

## **What to consider before applying for Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) (January 2026)**

### **What to consider?**

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) is allocated to promote the inclusion of children within a pre-5 setting who may require additional / different provision due to their Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND). This funding also supports local authorities to undertake their responsibilities to strategically commission SEND services as required under the Children and Families Act 2014. Local authorities are expected to target their Early Years SEND Inclusion Funds at children with lower-level emerging SEND. 'Emerging SEND' is not defined within the DfE's guidance. We define this as children, assessed as requiring any SEND Support who do not have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). At the point an EHCP is put in place for a child, the resources allocated via this EHCP will replace SENIF funding.

The provider must be registered with Ofsted on either the Early Years Register or the Childcare Register or must be legally exempt from this registration.

Early Years Inclusion Funding will only be allocated to children who are taking their early years entitlements, being either 9 months to 23 months (under 2's), 2 year olds or 3-4 year olds.

In their application, the provider must evidence that a child is eligible for EYIF including consideration of the following points:

- Does not have an Education Health and Care Plan
- Are not placed in an Early Years Resourced Provision (previously known as Early Years Enhanced Specialist Provision) or in a special school (as these places are already funded at a higher level)
- Are not in paid for childcare for the hours claimed for SENIF
- Are not in an upper foundation class in a maintained primary school

Following each termly SENIF panel meeting, confirmation is sought from the Early Education Funding Team, to ensure that a child is eligible for Early Education Entitlement before funding is released to the provider. This check takes place after the termly headcount deadline (census). Therefore, there may be a delay in payment at the start of a term. EYIF funding can only be provided if the Early Education Entitlement has been claimed for the corresponding term and to the same number of hours claimed.

Due to the demand for SENIF, checks prior to panel can no longer be sustained. Your request will be reviewed at panel and either agreed or declined to fund. It is therefore imperative that the application is completed fully in all the designated areas to ensure review at panel is successful. If additional documentation or areas of the application are not completed or eligibility is not within the criteria, you will be requested to resubmit with the necessary

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information and documentation to a following term's panel or at a future point if the child's needs changes.

### **Special Educational Needs**

In their application, the provider must evidence that a child is eligible for Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding. The evidence should be in line with the following criteria demonstrated in the assessment levels provided:

- *Under 2s and 2-year-olds*: EYFS development levels are approximately from 10 to 17 months behind chronological age in two or more prime areas (for example, Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs and Sensory and/or Physical).
- *3-year-olds*: EYFS development level are approximately from 18 to 25 months behind chronological age in two or more prime areas (for example, Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs and Sensory and/or Physical).
- *4-year-olds*: EYFS development levels are approximately from 21 to 31 months behind chronological age in two or more prime areas (for example, Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs and Sensory and/or Physical).

### **Utilising the enhanced staffing for bespoke provision**

It would be expected that the early years provider intends to or is following the graduated approach of Assess, Plan, Do and Review.

It is also expected that High Quality Teaching and reasonable adjustments are already made for the child.

The child is likely to require small group interventions and / or structured early years experiences with high adult to child ratio of support required.

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### Access to funding

Additional grant funding is available to support children with SEND, including the Early Years Pupil Premium and the Disability Access Fund (DAF) grant. This funding **should** be utilised in the first instance prior to claiming SENIF funding.

Early Education Entitlement can be split as motioned by the parent between 2 differing settings. When this is the case, each setting would submit a request for SENIF on the number of hours the child attends at their setting only.

Please note that this is only for Early Education Entitlement not for any paid for childcare.

SENIF will cease when an EHCP is finalised. If an overpayment of SENIF is created due to an EHCP finalising during the term, a reclaim will be requested via an invoice from the final EHCP date to the end of the term.

If a child leaves a setting/school, the SENIF can not be transferred to another provider. The new provider must submit their own request via their next termly cohort summary. For the provider where a child has left midterm, SENIF will not be reclaimed.

If a child starts to attend a setting/school mid-term, there will be no additional funding provided from SENIF. The submission for that child to receive funding would be included in the next term's cohort summary submission.

### Future

The Council's new SENIF approach will need to be reviewed in response to DfE's review of national EYIF arrangements and possible new guidance and prescription for 2026/27. The Council may need to adjust the SENIF approach in response.