



Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding Panel

Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding

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 (EYIA&F) Panel

The Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding (EYIA&F) 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 setting 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 Early Years Inclusion Funding (EYIF)
Criteria determined by quality of graduated approach

The panel will offer two 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 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. Where access to EYIF is sought a setting will receive advice and guidance too.

Who are the panel members?

The EYIA&F panel will be chaired by the Education and Childcare Sufficiency Manager or in his absence the Senior Development Officer, Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency. Core membership will include the Education Improvement Adviser (Early Years), Early Years Consultant and the Education Quality Adviser (SEND & AP). Further members will include professionals representing agencies of support and advice.

Terms of reference for panel members are provided in (Appendix 7).

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.

Date of panel	Time	Venue	Papers due in
2 nd April 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	28 th March 2025
7 th May 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	2 nd May 2025
4 th June 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	30 th May 2025
2 nd July 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	27 th June 2025
3 rd September 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	29 th August 2025
1 st October 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	26 th September 2025
5 th November 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	31 st October 2025
3 rd December 2025	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	28 th November 2025
7 th January 2026	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	2 nd January 2026
4 th February 2026	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	30 th January 2026
4 th March 2026	1pm – 4pm	MS Teams	27 th February 2026

Completed papers must be submitted by the dates shown for consideration at the next panel. 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. Panel will not run during August.

Panel Meeting Dates	Deadline for Applications
18 th March 2025 (to mop up any in the system)	14 th March 2025
15 th April 2025 (in the Easter hols)	11 th April 2025
20 th May 2025	16 th May 2025
17 th June 2025	13 th June 2025
15 th July 2025	11 th July 2025
16 th September 2025	12 th September 2025
21 st October 2025	17 th October 2025
18 th November 2025	14 th November 2025
16 th December 2025	12 th December 2025
20 th January 2026	16 th January 2026
17 th February 2026	13 th February 2026
17 th March 2026	13 th March 2026

Completed papers must be submitted by the dates shown for consideration at the next panel. Where the number of requests exceed availability then they will be placed on a waiting list for the following panel.

Eligible children

Any child in a Shropshire school-based nursery, private early years daycare or nursery setting or 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, then they cannot be discussed at the panel.
- The setting can demonstrate that they are already supporting a child's special educational need through their universal offer and the request will support a graduate approach which may include involvement of outside agencies, whose advice will have been used during cycles of assess, plan, do and review.
- The child will have significant barriers to learning that require support above what is already allocated through the setting's universal offer.
- The request is an Access to Education request supported by external agencies with a health notification received by the Local Authority.
- The setting can provide evidence of progress over time and the impact of current provision.

- 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 Inclusive Advice and Funding Panel. EYI Funding will stop from the end of the term an 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 (see Appendix 1) 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 EYIA&F 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 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.

EYIA&F 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.

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 EYIA&F paperwork checklist before submission (Appendix 8).

Who will be asked to present a child to the EYIA&F 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 Appendix 7 for guidance). Participants will be asked to provide some feedback about their experience by completing a 'satisfaction survey' (see Appendix 9) 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 EYIA&F 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 EYIA & F panel and EYIF is included in Appendix 4.

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 EYIA&F 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 may be 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 EYIA&F 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 EYIA&F 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 2024 to 2025](#) Section 5.4 (updated May 2024) 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, 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 7 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 by the chair of the panel in collaboration with panel members. Information contained in the EYIA&F 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. Examples are provided on the Local Offer website (<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/>). Settings are responsible for ensuring progress towards outcomes.

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. 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 if appropriate, **can continue for two years**. It may be reduced, increased or ceased depending on the progress made by the child.

Where a child is needing funding for longer than two years, consideration must be given to if this is a longer-term need that might be more appropriately met through an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Where a child is transitioning from a nursery or childminder into a mainstream Reception class, the timelines of applying for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) must be given consideration, to ensure the right support is in place for the child as they move setting.

The review of Early Years Inclusion Funding Form evaluation 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. If you wish continuous funding without a break, it is advisable the review is completed and return to the Local Authority the half-term before the funding is due to end. Reviews not received in a timely way will result in payments ceasing and funding will not be back dated.

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 EYIA&F panel immediately. The funding will cease at the end of that term. Funding is allocated to the individual child and therefore cannot be transferred to another child in the setting. The new setting will need to make their own application for EYIF, working to review the child's PCP with the previous settings and taking account what inclusive provision they will need to provide to support the child's needs.

EYIF will cease at the end of a child's time in an Early Years setting. If continued support is needed once in Primary school use of the school's notional budget should be considered. If support above and beyond this is required an application for GSP can be made once it can be evidence that notional budget has been spent.