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| Title | Priority of Access Policy |
| Description | The Priority of Access is developed to ensure that there is a clear and transparent process for offers in children's services. |
| Category | Policy |
| Type | |
| Approval authority | Yarra City Council |
| Responsible officer | Malcolm Foard |
| Approval date | 30 th April 2019 |
| Review cycle | 3 years |
| Review date | 30 th April 2022 |
| Document Reference (Trim) | |
| Human Rights compatibility | This policy has been assessed and is compatible with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights of Responsibilities |

1. Purpose

The Priority of Access is to ensure that there is a clear and transparent process for the allocation of places in Yarra City Council operated children's services and in council buildings where children's services operate.

The Priority of Access Policy reflects the Australian Government's intention to help families who need it most and supports the safety and wellbeing of children at risk in accordance with the Framework for Protecting Australia's children.

In 2006 Council committed to the development and implementation of a Priority of Access Policy for Council. In 2018, Council developed a 0 – 25 Plan which identified the importance for Yarra residents to have access to services they need including early childhood education and care. Council's Strategic Priorities in the 0 – 25 Plan include increased opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; responsiveness to culturally and linguistically diverse children and families; and promoting and supporting family engagement in learning for young children.

2. Policy

PRIORITY OF ACCESS

Priority of access is applicable to kindergarten, outside school hours care, occasional care and child care. Kindergarten is prioritised in accordance with the State Government funding requirements. Outside school hours care (OSHC) and childcare in consideration of Commonwealth Government recommendations.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Council managed centre-based children's services.

- Service operating from a City of Yarra building

2.1 Childcare, Outside School Hours Care and Occasional Care Priority of Access

1. A child at risk of serious abuse or neglect including:
 - a. children in receipt of additional childcare benefit;
 - b. children in Out of Home Care
 - c. children in situations of family violence
2. A child in need of priority care due to serious change of circumstances (e.g. death of an immediate family member, cancer treatment, loss of accommodation due to fire/natural disaster, court hearings)
3. A child of a single parent who satisfies, or of both parents who satisfy, the Child Care Subsidy activity test through work, training, volunteer and/or study.
4. Any other child.

Families that are meeting priority 1 and priority 2 and encouraged to contact children's services to discuss assistance directly with the team.

It should be noted that within each category priority will be given to the following children:

Tier 1:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children

Tier 2:

- Children with additional needs, defined as children who: require additional assistance in order to fully participate in kindergarten; require a combination of services which are individually planned; have an identified specific disability or developmental delay

Tier 3:

- Families which include a person with a disability diagnosis.
- Families which include a person who has a diagnosis of a chronic or serious health issue.

Tier 4:

- Children of single parents
- Families on low incomes as defined by the Child Care Subsidy highest subsidy threshold
- Asylum seeker and refugee children

Tier 5:

- Children whose family resides in Yarra
- Siblings of children enrolled in the same Yarra Children's Service

Tier 6:

- Children whose family work or study in Yarra

2.2 Priority of Access for funded kindergarten places:

Placement in a funded year of kindergarten (in a program that is not eligible for Childcare Subsidy) must be allocated in line with the State Government Priority of Access Procedure.

Priority One:

- Children at risk of abuse or neglect, including children in out of home care
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children
- Children eligible for the Kindergarten Fee Subsidy
- Children with additional needs, defined as children who: require additional assistance in order to fully participate in kindergarten; require a combination of services which are individually planned; have an identified specific disability or developmental delay
- Asylum seeker and refugee children

Having satisfied the requirements of State Priority of Access Guidelines, remaining places will be allocated applying the following Yarra City Council Priority of Access guidelines:

- Siblings of children enrolled in the same Yarra Children's Service
- Children whose family resides in Yarra
- Children whose family work or study in Yarra
- Children who have engaged in a Yarra pre-kindergarten program or long day care in the year before kindergarten.

3. Related Documents

- Family Youth and Children's 0 – 25 plan
- Child Care Provider Handbook
- DET Kindergarten funding guidelines.