

## Every Child Our Future: Children's Services Policy Implementation Plan

<b>Policy Commitment</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
1. Ensure assertive outreach services to support children experiencing vulnerability to access childcare, kindergarten, toy libraries and playgroups. This includes identifying and reducing barriers such as navigating the system and accessing available subsidies.	Officers are monitoring the continued participation of children experiencing factors associated with vulnerability. A proposal for assertive outreach will be considered as part of the development of the 2020/21 budget alongside a number of initiatives designed to support community recovery.	Consider proposal as part of 2020/21 budget deliberation alongside other recovery initiatives.
2. Reduce financial barriers preventing low income and vulnerable families from accessing childcare, kindergarten, toy libraries and playgroups through targeted grants.	New federal government Early Education and Care Package means childcare is free for any family enrolled in a service in February, vulnerable families and essential workers. There is no circumstance where Council would be justified in funding an individual child.	Continue monitoring Federal Government funding and adjust parameters for Early Education Grant as appropriate
3. Help families to access additional support when they need it and build capability in children's services to support families experiencing vulnerable circumstances.	Council is delivering online support programs whilst social distancing measures are in place and will put in place programs to help families to connect in the recovery period with a particular focus on families who are experiencing greater complexity.	Council's lead family worker program will continue to provide service. Consider any changes as part of budget deliberation.
4. Advocate to other levels of government to increase investment and ensure all children have access to high quality and accessible children's services.	Officers continue to advocate for increased investment and policies that ensure all children have access to high quality and accessible children's services.	Continue advocacy actions.
5. Work with families and all providers to improve enrolment processes to enable access to childcare and kindergarten for all children in Port Phillip.	Improvements are considered a low priority at this time.	Work to be put on hold until 2021.
6. Monitor and model current and future changes in community needs, government policy, available funding and service availability to ensure adequate provision of quality children's services in Port Phillip.	Monitoring changes continues to be an important focus.	Continue with existing resources.
7a) Operating childcare services where there is a business case that Council-run compared with community-run is the most effective way to ensure quality and accessibility for children in Port Phillip and encourage a thriving early education and care sector.	Council has an obligation to continue operating services in current environment Council was scheduled to consider a business case for whether it continues to operate its four early education and care centres or transitions one or more to community-managed organisations in May 2020. The timing of the	Defer consideration of business case until 2021. Note that operating decisions to temporarily reduce services where attendance is sufficiently reduced

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	<p>response to the COVID-19 pandemic means the business case would have been prepared at the peak time of uncertainty in Australia's history. Given this, there is significant economic uncertainty for early education and care providers including any further federal and state government interventions that may be introduced to ensure the viability of services at this time. Given the market uncertainty it is recommended that Council defers consideration of the business case.</p> <p>Federal government relief packages for early education and care services have had a significant negative impact on Council's revenue for operating its services. Whilst we are supportive the measures to make childcare affordable to all Council is forecasting a significant shortfall in its income projections because parents will not be making contributions and the service is ineligible for additional payments through the JobKeeper program. Council has applied for a special circumstances grant but is also required to look at options including temporarily reducing available places at particular centres or closing centres to constrain expenses and reduce the budget shortfall.</p>	<p>to minimise costs will be undertaken to ensure cost to Council during this time is minimised.</p>
<p>7b) Providing equitable and transparent funding agreements and/or tenancy arrangements to support quality and viable community organisations that provide childcare and kindergarten services.</p>	<p>Council has offer discounted levies for services during pandemic and provided further certainty with all leases and funding agreements extended to December 2022.</p>	<p>Continue existing funding arrangements with changes to reporting requirements until December 2022.</p>
<p>7c) Providing co-ordination services for toy libraries to support collaboration and facilitate access for all families. This includes working with toy library committees of management to develop and implement an operating model that meets the current and future needs of families in Port Phillip</p>	<p>Toy libraries are temporarily closed to comply with social distancing provisions. Work on a future approach to support toy libraries to be deferred to 2021.</p>	<p>Continue existing funding arrangements for 2020/21.</p>

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7d) Providing supported playgroups and improving access for all children and families to community-led playgroups in partnership with service managers, facility managers and playgroup coordinators.	Council will continue to provide supported playgroups as funded through DHHS and support playgroups to connect and access facilities including online forums.	Continue supported playgroups. Any additional resources to be put into this activity would be subject to budget prioritisation.
8. Support the implementation of Child Safe Standards across all children's services through education and capacity building programs.	Implementation will continue to ensure Council meets its obligation under Child Safe Standards.	Continue activities to implement Child Safe Standards undertaken by Child Safe project officer.
9. Support networks for all children's service providers to work together, and to access funding, training and nature play opportunities.	Council continues to support collaborative networks in the sector for all service providers.	Extent of resources to be put into this activity will be subject to prioritisation during the budget.
10. Foster resource sharing and collaboration between playgroups and between toy libraries.	Council continues to support collaboration between toy libraries and playgroups.	Extent of resources to be put into this activity will be subject to prioritisation during the budget.
11. Provide current and accessible information about children's services available in Port Phillip. Provide links to external sources of information where appropriate.	Improvements are underway and it is anticipated that changes will be live in August 2020.	Continue with existing resources.
12. Provide opportunities for families with children to connect and build relationships through playgroups, parenting information sessions and promoting family-friendly council and community events.	Altering sessions to digital models to support families during pandemic. Sessions will be reviewed to ensure they are accessible to all.	Extent of resources to be put into this activity will be subject to prioritisation during the budget.
13. Implement a long-term strategy in consultation with service providers to ensure facilities can meet current and future demand for children's services in Port Phillip. This strategy will ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council provides facilities where there is evidence of a community need that can't be met in any other way.</li> <li>• Council-owned facilities are fit for purpose and meet legislative and building compliance requirements</li> </ul>	Market uncertainty regarding supply and demand including potential market failures resulting from current pandemic environment requires that this work is deferred by twelve months. Risks associated with building condition will be managed through maintenance activities.	Planning for any major upgrades on hold until 2021

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all appropriate funding opportunities for upgrades or redevelopment of children’s services facilities are pursued</li> <li>• opportunities for integrated service delivery are leveraged, where appropriate</li> <li>• facilities provide access to natural environments and nature play</li> </ul>		
<p>14. Support the development and accessibility of natural environments in public spaces where children, families and children’s services can engage in nature play and activities that support children’s development.</p>	<p>To be prioritised alongside other public space strategy actions.</p>	<p>Extent of resources to be put into this activity will be subject to prioritisation during the budget.</p>
<p>15. Work with service providers to facilitate the promotion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outdoor learning environments</li> <li>• programs that promote children’s connection to nature and environmental sustainability practices.</li> </ul>	<p>Council has supported community initiatives to run nature-play bush playgroups and run pop-up playgroups in its adventure playgroups.</p>	<p>Extent of resources to be put into this activity will be subject to prioritisation during the budget.</p>
<p>16. Support opportunities for nature play, both formal and informal, in children’s services.</p>	<p>Through networks Council will encourage sharing of nature play opportunities including grant opportunities.</p>	<p>Extent of resources to be put into this activity will be subject to prioritisation during the budget.</p>