

**Tower Hamlets Early Years Inclusion Fund**

**Guidance for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings**

**(September 2018 - March 2019)**

**Introduction**

Government funding is available for all 3 and 4 year old children and eligible 2 year old children who meet specified criteria. In Tower Hamlets we refer to all settings as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings. This provision consists of private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings, child minders and schools. This guidance deals specifically with children attending PVI settings.

All local authorities are required to establish an inclusion fund for 3 and 4 year olds who are taking up any number of hours of free entitlement in PVI settings. Tower Hamlets has extended this offer to 2 year olds who are also accessing the free entitlement at these settings. The purpose of this document is to provide information and guidance on the Early Years Inclusion Fund and how it can be accessed.

This guidance is informed by the *Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (February 2018)* and the *Special educational needs 0-25 code of practice (2015)*.

All early years providers are required to have arrangements in place to identify and support disabled children and children with special educational needs (SEN) and to promote equality of opportunity for children in their care.

The majority of children with additional needs will be supported through the setting’s existing resources and the setting’s own best practice.

A smaller number of children may have emerging significant additional needs where additional provision will be required. Having a diagnosis does not automatically mean the child will need high levels of additional provision some children will make good progress within the everyday high quality provision.

**What is the Early Years Inclusion Fund?**

The Early Years Inclusion Fund provides a contribution to support inclusion of children with emerging significant additional needs. Please be aware that funding is not guaranteed therefore any expenditure incurred prior to a decision is the responsibility of the setting.

Funding for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Provision During assessment (PDA) is provided through the SEN Section.

Funding is linked to the free entitlement that the child is accessing.

**Who is it for?**

Early years providers in PVI settings who provide places for the free entitlement for 2, 3 or 4 year old children. Inclusion funding is to support inclusion of children attending settings who are in receipt of their entitlement and meet the specified criteria.

There are 4 criteria and the child must meet one or more of the following to be considered for inclusion funding:

* The child has complex medical needs that require immediate or continuous intervention to ensure the child’s safety and welfare.
* The child’s personal, social and emotional needs results in their behaviour presenting as a danger to themselves or others and support required to meet their needs.
* The child has significant social-communication needs where support is essential to develop their communication and interaction.
* The child has a significant physical or sensory needs requiring support to access the learning opportunities within the setting.

The Early Years Inclusion Fund is available where children’s needs meet one or more of the criteria above. It is not available for children with a completed Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or receiving Provision During Assessment (PDA) funding (this provides support for children undergoing an EHC assessment). EHCP and PDA funding is through the SEN Section.

**What funding is available?**

This funding provides a fixed amount per term depending on whether the child is accessing 15 or 30 hours free entitlement. The fixed level amounts are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Number of hours free entitlement** | **Amount per term** |
| Universal funded 3 and 4 year olds and funded 2 year olds  (15 hours) | £1,500 |
| Extended entitlement  (30 hours) | £3,000 |

A panel will use the evidence and information provided on the Inclusion Funding for PVI Early Years Settings application form to decide whether to recommend funding applications. The decision will be based on the application and evidence provided.

If there are two or more children attending the same sessions who meet the above criteria, the panel will consider the level of need outlined in each application to determine whether a single fixed amount will be adequate for all the children or whether an increased level of funding will be recommended.

If funding is not approved, settings are responsible for any costs they have incurred.

**What can the funding be used for?**

The funding is intended to support early years settings with early intervention to address emerging significant needs.

Funding can be used in a variety of ways:

* Purchase specific equipment. This would enable the setting to purchase specific equipment to support the child’s access to play and learning opportunities. For example wedges for children with physical needs.
* Make adaptations to the environment. This would enable the setting to fund small adaptations to the physical environment to enable access for the child, for example grab rails, ramps.
* Access specific training to build capacity of the staff in meeting the child’s identified needs.
* Pay for cover arrangements to enable staff to access relevant training to meet the child’s needs or attend meetings to plan for the child’s needs.
* As a contribution towards enhanced staffing for the setting to meet child’s needs. It is not intended to provide continuous one to one support for individual children but as a contribution to enable children to have support to access the setting and make progress in their learning and development. It is essential that the Key person is responsible for the planning and delivery of interventions whilst being supported by the wider staff group. Also that support plans are developed in partnership with parents.

**What is the duration of funding?**

Funding is available during Tower Hamlets term time only. Where children are accessing a ‘stretched’ free entitlement during holiday periods, settings are asked to think flexibly about how they use inclusion funding over this period.

Funding is awarded to the setting in which the child is receiving their free entitlement. However, if a child accesses their free entitlement over two settings, an application can be made from each setting. Where a child moves to another PVI setting, the funding is not transferable. The previous setting would be required to return any funding from the point when the child left their setting and the new setting will be required to make an application for inclusion funding. Where a child attends two settings, approved funding will be distributed equitably pro rata between the settings.

**How to apply to the Early Years Inclusion Fund?**

Use the application form and attach the relevant supporting documentation. All sections on the application form need to provide full information as stated in each section. A panel will use the information provided on the application form to inform their decisions. Any additional reports or supporting information is used for the initial checking stage only.

Requests for inclusion funding for each term must be received before the half term break to be considered for that term.

When considering applying for inclusion funding it is **essential** that you discuss the process with your **Area Inclusion Coordinator** who will be able to advise you on the funding and application. If you decide that it is appropriate to proceed please complete all sections of the application form.

**How is the decision made?**

There are three stages within the decision making process.

1. Applications are checked for accuracy and evidence.
2. Applications are submitted to the Panel consisting of senior members of the Integrated Early Years Service.
3. If the Panel recommend the application, it is progressed to the Head of the Integrated Early Years Service for final approval.

You will be informed of the decision in writing.

**Exceptional Circumstances**

The Panel will always consider individual circumstances and whether criteria and thresholds should be waived on the grounds of exceptionality.

**How the inclusion fund is monitored?**

Settings will need to monitor the effectiveness of the support provided by the Early Years Inclusion Funding in relation to outcomes for the child. Evidence of monitoring must be demonstrated on the Inclusion Funding Monitoring/Reapplication form which includes:

* Information on how the funding has been used
* Information about the child’s progress such as tracking, My Plan - Review (this may be qualitative rather than quantitative, for example evidence that the child is settled in the setting and able to participate and engage in activities)
* Information about the progress towards outcomes for the child.

This form must be submitted at the end of each term. The monitoring form is used as evidence of appropriateness of use of funds as well as evidence for subsequent funding.

**Can re-applications to the Early Years Inclusion Fund be made?**

If the setting re-applies for funding, then a completed Inclusion Funding Monitoring/Reapplication form must be submitted to the Inclusion Manager giving your reasons for reapplication and providing any additional reports or information (for example further referrals to services, Notification to the Local Authority, stating if a request has been submitted for an EHC assessment). Where a child has long term significant needs, be aware that an EHC assessment may need to be considered in discussion with parents and any services involved.

**What is the availability of inclusion funding?**

Please be aware that the Inclusion budget is reviewed on a termly basis to determine funds available for the following term and the offer will be amended accordingly.

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