

# **The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023**





City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Contents

Introduction .....	6
Reading this report.....	7
Children in Port Phillip.....	8
Children living in Port Phillip.....	8
Where children live .....	10
Factors influencing children's health and wellbeing.....	11
Outcomes for children when they enter school.....	12
Access and Participation.....	13
What services are children using? .....	13
Early Education and Care .....	14
Supply and demand .....	16
Growth of Early Education and Care Services in the City .....	16
Introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten and Free Kinder.....	17
Participation in Early Education and Care across the City.....	17
Factors impacting access and participation.....	18
Average fees at early education and care providers.....	18
Our Services .....	19
Maternal and Child Health.....	19
Universal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service .....	19
Enhanced MCH Program .....	20
Family Violence Screening.....	20
Family Services .....	21
Family Support Services .....	21
Early Years Assertive Outreach and Early Education Grant.....	22
Parent Information Sessions .....	22
Supported Playgroups.....	23
Community Playgroups and Toy Library .....	24
Community Playgroups .....	24
Toy Libraries .....	25
Children's Services .....	26



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Kindergarten and Long Day Care.....	26
Centralised Waiting List .....	27
Other services.....	28
Adventure Playgrounds (Middle Years Services) .....	28
Storytime.....	29
Our Performance .....	29
Children's Services .....	30
Access to Early Childhood Education and Care .....	30
Quality.....	34
Efficiency and effectiveness – Council managed services.....	35
Supporting vulnerable children .....	35
Maternal Child Health performance.....	36
Outcomes for Children .....	40
Outcome 1: All children living in Port Phillip are supported to develop their full potential.....	40
Outcome 2: Parents, carers and families are supported to increase their capacity and capability.....	41
Outcome 3: The effects of disadvantage on children's development are minimised .....	42



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Figures

Figure 1	Birth rate over time (Source: ABS Birth rates)	9
Figure 2	Dwelling structure over time (Source: 2021 ABS Census)	10
Figure 3	Number of new memberships at Toy Libraries (Source: Toy Library Memberships)	26
Figure 4	Number of children placed in Children's Services (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	30
Figure 5	Number of children placed with a Health Care Card (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	31
Figure 6	Proportion of children placed with a Health Care Card (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	31
Figure 7	Proportion of children placed with a vulnerability factor (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	32
Figure 8	Average number of days on the waitlist (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	32
Figure 9	Average age of children placed (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	33
Figure 10	Average number of days required Average age of children placed How long does it take to get care? (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	34

## Tables

Table 1	Demographics of Port Phillip residents aged 1 to 11 years	9
Table 2	Dwelling type	11
Table 3	Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable, by year (Source: AEDC Teacher Assessment 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021)	13
Table 4	Number of services and service type	15
Table 5	Percentage of services in Port Phillip by management type as at January 2023	15
Table 6	Ownership of approved places in Port Phillip as at January 2023	15
Table 7	Kindergarten offering	15
Table 8	Children enrolled by service type and kindergarten participation	16
Table 9	Nannies as Carers or Educators	18
Table 10	Mean Fees per hour in Port Phillip	18
Table 11	Long Day Care Fees in Port Phillip	18
Table 12	Number of days of care funded by the Early Education Grant (based on an average long day care fee of \$147 per day)	22
Table 13	Supported playgroup enrolments 2021/2022	24
Table 14	Toy Library membership 2021/2022	26
Table 15	Family Services attendance at Port Phillip Libraries Storytime sessions	29
Table 16	How long does it take to get care(days)? (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	33
Table 17	Children's Services Performance How long does it take to get care? (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)	34
Table 18	Children's Services Performance over time	35



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 19	Children's Services Statistics .....	35
Table 20	MCH key metrics (Source: CDIS MCH Data).....	37
Table 21	Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (Source: CDIS MCH Data).....	38
Table 22	Reasons for additional consults (Source: CDIS MCH Data) .....	38
Table 23	Outcome 1: All children living in Port Phillip are supported to develop their full potential .	40
Table 24	Outcome 2: Parents, carers and families are supported to increase their capacity and capability .....	41
Table 25	Outcome 3: The effects of disadvantage on children's development are minimised ....	42



Please consider  
the environment  
before printing.



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



# Introduction

In 2020 the *Children's Services Policy Every Child, Our Future*<sup>1</sup> (the Policy) was endorsed. The Policy describes Council's role in children's services and sets out Council's vision:

*'A children's services environment that honours diversity, builds creativity and social connections and encourages all children and families to maximise their development outcomes now and in the future.'*

The Policy seeks to achieve three outcomes:

1. All children living in Port Phillip are supported to develop their full potential.
2. Parents, carers and families are supported to increase their capacity and capability.
3. The effects of disadvantage on children's development are minimised.

In April 2022 the *City of Port Phillip State of Children's Services Annual Report, 2022*<sup>2</sup> (Annual Report 2022) was presented to Council to give a snapshot of Children's Services in the municipality and form the benchmark or baseline data set that will enable us to track impact over the life of the Policy and how we are meeting the seven policy objectives:

- **Policy Objective 1** - Council will work with partners to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities or background, will have access to affordable, safe, accessible, quality Early Years' services to support development to their full potential.
- **Policy Objective 2** - Council will understand current and future needs of families in the city and influence the provision of early years services to meet those needs.
- **Policy Objective 3** - Early years' services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legislation at the local, state and federal level.
- **Policy Objective 4** - Council will encourage collaboration across all early years' services.
- **Policy Objective 5** - Families will have access to the services and information they need, at the times they need it, to make choices appropriate for their needs.
- **Policy Objective 6** - Early years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments.

---

<sup>1</sup> City of Port Phillip. (2023). *Children's Services Policy*. <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/strategies-policies-and-plans/children-s-services-policy>

<sup>2</sup> City of Port Phillip. (2022). *City of Port Phillip State of Children's Services Annual Report, 2022*. <https://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/media/fpmnmvvo/9-1-att-1-city-of-port-phillip-state-of-children-s-services-annual-report-2022.pdf>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



- **Policy Objective 7** - Children will have access to natural environments that allow them to learn about and experience play in nature. This includes natural environments within early years' services.

The report highlighted the challenges faced by families and services during COVID-19 and recognised that the implications would be long lasting, strengthening the need to monitor support and service needs now and into the future.

As we continue to navigate the impacts of COVID-19, including utilisation rates, changing family work patterns, staff shortages, and the increase in living costs, engagement with families, supporting transitions and collaborating with our partners will be a focus for our work in 2023.

We know how important access to services and programs is, but we also know that children from financially disadvantaged families, Indigenous families, families with children who have a disability, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families are more likely to find access and transitions between services more challenging. "Children from these backgrounds are also less likely to attend an early childhood education and care service before they start school".<sup>3</sup>

Since the Annual Report 2022, Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data<sup>4</sup> collected from children starting school in 2021 and kindergarten participation data from 2019, 2020 and 2021 became available. The results tell us that participation was consistent in the first year of COVID-19 however these children went on to school displaying an increase in vulnerability.

This report provides where possible a comparison from previous and new data that supports our understanding of Children's Services in the municipality, acknowledging the work undertaken to progress our vision for children through Council-run and Council-funded services, outlines our performance in delivering on the seven policy objectives, and directs us to our priorities for 2023.

## Reading this report

The report is structured as follows:

### Section 1: Children in Port Phillip

This section summarises demographic and developmental trends for children in Port Phillip and environmental factors that have influenced their health, wellbeing and access to services since the Annual Report 2022.

### Section 2: Access and Participation

This section looks at the demand and need for children's services and programs in

---

<sup>3</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). Promoting positive education and care transitions for children <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/policy-and-practice-papers/promoting-positive-education-and-care-transitions-children>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Early Development Census. (2023). Data. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Port Phillip that support the wellbeing and development of children and families in our community.

**Section 3: Our Services**

This section outlines the range of Council-run and Council-funded early education and care services and programs available for families and children.

**Section 4: Children's Services Performance**

This section looks at the performance of Council-run and Council funded centres, and services in regard to quality and service delivery.

**Section 5: Outcomes for Children and Families**

This section highlights the work of Council-run and Council-funded services in addressing the seven objectives that describe Council's priorities for ensuring the vision for children's services is achieved.

## Children in Port Phillip

This section summarises demographic and developmental trends for children in Port Phillip and environmental factors that have influenced their health, wellbeing and access to services since the Annual Report 2022.

### Children living in Port Phillip

The 2021 Census data tells us that not a lot has changed for our children since the 2016 Census.

Children aged 0 to 11 years make up 9% (4.5% female and 4.5% male) of the resident Port Phillip population but are expected to decline as a proportion to 8.3% by 2041.

This is due to declining birth rates which now sits at 1.02 babies per female, against the national average of 1.7, and Victoria average of 1.52.

There were an estimated 19 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children aged four and under.

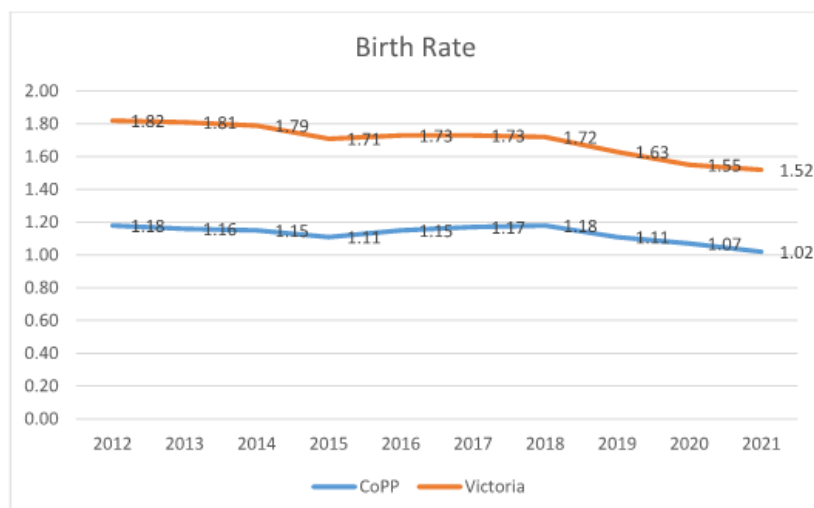


City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Figure 1 Birth rate over time (Source: ABS Birth rates)



Almost 8% of children residing in Port Phillip were born overseas (consistent with rates for Greater Melbourne). The most common overseas birthplaces for children from overseas were:

- The United Kingdom
- The United States of America
- Southern Asia

In contrast the most common overseas birthplaces of Greater Melbourne residents were:

- India
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom
- China

Table 1 Demographics of Port Phillip residents aged 1 to 11 years

Statistic	Port Phillip residents 0 to 11 years	Greater Melbourne residents 0 to 11 years
Resident Population	9,429 and 9.3% of the resident population	14.6% of the resident population
Born overseas	8%	8.6%
Speak a language other than English	21%	32%



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Statistic	Port Phillip residents 0 to 11 years	Greater Melbourne residents 0 to 11 years
Uses other language & speaks English not well or not at all	5%	6%

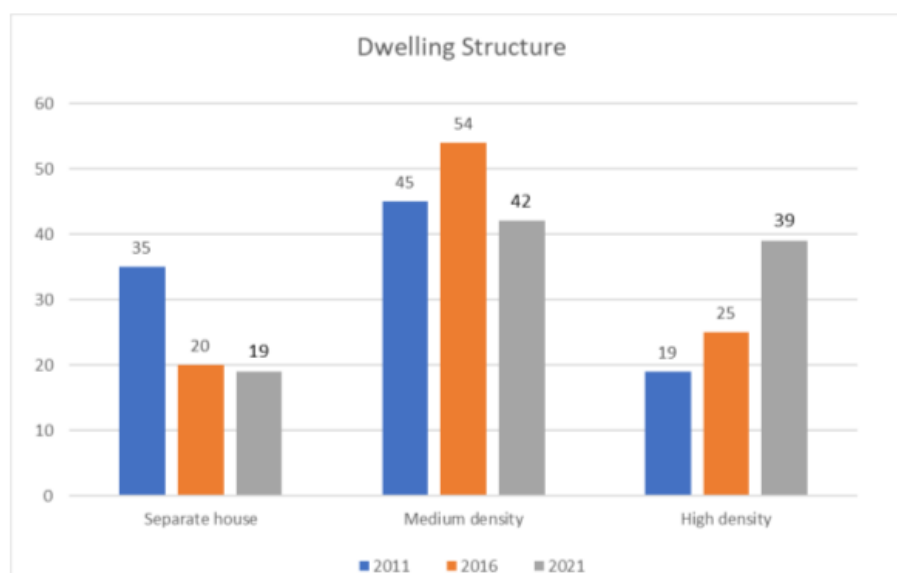
## Where children live

The Annual Report 2022 reported on household income and the SEIFA Index of Advantage and Disadvantage for children living in Port Phillip, down to suburb level. New census data tells us that children living in Port Phillip are increasingly living in high density apartments, units or flats and less likely to live in medium density or separate houses. Thus, only one in five children in Port Phillip reside in a separate house, compared with four in five in Greater Melbourne.

Two in five (or 40%) children live in rented housing (compared with 28% in Greater Melbourne) and 12% live with a single parent (consistent with Greater Melbourne). Around a third of Port Phillip children aged 0 to 11 reside in dwellings with two or fewer bedrooms.

Family Services staff working with Port Phillip clients in high density public housing have increasingly reported challenges for families in these environments, including families' concerns for their safety, poor hygiene, risk of harm in common areas, and noise from other residents causing sleep disruption from children.

Figure 2 Dwelling structure over time (Source: 2021 ABS Census)





City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 2 Dwelling type

Dwelling Type	2016	2021	Greater Melbourne 2021
Port Phillip Children living in high density apartments, units or flats	25%	39%	5%
Port Phillip Children living in medium density (defined as semi-detached, row or terrace house or townhouse)	54%	42%	13%
Port Phillip Children living in a separate house/dwelling	20%	19% or 1 in 5	4 in 5
Reside in dwellings with two or fewer bedrooms	Approx. 1 in 3	Approx. 1 in 3	1 in 10

## Factors influencing children's health and wellbeing

The Annual Report 2022 acknowledged the impact COVID-19 restrictions had on services for families, including early childhood education and care, schools and support systems.

ACCS, the peak body for not-for-profit Early Childhood services, captured the experiences of not-for-profit community education and care across Australia over 2020 and highlighted the concerning changes to enrolments, utilisation, waiting lists and staffing.<sup>5</sup> In mid-2021 the Australian Institute of Family Studies reported the number of parents using childcare services had mostly returned to pre-COVID-19 rates.<sup>6</sup>

Whilst limited data is available on the indirect impact of COVID-19 on young children, early studies report high rates of mental health difficulties, including anxiety, symptoms of depression and attachment seeking behaviours.<sup>7</sup> As further research on this age group occurs over time, including

<sup>5</sup> Australian Community Children's Services. (2021). *Not-for-profit education and care: High quality, accessible and resilient*. [http://ausccs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TICCS\\_2021\\_wave6.pdf](http://ausccs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TICCS_2021_wave6.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). *Childcare rates bounce back as Australian parents strike a balance between work and home life*. <https://aifs.gov.au/media/childcare-rates-bounce-back-australian-parents-strike-balance-between-work-and-home-life>

<sup>7</sup> Centre for Community Child Health. (2022). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in Australian early childhood education and care*. [https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20pandemic%20on%20children%20in%20Australian%20ECEC%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccchdev/Impact%20of%20COVID-19%20pandemic%20on%20children%20in%20Australian%20ECEC%20(1).pdf)



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



the Generation Victoria initiative<sup>8</sup>, it will be more important than ever for Council services to be informed by new insights into children's health and development, engaging with our local service providers and partners to share data and collectively work towards early intervention strategies.

## Outcomes for children when they enter school

When reporting against children's success in transitioning to school, the 2021 AEDC data reports that teachers suggest the majority of Port Phillip children have transitioned well in terms of adapting to the structure and learning environment and parents are engaged with the school and encouraging reading at home.

In 2021, teachers identified 2.1% of new starters with special needs status and 10% as requiring further assessment, demonstrating an upward trend from 5% in 2012, 8% in 2015 and 9.5% in 2018.

The proportion of children developmentally vulnerable remained reasonably stable from 2009 to 2018 but increased in 2021 from 13.4% to 14.6% per cent of children recorded as developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains in the first year of school<sup>9</sup>. This is lower than the Victorian average of 19.9 per cent.

In contrast, the proportion of children recorded as developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains declined from 5.9% to 5.3%. Again, this proportion is lower than the Victorian average of 10.2 per cent<sup>10</sup>.

There have been some changes over time at the suburb level. Specifically, the proportion reported as developmentally vulnerable increased between 2009 and 2021 in Albert Park, Elwood, Port Melbourne, St Kilda East, Middle Park and South Melbourne and decreased in St Kilda, St Kilda East, Middle Park and Balaclava/Ripponlea. However, caution should be taken when reviewing results at a suburb level due to small base sizes.

Across each of the domains, Port Phillip demonstrate lower proportions of children recorded as developmentally at risk or vulnerable than children in Victoria.

---

<sup>8</sup> GenV. (2023). *About GenV*. <https://www.genv.org.au/about-genv/>

<sup>9</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. (2022). *Australian Early Development Census*. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>

<sup>10</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. (2022). *Australian Early Development Census*. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 3 Percentage of children developmentally vulnerable, by year (Source: AEDC Teacher Assessment 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021)

Geography	Developmentally vulnerable									
	2009		2012		2015		2018		2021	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Australia	59,692	23.6	59,933	22.0	62,960	22.0	63,448	21.7	63,264	22.0
Victoria	11,832	20.3	12,407	19.5	13,465	19.9	14,232	19.9	13,777	19.9
Port Phillip	80	13.5	86	11.9	100	13.9	106	13.4	115	14.6
Local Communities										
Albert Park	5	9.1	6	7.3	10	11.8	14	12.3	15	19.0
Balaclava / Ripponlea	3	11.1	4	8.5	8	13.1	6	11.3	3	6.7
Elwood	8	7.8	14	8.8	13	8.4	17	12.6	17	12.9
Middle Park	6	12.5	6	12.8	6	14.6	3	6.5	5	9.3
Port Melbourne	15	13.0	19	14.3	20	14.8	16	10.6	27	16.3
South Melbourne	11	16.4	16	19.5	15	20.8	18	22.8	25	25.8
St Kilda	15	21.4	5	6.7	22	25.0	14	12.6	12	10.8
St Kilda East	17	15.5	16	16.2	6	7.1	18	17.3	11	10.9

## Access and Participation

This section looks at the demand and need for children's services and programs in Port Phillip that support the wellbeing and development of children and families in our community.

### What services are children using?

The *Children's Services Policy Every Child, Our Future* recognises the importance of the first 1,000 days as being a crucial stage in every child's life and the value children's services and programs play in supporting parents, carers and families to increase their capacity and capability and for children to develop their full potential.

Investing in early years services is also important, as they are cost effective, reduce demand on later services, and promote health and wellbeing in adulthood. Getting it right in the early years

13



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



reduces downstream expenditure on remedial education, school failure, poor health, mental illness, welfare reciprocity, substance misuse and criminal justice.

We know that families choose services that meet their individual needs with factors such as location, opening hours, fees, inclusions, proximity to other activities being important influencers. However, we know that there are areas of experience that can make an important difference to participation and genuine partnerships with families, with quality, child-centred practice and strong governance being key. Whilst attending services is important, it is consistent attendance and engagement with services that can make a critical difference to children's health and wellbeing, with service staff being well-positioned to identify potential risks to children. Early education and care services staff are mandated reporters and can provide protective functions and connect families with other programs.<sup>11</sup>

The Department of Education 2021 Early Learning Profile reports kindergarten participation in Port Phillip has dropped since figures were reported in the Annual Report 2022. However prep teacher reports (reported in the 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)<sup>12</sup>) suggest teachers believe almost all new starters attending school in Port Phillip have attended a preschool or kindergarten program in preparation for school (95% of children assessed through the AEDC are thought to have attended preschool or kindergarten in 2021).

The same report indicates that 17%<sup>13</sup> sought education or care from a grandparent (down from 25% in 2018). The prevalence of nannies as carers or educators has previously shown an upward trend since 2012 (from 7% in 2012, to 11% in 2015 and 12% in 2018) but declined to 9.7% in 2021 likely due to COVID-19 and<sup>14</sup> associated restrictions.

## Early Education and Care

The kindergarten and early education and care offering in Port Phillip provides families with a choice of settings, with the bulk of offerings in childcare centres. However, the range of provider types is more varied with 12% of centres operated by Council, 33% community based and 56% private for profits. Council managed centres account for 12% of all places offered within the municipality (362 of the 2,918 approved places within the municipality).

---

<sup>11</sup> Australian Community Children's Services. (2021). *Not-for-profit education and care: High quality, accessible and resilient*. [http://ausccs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TICCS\\_2021\\_wave6.pdf](http://ausccs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TICCS_2021_wave6.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. (2022). *Australian Early Development Census*. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>

<sup>13</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. (2022). *Australian Early Development Census*. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>

<sup>14</sup> Commonwealth of Australia. (2022). *Australian Early Development Census*. <https://www.aedc.gov.au/data>



City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 4 Number of services and service type

Type	# in 2021
Stand-alone kindergartens (sessional or extended)	9
Childcare centres	33

Table 5 Percentage of services in Port Phillip by management type as at January 2023

Type	#	%
Local Government	5	12%
Community	14	33%
Private (includes commercial, NFP, Jewish and Non-govt schools)	23	55%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>42</b>	

Table 6 Ownership of approved places in Port Phillip as at January 2023

Type	#	%
Council	362	12.4%
Community / Not for profit	853	29.2%
Private	1,703	58.4%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,918</b>	

Unfortunately, the participation rate for kindergarten (across both integrated long day care and sessional programs) in Port Phillip dropped from 82.30% in 2020 to 78.3% in 2021. Participation fell only in integrated long day care kindergarten programs, as demand for sessional kindergarten has remained consistent.

The number of services who were funded to provide a kindergarten program in 2022 dropped from previous years, which aligns with the drop in enrolments that occurred only in long day care.

Table 7 Kindergarten offering

Measure	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Number of services that offer a funded kindergarten program</b>	39	38	39	41	38
<b>Number of services operated by an Early Years Manager</b>	n/a	8	7	7	n/a
<b>Number of services operated by a single provider</b>	n/a	30	32	34	n/a



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 8 Children enrolled by service type and kindergarten participation

Service Type	2019	2020	2021
<b>Kindergarten</b>	299	297	300
<b>Long Day Care</b>	633	646	513
<b>Total Children</b>	932	943	813
<b>Participation Rate of Children in Port Phillip</b>	83%	82.30%	78.3%

## Supply and demand

The supply and demand analysis conducted in partnership with the Department of Education, the 2020 *Kindergarten Infrastructure and Service Plan City of Port Phillip* (KISP),<sup>15</sup> demonstrated that there is likely to be adequate supply of childcare and kindergarten places in Port Phillip through to 2026. Council also undertook further supply and demand analysis in the 2022 *Modelling Demand for Early Education and Care in the City of Port Phillip*<sup>16</sup>.

Council will be working with the Department of Education in 2023 to update the KISP. The updated KISP will be able to consider in its analysis the impact of the State Government early years reforms on kindergarten demand, updated demographic data and the increase in provision that will be achieved through the Building Blocks Partnership Agreement.

## Growth of Early Education and Care Services in the City

In 2022, Guardian Childcare & Education South Melbourne increased its number of places from 84 to 104. Several permits for new builds and expansion of private childcare services have been granted by Council however these plans have not yet progressed.

In October 2023, with the signing of the Building Blocks Partnership, Council and the State Government entered into an agreement to invest in 6 early education and care facilities over the next 7 years that will result in an increase of 57 licenced places in the municipality.

<sup>15</sup> Department of Education. (2020). *Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan City of Port Phillip*. [https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/City\\_of\\_Port\\_Phillip\\_KISP\\_Signed.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/City_of_Port_Phillip_KISP_Signed.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> City of Port Phillip. (2022). *Modelling Demand for Early Education and Care in the City of Port Phillip*. [https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/City\\_of\\_Port\\_Phillip\\_KISP\\_Signed.pdf](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/funding/City_of_Port_Phillip_KISP_Signed.pdf)



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten and Free Kinder

2022 was the first year all three-year-old children across Victoria could access a minimum of five hours of a funded kindergarten program each week.

Evidence shows that two years are better than one when it comes to early learning and the benefits are even greater for children who are in vulnerable circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

In 2023, Free Kindergarten was available to all Victorian three- and four-year-old children at participating services, in all funded programs. The free kindergarten reform means families save up to \$2,500 per child, every year. All of Council's early childhood education and care services and most centres in Port Phillip opted into providing Free Kindergarten for families.

Council looks forward to receiving data from the Department of Education 2022 Early Learning Profile to understand the participation of Port Phillip families in the first year of funded three-year-old kindergarten and the impact free kindergarten has had on participation.

## Participation in Early Education and Care across the City

The Department of Education Early Learning Profile reported consistent kindergarten participation in Port Phillip from 2018 to 2020, dropping to 78.3% in 2021 however the 2021 AEDC data show that teachers believe almost all new starters attending school in Port Phillip have attended a preschool or kindergarten program in preparation for school. The AEDC census data is collected by teachers completing an instrument (similar to a questionnaire) for children in their first year of full-time school and is completed based on the teacher's knowledge and observations of the children in their class. It is thought that the variation between teacher observations of children's preschool attendance and actual kindergarten enrolment data is due to children's participation in other types of education and care such as family day care, occasional care and long day care programs that don't have a funded kindergarten program at the time kindergarten enrolment data is collected.

The same report indicates that:

- 95% of children are thought to have attended preschool or kindergarten in 2021
- 17% sought education or care from a grandparent (down from 25% in 2018)

---

<sup>17</sup> State Government of Victoria. (2023). *Best Start Best Life Give your child the best start.* <https://www.vic.gov.au/give-your-child-the-best-start-in-life>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



- The prevalence of nannies as carers or educators declined to 9.7% in 2021. This is likely due to COVID-19 and associated restrictions. This figure has previously shown an upward trend.

Table 9 Nannies as Carers or Educators

2012	2015	2018	2021
7%	11%	12%	9.7%

## Factors impacting access and participation

### Average fees at early education and care providers

Department of Education, Skills and Employment administrative data indicate mean fees in Port Phillip have increased over time (up from \$12.46 per hour in March 2020 to \$12.67 in March 2021 and now \$12.81 in June 2021).

Table 10 Mean Fees per hour in Port Phillip

Type	March 2020	March 2021	June 2021
Mean Fees per hour in Port Phillip	\$12.46	\$12.67	\$12.81

Port Phillip has the second highest mean fee per hour in Victoria (behind Stonnington West at \$13.35), now higher than Bayside, Glen Eira and Boroondara (at \$12.76, \$12.74 and \$12.76 respectively).

Council managed childcare centres saw an increase in fees in the 2022/2023 financial year to \$140.50 per day.

Council conducted benchmarking of service fees, using four community-based services in Port Phillip, four commercial services in Port Phillip and four local government services (Port Phillip, Stonnington, Melbourne and Kingston). Comparing the average fees of each provider type suggests one reason Council and community managed services are in high demand, being an affordable option in comparison to commercial providers. It should be noted that providers offer individualised services, particularly regarding operating hours, staff to child ratios and pedagogical programs, therefore this benchmarking is a useful comparison of daily fees, but it is not a comparison of like for like services.

Table 11 Long Day Care Fees in Port Phillip

Type	Community based in Port Phillip	Commercial in Port Phillip	Local Governments
Average Long Day Care Rate Per Day	\$143	\$165.77	\$138.75



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Our Services

This section outlines the range of Council managed and Council-funded early education and care services and programs available for families and children.

### Maternal and Child Health

#### Universal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service

The MCH Service is a free universal primary health service available for all Port Phillip families with children from birth to school age. The service receives funding from the Department of Health based on enrolments, generated from birth notifications, self-referrals, and agency referrals. The MCH Service consists of three components:

- Universal MCH (UMCH) program
- Enhanced MCH (EMCH) program
- 24 hour MCH phone support

The MCH Service provides a comprehensive and focused approach for the promotion, prevention and early identification of the physical, emotional and social factors affecting young children and their families. The MCH Service supports child and family health, wellbeing and safety, focusing on maternal health and parent inclusive practice as a key enabler to optimise child learning and development.

The UMCH program consists of 10 Key Age and State (KAS) consultations with a maternal and child health nurse. The KAS consultations are a schedule of contacts for all children and their families from birth to school age. They include an initial home visit, and consultations at two, four and eight weeks, and four, eight, 12 and 18 months, and at two and three and a half years of age.

The MCH Service also offers a Sleep and Settle Program to families in the community with includes group sessions for infants aged 0 to 6 months, 6 to 12 months and toddlers 1 to 2 years and an outreach component is offered to families experiencing vulnerability which provides support in the family home.

The MCH Service is provided to families through a partnership between the Department of Health and Council. A Memorandum of Understanding guides the partnership between the Department of Health and Council for the planning, funding and provision of the MCH Service.

Participation in the Maternal and Child Health service is voluntary. Regular reminders for missed visits are sent and family participation can vary between years.



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Investing in high-quality programs that support optimal child, maternal and family health, wellbeing, safety, development, and learning has lifelong benefits to children's health, educational and social outcomes. This is particularly so for children with additional needs.

## Enhanced MCH Program

This program is fully funded by the Department of Health and is offered to selected families as an extension of the UMCH program. The EMCH program offers flexible actions and interventions to families who would benefit from targeted support and responds assertively to the needs of children and families at risk of poor outcomes, in particular where there are multiple risk factors.

The EMCH service is provided in addition to the components offered through the UMCH program. It provides a more intensive level of support, including short-term case coordination or management in some circumstances. Support may be provided in a variety of settings, such as the family's home, an MCH centre or another location within the community.

## Family Violence Screening

MCH nurses play an important role in identifying family violence and providing information and support to mothers and their children. MCH nurses have the opportunity, through their clinical consultations, to observe women, their children and the physical environment for signs of family violence. These can include physical injury, poor emotional health and regulation, poor attachment with care givers, and developmental delays in infants and young children.

Routine Universal Screening is conducted at the four-week Key Age and Stage (KAS) consultations, where it is safe and appropriate to complete the Screening and Identification questions. Safe screening and identification take place through observation and engagement with clients to identify family violence indicators and the MARAM evidence-based risk factors of family violence, and any changes in frequency or severity over time. MCH nurses have the unique opportunity to observe the family in their own home during the first KAS home visit and these observations are built upon with future client consultations.

In addition to the KAS consultations, MCH Nurses are able to offer specific family violence consultation to a family if the MCH nurse has completed a consultation and the following occurs:

- The MCH nurse was unable to complete the family violence questions (for example, at the four-week KAS consultation) because the partner or other family members were present, or
- Family violence has been disclosed or identified and more time is required for discussion or to complete a safety plan, or
- The MCH nurse suspects the family is experiencing family violence and requires additional time for exploration and discussion, or



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



- The MCH nurse or family member/s require a joint consultation with a specialist family violence practitioner.

Family violence consultations are led by the MCH nurse. In some cases, the MCH nurse may choose to hold a joint consultation with a family support worker, Aboriginal health worker, and/or specialist family violence practitioner.

## Family Services

### Family Support Services

Family Services support families through a range of programs, including:

- Lead Family Worker (LFW) program is a short term early intervention program for families with children aged 0 to 8.
- Integrated Family Services (IFS) Program is a case-management program funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, where families with children aged 0 to 17 can receive support from a Family Support Worker for 3 to 6 months.

The LFW program provides generalist family advice, support and referrals to families who live, work or play in the municipality and can provide advice on topics such as community connectedness, family relationships, as well as provide emotional support regarding family violence, parenting strategies and general mental and perinatal health.

The LFW program has had a particular focus on fathers in 2022, responding to the unique needs of fathers and the shift towards increased caring responsibilities and presence of fathers in their children's lives. Challenges here are a limit in the referral and support options that are specifically targeting and available to fathers, and services only available during business hours.

In 2022 the IFS program supported 33 families and the average length of intervention was 5 months. The majority of referrals to the IFS program are complex, often with family violence and child protection history. Of the 33 families:

- 8 presented with challenges accessing education and care services and other supports for children's learning and development.
- 14 had current or historic Child Protection involvement.
- 27 experienced current or historic Family Violence.

The Lead Family Worker Program accepted 59 referrals 2022 and the average length of intervention was 3 months. Of the 59 referrals:

- 79 brief interventions were completed for support such as service navigation, support letters and Centrelink advocacy.
- 43 referrals came from Maternal and Child Health.



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



- 89 referrals to other services were done. This is one of the program's core activities in the early intervention space, acting as a navigator and to provide referral pathways.
- 5 notifications to Child Protection were made.

## Early Years Assertive Outreach and Early Education Grant

The Early Years Assertive Outreach program supports Council's goal that every child in Port Phillip has access to quality early education. The program offers a range of supports to families and services in a collaborative and capacity building approach to provide the best outcomes for families.

In 2022 most enquiries to this program were in relation to families on a visa and not eligible for the federal government Child Care Subsidy<sup>18</sup>, which exacerbates the already existing financial challenges experienced by families.

Navigating the variety of systems and services, particularly the different funding arrangements across state and federal programs is further challenging for culturally and linguistically diverse families.

In the past year families shared concerns with accessibility of services, including waiting lists, immunisation status, additional costs such as bonds and lack of available places particularly as families move in and out of the municipality throughout the year.

The Early Education Grant was established in 2020 and was disrupted due to COVID-19, however uptake of the grant has been strong since the second half of 2021.

The grant provided access to early education and care for families who would not have otherwise been able to afford it, and/or provided for additional care.

Table 12 Number of days of care funded by the Early Education Grant (based on an average long day care fee of \$147 per day)

July to December 2021	January to June 2022	July to December 2022
363	667	571

## Parent Information Sessions

Council offers a number of free information sessions for parents and caregivers throughout the year as one strategy under the Children's Services Policy to support parents, carers and families to increase their capacity and capability. The topics and delivery are based on feedback from families attending MCH and other Port Phillip family programs.

<sup>18</sup> Services Australia. (2023). *Child Care Subsidy*. <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Six sessions were offered in 2022, with participation by 255 parents. A further 115 parents requested the copy of the recorded sessions.

Sessions offered in 2022:

- First Aid Awareness (2 sessions)
- Nurturing yourself as a parent - Selfcare, Anxiety, Raising Resilience, Positive/Strength Based Parenting
- Nurturing yourself as a parent - Selfcare for parents
- Raising resilience (coping with anxiety)
- Positive/Strength Based parenting
- Building Resilience

## Supported Playgroups

Although less well researched, supported playgroups can provide the same benefits as community playgroups for families experiencing situational vulnerabilities. Supported playgroups are distinct from the traditional community playgroup model (parent-run groups) because they are funded to have a paid facilitator who is employed to coordinate and deliver weekly sessions. They seek to provide and model stimulating early childhood environments for children along with support for their parents.

Supported playgroups have largely been implemented in the absence of strong theoretical or empirical evidence about their effectiveness to promote positive outcomes for parents and children from vulnerable families. Nevertheless, they have been shown to provide valuable social support for parents, decreasing parents' social isolation, increasing their confidence and their use of formal support services. Supported playgroups with the strongest evidence are those that include specific interventions, eg to increase physical activity, or to increase learning and cognitive development<sup>19</sup>.

Council runs two supported playgroups each school term with groups held weekly. To be eligible to attend, a referral needs to be received from a MCH nurse or another family support worker.

The supported playgroups average 5 families per group per week.

---

<sup>19</sup> Parenting Research Centre. (2016). *Supported Playgroups for children from birth to five years*. <https://www.parentingrc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Supported-playgroups-for-children-from-birth-to-five-years.pdf>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 13 Supported playgroup enrolments 2021/2022

Type	Term 3 2021	Term 4 2021	Term 1 2022	Term 2 2022
Caregivers	13	18	16	16
Children	17	21	17	17

## Community Playgroups and Toy Library

### Community Playgroups

Community playgroups make a unique contribution to community wellbeing and community capacity building. They cater for needs that are not met elsewhere, providing essential social supports in cases where child-rearing is occurring without a peer support network. They can overcome the experience of social isolation. They foster a 'sense of place', or affiliation with a local community, particularly for families who are newly arrived to an area.

Playgroups promote social capital,<sup>20</sup> and persistent playgroup participation may act as a protective factor against poor social support outcomes. Socially isolated parents may find playgroups a useful resource to build their social support networks.

There are a number of playgroups operating in Port Phillip. Playgroups operate in many of Council's community venues or one of three purpose-built facilities:

- **St Kilda Playgroup** has a licence agreement with Council to operate from Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre. A number of age specific and cultural playgroups are offered however some groups have not been sustainable with low participation and Council is working with the parent committee to increase family engagement in 2023.
- **Elwood Community Playgroup** has a licence agreement with Council to operate from the former Burnett Grey Maternal and Child Health Centre in Elwood, with strong attendance across age specific playgroups, open house sessions and Dad's Group on Sundays.
- **Bubup Womindjeka Playgroup** is based at the purpose-built space, funded by Council, at Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre in Port Melbourne. This facility has capacity to support 20 playgroups each week. The centre currently has eight vacant time slots as playgroup numbers have dropped in the past two years, which the Playgroup believes is due to families not forming connections with other families during COVID-19.

<sup>20</sup> Playgroup Victoria. (2023). *Research and evidence*. <https://www.playgroup.org.au/for-professionals/are-you-new-to-playgroup/research-and-evidence/>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Children from disadvantaged families benefit from attendance at playgroup, but they are the least likely to access these services. Disadvantaged families typically under-enrol in mainstream programs and drop out earlier and at higher rates than more advantaged families.

Council has a long-standing commitment to supporting playgroups to start up and become sustainable. This commitment to community capacity building is delivered via a dedicated member of staff to advise and support playgroups.

All community playgroups in Port Phillip have reported challenges with families registering their attendance and this has been shared with our partners at Playgroups Victoria, who are seeing this experienced across the state. Council will work with Playgroups Victoria in 2023 to consider other ways to increase attendance and the value of playgroups in the City.

## Toy Libraries

Toy libraries have long been recognised internationally as a valuable service for children aged 0 to 8 years. Although available research data is minimal, toy libraries, as local hubs, are credited with having many benefits for children, families and local communities. Families have informal opportunities to connect, socialise, network and learn from each other and knowledgeable toy library volunteers. Children benefit from access to a wide variety of developmentally and culturally diverse, age-appropriate toys, materials and equipment and from the informal play opportunities. Local communities benefit from volunteerism and social connectedness.

Toy libraries are primarily run by volunteers, membership-based and let members borrow toys for children 0 to 8 years of age, in exchange for an affordable yearly fee and helping with the operation of the library.

There are four toy libraries operating in Port Phillip:

- Elwood Toy Library
- Middle Park Toy Library
- South Melbourne Toy Library
- Port Melbourne Toy Library

Council works in partnership with toy libraries through an annual funding agreement, with a range of supports to contribute to the success of our shared vision for children in Port Phillip.

COVID-19 restrictions impacted toy library membership in 2020/2021 and after much hard work to engage new members, the libraries have reported a welcome increase in 2021/2022 to a total of 581 members in Port Phillip, an increase of 167.



City of Port Phillip

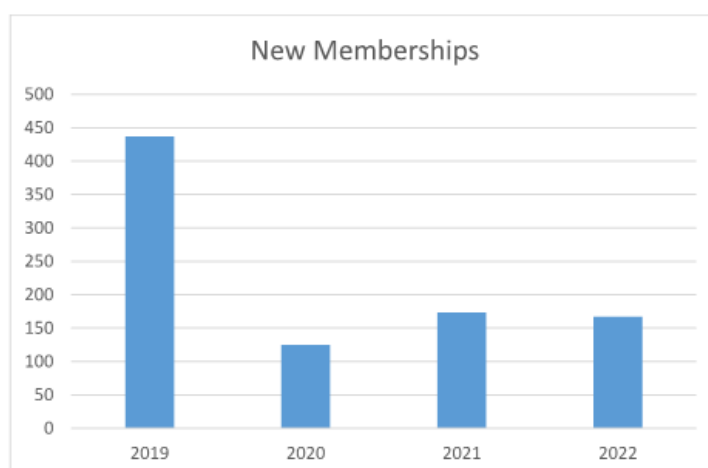
The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Table 14 Toy Library membership 2021/2022

Membership Type	Elwood Toy Library	Middle Park Toy Library	South Melbourne Toy Library	Port Melbourne Toy Library
<b>Regular</b>	220	70	97	71
<b>Subsidised (Health Care Card holders)</b>	22	4	10	81
<b>Outreach (no fee, costs covered by Toy Library)</b>	0	0	6	0
<b>Total number of memberships</b>	242	74	113	152

Figure 3 Number of new memberships at Toy Libraries (Source: Toy Library Memberships)



## Children's Services

### Kindergarten and Long Day Care

Early education and care lay the foundation for healthy future development and supports parents and caregivers as the child's first teachers. Research shows that participation in quality early education and care leads to better health outcomes and education and employment opportunities in life. The early years are critical for establishing a child's physical health, social skills, emotional health, cognitive capacity and language skills.

Kindergarten and childcare (long day care) are regulated under the National Quality Framework under the Victorian Childrens Services Act 1996 and Childrens Services Regulations 2020.



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Kindergarten is a program, not a place, and is delivered in both long day care and standalone kindergarten settings. Families can choose which setting best meets their needs – the kindergarten programs are the same.

Kindergarten is a one-to-two-year preschool program for children aged 3 to 5 years old before they start primary school. Programs provide play-based learning led by a degree qualified early childhood teacher.

A standalone kindergarten offers up to 15 hours of a funded kindergarten program to eligible three- and four-year-old children with some providing options for extended hours of attendance.

Childcare (or long day care) provides a full day of education and care to children from birth through to school age. Centres provide a funded kindergarten program as part of their service often with the Degree qualified teacher-led program integrated with additional hours of education and care. This provides flexibility for parents and carers by providing childcare before and after the kindergarten program.

## Free Kindergarten

For families who have a three-year-old child, this means from 5 and up to 15 hours per week of a kindergarten program is free.

For four-year-old children, this means 15 hours per week (or 600 hours a year) is free.

For families who attend a kindergarten program in a long day care setting, a \$2,000 Free Kinder subsidy will offset the kindergarten program component of their out-of-pocket fees.

## Centralised Waiting List

Council provides a central point for families to register children for Council and community managed early childhood education and care services located in Council-owned buildings.

Central registration provides a single point of contact for families to apply for multiple services in their area and helps ensure children secure a place that best suits their needs. Thirteen services participate in the centralised wait list, streamlining the process of registration for families. The wait list process also applies Priority of Access criteria which must be used by all service providers when prioritising enrolments in funded early education and care. This ensures that high priority children and children from families experiencing vulnerability are prioritised to access services.

The following services participated in the centralised wait list:

- Council managed early childhood education and care services
  - Barring Djinang Kindergarten, Southbank
  - Bubup Nairn Family and Children's Centre, St Kilda
  - Clark Street Children's Centre, Port Melbourne

27



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



- Coventry Children's Centre, South Melbourne
- North St Kilda Children's Centre, St Kilda
- Community managed early childhood education and care services
  - Ada Mary A'Beckett Children's Centre, Port Melbourne
  - Bubup Womindjeka Family and Children's Centre, Port Melbourne
  - Clarendon Children's Centre, South Melbourne
  - Eildon Road Children's Centre, St Kilda
  - Elwood Children's Centre, Elwood
  - Poets Grove Family and Children's Centre, Elwood
  - South Melbourne Child Care Cooperative (Albert Park)
  - The Avenue Children's Centre, Balaclava

## Other services

### Adventure Playgrounds (Middle Years Services)

The Middle Years and Youth Services team host programs at Council's two Adventure Playgrounds, Skinners (South Melbourne) and St Kilda.

Programs at the two playgrounds include:

- Homework Club (St Kilda)
- Evening meals (both sites)
- Breakfast and school drop off (Skinners)
- Boys and girls programs (Skinners)
- Walking Bus program (St Kilda)

The Adventure Playgrounds focus on delivering three key service delivery priorities to enrolled children:

- Outdoor play opportunities
- Support system linkages
- Participation activities



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Storytime

Port Phillip Libraries offer a number of programs, clubs and activities to engage children in books and reading. Family Services staff regularly attend Storytime at the four Port Phillip Libraries to engage families and provide referral pathways into programs.

Families can also access Storytime online<sup>21</sup>, for families to grow, learn and discover with their child in the comfort of their home.

Table 15 Family Services attendance at Port Phillip Libraries Storytime sessions

Storytime Type	Albert Park Library	Emerald Hill Library	Port Melbourne Library	St Kilda Library
Baby Rhyme Time		10.30am Mondays		10am Fridays
Tiny Tots Storytime	10am and 11am Mondays	11am Fridays	11am Wednesdays	11am Wednesdays 11am Fridays
Preschool Storytime	11am Tuesdays			11am Tuesdays
Bedtime Storytime				7pm first Thursday of the month
Russian Storytime				11am first Monday of the month
Spanish Storytime				2pm first Wednesday of the month

## Our Performance

This section looks at the performance of Council-run and community-managed centres that operate from Council facilities, in regard to quality and service delivery.

<sup>21</sup> Port Phillip Library Service. (2023). *Storybox Library*. <https://library.portphillip.vic.gov.au/our-collections/explore-digital-collections/storybox-library>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023

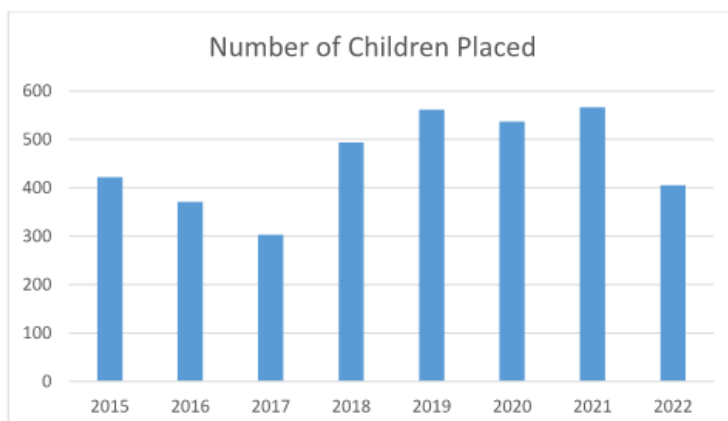


## Children's Services

### Access to Early Childhood Education and Care

Over the three-year period from 2019 to 2021, the number of children placed via the Children's Services Wait List (the waitlist) has remained consistent at over 500 per year, a substantial increase from earlier years. However, this decreased to 405 children being placed via the waitlist in 2022. An unusually high decline rate in offers has contributed to this decrease. One factor influencing the high decline rate is the bonds families have paid at other centres they have registered for when seeking to secure a place for their child. Bonds are fees charged by providers in the registration process and in most cases are only returned when the family leave the centre (but are not refundable if the registration does not progress to enrolment). Bonds are not applied in the administration of Council's waitlist.

Figure 4 Number of children placed in Children's Services (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)



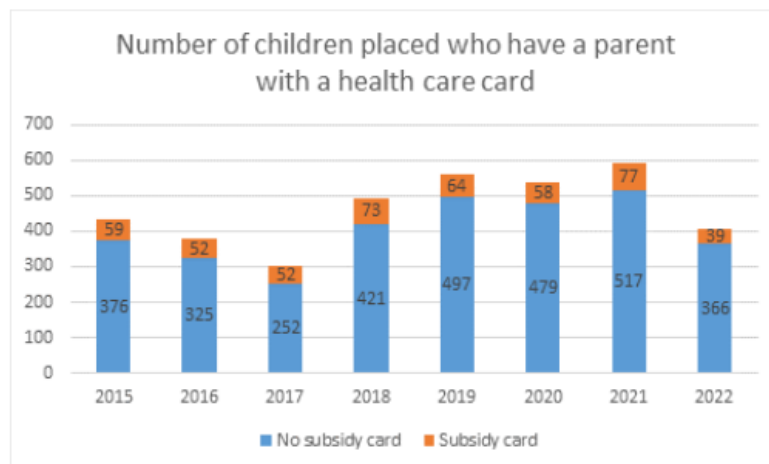


City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



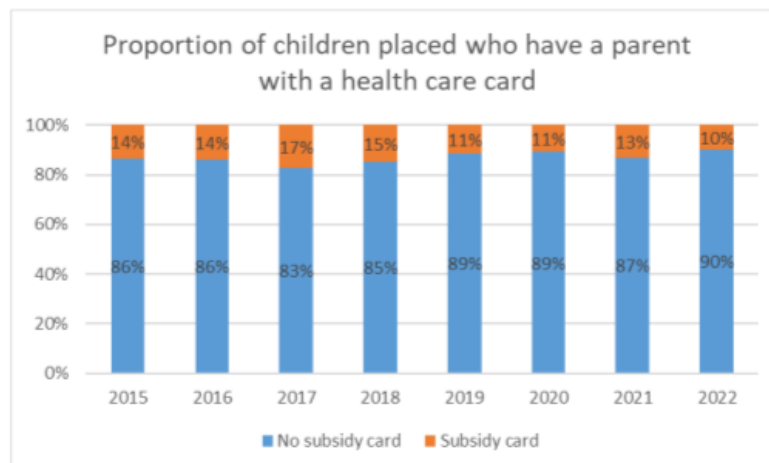
Figure 5 Number of children placed with a Health Care Card (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)



The number of those placed who have a parent with a health care card has declined from 77 in 2021 to 39 in 2022.

As can be seen in figure 6 below, as proportion of all placements this is a reduction from 13% to 10%.

Figure 6 Proportion of children placed with a Health Care Card (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)



Similarly, the proportion of those placed with a vulnerability factor has declined (although not significantly) from 20% to 19%.



City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Figure 7 Proportion of children placed with a vulnerability factor (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)

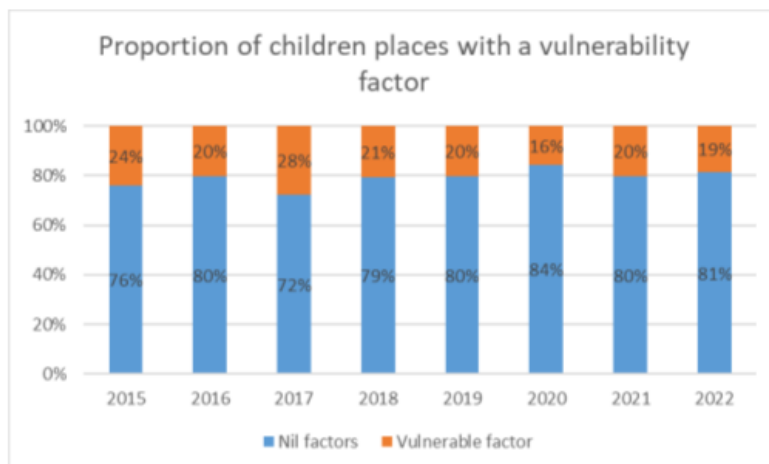
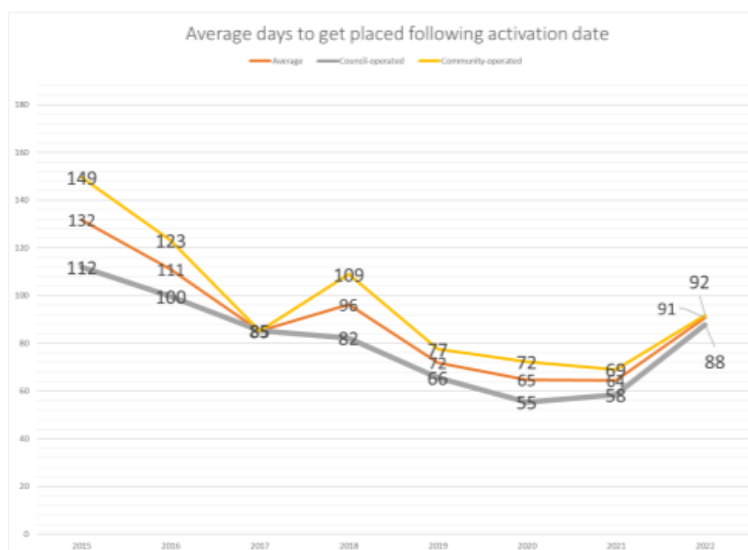


Figure 8 Average number of days on the waitlist (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)



The average number of days it took for families to be placed (from the date they require care) increased significantly in 2021/2022 across both community and council managed centres increasing from approximately 2 months to 3 months.

Reasons for the increase in wait time centred mostly on current staffing challenges (including recruitment and illnesses). The resulting room closures and reduction in available places to ensure staff to children ratios could be met, meant some centres placed holds on offers at various times.



City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



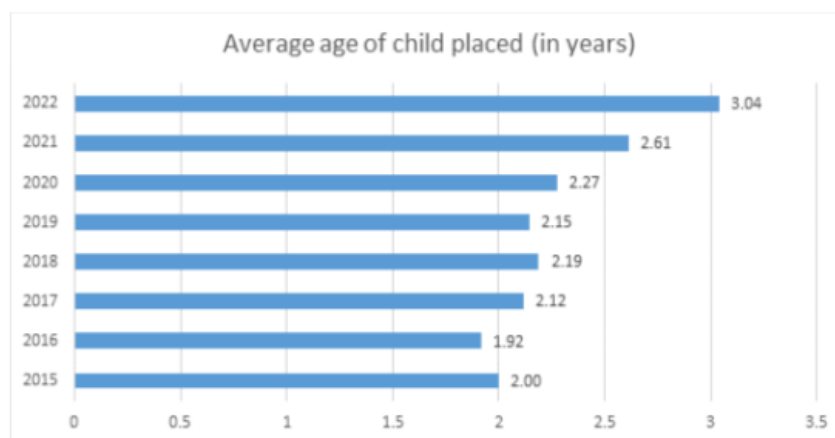
Additionally, it was reported that some families had brought activation dates forward (being the date from which they wish to start care opposed to the date of registration) due to cost of living pressures and the resultant return to both work and the office requiring earlier and sometimes more frequent care.

This increase in days on the waitlist has been evident across all centres but especially for Coventry Children's Centre and Bubup Nairn Children's Centre, potentially as the larger centres have the most significant staffing challenges.

Table 16 How long does it take to get care(days)? (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)

Centre	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Avg per centre
<b>Bubup Nairn Children's Centre</b>	133	85	108	104	80	85	65	110	<b>96</b>
<b>Coventry Children's Centre</b>	129	110	82	95	75	48	67	132	<b>92</b>
<b>Clark Street Children's Centre</b>	123	82	61	70	54	45	49	80	<b>70</b>
<b>North St Kilda Children's Centre</b>	60	121	66	83	58	45	54	61	<b>69</b>
<b>Barring Djinang Kindergarten</b>				41	29	20	42	58	<b>38</b>
<b>Average per year</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>88</b>	

Figure 9 Average age of children placed (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)





City of Port Phillip

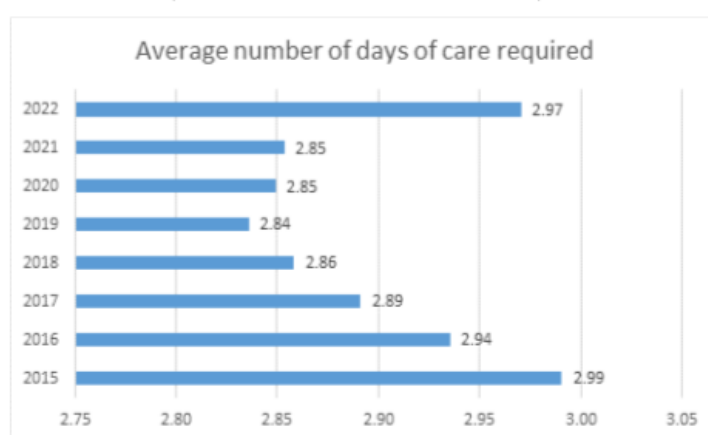
## The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



The average age of children when placed has been trending up since 2020 and is now over 3. This too is felt to be the result of staffing challenges as fewer places have been offered to babies and very small children as they require higher staff to children ratios. It is also assumed that the introduction and popularity of 3-year-old kindergarten is contributing to this trend.

The average number of days of care required increased in 2022 with families requesting, on average, almost three days of care a week,

Figure 10 Average number of days required Average age of children placed How long does it take to get care?  
(Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)



This average number of days is in line with 2015 averages. It was noted that in 2022, parents were less able to be flexible with their required days (potentially due to mandated team 'office days') also adding to the length of time to be placed.

## Quality

All Council managed and community managed centres are meeting or exceeding the National Quality Standards (NQS).

Table 17 Children's Services Performance How long does it take to get care? (Source: Children's Services Wait List Data)

NQS Rating	Council	Community Managed
<b>Working Towards</b>	0	0
<b>Meeting</b>	20%	36%
<b>Exceeding</b>	80%	57%
<b>Excellent</b>	0	7%



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Efficiency and effectiveness – Council managed services

Council managed services monitor key performance metrics on a monthly basis to ensure the service is operating effectively.

The financial impact of Covid can be seen in these results. Federal Government Covid related funding was a critical in supporting the operating result of 2021/22.

Table 18 Children's Services Performance over time

Key Performance Measure	Target 2021/22	Actual 2021/22	Actual 2020/21	Actual 2019/20	Actual 2018/19
<b>Child to Staff Ratio</b>	2.65	2.68	3.09	2.91	2.58
<b>Utilisation</b>	77.8%	72.9%	75.8%	85%	87.1%
<b>Operating result</b>	(\$324,727)	(\$878,990)	\$868,482	\$(402,148)	\$(371,029)

## Supporting vulnerable children

In 2020/2021 Council introduced new performance measures and reporting requirements for community managed children's services operating from Council facilities, to monitor how effectively services are supporting vulnerable children and families. This reporting indicates:

- In 2022, 39 children (or 10%) of all children who were placed at a Council managed or community managed early childhood education and care facility had a Health Care Card. This represents a decline (from 77 children) from the previous year and indicates a return to figures seen pre-COVID-19.
- There has been a similar pattern in the number of children placed at a Council managed or community managed early education and care facility who were associated with one or more vulnerability factors (from 85 in 2020 to 120 in 2021 and now 76 in 2022).

Table 19 Children's Services Statistics

Statistic	FY 2020/2021		FY 2021/2022	
	Council	Community Managed	Council	Community Managed*
<b>Access to the Federal Government additional childcare subsidy (ACCS)</b>	Between 11 and 17 families and 14 and 30 children each month	Up to 21 children per quarter	Between 17 and 27 children each month	Between 7 and 11 children per quarter



City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Statistic	FY 2020/2021		FY 2021/2022	
	Council	Community Managed	Council	Community Managed*
<b>Children accessing inclusion support funding</b>	Between 4 and 6 each month	Up to 5 per quarter	Between 1 and 7 each month	Between 3 and 10 per quarter
<b>Children accessing the Preschool Field Officer Program</b>	Up to 4 in a month	Not required to report	Up to 7 in a month	Not required to report
<b>Children who lived in households with a low-income health care card</b>	Between 27 - 78 each month	Between 14 - 23 per quarter	Between 46 - 83 each month	Between 21 - 37 per quarter
<b>Children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds</b>	Between 3 - 7 each month	Between 1 - 3 per quarter	3 or 4 each month	2 or 5 per quarter
<b>Children in out of home care</b>	1 or 2 across most months of the year	Up to 4 at various times throughout the year	1 in 11 of 12 months	2 per quarter

\* One Community Managed Children's Centre did not provide 2021/2022 statistics.

## Maternal Child Health performance

In 2021/2022, the MCH service received 1,130 birth notifications and the service enrolled 1,095 infants into the program. New enrolments from overseas and interstate also declined in this period due to international and boarder restrictions put in place due to COVID-19.

The program completed 8,667 KAS visits (of which 6 are usually undertaken in the child's first year of life and an additional 3 in the following years) and 411 3.5-year-old KAS consults.

In 2021/2022, 1,974 children and mothers transferred to another service outside of the municipality and 950 children and mothers transferred into the municipality.

In 2021/2022 the program conducted 3,690 MARAM screenings (for family violence) and of these, 22 safety plans were completed, and 54 referrals were made.

36



City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Department of Health funding for the EMCH program is allocated according to socioeconomic disadvantage, calculated on the number of Family Tax Benefit recipients in an LGA and rurality using the Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). The total service hours delivered in the EMCH program for 2021/2022 were 1,449.50 hours, 323 hours above the hours funded by the Department of Health. This was due to the high number of families in transitional accommodation, where their address listed with Centrelink is often not in Port Phillip.

In February 2022 Council assisted in the State-wide Code Brown initiative to support Council's in the wider metropolitan regions, where the impacts of covid and staff shortages were felt greater in growth municipalities. Wyndham and Melton were assisted through the completion of 90 telehealth consultations by City of Port Phillip MCH nurses over a six-week period.

In October 2022 the MCH Service conducted a client survey for families enrolled in the MCH Service. Of the 276 families surveyed:

- 86.59% responded that the MCH Service is important to them.
- 76.79% of families surveyed agreed that because of participating in the MCH service, they felt more confident as a parent, and 64.51% reported that they felt more socially connected. Parents who were experiencing complex issues predominantly found that they could talk about mental health issues (78.26 %), safe sleeping (81.5%) and family violence and safety (76.81%).
- Families reported the service being pivotal in helping them navigate being a first-time parent and their appreciation for having nurses they could ask for advice without judgement.

Table 20 MCH key metrics (Source: CDIS MCH Data)

Measure	2021	2022
<b>Birth Notices Received</b>	1,216	1,130
<b>Total No of Enrolments</b>	1,147	1,107
<b>Total No of KAS Consults</b>	9,165	8,667
<b>Total No of 3.5 KAS consults</b>	480	411
<b>Additional Consults</b>	2,103	2,227
<b>Family Violence Consults</b>	101	88
<b>Referrals</b>	947	1,413
<b>Transfers In</b>	638	1,588
<b>Transfers Out</b>	1,661	3,635
<b>Total Hours EMCH</b>	Comparable data not available	1,278 hours
<b>Total Hours Sleep and Settle Outreach</b>	n/a	49.5 hours

37



City of Port Phillip

## The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Measure	2021	2022
<b>Total Number Sleep and Settle Groups</b>	n/a	46

MCH reports a number of measures via the Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (LGPRF) showing the services consistently meet and exceed targets set for infant enrolments and participation in the 4 week KAS visits, the overall service to the community and by Aboriginal children.

Table 21 Local Government Performance Reporting Framework (Source: CDIS MCH Data)

Measure	2020/2021				2021/2022			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Participation in 4-week Key Age and Stage visit	102.71%	98.84%	97%	95.87%	103.9%	87.29%	99%	87.7%
Infant enrolments in MCH service	100.34%	101.16%	101%	101.0%	101.9%	101.7%	100.8%	100.67%
Participation in the MCH service	51.75%	51.42%	48.35%	87.38%	50.16%	50.64%	42.23%	45.66%
Participation in MCH service by Aboriginal children	64.86%	68.66%	69.44%	95.00%	42.9%	57.58%	40%	53.85%

The service conducted 2,227 additional consults of which 17% (378 consults) related to breastfeeding, 13% (292) to failure to thrive, 8% (183 consults) to feeding review and 4% (79 consults) to enhanced maternal and child. These figures were not significantly different from the previous year however data in 2023 will be a valuable tool to compare across a three-year trend.

Table 22 Reasons for additional consults (Source: CDIS MCH Data)

Measure	2021	2022
<b>Other</b>	383	458
<b>KAS Completion</b>	14	402
<b>Breastfeeding Difficulties</b>	312	378
<b>Failure to Thrive/Faltering growth</b>	238	292
<b>Feeding review</b>	218	183
<b>Parenting support</b>	195	99



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Measure	2021	2022
Developmental concern	79	91
Enhanced Maternal and Child Health	206	79
Parent - Mental Health issues	53	41
Brigance	21	33
Baby sleep issues	21	23
Prematurity	35	22
Child Disability(physical/cognitive/emotional)	22	20
Child Behaviour	49	14
Multiple risk factors	12	13
Paediatric follow up	14	13
Developmental Delay	19	12
Multiple Birth	30	8
Family Crisis	10	7
MIST vision test	16	7
Newborn sleep issues	7	6
Family Violence	8	4
Parental disability (physical/cognitive/emotional)	7	4
Acute Illness	3.00	3
Child Protection	2	3
Sleep and settling outreach	119	3
Toddler sleep issues	1	3
Case Conference	1	2
Post Natal Depression	2	2
Chronic illness	1	1
Unsettled Behaviour	3	0



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



## Outcomes for Children

This section highlights the work of Council-run and Council-funded services towards the three policy outcomes of the City of Port Phillip Every Child, Our Future Children's Services Policy.

### Outcome 1: All children living in Port Phillip are supported to develop their full potential

Table 23 Outcome 1: All children living in Port Phillip are supported to develop their full potential

Objective	Key Actions
<b>Policy Objective 2: Council will understand current and future needs of families in the city and influence the provision of early years services to meet those needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted MCH family survey to understand family's needs and inform service developments.</li> <li>Families attending the Solihull parenting program were surveyed to understand current challenges experienced by families and future needs.</li> <li>Partnership with the MAV and Department of Education to implement early years reforms and local area participation in kindergarten initiatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Objective 6: Early years services will be supported by safe, accessible, contemporary, fit-for-purpose, sustainable facilities and environments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building Blocks agreement signed with the State Government, a commitment of \$18m from Council and \$12.6 million from the State to future-proof 6 existing early childhood centres and 364 licenced places (57 greater than the current provision at these facilities).</li> <li>Children's Facilities Project Control Group commenced, to ensure a collaborative Building Block Partnership Agreement.</li> <li>Adventure Playground vision and design principles, adopted after community consultation. These will be used to guide upgrades at both sites to deliver safe, accessible and welcoming facilities.</li> <li>\$300,000 provided in 2022/2023 for immediate rectification works for Skinners Adventure Playground.</li> </ul>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Objective	Key Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least \$435,000 spent in 2022/2023 for maintenance at Council managed and Community managed children's services buildings.</li> <li></li> </ul>

## Outcome 2: Parents, carers and families are supported to increase their capacity and capability

Table 24 Outcome 2: Parents, carers and families are supported to increase their capacity and capability

Objective	Key Actions
<b>Policy Objective 3: Early years' services will be financially sustainable and consistently aligned with relevant policies and legislation at the local, state and federal level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated the 2023 Funding Agreements for community managed early years education and care services in community facilities.</li> <li>Commenced development of a contemporary funding deed to support Toy Libraries.</li> <li>Continued development of the Children's Services Integrated Registration and Enrolment System in consultation with community managed early education and care services located in Council facilities. Implementation of a new parent portal for families currently attending Council managed services underway.</li> <li>North St Kilda Children's Service awarded Exceeding National Standard.</li> <li>Joint advocacy with MAV and participation in sector relevant forums as a united voice for the investment in early years.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Objective 4: Council will encourage collaboration across all early years services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Years Assertive Outreach program commenced work with the Municipal Association of Victoria to build the capacity of services to meet the needs of CALD families.</li> <li>Networking for Community Playgroups and Toy Libraries commenced.</li> </ul>

41



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Objective	Key Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership with the Department of Education Early Childhood Improvement Branch to deliver targeted professional development opportunities across children's services.</li> <li>Partnerships with local schools support school transition for kindergarten children at Council managed children's services.</li> <li>Partnerships with community managed children's services support the development and professional learning of Provisional Kindergarten Teachers (in Council managed centres) to obtain their Victorian Institute of Teaching registration.</li> </ul>

## Outcome 3: The effects of disadvantage on children's development are minimised

Table 25 Outcome 3: The effects of disadvantage on children's development are minimised

Objective	Key Actions
<b>Policy Objective 1: Council will work with partners to ensure that every child, regardless of their abilities or background, will have access to affordable, safe, accessible, quality Early Years' services to support development to their full potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commenced partnership with Star Health to deliver the Early Help Program.</li> <li>Collaboration with Star Health, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and Tweddle Child and Family Health Service to support the successful delivery of the First 1,000 Days in Public Housing (Better Start) project.</li> <li>Solihull program delivered twice in 2022, a collaborative project between MCH and Family Services, delivering positive parenting education.</li> <li>Established the Early Years Education and Care Network.</li> <li>Council managed services opted into Free Kinder.</li> <li>Collaboration with Royal Women's Hospital and Launch Housing to provide MCH and EMCH Service to vulnerable families in the Cornelia Program.</li> </ul>

42



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Por Phillip Annual Report 2023



Objective	Key Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families supported to access subsidies, Early Start Kindergarten, referral pathways and through debt management to ensure children were retained in Council managed children's services</li> <li>Partnerships with the Inclusion Support Facilitator and Preschool Field Officer Programs to ensure access, participation and retention of children in Council managed children's services.</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Objective 5: Families will have access to the services and information they need, at the times they need it, to make choices appropriate for their needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of the Middle Years breakfast program, developed through increased engagement with the Park Towers community.</li> <li>Parent Information Sessions delivered through a mix of mediums, online and face to face.</li> <li>Family Services outreach to community settings, including Park Towers activities and Storytime.</li> <li>MCH delivered monthly Food Information Sessions at South Melbourne Market to provide education on healthy eating options and to enable families to connect in an informal setting.</li> <li>Sleep and settle sessions delivered to infants aged 0 to 6 months, 6 to 12 months and 12 months to 2 years.</li> <li>Sleep and settle support offered as outreach up to 6 hours offered to families who are experiencing vulnerability.</li> <li>Therapeutic group Bubs in Mind delivered to new parents who are experiencing challenges adjusting to new parenthood.</li> <li>Increased Enhanced MCH service delivery to families in transitional housing (additional 323 hours) in 2021/2022.</li> <li>Council managed Children's Services supported child and family referrals to the Orange Door, Child Protection, Star Health, St Kilda Community Group,</li> </ul>



City of Port Phillip

The State of Children's Services in Port Phillip Annual Report 2023



Objective	Key Actions
	Free Kindergarten Association (FKA), Launch Housing, Salvation Army, Family Life and VACCA
<b>Policy Objective 7: Children will have access to natural environments that allow them to learn about and experience play in nature. This includes natural environments within early years' services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop Up Playgroup at the Adventure Playgrounds during the school holidays when supported playgroups are closed.</li> <li>• Two outdoor new parent group play sessions delivered in St Kilda Botanical Gardens and Edwards Park to enable families connect in an outdoor setting.</li> <li>• Council managed children's services provided learning environments, natural materials and program experiences (e.g., gardening and cooking) that embed the principals of sustainability and nature play.</li> </ul>