

Appendix 1

Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025 to 2026

(Education and skills funding agency; 24)

[Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

Highlighted are guidance to add to SENIF guidance policy

1.2 Monitoring and compliance

However, following the expansion of the early years entitlements, we are exploring changes to this tool and plan to publish an updated version containing the 2024 to 2025 planned budget s251 data in early 2025. In the meantime, we will publish a simplified tool containing the raw data provided by local authorities as part of their s251 returns for 2024 to 2025 to provide information to support local authorities with their business planning

6. Special educational needs inclusion fund (SENIF)

All local authorities are required to have a SENIF for all children eligible for the entitlements and who have SEN, **regardless of the number of hours taken**

These funds are intended to support local authorities to work with providers to recognise and support the **low-level and emerging needs of individual children** with SEN who are taking up the entitlements.

SENIFs should apply to **children attending settings in the relevant local authority area**, regardless of where they live.

Local authorities should consult with early years providers to set the value of their local SENIF.

Sources of funding

Local authorities should establish their SENIFs using funding from the early years block and/or the high needs block of their DSG allocation. Although local arrangements will vary, local authorities should consider the right balance to strike in drawing from these 2 blocks of funding, taking into account the particular pressures on high needs and early years budgets locally and the 96% pass-through requirement.

Funding allocation

local authorities should publish details on how their SENIF will be used to support their early years SEN cohort. These details should include how providers can access funding, the eligibility criteria for the fund, the planned value of the fund at the start of the financial year, and the process for allocating the fund to providers. Local

authorities should ensure that their local offer is accessible for all providers and families of eligible children.

Local authorities should endeavour to distribute funding to providers in a timely manner such that the positive impact of funding can be felt by the child as soon as possible. SENIF funding should be used to support eligible children to access the entitlements and ensure settings are inclusive and supporting individual children's needs; funding can be used in a variety of ways to meet this policy intent, and could, for example, include training, specialist resources and funding for staffing.

Local authorities should review and understand how SENIFs are used by providers, in particular to understand how they support eligible children to access the entitlements. This could include implementing an audit process to ensure funding is delivering against local objectives.