

# **Kirklees Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Inclusion Fund Policy**

## **Introduction**

One of Kirklees Council's goals is to ensure that children in our area have the best start in life (Best Start Shared Outcome).

Through the Kirklees Local Offer, we provide information, services, and activities for young people aged 0 to 25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

## **Purpose of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Inclusion Fund (SENDIF)**

SENDIF is part of the Kirklees approach to supporting inclusion of children with SEND to participate in Early Years education.

It provides extra money to childcare providers so they can better support children aged 0 to 5 years old with SEND.

The government says all local authorities must have a SEND Inclusion Fund.

## **Purpose and timing of this policy**

The purpose of this policy is to inform childcare providers, parents, and other interested people about Kirklees Council's approach to SENDIF.

This policy applies to all SENDIF given to childcare providers from 1 January 2025.

For SENDIF given to childcare providers between 1 September and 31 December 2024, this policy applies to new applications only. During this period, existing SENDIF+ applications will be funded in line with the previous policy.

## **Eligibility**

Childcare providers must have arrangements in place to support children with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These arrangements should include a clear approach to identifying and responding to SEND.

Kirklees Council expects childcare providers to work in partnership with parents and/or carers to implement any support a child needs. It is crucial that there is regular monitoring through the graduated approach - assess, plan, do, review.

Many children with SEND will **not** require extra resources to be successfully integrated into settings. We expect childcare providers to make reasonable adjustments to their universal inclusive high-quality practice for children with emerging SEND needs or identified SEND needs - including medical needs - by using their core funding. Only when there is a clear need for additional resources should childcare providers seek SENDIF.

Subject to the above requirements, all registered childcare providers that receive funding for free childcare hours can apply for SENDIF for eligible children.

Childcare providers in Kirklees can get funding from SENDIF from the term after a child reaches 9-months of age up to school age, as long as the child:

- is receiving free childcare hours from the government

AND

- has been identified at SEN Support

**‘Free childcare hours’** means when childcare is paid for by the government in the following ways:

- 15 hours free childcare for children aged from 9 months old to 2 years old for eligible working parents/carers, extending to 30 free hours from September 2025.
- 15 hours free childcare for 2-year-olds if their parents/carers receive a low income, receive certain benefits or their child meets certain criteria.
- 15 hours free childcare for all 3-to-4-year-olds and additional 15 hours for eligible working parents/carers (up to 30 hours).

The above entitlements are for 38 weeks a year or the stretch equivalent. Children become eligible for a free place the term after the prescribed age.

**‘SEN support’** is when a child receives an enhancement to the provision or learning offer within their setting. This provision is additional to or different from the universal inclusive high-quality practice available to all children of a similar age.

### **Applications**

It is the responsibility of childcare providers to apply for SENDIF each term via the Provider Portal.

Kirklees Council will monitor and audit the use of SENDIF to ensure it is being used appropriately. If SENDIF criteria are not being met, funding will be withdrawn and could be recouped from the childcare provider.

### **Amount of money overall per year**

The value of SENDIF may change each financial year and is subject to the annual Kirklees Early Years Funding Formula consultation. Kirklees Council will agree and publish the budget for the year’s SENDIF once the annual consultation is complete. The **‘financial year’** runs from the start of April to the end of the following March.

### **Amount of money per child**

Each childcare provider is given an amount of money from SENDIF for each hour that they look after a child with SEND. Only the free childcare hours funded by the government count towards this total.

The amount of money paid to childcare providers per child per hour may change each financial year.

After the 'Kirklees Early Years Funding Formula' consultation that takes place each year, Kirklees Council will agree and publish the amount paid to childcare providers per child per hour for the upcoming year.

Kirklees Council will monitor and review spending within each financial year and may adjust the hourly rate in-year where required, in consultation with childcare providers.

### **Changes to the rules**

In March 2023, the government decided to expand the number of free childcare hours available and offer them to more children. Since then, the government has said that a local authority's SENDIF must be available to all children getting free childcare hours, including the extra hours.

In Kirklees, this means we have decided to change the rules around our SENDIF as the government's free childcare hours offer expands. The new rules are outlined in the policy above. In the past, we had something called 'SENDIF+', where Kirklees Council voluntarily decided to provide SENDIF for childcare hours not funded by the government. With the government's expansion of free childcare hours, it no longer makes as much sense to do this.

SENDIF will also no longer contribute to the costs of 'after school clubs' for school-age children, a very small number of whom were in receipt of funding under old rules. All such funding will end from 1 January 2025.

As noted above in the '**Amount of money per child**' section, SENDIF will now be based solely on the number of free childcare hours each child uses, rather than the total number of hours they spend in childcare.

To help make this change smoother for childcare providers, the new policy will apply in two stages as summarised in the '**Purpose and timing of this policy**' section above.

Where providers require any additional support with children with SEND, they can contact Kirklees Council's Specialist Early Years SEND Team via [dewsbury.psychology@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:dewsbury.psychology@kirklees.gov.uk)