Enfield SENIF Guidance April 2025

From September 2017 the SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) became a statutory requirement, stating that all local authorities must set up a SENIF budget. The funding must be available to enable settings, childminders and out of school providers supporting pre-school children with special educational needs to secure better outcomes. It is not designed to provide 1:1 support as research has shown that this is not the best way to support most children. All early year's providers that are eligible to receive funding for the entitlements for 9 months to four-year-olds are also eligible to receive support from the SEN inclusion fund. As set out in the early year's operational guidance, there are additional early years funding streams to support children aged 9 months to 4 years old with special educational needs and disabilities to access their free entitlements. All local authorities are required to establish an inclusion fund in their local funding systems for 9 months to 4-year-olds with SEN taking up the funding 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 SEN. It will also support local authorities to undertake their responsibilities to strategically commission SEN services as required under the Children and Families Act 2014. Local authorities can establish their SEN inclusion funds using funding from either one or both of their early years block and high needs block of the Designated Schools Grant (DSG).

Local authorities and providers must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the Equalities Act 2010 and be able to demonstrate how they are implementing a graduated approach to support all children with special educational needs or a disability to fulfil their potential.

Providers must have arrangements in place to support children with SEND or disabilities. These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEND. (SEND Code of Practice, January 2015 update)

Eligibility

The Early Years Inclusion Support is for children aged between 9 months and 4-years old who are taking up any number of hours of the funding entitlement. Children with a final Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) and in receipt of contingency funding are **not** eligible to access SENIF.

The SENIF budget is to support children with lower level or emerging **SEN for a maximum of 3 terms.** Children with more complex needs and those in receipt of an EHCP continue to be eligible to receive funding via the high needs block of the DSG.

As with other elements of early years funding, SENIF should apply to children attending. Applications can therefore be made by:

- An Ofsted registered childcare provider or Childminder with an Ofsted outcome of Good or Outstanding
- A primary school providing registered nursery provision and
- Any provider, childminder (Ofsted Good or Outstanding) or school for children who are in receipt of the funding entitlements in line with the DfE operational guidance

The funding is targeted at children with **lower level or emerging SEN**. Children with more complex needs and those in receipt of an EHCP continue to be eligible to receive funding via the high needs block.

The SENIF funding is for children in receipt of the entitlement funding who have low level and emerging needs. Low level and emerging needs are where a child has been identified as not meeting their developmental milestones at certain ages.

SEN inclusion funds should apply to children attending settings in the relevant local authority area, regardless of where they live.

Value

The value of the fund should consider the number of children with SEN in the local area, their level of need, and the overall capacity of the local childcare market to support these children. Local authorities must consult with early years providers to set the value of their local SENIF.

Allocation of funding

Local authorities must consult with early years providers, parents and SEN specialists on how the SEN inclusion fund will be allocated, as part of the preparation and review of their 'Local Offer'. Under this 'Local Offer', local authorities should publish details on how they are using their SEN inclusion fund to support their early years SEN.

As part of the preparation and review of the 'Local Offer', local authorities must consult with early years providers, parents, and SEN specialists on how the SEN inclusion fund will be allocated. Under this 'local offer', local authorities should publish details on how their SENIF will be used to support their early years SEN cohort. These details should include the eligibility criteria for the fund, the planned value of the fund at the start of the year, and the process for allocating the fund to providers.

Applying to the Inclusion Fund

Most children with SEND do not require specialist resources or enhanced staffing to be successfully included with a provision. Most provisions meet the needs of children with SEND very well from within their existing resources and through their own best practice.

The Panel may request additional evidence of a child being significantly delayed in any of the three prime areas of the EYFS in comparison to the expected outcomes for their age, or where there are significant medical needs which require a high level of adult intervention and supervision.

It is important to note that a delay in learning and development in the early years does not always necessarily indicate that a child has a special educational need that calls for special educational provision. Similarly, difficulties related solely to learning English as an additional language are not considered a special educational need.

Parents must be involved in the decision to apply for support from the SENIF and must agree to the application before being submitted to panel.

Dates of panel meetings and application deadline dates are published on the Informed Families website.

Funding Options

The level of funding from the summer term 2025 onwards low or emerging communication and language needs **cannot** be funded via SENIF, in line with the upcoming changes to be issued by the DfE. Children with these identified needs will instead access Early Talk Boost Intervention. This is a DfE recommended Speech and Language programme which will be

funded by the Family Hub for 2025 - 2026 including training, resources, progress tracking of development and monitoring of the intervention.

SENIF Application and Requirements

An online application form must be submitted by the deadline dates. SENIF funding will be passported for one term, i.e. the term in which the application was submitted, or from the child's start date within that term.

Funding can be requested for the following:

1. Specific Equipment
This would enable the setting to purchase specific equipment to support the child if recommended by a health professional depending on the SENIF budget allocation. SENIF cannot be used for resources that would ordinarily be made available to children in the Provision.

2. Adaptations to the environment
This would enable the provision to fund small adaptations to the physical environment to enable access for the child, for example, grab rails, ramps etc. Any requests must be recommended in writing by the appropriate health professional, usually an occupational therapist, and must include costs, and depending on the SENIF budget allocation.

3. Adult Enhanced Support
Adult support is available to enable key persons to carry out targeted activities. It is important to note that the funding is not intended to provide continuous one to one support for individual children, but to enable all children to have access to an appropriate curriculum. For example, during small group times you may want to allocate one person to lead the group and a second person to support the children in accessing the group, including staff to run intervention groups.

4. Training

Specialist or one-off training as listed on the SENIF application.

To help you in completing the application, listed below are some factors which could result in an application being refused or deferred.

5. Funding will not be passported:

- for 1:1 staffing for a specific child or targeted adult support
- for staff or admin cost or salaries
- where insufficient explanation has been given as to how the funding would be used e.g. request for funding for a small group but with no explanation as to what this would achieve
- where insufficient description of the needs of the child have been provided
- where the progress and remaining needs are not clear at review
- for non-specialised resources that should be part of your general provision
- if supporting evidence has not been submitted alongside the application on time.
- for activities that should form part of your ordinarily available provision
- to subsidise funded places or to offset an existing deficit
- for children attending School Reception

Funding from Summer Term – April 2025

The following changes have been made as the DfE states that the Local authority should not match fund hours for 1-1 support.

- **Band A (child accessing 15 hours funding entitlement)** Up to 7.5 hours per child, per funding block. This is for individual children with low-level special educational needs who require a short-term intervention (3 terms funding only) to support their progress along the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- **Band B (child accessing 30 hours funding entitlement)** Up to 15 per child, per funding block. This is for individual children with low-level special educational needs who require a short-term intervention (3 terms funding only) to support their progress along the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Please note: It is not expected that any provider would submit more than 8 SENIF applications per academic year (Sept – July). Providers that submit more than 8 applications will be subject to an LA audit and/or the DfE.

Submitting your application

The SENIF applications must be submitted online, paper applications will not be accepted. https://forms.office.com/e/jdRibCJ49t?origin=lprLink

The SENIF review application must be submitted on a termly basis. SENIF Review Form for 9 months - 4 years olds (Nursery age children only)

If you have any queries regarding the outcome of your application or the process, please contact – EYteam@enfield.gov.uk who will email you with an outcome of your application and if any further evidence may be required to support the application.

Monitoring SENIF

The monitoring of the use of the SENIF funding will form part of the funding audit process carried out by Early Years/Informed Families.

The Early Years and EY SEN Team will be monitoring the use of the SENIF funding. This will consist of an advisory visit (virtual or face to face) from an Early Years Advisor or SEND Advisor, where the child's provision, progress and SENIF funding will be discussed.

Any SENIF funding provided may only be used for items approved in your application and you must seek written permission from the SENIF Panel **before** making a variation to your use of it.

The SENIF panel will require evidence of the need for specialist resource contained in your application form. Evidence will only be valid if it is from the date of the funding agreement within the financial year.

Failure to spend the allocated SENIF funding in accordance with your application or failure to provide valid receipts/ evidence will result in the SENIF funding having to be repaid to Enfield Council.

Receipts clearly dated within the funding agreement date, with item(s), total amount and supplier name visible invoices clearly dated within the funding agreement date, with item(s), total amount and supplier name visible.

Early Years Procedure

First stage - Please contact the team responsible for the service you're unhappy with. The team will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and aim to resolve it within 10 working days. If it takes longer, we will let you know and may take up to 20 days. If we need more information from you, the process will pause until we receive it. If you're not satisfied with the response, you can request to move to the final stage.

Final stage - At this stage, a senior manager will investigate your complaint. We will acknowledge it within 5 working days and respond within 30 days. If we need more information, we will pause the process and keep you informed. Our response will clearly explain the decision. If we agree with your complaint, we will explain what went wrong, offer an apology, and outline what we will do to fix the issue. If we do not agree, we will explain why. A draft response will be sent to you 5 days before the final version, so you can comment if needed.