger children.

What is the Additional Child Care Subsidy?

The Additional Child Care Subsidy is a top up payment in addition to the Child Care Subsidy which will provide targeted additional fee assistance to families and children who need extra support.

The Additional Child Care Subsidy has four elements:

- Child wellbeing
- Grandparents
- Temporary financial hardship
- Transition to work.

Activity test

The number of hours of subsidised childcare to which a family will be entitled will depend on how much time parents spend undertaking recognised activities, for example work, training, volunteering, or study.

The Child Care Subsidy activity test considers both parents' (if applicable) activities, however, the maximum hours a family will receive will be based on the person with the lowest level of activity. A broad range of activities will meet the activity test requirements.

For people with irregular work hours, such as casual employment, an estimate can be used based on the highest number of hours they expect to work in any one fortnight over a three-month period.

Step	Hours of activity (per fortnight)	Maximum number of hours of subsidy (per fortnight)
1	Less than 8 hours	0 hours if you earn above \$85,279, 24 hours if you earn \$85,279 or below 36 hours – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child, regardless of family activity
2	8 hours to 16 hours	36 hours
3	More than 16 hours to 48 hours	72 hours
4	More than 48 hours	100 hours

Activity 2025-26

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children

Families can get at least 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight for each Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child in their care. This is regardless of their family's activity level.

Families should tell Services Australia that they have an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child in their care if they would like to get at least 36 hours of subsidised care. Families may get more than 36 hours of CCS per fortnight based on their circumstances and the amount of recognised activity they do. Families do not need to do anything if they already get more than 36 hours of subsidy based on their circumstances.

Families must still pay the gap fee.

Shared care

If a child's parents are separated, both parents may be eligible for CCS if they:

- share care responsibilities, and
- are each liable for child care fees.

Each parent/guardian must lodge their own CCS claim. They will each need to meet the eligibility criteria outlined above.

The amount of CCS each parent can get will depend on their income and activity level as outlined above. Where a parent has re-partnered, their partner's income and activity level will also be considered.

Combined families, with children from a current and previous relationship, are counted as a single-family unit when determining entitlement to the higher rate for second and younger children.

Service type

There is an hourly rate cap for each hour of childcare provided which differs depending on the type of approved childcare service used.

Where a childcare provider charges less than the hourly rate cap, a family's subsidy will be their Child Care Subsidy percentage of the actual fee charged.

If a childcare provider charges more than the hourly rate cap, a family's subsidy will be their Child Care Subsidy percentage of the relevant hourly rate cap.

How will the Child Care Subsidy be paid?

Child Care Subsidy will be paid directly to childcare provider to pass on to families as a fee reduction so that their fees are reduced at the time they use childcare. Families will pay their provider the difference between their subsidy and the fees charged. Families will not be able to elect to receive their subsidy as a lump sum at the end of the financial year. Families will need to make a claim for Child Care Subsidy when (or before) each child starts attending care.

Any Child Care Subsidy owed to families following the end of year reconciliation process will be paid directly to families as a lump sum. If a family has been overpaid Child Care Subsidy during the year the family may have to repay some Child Care Subsidy (a debt).

What is the Child Care Subsidy withholding?

Child Care Subsidy withholding is designed to help families avoid or minimise debts at reconciliation, which could occur due to changes in circumstances throughout the year (for example, changes to family incomes or activities). Parents can request their percentage of withholding be adjusted up or down through Centrelink. However, withholding is important as it helps protect families from possible debts. After reconciliation any outstanding subsidy is returned to the family. Five per cent of all families' Child Care Subsidy will be withheld by the Government, however, withholding will not apply to Additional Child Care Subsidy payments.

Where can I get further information on Childcare subsidies?

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-care-subsidy>

Start Strong Funding

The Start Strong for Long Day Care program provides funding to deliver affordable quality preschool education to children aged 3 and above who are enrolled in eligible long day care services in NSW. The Start Strong for Long Day Care program operates on a calendar year from 1 January to 31 December.

Initial funding allocations for eligible services are generally calculated based on NSW enrolment data provided by the Australian Government from the representative week of 24 June to 30 June in the previous calendar year.

Start Strong for Long Day Care provides funding through 4 streams:

1. Program funding for children aged 4 and above (4YO+ Program Payment), scaled for enrolments above and below 600 hours, with loadings for:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
 - Services located in areas of relative socio-economic disadvantage.
2. Fee relief for families of children aged 4 and above (4YO+ Fee Relief Payment)
3. Program funding for children aged 3 (3YO Program Trial Payment) with loadings for:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
 - Services located in areas of relative socio-economic disadvantage.
4. Fee relief for families of children aged 3 (3YO Fee Relief Trial Payment).

Start Strong for Long Day Care supports eligible services to:

- improve the service they provide through supporting capability uplift of early childhood teachers (ECTs) and educators, the attraction and retention of ECTs and educators, purchase of educational resources and program development
- reach out to their community to offer and promote quality early childhood education
- Reduce the cost of early childhood education for families by providing up to \$2,174 per year in fee relief for children aged 4 and above, and up to \$515 per year in fee relief for children aged 3.

For a provider to be eligible for 4YO+ Program Payment and 4YO+ Fee Relief Payment funding under Start Strong for Long Day Care, for a child, that child must be:

- The age of 4 years old on, or before, 31 July of that year.
- attending an eligible early childhood education program
- a confirmed enrolment with the service in the CCSS
- Not yet in compulsory schooling.

For a provider to be eligible for 3YO Program Trial Payment and 3YO Fee Relief Trial Payment funding under Start Strong for Long Day Care, for a child, that child must be:

- The age of 3 years old and not yet 4 years old on, or before 31 July of that year.
- attending an eligible early childhood education program
- a confirmed enrolment with the service in the CCSS
- Not yet in compulsory schooling.

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre has been approved and participating in the Start Strong program's fee relief and program funding since their inception.

As we meet the program's eligibility measures, we happily pass on fee relief funding to families who meet the criteria. Families who have children that are eligible will receive an email from the centre asking them if they wish to receive the fee relief funding for their child and to complete a form. Start Strong Funding fee relief can only be claimed at one approved service. Once this happens their fees will be reduced each week via this program.

We also utilize the program funding to improve our programs for children aged 3 years and above, offer our team of educators' high quality professional development, purchase IT equipment, educational resources and fund our team to upgrade their qualifications.

5.5 HOLIDAYS, OCCASIONAL ABSENCES, SICK DAYS & REDUCING DAYS

When children are absent from the centre for any reason, families are still required to pay fees. Some of the reasons for children being absent include holidays and exclusion from the centre due to an infectious disease. If your child will be away from the centre due to illness, please advise us of this as soon as possible. We also need to know the nature of the illness affecting the child so we can record it in our Illness register.

Please also notify the centre by 9.00 am on any day your child is taking an occasional absence. If you plan for your child to be away from the centre due to a holiday, please advise us before you go on holiday.

If a family chooses to reduce the number of days their child is attending the centre (e.g., reduce from 3 days to 2 days), we ask that you advise us in writing, noting that you wish to permanently reduce chosen days, giving the centre 2 weeks' notice. (Please note: 2 weeks' notice does not apply after 31 October each year, as enrolments must after this date run the course of this year. On recommencing operation in the New Year, 2 weeks' notice can then be reapplied.)

Buy & Sell

Elder Street has a system that has been designed to offer families more flexibility with their childcare. If parents have planned holidays away from the centre, there is an option to complete a Buy & Sell Request Form. The form asks for the name of the children attending the centre and the dates that they will be away from the centre. The system works in reverse if parents wish to pick up extra days for any reason.

We are happy to offer this system to assist families, but stress that we cannot guarantee days will be available to buy or that they will be sold. There are some further important conditions that families need to be aware of:

1. The only way days can be sold or bought is through this system. Parents cannot swap days amongst themselves.
2. Parents will not be permitted to buy any additional days if their account is in arrears.
3. If you have requested a day to be sold but then you have changed your mind, parents will need to email the directors to ensure days are removed. If days have already been sold, then this cannot be revoked.

- This alleviates the problem of more than one child attending the centre for one enrolled position which would breach regulations.
4. There is an administration fee of \$3.80 per day for each family when they utilise both the selling and buying of days.
 5. We do not advertise days available for sale. The system will only operate using our Buy and Sell Request Forms.
 6. We do not sell incidental days. For example, we do not sell days of children who are absent due to illness.
 7. We can assure families that all efforts are made to process the buying and selling of days. We make contact in person or by phone to confirm dates and check on any changes. We do not contact families to advise that days have been sold, but a reduction in the fees charged will appear on their account.
 8. The buy and sell system is only available for families who are currently enrolled at the centre.
 9. If a family buys an additional day but does not attend this day, that family registered to buy will be charged the attendance.

Health and Hygiene

6.1 HEALTH AND HYGIENE ISSUES

The centre's health and hygiene policies and procedures aim to provide a healthy and safe environment for children and staff. They also aim to protect the general health and well-being of children and staff by minimising the risk of infection and the spread of infection within the centre.

When children spend time in early childhood education and care centres or other facilities they are exposed to many children for lengthy periods, making the risk of illness higher, allowing infection to spread easily. It is only by removing sick or unwell children from the centre that we can reduce the risk of infecting other children. Children should not be brought to the centre unless they are able to adequately cope with the normal daily routines and activities.

If the Director or staff member feel that one child is exposing other children to illness or is too unwell to cope with the centre's program, they will notify the family and ask for the child to be taken home.

Families are requested to collect their child as soon as possible after being notified of possible illness or make alternative arrangements. If family cannot be reached, the emergency contact numbers on the enrolment form will be used. Please see our Exclusion policy information included in this enrolment pack to support your understanding of whether your child can attend the centre when ill. If families are unsure whether their child can attend the centre due to illness, please do not hesitate to call or email our directors to discuss the situation.

6.2 NUTRITION

The N.S.W. Health Department guidelines state that early childhood education and care Centres must provide children with at least 50% of their daily recommended dietary intake (RDI) of nutrients in the form of safe and appetising foods. Our food manager ensures these nutritional requirements are met. The emphasis is on whole foods with plenty of raw and cooked fruit and vegetables. We encourage and promote a low salt and sugar reduced diet. The menu also incorporates foods from a variety of cultures. We follow the guidelines set down by the Hunter New England Health 'Good for Kids Good for Life' program. Please ask Kate or Paula for any further information.

Breakfast for early starters (only on request), morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and late afternoon tea, are all provided. Milk and water are offered for morning and afternoon tea, with water being available for lunch. Water is also readily available to all children at any time throughout the day. The current week's menu is displayed for your perusal in each room.

Provision is made for alternative meals or snacks to be served to any child who is unable to partake of the routine menu due to:

1. Cultural or religious reasons.
2. Medical reasons.
3. A genuine dislike for a particular food is established by the child, family, and educators.
4. Family dietary preferences.

Special Diets: Any request by family to provide or delete specific foods for children on special diets must be submitted to the Director on a form provided by the centre. Our Food Manager then keeps the form on file. At no time will any item of food or drink be given to any child in contradiction of written instructions or requirements made by that parent.

Infant formulas: All infant formulas must be provided by the parents. Infant formula powder is to be pre-portioned into individual canisters labelled with the child's name. Bottles are to be clearly labeled. If you choose to have educators fill bottles with cooled boiled water, please ensure the amount required is written on the child's formula canister. Formula and bottles are to be placed in the bottle prep kitchen in the morning and will be returned to children's bags at the end of the day.

For families who choose to bring already prepared bottles of formula in individual bottles, please ensure the bottles are labeled with the child's name. Families are asked to put the prepared bottles in the refrigerator on arrival.

Breast Milk: Whether bought in bottles, bags or frozen, these must be clearly labeled with child's name and date expressed.

6.3 FOOD SAFETY PLAN

This centre is committed to the employment of kitchen staff that have appropriate qualifications of 'Food Safety Supervisor' and or a 'Statement of Attainment in Food Safety and Handling' for those staff preparing food occasionally, such as when the food manager is on leave. All staff will adhere to standard 3.2.2 in the Food Safety Practices and General Requirement of the Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code.

6.4 IMMUNISATION

In NSW, for early childhood education and care enrolment, children must be fully vaccinated or on a recognized catch-up schedule.

All parents need to provide the service with Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) immunisation history statement to enroll their child. A copy of your child's AIR can be found on the Medicare website or App. For children with exemptions a copy of an AIR immunisation medical exemption form must be provided, signed by a medical practitioner and kept on file.

The recommended immunisation schedule may be accessed on the N.S.W health website or by calling the immunisation info line on 1800 671 811.

Please note: Children's immunisation must be kept up to date by parents according to the national immunisation register to be or remain eligible for the payment of Child Care Subsidy.

It is the responsibility of families to provide the centre with documented evidence of updated immunisation to maintain accurate records of immunisation status for each child. This will be supported by the Directors sending email reminders to families requesting updated immunisation records.

6.5 MEDICATION

IMPORTANT NOTES

- ❖ Under no circumstances is medication to be left in a child's locker or bag.
- ❖ If a child begins to take antibiotics or any new medication, there is a 24-exclusion period from the first dose taken, in case of a reaction to the medication. Regardless of if the child has been prescribed the medication previously.
- ❖ No medication will be administered unless it is supplied in the container it was dispensed by a pharmacist or medical practitioner. The dispensing label clearly showing the child's name, name of medication, administration instructions, expiry date of product and the name of prescribing Doctor or Medical practitioner.

- ❖ Long-term medication must have a letter from a medical practitioner stating reasons for the medication. An updated letter is required every six months if centre staff are to continue giving the medication unless otherwise stated in the letter from a medical practitioner.
- ❖ On enrolment families will be asked to indicate their consent or otherwise to the administration of liquid Paracetamol or equivalent to their child in accordance with labeled directions, should it be considered necessary by the Director and staff member on medical duty, on any given day.
- ❖ On enrolment, parents will be asked to indicate if their child suffers from any allergies or reactions and to give instructions for treatment should a problem occur.

Parents must fill out appropriate risk minimization and communication forms to accompany any treatment of allergies.

- ❖ Proprietary “over the counter” medication will be administered strictly in accordance with manufacturer’s directions unless specific written instructions are received from a medical practitioner. The Director reserves the right to ask parents to obtain advice from a medical practitioner about the use of non-prescribed medication if, in her professional judgment, doubt exists about the necessity for and/or suitability of the medication.

6.6 PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING MEDICATION

All medication must be personally handed to a staff member who will then ensure that families have fully and accurately completed and signed the Medication form.

Before a staff member signs the completed medication form, they must verify the following:

- ❖ Child's full name, medication name, date medication was prescribed, medication expiry date, name of prescribing physician, reason for medication, time and date of last dose given at home, dosage, method of administration, time, and days of week medication to be administered.
- ❖ Parent/guardian has signed the form
- ❖ Staff members, after checking all the above is correct will sign the completed medication form.
- ❖ Staff members will place medication in the appropriate (refrigerated or unrefrigerated) locked container, used for the sole purpose of storing medication.
- ❖ Medication form will be placed into the Medication Folder

- ❖ Staff will write the child's name; medication requirement and time medication are required on a medication list in the child's room.
- ❖ Staff members responsible for verifying the medication form will communicate medication requirements to all other staff in the child's room.

6.7 PROCEDURE FOR PREPARATION, ADMINISTERING AND RECORDING OF MEDICATION

To ensure safe administration of medications at the centre a strict procedure must be followed. For ALL medications that are administered, a Medication form must be completed correctly.

- ❖ The designated member of staff to administer the medication will thoroughly wash hands prior to administering each dosage of medication.
- ❖ The administrator of medication will take the medication and the medication form filled in by the parent/guardian to the witness along with the child, who will check that the label on child's medication corresponds with that on medication form.
- ❖ Both the administrator and witness will identify the child and check that it corresponds with the name on the medication form and the measured dosage corresponds to the medication form.
- ❖ The administering staff member will administer the medication as per the method of administration as documented on medication form
- ❖ Administrator and witness will ensure that full prescribed dosage of medicine is taken by the child.

If applicable the child will be offered a drink of water afterwards.

- ❖ The administrator, witness and child will wash their hands.
- ❖ The child will return to normal routine.
- ❖ Any mistakes to be reported to Director immediately
- ❖ Administrator and witness to sign medication form only after administration of medicine
- ❖ Medication measures used are to be washed with warm soapy water.

6.8 INDIVIDUAL HEALTH MANAGEMENT PLANS

This service acknowledges the great diversity in childhood medical conditions. In the event of a child with a medical condition being enrolled at this centre we will:

- ❖ Request families to provide further information about the condition to help with our understanding.
- ❖ Request family, in consultation with their medical practitioner, to formulate a health management plan
- ❖ Provide families with a medical conditions policy
- ❖ Request families fill out a Risk Minimisation and Communication Plan.
- ❖ Arrange a conference between families and medical practitioners if agreeable or appropriate and all relevant staff to discuss and ensure a better understanding of the condition and medical plan.
- ❖ Inform all staff of the child's triggers, symptoms, and Action Plan

Wellbeing Health Management

Families requesting staff to administer long-term medication such as asthma puffers must have a letter from a medical practitioner stating reasons for the medication. Individual Asthma plans will be kept in the Medication folder and strictly adhered to by the team members when administering asthma medication. An updated letter from a medical practitioner is required every six months unless otherwise stated by a medical practitioner for the ongoing use of asthma medication.

6.9 ASTHMA

All staff at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre have an essential role and duty of care in ensuring children with asthma lead a healthy, happy life whilst attending the centre. Staff at Elder Street will:

- Train in asthma education and keep abreast of any relevant information updates.
- Collate information, listing names of children diagnosed with Asthma, their triggers, allergies, and side effects from asthma medication.
- Display 4 step - action plans in a prominent position for referral in the event of an emergency.
- Administer medication, provided such medication is in accordance with the child's individual asthma action plan.
- It is the parents/guardians' responsibility to notify staff immediately if any changes occur to the child's individual asthma plan.
- Maintain additional asthma puffer located in emergency evacuation bag.

6.10 INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS

Our staff are committed to providing the best care possible for the children in their care. We place children's safety and wellbeing as our number one priority.

It is important for all stakeholders of the centre to understand that whilst all necessary precautions are taken, accidents and incidents will sometimes occur.

Bumps and Scrapes Register

Children develop at different rates and explore constantly; this invariably means bumps and scratches. If your child has a minor accident, it will be documented on our 'bumps and scrapes' register. We deem a bump or graze that is documented on this register to not require first aid beyond a saline wash and cold washer application.

Incident/Accident Reports

Any other accidents will be documented in an incident/accident report. This report details how the accident occurred and any treatment that was undertaken. Families will be requested to sign both the bumps and scrapes register or accident report when they collect their child to confirm that they have been informed of the accident.

In an incident/accident where a child receives a bump to the head, the staff will inform families via a phone call. The call will detail the nature of the incident/accident and the child's current state of wellbeing.

If a child is seriously injured or ill, families will be notified immediately. If deemed necessary, an ambulance will be called. Centre staff will apply immediate first aid. If an incident/accident occurs at the centre that requires families to seek further medical attention, e.g., a doctor or hospital visit that results in stitches, broken bones, observation for concussion etc., please advise the Director as soon as possible. Under our child safety reporting obligations, we will submit a report to our State regulatory body to ensure the incident is fully reported and responded to.

Any medical costs incurred in caring for your child whilst at the centre (i.e., ambulance or hospital costs) will be at the expense of families.

6.11 INFECTION CONTROL

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre is committed to establishing and maintaining the highest possible standard of hygiene and infection control through:

- ❖ The implementation of procedures to ensure personal hygiene for staff and children
- ❖ Cleaning regimes for staff and after-hours contract cleaners
- ❖ Implementation of thorough medical and isolation procedures which minimise the risk of cross infection.

6.12 HAND WASHING

Hand washing should take 10-15 seconds using liquid soap and warm running water. All surfaces of the hands should be cleaned, lathering vigorously the front, back and sides of the hands, wrists, between fingers and under nails. Rinse hands with fingers pointing down for another ten seconds. Count to ten as you wash and rinse.

Dry hands with a single use paper towel. If hand washing is not possible “wet wipes” containing antiseptic may be used. Children will be taught to wash their hands in this way as part of the daily program. Activity sessions should include songs and stories with hand washing as a topic. Teach children that washing their hands will prevent the spread of germs and illness. Supervise children to ensure they develop good hand washing habits.

Staff will strictly adhere to procedures and wash their hands:

- ❖ On arrival at the centre, before commencing work and at the end of each day.
- ❖ Before and after administration of medication and first aid
- ❖ After visiting the toilet
- ❖ Before and after each nappy change and changing children's soiled clothes.
- ❖ After toileting children
- ❖ After using a tissue
- ❖ After touching eyes, ears, nose, hair, or mouth
- ❖ After handling body fluids
- ❖ Before handling raw food
- ❖ After garbage disposal
- ❖ Before serving and preparing food
- ❖ Before eating
- ❖ After every break
- ❖ After removing gloves
- ❖ After handling animals
- ❖ After any other unhygienic practice
- ❖ Any staff members with cuts or abrasions will ensure that they are covered with occlusive dressing.

Children will wash their hands:

- ❖ Before setting tables and serving food
- ❖ Before eating
- ❖ After going to the toilet
- ❖ After touching nose and using a tissue
- ❖ Before participating in cooking activities
- ❖ After nappy changing
- ❖ After handling animals
- ❖ Any other unhygienic practices

Babies' hands will be washed before eating, after each nappy change and frequently throughout the day.

6.13 NAPPY CHANGING

Educators at Elder Street Early Childhood Centre follow strict nappy change procedures which are linked to the hygiene management protocols.

- ❖ Ensure all items needed for change are within easy reach
- ❖ Use washable change mats
- ❖ Wash your hands
- ❖ If a child's nappy is soiled, place paper on the change table mat
- ❖ Put disposable gloves on both hands
- ❖ Lay child on change surface keeping a hand on child to prevent falling.
- ❖ Remove the child's nappy and put it in designated bin
- ❖ Place any soiled clothes in a plastic bag
- ❖ Clean child's bottom with disposable wipes
- ❖ Remove the paper and put it in a hands-free lidded bin.
- ❖ Remove your gloves and put them in the bin
- ❖ Place a clean nappy on the child
- ❖ Dress the child
- ❖ Take the child away from the change table
- ❖ Wash your hands and the child's hands
- ❖ Clean the change mat with detergent and water after each nappy change
- ❖ Wash your hands

6.14 CLEANING POLICY

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre prides itself on the degree of cleanliness of the centre, equipment, and grounds, while staff and children's personal hygiene is of high importance.

Cleaning procedures and schedules are strictly adhered to for:

- ❖ Staff and children's hand washing
- ❖ Staff duty maintenance cleaning for each room
- ❖ Cooks' duty maintenance cleaning
- ❖ Contract cleaners
- ❖ Ground maintenance

Cleaning the nappy change area

- ❖ After nappy change wash the mat with neutral detergent and water
- ❖ Use a paper towel.
- ❖ If faeces spill onto the change mat educators will place on gloves and wash them with warm soapy water, wipe and leave to dry
- ❖ Wash hands

Cleaning and Disposing of Blood and other Body Fluids

- ❖ Wear disposable gloves before attending to a child who is bleeding.

- ❖ If there is a spill of blood or body fluids onto a child or adult, wash the affected area with soap and warm water
- ❖ If blood or body fluid is splashed in the eyes, rinse with running water for several minutes
- ❖ If blood or body fluid contacts an open wound or broken skin, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water
- ❖ In the case of vomit, educators will use a designated vomit bucket which contains gloves, masks and cleaning products to thoroughly clean the immediate area.

Cleaning after a spill

- ❖ Wear disposable gloves
- ❖ Soak any implements used from the first aid box in a fresh solution of 1 to 10 bleach solution for one hour.
- ❖ Clean up any spilt blood, faeces, vomit, or urine by first removing the bulk of the spill with paper towels.
- ❖ Dispose of the towels and gloves – into a plastic bag into garbage
- ❖ Clean the surface with warm soapy water
- ❖ Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water

6.15 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

Elder Street Early Childhood Centre has a detailed fire and emergency evacuation procedure with information located in every room. On a minimum of a three-monthly basis, we conduct evacuation drills (fire and bomb threat) with staff and children. They are carried out 3/4 times over the week to ensure that all staff and children can practice the evacuation. Staff have strict instructions regarding emergency evacuations and receive training in the use of fire extinguishers and fire blankets. The children enjoy this activity, which is conducted in a safe and happy manner.

Within the service there are three emergency evacuation bags, located in the Joey Room, Wallaby Room and the outdoor atelier shed. These bags contain drinking water, a first aid kit, asthma puffer, nappies, wipes, gloves, plastic bags, emergency contact information of all children and emergency phone and phone numbers list. These bags are to be removed with the children as part of the evacuation procedure.

If the centre has been evacuated and the children are going to be outside for a prolonged time, parents will be notified and asked to come and collect their child. You will be advised of the evacuation location at the time of notification.

Policies and Procedures

7.1 CENTRE POLICIES

Our Centre policies are available at any time for families upon request. Our list of policies includes the following:

- Administration of First Aid
- Behaviour Intervention and Support
- Child Safe Policy
- Code Of Conduct
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Dealing with Complaints
- Dealing with Medical Conditions
- Delivery of children to and collection from the centre
- Determining Responsible Persons Policy
- Emergency Evacuation and Lock down policy and procedure
- Enrolment and Orientation
- Excursion
- Fees
- Governance of the Service
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness
- Inclusion and Social Justice
- Infectious Illness outbreak plan
- Interactions with children
- Medication
- Nappy Changing Policy and Procedure
- Nutrition Food and Beverages Dietary Requirements Policy
- Providing a Child Safe Environment
- Safe Sleep and Rest for Children
- Sun Protection
- Volunteers and students
- Water Safety
- Educational Program

We can email policies at any time. We have a Parent Policy Review Committee that encourages families to join so they can become part of the review and development of policies. Please see the Directors if you would like to join our committee.

We thank you for taking the time to read our Centre Handbook. We suggest you keep it somewhere handy at home so you can refer to it often to become familiar with the way our centre operates and offer feedback.

We welcome you and your child/ren to Elder Street Early Childhood Centre

Feel free to contact us at any time by:

Phone: (02) 49539300

Email: director@elderstreetehc.com

Team Elder Street ECHC

Privacy Statement

To provide you with the highest standard of early childhood education, Elder Street Early Childhood Centre is required to collect personal information from you about your child/ren and your family before and during your child's enrolment at our Centre. We are committed to protecting your privacy and we abide by the National Privacy Principles contained within the Privacy Act. The privacy of your personal information is important to us, and we conduct our business with respect and integrity.

INFORMATION COLLECTED

Basic details are usually collected directly from parents/guardians, such as your names, address/es, phone contacts, your child's name, date of birth, medical details, health, routines, likes and dislikes, etc. In addition, we are required to hold information regarding your child's Child Care Benefit entitlements.

All this information is vital in assisting us to provide the best possible individual care for your child and in processing payments. Some of the information we collect is to satisfy the centre's legal obligations under the relevant childcare legislation.

PRIVACY COMMITMENTS

We assure you that:

- This information will only be used by our early childhood education and care professionals to deliver your child's care to the highest standards.
- It will not be disclosed to those not associated with the care of your child without your express consent
- You may ask to seek access to the information held about you and your child and we will provide you with access.
- This access might be an inspection of your child's records or copies of information held by the Centre.
- We will take reasonable steps to always ensure that the details we keep about your family are accurate, complete and up to date.
- we will take reasonable steps to protect this information from misuse and from unauthorized access or disclosure; and,
- Our staff are committed to always respecting these principles.