



## Governance arrangements

### Foreword

The governance arrangements aim to maximise partnerships across services and service providers within the current legislative environment.

### Purpose

This document sets out the expectations, roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in decision making, regarding planning and service delivery in Children's Centres for Early Childhood Development and Parenting (Children's Centres); and Children and Family Centres. It encourages partnerships between many different professional disciplines and suggests new ways to support children aged birth to eight years and families in their community.

### Definition of Governance

Governance arrangements for Children's Centres support collaborative decision making between partners. This involves appropriate compliance with legislative and reporting requirements, as well as more informal advisory, planning and decision making responsibilities, including developing practices, policies and procedures to provide strategic direction, to ensure objectives and outcomes are achieved, risks are managed and resources are used responsibly and that accountability requirements are met.

### Vision

Children's Centres support children and families to achieve the best possible learning, health and wellbeing outcomes in a universal setting with targeted responses for children and families who may require additional support.

Through partnerships, Children's Centres strive to achieve four population outcomes:

1. Children have optimal health, learning and development.
2. Parents provide strong foundations for their children's healthy development and wellbeing.
3. Communities are child and family friendly.
4. Aboriginal children are safe, healthy, culturally strong and confident.

### Context

Children's Centres operate within existing legislation and the requirements of each partner agency and encourages people to build partnerships and develop flexible, integrated responses to children and families.

Children's Centres are supported by external governance bodies including, SA Government Ministers and associated departments (centrally and regionally). The shared commitment of all these groups is to provide the best start for children and engage the community in building supportive environments for children and families.

The key partner agencies of the Children's Centres in South Australia are the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) lead agency, Department of Health and Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI).

## Partnerships

Partnerships take time to develop. The success of providing integrated services through Children's Centres relies on a partnership approach by interdisciplinary teams and multiple service providers when supporting children, families and the community.

The partnership process starts with developing a vision for the centre and for the way services will work together to deliver integrated programs and services.

Induction for staff delivering programs in the Children's Centre will include clarification of individuals' roles and responsibilities and support by their employer to participate in the governance of the centre, relevant centre meetings and training opportunities.

## Principles and Practices

Six principles have been developed by the State Government's Children's Centres Operations Group to apply in all Children's Centres.

### 1. Governing groups provide leadership

In practice this means:

- contributing to the development of the Children's Centre vision and putting it into practice
- building multiple ownership of the centre's vision, values, planning and programs and services
- complying with legislative requirements
- contributing to a culture of quality and continuous improvement

- establishing a welcoming and positive culture in which all people feel they can participate
- supporting relationship building and the trust and respect of all involved in determining and meeting agreed objectives
- encouraging cross-government, interagency, non-government, children, family and community voices
- supporting members to make their best contribution by providing training in meeting, communication and consultation skills
- establishing family friendly structures and processes that enable a strong community voice and enhance community capacity and social capital.

### 2. Governing groups are accountable to their communities

In practice this means:

- informing the community about decisions made and where appropriate involving them in making the decisions
- supporting governing groups to make their best contribution by providing training in meeting, communication and consultation skills
- having systems in place to ensure standards and policies are adhered to
- reporting against the objectives and directions of strategic plans
- reporting to the community and government on the financial status and the quality of programs and services delivered.

### 3. Decision making and management processes of governing groups are public and explicit

In practice this means:

- documenting roles and responsibilities of members of each governing group

- documenting committee and working group functions, membership and meeting procedures
- communicating decisions to stakeholders
- encouraging and supporting staff, parents and stakeholders to participate in decision making.

#### **4. All members of the governing groups act with integrity**

In practice this means:

- ensuring that the interests of children and their families are paramount
- acting in the interests of the Children’s Centre
- acting ethically and impartially using the Code of Ethics for the South Australian Public Sector as a guide
- ensuring all stakeholders have information and the opportunity to have their voice heard.

#### **5. Governing groups have stewardship of the Children’s Centre**

In practice this means:

- ensuring that the operational policies of the Children’s Centre are documented
- ensuring regular meetings occur which address relevant matters in a timely way and issues arising are addressed quickly
- focusing on improving access to and coordination of high quality services, including ensuring there is a single entry point and clear referral pathways
- using every opportunity to enhance the Children’s Centre and its programs and support the staff and volunteers who provide them
- supporting integrated service planning and program delivery using the Outcomes Framework.

#### **6. Governing group business is conducted efficiently**

In practice this means:

- developing procedures that ensure the business of governance is achieved
- providing training for members so everyone can contribute and understands how to raise and resolve issues
- ensuring there is sufficient flexibility in Children’s Centre policies to enable timely responses to emerging issues
- meeting procedures are not overly complicated and encourage everyone’s contribution
- regularly reviewing (annually) the operations of the governing group and identifying where improvements can be made
- ensuring best use is made of available resources to achieve the Children’s Centre aims
- using data and information to inform decisions and direction.

## Terms of Reference:

### Leadership Team

Children's Centres bring together interdisciplinary teams with a range of professional expertise, knowledge and responsibilities underpinned by a shared commitment that children aged birth to eight years and families will experience seamless service delivery. Leadership qualities and responsibilities are acknowledged and respected within the team. Individual leaders from different disciplines will retain their respective accountabilities and responsibilities while supporting the leadership of the Children's Centre.

#### Purpose

The Leadership Team shares leadership responsibilities and takes on collective responsibility for integrated service delivery.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The Leadership Team will:

- contribute to the development of the Children's Centre vision and values
- monitor, report and contribute to the achievement of the National Quality Standard requirements
- develop program and service priorities based on the Children's Centre vision, advice from the Parent Engagement Group on any service gaps and the Outcomes Framework
- develop and consider program proposals and provide advice to the Partnership Group and Governing Council on agreed proposals
- develop strategies for encouraging broad community participation and engagement based on advice from the Parent Engagement Group
- coordinate the use of facilities in line with the vision, Outcomes Framework and advice from the Parent Engagement Group

- monitor service outcomes and provide advice to continuously improve services for children and parents/families
- share strategies and responses for individual children and families and program and practice directions and highlights
- determine and provide common training and professional development
- undertake data collection, monitoring and reporting on agreed outcomes
- share and analyse relevant data and research, including the AEDC
- coordinate grant applications and potential resources to achieve Outcome priorities
- develop Partnership Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) as required
- provide representation on the Partnership, Regional Planning and Parent Engagement Groups.

#### Membership

- Centre Director/Head of School Early Years
- Community Development Coordinator
- Family Services Coordinator
- Allied Health staff (if appointed).

And may include:

- other government and non-government participating agencies
- School Principal
- Assistant Director (if appointed)
- Allied Health staff (if appointed)
- TAFE or other adult learning providers
- other DECD early childhood leaders.

In the first instance, the Centre Director/Head of School Early Years will chair the group. The group can then elect a chair.

#### Meeting Frequency

The Leadership Team meets as frequently as needed, and no less than 12 times per year.

## Terms of Reference:

### Partnership Group

The Partnership Group brings together disciplines and agencies to work together by providing integrated services organised around the child and family, while maintaining reporting and accountability responsibilities to their own agency.

#### Purpose

The group plans and provides integrated strategies and directions that will support the achievement of outcomes for children aged birth to eight years and families within the Children's Centre.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The Partnership Group will:

- develop the Children's Centre vision and values and approach to integrated services in collaboration with all other governing groups
- coordinate agency activities and the mix of appropriate services based on community strengths and needs and identified priorities of the Outcomes Framework, in consultation with the Governing Council
- establish and monitor family and community consultation and participation in the Children's Centre
- ensure that research evidence and best practice underpin advice and directions
- consider reports on all programs within the Children's Centre, monitor service outcomes and provide advice to continuously improve services for children and families
- contribute to and endorse the centre Outcomes Framework planning
- advise the Children's Centres Operations Group of operational issues and barriers to integration

- identify opportunities for collaborative action and share relevant agency policies and practices between key stakeholders

The Partnership Group may provide representation on the Regional Planning and Parent Engagement and Preschool/School/Long Day Care Management Committee/Governing Council.

#### Membership

- Regional managers from key partner agencies DECD, Department for Communities and Social Inclusion (DCSI), Department of Health and representatives from participating agencies and service providers that may include non-government organisations, adult education providers, Australian Government, local government and community representatives
- Representatives from Leadership Team and Parent Engagement Group
- Representative from the Preschool/School Governing Council/Long Day Care Management Committee/Governing Council
- Representation from the Children's Centres team.

In the first instance, the Centre Director/Head of School Early Years will chair the group. The group can then elect a chair from one of the key government partner agencies. The Community Development Coordinator will perform the role of Executive Officer.

#### Meeting Frequency

The Partnership Group meets as frequently as needed and no less than four times a year.

## Terms of Reference:

### Parent Engagement Group

Children's Centres are built on the understanding that parents and families provide the strongest, most reliable pathway to better outcomes for children aged birth to eight years. Children's Centres support families to be actively engaged in programs, services and decision making. Parent engagement will be established in formal and informal ways and supported by the Community Development Coordinator, to ensure all members of the community feel welcome to contribute and participate.

In all Children's Centres, a range of mechanisms will be developed to ensure ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal families and members of other priority groups so their voices inform key decisions about the Children's Centre.

#### Purpose

The Parent Engagement Group provides opportunities for family and community members to have input into the future directions of the Children's Centre based on community strengths and needs. Parent engagement connects the community to the centre and the centre to the community.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

The Parent Engagement Group may:

- connect with families and the community to obtain their views on programs and services and other matters
- contribute to the development of the Children's Centre vision and values and Outcomes Framework planning
- provide advice to the Leadership Team on programs and services needed in or through the Children's Centre
- develop advice for the Leadership Team on strategies for encouraging family and community participation and engagement

- promote the Children's Centre within the community
- undertake volunteer work within the Children's Centre
- participate in training opportunities
- may provide representation on the Preschool/School Governing Council/Long Day Care (Management Committee), Partnership Group, and Regional Advisory and Planning Group.

#### Membership

- Families using the Children's Centre from a broad cross section of the community
- Community Development Coordinator
- Family Services Coordinator
- Allied Health staff (if appointed).

The Community Development Coordinator will coordinate the Parent Engagement Group. If a formal group is operating, then members will hold the position for a period not exceeding two years.

#### Meeting Frequency

The Parent Engagement Group meets as frequently as needed, and no less than four times per year.

### Preschool/School or Governing Council

In partnership with the Children's Centre Director/Head of School Early Years the council supports the development of future directions for integrated service delivery and monitors and reports on progress to the community.

For more information visit

<https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/governing-councils/legal-and-insurance/constitutions-schools>

## Regional Advisory and Planning Group

As the number of Children's Centres and Children and Family Centres in operation increases within the South Australian Government's common regions, a Regional Advisory and Planning Group may be established. This group will focus on delivering more effective and coordinated integrated services across a number of regionally aligned centres. This group will support the individual centres' Partnership Groups by focusing on the direction and operation of all centres within their region.