

## The Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund (EY SENIF)

We consulted on the Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund (EY SENIF) document in terms of its content, scope, application and decision making process.

The consultation ran from the 16 June 2017 – 10 August 2017 with an online questionnaire (anonymous responses) being available during this period on the council's Engage Barnet website.

The consultation related to each of the main parts of the EY SENIF document. The sections, the points raised and our responses are expanded upon below.

### **The funding that can be requested**

Overall we received 33 responses. Of these the vast majority either agreed or tended to agree with what funding could be requested under the EY SENIF.

One point raised concerned how could a setting support a 2 year old child with additional needs who is not eligible for FEE2 or Fee 3 or 4 (15-30 hours).

In respect of this point, it is important to note that the government has provided an eligibility criteria for free entitlement for 2 year olds and for 3 and 4 year olds (for 15-30 hours). The EY SENIF follows this and supports young children with SEND who are eligible under the government FEE scheme.

### **The duration of funding**

Overall we received 31 responses. Of these respondents, the vast majority agreed or tended to agree with the duration of funding described in the document. A respondent commented that the existing arrangement was manageable. Other respondents stated that the funding should be for a year or should be for the duration of their attendance in a setting or should continue automatically into their reception year.

These responses were reviewed. We note that, if appropriate, the funding can be given for a term at a time or for two terms or may be given a year at a time. In respect of the response that the funding should be for the duration of a child's attendance in a setting, this may well turn out to be the case but it is important that funding is subject to periodic review so that it moves in line with the developing needs of the young child. In the absence of periodic review and monitoring, this would be difficult to achieve. In terms of the continuation of funding into reception, settings can apply for funding to cover the transition into the first term of reception.

### **The EY SENIF application process.**

Overall we received 27 responses. The vast majority agreed with or tended to agree with the application process. Respondents noted that it was fair and clear and noted the importance of the involvement of the Area SENCO. Firstly, the point was made that the involvement of the Area SENCO is subject to their availability. Secondly, the requirement for the funding to be used to fund new staff therefore freeing up the existing staff member to work with the child can be disruptive to the team. Thirdly, it was suggested that the panel should consider the length of time the setting has had to assess the child when considering the application. Lastly, the point was raised that regular reminders should be sent out to early year settings in respect of applications.

Each point made was considered. In terms of the Area SENCO's availability, the Area SENCOs will always try to be flexible in how and when they respond to settings. In respect of the requirement that the funding be used to free up workers who already have a relationship with the child to continue to work with the child, we believe this promotes the best outcomes for the young child. Thirdly, in respect of whether the panel should consider the length of time the setting had to assess

the child, it is important to note that the panel seeks to balance the need for evidence with the needs of the child together with a range of factors (see the guidelines) in order to reach an appropriate decision. It is important to stress that the panel will consider individual circumstances and whether criteria and thresholds should be waived on the grounds of exceptionality when relevant. Lastly, in respect of sending reminders to settings, although we seek to support settings, we do believe that it is the settings responsibility to meet the needs of the children with SEND, to track their progress and apply for appropriate funding support as necessary.

### **The Guidelines**

Of 27 responses, a high number agreed or tended to agree with the guidelines in the EY SENIF.

We thank people for the number of positive responses to the guidelines contained within the EY SENIF.

### **The Scope, Application and Decision Making Process for the EY SENIF**

Of 27 responses, a high number agreed with the scope, application and decision making process of the EY SENIF. In terms of suggestions, one respondent made the point that where an application is turned down it is important to provide feedback to the applicant. Secondly, another respondent stated the application process needs to be faster. Thirdly, the suggestion was made that it may be helpful to invite observers from the settings to Panel to see the process in operation.

After considering the responses and, in respect of providing feedback where an application is not agreed, we have amended the document to state that Panel will state why the application was not agreed and/or the Area SENCOs will provide feedback to the setting in such cases. In terms of the speed of processing applications, we have amended the EY SENIF document to state that the SEN team aim to be expeditious in processing applications. In terms of attendance at panel, we will send to early years settings invitations to sit on panel.

### **Other matters considered**

A point was raised in the documentation emphasising that every child who has a disability should be given equal opportunities. This was duly considered and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to address this issue.