

COVID-19 Additional temporary funding support for Community & Mobile Preschools and Local Government Childcare Services

QandA

What additional funding is available for NSW community and mobile preschools to provide financial support for lost fee income due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

On 9 April 2020, the Premier Gladys Berejiklian and Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning Sarah Mitchell announced a \$51 million initiative to provide additional temporary funding support for State funded community and mobile preschools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Start Strong funded community preschools and mobile preschools on contract with the Department of Education will have the opportunity to opt in to the initiative.

Funding will be provided as a top up payment to replace a proportion of fee income that is being lost as a result of decreasing enrolments due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Start Strong funding and mobile preschool contract funding provided by the NSW Government and support provided under the Australian Government's JobKeeper program will be taken into account before any additional funding support is provided.

This will maintain the viability of the community preschool sector, support the retention of the workforce and provide relief in cost of living pressures to NSW families by making community and mobile preschool free for families in NSW for up to six months (Terms 2 and 3).

What are the funding conditions for services that opt-in?

Services opting in will need to comply with the following conditions:

- Services must retain their staff.
- Services must remain open and available unless on public health advice, for other health and safety reasons or where directed to close by the Regulatory Authority.
- Services must prioritise access for essential workers, vulnerable and disadvantaged children and those currently enrolled (including 3, 4 and 5 year olds).
- Services must encourage children to remain enrolled even when not attending and provide outreach including 'distance education' to these children where possible.

The additional funding will provide a replacement up to a reasonable level of fees using 2019 enrolment and fee data as a benchmark, and may be used for operational costs of the preschool that prioritise:

- fee relief for families
- staff wages to enable retention of the workforce.

The Department will work with the community and mobile preschool sector to finalise implementation arrangements that will allow this initiative to be implemented with the least burden for services while achieving the policy objective. This will be done as a matter of priority to provide further detail to the sector to support operations in Term 2.

What additional funding is available for NSW Local Government early childhood education services?

This initiative also provides up to \$82 million in State support for Local Government early childhood services should they not be eligible for the Australian Government's JobKeeper program or other additional support from the Australian Government above the 50% fee replacement program.

This additional State funding is primarily focused on council operated Long Day Care services, Out of School Hours Care services (including Vacation Care). Local Council Preschools are primarily funded by the NSW Government, and will benefit from funding announced to support these services. Family Day Care educators are able to access assistance through the JobKeeper package as well as the Commonwealth's Exceptional Circumstances Supplementary Payments.

Councils who opt into this funding will be required to remain open and provide services.

The Department will work with the Local Government sector to finalise implementation arrangements.