



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

FEES POLICY

Last Review Date: April 2023

Policy No. 6

Issued: 2012

Policy Statement

The management of childcare fees in Links Childcare endeavours to reflect best practice with regard to the budgeting of costs for the provision of a quality childcare service and to ensure the long-term sustainability of the service. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Links Childcare Exceptional Closure Policy available at www.linkschildcare.ie

Principles

This policy is underpinned by the National Standards for Preschool Services 2010, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Equal Status Acts 2000-2012.

Procedures

I. Billing

- Fees are payable on a 12 month / 52-week basis and all absences and holidays must be paid for. This applies for **all children (both day care children and after-school children)**. There is no exception to this policy.
- There is no refund for illness, holidays or closure of the service due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The service will close if it is deemed by Senior Management to be unsafe to open, e.g. extreme staff shortages or severe weather conditions. Full fees will be payable. Refer to 'Exceptional Closure Policy'.
- Unless otherwise agreed, all fees are payable in full monthly in advance by direct debit on the 5th of each month. This includes any extra care should this be availed of.
- Your first month's fees must be paid in advance by either bank transfer or a card payment over the phone with our accounts department to allow time to set up the direct debit which will usually commence from a child's second month with us.
- Once the direct debit is set up you will be notified via email of the date this will first present to your account and the date that it will regularly present to your account thereafter. The date for your first direct debit may differ from the 5th of the month depending on the set-up date, you will however be notified in advance of this date.
- An administration fee of €5 will be incurred for each direct debit that is returned unpaid on its due date and this will be charged for and included on the monthly invoice in the next available billing period.
- Each month both a statement of account and an invoice will be issued via email.
- The statement of account that is issued via email will notify you of the amount that is payable to Links Childcare for that particular month. This amount will reflect any subsidy, grant or funding deductions and/or adjustments that have been applied to your fees.
- Invoices are issued via email by the 1st of the month.
- Invoices detail the full charges of your fees on the invoice and do not include any subsidy, grant or funding deductions that may be applicable.
- Unless stated otherwise, care charged on the monthly invoice is for the current calendar month's regular standard care booking, i.e. from the 1st of the month to the last day of the same month.
- A child's first month's invoice may be issued on an alternate date if the start date is not on the 1st of the month. Unless stated otherwise, a child's first month's invoice is for care from the child's first day with us to the last day of the same month.



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- Should a child attend for any extra care/time not covered by their standard care booking this will incur an additional charge.
- There is an additional fee for after-school children who wish to attend our service for additional morning care during mid-terms, school holidays and school closed days.
- Unless otherwise stated, extra care/time availed of during a month will be charged for and included on the monthly invoice in the next available billing period. If you have pre-booked extra care in advance for mid-terms and summer camps this will be charged for as per the terms set out on the booking forms.
- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that full fees as charged by Links Childcare are paid in full and on time each month regardless of any subsidy, grant and/or funding being applied for and/or availed of from any source.
- Full fees without any subsidy, grant or funding deduction are payable to Links Childcare whilst any application for a subsidy, grant or funding is being processed and during any time these no longer apply and/or are withdrawn. Please refer to the separate additional subsidy, grant and/or funding policy document issued on the commencement of your child availing of any of these types of funding. Please see part XIV - Funding, Subsidy and Grants section of this policy document for further information. Further terms and conditions apply when availing of any funding type. Funding, subsidy and/or grant deductions applied to fees may therefore be adjusted from time to time depending on a child's funding approval, absence period, start date, finish date and where a change in care has occurred.

II. Termination of Care

Unless stated otherwise the following will be required to terminate a child's care:

Applicable to enrolments from July 2018:

- If you intend to terminate your child's care, **2 months (calendar months)** written notice must be provided by the parent/guardian to withdraw a child from the service.
- Termination of care notices must be made in writing and emailed to the crèche manager or the accounts department.
- If the required termination of notice period is not provided by the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must forgo two month's fees in lieu of same.
- Where the required notice period is not received any deposit monies held on file are forfeit and will be non-refundable.
- Any deposits held are at risk of being forfeit if the required notice period is not received.

Applicable to enrolments prior to July 2018:

- If you intend to terminate your child's care, **1 month (calendar month)** written notice must be provided by the parent/guardian to withdraw a child from the service.
- Termination of care notices must be made in writing and emailed to the crèche manager or the accounts department.
- If the required termination of notice period is not provided by the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian must forgo one month's fee in lieu of same.



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- Where the required notice period is not received any deposit monies held on file are forfeit and will be non-refundable.
- Any deposits held are at risk of being forfeit if the required notice period is not received.

Termination of care at the start of a new Term Year:

- If your child is attending (or is due to commence attending) a pre-school class, and your care is due to cease within 1 week following the commencement of a new term year (late August/early September) your termination of care date will be taken as the last day of the previous term, which will be confirmed at the time a child's notice is received.

III. Change in Care – Notice Period

- Should you wish to change your child's care please refer to the Change in Care – Approval Process noted in part IV of this document.
- All places and care arrangements are subject to availability.

Should a change of care request be approved the following notice periods will apply:

Applicable to enrolments from **July 2018:**

- Where the request is to reduce your child's care; a minimum of 2 months' notice (calendar months) written notice must be provided by the parent/guardian.
- Where the request is to increase your child's care, the request must be made in writing and the increase in care will take place from the date of availability.

Applicable to enrolments **prior to July 2018:**

- Where the request is to reduce your child's care; a minimum of 1 month (calendar month) written notice must be provided by the parent/guardian.
- Where the request is to increase your child's care, the request must be made in writing and the increase in care will take place from the date of availability.

IV. Change in Care – Approval Process

- Parent/Guardian must request care change in writing by email to the creche manager/ senior management team.
- On receipt of the request from a Parent/Guardian the care change request is reviewed by creche management.
- The care change request will be approved if the requested care is available at the time of the enquiry.
- In the event, of the care being unavailable, the care request will be rejected by the management team and the care request will be added to a waiting list, if/once the care becomes available the parent/guardian will be informed.
- Where a change in care occurs the fee rate charged for the new care arrangement will be as per the current pricing applicable at the time of the change. Where a previous family discount applied this will cease. Please see section IX - Discounts for further information.



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- Where a parent requests a reduction in care any future increase in care cannot be held or guaranteed, the care request will be added to a waiting list, if/once the care becomes available the parent/guardian will be informed.

V. Change in Care – From Pre-School Care to Afterschool Care

Where a child is commencing primary school in the September following their final Pre-School year:

- Pre-School fees and care will continue to apply for the months of July and August.
- No ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) deductions apply during these months.
- Pre-School care will terminate at the end of August, unless the appropriate notice has been given in line with our termination of care requirements. See part II Termination of Care for further information.
- Where a child enrolls on our Afterschool Programme from the September, the afterschool care and fee rates will apply from September 1st.
- Please refer to the After School Programme Policy for further information.

VI. Termination & Billing Agreement

- A parent/guardian is requested to sign the termination and billing agreement, before their child's enrolment.
- Where the termination and billing agreement is not signed the terms and conditions as set out in this policy document will continue to apply to all enrolments at Links Childcare.

VII. Fee Structure and Crèche Opening

Fee Structure

- The fee structure, rates and discounts offered, if any, may vary from centre to centre.
- Unless otherwise stated fees are payable on a 12 month / 52 week basis and all absences and holidays must be paid for. This applies for all children (both day care children and after-school children). There is no exception to this policy.

Crèche Opening

Our centres open throughout the year with the exception of the following times:

- Christmas Eve
- 3 days over the Christmas holiday period i.e. between the 24th December and 31st December.
- Good Friday
- Bank Holidays.

VIII. Chargeable Rate Bands – Full Day Care

While fee structure and rates differ from centre to centre, rate bands for full-time care are fixed as follows;



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- Baby Rate is chargeable on the basis of a child attending the Baby Room. This rate is not susceptible to deviation on the basis of adult/child ratios in the room or the child's age.
- Wobbler Rate is chargeable from the beginning of the first full month after entering the Wobbler Room, until the end of the month in which the child turns two years-of-age. For new entrants, this rate is chargeable from the date of commencement in the Wobbler Room.
- Toddler/Pre-School Rate is chargeable from the beginning of the month immediately following a child's second birthday.

IX. Fee Review

- Fees are reviewed periodically by management, to ensure that sustainability, quality, staff costs and overheads are appropriately met.
- Fees are subject to change.
- Parents/guardians will be notified in writing, via email, a minimum of 2 months prior to any increase/change in fees. Should a parent/guardian not wish to continue his/her child's care arrangement with our service on foot of a notice to increase/change fees, the parent/guardian can terminate the child's care with us by giving 2 months' notice in writing and email this notice to the crèche manager or the accounts department.

X. Discount

- Should a discount be offered to a family it is offered at the sole discretion of management and may be amended or withdrawn without reason or notice at any time.
- Any discount offered will be applied to standard monthly fees only, prior to the deduction of any grant/subsidy.
- No discounts will apply to any extra care, hours and/or time availed of outside of the standard regular care booking.
- Minimum care requirements will apply to avail of any discount offered.
- Once a change in care occurs, any prior discount applied will cease. Current fee rates applicable at the commencement of the change in care will apply. Should the new care arrangement satisfy the current criteria required for a discount, if any, the discount rate that will apply will be based on the current discount rate offered at the time of the change in care.

XI. Deposit

- The deposit relevant to your child's particular care is required along with a completed application form before a child's place is secured. A portion of the deposit will cover an initial booking administration fee and is non-refundable. The deposit balance will be held onto separately, for the duration of a child's attendance at Links Childcare. Please also refer to the Deposit and Billing Termination Agreement Form.
- The deposit amount is reviewed by management regularly and is subject to change.
- The deposit will be refunded once the terms of our termination and billing agreement have been met and all balances on your account are paid in full. The deposit will be refunded in the month following a child's finishing date.
- In the event of the following instances the deposit will be non-refundable:

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- where a booked place is not taken up and/or is cancelled by you, the deposit will be forfeit and therefore non-refundable.
- where the terms of the fee policy are not upheld.
- where the child does not start on the reserved start date (or on the deferred start date where the start date has been deferred by agreement with Links Childcare for a maximum period of up to 6 months).
- where the notice period required to terminate care is not provided in full.
- where all balances due on an account are not paid in full. All outstanding fees must be paid in full before a deposit refund is issued. Where a balance is outstanding on the account the deposit monies held on file will be retained to cover this outstanding balance.

XII. Non-Payment of Fees Policy

- Non-payment of fees in full will result in the loss of your child's place with Links Childcare.
- Links Childcare reserves the right to request a Parent/Guardian to withdraw their child from the service if fees are unpaid. Links Childcare will provide one week's notice in this instance.

XIII. Late Collection Fee

- A late collection fee will apply where a child is collected after the crèche's closing time. The fee charged will be €10.00 for each 15-minute period or part thereof after the crèche closing time.

XIV. Additional Care

- At Links Childcare we aim to provide as flexible a service as possible, we understand that schedules can change and at times a parent/guardian of a child enrolled for part time care and/or afterschool care will require additional care in the crèche. Should additional care be required from time to time for a child in addition to the normal standard care arrangement the crèche manager will confirm availability directly with the parent/guardian.
- Additional care will be charged for and included in the next available billing period.
- Where you have pre-booked extra care in advance for mid-terms and summer camps this will be charged for as per the terms set out on the booking forms.
- We do not facilitate 'change in day request' whereby a parent/guardian requests to swap their child's days on a given week. Please note that we cannot provide a 'care change' (i.e swapping of days). If your child attends for care that is not as per their normal standard care booking then this will be charged as extra care.
- We do not charge extra care by the half hour. Where a child attends for an extra hour or part thereof a full hour will be charged for.

XV. Funding, Subsidy and Grants

- Please note that where a parent/guardian is availing of any type of funding, subsidy or grant for their child additional rules and policies will apply depending on the type of funding being availed of.



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- A supplementary policy & guideline document is issued directly to a parent/guardian when their child is availing of a particular government funding scheme. A parent/guardian can also request a copy of this document from the accounts department at any time.
- The rules and procedures as set out in these additional and separate funding policy documents will also apply in addition to those already noted in this document.
- Any rules and procedures set out by the DCYA (Department of Children and Youth Affairs) in relation to their childcare funding programmes must be complied with to continue to avail of these funding types. For further information in relation to the rules on the DCYA funding schemes please go to www.dcy.gov.ie
- Full fees without any subsidy, grant or funding deduction is payable to Links Childcare whilst any application for a subsidy, grant or funding is being processed and during any time these no longer apply and/or are withdrawn. Please refer to the separate additional government subsidy, grant and/or funding policy document issued on the commencement of your child availing of any of these types of funding. Funding, subsidy and/or grant deductions applied to fees may therefore be adjusted from time to time depending on a child's funding approval, absence period, start date, finish date and where a change in care has occurred.

Review

Management and staff monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy yearly and revise the policy as required.

Review Dates:	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	January 2020	October 2020
	April 2021	August 2022	Sept 2022	April 2023					