



**Guidance and Procedures
for Accessing Early Support Funding (ESF)
through the implementation of the
'My Support Plan'**

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Introduction & Rationale

Hillingdon advocates a child and family centred approach, that aims to ensure that children and young people with identified Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) are appropriately supported in their educational setting. We know that adopting a needs-led and early intervention approach promotes positive progress relative to the individual child/young person's needs.

This document aims to provide information and guidance about the allocation of High Needs Block Funding linked to the My Support Plan; known as Early Support Funding (ESF) which promotes the Hillingdon SEND Transformation model of early identification & intervention.

The development of Hillingdon's ESF model has been a collaborative approach, that has involved a pilot project and on-going reflection and review. Working in partnership with schools, settings, professionals and parents/carers the process has been comprehensively reviewed and has evolved over time. Following the pilot and the initial implementation of this early intervention model, further detailed review took place via a working focus group (including representation from education, schools, early years, health and parents) and this new guidance has been produced to outline and clarify the current ESF model.

For most children, support at the earliest opportunity is all they need to enable them to make progress. Hillingdon promotes the use of a My Support Plan to capture information about their needs, views and outcomes and how these will be met.

A small number of children/young people will need a higher level of support than early years, schools & post 16 settings feel they can provide from their normal budget. These will be children and young people who have already received a high level of support within the setting (SEN Support) however, they are not progressing or not progressing sufficiently well. For this group educational settings can apply for ESF.

The Expectations on Educational Settings

The leaders of early years settings, schools and colleges should establish and maintain a culture of high expectations that encourages those working with children and young people with SEN or disabilities to include them in all the opportunities available to other children and young people so they can achieve well (SEND CoP 2015; 1.31).

It is expected that ESF should be accessed and used alongside the Ordinarily Available document. If needs are being identified **early**, ESF **should** enable their needs to be met through SEN Support.

Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, educational settings should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This SEN support

should take the form of a four-part cycle of '**Assess, Plan, Do, Review**' (SEND CoP 2015; 6:44), implemented through the use of a 'My Support Plan'. ESF will be used to deliver the outcomes in the child's 'My Support Plan'.

An additional expectation is that settings will adhere to the Equality Act 2010 which states that 'schools are allowed to treat disabled pupils more favourably than non-disabled pupils, and in some cases are required to do so by making **reasonable adjustments** to put them on a more level footing with pupils without disabilities' (Equality Act 2010 and Schools 2014; 1.25).

What is Early Support Funding?

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 2015 tells us that 'the responsible local authority should provide additional top-up funding where the cost of the special educational provision required to meet the needs of an individual pupil exceeds the nationally prescribed threshold' (SEND CoP 2015; 6.99).

ESF is the process Hillingdon uses to allocate High Needs Block Funding for individual children who have significant barriers to learning and so require special educational provision which costs more than the nationally prescribed threshold. It is for children whose needs are best met within a mainstream provision but who require resources outside of what is 'ordinarily available'.

Hillingdon has adopted an approach used by other local authorities who also delegate high needs funding to educational settings as a way of incentivising schools to be more inclusive and allowing them to use funding creatively' (London Councils - inclusive practice; 2019:25).

Utilising a flexible funding approach advocates early intervention and allows the necessary resource to be deployed in a timely manner. This approach supports settings to meet the needs of children and young people who are experiencing challenges, where it is not established that their individual needs are **severe** or **long term**.

The Principles underpinning the development of Early Support Funding (ESF)

- To allow schools to access funding quickly, which will enable them to intervene early and have the greatest impact for children/young people.
- To embed a person centred approach, using the 'Team Around the Child/Young Person' (TAC/YP) model to develop co-produced My Support Plans with parents/carers, children and young people.
- Educational settings will continue to receive support from the SEND Advisory Service further enabling children and young people to make progress and meet their agreed outcomes.

- Supports the inclusion of children and young people in mainstream settings as per UNCRC (1989) and UNESCO (1994).
- It is '**needs led**' and aligns with existing banding levels, there is no ceiling or certain range.
- Parents will retain the right to apply for an EHC needs assessment as outlined in the SEND CoP 2015.

Further Clarification

- ESF is not an additional influx of resources available to the Local Authority and is funded through the same stream as Education Health and Care Plans. It is expected that as the number of children and young people who access ESF increases, due to an early intervention approach we will see a relative reduction in the total number of Education Health and Care Plans.
- ESF through a 'My Support Plan' is not a replacement for an Education Health and Care Plan.
- Children and young people with **severe and long term** needs will continue to have their needs met through an Education Health and Care Plan in line with the Code of Practice 2015.
- Exceptional Funding will be absorbed by ESF however, settings can apply for ESF under the same criteria.

Accessing Early Support Funding

The majority of children and young people in Hillingdon with SEND have their needs met within local mainstream early years providers, schools or colleges from within the resources normally available to them. To do this, educational settings have to make a range of '*ordinarily available*' provision for all children and young people, including those with SEND from the totality of resources available to them (SEN notional budget).

ESF may be appropriate if a child or young person's needs are not **severe or long term** whose needs are monitored and assessed overtime and it is perceived that they require provision that is above what is ordinarily available. Alongside this, the following will also need to apply:

- The child/young person attends or will attend a mainstream Early Years, school or Post 16 settings.
- A 'My Support Plan' is in place and contains clear evidence of the four part cycle (Assess, Plan, Do, Review) being implemented over two terms or more.
- The child/young person is able to have their needs met within a mainstream setting.

- The child/young person has significant barriers to learning and requires support above what is ordinarily available (as stated above).
- The child/young person does not have an Education Health and Care Plan or is not undergoing an EHC Needs Assessment.
- A child/young person suffers a serious accident or deterioration in a physical/sensory condition, which requires immediate support for the medium to long term, to access the curriculum.
- The child/young person's medical and/or educational needs, which would meet the local guidelines for SEN Support, have not been fully identified prior to starting nursery/school.
- The child/young person's behaviour shows serious deterioration and there is supporting evidence including a recent pastoral support plan that the guidelines for social, emotional and mental health needs have been reached.

Requesting Early Support Funding (ESF)

To apply for ESF or for a continuation please complete the Google form which can be found via this link: [Early Support Funding Application Form](#) and send the documents listed below to sasinclusion@hillingdon.gov.uk . Please send this information via a secure email, the following websites provide advice to enable you to check whether your email is secure <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/securing-government-email> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/set-up-government-email-services-securely> however if you are not sure, then items should be zipped (with encryption) and then emailed with the password being communicated in a separate email.

Please include the following information documents/information:

- A reviewed My Support Plan.
- Within the My Support Plan, a provision map detailing spend to date to be included. Please also outline any proposed additional intervention and associated costs. Children and young people requiring Early Support Funding will have significant barriers to learning and require support above element 2 funding.
- For children requiring input from an occupational or speech therapist please include a report from the current therapist outlining the resources the child/young person will require in order to meet the outcomes outlined in the My Support Plan.

SEND Advisory Service Panel

- ESF requests will be considered on a **fortnightly** basis as part of the SEND Advisory Service panel.
- Representatives will consist of ASD, Language & Early Years Advisors, Hearing, Visual & Multi-Sensory Specialist, Key Workers & Team Managers.
- Settings will have the opportunity to present cases directly.
- All submitted paperwork will be reviewed in line with the Ordinarily Available documentation.
- Particular attention will be made to the agreed outcomes with the My Support Plan, the use of the four cycle approach (Assess, Plan, Do , Review) and the provision map.
- A decision will be made based on the evidence provided and the recommendations of those involved and the professional judgement of those who sit on the panel.

Reviewing Early Support Funding & the 'My Support Plan'

Educational settings **should** hold termly reviews and we **encourage** a 'Team Around the Child/Young Person' (TAC/YP) approach. In addition to this, all funding will be reviewed annually via the SEND Advisory Service panel. When reviewing the funding the panel will consider:

- The progress the child/young person has made towards the agreed outcomes.
- Whether the child requires the same level of support in order to continue to make appropriate progress.
- Whether the child/young person still requires ESF in order to make appropriate progress.
- Whether an increase or decrease in funding will be sufficient to meet the needs of the child/young person.

Please note that reviews have to be made at **least three weeks** before the current funding is due to cease.

Transitions

In Hillingdon we recognise the importance of effective transitions for all children and in particular children and young people with SEND. We know that well planned transitions support continuity of learning and development. ESF can transfer from one Hillingdon setting to another. To support this the following steps are vital:

- When a child receiving ESF leaves the educational setting, the setting must notify the local authority immediately. The funding will transfer to the child's next placement or cease if appropriate (for example if the child is moving out of the borough).
- For children transitioning to a new Hillingdon school (i.e. at secondary transfer) and whose ESF is running from September to July, you will need to follow the process of review via the SAS Panel.
- Educational settings have a responsibility to inform the Local Authority once a child or young person transitions to an out of Borough school.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is the use of 'My Support Plans (non- statutory plans) and flexible funding legal?

Yes, the key is to implement it appropriately. Several other local Authorities are using a flexible funding approach as highlighted in the recent London Councils - Inclusive Practice publication (2019).

Does ESF and My Support Plans 'replace' an EHCP?

No, it is not a replacement, ESF may be appropriate for children/young people who do not have severe or long term needs. It is expected that requests for EHCPs are likely to reduce as ESF becomes more embedded in the Hillingdon SEND pathway.

Is ESF an additional influx of resource that has been made available to the LA?

No, ESF is funded through the same stream as EHCPs.

Is the banding/funding consistent between ESF and EHCPs?

Yes, there is no ceiling or range.

Is ESF only accessible through a 'My support Plan'?

Yes, settings must evidence a graduated response to meeting the needs of children and young people through the implementation of a My support Plan.

Are settings required to re-apply annually for ESF?

No, it is not a 're-application'. The My Support Plan and ESF are **reviewed annually** and paperwork submitted to the SAS Panel. The Panel will make an informed decision whether to maintain, increase, decrease or cease the funding.

When are educational settings expected to review ESF/My support Plans?

We encourage a Team Around the Child (TAC/YP) approach which should take place **termly**. The impact and quality of the support and interventions should be reviewed with the child/young person, their family and any involved professionals where relevant.

Does Exceptional Funding still exist?

No, it will be absorbed by ESF. However settings can apply for ESF as long as the application is submitted with up to date evidence.

Are children/young people included in the 2% SEND uplift funding settings currently receive?

Yes, the cohort of children and young people with ESF are included, meaning that children and young people with both ESF & EHCPs above 2% will receive the £6,000 element 2 funding.

Are those in receipt of ESF, still able to receive support from the SEND Advisory Service?

Yes, this support will be vital to assist settings in following the four part cycle (assess, plan, do, review) to meet the needs of the child/young person.

If a parent/carer makes a statutory request for an EHCP assessment for a child/young person currently in receipt of ESF, is the funding withdrawn for the 20 week assessment period?

No, ESF funding will remain in place.

Are parents/carers able to raise concerns regarding ESF?

Yes, these concerns should be dealt with directly with the setting who should follow their internal process.

Are settings able to raise concerns with the LA regarding allocation of resources?

Yes, this should be in writing to the SEND Advisory Team Manager, who will then follow internal processes.

How do schools record children who are in receipt of ESF on the census?

Children should be recorded as K, as they are receiving SEN Support. Hillingdon's internal systems will identify children in receipt of ESF through their URN.

How does ESF show in the schools account?

It shows up on the schools cash advance statement as 'Early Support funding'.

At what point in the year is ESF paid?

ESF is paid monthly and should start the month following the panel in the same way as top up funding.

What happens when a child/young person moves educational setting within Hillingdon?

Educational settings must notify the local authority (or your linked SAS Advisor) immediately. The funding will need to be transferred to the new setting.

When the child or young person is transitioning between schools, i.e. infant to junior, junior high school etc. please share the child's My Support Plan as part of the preparation for this move.

If the funding is running from September to July, we ask that you follow the review process outlined within the guidance.

What happens when a child/young person moves to an out of borough school?

ESF, is only available to children and young people who are on roll at a setting within Hillingdon. We expect settings to share information to enable the new setting to devise a through transition, they will then need to follow their internal process regarding funding allocation.

Is ESF available for children and young people who live outside of the London Borough of Hillingdon.

No, ESF is only available to Hillingdon residents.