



Bristol City Council

Inclusive Learning Service

Early Intervention Fund (EIF)

Guidance for mainstream education settings

Three non-statutory funding pathways



Contents

- 1. Purpose and shared expectations
- 2. EIF principles
- 3. Funding context
- 4. Pathway 1: individual application
- 5. Pathway 2: whole-school grant application
- 6. Pathway 3: EIF-commissioned initiatives
- 7. Exceptions and process concerns
- 8. Frequently asked questions

1. Purpose and shared expectations

The Early Intervention Fund (EIF) provides additional, time-limited support for Bristol mainstream primary and secondary settings. It complements, rather than replaces, existing school funding. EIF supports early identification, the graduated response and inclusive practice so that children and young people receive the right help at the right time.

The three pathways provide proportionate routes for an individual learner, a school-designed whole-school project or participation in a local authority commissioned initiative. They align with the SEND Code of Practice, Bristol Graduated Response Guidance and Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028.

Ordinarily Available Provision and adaptive teaching

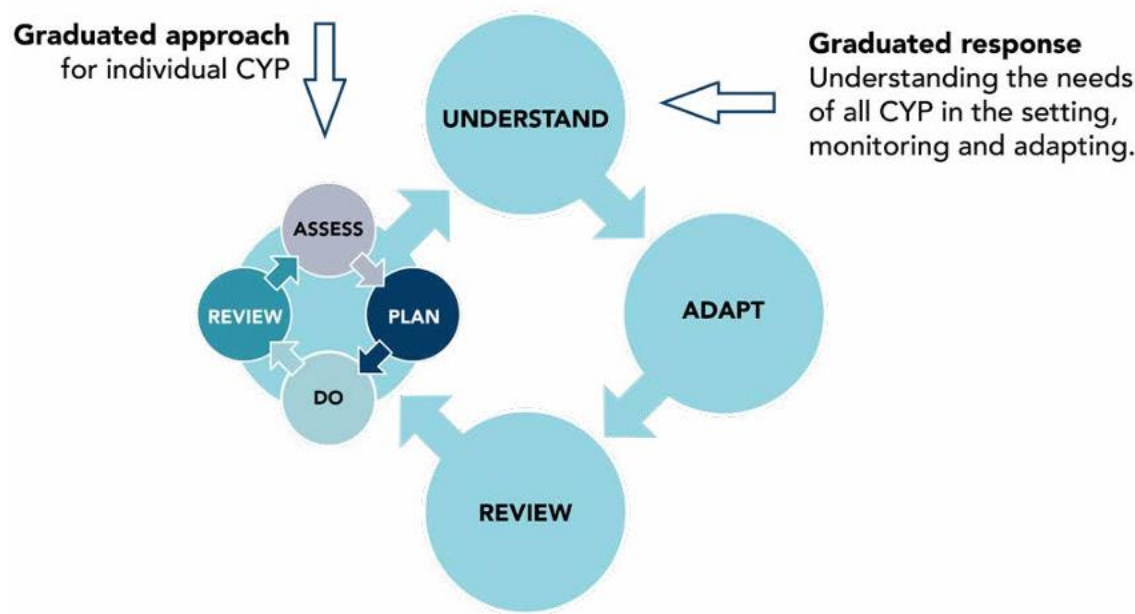
Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) is the inclusive teaching, reasonable adjustments, targeted support and use of existing resources that mainstream settings are expected to provide. High-quality, adaptive teaching is the starting point for all three pathways. Teachers remain responsible for adapting teaching, the curriculum, communication, routines, resources and the learning environment so that learners can participate alongside their peers. EIF must add to, not replace, effective OAP or a school's duties under equalities and SEND legislation

Pathway	Purpose	Application route
1. Individual application	Time-limited additional intervention for an eligible learner at SEN Support.	Apply through the SEND Support Tool on the EIF webpage.
2. Whole-school grant application	A school-designed project strengthening inclusive practice and provision, primarily for pupils at SEN Support.	Complete the GRANT application form which can be downloaded from the website. This outlines your assessment of school needs and details your plan for addressing gaps.
3. EIF-commissioned initiatives	An invitation to request a place in a defined, evidence-informed initiative funded through EIF.	Use the initiative-specific request-to-participate link, which will be emailed when opportunities are available.

2. EIF principles

Graduated approach and graduated response

Settings should apply the graduated approach or graduated response appropriate to the pathway. Individual applications should demonstrate a person-centred Assess–Plan–Do–Review cycle. Whole-school grant applications and requests to participate in commissioned initiatives should demonstrate a proportionate response to identified setting-wide or cohort needs. Both processes are continually improved and adapted and should build on ordinarily available provision, adaptive teaching, and reasonable adjustments.



Principle	What this means
Early intervention	Timely action to reduce barriers and improve participation, independence and outcomes.
Evidence-informed practice	Provision has a credible evidence base or reflects recognised good practice and is appropriate to the identified need.
Additionality	EIF adds to effective OAP, adaptive teaching, core resources, the notional SEN budget and Inclusive Mainstream Fund activity.
Time-limited support	EIF does not replace core or ongoing provision.

Principle	What this means
Impact	Need, intended outcomes, implementation measures and evidence of change are clear.
Proportionality	Application, decision-making and monitoring arrangements reflect the pathway and award.
Equity and participation	Applicants can apply to one or more pathways, depending on need

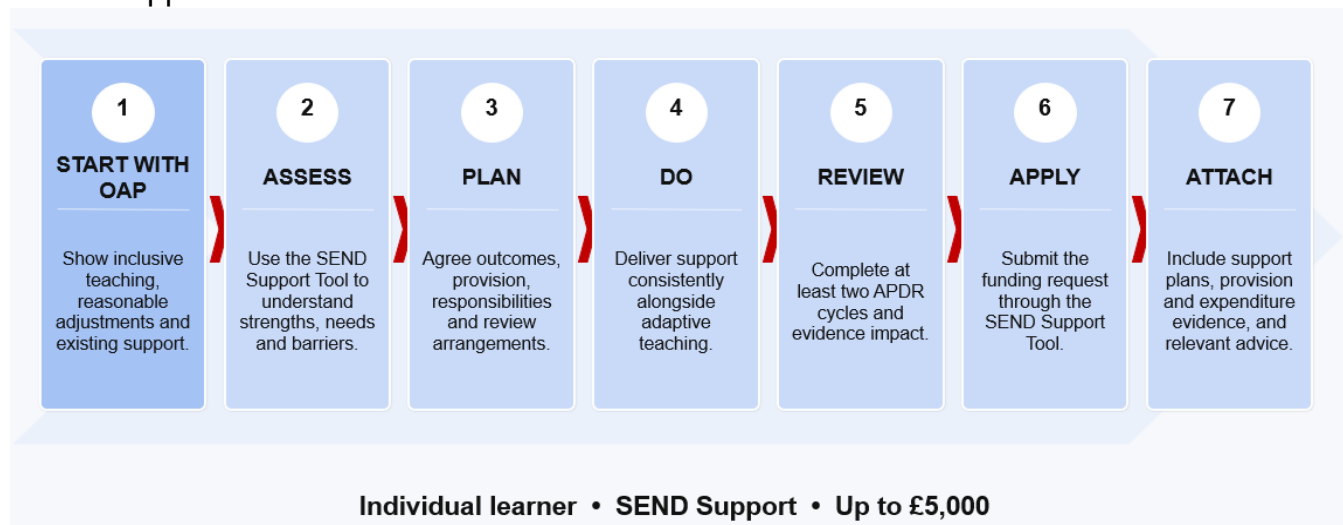
3. Funding context

EIF is additional funding from the High Needs Block. When making an application, settings should consider EIF alongside the full range of funding that supports inclusive provision:

- **Element 1:** core per-pupil funding through the age-weighted pupil unit.
- **Element 2:** the notional SEN budget, including the first £6,000 of additional provision for pupils with SEN where applicable.
- **Element 3:** additional high needs funding provided by the local authority where provision costs exceed the school's expected contribution, including top-up funding associated with EHC plans.
- **Inclusive Mainstream Fund:** additional funding to help schools embed inclusion and remove commonly occurring and predictable barriers. Schools are expected to publish an inclusion strategy setting out relevant activity and expenditure.

4. Pathway 1: individual application

Purpose and award: Time-limited additional early intervention for an eligible learner at SEN Support. Settings may request up to £5,000 per learner, subject to annual review, through the SEND Support Tool.



How the graduated approach applies

The application must show a person-centred Assess–Plan–Do–Review (APDR) cycle. The cycle is repeated for as long as needed, with increasing detail where appropriate.

The evidence should show at least two completed reviews of implemented support and, where appropriate, how provision has been adapted in response. There is no fixed requirement for a particular number or duration of APDR cycles.

Settings should use the Bristol Graduated Response Guidance and SEND Support Plan Guidance to support proportionate assessment, planning, implementation and review. Existing APDR records should provide the evidence; a separate process should not be created solely for EIF.

Stage	Evidence of the Graduated Approach expected for the individual learner
Assess	A developing understanding of strengths, needs, barriers and context, informed by the learner, parent or carer, teachers, assessment and relevant professionals.
Plan	Clear outcomes, reasonable adjustments, provision, responsibilities, frequency and review arrangements agreed with the learner and parent or carer.
Do	Consistent delivery of agreed support alongside adaptive teaching, with relevant information shared between classroom staff and those delivering targeted support.
Review	Evidence of progress, participation, independence and transfer into everyday learning, followed by a clear decision to continue, adapt, intensify, step down or stop support.

Eligibility

- The learner attends a Bristol mainstream primary or secondary setting and lives within a Bristol postcode.
- The learner is identified at SEN Support in the current setting.
- A proportionate graduated approach has been implemented, with sufficient evidence of need, provision and impact.
- The request meets the published requirements for the funding round.

The learner will usually attend full time and access the full age-appropriate curriculum, with reasonable adjustments. Where there is an agreed part-time timetable, phased return, medical arrangement or other individual access arrangement, the setting should explain the circumstances, how education and inclusion are being secured and why EIF remains an appropriate early intervention response.

Funding is not normally available where:

- The learner has an EHC plan or an active EHC needs assessment.
- The learner has already received EIF in the current key stage.
- An unsuccessful EIF application was made for the learner within the previous calendar year.

- The learner is resident in another local authority.
- The request duplicates current top-up funding, core provision or another funding stream.
- The request is for long-term or complex provision rather than time-limited early intervention.
- The request is primarily to address attendance or fund off-site provision.

These criteria support professional judgement and do not operate as an automatic checklist. Any additional requirements for a funding round will be stated in the current application information.

Application evidence and route

The SST may also be used to identify needs and plan support without submitting a funding request.

- Completed SST assessment and funding request.
- Support plans or equivalent APDR evidence, with clearly identified needs, provision and impact.
- A whole-school costed provision map or inclusion strategy showing existing OAP, relevant expenditure and how EIF would provide additionality.
- Payment information required by the current process.
- Relevant professional reports or advice, where appropriate.

[SEND support plans and guidance](#)

Decision-making and payment

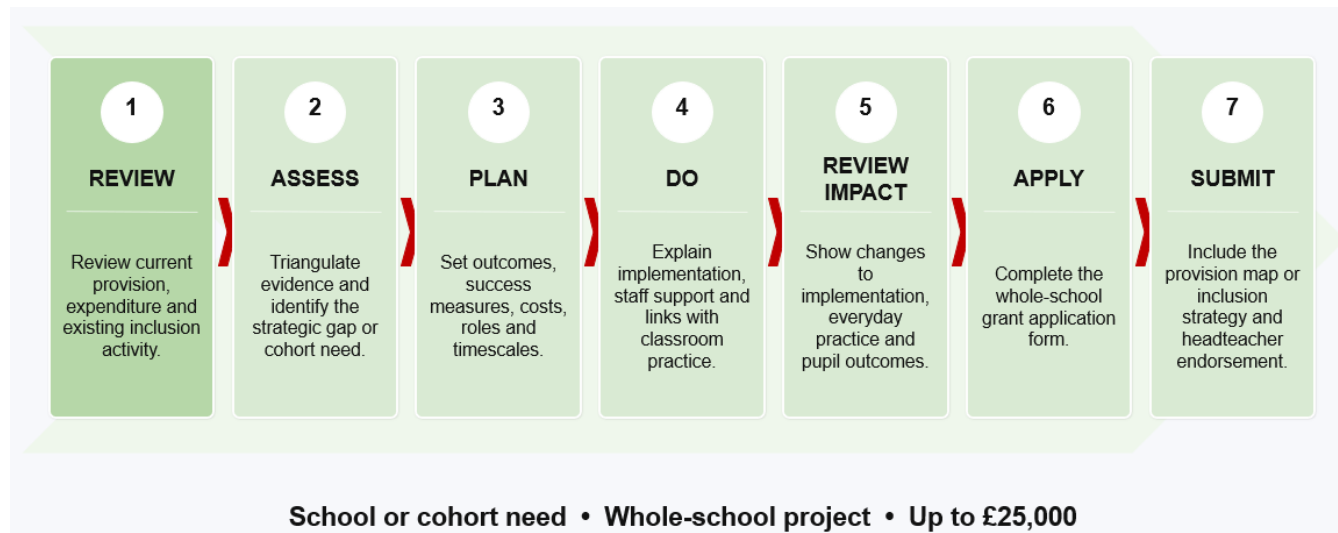
- Applications must be submitted by the published deadline. They are assessed by the panel and decisions are moderated through the moderation process.
- Where eligible demand exceeds the available budget, priority may include children known to a social worker, learners receiving Pupil Premium and children of armed forces personnel.
- A partial award may be made where an element is ineligible, insufficiently evidenced or disproportionate. Feedback will explain the decision.
- Successful settings sign a funding agreement. Decision and payment arrangements are published for each round.

Monitoring and accountability

The setting must review the learner's support through APDR and retain evidence of implementation, impact and use of funding. Monitoring for individual awards will be proportionate to the award and specified in the funding agreement. This may include end-of-year feedback or additional monitoring where a setting receives awards for a high number of learners.

5. Pathway 2: whole-school grant application

Purpose and award: A school-designed, time-limited project that strengthens whole-school ordinarily available provision, primarily for pupils at SEN Support. Settings may request a one-off award of up to £25,000, subject to annual review, using the whole-school grant application form.



How the graduated response applies

The whole-school grant application form provides prompts for the information and evidence to include at each stage. The prompts should be used alongside this guidance.

The proposal must respond to an identified setting-wide or cohort need. Schools should triangulate evidence to evaluate current provision, identify a strategic gap and judge whether additional investment improves implementation, everyday classroom practice and pupil outcomes. No single data source is sufficient on its own.

Stage	Evidence of the Graduated Response expected for the school or cohort
Assess the need	Triangulate the SEND profile and whole-school costed provision map or inclusion strategy with relevant attainment and progress, attendance, behaviour or exclusion information, observations, intervention records, and pupil, parent and staff voice. Identify the barrier, group affected and gap in provision or staff knowledge.
Plan the response	Select an evidence-informed response; set outcomes, success measures, beneficiaries, costs, roles, timescales and implementation conditions. Show how it complements the school inclusion strategy, Inclusive Mainstream Fund activity, core funding and the notional SEN budget.
Do and implement	Explain leadership, delivery, staff training and support, and how fidelity, dosage, access and links with adaptive classroom practice will be maintained.

Stage	Evidence of the Graduated Response expected for the school or cohort
Review impact	Triangulate implementation evidence with outcomes, observations, voice, staff feedback and transfer into classroom practice; decide what to continue, adapt, scale or stop.

Key evaluative question

The critical question is not simply whether activity was delivered. The school should show whether it was implemented as intended, changed everyday practice and improved outcomes, participation or independence for the intended pupils.

Eligibility and what may be funded

- Bristol mainstream primary and secondary settings.
- Activity primarily benefiting pupils at SEN Support, including whole-school approaches that strengthen OAP for this group.
- Staff training or continuing professional development.
- Evidence-informed intervention programmes or packages.
- Relevant subscriptions.
- Assessment and identification materials with associated training.
- Time-limited staffing, resources, consumables or supply cover that are necessary to a coherent project.

An application may combine tools, training, resources, subscriptions, staff release and implementation support where every element forms one coherent response to a clearly identified area of need, for example speech, language and communication needs. The application must explain how the components work together and avoid unrelated resources.

Grant funding will not support

- Provision specified in Section F of an EHC plan.
- Bespoke provision for an individual learner.
- Educational Psychologist or other professional assessments.
- Early years or post-16 provision.
- Provision covered by Pupil Premium or another funding stream.
- Activity not directly related to SEND or the identified strategic gap.
- Building or capital works.
- Establishing or maintaining enhanced provision spaces or classes.
- Ongoing staffing or recurrent costs that the setting cannot sustain.

Application evidence and route

Whole-school grant applications may request a one-off award of up to £25,000, subject to annual review. Submit the completed grant application form with a whole-school costed provision map that clearly shows relevant provision and expenditure, using the route stated on the current form. Do not name individual children. The headteacher's signature is required.

Use the prompts on the application form to demonstrate:

- A clear rationale and strategic gap supported by triangulated evidence.
- A direct link to the whole-school costed provision map showing relevant provision and expenditure.
- How the notional SEN budget is allocated and how EIF adds to existing provision.
- How the proposal complements the school inclusion strategy, Inclusive Mainstream Fund activity and core funding without duplication.
- The evidence base or recognised good practice.
- A full cost breakdown, implementation steps, roles, timescales and sustainability plan.
- Intended outcomes, beneficiaries and measures of implementation, impact and transfer into classroom practice.

Do not name individual children

Decision-making and payment

- Applications must be submitted by the published deadline. They are assessed by the panel and decisions are moderated through the moderation process.
- Individual applications are considered before whole-school grant applications when managing the available EIF budget.
- Where demand exceeds the available budget, prioritisation will consider school demographics, SEND and disadvantage, expected reach, previous awards, proportional cost and anticipated impact. Current indicators will be stated in the application form.
- Schools that have not already received a grant may be prioritised over settings with a previous award.
- Partial awards may be made where elements are ineligible, insufficiently evidenced or disproportionate. Feedback will explain the decision.
- Successful settings sign a funding agreement. Decision and payment arrangements are published for each round.

Monitoring and accountability

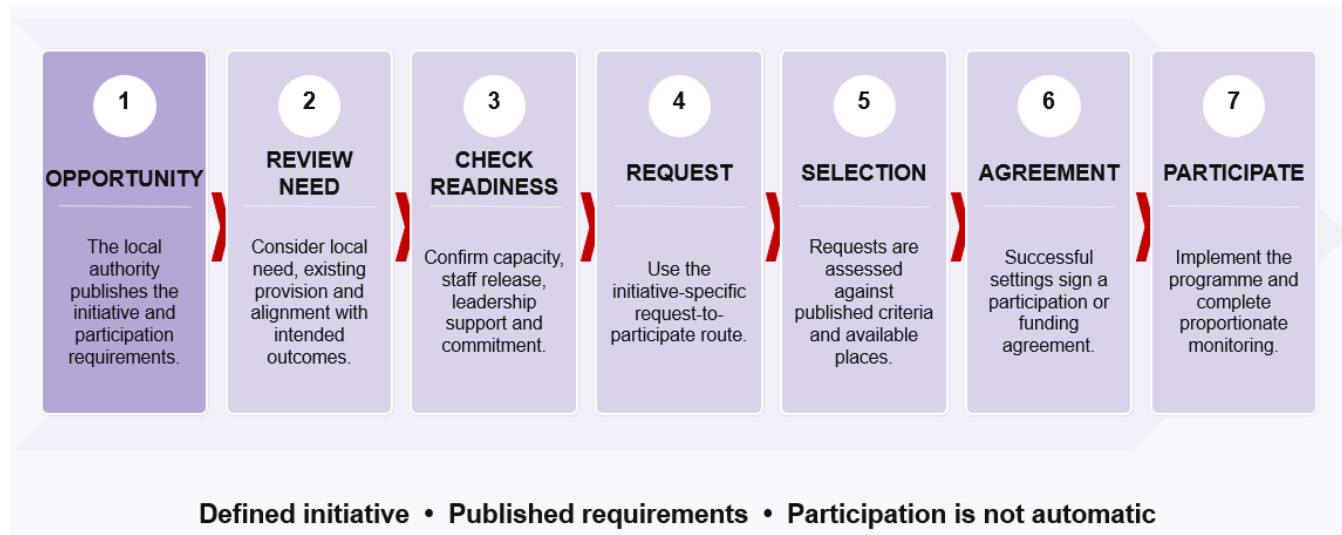
A member of the Inclusive Learning Service will undertake proportionate monitoring with the setting at approximately 6 and 12 months after the award begins. Monitoring will review implementation, expenditure and progress against the agreed outcomes and impact measures. The format may include a visit, online meeting, evidence review or a combination.

- Implementation progress, fidelity and agreed changes.
- Relevant outcome information and evidence of transfer into classroom practice.
- Pupil, parent or carer voice where appropriate.
- Staff feedback, training and participation records.
- Evidence that funding has been used for the agreed purpose.

Where funding has not been used for the agreed purpose, the local authority may seek information, agree corrective action or recover some or all of the award. The setting will be informed and able to provide relevant evidence before a recovery decision is made.

6. Pathway 3: EIF-commissioned initiatives

Purpose and offer: Participation in a defined, evidence-informed initiative commissioned through EIF. The support available, number of places, eligibility requirements and participation arrangements will depend on the initiative and will be published with each opportunity. Settings should use the initiative-specific request-to-participate route.



Each initiative has a defined delivery model, intended outcomes and programme requirements. The request-to-participate process will therefore focus on local need, fit with the initiative, readiness, capacity and commitment, rather than requiring the full analysis used for a school-designed whole-school grant.

How the graduated response applies

The request should show how the setting has identified the relevant need, reviewed existing provision, and considered how participation would strengthen everyday practice and improve outcomes for the intended cohort. Evidence should be proportionate to the initiative and the requirements published with the opportunity.

Eligibility and participation requirements

Whilst a whole school costed provision map is not required at the point of application, there should be a willingness to work with the ILS to develop this.

Schools will be expected to provide:

- Evidence of need and alignment with the initiative's intended outcomes.
- Readiness and capacity to release staff, implement the approach and meet programme requirements.
- Senior leadership support and commitment to monitoring and sustainability.

Participation is not automatic. Eligibility, available places, delivery arrangements, selection criteria and monitoring requirements will be published for each initiative. Where demand exceeds available places, requests will be assessed against those published requirements. The invitation will include the request-to-participate link and all initiative-specific information.

Decision-making and agreement

- Requests are assessed by the EIF management team, against the published initiative requirements and available places. Decisions are moderated through the moderation process.
- Successful settings sign a participation or funding agreement.

Monitoring and accountability

- Monitoring follows the same proportionate principles as whole-school grant monitoring and will normally take place at approximately 6 and 12 months, adapted to the initiative's delivery model.
- The format may include a visit, online meeting, evidence review or a combination. Monitoring may review implementation and fidelity, expenditure where relevant, staff learning, changes to everyday practice, pupil experience, outcomes, transfer into classroom practice and sustainability.
- Where programme requirements are not met or funding has not been used for the agreed purpose, the local authority may seek information, agree corrective action, reallocate a place or recover funding where the agreement permits. The setting will be informed and able to provide relevant evidence before a decision is made.

7. Exceptions and process concerns

Applications and requests to participate are considered on the information submitted by the deadline. The panel may seek a minor clarification, but the submission cannot be amended or supplemented after the deadline. Decisions are made by the relevant panel, subject to moderation, and are final for that funding round or initiative. An unsuccessful submission may be revised and submitted to a future funding round or opportunity, subject to the eligibility requirements and any resubmission restrictions applying to that pathway.

8. Frequently asked questions

General questions

Can a setting apply through more than one pathway?

Yes, where each request meets the relevant requirements and there is no duplication of funding.

What evidence of existing SEND and inclusion expenditure is required?

For individual and grant funding applications, the school must provide a whole-school costed provision map that clearly shows relevant provision and expenditure. Contact the linked Inclusive Learning Service advisor for support if this document is not in place.

Where are dates and current requirements published?

On the current EIF webpage and in communications issued for the funding round or initiative.

Can information be added after submission?

No. Submissions cannot be amended or supplemented after the deadline. The panel may contact the setting where a minor clarification is needed, but this does not provide an opportunity to add evidence or change the request.

Pathway 1: individual applications

Is a fixed number of APDR cycles required?

There should be a minimum of 2 cycles of APDR however the evidence should provide a proportionate picture of need, provision, consistent implementation and reviewed impact.

Can a learner with an EHC plan, live EHC needs assessment or current top-up funding receive EIF?

No. The current eligibility criteria and any requirements for the funding round apply.

Can EIF support a learner on a part-time timetable or phased return?

This will be decided on a case by case basis. Explain the circumstances, how education and inclusion are being secured and why EIF remains an appropriate time-limited early intervention response.

Can an individual learner receive EIF more than once?

Funding is not normally available where the learner has already received EIF in the current key stage. Current funding-round requirements also apply.

Pathway 2: whole-school grant applications

Can a school make more than one application?

Yes, but each proposal must address a distinct strategic gap. Previous awards and the school's stated priority may be considered where demand exceeds the budget. There must also be clear evidence which demonstrates the capacity of the school to deliver more than one project.

Can the panel make a partial award?

Yes. Feedback will explain which elements were not funded and why.

Can a grant combine training, tools, resources, staffing, consumables and supply cover?

Yes, where the components form one coherent, eligible and time-limited response to an identified area of need.

Can EIF fund ongoing supervision or staffing?

Time-limited implementation costs may be considered. Ongoing costs must be sustainable from the school budget.

Can EIF fund assessment materials, access-arrangement resources or laptops?

Stand-alone or core purchases are unlikely to be eligible. Relevant resources may be considered within a wider eligible project. Laptops are a core provision.

Can EIF fund Speech and Language Therapy support?

A whole-school grant should show how commissioned support builds school capacity and strengthens OAP, rather than operating only as a one-off service.

Can EIF pay for building or environmental works?

No. Capital and building costs are not eligible.

Is there a required format for the whole school costed provision map?

No single format is required. It must clearly show relevant provision and expenditure, including use of the notional SEN budget.

Does the form need a headteacher signature?

Yes. A physical signature or an electronic copy of the signature is required – not a typed name

Should individual children be named?

No.

What happens if a project changes after an award?

Discuss material changes with the Inclusive Learning Service so that any agreed variation can be considered through monitoring and recorded appropriately.

Pathway 3: EIF-commissioned initiatives

How will settings hear about initiatives?

Opportunities and the request-to-participate process will be communicated when an initiative becomes available.

Is participation automatic?

No. Requests are assessed against the published requirements and available places.

What monitoring is required?

Monitoring will normally take place at approximately 6 and 12 months and will be adapted to the initiative's delivery model.

Can a place be reallocated?

Where programme requirements are not met, the local authority may agree corrective action or reallocate a place in accordance with the agreement.

Key links

[Early Intervention Fund webpage](#)

[Bristol Graduated Response Guidance and toolkits](#)

[SEND support plans and guidance](#)

[SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

[Inclusive Mainstream Fund 2026 to 2027](#)

[Bristol SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028](#)