

EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE INCLUSION FUND PROPOSAL

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval from the Forum to consider the development of an Early years and Childcare (0-11 yrs) Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) from 2025 – 2026 onwards., to be funded by High Needs Block of DSG.

Information and Advice

2. All local authorities are required to establish a special educational needs inclusion fund (SENIF) in their local funding systems for children with SEN taking up the funded entitlement, regardless of the number of hours taken. This fund supports local authorities to work with providers to address the needs of individual children with low level or emerging SEND.
3. The Spring Budget 2023 announced significant new investments to expand the funded early education entitlements from 2024 to 2025 and develop Wraparound Childcare for Primary aged children from September 2024.
 - a. in April 2024, all children aged 2 of working parents become eligible for funded childcare.
 - b. In September 2024, all parents of children over the age of nine months become eligible.
 - c. In September 2024, the National wraparound Pathfinder programme begins.

Funding Overview – Early Years

4. Currently, there is a contribution of £172,000 from NCC funding and £250,000 retained from the Early Years Block of the DSG, giving a total Early Years SENIF budget of £422,000 (2023-2024). This is for children aged 3 and 4, the most vulnerable 2 year olds and exceptional cases for under twos with complex needs.
5. On current predictions, the Early Years SENIF will spend £464,000 in 2023-2024. It is proposed that a further £25,000 is retained from the 2024-2025 budget. However, it is not anticipated that this will meet demand.
6. EHCP Payments have risen from 0 in 2018 to 41 in 2023.
7. DAF eligibility and payments have risen from 44 in 2018 to 81 in 2023.
8. Children receiving Early Years SENIF has risen from 70 in 2018 to 142 in 2023.

9. 15% of 2, 3 and 4 year olds attending an Early Years setting are in receipt of some form of supplementary funding (CIN, CPP, DAF, Inclusion, EYPP LAC, EHCP.)
10. Approximately 1.5% of 2, 3 and 4 year olds attending an Early Years setting are in receipt of funding to support their special education needs. Data is not currently captured for children under the age of 2.
11. Based on current estimates¹, there are *approximately* 3,000 children of working families per year group. For Early Years this could potentially mean a further 45 children per year group who would be eligible for SENIF as the expanded entitlements are rolled out. (90 in total aged 1 and 2 years)

Funding Overview – Wraparound Childcare

12. There are currently 2,000 children in receipt of Additional Family Needs (AFN) funding in Primary (F2 to Y6)
13. There are currently 294 children in receipt of High Level Needs (HLN) Funding in Primary (F2 to Y6)
14. Schools and Families Specialist Service (SFSS) are currently working with 719 Children in Early Primary (F1 to Year 2)
15. The SFSS Home and Preschool Team have 562 open cases from birth to school entry. This is for half of the year to date.
16. Assuming that we apply similar estimates to Early Years Provision, it is reasonable to assume that 47% of these children will have working parents and will therefore wish to access Wraparound Childcare if they do not currently. However, these figures are as yet unknown and further work needs to be carried out to assess levels of demand.

Future proposals

17. Early Childhood Services will embark on a data exercise to collect actual numbers of children accessing SENIF for Early Years (0-4 years) in 2024-2025.
18. This will include assessment of numbers of children under the age of two not currently eligible for funding and Early Years SENIF.
19. Early Childhood Services will assess current access, and future demand and supply of Wraparound Childcare in partnership with SFSS with a particular focus on those in receipt of AFN and HLN as described above. (Primary Age)
20. This will enable us to have more robust data on actual take up and demand for Childcare in the 0-11 age group and therefore more accurately able to assess the cost of providing support for Childcare providers through Inclusion Funding.

¹ Census 2023 data 5,055 2 year olds in a setting, 1,784 funded. 3,271 paying (assumed to be working). 47% of 3 and 4 year olds currently take up working families extended entitlement equals 7,660 children aged 3 and 4.

21. A further paper to be presented at Schools and Early Years Forum early in 2025, to bid to release funding from the High Needs block of DSG to fund a 0-11 Inclusion Fund for Childcare.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Forum:

22. Consider the development of an Early Years and Childcare (0-11 years) Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) from 2025 – 2026 onwards., to be funded by High Needs Block of DSG.

23. Approve members of SFSS and Early Childhood Services to carry out a robust data collection exercise to estimate need and costs of such an Inclusion Fund more accurately.

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