



Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding Panel

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Introduction

Local Authorities are statutorily required to establish funding arrangements for early education reflective of the need to provide suitable support for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

Legislation determines that all early year's providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEND. Settings must have a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEND with parent partnership key to implementing support a child needs. Most children will be well supported through high quality inclusive provision however, some children with more complex needs may benefit from enhanced provision, support and resources implemented over a period of time.

The Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding (EYIAF) Panel

The Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding (EYIAF) Panel aims to support the development of inclusive early years provision across Shropshire. It is an Early Years focused panel providing support, advice and funding for private, voluntary and maintained early years settings including childminders regarding the provision and practice for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The focus is to ensure that children with SEND, some of which may have increasingly complex needs, are able to fully access early years education in order that they can be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life. We want them to have and to expect the same opportunities in life as other children and young people. We want them to thrive and live their best life.

A key function of the panel is to support settings in identifying needs at the earliest opportunity and subsequently responding with well match support and intervention through the implement a graduated response, delivered through assess, plan, do, review cycles. To enable settings to intervene early and with pace, the panel has an allocation of funding (EYIF) from the Local Authority which can be accessed where criteria is met and the documentation required has been completed. An Education Health and Care Plan will not be required to access EYI funding. Where the Local Authority has received a health notification that a child has a complex need, the panel will provide EYIF to support access to education, ensuring equity for all Shropshire children in accessing inclusive early years education provision.

Principles of the Early Years Inclusion and Advice Panel

We will develop strong partnerships between Early Years settings and professionals that ensures effective collaboration to support children with SEND.

We will support early identification of need by providing support that is timely with appropriate focusing on the graduated approach and high quality assess, plan, do review cycles.

We will offer support and challenge that aims to build resilience and skills of Shropshire Early Years settings to meet increasing complexity of need.

We monitor our criteria, process and impact to ensure it is fit for purpose and achieves positive outcomes for the child.

Our collective aims

- Staff in Early Years settings will be more able to meet the needs of children with SEND.
- Staff in Early Years settings will be able to effectively identify and deploy early intervention and support so that children, where able to, can close the gap between themselves and their peers.
- Early Years settings will be supported to increase their confidence so that children with SEND are included and can achieve to their highest potential.
- There will be increased participation and achievement for children with SEND.
- Early Years settings will build their own expertise through wider workforce development leading to better outcomes for all.
- There will be less escalation into more specialist pathways, resource and provision.

Proposed Functions

Advice and Guidance
Support and challenge
Signposting to services

Access to Outreach
Support from Early Years SEND Support Officers (EySSOs)

Access to Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF)
Criteria determined by quality of graduated approach

The panel will offer three functions.

The primary function is to offer advice and guidance through the opportunity to review a case and have a supportive professional discussion. The panel seeks to solve problems by seeking expertise from all who attend rather than acting as a gatekeeper to external agencies. Over time the panel will build up a bank of good practice and learn, through common enquires, where there are gaps in knowledge enabling workforce development opportunities to be provided to our Early Years settings.

The second function is concerned with the provision of outreach support. An Early Years setting may request support from an Early Years SEND Support Officers to explore the support and provision they are providing to an individual child. The Early Years SEND Support Officer will offer advice and guidance. Likewise, panel may suggest this as an outcome of the EYIAF panel request. Panel may also recommend a setting level SEND review which will support the development of high quality inclusive early years education provision. This challenge and support will be provided by an Education Quality Adviser (SEND & AP).

The third function enables settings to seek access to EYIF. The panel will act as gatekeeper to this fund. The panel will still provide advice and guidance where EYIF is sought. The panel will discuss and explore alternative options to the provision of EYIF as a potential outcome to a request.

A setting is able to attend the panel for only advice and guidance or to request outreach. Where access to EYIF is sought a setting will receive advice and guidance too.

Who are the panel members?

The EYIAF panel will be chaired by the Senior Development Officer and in their absence the Educational Quality Adviser (SEND & AP), core membership of the panel will also include the Early Years Quality Improvement Learning Coordinator. At times, Early Years SEND Support Officers may cover panel in the absence of one of the core members. Further members will include professionals representing agencies of support and advice such as a Child Development Centre Lead Specialist Nursery Nurse and Portage adviser

Terms of reference for panel members are provided to panel members.

When will the request panel meet?

The new requests panel will meet the first Wednesday of every month during term time, where this falls in the school holidays panel will move to the first Wednesday after the holiday. Panel will not run during August. Should requests to attend panel become high, panel may move to fortnightly as a temporary measure to meet demand.

Completed papers must be submitted by morning of the Friday the week before the panel date for consideration at the next panel. If papers are not received by this point, the request will be added to the next panel date. Where the number of requests exceed availability then they will be placed on a waiting list for the following panel. Once the relevant paperwork has been confirmed as complete, Early Year settings will receive confirmation regarding the date and time of their presentation to panel.

Where will panel take place?

The panel will take place via Microsoft Teams.

When will the review panel meet?

The review panel will meet the third Tuesday of every month; papers should be received at the latest the week before the panel.

Panel will not run during August.

Settings will not need to attend the panel but may have received a visit from an Early Years SEND Support Officer in the half term before the review is due. The Early Years SEND Support Officer Note of Visit may be included with your review request and they will provide panel with feedback from their visit. This will support panel to make a decision on the level of funding still required.

Where the review asks for a continuation of funding, it is expected that the setting will have worked with parent carers to seek external agency involvement; otherwise, the panel will expect to see that the child has made progress resulting in the panel reaching a reduction or ceasing of funding outcome decision.

Eligible children

Any child in a Shropshire group or school-based setting including those placed with a childminder (from aged 9 months to 4 years old) with special educational needs can be presented for **advice and guidance**.

- Children in receipt of Early Years Funding attending private, voluntary, academy & maintained early years settings including childminders.
- Children must not have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), if a child has an EHCP in place.
- The child will have significant barriers to learning that require support above what is already allocated through the setting's universal offer.
- For children already attending a setting, the setting must be able to demonstrate that they are already supporting a child's special educational need through their universal offer and the request will support a graduated approach which may include involvement of outside agencies, whose advice will have been used during cycles of assess, plan, do and review.
- The setting can provide evidence of progress over time and the impact of current provision.
- The request is an Access to Education request supported by external agencies with a health notification received by the Local Authority. In this instance, the setting may not have the above documentation evidencing a graduated response.
- The setting has set out what they require EYIF for (with recommendations from outside professionals included where available), what needs they aim to address, what provision they would put in place and expected outcomes.

In addition

- Settings must ensure request has been discussed and agreed with parent carers ahead of submitting.
- The right for parent carers to request an EHC needs assessment remains in place, if appropriate, for children with EYIF allocated through the Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding Panel. EYI Funding will stop once the child's final EHCP is issued.
- An allocation of EYIF must be used for the named pupil only which is in line with the Schools and Early Years Finance Regulations.
- Funding is allocated to the individual child, if the pupil moves setting the funding is transferred if appropriate.

Making a request to present a child to the Early Years Inclusive Advice and Funding panel

Early Years settings will need to complete an Early Years Inclusive Advice and Funding Panel request form to access the Early Years Inclusive Advice and Funding panel. This must include parental consent. Where this is not included, the request will be sent back to the setting.

The EYIAF panel will expect evidence of the inclusive provision that has been considered and delivered to support a child's special educational needs.

You will be asked to detail your graduated response and the reasonable adjustments you have made/ plan to make to support the child's needs. Settings should take into account research and [Final \(August 2026 Ver 2\)](#)

guidance (EEF research and guidance contained within The Effective Use of Teaching Assistants (2021) and Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (2021)) that states small group, and one-to-one support can be a powerful tool but must be used carefully. Pupils who receive the most support make less progress than similar pupils who received little or no support. It is also recognised that the use of one-to-one Teaching Assistant support can result in a dependency effect. Settings must be considerate to this and to how they will develop as much independence as possible when planning the support and intervention a child needs. This will enable children to be better prepared for transition into their mainstream primary school. Therefore, the expectation would be that the provision planned by settings blends one-to-one, small group and whole group teaching and support, along with resources and other adaptations.

EYIAF panel members will gauge an understanding about the child's level of need and if the support requested is closely matched to this need, as documented in a robust A-P-D-R cycle through the paperwork provided, along with the setting's presentation and any responses to questions asked by panel members.

An Access to Education Request

When placing an Access to Education request, panel accepts that the setting will not yet have been able to deploy a graduated response. Panel asks that the setting work co-productively with parent carers to develop an understanding of the child's needs and the support they may require. This may include making contact with any external agency professionals working with the family and/or taking into consideration any reports available. Panel will also expect the setting to have facilitated a few short stay and play sessions to see the child in the setting. The setting will then be asked to complete a EYIAF request form and also complete an EY Pupil Centred Plan. This will detail the information collected from parent carers, professionals and observations along with an indication of outcomes, targets and the provision needed to support. Panel understands this is an indication of the intention to support the child's needs and is likely to change once the child has begun attending the setting and has settled.

Where to send your completed forms

All paperwork should be sent to NEF@shropshire.gov.uk Once the relevant paperwork has been confirmed as complete, settings will receive confirmation regarding the date and time of their presentation to panel.

If the paperwork is deemed to be incomplete, the application **will be returned** to the setting, who will be asked to update it and resubmit at the next panel. Please refer to the EYI&F paperwork checklist before submission.

Who will be asked to present a child to the EYIAF Panel?

A member of staff who knows the child well must attend to present the child to panel and be involved in the professional dialogue. The setting's manager or Early Years Lead will always be invited to attend. Parent Carers will not be asked to attend to present. An allocation of 15 minutes will be given for each child to be discussed (see the presentation guide for guidance). Participants will be asked to provide some feedback about their experience by completing a 'satisfaction survey' following attendance at panel.

Involvement of parent / carers

Parent carers must be involved in the whole process and consent to their child's needs being presented at the EYIAF panel. Settings must meet and plan with parent carers so that their views are represented in all decisions. Parent Carers are not required to attend panel. An information guide for parent carers about the EYIAF panel and EYIF can be found on the Shropshire Learning Gateway and must be shared with parent carers.

Child's Voice

A golden thread through all outcomes and provision planned to support a child's needs must be the child's voice. This must be 'heard' when a request is made to the EYIAF panel. A setting should ensure when completing a Person-Centred Plan (PCP) for a child they include the child's voice within the assess section. This maybe from conversation and discussion with the child, but also from observing them and developing good knowledge of their likes/ dislikes, interests and needs. Parent carer's conversation will be key to this, particularly for children who are new to your setting. It may take time and additional support to gather the views of the child meaningfully, but this is vital to planning support and intervention for them.

The role of the Local Authority

The Local Authority has a role to play given it is accountable for the Early Years Block Funding from which EYIF will be allocated. A member of the Local Authority team will be present at panel to chair and support the consistency of approach and ensure equitable resource distribution. The Local Authority will keep central records of children presented at panel and record and monitor who is provided with EYIF funding. The Local Authority is responsible for releasing EYIF funding to settings. The EYIAF panel may highlight the need for the Local Authority to follow up, monitor and support SEND provision in settings, making frequent and/or poor applications. This would identify training needs within settings in the LA, for example, in particular areas of SEND interventions.

Funding

The EYIAF panel has been provided with a set budget envelope. An allocation of funding will be made based on the evidence provided by the setting about the child's need and level of support, provision and intervention required.

The [Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2026 to 2027](#) Section 6 (updated 13 January 2026) confirms the requirement for Local Authority to have special educational needs inclusion funds (SENIFs) known in Shropshire as Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF) for all children with special educational needs (SEN) eligible for or taking up the new and existing entitlements.

Settings may use the funding to provide a range of support and evidence-based intervention. This may include training, resources and tailored adult support focused on need, during both child-led play and evidence-based interventions in differing ratios and group sizes such as whole group,
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small group and one-to-one. Generally, children would not be expected to need enhanced levels of adult support continuously throughout their time in settings. However, where there is a health notification in place and evidence that the child's Special Educational Needs are complex, panel may decide an award of one-to-one funding is appropriate. Evidence of this increasingly complex need should be supported by a robust Assess, Plan, Do, Review response that details clear support and intervention, that helps the child make progress.

Disability Access Funding (DAF) is available to support duties required by the Equality Act 2010 (see section 8 of above guidance) and is available to settings to support children with disabilities to access their Early Year entitlement. A child will be eligible if they are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and receives the same entitlement funding as detailed above in the Eligible Children section. Funding can be used to support providers in making reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or helping with building capacity, be that for the child in question or for the benefit of children attending the setting.

Decisions about funding

Decisions about funding are made collectively by the panel. Information contained in the EYIAF request form and discussion following presentation at panel, will be used to determine if the criteria for EYIF has been met and what funding will be provided. Agreement for funding, where agreed, **will not** be given at the panel meeting but rather in an OUTCOME email from the LA which will be sent to the setting within 10 working days of the panel's meeting. Where EYIF is agreed there is no requirement for the LA to draw up a plan. Settings will need to use the funding provided to put in place the support outlined in the Person-Centred-Plan (PCP) submitted with their request. Specific support strategies and evidence-based interventions with measurable outcomes need to be fully detailed to target the child's SEN/barriers to learning. Settings are responsible for ensuring progress towards outcomes. Settings are **not able** to challenge the panel funding award and are asked to use any funding provided to support the child for at least one term before returning to the panel and requesting a review. Clear evidence of why this early review is being requested will be needed. Training to support effective writing of EY PCPs is delivered frequently, bookable through [Shropshire Learning Gateway Early Years CPD page](#).

Allocation of EYIF is usually for one year from the approval date, unless the child is due to commence school, but can be continued as required. On occasion, it may be provided for a shorter period whilst the setting is asked to follow and respond to some advice or to allow time for an Early Years SEND Support Officer to visit and work with the child and setting. When the plan is due for review this must be done by the setting with parent carers and any other services involved. Settings should provide evidence of the impact of the funding they have been awarded through review of the progress the child has made. A reviewed and evaluated A-P-D-R cycle along with the new cycle showing clearly how the renewed funding will be used should be submitted. This should evidence provision such as purchase of resources, time to make resources, training and staff support which may include both 1:1 individualised intervention and targeted free-flow support, as well as small group and support to join whole group activities. A behaviour support plan for those children who are showing behaviours of concern, should also be included with detail on how this will be supported.

EYIF can continue until a child leaves their early years setting to go to their mainstream primary school. It may be reduced, increased or ceased depending on the progress made by the child. EYIF **will not** continue into a Reception class ceasing at the end of the pre-school year or upon the child

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reaching statutory school age if they remain in their nursery setting, unless school entry has been formally deferred. EYIF will cease if a child receives an Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP).

It is the settings responsibility to time bring their EYIF review request to the review panel. If this is not completed before the funding end date, funding will cease and **will not** be backed dated to cover the gap between funding periods.

The review of Early Years Inclusion Funding Form along with reviewed PCPs (expectation is there will be three PCPs submitted to clearly evidence A-D-P-R cycles, unless this is an early review) and a new PCP detailing intended outcomes and provision needed must be returned to NEF@shropshire.gov.uk before the cease date.

Where a request for funding has been refused, the setting will be informed of the reasons for this and any further steps they may need to take before funding may be granted.

Moving between settings

Where a child receiving EYIF moves settings, the setting must notify the EYIAF panel immediately. The funding will cease at the current setting and moved to the child's new setting. Funding is allocated to the individual child and therefore cannot be transferred to another child in the setting.

EYIF will cease at the end of a child's time in an Early Years setting and not be carried on into Reception. Settings should be mindful an EHCP is not required for a child to move into school. For children with complex SEND, who are referred to the Child Development Centre waiting a multi-disciplinary assessment (MDA) and in receipt of EYIF at a high one-to-one funding level a Step into School funding request could be considered to support the child to transition into school.

Where a child has received their MDA outcome whilst in their early years setting, it may be appropriate for the setting to consider with parent carers if this outcome indicates the child's needs maybe longer-term and may require support that is additional to or different from other children of the same age upon reaching statutory school age. Should this be the case, then the setting may wish to give consideration to applying for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA). It is not a given that all children who receive a diagnosis as part of a MDA will need an EHCP.

In rare situations, a setting maybe asked to consider with parent carers an ECHNA request for a child awaiting a MDA outcome in receipt of EYIF ahead of the child receiving the outcome. These cases will be for children with the most complex need who are due to submit their primary school admission request. The LA will be aware of these children and an Early Years SEND Support Officer will have visited the setting to observe the child.

Quality Assurance of the Use of Early Year Inclusion Funding

Quality assurance of the use of Early Years Inclusion Funding with be undertaken at the discretion of Shropshire Council to ensure it is being used effectively to improve outcomes for the children it has been applied for. Early Years Inclusion Funding should be requested to provide the right support at the right time and must be requested proportionately to the child's need. Should quality assurance of the use of funding identify that this is not the case, the review panel have the right to lower or

cease the funding. In order for a setting to maintain the funding, they may be requested to actively engage in support provided by an Early Years SEND Support Officer and/or an Education Quality Adviser (SEND & AP) which could include being asked to complete a SEND review.