

Responses to Early Education Funding Consultation on Funding Rates and Early SEND Support funding

Number of responses

Childminders	21
Group settings	34
Total	55

Do you agree with the increase of the early SEND support budget by £50,000 from £250,000 to £300,000?

Number of responses

Yes	45
No	0
Don't know	10

Do you have any comments about the Early SEND Support funding?

1. Yes, it simply isn't enough for some of our children. Eg, we have two children (twins) who both require a very high level of support and one who cannot be left unsupervised at all. EHCNAs were completed in July and have still not gone through. Without EHCPs in place, we cannot claim the higher level of funding and are having to meet the financial shortfall ourselves. It is an impossible situation and very stressful.
2. I think we need a lot more funding for children with SEND
3. The forms need to be streamlined, especially if there are other professionals involved in the child's care and development. Paperwork has become a massive undertaking now, please help us to keep it to a minimum, thanks
4. the threshold for the basic payment needs to be looked at
5. the funding allocation is not fit for purpose if we are taking children with higher needs that require additional adults then the funding needs to adequately reflect that
6. Why is the highest percentage of money being taken from 3 and 4 year old funding which is already grossly underpaid.

7. It would be nice to have a prediction of how this would impact the termly amount settings receive. For many children £850.00 allows us to adequately support children with emerging needs within normal ratios. This amount is not sufficient for those children with complex long term needs or those with medical conditions/safety needs which require high levels of supervision. If the idea is to reduce EHCPs this will need much greater thought. The paperwork around SEND support funding at all levels needs looking at to avoid duplication and to be more time efficient for settings. There is also a need for greater clarity and clearer procedures for anticipatory funding - where children are already being supported by many professionals and their needs (often high level needs) are already identified. Settings are often but in the position of funding additional support needed themselves and children risk not getting the full support they need whilst awaiting a full cycle of a graduated approach . Over recent years with more children with complex needs this has impacted financial sustainability.
8. I think the funding should be done based on the child's need rather than a set amount. Happy to talk about this further.
9. Early SEND support funding also needs to be carefully considered on an individual basis as sometimes we need to be able to show our graduated response which takes us over our budget for additional adults. I have found this to be the case with a child who now has an EHCP and will be awarded Specialist in Mainstream funding in reception but nothing to cover the cost of an additional adult for the full amount of hours attended in pre-school.
10. SENIF funding is essential to meet the needs of children with SEND, I fully support the increase. After last night's teams briefing hearing childminders are not offering places to 3/4 year olds due to the low hourly rate. Could a slightly higher percentage be taken from under 2's and 2 year-olds to even out the funding?
11. I have found the SEND funding helpful in supporting the children that I care for who needed it - as a lone worker it has supported the additional costs in time as much of the extra work required for these children I have to do complete outside working hours.
12. We welcome the additional funding as we are seeing more children with additional needs.
13. Increasing numbers will need increased budget.
14. I feel that this budget is probably not increased enough. The government are very clearly pressing for less EHCP's and pushing diagnosis from schools so the earlier we can get send support & funding and try to engage parents to get the early help the better outcomes for the children.
15. I understand there is higher level of send support needed but not at the expense of the 3/4 yr old funding rate
16. SEND support will obviously vary across settings so this does need to be reviewed to ensure consistency of funding received across settings
17. It is very nice that they are increasing the support for SEND children but I feel that maybe it would more helpful if they gave all settings support by increasing the funding in general.
18. Yes more money needs to come to Early Years as we have a lot of children with SEND and this is impacting on our budget, staff and resources

What is your preferred option for the 2026-27 funding rates?**Number of responses**

Option 1 - keep the deprivation and low income supplement rates the same	22
Option 2 - increase deprivation rates, keep deprivation bands the same and keep low income supplement the same	10
Option 3 - increase deprivation rates, lower deprivation band 1 and keep low income supplement the same	3
Option 4 - keep deprivation supplement the same and remove low income supplement	10
Option 5 - keep deprivation supplement the same and increase low income bands by 25%	3
Option 6 - increase deprivation rates, lower deprivation band 1 and increase low income bands by 25%	6
Option 7 - increase deprivation rates, lower deprivation band 1 and remove low income supplement	1

Do you have any comments on the 2026-27 funding rates?

1. 1 or 4

2. I honestly find this very difficult every year - there are so many options and the temptation is to go for the highest hourly rate option. It's so confusing that I have chosen 'no change'. The base rate for 3-4 YO's is still too low. Our fees are £6.50 per hour. We want to be able to pay our practitioners a reasonable rate, given the high expectations and pressure placed upon them by government and Ofsted. Their pay should reflect their skills and experience and not be less than they could earn stacking shelves in a supermarket. Why do other areas receive higher funding? I understand there should be a London/city weighting but it is very expensive to live/rent/travel in Dorset. It just does not make sense.

3. I seem to have got totally confused by all these figures. My opinion is that every age range should be equal amounts and why not every setting? Just make it fair across the board!

4. Funding is still low

5. Still not enough money. We are facing another massive rise in minimum pay rate, this isn't sustainable

6. The 3 and 4 year old rates are too low and you are going to force early years providers to make a choice on what age children they take which could be detrimental to the child's development!

7. The drop of funding between age bands is very difficult to absorb for childminders if they do not have a young child to offset the older ones. I feel it is necessary to keep the low income addition to the 3&4 yr rates. To enable the childminder to remain viable as the children grow through the bands and the rates decline. However they do need to be increased to cover the increase in income the setting could have when the child is younger.

8. I have chosen option one as a recognition of those settings that might rely on these supplements - we do not receive any. We are a 20 place setting only taking up to 5 two year olds at any one time due to EYFS floor space requirements. . None of the options will increase the base rate significantly enough to keep pace with increased costs. Fundamentally 3 and 4 year old funding has been too low for too long!!

9. It's great to see that a more appropriate rate is being offered for 3&4 year olds

10. Funding is insufficient to fully cover rising salary costs, but acknowledge the rates are set by the Government.

11. As a childminder the current system works against us due to the different rates of funding when children join us its a higher rate, next year they will all move up to the older age ranges and income rates will drop accordingly but the income from the previous year dictates whether we qualify for the uplift - this is very challenging to calculate and budget for and we cannot 'save it' as we will be taxed more on the income - we should be getting one rate as per the 1:3 ratio in the funding model. If the borough have any support for childminders in regards to how we can possibly plan and navigate financially through the constant changes in the rates we will be paid that would be very helpful.

12. The current funding rates along with the restrictions on what we can and cannot charge parents for means that our operating costs are not covered. The continual increase in National Living Wage and overheads that are over and above the increase in the funding rates is putting increased financial pressure on our nursery.

13. I'd propose the basis for the Low Income Supplement needs reassessing. We are a small setting but with an income well above the current threshold. But this year we will make a significant loss due to regulatory requirements to maintain >2 staff in setting despite low child numbers in all sessions so our child/staff ratio is << statutory maxima. We find the base rates, with some PP, are adequate to cover costs (driven by staff cost) when ratios can be maintained close to statutory maxima, but when our ratios in practice fall below about ~75% of statutory ratios when providing minimum safeguarding staffing (of 2 supervisors) we start losing money very quickly so our charity is becoming unsustainable. So I would propose that Low Income Supplement is based on the average number of children attending per session compared to the number which could be supervised by 2 staff and becomes payable if attendance is, say, less than ~75% (to be determined) of statutory maximum for 2 staff; though this will obviously depend upon the age mix. I'd also propose that payment is based on the Autumn #1 plan and grant payment in August and then continues until attendance increases above the threshold assessed at each subsequent half-termly grant submission, so the Supplement is received when needed.

14. As childminders, the current funding system works against us due to the differing funding rates applied as children move through age bands. Children often start in our setting at a higher funding rate, but this drops the following year when they move into an older age band. As a result, our income reduces, yet eligibility for the uplift is still based on the previous year's higher income. This makes budgeting and financial planning extremely challenging. We are also unable to set aside funds from the higher-rate year to offset the reduction, as doing so would result in higher taxation on that income. A single, consistent funding rate aligned with the 1:3 ratio within the funding model would be far more appropriate and sustainable. Do you have any support or guidance on this issue?

15. It does not appear clear from the 7 options, where or how the 19p funding adjustment 'bonus' has been utilised for the 3 & 4 year old funding in Dorset. Please could this be made clearer so it is understood how it has impacted us. Ie how much has been passed through and where it has been allocated. I feel that the response rate to the consultation has been too low and does not provide a county based opinion about the funding rates being decided upon. This must be improved for next year by increasing engagement with settings and not dissuading conversations around funding. The timeline is not adequate enough, having recently been told that providing our parents with one months notice to make adjustments to fees and funding arrangements albeit private fees, is not adequate and we should give more time, I feel it is contradictory to then potentially give providers 1 month in March to ensure our predicted revenue will be sufficient before we accept the funding the following month. This does not give ANY time to make reasonable adjustments and provide parents with notice should we be required to make additional changes. The majority of settings do not understand the funding formulas; or HOW it will impact them or other providers through the decisions being made. This makes the whole consultation process seem irrelevant. More information should be provided about how much financial impact could be made for low income settings and those claiming deprivation bands. As we discussed in the meeting, for the majority of settings who are not eligible for either of these options the consultation is being decided for approximately £400 if based on 10,000 funded hours. This is NOT enough money to make a huge impact on a setting of our size, but the balance of funds could be the difference between surviving or not for a smaller or low income setting. Please could examples of how this is beneficial be supplied? For childminders, the low income assistance is not sufficient in its current format. When able to earn more via under 2's funding they are not eligible potentially for the low income support and get taxed by HMRC on their earnings. Then when the funds are needed they are not able to claim due to the financial year and must wait until the following year where their earnings will be more anyway and then be taxed again... The overall funding rates continue to be less than adequate and DO NOT represent the sector struggles, particularly when there has been such an emphasis on employing apprentices and their wages are increasing the most in April. The admin surrounding the application for funding has increased tenfold. This needs to be reviewed with so many children now accessing funding. Perhaps create a system where only changes are updated? The HMRC reconfirmation process for some parents is not particularly easy and many require our support to ensure this is correct. The helplines are not sufficient or easy to get through to for some parents.

16. We are a large setting in band 1 but our over heads are very high and funding is not covering costs and I am sure the other day nursery is having the same problem. We might receive a lot of funding from DCC but it is time they thought of the affect that NI, Wages and other out going is impacting on these larger settings and this should now be considered.

