

MERTON COUNCIL

Early Years SEND Advisory Support and SEND Inclusion Fund (SENDIF)

Handbook and Guidance

Version 3 March 2022



www.merton.gov.uk



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1. Context and background

Local authorities (LAs) and early education and childcare providers must have regard to the SEND 0-25 Code of Practice (2015) and be able to demonstrate how they implement a graduated approach to support all children with SEND to fulfil their potential.

Recently, Government introduced new measures to support children with SEND in Early Years provision, which includes the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Disability Access Fund (DAF) and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Inclusion Fund (SENDIF). (Please see the Merton Funded Early Education Guidance for more information about EYPP and DAF).

All LAs are required to establish a SEND Inclusion Fund for children aged 3 and 4 who are in receipt funded early education. In Merton it has been agreed that this fund will also be made available to 2-year-old children taking up a funded place. The purpose of the fund is to support LAs to work with providers to address the special educational needs and disabilities of individual children. The fund also supports the LA in its commissioning responsibilities and its sufficiency duties to strategically commission SEND services under the Children and Families Act 2014 and Childcare Act 2006.

In addition, London Borough of Merton recognises that there may be other circumstances in which a setting may require advice/support to meet the needs of children with SEND. Therefore, we also currently provide a discretionary SEND Advisory Service when settings are in the early stages of Assess, Plan, Do, Review for either early education funded or non-funded children.

2. Working in partnership with parents

Parents must be in agreement with a SENDIF application in relation to their child and will have contributed their opinions and views as part of the application process. It is crucially important that parents are fully involved, engaged and agree with the work that is carried out in the setting and that the setting works in partnership with the parents/carers so that the best outcomes for the child can be achieved.

The Early Years Inclusion Service works with settings to improve practice and provide advice, information and guidance to the setting. The Inclusion Service's work therefore is not with parents/carers directly, but with the setting. Please see our information leaflet for parents that explains how the service runs and how we work in partnership.

3. SEND support and funding processes

In Merton we have two separate processes for supporting Early Years (EY) settings in their SEND work with children.

Process 1 – EY SEND Advisory Support This is for settings when a child:

- is not accessing funded early education, or
- has low level SEND (level 1a) and is accessing funded early education, or
- is accessing funded early education and evidence is being gathered to make an application for SENDIF

Process 2 – SEND Inclusion Fund This is for settings when a child:

- is accessing funded early education and meets the criteria for the SENDIF at medium level (1b) or higher level (1c) of need

4. Eligible providers

*Settings must be located in the London Borough of Merton for Process 1 and must be on Merton’s Directory of Providers of funded early education for Process 2.

Eligible providers	Process 1 Advice	Process 2 SENDIF
An Ofsted EY registered setting and the child concerned does not have a funded early education place	✓	✗
An Ofsted EY registered setting and the child concerned takes up a funded early education place	✓	✓
An independent school and the child concerned does not have a funded early education place (this is a charged-for service)	✓	✗
An independent school and the child concerned takes up a funded early education place	✓	✓
A maintained school nursery class (all children are funded)	✓	✓

*If your setting is outside London Borough of Merton and you require specific advice about processes and services in Merton with regard to SEND please email providers@merton.gov.uk

5. Application processes

The majority of children with SEND do not require specialist resources or enhanced staffing to be successfully included at a setting. Most settings can, and do, meet the needs of children with SEND very well from within their existing resources and through their own best practice.

It is important to note that a delay in learning and development in the early years does not always indicate that a child has a Special Educational Need that requires special educational provision. For example, difficulties related solely to learning English as an additional language are not considered a Special Educational Need.

It is expected that providers applying for support from the Early Intervention and Inclusion Team (SEND Advisory Support) or through the SEND Inclusion Fund (SENDIF) will provide information about how they have used the resources and staffing routinely available to them within the setting to maximise the support for individual children prior to submitting an application.

Parents/carers must be consulted and involved in the decision to apply for SEND Advice or the SENDIF and be in agreement with the application. All application forms must be signed by the parent/carer and the setting's SENCo.

Process 1 - SEND Advisory Support Application

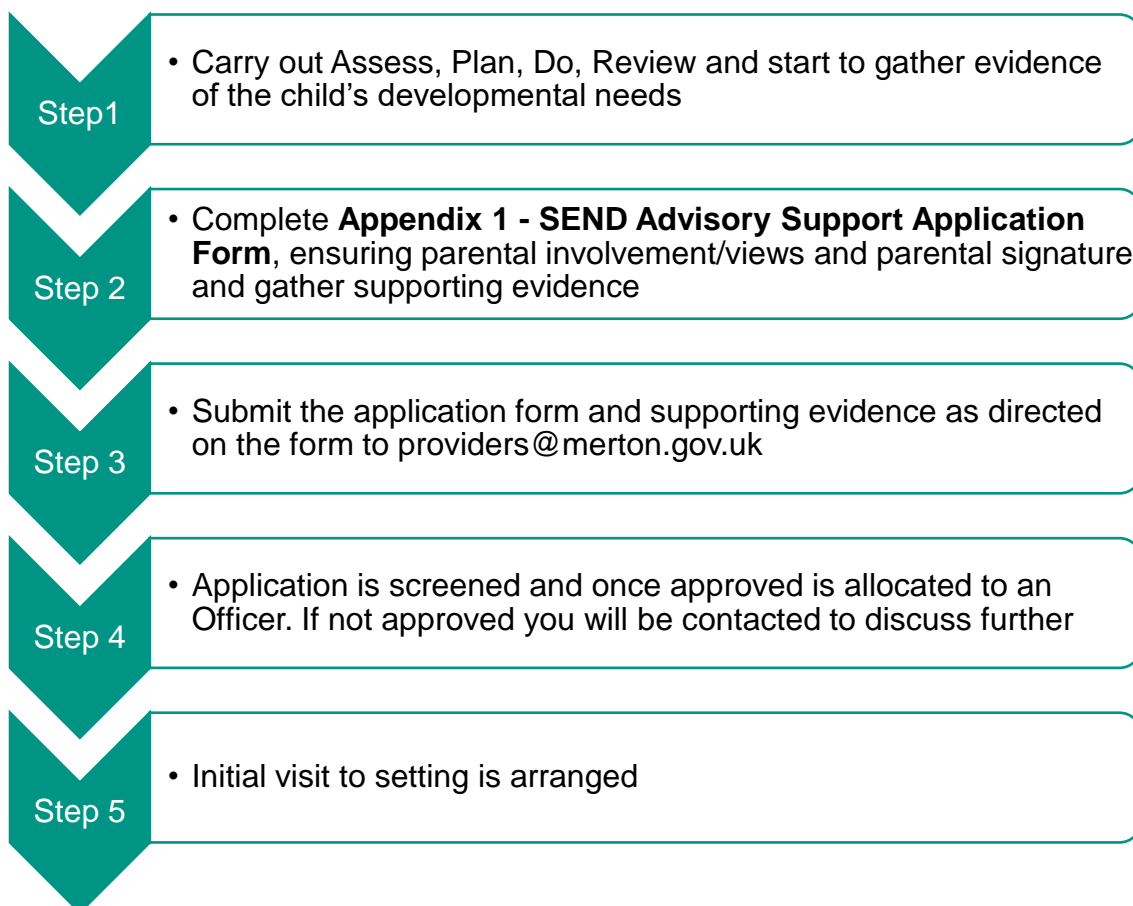
Support services provided

Applications may be submitted by Merton Early Years settings to the LA to request the following:

- Support and advice to implement SEND interventions, such as best practice in terms of use of equipment, resources, environment, small group work
- Advice and recommendations for individualised strategies, such as visual and sensory support, writing an SEN Support Plan and completion of a full cycle of support, role-modelling specific strategies/practice, support to make professional referrals, support to complete a SENDIF application (childminders or 1st application for a PVI only)

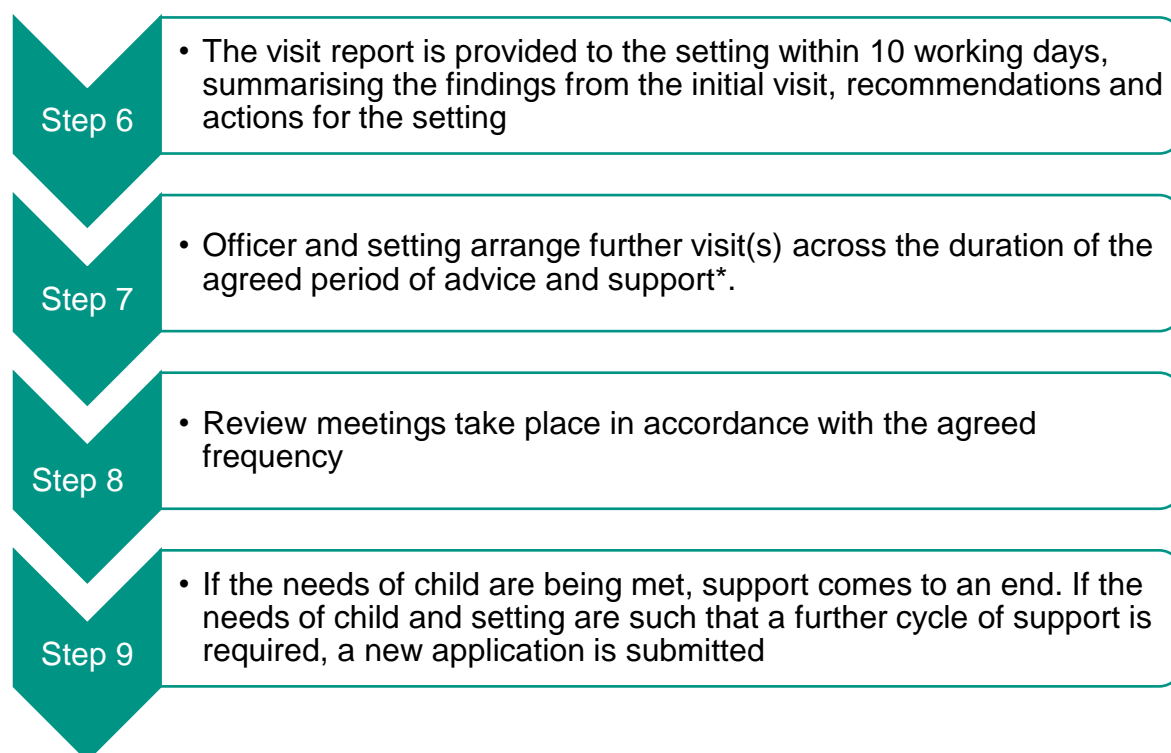
Providers will be expected to plan and monitor the provision they are making on a termly basis and use this to contribute to reviews/Officer visits. This will inform how the support has enabled the child to meet their education and learning outcomes. It is good practice for a child with an SEN support plan to have their progress and attainment reviewed in line with the outcomes within the SEN plan, and once a term as a minimum.

Application Pathway for SEND Advisory Support



During the initial visit, a Merton Council Inclusion Officer, the child's Key Person and SENCo will discuss progress and review any existing assessments, records, EYFS age / stage of development and strategies that have already been implemented

The Officer will build a picture of the child's strengths and areas of concern and check to see if there is any other support in place for the child and /or family. An observation of the child, practitioner interactions and access to resources /environment will also take place. The visit lasts about 2 hours.



* **Frequency of visits**

- Low level of need - one further visit
- Medium level of need - a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 3 further visits depending on needs of child and setting over 2 terms
- Higher level of need - a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 5 further visits over a full year

Please note that if a child moves to another setting, a new application must be submitted by the new setting if support is still required. Support cannot be transferred between settings without a new application.

Process 2 – SENDIF Application

SENDIF criteria and evidence required

The child must attend an eligible setting in Merton (see page 4 for provider eligibility), taking up a funded early education place at the setting and meet the criteria.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If SENDIF funding is agreed, funding will only be released if the child is named on the setting's early education funding claim

Applications may be submitted to the LA in accordance with the published criteria (see page 15).

Settings will need to include evidence of the child's needs, actions already taken and planning what the funding would be used for to support their application. This should include (where applicable and relevant)

- Information from parents/carers
- Information from previous settings / Portage
- Current observations /activity records
- Progress reports
- Health care plan, risk assessments or similar plans
- Evidence of individualised assessment, planning, provision, monitoring and evaluation cycles
- Evidence from professionals involved

Use of the SENDIF

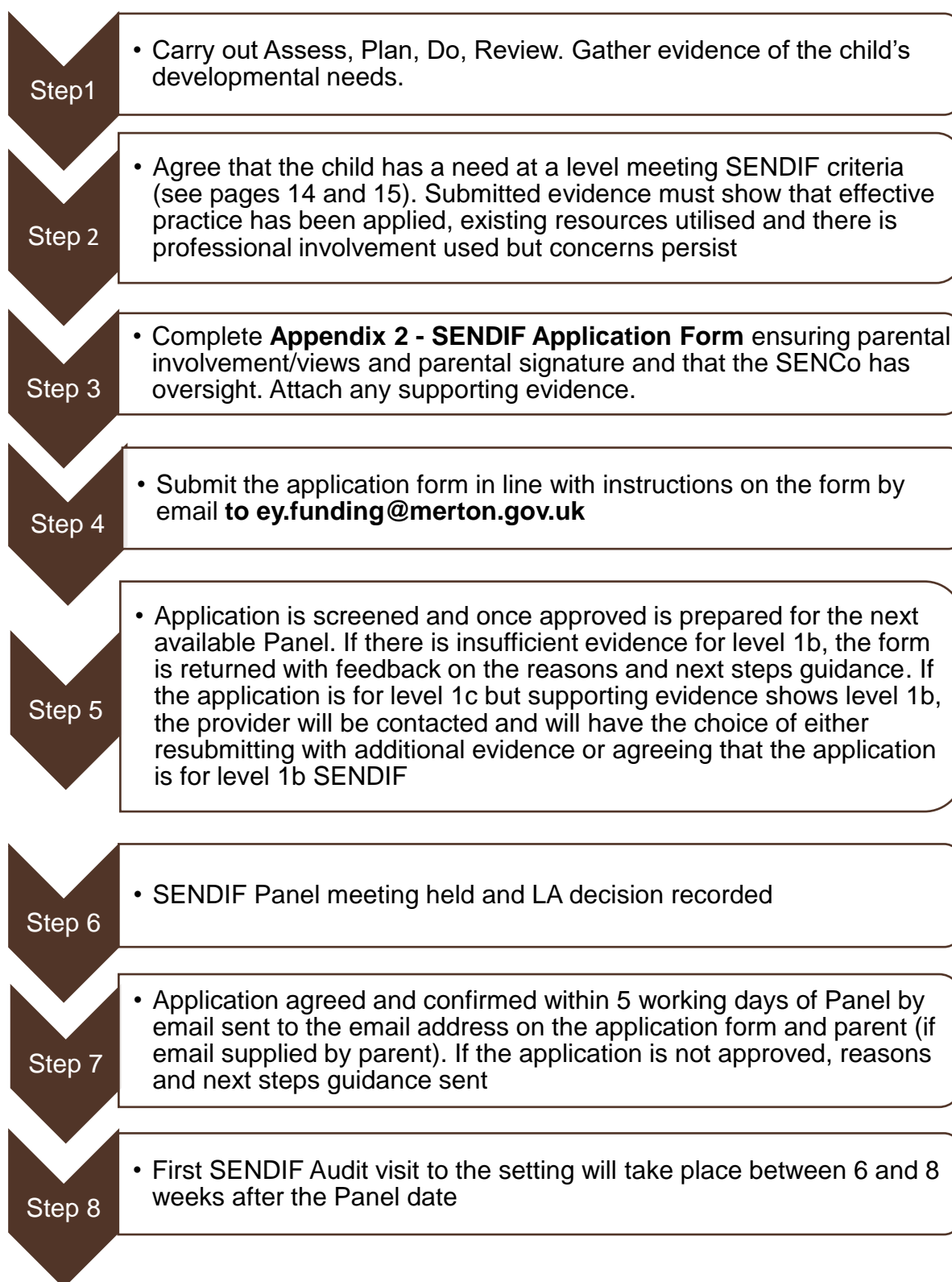
The application form provides space to outline the proposed use of the SENDIF and the SENDIF criteria (see page 15) provides suggestions as to what kinds of activities and resources the funds can be spent on.

Examples of uses of the funding are:

- Staff training specific to meet a child's needs, such as understanding autism, Makaton etc. This may be on site (charged for) training from a local SEND professional or to cover attendance at external training and cover staff costs
- As a contribution to enhance staff ratios for children with a higher level of need
- Improvements to the environment such as resources and equipment , taking into account whether the setting receives the Disability Access Fund (DAF)
- Embedding new strategies/practices

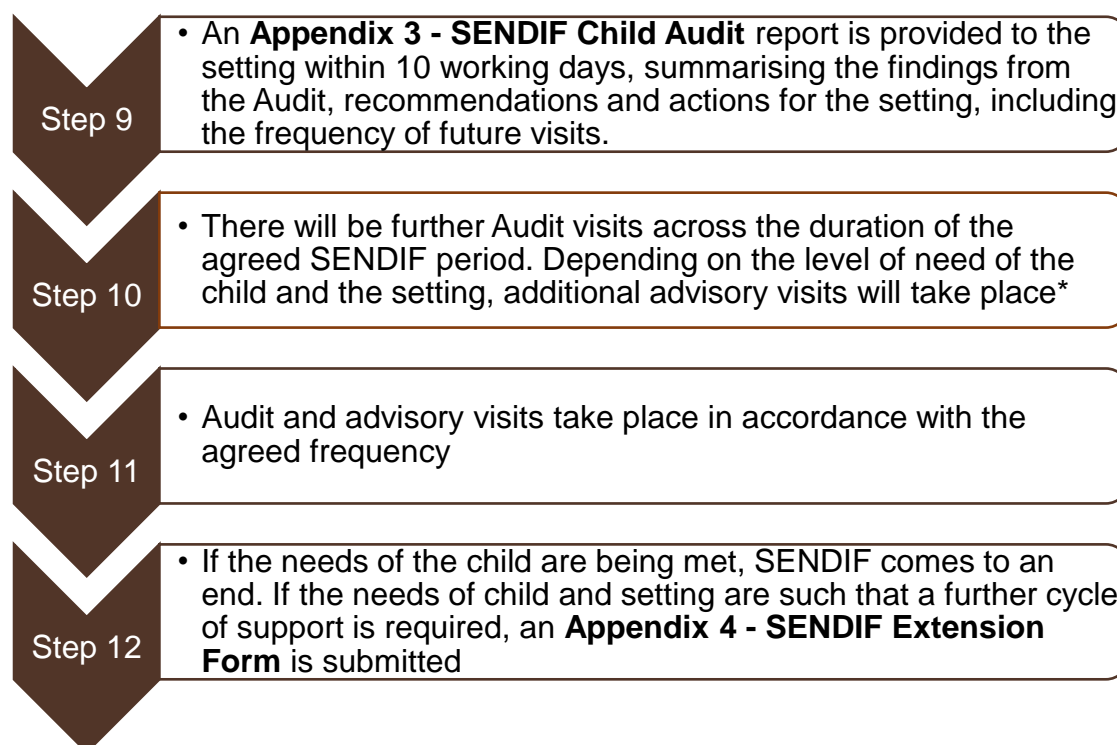
Application pathway for SENDIF

Applications may be submitted to the LA in accordance with the published pathway on the next two pages.



The Audit visit is to ensure that the funding is being used in accordance with the purposes set out in the application and that the child's education and learning outcomes are being met and progress is being made.

At the Audit visit, the Inclusion Officer will discuss concerns, what's going well and progress made with the Key Person and SENCo. They will review current strategies and intervention, evidence of SENDIF spending and its impact on the child's learning outcomes, update key information such as professional/agencies involved, new reports, and provide agreed actions/recommendations to further improve practice / SEN support. The Officer will build a picture of the child's strengths highlight areas of concern and check if there is any other support in place for the child and or family. An observation of the child, practitioner interactions and access to resources / the environment will take place. The visit will last about 2 hours.



*Frequency of Audits and Advisory visits

- Medium level of need (1b) 1 further audit visit and a maximum of 2 further advisory visits depending on needs of child and setting over 2 funding periods
- Higher level of need 2 further audit visits and a maximum of 3 advisory visits over a full year

Please note that if a child moves to another setting, a new application must be submitted by the new setting if support is still required. Please note **funding does NOT follow the child if they change placement during the funding period**

6. SEND Inclusion Fund (SENDIF)

Levels of funding

The current funding is available at two levels (see SENDIF Criteria from page 15 further details):

- 1b / Medium Level - £2.80 per hour for 3 and 4 year olds and £2.55 for 2 year olds

- 1c / High Level - £10.50 per hour for 3 and 4 year olds and £7.80 for 2 year olds (includes children undergoing an EHC Needs Assessment)

Claims and Payment Process

SENDIF will be paid to providers in line with the timetable published in Section 9.1 of the Merton Funded Early Education Guidance as part of Headcount claims (all providers) or Late Starter claims

To claim the funding, please follow the general guidance in Section 9.3 of the Funded Early Education Guidance. Ensure you confirm the child is SEN support on the early education funding claim form

The SENDIF payment will be calculated using the date of the application and the child-led claims data. Payment of SENDIF is subject to the child being on the main early education funding claim

Because the SENDIF is processed using the existing claims arrangements, the number of funded early education hours claimed for a child will correspond with the number of hours SENDIF applies.

We are aware that, on occasion, a very few children who are identified as SEN Support and in receipt of additional inclusion funding, or those with an EHCP, may, with the agreement of the setting, the parent and an Inclusion Officer, claim for the full 15 hours even if the child does not take up the full entitlement. This only happens where this has been agreed by all parties and is in the best interest of the child to support a planned transition.

However, it is expected that during the first funding period of starting at a setting, a plan is followed to enable the child to take up their full entitlement.

If after the first term the child is unable to attend for the full entitlement each week, the provider can only claim for the hours that the child is attending. In exceptional circumstances and in agreement with all parties a further period of transitioning will be agreed, and full funding allocated during this time in order to meet child's needs.

Moving between funding levels

- The movement of a child from 1b/medium level funding to 1c/higher level funding must first be agreed by the SENDIF Panel via the application process. Once agreed, the funding will automatically be upgraded from the date of submission of the application.
- If a child is receiving 1b/medium level funding and an agreement to assess them for an EHCP is made by the LA's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Integrated Service (SENDIS) Panel (this includes children resident in another LA, for whom written evidence will be required), the funding will be automatically move to 1c/higher level funding effective from the decision date for 20 calendar weeks or the effective date of the finalised EHCP, whichever is sooner.

Child changing setting at end of the funding period

The child's new setting will need to complete an **Appendix 5 - SENDIF Change of Setting form** prior to making the first early education funding claim for that child at the new setting. This confirms that transition arrangements have been made between the old setting and the new setting.

Child changing setting during a funding period – before the funding claim

There will be no funding allocated to the setting if the child is not on the funding claim, even if the SENDIF has been agreed. SENDIF is subject to the child being on the early education funding claim

Child changing setting during a funding period – after the funding claim

There will be no funding allocated to the new setting after the funding claim period. The setting that submits the early education funding claim will receive the SENDIF

Application cycle timescales

The cycle of SENDIF is as follows:

- For successful applications received before half term, the cycle will start from the date that the application was received. This will count as the first SENDIF period.
- For successful applications that are received after half term, the cycle will start in the following funding period which will count as the first SENDIF period. The funding will start however, from the date the application was received.

The tables below show how the timescales are applied in terms of when the SENDIF cycle starts and ends

Application cycle - received before half term					
Term	Autumn this year	Spring this year	Summer this year	Autumn next year	Spring next year
Autumn this year	1b 1c	1b 1c	1c		
Spring this year		1b 1c	1b 1c	1c	
Summer this year			1b 1c	1b 1c	1c

Application cycle - received after half term						
Term	Autumn this year	Spring this year	Summer this year	Autumn next year	Spring next year	Summer next year
Autumn this year	1b 1c	1b 1c	1b 1c	1c		
Spring this year		1b 1c	1b 1c	1b 1c	1c	
Summer this year			1b 1c	1b 1c	1b 1c	1c

THE SENDIF Panel does not meet once the final submission dates for the claims have passed. Once the new funding period starts the application will be considered and funding applied from the date of the new funding period.

Extension of funding

Funding is awarded for either 2 funding periods (1b) or 3 funding periods (1c). See table above for the application cycle. If a setting still has concerns and has evidence to show that the funding should be extended after these cycles, they will need to submit an **Appendix 4 - SENDIF Extension Form** to be considered by the Panel.

The SENDIF is reviewed every year to inform the following financial year's SENDIF processes and the total value of the fund. Where SENDIF funding is agreed for a timescale that cuts across two financial years, there may be changes to the unit cost of the funding released for funding periods falling into the new financial year.

Appeals Process

If evidence is submitted to Panel that does not show how the child meets the published criteria for SENDIF, an explanation will be given to the provider highlighting which criteria was not met and this decision will be final. Criteria is either met, or not met and therefore the decision cannot be appealed unless there is further/new/additional evidence that shows the criteria is met.

If the provider believes the decision making to be inconsistent with the criteria, a letter/email to the Head of the Early Years' Service should be sent within 15 working days of the decision.

On receipt of this, the Head of Service and a named Advisor or Inspector from the Education Department's School Improvement Team will review the documentation

and the evidence submitted against the published criteria. The outcome of this will be that the appeal is either upheld or not.

If the provider is not satisfied with this response they can follow the council's formal complaints procedure.

7. Appendices

Published separately

Appendix 1 - SEND Advisory Support Application Form

Appendix 2 - SENDIF Application Form

Appendix 3 - SENDIF Audit

Appendix 4 - SENDIF Extension Form

Appendix 5 - SENDIF Change of Setting Form

8. SENDIF Criteria, evidence and examples of how the funding can be used

Funding Level	Amount	Threshold and criteria	Evidence to be provided	Possible uses for the funding
1b/Medium Level	Available for both universal and extended entitlement for an initial period of a maximum of 2 funding periods.	<p>Child/ren identified with additional needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed as below age related expectations (ARE) in 3 out of the 7 aspects of the prime areas of learning; AND; Requires targeted SEN support with an SEN Support Plan in place, AND; Professional involvement from at least one external child development professional from education or health that evidences developmental delay / additional needs AND Is taking up a funded early education place and is recorded on the headcount 	<p>To make a decision to go to SENDIF Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of parental consent and views, AND; Evidence of Assess, Plan, Do, Review (SEN Support) AND; Detail of the child's age related delay and what relevant SEN related assessment tools have been used (communication audit or portage checklist); or evidence contained within the professional reports of age related delay AND Evidence of Professional report/assessment from a minimum of 1 specialist (e.g. Educational Psychologist, Paediatrician, SALT, OT, Physiotherapist or Portage Worker) that shows developmental delay / additional needs in 2 out of the 3 prime areas of learning 	<p>Social interaction or Language Groups delivered in small groups and always involving the named child (4 children maximum) x 3 a week, and where these cannot be met through existing staffing ratios (e.g if a setting has mainly 2 year funded children and a 1:4 ratio, or the setting has other children in receipt of funding which has significantly enhanced ratios, then they do not need additional funding to deliver these groups)</p> <p>Wholly integrated and individualised use of visuals at all times for the named child, including systematic use of objects of reference, photos, symbols, use of picture exchange systems etc, used consistently by all staff. (where the named child is just accessing the same visualised support as other children, then they do not need additional funding)</p> <p>Individualised and differentiated activities, that are well planned and well resourced, to support the named child's longer term outcomes and specific targets included in SEN Support Plan and/or recommended by another professional (where the activities are not carefully planned or linked to the child's SEN Support, then they do not need additional funding)</p> <p>Short direct teaching sessions with just the child and an adult, clearly planned for the individual child and linked clearly to the SEN Support Plan (it is expected that when 1:4 ratios are in place either</p>

Funding Level	Amount	Threshold and criteria	Evidence to be provided	Possible uses for the funding
				<p>due to children’s age, or due to high number of children in receipt of funding, additional funding may not be necessary)</p> <p>Individualised and differentiated support for children with a behaviour plan or with a SEN Support Plan, for children with challenging behaviour</p> <p>Risk assessments for children with risky behaviours and enhanced staffing support for short periods of the day</p> <p>Care Plans for children who require specific care which is considered above and beyond what would normally be expected for other children of a similar age; outlined by a medical professional and delivered by staff with training</p> <p>Adjustment to the environment or resources linked to the individualised child SEN Support Plan and professional reports</p> <p>Specialist or additional equipment to support children with physical disabilities and linked to the SEN Support Plan and professional reports (and where DAF is not in place).</p> <p>Changes to staff deployment to enable small group work involving the named child or individualised support for specific and planned activities for the named child, and where these cannot be done under existing ratios</p> <p>Additional supervision when accessing specific equipment or resources for planned interventions, for the named child, and where this is named in the SEN Support plan, to ensure health and safety</p>

Funding Level	Amount	Threshold and criteria	Evidence to be provided	Possible uses for the funding
				Support to manage basic hygiene, feeding and personal needs above and beyond what would normally be expected for a child given their age (note: nappy changing and changing clothes should be an integral part of caring for children under 4 in the EYFS)
1c/Higher level	Available for both universal and extended entitlement for an initial period of a maximum of 3 funding periods.	<p>Child with complex and significant needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 year olds: assessed as below age related expectations (ARE) by 12 months in 3 out of the 7 aspects of the prime areas of learning • 3 year olds: assessed as below age related expectations (ARE) by 18 months in 3 out of the 7 aspects of the prime areas of learning • 4 year olds: assessed as below age related expectations (ARE) by at least 24 months 3 out of the 7 aspects of the prime areas of learning <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires targeted SEN support with an SEN Support Plan in place, AND; • Professional involvement from at least two external child development professional from education or health that evidences developmental delay / additional needs; or one professional report from a 	<p>To make a decision to go to funding panel *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of parental consent and views, <p>AND;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Assess, Plan, Do, Review (SEN Support) for at least one term which demonstrates that a highly differentiated curriculum has been put in place and that the interventions necessary are at a much higher level than those identified at 1b <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail of the child’s age related delay and what relevant SEN related assessment tools have been used (communication audit or portage checklist); <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evidence contained within the professional reports of age related delay and of the need for a highly differentiated curriculum and interventions <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Professional reports/assessments from a minimum of 2 specialists (e.g. Educational Psychologist, 	<p>For the higher level of funding, many of the strategies and interventions identified above (1b/medium level) <u>must</u> also be in place. 1c funding is not given where only 1b interventions are evidenced in the SEN Support Plan or where 1b recommendations have been made by professionals.</p> <p>Settings should be aware that 1 to 1 support is never provided via SENDIF and funding should not be used in this way.</p> <p>1C funding should be used to provide (in addition to all the 1B interventions above):</p> <p>A highly differentiated and planned curriculum which enables intensive support and interventions to meet the targets and outcomes set for the child in the SEN Support Plan (not 1:1)</p> <p>Intensive support/teaching for the child, taking place on an individualised basis and based on recommendations being made by a number of professionals involved with the child (not 1 to 1)</p> <p>Intensive support for the child to meet Personal, Social and Emotional development (e.g. highly challenging behaviour, social interactions etc.)</p>

SEND Advisory Support and Inclusion Fund

Funding Level	Amount	Threshold and criteria	Evidence to be provided	Possible uses for the funding
		community paediatrician in relation to the areas of need AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is taking up a funded early education place and is recorded on the headcount OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN new referrals Panel has agreed to undertake an EHC Needs Assessment (Max funding is 20 calendar weeks or the effective date of a finalised EHCP, whichever is sooner) 	Paediatrician, SALT, OT, Physiotherapist, that evidences developmental delay / additional needs);	Intensive support to manage moving and handling, feeding, basic hygiene and personal needs for children with very complex special needs and care needs, with training undertaken or overseen by a community nurse and where there is a significant range of professionals involved Significant attention being paid to the provision and maintenance of a range of personal equipment and manual handling and hoist training for staff where applicable.

*On occasion, when there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances relating to the child's needs, professional judgement will be applied to inform decision-making