ELIGIBILITY AND PRIORITY OF ACCESS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

- Jamestown Community Children’s Centre follows Government Guidelines for eligibility/priority of access to care.
- Long Day Care and Preschool enrolments have equal priority of access in Integrated Centres. Numbers of places reserved for preschool/child care on any given day are flexible and depend on demand for the respective services and the need to maintain the child care service as a viable and sustainable business.
- Child care enrolments must meet the conditions of the centre’s “Licence For A Child Care Centre” no. 601, dated 27 June 2011, based on the Children’s Services Act 1985:
  - No more than 5 children under 2 years of age are to be cared for at any given time.
  - The number of children to be cared for at the centre at any given time must not exceed 44 children in total.

NB: It is assumed for the purpose of this policy that, upon relocation, the total number of children in attendance at the centre must not exceed the site capacity of the new premises.

RATIONALE

We recognise the importance of protecting children from abuse and neglect, as well as meeting the care needs of families in our community and providing universal access to preschool education. Where the combination of child care and preschool enrolments reaches site capacity on a particular day / days, decisions must be made about priority of access when accepting enrolments.

STRATEGIES, PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Both preschool and child care enrolments will be accepted in the order in which they are lodged provided that centre capacity is not exceeded and ratio requirements can be met. When capacity/staffing prevents acceptance of further enrolments, waiting lists will be established and places which become vacant will be filled using the priority of access policy.

PRESCHOOL

1. Eligibility

The Universal Access policy states that all children are entitled to 15 hours of preschool per week in the year before they begin school. Preschool session times will be determined by Governing Council based on preschool enrolment numbers, staffing allocation, childcare enrolment numbers and centre capacity. When the centre is at capacity and children who could not reasonably be expected to access preschool elsewhere wish to enrol, an application to exceed capacity for a specified period of time will be lodged with the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia. The following priority of access to preschool will apply only to a preschool waiting list in the event that such an application is unsuccessful.

2. Priority of Access to Preschool

When determining which children on a waiting list are offered preschool places, the following priority order shall be observed:

   1. Children considered to be at risk of abuse or neglect.
   2. Children from vulnerable groups within the community including:
      - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
      - Children under the Guardianship of the Minister
      - Children in families which include a disabled person
      - Children with a disability
      - Children from families with non-English speaking backgrounds
      - Children from socially isolated families
   3. Distance and/or accessibility – children who live closer to another preschool will have lower priority unless Jamestown Community Children’s Centre is more accessible due to transport / family work arrangements.

When considering priority of access, the centre reserves the right to consider the benefits and alternative arrangements reasonable available to families in each individual case.

A child already attending preschool will not lose their place when the centre is full and a child with a higher priority of access wishes to enrol.
CHILD CARE

1. Eligibility

Children are eligible for care between the ages of 6 weeks and 12 years, provided licensing conditions are met.

2. Priority of Access to Child Care

The centre follows Australian Government Priority of Access Guidelines for allocating places when demand for child care exceeds availability. The guidelines set out the following three levels of priority, which child care services must follow when filling vacant places:

- Priority 1 — a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect
- Priority 2 — a child of a single parent who satisfies, or of parents who both satisfy, the work, training, study test under section 14 of the A New Tax System (Family Assistance) Act 1999
- Priority 3 — any other child.

Within these main categories, priority should also be given to the following children:

- children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- children in families which include a disabled person
- children in families which include an individual whose adjusted taxable income does not exceed the lower income threshold* or who or whose partner are on income support
- children in families with a non-English speaking background
- children in socially isolated families
- children of single parents.

*The lower income threshold for receiving the maximum CCB payment is $41,026 a year ($788.96 a week), subject to other eligibility requirements.

When considering priority of access, the centre reserves the right to consider the benefits and alternative arrangements reasonable available to families in each individual case.

3. Circumstances in which a child may lose their care place to another child

a) When the centre has no vacant places and is providing child care for a child who is a Priority 3 under the Priority of Access Guidelines, the centre may require that child to leave the child care service in order for the centre to provide a place for a higher priority child, but only if:

- the person who is liable to pay child care fees in respect of the child was notified when the child first occupied the child care place that the centre follows this policy and
- the centre gives that person at least 14 days notice of the requirement for the child to leave the child care service.

b) A casual booking may be cancelled if someone makes a permanent booking for the place. The centre will give the holder of the casual place two weeks’ written notice that their booking has been cancelled to allow families time to make alternative arrangements.

c) In accordance with the Fees and Bookings policy, child care places may be cancelled when fees are unpaid for three consecutive weeks and no acceptable payment plan has been negotiated with the centre.

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Approval Signatures

Governing Council Chairperson: ____________________________
Director: ____________________________