

Early Years SEND Funding Guidance April 2026

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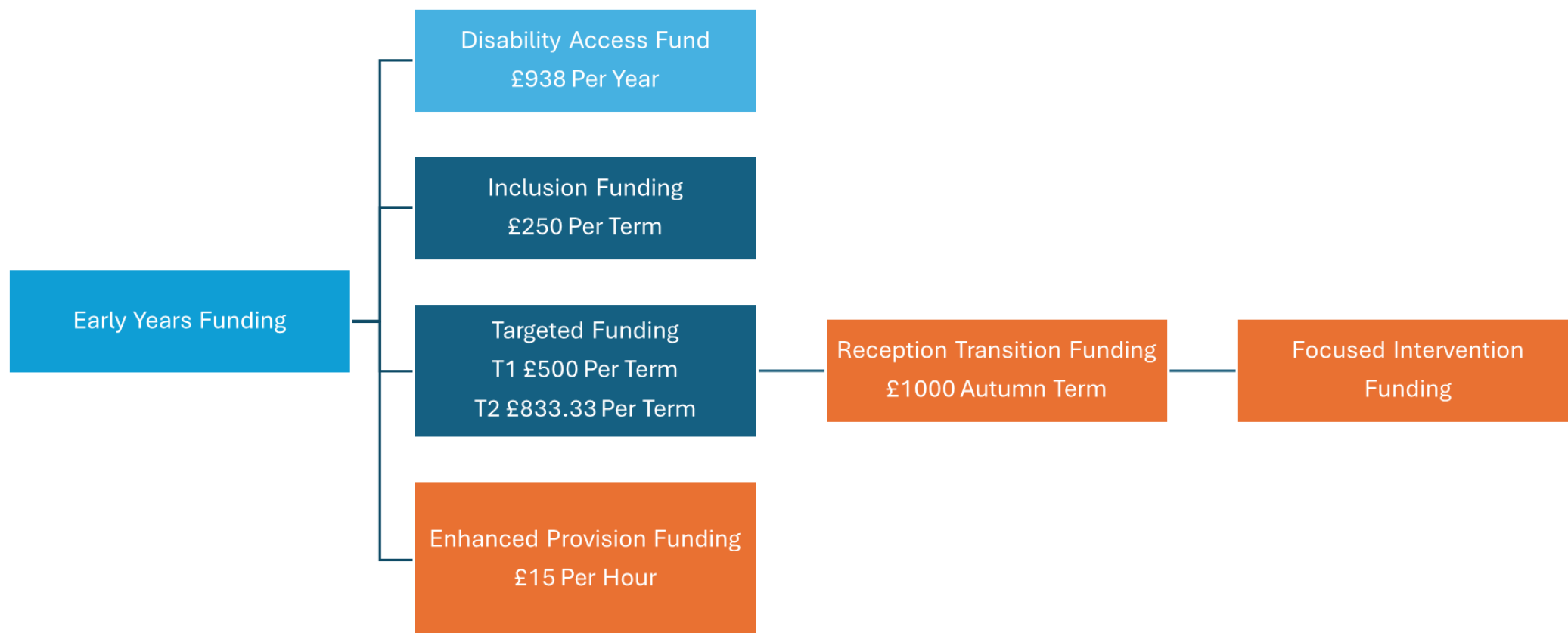
1. Introduction

This guidance document provides a clear and comprehensive overview of the Early Years SEND funding streams available to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are accessing their Early Education Entitlements across Early Years provision in Hertfordshire. See Appendix 1 for more information on Early Education Entitlements. The purpose of this guidance is to help providers and professionals understand the aim of each funding stream, who it supports, and how it is accessed, ensuring that children receive timely and appropriate help in line with the Graduated Response.

Early identification, inclusive practice, and high-quality provision are central to securing positive outcomes for children with SEND. The funding streams outlined in this guidance are designed to offer graduated layers of support that align with a child's level of need and the provision required to meet those needs—from emerging concerns identified through everyday observation to highly personalised provision requiring sustained specialist involvement. Professional advice and support from the Early Years SEND Team is closely matched to the needs of the child and their setting, ensuring the most effective and efficient use of allocated funding.

This document should be read alongside the Focused Intervention Funding Guidance.

2. Overview



At A Glance

Funding Stream	One-Line Summary
Early Years Inclusion Funding	<i>Supports early and emerging needs through reasonable adjustments that strengthen early identification and inclusive everyday practice.</i>
Early Years Targeted Funding	<i>Supports children with developing SEND needs through structured Assess Plan Do Review (APDR) cycles, targeted adult-led interventions and moderate adaptations.</i>
Early Years Enhanced Provision Funding	<i>Supports children with complex, established SEND needs through personalised, high-level provision and sustained specialist strategies.</i>
Reception Transition Funding	<i>Supports children with developing SEND needs entering Reception by ensuring continuity of targeted strategies, structured support and environmental adaptations during the first term.</i>

3. Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Aim:

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is intended to support early years providers to make their setting more accessible and inclusive for children with SEND. The funding is designed to help providers remove barriers to participation and improve the child's experience within their funded early education entitlement.

Amount:

£938 (set by central government) per year

Eligibility:

A child may receive DAF Funding when:

- They are accessing their free early education entitlement (15 or 30 hours).
- They have a valid Disability Living Allowance (DLA) award letter.
- The parent must nominate the childcare provider to claim DAF on the [Parent Declaration Form](#).

Access:

- Providers apply through the Early Years Portal by selecting the DAF checkbox.
- Providers must email fee@hertfordshire.gov.uk with the child's:
 - DLA reference number
 - Award start date
 - Award end date
- Only one DAF payment is made per child per year.
- If a child attends more than one childcare setting, the parent must choose one provider to receive the DAF payment.
- If a child moves to a new setting before the next annual DAF payment is due, the new provider cannot claim the funding until the DAF anniversary payment date.
- The local authority cannot reclaim DAF funding from a previous provider if a child has moved settings before the anniversary payment is due.

For more information on DAF funding please visit the Early Years Website [EarlyYears | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

Allocation:

- This funding is allocated as a lump sum annual payment.
- Providers will be able to see a record of this payment in the Finance Section of the Early Years Portal. Please see the Early Years website for more details on this [Guides for Providers | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

4. Early Years Inclusion Funding

Aim:

To support early and emerging SEND needs by strengthening initial identification, promoting high quality, inclusive, everyday practice, and enabling settings to put in place the earliest, reasonable adjustments needed within Ordinarily Available Provision. The funding enables settings to:

- Promote early identification and swift implementation of appropriate support as soon as emerging needs are noticed, ensuring timely intervention.
- Enhance high quality, inclusive provision as part of Quality First Teaching, ensuring all children can access the curriculum and participate meaningfully in daily learning experiences.
- Support the implementation of universal strategies, including differentiation, personalised adaptations, and short-term interventions to reduce barriers to learning and promote progress.
- Build the provider's capacity to meet needs within the Ordinarily Available Provision offer, reducing the escalation of needs where early support can be effective.

Amount:

£250 per term (Available for up to a maximum of three terms)

Eligibility:

A child may receive Early Years Inclusion Funding when:

- They are accessing their free early education entitlement (15 or 30 hours).
- They present with early and emerging SEND needs, identified through observation, assessment, and partnership with parents/carers.
- They are not simultaneously receiving DAF; children cannot receive both funding streams.

Access:

Term 1

- Providers submit an initial request through the Early Years Portal, selecting 'Inclusion Funding' under the SEN/EHC field for the relevant child. For more information on how to access and use the Early Years Portal, please visit the Early Years Website [Guides for Providers | Hertfordshire County Council](#)
- No additional evidence is required at this stage; funding is allocated automatically based on the provider's identification of need.
- Providers should begin implementing appropriate strategies and ensuring that support is clearly recorded within the child's records.

Terms 2 and 3

- Providers must complete the full online [Inclusion Funding Application](#) providing:
 - Evidence of the strategies implemented during Term 1.
 - Review of impact of strategies on child's progress and development.
 - Rationale for continuation of funding to sustain progress.
- Applications are reviewed by the local area Early Years Lead Teacher, who will consider the quality of evidence, alignment with the funding aims, and the appropriateness of continued support.
- Funding will be allocated where there is clear evidence that continued intervention is required and is contributing to improved outcomes.
- Providers should keep a record of use of funds.

Early Years Inclusion Funding should be discussed with the providers link Inclusion Development Officer (PVI, Maintained Nursery School, Childminder) or link Specialist Advisory Teacher/Early Years Inclusion Advisor (School Nursery).

Allocation:

- This funding is allocated as a lump sum termly payment.
- Providers will be able to see a record of this payment in the Finance Section of the Early Years Portal. Please see the Early Years website for more details on this [Guides for Providers | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

5. Early Years Targeted Funding

Aim:

To support children with developing SEND needs who require targeted interventions, consistent Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycles, and increased adult-led input. The funding helps settings to embed and refine Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) and implement specific strategies. The funding enables settings to:

- Strengthen APDR processes, ensuring assessment, planning, high-quality implementation, and review cycles are embedded and responsive to developing SEND needs.
- Enable the delivery of targeted 1:1 or small-group, time-limited interventions, informed by ongoing observation and assessment, that go beyond universal adaptations.
- Strengthen the consistency, quality, and impact of enhanced provision, ensuring adaptations and strategies are increasingly personalised, purposeful, and closely aligned with the child's developing needs.
- Support close monitoring of outcomes, ensuring children make sustained progress and that decisions regarding further support or potential escalation are evidence-based and proportionate.

Amount:

Two levels of support are available, determined by assessed need, quality of evidence, and the provision currently in place or planned:

- **Targeted Level 1:** £500 per term
- **Targeted Level 2:** £833.33 per term

Funding may be awarded for one or more terms (up to a maximum of three terms)

Eligibility:

A child may receive Early Years Targeted Funding when:

- They are accessing their free early education entitlement (15 or 30 hours).
- They present with developing emerging SEND needs requiring targeted intervention beyond Universal support.
- The provider has initiated or is actively seeking support to initiate the APDR processes.

Access:

1. Child must be known to the Early Years SEND Team
 - Providers must submit a signed [Single Service Request \(SSR\) form](#) to initiate the process.
 - The SSR form should clearly outline the child's needs, current provision, and the rationale for requesting support. It is important to note that SSR's should not be submitted solely for funding. Funding will only be allocated alongside professional advice and guidance from the EY SEND Team.
2. Consultation with Early Years SEND Team
 - A consultation (either virtual or in-person) will be arranged with a member of the Early Years SEND Team.
 - During the consultation, professionals will explore the child's presenting needs, existing provision, and next steps within the graduated response.
3. Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) Requirements
 - The APDR cycle must already be in place or will be initiated as a formal outcome of the consultation.
 - When available, a copy of the APDR documentation should be shared with the Early Years SEND professional. This forms part of the evidence base informing decision making.
4. Evidence Review and Decision Making
 - Decisions are based on a combination of:
 - Information provided by the setting
 - Professional assessment of the child's needs
 - The quality and depth of APDR evidence
 - The level of provision already in place or planned
 - The Early Years SEND professional will determine the appropriate level and duration of Targeted Funding based on the child's needs and the provider's capacity to implement provision and intervention.
5. Review and Continuation of Funding
 - Providers are responsible for requesting a review consultation with their link Early Years SEND professional to access further Targeted Funding. Reviews may be virtual, by telephone, or in-person.
 - Impact should be monitored within the APDR cycle.
 - Reviewed APDR documents must be shared and will be used to determine continuation, increase, reduction, or cessation of funding.
 - Reviews should align with key transition points (e.g., transition to a new setting or end of agreed funding period).

Allocation:

- All communication will be issued via secure transfer of information.
- Providers will receive written confirmation of the outcome, including
 - Funding level
 - Start date
 - Duration of funding (Up to a maximum of 3 terms)
- If a child is already in receipt of Inclusion Funding when Targeted Funding is agreed, Targeted Funding will commence the following term.
- This funding is allocated as a lump sum termly payment.
- Providers will be able to see a record of this payment in the Finance Section of the Early Years Portal. Please see the Early Years website for more details on this [Guides for Providers | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

6. Early Years Enhanced Provision Funding

Aim:

To support children with established, complex and ongoing SEND needs who require personalised, high-level and often sustained provision. This includes bespoke strategies, enhanced staffing, significant adaptations to enable consistent access, engagement and safety. The funding enables settings to:

- Implement personalised, longer-term strategies aligned with the child's developmental profile and identified needs.
- Implement specialist recommendations from Specialist Advisory Teachers, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and other services.
- Develop and embed individualised support plans, including SEND Support Plans, bespoke curriculum pathways, communication plans, risk assessments, or behaviour support plans.
- Strengthen a coordinated multi-agency approach, ensuring alignment between home, the early years setting, and external professionals.
- Provide consistent and high-quality support that exceeds what can be delivered through Inclusion funding and Targeted funding.

Amount:

- £15 per hour attending (up to a maximum of their free early education entitlement, 15 or 30 hours, for a maximum of three terms)

Eligibility:

A child may be considered for Enhanced Provision Funding when:

- They receive their free early education entitlement (15 or 30 hours).
- The child has established or complex SEND needs, evidenced through a thorough and ongoing Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR) cycle.
- Professional involvement is already in place or planned (e.g., Early Years SEND professional, medical professionals or therapists)
- Their needs require sustained and significant additional support beyond what can be delivered through OAP, Inclusion Funding, or Targeted Funding.

Access:

1. Submission to Local DSPL Area

- Providers must complete the Focused Intervention Funding application form in full. Please see Appendix 2.
- The completed form must be submitted to the area DSPL manager.

2. Review by Early Years SEND Team Panel

- Local area DSPLs will forward the application to the Early Years SEND Team Panel for consideration.
- The panel evaluates:
 - APDR evidence and review cycles - key interventions and individual provision
 - Specialist assessments and provision recommendations
 - The child's level of complexity and risk
 - Appropriateness of proposed use of funding
- Decisions are made to ensure fair, consistent allocation across the county.

Allocation:

- All communication will be issued via secure transfer of information.
- Providers will receive written confirmation of the outcome, including:
 - Approved number of hours (up to the child's entitlement)
 - Duration of funding (up to a maximum of three terms)
 - Any conditions or professional recommendations
- If a child attends a dual placement, the funding can be shared between the settings in line with their allocated early entitlement hours.
- This funding is allocated as a termly payment.
- Payments are made via Biscuit for Maintained and School Nurseries and direct into the Nursery account for PVI settings.

7.Reception Transition Funding

Aim:

To provide additional, time limited support for children with developing SEND needs as they transition from Nursery into Reception. The funding enables settings to:

- Put in place continuity of strategies, early interventions and environmental preparations
- Reduce barriers to settling, engagement and early learning during the Autumn term.
- Enhance inclusive provision and practice within Reception settings.
- Facilitate accurate assessment of needs and continue to establish effective APDR cycles.

Amount:

- £1000 one-off payment

Eligibility:

- Children who have been in receipt of Targeted 2 Funding in the summer term prior to transition.

Access:

- In the summer term before transition to reception the Early Years SEND Team will contact schools to facilitate arrangements as part of ongoing support.
- Schools will be required to complete a Funding agreement form in order for funds to be released.

Allocation:

- This funding is allocated as a one off termly payment.
- Payment is made via Biscuit for Schools.

8. Record Keeping and Accountability

Providers must maintain clear and accurate records detailing how all strands of Early Years SEND funding has been used to support individual children. This includes documenting the strategies, resources, and interventions funded, along with evidence of their impact on the child's progress. Robust record-keeping ensures transparency, supports effective monitoring by the local authority, and demonstrates accountability in the use of public funds. Providers may be asked to share these records as part of routine audits, funding reviews, or quality assurance processes, and should ensure that documentation is updated regularly and stored in line with data protection requirements.

9. Monitoring

To monitor the impact of funding on children's outcomes, the County Lead for Early Years SEND, and area Lead Teachers will conduct termly moderation panels. Cases will be chosen at random and reviewed. Funding allocation data will be analysed alongside Early Years progress data, Valuing SEND (VSEND) information and Early Years SEND Team service level data, to target individual settings for focussed support and inform provision and support at a county wide level.

10. Contacts

County Lead for Early Years SEND

- Lara Windsor – Lara.Windsor@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Send Service Manager

- Faye Den Heijer - Faye.Denheijer@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Lead Teachers

- North Herts and Stevenage;
Laura Wilson- Laura.Wilson@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- East Herts, Broxbourne, Welwyn and Hatfield;
Katie Dean – Katie.Dean@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- St Albans and Dacorum –
Eilish Foley - Eilish.Foley@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere;
Debbi Watson – Debbi.Watson@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Advice Line 01442453920 - Available Wed 9-12.30pm and Thurs 1.30-4pm (Term Time Only)

11. Appendices

Appendix 1

Hertfordshire Early Education & Childcare Entitlements – based on the child's age and family circumstances

Child Age	Funding Scheme	Notes	Further Info
Under 9 months	N/A	No funded childcare entitlements available	N/A
From the term following the child's 9th month up until the term they turn 2	30 funded hours for working families	Each parent living with the child must earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage.	Families must apply and reconfirm their eligibility with HMRC before the start of the relevant term. Further info
From the term after the child turns 2	15 funded hours for supported families	- Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are eligible. OR - Family receives Universal Credit and meets income threshold	Refer to parents pages for further eligibility criteria. Follow the application process using the above link.
	30 funded hours for working families	Each parent living with the child must earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage.	Families must apply and reconfirm their eligibility with HMRC before the start of the relevant term. Further info
From the term after the child turns 3 up until the term, they turn 5. (if they are not in school reception)	15 funded hours for all families (universal)	All children are entitled to 15 hours a week, this is a universal entitlement and not based on any other circumstances of the child or family	There is no application or code required. Refer to parents pages
	30 funded hours for working families	Each parent living with the child must earn at least the equivalent of 16 hours per week at the National Minimum Wage.	Families must apply and reconfirm their eligibility with HMRC before the start of the relevant term
From the term after the child turns 5	N/A	No funded childcare entitlements available	N/A

Term Dates and Deadlines

Period the child reaches age above	Entitlement can be used from	Working family code – recommended apply by
1 January – 31 March	1 April (Summer term)	28 February
1 April – 31 August	1 September (Autumn term)	31 July
1 September – 31 December	1 January (Spring term)	30 November

Appendix 2



Focused Intervention Funding Individual Application Form



Please refer to the Guidance document before completing this form

Category of Application	Tick
Strand 1 – Early Years Enhanced Provision Funding	
Strand 2 – Support for Reception aged children who have complex needs and will need an EHCNA/EHCP	
Strand 4 a) – Support for children to access a mainstream curriculum individually or Strand 4 b) – Support for children to access a mainstream curriculum as a group	

Please state the name / number of your cluster	
--	--

Section 1	Child/Young Person's Detail
Name	
Age	
Year Group	
Gender	
Home Address	
Ethnic Origin	
First Language	
Section 2	School/ Setting Details
Name of School/ PVI	
Contact No. of School	
School No/NEG number	
	Early Years Enhanced Provision Application
PVI/Maintained Nursery application – no. of hours the child is entitled to	15 hours ☐ 30 hours ☐

No. of hours the child is currently attending		
Is the child currently in receipt of any EY's SEND funding	No ☐ Yes ☐ Previously ☐ Unknown ☐	Inclusion Funding ☐ Targeted Funding Level 1 ☐ Targeted Funding Level 2 ☐
Section 3 - All Strands	Profile of the Child/Young Person's SEND	
Main Educational SEND Need	Speech, Language & Communication ☐ Social, Emotional & Mental Health ☐ Sensory & Physical ☐ Cognition & Learning ☐ Other:	
Is the child known to any other services	Yes ☐ No ☐ Name of Service/s:	
Is the child receiving current/ongoing involvement?	Current Involvement:	
Provide a profile of the child/YP's needs in bullet point format. Please attach copy of the VSEND radar/ profile. If not available, please attach ongoing assessment including latest and previous APDRs	• VSEND Radar/Child Profile or equivalent ☐ Recent Assess, Plan, Do, Review Cycles ☐ Recent/relevant Professional Reports ☐ Not Applicable- new to education ☐	

What impact do the SEND needs have on the ability of the child to access education?	
What is the view of the child or young person?	
Section 4	Provision
Please list key interventions/ individual provision that is already in place that are in addition to ordinarily available provision.	
What additional intervention is required?	
For Strand 2 please indicate the substantial provision that is required using the Descriptors of Need Tool	
Section 5	Impact
What is the intended outcome of the proposed intervention?	
If this is a resubmission please indicate what impact previous funding has had on progress towards outcomes and what further intervention is required.	

Role of person completing the form.....

Name of person completing the form.....

Name(s) of parent(s).....

Date of completion.....

(Parents must be involved and agree with the contents of this form)

Please e-mail to your DSPL manager.

Attachments

- the latest reviewed and current APDRs
- VSEND Pupil radar or similar

Please list any other attachments:

Appendix 3

Example Profiles

The following example profiles are intended as a guide to help illustrate the types of needs and provision that may align with each Early Years SEND funding stream. They are not checklists and should not be used as criteria that must be met. All applications are reviewed individually, with consideration given to the unique needs, developmental profile, and provision in place for each child.

Children's needs may look different over time and will naturally change as they grow, develop, and respond to support. The examples below are therefore provided to offer a general picture, recognising that every child's journey is individual and that evidence will always be considered in context.

Example Profile 1: Inclusion Funding

(Supports early and emerging needs through reasonable adjustments that strengthen early identification and inclusive everyday practice)

Overview:

This child shows early or emerging SEND needs that can be recognised through daily interactions and observations. They are able to participate in the Early Years curriculum when provided with high-quality inclusive practice, small environmental or teaching adjustments, and occasional short periods of adult-led support.

Key Characteristics:

- Early indicators of SEND (e.g., emerging language delay, early social communication differences, mild sensory sensitivities).
- Able to participate in most routines with gentle adult scaffolding.
- Benefits from visual cues, modelling, repetition and a predictable routine.
- Sometimes needs brief adult support during transitions or group times, but not regularly or intensively.
- May require short, occasional sensory breaks or basic regulation strategies.
- Accesses provision, such as increased modelling, targeted turn-taking games, or simple vocabulary enrichment activities.
- Uses additional resources (e.g., basic visual timetables, choice boards, simple sensory items).
- Needs guided play opportunities but can engage independently for sustained periods.
- APDR may be in its early stages, with emerging evidence showing how strategies support progress.
- Family involvement is regular; professional involvement may not yet be required or is minimal (e.g., discussed during a cohort visit).
- Needs are emerging but low, and can be met through adjustments within Ordinarily Available Provision enhanced by small amounts of additional adult support.

Example Profile 2: Targeted 1 Funding

(Supports children with developing SEND needs through structured APDR cycles, targeted adult-led interventions and moderate adaptations).

Overview:

This child presents developing SEND needs that benefit from planned, structured intervention. They make progress through small-group work, predictable routines, and activities tailored to their learning approaches. They require targeted input to support specific areas of development, but not yet at a level requiring high-intensity or frequent additional adult support.

Key Characteristics:

- Developmental delay in one or more areas, showing increasing impact on everyday participation.
- Requires regular differentiated tasks and structured adult-led interactions.
- Benefits from visual support, task breakdown and clear modelling to stay on task.
- Requires targeted adult support at specific times (e.g., joining group time, following routines, managing transitions).
- Uses additional resources more consistently (e.g., communication boards, now-next visuals, sensory boxes).
- Accesses targeted small-group interventions 2–3 times weekly (e.g., attention skills, early language enrichment).
- Requires more consistent adult scaffolding for communication, turn-taking, or problem-solving.
- Shows progress with targeted intervention, which is recorded within APDR cycles.
- Family involvement is proactive; external professionals are engaged for initial advice.
- Needs are emerging and increasingly evident, requiring targeted provision beyond universal practice, but not at the level of intensive or bespoke support

Example Profile 3: Targeted 2 Funding

(Supports children with developing SEND needs through structured APDR cycles, targeted adult-led interventions and moderate adaptations).

Overview:

This child presents with more pronounced developing SEND needs that require frequent targeted intervention, increased adult support, and more substantial adaptation of provision. The child requires consistent differentiated input, structured routines, and more personalised strategies to access learning and maintain engagement.

Key Characteristics:

- Developmental delay in multiple areas, (e.g., communication, social understanding, sensory processing, emotional regulation).
- Requires frequent differentiated activities to engage with the curriculum.
- Needs regular adult support throughout the day to successfully navigate routines, interactions and transitions.
- Benefits from personalised visual timetables, social stories, and highly predictable routines.
- Requires daily targeted interventions or structured sessions (1:1 or small group).
- May need frequent sensory breaks integrated into the day, with adults supporting coregulation strategies.
- Uses a wider range of specialist resources (e.g., objects of reference, personalised visuals, supported seating, adapted communication tools).
- Requires consistent adult scaffolding to maintain engagement, support communication, and enable participation in group experiences.
- APDR is established, with clear evidence of strategies, impact, and continued need.
- Has involvement from external professionals (e.g., Speech and Language Therapy programmes, EY SEND Team visits) requiring ongoing implementation by staff.
- Needs are developing but more evident, requiring a higher level of targeted intervention and adult input than Level 1, but not yet meeting the threshold for enhanced, individualised provision.

Example Profile 4: Enhanced Provision Funding

(Supports children with complex, established SEND needs through personalised, high-level provision and sustained specialist strategies)

Overview:

This child has identified, significant and complex SEND needs requiring high-level, personalised and often ongoing provision. They need consistent adult support, specialist strategies, adapted environments and bespoke personalised approaches to enable access, engagement and safety. Support typically requires multi-agency involvement and is likely to be long-term.

Key Characteristics:

- Delays or differences across multiple developmental areas, often significant (e.g., communication, social interaction, cognition, sensory processing, physical development).
- Requires high-frequency adult support for co-regulation, engagement, safety, and personal care.
- Needs, personalised routines rather than general adaptations (e.g., individual timetables, 1:1 structured learning blocks).
- May have health, medical or physical needs requiring trained staff to carry out specific procedures or ensure safe access to the environment.
- Staff may require specialist training in interventions or approaches (e.g., BSL*, intensive interaction, PECS*, SCERTS*, TEACCH* physio programmes). British Sign Language, Picture Exchange Communication System [Picture Exchange Communication System \(PECS\)](#) Social Communication Emotion Regulation Transactional Support [The SCERTS® Model](#) TEACCH [Home | TEACCH® Autism Program](#)
- Provision involves specialist or adapted equipment, such as seating, standing frames, communication aids or sensory-integrated tools.
- Requires multisensory, highly individualised teaching approaches, often one step at a time with over-learning and repetition.
- Needs frequent personalised regulation strategies, e.g., tailored sensory diets, proprioceptive programmes, or specialised calming tools.
- Requires extensive environmental adaptations, such as low-arousal spaces, acoustic modifications, personalised workstations, or adapted outdoor areas.
- Regular collaborative planning with parents and multiple professionals (e.g., Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physio, Specialist Advisory teachers) to shape Individualised Support Plans.
- Needs are complex, established and unlikely to reduce significantly without sustained, high-level support.