

## Information for foster and kinship carers



# Helping with the cost of early childhood education

Attending a quality early childhood program helps set children up for later success at school. Through play-based programs, young children develop their creativity and imagination, social and communication skills, develop self-confidence and make new friends.

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services is investing in a new early childhood education and care participation initiative to ensure children in out-of-home care have the same early childhood educational opportunities as other children.

While it is not compulsory for children to participate in early childhood education and care, children who attend kindergarten are better prepared for school.

This initiative provides carers with financial assistance to help meet the cost of early childhood education and care. This new payment is in addition to support payments provided by the department to meet child related costs and does not place a cap on the level of support that carers can receive to meet the cost of early childhood education and care.

## What is the early childhood education and care participation initiative?

### Kindergarten gap cost payment

Foster and kinship carers will receive a minimum gap cost payment of at least \$25 per week for each child in their care to attend an approved kindergarten program — that is, a play-based program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year.

Where there is a gap in kindergarten costs, carers will receive a guaranteed minimum level of financial assistance to help bridge that gap.

If a child is participating in a kindergarten program through long day care and attends more than 15 hours per week, support to cover the additional costs can be discussed with your child safety service centre.

Existing arrangements with your child safety service centre to provide a higher level of support will continue to be available. Support payment arrangements that are already in place will not be reduced as a result of this new initiative, and may be increased where full gap costs are not currently being met.

All children in out-of-home care are eligible for a health care card which significantly reduces the cost of kindergarten. So make sure you provide the child's health care card details to the kindergarten.

This payment will be offered from **1 March to 30 June 2017 only**.

### Eligibility

Eligible children include:

- » children who are subject to an interim or final child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive
- » children who are residing in an out-of-home care placement with a foster or kinship carer
- » children who are attending, or will attend an approved kindergarten program.

### Early childhood education and care gap cost payment

**From 1 July 2017**, foster and kinship carers will receive a guaranteed minimum gap cost payment of at least \$2000 per annum for each child in their care to attend early childhood education and care, or a guaranteed minimum payment of approximately \$40 per week. This will replace the kindergarten gap cost payment.

Support payment arrangements that are already in place will not be reduced as a result of this new initiative, and may be increased where full gap costs are not currently being met.

### Eligibility

Eligible children include:

- » children who are subject to an interim or final child protection order granting custody or guardianship to the Chief Executive
- » children who are residing in an out-of-home care placement with a foster or kinship carer

- » children who are attending kindergarten, limited-hours care and long day care
- » children who are aged between one and five years, and have not commenced Prep.

## What should I do if I have a child currently attending early childhood education and care?

If you have a child in your care who meets the eligibility criteria and you are not currently receiving financial assistance to help with early childhood education and care costs, please talk to your Child Safety Officer about receiving this payment.

If you already have support payment arrangements in place, talk to your Child Safety Officer about whether your current level of support can be increased.

## How will the payment be paid?

If you are paying some or all of the costs for the child to attend early childhood education and care, you will receive the additional payment on a regular basis as discussed with your child safety service centre. This could include the child safety service centre making payments directly to the early childhood education and care provider.

If the child's placement with you is stable and long term, the child safety service centre may reimburse you in lump sum payments. However, if the child's placement with you is temporary, or you would prefer more regular payments, the child safety service centre can make fortnightly payments to you.

## More information

To find out more about eligibility for receiving these additional payment, talk to your Child Safety Officer.

Information about the early childhood education and care participation initiative can be found in the Community Support section on the Queensland Government website [www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child](http://www.qld.gov.au/community/caring-child)