



# Establishment Payment Policy

## 1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the support and financial assistance that may be provided to family members and other significant adults (significant others) who look after a child under a private family arrangement where the Department of Communities (Communities) hold concerns about the child's wellbeing.

## 2 Scope

This policy applies to circumstances where Communities have been working with a family due to concerns for a child's wellbeing.

## 3 Background

In Western Australia (WA) family members and significant others who provide care arrangements to children in the CEO's care (i.e., approved carers) receive a subsidy from Communities to cover the normal, ongoing costs of maintaining a child in their care. Family members or significant others who look after a child in their family informally do not receive this financial assistance. In these circumstances the family member or significant other may be eligible for assistance from the Australian Government through the Department of Human Services. WA State Government assistance may also be available to these individuals as per the criteria for all families.

When a child first goes to live with their family members or significant other under a private family arrangement there may be some basic items required to accommodate the child, such as furniture, bedding, clothing and age-appropriate toys and equipment.

An 'Establishment Payment' was introduced in January 2011 by the then Department for Child Protection and Family Support to assist family members with these initial set up costs. As of January 2024, the policy was expanded to include significant others who have an enduring connection to a child and/or the child's family.

## 4 Policy statement/s

Communities can provide assistance, including an Establishment Payment, to a family member or significant other who has a demonstrated an enduring relationship with a child and/or the child's family and who looks after a child under a private family arrangement, when the child may have otherwise entered the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) care.

Where Communities have been working with a family due to concerns for a child's wellbeing (Communities has undertaken a Child Safety Investigation (CSI) or the family is assisted by Communities Intensive Family Support (IFS) team) and the child's parents have resolved that to ensure their child's wellbeing, a family member or significant other may look after the child under a private family arrangement for a defined period. This decision, made independently by the child's parents in collaboration with the family member or the significant other, will be considered by Communities when developing a safety plan with the child's parents and safety network.<sup>1</sup>

In circumstances where the child's parents do not agree for a child to reside with a family member or significant other, statutory action may be required to safeguard and promote the child's safety and wellbeing. In these circumstances the Establishment Payment would not apply.

## 5 Legislative Mandate and Principles

The *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (the Act) confers functions in relation to the provision of social services, financial and other assistance concerning the wellbeing of children, other individuals, families and communities.

In performing a function under the Act, the paramount consideration is the best interests of the child.<sup>2</sup> The Act provides for matters that must be taken into account in determining what is in a child's best interests.<sup>3</sup>

The Act includes other principles, including the principle that:

- parents, family and community of a child have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the child's wellbeing;<sup>4</sup>
- the preferred way of safeguarding and promoting a child's wellbeing is to support the child's parents, family and community in the care of the child;<sup>5</sup>
- intervention action (as defined in s.32(2)) should be taken only in circumstances where there is no other reasonable way to safeguard and promote the child's wellbeing;<sup>6</sup>

The Act includes the principle of self-determination and provides that Aboriginal people have a right to participate in the protection and care of their children with as much self-determination as possible.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Communities has assessed that there are no concerns for the child's safety in the private family care arrangement. The child is not in the care of the CEO. Parental responsibility remains with the child's parent/s.

<sup>2</sup> *Children and Community Services Act 2004* s 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Children and Community Services Act 2004* s 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Children and Community Services Act 2004* s 9(a).

<sup>5</sup> *Children and Community Services Act 2004* s 9(b).

<sup>6</sup> *Children and Community Services Act 2004* s 9(f).

<sup>7</sup> *Children and Community Services Act 2004* s 13.

## 6 Responsibilities

### Safety planning during a Child Safety Investigation (CSI) or Intensive Family Support (IFS)

Safety planning to manage concerns for the safety and well-being of a child may occur during the CSI or period of IFS. The CSI and IFS work must be informed by the Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework.

When concerns persist for the child's wellbeing Communities should hold a Signs of Safety meeting with the child's parents, extended family, significant others, and safety network to develop safety goals and draft a written safety plan agreement that outlines how the child will be kept safe and, if appropriate, what agreed private family arrangement is required for the child to promote their wellbeing.

Communities must give the child the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process and express their wishes and views freely, having due regard to the child's age and level of understanding. The child's parents must agree to the safety plan, and consent to any private family arrangement made for the child. In these circumstances, parental responsibility remains with the parents.

The safety plan must include actions to be taken if changes are made to the private family arrangement for the child. By way of example, actions required if the parents withdraw their consent for the private family arrangement or the family member or other significant adult is unwilling or unable to continue to look after the child.

### Provision of payment

The decision to provide an Establishment Payment to a family member or significant other as a result of the private family arrangement must be endorsed by the team leader and approved by the district director prior to the payment being made.

The Establishment Payment may be provided for each child under a private family arrangement. The family member or significant other may only receive the Establishment Payment for a child once. By way of example, if a child enters the same private family arrangement on more than one occasion, the Establishment Payment may only be paid to the family member or significant other on one of those occasions.

The Establishment Payment is \$1,000 per child.

### Family Support Services

Family support services underpins Communities work with vulnerable children and families, from the initial assessment process through to supporting reunification. Child protection workers, alongside community service organisations, provide support to families

across all areas of contact with Communities. The level of support provided by Communities will be dependent on the family's needs to promote the child's wellbeing.

When a child enters a private family arrangement during a CSI or IFS work, Communities must provide the family member(s) or significant other(s) with information on the services and supports that may be available to them. This may include information on services available in the community to support the family, such as parenting support and financial counselling services offered by community service organisations, such as Anglicare, Communicare or Wanslea Family Services. In the Perth metropolitan area, the Family Support Networks (FSNs) are a partnership between Communities and community service organisations and should be a primary consideration for referrals. FSNs are trauma informed, culturally competent and prioritise referrals for Aboriginal families.

Where a child has particularly challenging behaviours or additional needs, the child protection worker should assist the family to plan for how these needs will be addressed and provide support to ensure that appropriate referrals have been made.

## 7 Procedures, guidelines and forms

The Casework Practice Manual provides guidelines based on this policy.

## 8 Other related documents

- Building Safe and Strong Families – Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy
- Policy on assessment and investigation processes for child safety concerns
- Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022-2032
- At Risk Youth Strategy 2022-2027
- Intensive Family Support Approach
- Signs of Safety Child Protection Practice Framework

## 9 Document control

<b>Publication date</b>	January 2024
<b>Review date</b>	January 2026
<b>Owner</b>	Executive Director – Statewide Services
<b>Custodian</b>	Director – Child Protection Practice and Support

## 10 Amendments

Version	Date	Author	Description
1	December 2023	Senior Operational Policy Officer	Transferred to current Communities policy template following approval of content by Director, Child Protection Practice and Support
2	Month/year	[position title – not name]	
3	Month/year	[position title – not name]	