

## **A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE INCLUSION FUND**

### **1. What is the Inclusion Fund (also called SENIF)?**

The Department for Education requires every Local Authority to have an Inclusion Fund. This fund helps local authorities to work with providers to understand and support low-level and emerging needs of children with special educational needs/disabilities (SEND) who are taking up their EY entitlements. These funds also help local authorities to undertake their responsibilities to strategically commission SEN services as required under the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Inclusion Fund is to help young children with lower-level emerging SEND. In 2025/26, Gloucestershire County Council allocated £530,000 to be used as inclusion funding. Any EY provider within the county can apply for this funding to help individual or groups of children within their setting. Parents cannot request or receive Inclusion Funding so please speak to your child's provider if you think inclusion funding may help your child. Please see bullet point (5) below for detailed information on allocation of inclusion funding.

The Subsidy Control Act 2022 does not apply for distribution of the Inclusion Fund. More information is available on [Subsidy Control Act 2022](#)

### **2. I think my child needs extra help – what should I do?**

Please have a chat with your child's EY Provider and share your concerns and ideas. It may be helpful to ask them to start a My Plan or My Assessment. This will identify where your child needs help and agree what everyone will do to help him/her. The EY Provider can also contact the Early Years' Service for further advice.

If you are still concerned, please contact the Early Years Advice Line on 01452 425959 or email ([eyesadvice@goucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:eyesadvice@goucestershire.gov.uk)).

### **3. What help is available to my child?**

The Early Years Service helps children in lots of ways, and everything is considered when agreeing the best way to help your child, including:

- Portage for young children with SEND not yet in a setting
- Transition support for children with SEND to start in an EY setting
- Inclusion Funding to support groups of children with similar needs
- Outreach support (in home and setting)
- Signposting/referral to other services
- Specific short-term interventions
- Help to adopt a Team Around Family (TAF) approach
- Identification of training needs for staff in setting
- Training to staff and parents
- Enhanced ratio of staff to support child
- Enhanced transition support
- Inclusion Funding to support individual children
- Multi-agency consideration of needs and resources

## 4. How can my child get Inclusion Funding?

Inclusion Funding is available for groups of children with similar needs as well as individual children. For groups of children, it can be used to fund training for practitioners to run small groups focusing on areas of need such as speech and language, emotional regulation, area of development etc. For individual children, it can be used for a short time to help them make faster progress, or to give extra help to successfully move to a lower ratio (e.g., moving from a 2-year-old room to a 3-year-old room). For children with higher level needs, the Early Years Multi-Disciplinary Team (EYMDT) considers requests from the Team Around the Family (TAF) where it is agreed that input from a range of services and agencies and/or longer-term support is needed.

Funding for groups of children and short-term funding for individual children are considered every week by the CD/SEND Lead and the Inclusion Lead and, if agreed, funds of up to £500 are paid to the EY provider.

Funding for individual children with higher level needs are made at EYMDT Panel which is held every six weeks and includes:

- Funding up to a maximum of £1500 to achieve the outcomes on a child's My Plan+ or to prevent a placement breakdown whilst further assessments take place
- Consideration about the need to request an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment
- Signposting to other services
- Discussion about interventions/options to support the child and family
- Discussion to ensure holistic needs of child are being considered

Whilst Inclusion Funding is not intended for children with high level SEND, as the funding is short-term only, we do offer limited financial support as detailed in section 5(e) below. Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) processes are in place for children with high level and long-term needs. For more information, please follow link [Glosfamilies Directory | Education, Health & Care Plan \(EHCP\)](#)

## 5. What is the funding spent on?

In 2025/26, a total of £530,000 has been allocated to Gloucestershire's Early Years SEND Inclusion funding budget. This will be used to provide a range of whole setting and child focussed support, as set out below, to maximise impact and ensure as many children as possible are supported.

### (a) Enhanced Inclusion Programme - £160,000

This is our second year of delivering a twelve-month programme of intensive support to a targeted group of providers to improve their inclusive practice for all children, including those with SEND. This year we are focusing on 20 playgroups predominately operating in areas of deprivation and/or with high numbers of children with additional needs and SEND. We will award each setting £8000 to fulfil the expectations of the programme and to gain the Early Years Inclusion Champion award. The programme aims to develop long-term sustainable inclusive practice but recognises that some children will always need additional support. It covers a range of training, CPD opportunities, support and challenge from a dedicated Inclusion Advisor and focus on five key areas: inclusive learning environment, positive behaviour environment, practitioner skills and confidence, positive relationships with parents and other professionals, and supporting successful transitions.

**(b) Early Years Inclusion Champion Online Platform - £150,000**

This is a new platform we are launching in September 2025 to encourage Early Years providers to evidence their good quality and inclusive practice and to gain an award of recognition – the Early Years Inclusion Champion Award, valid for 3 years. Additional support from the Inclusion Team is available and, again to support engagement, we are allocating between £1000 and £2000 to providers once they are accepted onto the platform. This funding will support providers to access the training expectations and levels of commitment, whilst recognising they may require less support than those on the programme to evidence the levels of good quality inclusive provision required to gain the award.

**(c) Transition support for children with SEND - £100,000**

This funding is to support children transitioning to an EY setting or to support an enhanced transition in the summer term before reception, where there are clearly identified needs but no additional financial resource in place. Up to £1000 will be allocated per child and to allow time for the child's needs to be assessed further. For those children who require ongoing support after the transition period in their EY setting, please see points (d) and (e) below.

**(d) Individual children and groups of children with low level/emerging needs - £50,000**

Funding of up to £500 per child or group to deliver enhanced ratios or short-term interventions for children with low level needs. This can be continued for a second cycle for individual children only if necessary.

**(e) Individual children with high level needs - £70,000**

Funding of up to £1500 per child can be requested via the EYMDT Panel and referrals are made by the EY provider. This can be continued for a second cycle if necessary. This funding can also be requested to support children on the EHCNA pathway, once the 20-week deadline has passed and there is a delay in the decision on whether to issue an EHCP.

## **6. How do you measure the impact of this funding?**

Providers are asked to submit evidence of the impact of the funding and this information is used to identify trends or gaps in provision. Funding is also tracked to analyse distribution throughout the county and themes to inform future planning and support to the sector.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **(a) How can I access Inclusion Funding for my child?**

As a parent, you cannot request this funding. Please speak to your child's EY provider and explain your concerns and ideas with them. It may be helpful to ask the EY provider to start a My Plan to show areas of need for your child and to agree what everyone will do to help him/her. *(please see hyperlink for more information: [Graduated Pathway](#))*

### **(b) What if my child needs more support than the funding covers?**

If you believe your child's needs are too high to be met by Inclusion Funding, then you may consider requesting an Education Health and Care Needs Assessment for your child. Please discuss this with your child's EY provider to ensure you have all the information needed. *(please see hyperlink for more information: [Education | Glosfamilies Directory](#))*

### **(c) Can I use Inclusion Funding to cover childcare costs if my child has additional needs?**

No, Inclusion Funding is not available to parents to cover any costs; it is available only to EY providers to help children access their Early Years entitlement and to make developmental progress. If you are struggling to cover childcare costs, please visit the EY Service webpage: [Help with childcare costs](#)

### **(d) Can Inclusion Funding be used to support my child in their reception year at school?**

No, Inclusion Funding is not available to children once they leave their Early Years setting. Schools have access to delegated funding to support children with additional needs, if necessary, once they are in reception year. Please speak to your child's reception teacher if you have any concerns.

### **(e) Why is Inclusion Funding time limited?**

Inclusion Funding is intended to support children with emerging and lower-level needs. It is therefore expected that time limited funding should enable a child to make accelerated progress.

Inclusion Funding is **not** intended to support children with significant special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) where it is recognised or shown that the child's needs are unlikely to be met through short term interventions and support. Please refer to [Graduated Pathway](#) for information on funding and support for children with SEND