

	Schools Forum 18 June 2025
	Report from Corporate Director of Children, Young People & Community Development
SEND Funding Allocations for Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) and Early Years	

Wards Affected:	All
List of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1: Consultation on the Revised SLA and Funding Model for Enhanced Provisions in EY Settings Appendix 2: Consultation on the Revised SLA and Funding Model for ARPs
Background Papers:	None
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Schools Forum received a report on 19 June 2024 on a proposed banding SEND Resource Allocation System (RAS) to move away from the current hours led system to a needs-led, provision-based approach for mainstream schools and Additional Resource Provisions (ARPs), early years settings and post-16 settings. It was agreed that consultation would be undertaken with schools and settings in the autumn term on the proposed new approach.
- 1.2. A report on consultation with mainstream schools and post-16 colleges on a proposed RAS for mainstream schools and post-16 was received by Schools Forum in November 2024. This report provides feedback on consultation on a new approach to funding for Early Years and ARPs.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Schools Forum support the introduction of a new approach to SEND funding in Early Years settings as set out in section 4.
- 2.2 It is recommended that Schools Forum support the introduction of a standard and consistent approach to funding ARPs across the borough, as set out in section 5.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The development of consistent funding approaches for Early Years and ARPs is part of the Brent Borough Plan priority 'Best Start in Life', aimed at ensuring that children and young people "receive the support they need when they need it". The recommendations specifically meet the outcome to 'raise attainment and aspirations [through] working with schools and partners [to] make sure access to education is fair and equal" (Appendix 1).

3.2 Background – Early Years

- 3.2.1 The review of ARP and EY funding represents an extension of projects initiated within the DBV programme to drive efficiency in the use of the HNB. Close to £1.1M is allocated from the HNB to the Early Years (EY) block, known as the Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF). Additional income for early years inclusion support comes from the Early Years block (£590K) and the Disability Access Fund (£170K).
- 3.2.2 The Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF), totalling just under £1.7M, is distributed as outlined in Table 1 below. This funding supports enhanced places in the Maintained Nursery Schools (MNS) Granville Plus, Curzon, and Fawood and Willow Nursery. The funds are allocated through two main channels: 'Children with Disabilities' (CWD) places and Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) places. Additionally, EYIF provides financial support to Private, Voluntary, and Independent (PVI) settings, as well as childminders, to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) via SENIF. A breakdown of this funding can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Current allocation of HNB funding to Early Years (EY)

	Maintained	PVIs	Total
CWD	£724,988	£294,172	£1,019,160
ARP	£609,328		£609,328
	£1,334,316		£1,628,488
EY Inclusion Officer Post			£70,000
			£1,698,488

- 3.2.3 Currently, allocation of the EYIF is overseen by the Under 5s Nursery multi-agency panel (held monthly). CWD or ARP places are agreed using supporting evidence from a paediatrician report or an EHCP. SENIF funding to the PVI settings is awarded using a two-tier banding system, where either £2,850 or £4,560 top-up is awarded. The EY Inclusion Officer provides support and training to EY settings, including school nurseries.
- 3.2.4 An analysis of High Needs Block (HNB) funding allocation indicates that the Maintained Nursery Schools and Willow Nursery receive funding at a ratio of approximately 5:2 compared to PVI settings, such that for every £5 they receive £2 allocated to PVIs.

3.3 Background - ARPs

- 3.3.1 ARPs are specialist provisions established in partnership with Brent Council to provide targeted support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in both maintained nurseries and schools. Brent currently has 15 ARPs in total. 3 ARPs are located in maintained nurseries (see 3.2.2 above and Table 1), whilst 12 ARPs are located in 10 schools (9 primary, 3 secondary). Brent has 8 ARPs for children with autism spectrum condition (ASC), 2 ARPs for children with hearing impairment (HI) and 2 ARPs for children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Three further ARPs/ARP expansions will be opening between September 2025 and January 2026 at Preston Park, St Margaret Clitherow and Newman Catholic College. Two further ARPs have been agreed in principle but are still at the planning stages. Discussions are ongoing with further primary and secondary schools regarding opening additional ARPs. The current and agreed planned distribution of ARPs in Brent is detailed in Table 2, below.

Table 2: ARPs in Brent (current and planned)

	School / Setting	Phase	No. places	Designation	Annual Pupil Top-up (£)
1.	Oakington Manor	Primary	21	ASC	8,931
2.	Oakington Manor	Primary	3	SLCN	2,485
3.	Fryent	Primary	42	ASC	12,413
4.	Elsley	Primary	10	ASC	12,413
5.	Newfield	Primary	12	ASC	12,413
6.	Kingsbury Green	Primary	30	HI	10,357
7.	Preston Park	Primary	7 (21)	ASC	12,413
8.	Kilburn Park	Primary	16	ASC	12,413
9.	Carlton Vale	Primary	10	ASC	12,413
10.	Preston Manor	Secondary	12	SLCN	6,492
11.	Preston Manor	Secondary	12	ASC	13,108
12.	Kingsbury High	Secondary	7	HI	10,357
13.	St Margaret Clitherow	Primary	17	ASC	TBC
14.	Newman CC	Secondary	25	SEMH	TBC
15.	QPCS	Secondary	25	TBC	TBC
16.	St Gregory's	Secondary	28	TBC	TBC
		Total:	270(284)		

	<i>Early Years</i>				
17.	Granville	Nursery	7	ASC/SLCN	11,272
18.	Fawood	Nursery	10	ASC/SLCN	10,516
19.	Willow Nursery	Nursery	12	ASC/SLCN	11,272
		Total:	29		

3.3.2. As can be seen from Table 2, at present there is no consistency in how the funding is allocated to nurseries and schools who operate an ARP. This makes it difficult for nurseries and schools to adequately plan how to resource ARPs as the funding received fluctuates year to year (as funding is dependent upon occupancy rates). In order to resolve this., a financial review was conducted, including benchmarking against other local authorities and engaging with nurseries and schools to understand the cost associated with running an ARP.

4.0 Proposed Early Years funding model

4.1 A financial review of the Granville Plus, Fawood and Curzon Maintained Nursery Schools and Willow Nursery highlights a funding shortfall across all three settings, despite allocated SENIF (CWD) and ARP funding, see Table 3. The figures in Table 3 indicate that the current funding structure does not fully cover the operational and staffing costs required to sustain the current enhanced SEND provision.

Table 3: The funding of Brent's MNSs and Willow Nursery

Nursery School	Income (£)	Expenditure (£)*	Difference (£)
Granville Plus Nursery School (7 ARP + 6 CWD FTE places)			
SENIF Funding	140,320.00		
ARP Funding	148,905.00		
TOTAL	289,225.00	324,699.88	-35,474.88
Willow Nursery (12 ARP + 15 CWD FTE)			
SENIF Funding	350,801.00		
ARP Funding	255,265.00		
TOTAL	606,066.00	691,580.76	-85,514.76
Fawood and Curzon Nursery Schools (10 ARP + 10 CWD FTE places)			
SENIF Funding	233,868.00		
ARP Funding	205,000.00		
TOTAL	438,868.00	457,375.48	-18,507.48
Total for all settings	1,334,159.00	1,473,656.12	-139,497.12

4.2 Many local authorities do not offer enhanced nursery provision. The SENIF bandings cover most levels of need and for those children with complex needs, there are some early years resourced provisions which provide specialist

support. Table 4, below, provides a summary of benchmarking carried out on SENIF.

Table 4: Benchmarking of SENIF

LA	Brent	Newham	Bristol	Lambeth	Waltham Forest	Camden
SENIF bandings	-	£1,500	£1,026	£1,050	£1,710	Pay £6.57 ph. (£7,500pa) Provide 30hrs for all 3/4yrs
	£2,850	-	£2,052	£1,200	£2,850	
	-	£3,225	£3,420	£1,600	£3,990	
	£4,560	-	£5,130	-	£5,700	
	-	£7,000	£6,840	-	-	
Enhanced provision	£23,386 (CWD) £21,272 (ARP)	£7k-18,000	N/a	£3k-18,000	N/a	£23,900

4.3 Early years is a crucial stage to ensure that children have the best start in life. It is, therefore, vital that services and provision are evidence-led and strategically aligned, staff are well-trained and parents understand their role in supporting their child to develop and progress. The work undertaken as part of this review has highlighted some key issues:

- Currently Early Years SENIF funding has only two bands. This means that emerging needs are either not supported or are financially over-supported; for children with more complex needs, PVI settings are not appropriately funded to meet need. This in turn is driving demand and pressure on the enhanced nursery settings and limiting parental choice.
- Early Years providers can face a significant administrative burden in applying for education, health and care plans (EHCPs) before a child starts school, often at a stage of a child's development where it remains uncertain what their long-term needs will be. Early Years providers need resources to be provided in a timely manner.
- Waiting times for EHCPs and paediatrician reports can impact on the allocation of places in a timely fashion contributing to empty places within settings and delayed support for children.
- SENCOs (recently surveyed) report that they find the Graduated Approach Framework useful, but they could not access funding quickly enough, particularly for those children who clearly have complex needs.
- There is a lack of clarity from the nursery settings about the difference between enhanced nursery placements and the nursery resourced provisions. The funding of different placements at different levels needs to be clearer, alongside clear reporting on delivery, from the providers.

4.4 The LA conducted a consultation with schools, EY settings, and parents to gather feedback on proposed changes to ARP and EY SEND funding. For further details on the consultations, please refer to Appendices 1 and 2. Following consultation it is recommended that:

- In Early Years, terminology 'CWD' and 'ARP' places is no longer used, with the term 'enhanced places' used to cover all places allocated additional resource
- A new SENIF banding system and Early Years Banding Matrix Resource Allocation System (RAS) is implemented. The new approach would standardise enhanced place funding. Introduction of the new SENIF bandings will mean that emerging needs are supported and not financially over-supported; for children with more complex needs, PVI settings are appropriately funded.
- New staff resource is put in place to quality assure settings receiving funding alongside a new SLA. Allocating staff resource to quality assure and oversee the use of SENIF and enhanced place funding, in addition to implementing SLAs (Service Level Agreements), would ensure the optimum use of funding, thereby improving service delivery.
- The current requirement for a child to have an ECHP and paediatrician report to be considered for SENIF and enhanced place funding is removed. The Under Fives Nursery Panel approving enhanced places in the absence of an EHCP and/or paediatric report could improve efficiency in filling available places.

4.5 Tables 5 and 6 set out the financial modelling for increasing the enhanced place top-up value to £12,500.

Table 5: Option 2 enhanced provision funding allocation

Type of Funding	Funding per place
Base funding	£10,000
Top-up funding	£12,500
Total ARP place funding	£22,500

Table 6: The financial impact of the proposed changes on Brent's MNS

Nurseries	CURZON	FAWOOD	GRANVILLE	WILLOW	Total
ARP Places (FTE)	0	10	7	12	29
CWD Places (FTE)	5	5	6	15	31
Total Enhanced Provision Places (FTE)	5	15	13	27	60
Funding Rates					
Previous ARP place funding	0	£20,516	£21,272	£21,272	
New Enhanced Place Funding from April 25	£22,500	£22,500	£22,500	£22,500	
Funding Calculation (New Rate)					
Enhanced Provision Places total from April 25	£112,500	£337,500	£292,500	£607,500	£1,350,000
Previous funding Total (CWD +/- ARP) April 25	£116,934	£322,094	£289,224	£606,069	£1,334,323
Increase from September 25	-£4,434	£15,406	£3,274	£1,431	£15,677

4.6 Increasing the enhanced place top-up value to £12,500 would bring average funding across all enhanced places to £22,500 (the agreed number of places

attract £10K base funding). The EYIF currently provides funding for 60 places in MNSs and Willow Nursery at an average of £22,238.60/place. These places would see an uplift of up to £261.40 per place on average in the level of funding allocated to enhanced nursery placements.

- 4.7 As seen in Table 7 below, the SENIF banding system would move from a two-tier banding system to a four-tier system linked to the EY RAS Matrix.

Table 7: The current and proposed SENIF banding changes

	Current funding	Proposed funding	
	Top-up payable	Top-up payable	Funding level description
SENIF bandings	-	£500.00	Targeted / Emerging needs
	-	£2,850.00	Targeted+ level of needs
	£2,850	-	
	-	£4,560.00	Specialist level of needs
	£4,560	£7,000.00	Exceptional level of need

Analysis based on nursery children in academic year 23/24, show 120 children in Band 3 and 110 in band 5. The additional banding rate for emerging needs (called Band 1) at £500 would be more appropriate for approximately a third of children on Band 3 (£2,850). This would represent a saving of £94,000 (noting however that the new band 1 (£500) may increase the number of requests for that level of funding). It is proposed that a quarter of children in the current band 5 (£4,560) would move into the exceptional level of need band (£7,000). Transition of children from band 5 (£4,560) to the exceptional level of need band (£7000) band would bring an additional cost of £65,880. Overall, the new banding system could introduce savings of £28,120 that would be used to fund staff resource to support and quality assure the enhanced provisions.

- 4.8 In 2023/24, 90 children receiving Band 5 SENIF support (at £4,560 per child) went on to be approved for Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). Since the specific EHCP banding for these children is not yet clear, model assumptions are that they are funded at an average EHCP band value of £11,916.67 to estimate the total cost of 90 EHCPs. This results in an approximate total of £1,072,500.30. If these children were approved under the exceptional needs band (£7,000), the total cost would be £630,000 for the 90 children, indicating a potential cost avoidance of £442,500.30. The exceptional needs band is designed to provide a more cost-effective and timely alternative for supporting children with additional needs.
- 4.9 Table 8 shows the total cost of the proposed new model. There is a small uplift in funding for Early Years from the HNB.

Table 8: The total cost of proposed Early Year Funding Model

Total cost	
SENIF	£364,172
Enhanced Provision	£1,350,000
	£ 1,714,172
EY Quality Assurance Post	£56,853
Potential Savings	(£ 28,120)
Proposed Total	£ 1,742,905
Current total	£1,698,488
Increase	£44,417

5.0 Proposed Funding Model for School ARPs

- 5.1 A financial review was undertaken of ARPs in school settings including mapping school costs and benchmarking with other Local Authorities. The current top-up rates for ARPs in Brent schools are provided in Table 9.

Table 9: Current ARP funding rates

Type of ARP	Name of School	Maintained/ Academy	2024-25 ARP Top-up Rate
S&L	Oakington Manor	Academy	£2,485
S&L	Preston Manor School	Academy	£6,492
ASD	Oakington Manor Primary School	Academy	£8,931
HI	Kingsbury Green Primary School	Maintained	£10,357
HI	Kingsbury High School	Academy	£10,357
ASD	Fawood Childrens Centre	Maintained	£10,516
ASD	Granville Plus Nursery School	Maintained	£11,272
ASD	Sunshine Arp (At Willow Family Wellbeing Centre)	Maintained	£11,272
ASD	Fryent Primary School	Maintained	£12,413
ASD	The Kilburn Park School Foundation	Maintained	£12,413
ASD	Carlton Vale Infant School	Maintained	£12,413
ASD	Elsley Primary School	Maintained	£12,413
ASD	Newfield Primary School	Maintained	£12,413
ASD	Preston Manor	Academy	£13,108

- 5.2 Schools were contacted to get a better understanding of the cost to run an ARP provision. They were asked to outline their costs for staffing, resources and other costs associated with operating an ARP. Of the eight schools who engaged, the average cost per child per place was £24,363.18. It is important to note that many schools included maintenance costs in their modelling, which the LA does not cover through HNB funding. The cost of speech and language

therapy was added to the costs by 5 of the 8 schools. However, starting from September 2025, this expense will be covered by the Local Authority (LA) through the wider speech and language contract with CLCH allowing ARP funding to be utilised elsewhere.

- 5.3 Benchmarking against other local authorities showed that there were two main methods of allocating funding: a banded system and a set rate for each provision. Table 10, below, outlines the different median cost per top up rate per place.

Table 10: Benchmarking of ARP provision across other London Boroughs

Local Authority	Type of System	Median Top-Up Rate
Hillingdon	Banded	£12,500
Barking and Dagenham	Banded	£9,866
Ealing	Set rate for each provision	£8,932
Hounslow	Set rate for each provision	£12,339

- 5.4 The LA conducted a consultation with schools, EY settings, and parents to gather feedback on proposed changes to how ARPs are funded and also on a proposed revised SLA. For full details on the consultation, please refer to Appendix 2. Only 3 schools responded to the ARP consultation, but the Head of Inclusion has followed this with detailed conversations with each school with an ARP. It is proposed that a single rate of £12,500 top up per child is introduced for all school ARPs. ARPs would continue to receive £6,000 base funding per child per annum place funding for occupied places, plus AWPU. The newly proposed model would result in an increase in the yearly cost of ARP provisions of £268k. This equates to £168k for the 2025/26 financial year if implemented from September 2025.
- 5.5 All schools with an ARP would see an overall increase in their top up rate, allowing there to be clarity of expectation, fairness and consistency across all ARP provisions addressing current disparities (Table 12). With a uniform rate, the administrative burden of assessing individual needs and adjusting funding accordingly is reduced, streamlining the process for both the Council and the schools. It would allow schools to plan long term as there will be a set budget year on year providing surety of funding. Schools would also have the flexibility to utilise the funding in a way that best supports the whole provision as opposed to differentiating between children as one is on a higher band than another. There is a risk that a single rate may not adequately address the varying needs of children, potentially leading to insufficient support for those with higher needs. This could impact the effectiveness of the provisions.

Table 12: Current and proposed top-up for school ARPs

School	Phase	Designation	Previous annual pupil top-up (£)	Proposed annual pupil top-up (£)	Percentage Difference (%)
Oakington Manor	Primary	ASC	8931	12500	40
Oakington Manor	Primary	SLCN	2485	12500	403
Fryent	Primary	ASC	12413	12500	1
Elsley	Primary	ASC	12413	12500	1
Newfield	Primary	ASC	12413	12500	1
Kingsbury Green	Primary	HI	10357	12500	21
Preston Park	Primary	ASC	12413	12500	1
Kilburn Park	Primary	ASC	12413	12500	1
Carlton Vale	Primary	ASC	12413	12500	1
Preston Manor	Secondary	SLCN	6492	12500	93
Preston Manor	Secondary	ASC	13108	12500	-5
Kingsbury High	Secondary	HI	10357	12500	21
St Margaret Clitherow	Primary	ASC	TBC	12500	-
Newman CC	Secondary	SEMH	TBC	12500	-
QPCS	Secondary	TBC	TBC	12500	-
St Gregory's	Secondary	TBC	TBC	12500	-
Granville	Nursery	ASC/SLCN	11272	12500	19
Fawood	Nursery	ASC/SLCN	10516	12500	11
Willows	Nursery	ASC/SLCN	11272	12500	11

6.0. Financial Considerations

- 6.1 The proposed new approach for the HNB contribution to Early Years would result in an increase of approximately £44k, raising funding from £1.698m currently to £1.743m.
- 6.2 The proposed new approach to standardise ARP rates at £12,500 would result in an increase of £268k against the overall annual budget allocation of £4.6m for ARPs (including the Maintained Nursery School ARPs). This would create an additional budget pressure of £168k for the 2025/26 financial year, if implemented from September. However, this approach would ensure consistent funding for all ARPs in Brent and provide schools that previously

received less funding with adequate resources to continue meeting the needs of children in line with other ARPs. Additionally, there should be a reduction in the number of children requiring special school places if their needs can be effectively met within an ARP.

7.0 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 The proposed funding approach is consistent with the Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015). An SLA will be put in place with each school and setting that sets out responsibilities, expectations and KPIs.

8.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 8.1 The Brent Parent Carer Forum as well as the High Needs and Early Years subgroups of the Schools Forum have been kept informed and provided direction and support for the proposed changes as set out in the body of the report.

9.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 9.1 It is considered that there have been no changes in equality implications of the proposals set out in this report compared to the current systems for funding that are in use. In addition, there is no disproportionate effect on any protected characteristic group and no adverse equalities implications.

10.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 10.1 These changes will not impact on the Council's environmental objectives and climate emergency strategy.

11.0 Communication Considerations

- 11.1 The proposed changes have been co-designed with input from all key stakeholders, including parents, through forums and formal consultation.

Related document(s) for reference

Previous School Forum papers

Report sign off:

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