

Family Day Care

Information Handbook



Merri-bek
City Council





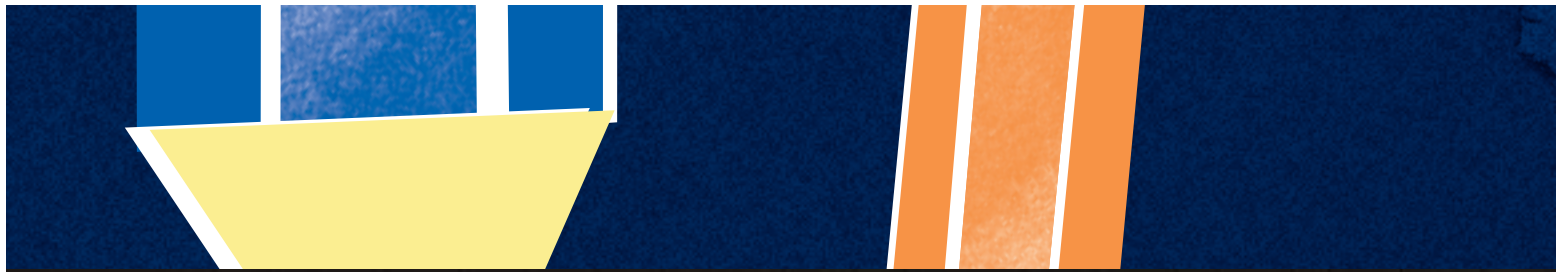
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Merri-bek City Council acknowledges Merri-bek as being on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people. Council pays its respects to the Wurundjeri people and their Elders, past, present and emerging.





Demographics

The City of Merri-bek lies between 4 and 14 kilometres north of Melbourne's central business district. It covers 50.9 square kilometres and is one of Melbourne's most populous municipalities.

It is bordered by the Moonee Ponds Creek to the west, Merri Creek to the east, Park Street to the south and the Western Ring Road to the north.

The City of Merri-bek covers the suburbs of Brunswick, Brunswick East, Brunswick West, Coburg, Coburg North, Fawkner, Glenroy, Gowanbrae, Hadfield, Oak Park, Pascoe Vale, and Pascoe Vale South. Small sections of the suburbs of Fitzroy North and Tullamarine are also part of the City of Merri-bek.





Welcome

Welcome to Merri-bek Family Day Care (MFDC).

This Information Book has been written to provide you with a brief overview of Council's MFDC service. A detailed Policy document can be found on the Council website at Merri-bek.vic.gov.au

We hope your child's experience in MFDC is an enjoyable and satisfying one and that your family's child care needs are met by our service.

In essence, MFDC is the care of children in a home environment – home based care. Merri-bek FDC is a registered home based child care service sponsored by Merri-bek City Council and licensed with the Department of Education and Training (DET). Additionally, the service is approved under the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority – ACECQA and registered with the Department of Education to provide access to Child Care Subsidy (CCS) which assists families with the cost of care.

MFDC is available to families who live, work or study within Merri-bek and places are offered according to council policy.

The service provides high quality, flexible and personalised child care. Children are cared for in secure, nurturing and stimulating home environments by educators registered with Council. Small groupings and a high adult to child ratio ensure individual needs and interests can be catered for. Educators are from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and all meet a minimum qualification standard prescribed by the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.

MFDC is available for children from birth to the commencement of secondary school 0 years to 12 years.

In MFDC, the hours of care are flexible and where possible will be matched to your family's needs. MFDC can be available on weekends and for overnight care, to cater for families who work shift work. Care is available all year round providing families meet the Commonwealth POAG.

Services as part of MFDC include:

- Full-time care
- Part-time care
- Overnight care
- Evening care
- Before and after school care – pick up and drop off of children can be arranged.
- School holiday care

Care occurs in:

- Mixed age groups
- Family groups

The following documents are available on request through the MFDC Coordination Unit:

- Policies
- National Law and Regulations 2011
- National Framework: Being, Belonging and Becoming
- Victorian Framework: Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework.



The Merri-bek Family Day Care Coordination Unit

The Coordination Unit is located at the Coburg Council Offices. The Coordination Unit is staffed by a Coordinator, Resource Officers, Educational Leader and Administration Officers.

The Coordination Unit has a range of responsibilities and tasks including:

- Ensuring the program operates in accordance with all relevant funding and legislation guidelines of the Department of Education and Training (DET) and Merri-bek City Council and Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.
- Developing, reviewing and implementing program guidelines.
- Assessment, approval, training and monitoring of registered educators.
- The placement, enrolment and ongoing support of children.
- Ensuring all program data is recorded, maintained and stored in accordance with all relevant legislation, Council policies, guidelines and funding agreements.
- Providing clear and accessible information to service users and educators on the operation and guidelines related to the program.
- Providing service users and educators with opportunities to participate in the development of the program and provide feedback.
- Ensuring that any complaint or feedback is dealt with promptly in accordance with relevant legislation and guidelines.

The Coordination Unit also aims to provide relevant information to families to assist in making the care choices as easy as possible. For a comprehensive list of duties and tasks please refer to the policy document which can be accessed via Council's website.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Coordination Unit or your educator in relation to any FDC matters.

Our Philosophy

FDC is a team of Families, Educators and the FDC Coordination Unit. The focus of our efforts in FDC is the child's wellbeing and education. We work in partnership based on cooperation, respect and open communication to encourage each child to reach their full potential. We strive for an environment that is safe, happy and nurturing.

Children in their formative years thrive in a small group with a primary Educator who is aware of and responsive to the individual child's developmental needs.

We believe:

- Every family has the right to quality children's services
- All children are individuals and have the right to a safe and secure environment which acknowledges the Child Safe Standards.
- Our service will respond to the needs of families from all social, cultural and economic backgrounds
- In encouraging children to learn through play, inspiring fun, security and a stimulating environment
- All children have the right to encouragement, support, understanding and acceptance
- In a team approach.



Our Values

Quality Children's Services enhance our community. We promote the development of:

- Mutual respect and trust
- Wellbeing
- Effective communication
- Partnerships
- Community contribution
- Reflective practice
- Cultural competence
- Identity
- Community connections and collaboration
- Confident learning

Code of Conduct/Ethics

The Coordination Unit and educators are expected to abide by the Merri-bek City Council Code of Conduct and ECA Code of Ethics.

Policies

MFDC has policies and procedures in place to ensure legislative and regulatory requirements are met.

Families are encouraged to read and become familiar with FDC [policies and procedures](#) (below). They are designed to ensure the provision of a high-quality child care service meeting the individual needs of children and families, within a safe home environment. Educators, families and staff are consulted in planning and reviewing the provision of FDC.

Child Protection

Victorian organisations that provide services or facilities for children are required by law to implement Child Safe Standards to protect children from harm. Merri-bek City Council is committed to being a Child Safe organisation.

The Coordination Unit staff may make a notification if children are at risk of harm or abuse and abide by the State Government's Child Family Information Referral and Support Team principles for protecting children. In the instance where a child is deemed at risk of harm or abuse the service will consult Orange Door for support and guidance.

Educators and all adult household members submit a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) to the service prior to commencing. The WWCC is a checking system for people who work or volunteer in some types of child-related work which helps to protect children – under 18 years of age – from sexual and physical harm. This check is required to be renewed every 5 years. In addition to the WWCC all educators and adult household members aged 18 years and over undergo a National Police Record Check prior to the educators commencing and annually thereafter. A WWCC and NPRC are conducted on household members as they turn 18 years of age.



Educators

Who are the educators?

Educators are carefully chosen by the Coordination Unit based on their skills and experience in providing care and education to the children in their care and for their ability to provide for the emotional and developmental needs of children in their care; and come from a wide range of backgrounds and different cultures.

The educators are independent, self-employed persons who live in the local community and who have registered with MFDC service. Educators have their own public liability insurance through Family Day Care Australia – FDCA. Educators and all household residents hold a current Working with Children Check – WWCC.

All Merri-bek educators have:

- a minimum qualification of Certificate III in Children's Services and/or
- Diploma in Children's Services as prescribed by the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010.

All educators are persons who undertake to care for children in accordance with:

- the Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011,
- National Quality Framework and the Merri-bek City Council FDC policies.

Educators are interviewed and reference checked by the Coordination Unit. All educators require the following:

- police check
- first aid
- anaphylaxis and asthma training
- minimum of certificate III

Educators are expected to provide an educational program for all children guided by the *National Quality Framework* requirements. Educators are supported and resourced by staff from the Coordination Unit to achieve this. The Coordination Unit offers training to educators to build their capacity and ensure contemporary pedagogy and practice is being implemented.

Note: Educators are not employees of Merri-bek City Council.

What if an educator is unable to provide care?

It is important to understand that from time to time educators will need time off, just as all employees do in the taking of annual leave. Your educator will let you know well in advance what their intentions might be in regard to planned leave. The Coordination Unit will endeavour to offer you alternate options this may not always be possible or may not suit you, in such cases you will need to arrange your own care. You will not be charged fees for days that your educator is unavailable.

If your educator is unable to provide care due to illness, you will be contacted as soon as possible. The Coordination Unit will then endeavour to arrange alternate care. Alternative care is of course subject to care availability, which can be difficult for unexpected or sudden occasions. No fee is payable when an educator is unable to provide care due to illness.

Home visits and monitoring of educator arrangements

It is essential for good management of the service that regular home visits are maintained. MFDC staff will visit your educator in their home on a regular basis – minimum monthly. In addition to providing support and resourcing your educator, these visits ensure ongoing assessment and monitoring of your child/ren's placement, safety and other relevant issues. Visits will be either scheduled or unscheduled and during MFDC hours of operation.

Families are notified of home visits, and encouraged to contact the Coordination Unit for feedback.

Accessing Family Day Care

Families interested in using MFDC should contact the Coordination Unit. A staff member will discuss your care requirements with you, and an initial application for care will be completed. The specific needs of your family are considered in order to match your needs with a suitable educator. Location, ages of child/ren, care required and available vacancies are some of the factors affecting a suitable placement.

Who can use FDC?

Children in families who:

- are working
- are seeking employment, studying or training
- are in crisis or experiencing exceptional circumstances
- have a continuing disability
- require respite care.

Each family's eligibility for activity hours are determined by Services Australia when CCS is applied for. Access to care may be limited according to availability of educators and priority of need.





Enrolment Process

Once a potential match with an educator has been established you will be requested to complete a child enrolment record and to attend an interview at Council offices before your child starts care.

In the majority of situations you will have already interviewed the educator in their home and discussed specific aspects of care that are important to you.

Areas discussed should have included:

- your expectations of care
- your child/ren's food/meal, sleep and toileting requirements
- any allergies, medical conditions or special needs
- behaviour guidance and practices
- fees and payment of fees
- how the educator provides care – activities, outings and routines
- transportation of children to kindergarten/school.

Families have the right and responsibility to determine that the educator shares similar values and can meet the needs of your child. The educator has the responsibility and the right to decide whether the child's needs and the parent's expectations could be met through the placement. Families and educators are under no obligation to accept any placement.

Once you have enrolled with our service please be aware that care is arranged between yourself and the educator.

No Jab No Play

In January 2016 the *No Jab, No Play Policy* came into effect. In order to finalise an enrolment for care parents/guardians must provide the service with an immunisation status certificate that shows their child:

- is up-to-date with vaccinations for their age OR
- is on a vaccine catch-up schedule OR
- has a medical condition preventing them from being fully vaccinated.

Please note that a conscientious objection is no longer applicable.

Children with Additional Needs

The Commonwealth Government recognises the importance of providing access to quality child care for children and families with additional needs.

The placement of any child is subject to the availability of a suitable educator and available resources. All placements involve consultation between the family, the educator and the Coordination Unit.

Contracted/Agreed Care and Bookings

You and your educator will negotiate the agreed/contracted hours of care you require. This is your booked care.

Should you wish to make a change to your booked care, you must discuss this with your educator in the first instance to see if your requirements can be accommodated. Two (2) weeks' notice must be given to change your booked hours of care. A booking request will then need to be completed and approved by the family.

Enrolment, Orientation and Attendance

The Coordination Unit will provide your educator with a copy of your enrolment form. Care cannot commence until your enrolment has been received by both the Coordination Unit and the educator.

The information you provide is used for MFDC purposes only – refer to the privacy policy for further information.

Updating Information

It is a condition of participation in MFDC that educators and the Coordination Unit are promptly advised of any changes in family information which may impact on the provision of child care.

This information includes:

- Changes in home, work or study course details, e.g. address, telephone number, hours of work/study
- Changes in child's health details
- Changes to custody, emergency contacts or child collection arrangements Families will be requested to confirm details regularly.

What to Bring To Care

Nappies

You will need to bring a sufficient supply of nappies for each day your child is in care. You should also provide nappy wipes, any creams or lotions used when nappy changing, and plastic bags for the disposal of nappies. We suggest you discuss nappy change routines with your educator and we recommend you supply disposable nappies.

A waterproof change mat must be provided to the educator whilst your child is in nappies.

Change of Clothes

Due to changeable weather and the fact that children can soil/wet their clothes as they busy themselves in activities throughout the day, it is important to provide at least 1 spare set of clothes and more pairs of underpants. Children who are toilet training are likely to require several spare sets of clothes, including 3 or 4 pairs of underpants.

Children must have hats. Please refer to *SunSmart Policy*.

Safe, well-fitting and flexible footwear is required for active play. Thongs are not suitable. Gumboots should be accompanied by indoor footwear. Council allows children to wear slippers for indoor use only.





Food/Drink

If you are to provide your child's own food, you should supply sufficient meals and snacks to cover the time your child is in care, including drinks.

If you provide meals and snacks for your child the following conditions apply:

- Pre-prepared and easily reheatable if to be served hot.
- Nutritious – no chips, lollies, chocolate bars, etc.
- Sufficient quantity to satisfy your child's dietary needs.
- A sufficient quantity of suitable drinks (e.g. milk, juice) must also be provided. Cordial and other soft drinks are not recommended. Children will be encouraged to drink water.
- If insufficient food or no food is supplied and an educator needs to supply food, a meal charge will apply.
- If a child remains in care beyond booked hours and requires a meal, a meal charge will apply.

If you prefer for your educator to provide meals, you will need to discuss this, including any special dietary requirements, allergies and the payment for food. Educators who provide meals will do so in accordance with MFDC policies.

It is suggested that all items, clothing, bottles, food containers be clearly marked with your child's name.

Educator's Daily Routine and Home Environment

Your educator will have developed their own routine that meets the needs of the group of children as well as their own, in regard to collecting and taking their own children – if applicable – to kindergarten or school etc. You should discuss this with your educator so you are familiar with what the daily routine will be, including outings and transportation.

It is important to remember that the place in which your child is to be cared is also your educator's home. Respect should be given to the private areas of your educator's home.

Program Planning

The home-based child care setting provides a unique child care experience for children in which they are engaged in the real life experiences of the home. The effective use of appropriate and flexible programming in this home based setting is regarded as an important indicator of quality. In MFDC it is important for educators to plan in response to outcomes identified in the National Framework, this ensures that children's needs are met. A range of experiences for young children, based on their individual needs, abilities and interests will be regularly offered by educators. This is to ensure their emotional, social, cognitive, physical and language developmental needs are being met.

Excursions/Outings

From time to time excursions and outings, separate to routine outings, may be organised.

Risk assessments are conducted prior to any outing. Parental permission in writing will always be sought for excursions by educators.

Sleep/Rest

Your educator will provide your child with rest/sleep times based on your child's needs, where possible. Even if your child does not sleep, there will be a quiet/rest time organised in the afternoon.

Toilet Training

If your child is toilet training and/or when he/she is ready for toilet training, you should discuss this with your educator. This will help the educator participate in the process and better respond to your child's needs. Families will need to provide a potty/toilet seat for their children.

Behaviour Guidance

Educators use positive behaviour guidance techniques when working with children and recognise that children have the same rights as adults and recognise the values, differences and similarities that exist in all people.

Positive guidance of children's behaviour is based on respect, with the belief that all children in their own way can learn to manage their emotions. Given the right tools, children can take responsibility for their actions and operate in the social world in a productive way.

If you have any concerns regarding your child's behaviour, please do not hesitate to discuss this with your educator. Likewise, if your educator has any concerns regarding your child's behaviour whilst in care, these will be discussed with you. The Coordination Unit is available to provide assistance, support and advice in relation to this at any time.

For a full details please see the *Behaviour Guidance Policy* located on the website.

Fees and Child Care Subsidy

Fees

The Service annually sets and reviews all fees and charges. This includes specifying a fee range for hourly rates of care, type of care and other charges. A Service Levy is charged to families to assist with administration of the Service which is included in the fee.

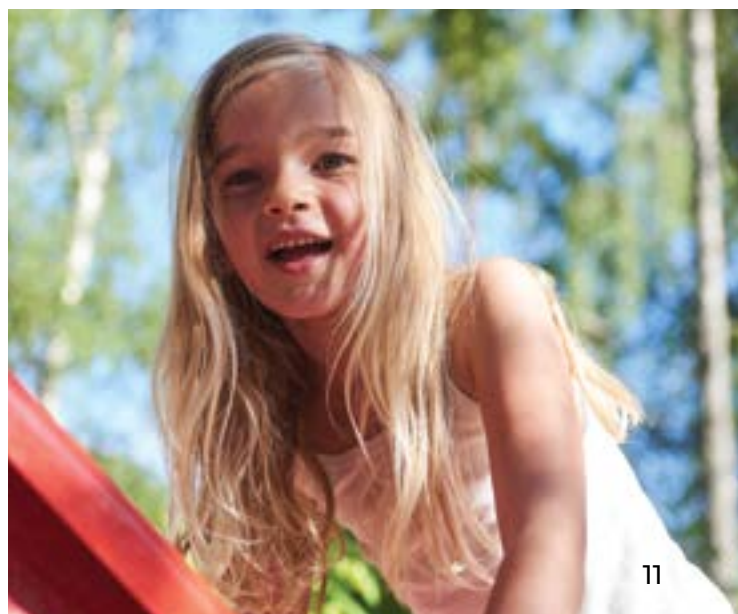
Each Educator sets their hourly rate within the range.

Registering for Child Care Subsidy

Merri-bek Family Day Care is approved by the DET for the purposes of Child Care Subsidy (CCS). CCS is available to assist families with the cost of childcare.

Families can apply for CCS via their MyGov account, using the Centrelink application. Once approved the CCS is paid to the educator (via the Coordination Unit) to reduce the parent gap fee.

Full fees are payable until CCS has been approved.





Complying Written Arrangement (CWA)

All children registered to attend FDC are required to have a CWA in place, which is an ongoing care agreement between the Service and the parent/guardian.

A CWA specifies the booked days (sessions) and hours and fees payable for each child's session of care. This ensures that all parties are fully aware of their commitment and obligations regarding fees and charges and responsibilities in relation to payment. This is set out in the Fee Schedule.

It is expected parents adhere to agreed hours of care. If children arrive or leave outside the agreed hours of care, additional fees may be charged by the educator.

Two weeks' notice must be given before changing a regular contract or commencing a holiday contract. 24 hours notice must be given before changing a casual contract.

When there are changes to booked days and hours, the Coordination Unit will create and submit a revised CWA to the families for approval.

For additional information regarding absences, leave, and other care arrangements please refer to the policies, the Services Fees and Charges, or your Educator's Fee Schedule.

Termination of Care

Two (2) weeks' notice must be provided by the educator or the parent if either party is terminating care. If children cease care during a notice period, the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is paid for absences in accordance with the current CCS legislation. In certain circumstances the full fee is payable.

Health and Safety

Illness, Injury and Accidents

If your child should become ill whilst in care or be hurt through an accident, it is service policy that your educator will notify you to discuss the event and if required, to request that your child be collected from care. If your educator is unable to contact you, the educator will then make attempts to contact the people you have listed as your emergency contacts on the enrolment form. In the event of no contact being possible, and at the discretion of the educator, medical assistance may be sought for your child. Your educator must record details of any accidents/injuries/illnesses, and you will be required to sign this record, indicating that you are aware of the incident. You will then be provided with a copy of the incident record.

Any serious incident will be reported to the appropriate government authority.

It is expected that children who are ill will not be in care. Educators are not permitted to accept into care any child who is sick, contagious or receiving medication for a contagious condition. Educators and parents are expected to comply with the Exclusion Periods of Infectious Diseases.

In relation to infectious diseases, see DHHS Exclusion Table, which can be accessed on the website.

Further information can be obtained by accessing the policy document located on the website or viewed at the educators home.



Medication

Medication may be given to a child in care. However parents must complete the Medication Form in detail prior to this happening. Please speak with your educator or the Coordination Unit for additional information.

Further information can be obtained by accessing the policy document located on the website.

Asthma

If your child/ren has asthma, it will be necessary for you to complete an *Asthma Management Plan*. This plan should be completed in consultation with your family doctor and updated annually. An *Asthma Management Plan* allows your educator to best respond to your child's medical needs. If there is a change to the child's original asthma plan, a new asthma plan needs to be provided to your educator. Your child can only attend care if there is a current *Asthma Management Plan* in place. You will be advised by the Coordination Unit in advance if your plan is due to expire to ensure there is time for a new plan to be developed and signed by your family doctor.

Allergies (non Anaphylaxis)

If your child/ren has an allergy an Allergy Plan must be completed in consultation with your family doctor and updated annually. This plan allows your educator to best respond to your child's medical needs. If there is a change to the child's original allergy plan, a new plan must be completed and provided to your educator.

Allergies (Anaphylaxis)

Allergic Reaction (Anaphylaxis) requiring use of an auto-injection device (eg EpiPen®). If it is necessary for the educator to carry and administer an auto-injection device, you will be required to complete a Management Plan in consultation with your family doctor and updated annually. The educator must have appropriate training in the administration of the device. You will need to advise your educator of any changes to conditions on the management plan (e.g. new allergens, change of medication, etc.).

Further information can be obtained by accessing the policy document located on the website.

Smoke-free Environment

No educator, educator's family members, parents or visitors may smoke in the educator's home or vehicle or in sight of the children. Please refer to the [*Merri-bek Family Day Care Policies and guidelines*](#).

Emergencies

Educators have clear procedures and guidelines and are trained in emergency management (see Emergency Procedures Policy). Educators have 24 hour support from the Coordination Unit. They are required to practice evacuation procedures with the children in care, every three months.

Other

All educators must have working smoke alarms fitted, and a fire extinguisher or fire blanket in case of fire.

All educators have a current First Aid, Asthma and Anaphylaxis Training.

Educators are required to maintain current contact numbers for families.

SunSmart

MFDC is an accredited member of the Cancer Council SunSmart Early Childhood Program.

Further information can be obtained by accessing the policy document located on the website.



Further Information

Arrival, Departure and Collection of Children

The health, safety and wellbeing of children placed in care with MFDC is of paramount consideration and importance.

All children arriving and departing from care with the service will be accompanied by the parent/guardian or an authorised person eighteen years or older and who is nominated by the parent or guardian on the child enrolment record.

The parent/guardian or authorised persons nominated by the parent or guardian must sign the child in and out of care each day showing the arrival and departure time on the invoice/attendance record in accordance with Australian Government guidelines.

Communication

Effective communication is essential between your educator and your family. It is likely that you will want to know about your child's day, for example the activities and experiences your child was involved in; so take the time to familiarise yourself with the educator's home. Make time at either end of the day to discuss to your educator and let your educator know about matters that might influence/affect your child's time in care.

Resource officers regularly visit. You are welcome to call the Coordination Unit and discuss any aspect of the Resource Officer's visit or any concerns regarding your child's development or the MFDC program.



Consultation and Participation

In the interests of children in care, educators and parents are encouraged to develop open, honest and regular communication. Resource Officers regularly visit educators, offering support and advice. Coordination Unit staff are always available to discuss any issues concerning MFDC with parents. Surveys request comment from families, and provide a valuable opportunity for feedback and improvement of the service.

Council also produces newsletters for educators and parents and welcome any contributions from families and educators. Educator Network meetings are held three times during the year and are advertised in the newsletters. The purpose of the Network meeting is to provide input and feedback to the Coordination Unit on operational matters and service issues e.g. fees, policies, training, current developments in the child care field.

Complaints and Concerns

If at any time you feel uncomfortable or concerned with any aspect of your child's care or the service provided, you should discuss these openly and honestly with your educator. Clear and open discussion about minor problems usually prevents situations escalating into crises.

If after talking with your educator you are not satisfied, or you need to speak to a third party, you are welcome and encouraged to contact the Coordination Unit. Your concerns will be documented and followed up in a prompt and timely manner. Complaints can also be made in writing to the Coordination Unit.

Alternatively, parents have the right to contact The Department of Education and Training directly to raise any issues or concerns regarding the MFDC service.

Meetings and Professional Development for educators

Educators are required to attend professional development training. These sessions are held in the evenings, and are an opportunity for educators and the Coordination Unit staff to exchange important and relevant information.

The Coordination Unit is committed to providing support to educators through training opportunities which enhance educator's professional development.

National Quality Framework

The National Quality Framework, including the Education and Care Services National Regulations and National Law, is the key mechanism for achieving quality care for young children in Australia.

Further information is available at: acecqa.gov.au

Early Years Learning Framework

As an approved children's service Council has a commitment to the principles of the Early Years Learning Frameworks. Further information is available at: education.vic.gov.au

Privacy

Merri-bek City Council is committed to protecting the privacy of personal and health information it collects and uses, by complying with its obligations under the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) (the Acts). Council has a policy that outlines the requirements for the management and handling of Personal and Health Information.

Obligations under the above Acts apply to Counselors, Council staff (employees), agents (consultants, agency staff and volunteers) and contracted service providers and is a mandatory requirement in any new or existing contract.





Glossary

The following terms are used throughout the manual, when used they mean:

ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
CCMS	Child Care Management System
CCS	Child Care Subsidy
CWA	Complying Written Arrangement
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services Victoria
ECA	Early Childhood Australia
Educator	A person who provides care and education for children
EYLF	Early Years Learning Framework
FDC	Family Day Care
FDCA	Family Day Care Australia
IP	Inclusion Professional
MFDC	Merri-bek Family Day Care
NPRC	National Police Record Check
NQF	National Quality Framework
Parent/Guardian	Person who has lawful authority and custody to care for children
POAG	Priority of Access Guidelines
SA	Services Australia (Centrelink)
The Coordination Unit	Merri-bek Family Day Care Coordination Unit
VEYLDF	Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework
WWCC	Working with Children Check



Merri-bek
City Council



Family Day Care Coordination Unit Telephone: 9240 2300

FamilyDayCare@merri-bek.vic.gov.au

merri-bek.vic.gov.au/childcare

Merri-bek Language Link

Italiano	Italian	9280 1911	Türkçe	Turkish	9280 1914
Ελληνικά	Greek	9280 1912	Tiếng Việt	Vietnamese	9280 1915
عربي	Arabic	9280 1913	पंजाबी	Nepali	9280 0751

普通话 Chinese (Simplified) 9280 0750

National Relay Service:

13 36 77 or relayservice.com.au