

## SEN Inclusion Fund Guidance

2025-2026

### Background

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) is additional funding to assist Early Years providers to support the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Local authorities are required to have Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding available for all children with SEND who are eligible for universal funded hours or working parent entitlement early years entitlements. [Early years entitlements: local authority funding operational guide 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

### Who is eligible for funding?

The [SEN Code of Practice \(2014\)](#) states that a child has SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Special educational provision is educational or training provision that is '**additional to or different from**' that made generally for other children or young people of the same age.

Most children with additional needs will not require special resources or additional funding to be successfully included in settings; indeed, the majority of settings meet the additional needs of their children very well within the resources of the setting. Inclusive settings meet the needs of most children as part of their graduated response, through differentiation of their curriculum and reasonable adjustments. These children will fall into the Tier 1 criteria and will not receive SENIF (see below).

Children who eligible for SENIF usually show significant delays in 2 or more areas of their development. Funding is available through a three-tier system based on the child's age and their developmental stage.

Applications for children who have a very significant difficulty in one area only which is impacting on their education may be considered for funding if appropriate evidence is provided.

Children who have a completed EHCP are not eligible for SENIF.

Funding is only provided for the number of funded hours that the child attends, up to a maximum of 30 hours. Funding amounts shown below are based on a child attending for 15 hours per week. Where children attend more or less hours than this, the amount requested can be adjusted up or down accordingly on a pro-rata basis. Please see Appendix 1 for a breakdown of funding amounts.

## Funding Amounts and Criteria

**Tier 1 funding- No additional funding is given for children within Tier 1.**

Child's age	Developmental level
24 – 36 months	Developing at 15 months or higher
36 – 41 months	Developing at 18 months or higher
42 – 47 months	Developing at 24 months or higher
48 – 60 months	Developing at 36 months or higher

**Tier 2 funding - £450 per term (based on child attending for 15 funded hours)**

Child's age	Developmental level
24 - 36 months	Developing within 9-14 months
36 – 41 months	Developing within 12-17 months
42 – 47 months	Developing within 18-23 months
48 – 60 months	Developing within 24 - 35 months

**Tier 3 funding - £900 per term (based on child attending for 15 funded hours)**

Child's age	Developmental level
24 - 36 months	Developing within 0-8 months
36 – 41 months	Developing within 0-11 months
42 – 47 months	Developing within 0-17 months
48 – 60 months	Developing within 0 - 23 months

### Stretched Care

Some children with additional needs benefit from attending settings across the whole year so that their routine remains predictable and consistent. In such cases, Parents and the setting may agree that the child stretches their funded entitlement across the year. This means that they are able to attend during the school holidays rather just than term-time only.

In the case of stretched care, the child will be allocated SENIF to match the number of funded hours they are entitled to. For example, if they are entitled to 15 hours but attend 11 hours stretched throughout the year, SENIF will be calculated on the full 15 hours term time only entitlement.

### Funding for children who do not live in Stoke-on-Trent

SENIF goes on the location of the child's setting not their home address. This means that Stoke-on-Trent City Council is responsible for providing SENIF for any child with SEND who is attending an early years provision or school nursery located in Stoke-on-Trent. This is regardless of where the child lives.

Children who live in Stoke-on-Trent but attend a setting in another Local Authority (eg Staffordshire) will not receive SENIF from Stoke-on-Trent City Council. The setting will need to apply for SENIF from the council in which they are located.

### What can funding be used for?

SEN Inclusion Funding should be focused on developing a child's independence and improving long term outcomes.

SENIF can be used towards additional staffing. Any additional adult resource should be well planned – the focus of this additional adult time may be:

- to increase the child's independence, play skills, interactions and communication
- to reduce adult to child ratios within the setting so that more support can be given to the child with additional needs within the mainstream room
- for periods of 1:1 support for specific interventions to support the child's targets on their SEN Support Plan
- for periods of 1:1 support at times that the child may find difficult such as lunch time
- for providing specific interventions in small groups such as 'bucket time'

SENIF can also be used for specialist training which will enable staff to better support the child's needs, for example Makaton training.

For children who receive [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#), [Disability Access Fund \(DAF\)](#) should be used for purchasing specialist resources rather than using SENIF. Where specialist resources are needed and a child is not in receipt of DLA then SENIF can be requested for this purpose on one occasion only. Settings should then support Parents to consider applying for DLA so that DAF can then be accessed for any future resources.

### **Application process**

Settings must demonstrate how they have supported the child through the graduated approach before applying for additional funding. Settings should do this by following the 'assess, plan, do, review' (APDR) cycle as detailed in the [SEN Code of Practice \(2014\)](#). At least one APDR cycle should be completed before SENIF is requested. If a child has moved from another setting or has accessed Portage, then any previous APDR cycle will be sufficient evidence.

For children with very high levels of need who are about to start at the setting, SENIF may be needed immediately to support them. In such exceptional cases SENIF may be agreed without the minimum 1 APDR review cycle. Any requests should be discussed with a member of the Early Years Inclusive Service by calling 01782 231285 before an application is submitted.

We have introduced a colour coding system for the different SENIF forms. We hope that this will make it easier for settings to identify which form to use.

Apricot = APPLICATION
Green = GROUP
Mauve = MEDICAL
Silver = SHINE
Red = REVIEW

Please see Appendix 2 for a quick overview of the different forms and their uses.

Settings must fully complete the application form electronically – any incomplete forms will be returned and may delay discussion by the SENIF panel. Completed forms should be sent via email to [eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk)

## **SENIF application deadlines**

### **Autumn Term 2025**

Deadline for applications	Friday 24 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
SENIF meeting date	Monday 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2025
Notifications of funding decisions	Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> November 2025

### **Spring Term 2026**

Deadline for applications	Friday 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
SENIF meeting date	Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> March 2026
Notifications of funding decisions	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2026

### **Summer Term 2026**

Deadline for applications	Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2026
SENIF meeting date	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> June 2026
Notifications of funding decisions	Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> June 2026

## **Parental Consent**

Partnership with Parents is key to children making the most progress possible. The [SEN Code of Practice \(2014\)](#) says that settings must ensure that Parents are fully aware of any special educational provision that is being made for their child. Parental consent must be gained before an application for SENIF is submitted.

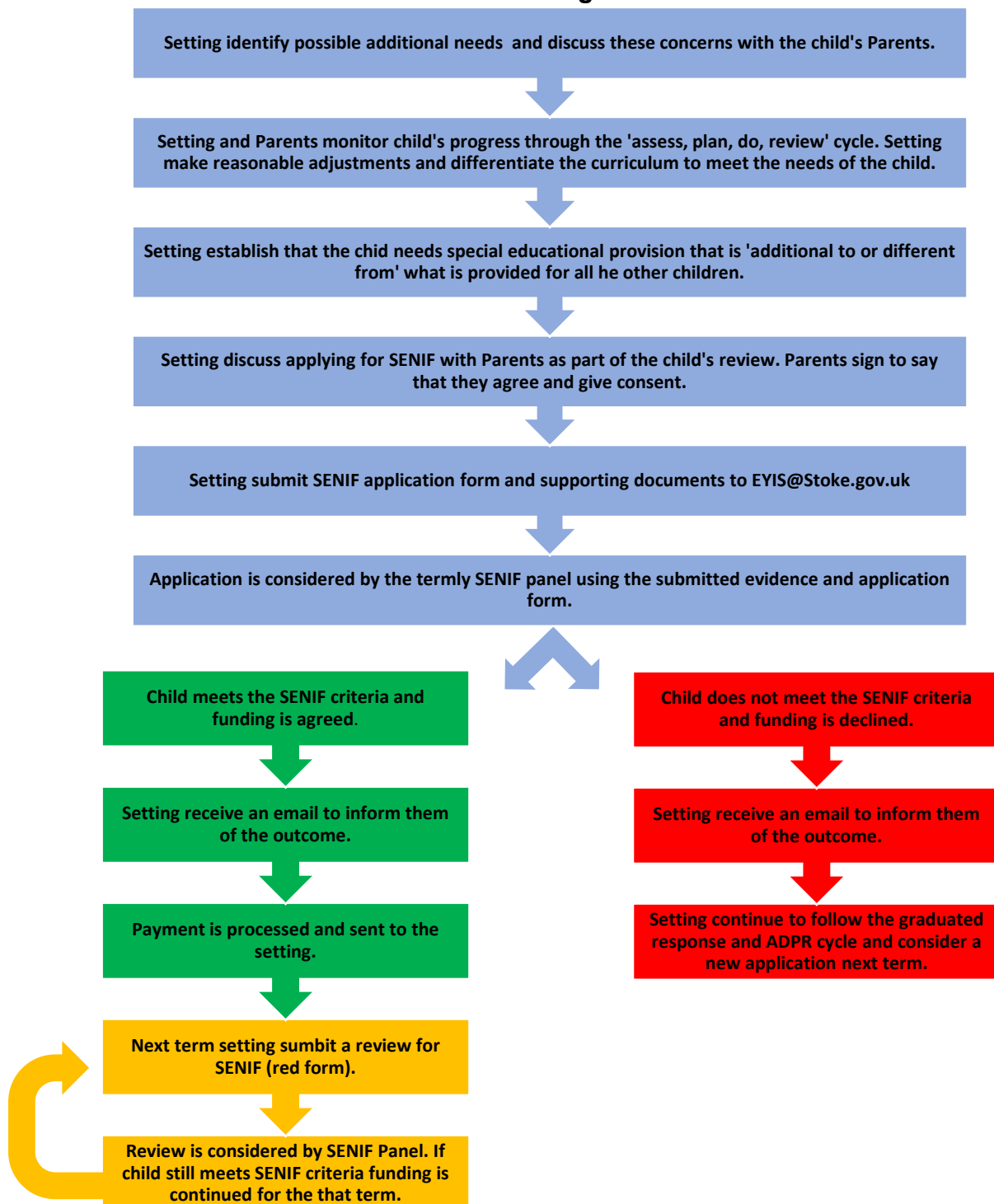
## **Supporting information**

SEN Support Plans or IEPs should be in place for each child with SEND. **Please ensure you send a copy of the most recently reviewed SEN Support Plan with your SENIF application.**

Where a child demonstrates unsafe behaviours that require a risk assessment to be in place, please ensure that the current risk assessment is also attached to the SENIF application.

For children with high levels of medical needs, please attach a copy of their most recent health care plan.

## SEN Inclusion Funding Process



### **Group applications (green form)**

Where settings have a group of 4 or more children with similar needs who require similar special educational provision, they can use the Group SENIF application form. This will reduce the need for duplication and repetition. This form needs to contain the individual details for each of the children included in the group application, as well as signed Parental consent for each child. Each child's information should start on a new page so that their personal information is not seen by other Parents when they are signing their consent.

### **Applications for children aged 9-23 months with medical needs (mauve form)**

The additional needs of most children under the age of 2 years can be managed within the setting's own resources due to staffing ratios and room organisation for children of this age.

Where children aged 9-23 months have complex/medical needs and are in receipt of funded hours, settings can request SENIF to help to support the child to access the provision. This is likely to apply in exceptional circumstances only. Examples of such levels of need include:

- Training needed from medical professionals before admission (such as community nurse or Abbots Nurse)
- Physical/medical needs that require specialist equipment (eg requires continuous oxygen, standing frame)
- Need adult support for moving/position changes and personal care including feeding, changing and drinking (significantly above what is expected for children of this age)
- Has a therapy programme devised provided by a medical professional that has to be delivered in every session (eg daily physiotherapy programme requiring specific interventions)
- Need for frequent monitoring of medical condition (eg has a tracheostomy)

### **Completing the application form (apricot form), (green form) and (mauve form)**

#### **Section 1 – Setting details**

#### **Section 2 – Child's Details**

Please complete each section fully, giving relevant information about the child.

Please highlight the child's main area of need from the four broad areas set out by the [SEN Code of Practice \(2014\)](#). These are:

- Cognition and Learning (eg difficulties in learning new skills, delays in all prime areas, fleeting engagement with activities)
- Communication and Interaction (limited verbal/non-verbal communication skills, solitary play, not seeking help from adults, limited understanding of instructions)

- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (eg extremely high levels of anxiety, trauma and attachment difficulties, behaviour that challenges)
- Physical and Sensory (eg physical disabilities, hearing impairment, visual impairment).

Where a child has needs in more than one of these areas, please consider which area presents their biggest barriers to learning.

The [Stoke Speaks Out Child Development Tool](#) should be used to assess developmental levels for each area accurately. You do not need to send a copy of the completed Stoke Speaks Out Child Development Tool.

### Section 3 - Interventions already in place

Please give examples of how you have already adapted your practice to meet the child/children's needs. This should include the things that are '**different from and additional to**' what is provided for all of the children in the setting.

Here are some examples:

Strategy/Intervention	Impact – please give real life examples
People games	Increased interaction - Lucy will now look at the adult when the adult pauses the game.
Risk assessments - risk of choking.	Increased safety – As identified by the risk assessment, John requires additional supervision when outside as he frequently puts non-food items in his mouth.
Smaller group sizes	Increased interaction - Arthur is now able to roll a ball back and forth with his friend for around 1 minute (4 exchanges).
Support to engage with others	Increased interaction - Ibrahim can now tolerate another child playing alongside him.
Visual timetable	Increased independence - Nevaeh will now respond to some pictures on visual timetable. When she is shown the 'wash hands' picture she will go to the bathroom.

Please note that on the Group SENIF form **(green form)** there is an extra column on this table for you to include which children are receiving each intervention.

## Section 4 - Provision Map

In this section you will show how you intend to use the SENIF awarded to the setting to support the child/children. Some examples are given below:

Strategy/Intervention/Resources	Costs to deliver	Intended outcomes – please give real life examples
Eg Attention bucket	<p>1 member of staff per session</p> <p>2.5hours @ minimum wage = £per week</p> <p>X 12 weeks = ££</p> <p>TOTAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To take part in a small group activity – the children will sit next to their friends in the group to watch the adult show them the exciting toys from the attention bucket.</li> <li>To focus on a shared object (joint attention) – the children will look at the exciting objects that the adult removes from the bucket and anticipate what is going to happen (eg the balloon will whizz around the room)</li> <li>To maintain attention to adult focused activity for a longer period of time – the children will sit and watch the attention bucket activity for an increasing amount of time up to 15 minutes</li> </ul>
<p>Eg Enhanced ratios to support:</p> <p>Group/meal times</p> <p>use of visuals</p> <p>range of activities</p>	<p>2 additional staff per session (am and pm)</p> <p>30 hours @ minimum wage = £per week</p> <p>X 12 weeks = ££</p> <p>TOTAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop self-care skills including eating at the table - the children will sit for lunch with their friends</li> <li>To take part in a small group activity – the children will sit next to their friends during singing and rhyme time</li> <li>To make requests - the children will be able to request items using a communication board by pointing to the picture of the food/toy that they want</li> <li>To extend the range of activities they will engage in – the children will be able to complete a simple shape sorter or inset puzzle when supported by an adult</li> </ul>

Please note that on the Group SENIF form (green form) there is an extra column on this table for you to include which children are receiving each intervention



## **Section 5 – Parent consent**

An actual Parental signature is needed so please ensure this page is printed so that the Parent can sign. This will then need to be scanned in and sent as part of the application.

Please note that on the Group SENIF form (green form) the Parent consent is given for each child in section 2.

## **Section 6 – Setting declaration**

Please ensure that this is actually signed by the person from the setting who is making the application - this will usually be the setting SENCO or manager. A scanned in signature is acceptable or the page can be printed, signed and then scanned in and sent as part of the application.

Completed forms should be sent via email to [eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk)

Please note that on the Group SENIF form (green form) the setting declaration is Section 5.

## **Funding reviews (red form)**

There is no longer a requirement for settings to complete a new application form each term. If SENIF is required for the remaining terms of the academic year, settings should complete a SENIF review form (red form) for each child, each subsequent term. Parental consent is needed on the SENIF review form.

SHINE nurseries and those settings who originally submitted group SENIF applications must also use the SENIF review form (red form) so that impact of the funding is clearly demonstrated.

SENIF review forms should be sent via email to [eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk) so that the impact of the funding on the child's progress and development can be reviewed by the SENIF Panel. SENIF review forms must be submitted by the SENIF deadlines for each term.

We understand that children with SEND might make very small steps of progress and that developmental levels alone may not reflect all of the child's achievements in the last term. Please ensure that you include real life examples of how the child has progressed and benefitted from the support provided through SENIF so that it provides a clearer picture of the impact on the child.

If the child still meets the SENIF criteria and impacts of the funding has been demonstrated by the setting on the review form, funding will be approved and the payment processed.

## **Funding Audits**

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has a responsibility to ensure that all public finances are used effectively. This includes SEN Inclusion Funding. The Council may undertake SENIF audits at any time. Settings must ensure that any monies awarded through SENIF are used to support the child's needs, as detailed in the SENIF application form

that was submitted. Settings should ensure that they keep any receipts/staffing invoices etc to demonstrate where SENIF has been spent/used.

### **Setting responsibilities**

Settings must inform EYIS in writing by emailing [eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:eyils.sp@stoke.gov.uk) with any changes to a child's attendance patterns once SENIF has been agreed. Settings must also inform EYIS if a child receiving SENIF is no longer attending their provision.

### **SHINE nurseries**

There is a shorter SENIF application for settings who currently hold the SHINE accreditation. SHINE settings should complete the SEN Inclusion Fund Application Form for SHINE Settings (silver form) when requesting SENIF for an individual child or for a group of children with similar needs.

## Appendix 1 – Pro-rata maximum funding amounts

Number of funded hours attended per week	Maximum funding per term @ Tier 2	Maximum funding per term @ Tier 3
1	£30	£60
2	£60	£120
3	£90	£180
4	£120	£240
5	£150	£300
6	£180	£360
7	£210	£420
8	£240	£480
9	£270	£540
10	£300	£600
11	£330	£660
12	£360	£720
13	£390	£780
14	£420	£840
15	£450	£900
16	£480	£960
17	£510	£1020
18	£540	£1080
19	£570	£1140
20	£600	£1200
21	£630	£1260
22	£660	£1320
23	£690	£1380
24	£720	£1440
25	£750	£1500
26	£780	£1560
27	£810	£1620
28	£840	£1680
29	£870	£1740
30	£900	£1800

## Appendix 2 – Quick guide to colour coded SENIF forms

<b>Colour</b>	<b>Form name</b>	<b>Use/Function</b>	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Age of children</b>	<b>Type of settings</b>
Apricot = APPLICATION	SEN Inclusion Fund Application Form	Initial application	Individual child only	2+ years	Schools and settings
Green = GROUP	SEN Inclusion Fund Group Application Form	Initial application	Group of 4+ children with similar needs	2+ years	Schools and settings
Mauve =MEDICAL	SEN Inclusion Fund Application Form - children aged 9-23 months with medical needs	Initial application	Individual child only	9-23 months	Schools and settings
Silver = SHINE	SEN Inclusion Fund Application Form for SHINE Settings	Initial application	Individual child or group of 4+ children with similar needs	2+ years	SHINE nurseries only
Red = REVIEW	SEN Inclusion Fund Review Form	Review & continuation of funding	Individual child only	ALL ages	ALL settings