1. Introduction

The primary focus for Early Years and Childcare is to commission quality, innovative services, effectively work with those responsible for operational delivery and to improve services for early years (up to the end of the Foundation Stage) and childcare services (children 0 –14 or up to 19 for disabled children).

Early Years and Childcare inclusion funding comes through Essex County Council (ECC) to support specific priorities and most importantly to ensure every Essex child has the best possible start in life. Officers review ECC priorities and funding available annually, in advance of allocating the budget for the new financial year.

The funding must support high quality provision and the inclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

2. Early Years and Childcare Funding Panel

All recommendations for funding are made by formal process through the Early Years and Childcare Funding Panel. The process is designed to be transparent and fair.

Each application is assessed for eligibility and accuracy before it is presented to the Panel.

Funding to successful applicants is paid when the terms and conditions of a Funding Agreement have been accepted. It will be monitored to ensure that funding is spent in line with the terms and conditions of the Funding Agreement.

3. Funding Panel members

Panel members:
- Chair – Essex County Councillor
- Vice Chair
- Representative from Early Years and Childcare
- Representative from SEN/AEN Provider Services
- Parent Representatives

Specialist Early Years and Childcare Advisers to the Panel:
- Equality and Inclusion Officer
- Business Management Consultant
4. Priorities for Early Years and Childcare in Essex

The overarching aim of all Early Years and Childcare funding is to provide children with the best start in life; equality of opportunity and to improve outcomes for all Essex children.

The new Essex County Council (ECC) Organisation Strategy sets out the areas of focus for 2017-2021. It articulates how ECC will achieve better outcomes for Essex and secure the ambitions set out in the Vision for Essex. The four strategic aims are set out below along with the priorities of each aim:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Aim</th>
<th>Strategic priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Enable inclusive economic growth</td>
<td>• Help people in Essex prosper by increasing their skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Enable Essex to attract and grow large firms in high growth industries</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Target economic development to areas of opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Help people get the best start and age well</td>
<td>• Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their potential</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Enable more vulnerable adults to live independent of social care</td>
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<td>• Improve the health of people in Essex</td>
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<td>3 Help create great places to grow up, live and work</td>
<td>• Help to secure stronger, safer and more neighbourly Communities</td>
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<td>• Help secure sustainable development and protect the environment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Facilitate growing communities and new homes</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Transform the council to achieve more with less</td>
<td>• Limit cost and drive growth in revenue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Re-imagine how residents’ needs can be met in a digital world</td>
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Essex County Council’s strategic aim – Help people get the best start and age well

The strategy is underpinned by proposed actions and how the council will align resources to ensure people in Essex get the best start and age well.

5. General terms and conditions of funding

Who can apply?

In general you can apply for funding if you are offering early years provision and/or childcare and are one of the following:

- An Ofsted registered childcare provider whether private, charitable or a social enterprise
- An Ofsted registered childminder
- A school where childcare falls outside of educational statutory provision (including those who have changed their status to an academy)
- A school providing registered nursery provision
Eligibility

All applications must be made through an eligible childcare provider as we are unable to fund individuals.

To be eligible for funding, you must have completed your data returns relating to childcare sufficiency.

You must also not be in breach of any other contract we hold with you.

The Panel will not recommend any retrospective funding or funding of goods or services received before the award of the funding unless with the prior agreement of Essex County Council.

6. Panel meeting dates and application deadline

Panel meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month. The deadline for receipt of full applications is the first day of each month. Applications received after this deadline will be held over to the following agenda. This is non-negotiable.

Dates for panel meetings during the 2019-20 financial year are available here.

7. Types of funding available

There are 3 types of funding available to support individual children in Essex settings:

- Full Inclusion
- Interim Inclusion
- Emergency Childcare

All applications for inclusion funding will be assessed using the information and supporting evidence provided by the setting. This information/evidence will also be used to determine the hourly rate. It is the setting’s responsibility to provide sufficient, relevant and recent information.

The application form must be completed in full so that it can be considered as a stand-alone document. Applicants should not rely on any additional information, including the endorsement or supporting evidence to provide the information required by the panel.

Where the panel feel that insufficient information is provided on the application form it will be rejected and any additional information or supporting evidence, including the endorsement will NOT be read.

Please be aware that this is an application process and the Panel is tasked with managing the budget to ensure the local authority meets its duty of sufficiency of affordable high quality childcare that offers choice to parents and carers across Essex.
Funding may be paid at any time throughout the financial year. However, all Funding Agreements expire on 31 March. Where applicable, it is the setting's responsibility to reapply each financial year.

**Full Inclusion Funding**

**Aim of the Funding**

Inclusion funding is to support the inclusion of children who have special educational needs, a disability, an additional need or who for other reasons might be unable to either access or gain the full benefits from provision.

You can apply for funding only towards the cost of an additional member of staff during the time the child is in attendance not setting up/clearing up, meetings, handover, attending or buying training etc.

Children who are not Essex residents attending an Essex provision may be funded in line with their FEEE entitlement only.

Inclusion funding is available for any hours the child attends that are not already funded by the SEN Premium. You can apply for additional funding if the child attends for more than their Free Early Education Entitlement hours including the extended FEEE.

Inclusion funding cannot be used to pay any building or refurbishment costs nor can it be used to cover childcare fees. Free Early Education Entitlement Funding for up to 15 hours per week during term time is available for all 3 and 4-year-olds and some 2-year-olds. Eligible families can also access Extended FEEE for up to an additional 15 hours per week during term time. Further information about FEEE funding, and how to claim it, is available [here](http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Provision-Guidance-for-Early-Years-Nov-16.pdf).

**What does inclusion funding cover?**

The funding should be used to enable children to be fully supported, included and able to participate in activities.

- **Additional staffing** for a child who requires enhanced support for some or all of the time: please note; funding is only available for the times the child is in attendance to a maximum of 10 hours per day. Funding for setting up, attending meetings etc, is not available

  Please note the hourly rate you can apply for is in line with the rates set by SEN/AEN Provider Services based on the child's level of need:

  **Low: £3.68** ~ for children with SEN/AEN who need enhanced support for some periods of their time in the setting

High: £6.90 ~ for children with a high level of medical need or a life threatening medical condition which requires continuous enhanced support

Group Funding ~ £10.00
The Panel will consider applications for 1 additional member of staff to support:

- groups of 3 or more children with identified AEN/SEND who have similar outcomes and require strategies that can be implemented in a targeted group which is ‘additional to and different from’ universal EYFS provision e.g. speech and language interventions such as ELKLAN or social communication groups to support Good Beginnings

OR

- groups of 3 or more children with identified AEN/SEND who attend at the same time and require enhanced support that can either be provided through a 1:3+ ratio or individual support at separate times during their attendance

This will be paid at £10.00 per hour to reflect the cost of using a member of staff who has trained or qualified at a higher level.

Applications for group funding must include detailed information about each individual child, for example Provisions and Outcomes.

How to apply

If you wish to apply, you will need to fully complete an application form and submit it with any available evidence relevant to the child's need. This might be demonstrated through the following:

- **For additional staffing:** a letter or report from the relevant professional(s), for example a specialist teacher, speech and language therapist, or consultant paediatrician. This should describe the child's abilities and areas for development and detail how it is anticipated that any additional staff time would be beneficial to support the child's specific and holistic development. Recommendations should take into account the required level of support that is greater than that currently provided under the legal ratio in the setting. When submitting a group application, supporting evidence **must be provided for each child in the group.**

Please ensure that:

- The name of the child is blanked out/removed from all supporting documentation and only the child's initials and DOB are visible to enable identification between multiple applications from one setting (applications not complying with this will be returned to the applicant)
- All documentation is dated within the last 12 months.

Options for the relevant professional to contact to request an endorsement of your application:
Area SENCO; specialist teacher; relevant health or social care professional – someone who is familiar with your setting and can comment on how inclusion funding will enable the child to be fully supported, included and able to participate in activities.

For school aged children in out of school provision the SENCO at the child's school may be able to provide an endorsement.

**Interim Inclusion Funding**

Interim Inclusion funding differs from Full Inclusion funding in the following ways:

- An Interim Inclusion funding application is appropriate when a child has a SEND or additional needs that were **not known** before the child began to attend, or have become apparent in a sudden or unexpected manner
- An Interim Inclusion funding application can be submitted up to 8 days before the panel meeting date. i.e. the Monday before the week of the panel meeting.

**Aim of the Funding**

Interim Inclusion funding is available as short-term (up to 12 weeks) funding to support the inclusion of children that the setting have identified as having an additional need which is preventing them from fully accessing the provision offered at the setting as appropriate.

Children who are **not** Essex residents attending an Essex provision may be funded in line with their FEEE entitlement only.

The funding is designed to enable the setting to provide enhanced support while assessments and further information are gathered for a Full Inclusion application, where applicable.

This funding is only available once for an individual child. It is payable for up to a maximum of three panel meeting dates (up to 12 weeks).

The interim inclusion process is **not** designed to be a 'short cut' to obtaining inclusion funding. Where there is evidence that the child's needs are, or have been, well known to the setting you will be asked to resubmit using a full inclusion application.

**What does the funding cover?**

The funding should be used to enable children to be included and able to participate in activities through additional staffing to provide enhanced support.

Interim Inclusion funding is intended as a contribution towards the cost of providing enhanced support. (please note: funding is only available for the times the child is in attendance to a maximum of 10 hours per day. Funding for setting up, attending meetings etc, is not available)
Please note: the hourly rate has been set at £3.68 for all applications although the panel retain the discretion to recommend a higher amount where there is evidence to support a need; for example, where a child has a life threatening or complex medical condition.

How to apply

You will need to complete the Interim Inclusion Application form available [here](#); obtain an endorsement from SEN/AEN Provider Services; attach any supporting evidence and send it to inclusion.funding@essex.gov.uk

Please ensure that the name of the child is blanked out/removed from all supporting documentation and only the child’s initials and DOB are visible to enable identification between multiple applications from one setting. Applications not compliant with this will be returned.

SEN funding that may be available:

Please see the following information regarding eligibility for the SEN Premium. When applying for inclusion funding please ensure it is for additional support, eg hours over than those covered by the SEN Premium.

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Premium

The SEN premium is a supplement to the standard hourly rate of funding under the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) for eligible children from the term after their third birthday. It is allocated to settings who are providing the FEEE for individual children with complex/severe SEN and disabilities who have been notified to the local authority under the statutory health duty (Section 23).

The SEN premium is not allocated for two-year-old children with complex/severe SEN and disabilities that are eligible for FEEE2. Providers are able to claim FEEE2 through an online application process.

The SEN premium matches the universal and extended FEEE offer and is determined by the SEN/AEN Provider Services Preschool Allocations Panel (PAP). The Preschool Allocations Panel will consider whether an SEN premium is required for children resident in Essex who meet all of the following criteria:

- Are subject to a statutory notification of probably SEN/Disability by the Health Authority (Section 23)
- Have special educational needs/disability determined to be complex and/or severe
- Have had an initial assessment of additional or different needs undertaken, which includes specification of the type of SEN provision required
- Are accessing the universal FEEE, commencing the term after their third birthday.
There is no application process for the SEN premium. PAP allocates resources, including the SEN premium, as part of the local authority’s response to a statutory notification by the Health Authority, and will ask settings to provide information to support assessment of need and monitoring of outcomes. For enquiries email the Preschool.AllocationsPanel@essex.gov.uk
Emergency Childcare Funding

Aim of the funding

Emergency Childcare Funding is short-term (up to 6 weeks) funding to support individuals (children and their families) through a specific difficult period in their lives. This funding will be available whilst referrals are being made to appropriate statutory agencies, ie children's social care/family operations.

It may be used to cover costs associated with childcare, including fees or transport. Where there are children aged under five years within the family, we would encourage you to also link them to their local family hub for further family support.

This funding will only be paid for up to six weeks in the first instance and is then subject to further review.

What does the funding cover?

1. Costs associated with childcare following an emergency e.g. sudden serious illness, accident or bereavement of the child's carer or close family member and no referrals to statutory agencies for either the child or the parent/carer have yet been made or completed.

   OR

2. Where urgent childcare is required immediately as an interim measure to support the child/family whilst more sustainable and ongoing funding is realised.

How to apply

As with all other funding, the application must be made by an Ofsted registered childcare provider.

You should send an email or attach a letter to: inclusion.funding@essex.gov.uk detailing the child’s/family’s needs along with:

- Full contact details for your setting – name, address, telephone number, Ofsted registration number
- The child’s initials and date of birth
- The amount you are requesting broken down by daily/weekly rates
- Details of referrals to statutory agencies and/or details of ongoing funding that has been applied for
- Where appropriate, supporting information from a professional working with the family.

Please ensure that the name of the child is blanked out/removed from all supporting documentation and only the child’s initials and DOB are visible to enable identification between multiple applications from one setting (applications not compliant with this will be returned to the applicant)
8. Processing your application

When your application is received, it will be checked to ensure it is complete.

Applications that have not been endorsed will not be placed on the agenda for the meeting.

We may need to contact you for clarification or further information. Please provide a response quickly to avoid delays.

Please ensure that the email address on your application form is one that is checked regularly.

Please be aware that failure to respond may result in your application being held over until the next available Panel meeting date.

Notification of EY&C Funding Panel decisions

The outcome of your application will be communicated via email only. Information will not be given over the telephone or in person.

If your application is successful you will receive a Funding Agreement after the meeting

If your application is unsuccessful you will be informed via the email address provided on your application form and given the reason why your application was unsuccessful.

The EY&C Funding Panel decision is final and no further information will be given out over the telephone or via email.

Please note that funding is limited so we cannot guarantee that all applications will be successful.

Issuing of Funding Agreements

If your application is successful, you will be notified via email with the relevant documents attached. You will then be required to complete an acceptance form to confirm you accept the terms and conditions of the funding agreement.

This must be returned before any funds can be released. Failure to return the completed form by the date specified will result in the offer of funding being withdrawn.

Payments will be made by BACS into the account details provided on the acceptance form.

Monitoring and reporting requirements
If your setting receives an Inadequate Ofsted judgement and you are in receipt of funding through the Early Years and Childcare Funding panel (inclusion, emergency childcare, capital) you must immediately inform us by emailing the EY&C Funding Panel mailbox.

The Panel will review the reasons for the Inadequate Ofsted judgement and make a decision on whether the funding can continue (subject to any conditions being met).

You are required to use the funds before the end of the financial year in which the funding is confirmed. (The financial year runs from 1 April – 31 March.)

If successful, you may be required to complete and submit one or more monitoring returns along with receipts/evidence of expenditure at specified intervals from the date of the funding being awarded.

Early Years and Childcare may request information relating to individual children and their attendance, where this is relevant to the funding. You must therefore ensure that you have the relevant consent to pass this information to Essex County Council, in line with data protection requirements. Visits by ECC staff may also be made in order to monitor compliance.

Where there is a subsequent instalment of the funding to be made, and a monitoring return has been requested, payment may be withheld until a satisfactory monitoring return has been received.

Examples of monitoring evidence that may be requested include:

- Evidence that staff ratios were increased for the hours covered by the inclusion grant. For example, signing in sheets, rotas or staff planning documents.
- Attendance registers and sick notes for children, where they have been absent without notice.
- Receipts clearly dated within the funding agreement date, with the item(s), supplier name and total amount.
- Invoices clearly dated within the funding agreement date, with the item(s), supplier name, and total amount.

**Please note:** Failure to provide, when requested, satisfactory monitoring information may result in you having to repay part or the total amount of the inclusion funding and may affect your setting accessing funding in the future.