

Provider Reference Group Meeting – Summary (14 May 2026)

Present: Ashmita, Bev, Gina, Lisa W, Sarah. Ann, Lisa M, Rosie, Steve, Tom.

1. Main Topic: Inclusion Grant (2026–27)

- The DfE has introduced a **one-year Inclusion Grant** (Sept–March) as part of SEND reforms.
- Approx. **£182,000 total funding** for Solihull, based on January census data.
- Key requirements:
 - **100% of funding must go directly to settings**
 - Minimum **£1,000 threshold per setting** to ensure meaningful impact [DfE]
 - Funding split based on:
 - 75% funded hours (3–4 year olds)
 - 25% deprivation (EYPP)

Allocation Options Discussed

- **Method 1:** Remove settings below £1,000 → redistribute funds
- **Method 2 (preferred):** Iterative approach → brings more settings above £1,000

👉 General agreement (in principle):

- Follow **DfE methodology (no local model)**
- Use approach that **maximises number of settings receiving funding**

⚠️ However:

- **Decision NOT finalised** due to **data inaccuracies identified** in the model
- Spreadsheet error confirmed (formula issue), now corrected and to be reissued
- Re distribute spreadsheet and methodology and respond if concerns with this method remains [by Monday 18th May 5pm]

2. Key Issues Raised

- **Data accuracy concerns**
 - Providers challenged allocations
 - Agreement to **recheck and validate data before final decisions**
- **Equity concerns**
 - Smaller providers (especially childminders) likely to receive **no funding**
 - Strong view that:
 - Support must still be provided to unfunded settings [as DfE states]
 - Expectations on inclusion must remain realistic
- **Use of funding**
 - Intended for **whole-setting inclusion improvements** (not individual children)
 - Examples:
 - Training (e.g. SENCO, Makaton)

- Staff release time
 - Transition support
 - Multi-agency collaboration
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3. Wider Funding & Compliance Updates

- **DfE consultation (expected soon)**
 - Reviewing early years funding system
 - **Monthly payments**
 - Solihull already compliant (ahead of national requirement Oct 2026)
 - Positive provider feedback—supports cashflow and sustainability
 - **Charging compliance**
 - Most providers now compliant with transparency rules
 - Remaining non-compliance being addressed
 - New **provider agreement to be developed (summer)** with legal input
 - **Concerns raised**
 - Charging to join waiting lists flagged as inappropriate → being monitored and escalated nationally
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4. Provider Engagement & Data

- **New termly provider survey (pilot launching)**
 - First focus: **demand and waiting lists**
 - Future themes:
 - Supply and costs
 - SEND provision
 - **Parent survey planned**
 - Broader scope including wraparound childcare
 - Will support sufficiency planning and provider insight
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Overall Direction

- Broad consensus to:
 - Use **DfE framework**
 - Prioritise **fairness and inclusion across sector**
 - Ensure **transparency and accuracy before decisions**
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Future Actions

Immediate (Before End of May 2026)

- Correct and reissue funding model spreadsheet
- Providers to review updated figures
- Feedback to be sent to Lisa Morris by **Monday (deadline agreed)**

Funding Decisions

- Finalise methodology (likely Method 2) after validation
- Confirm allocations once DfE confirms funding (by Aug 2026)
- Payments issued as quickly as possible after confirmation

Support & Inclusion

- Develop plan for **settings not receiving funding**
- Explore:
 - Training offers
 - Shared learning opportunities
 - Targeted inclusion support
 - Further sources of funding

Policy & Compliance

- Draft new **provider agreement** (summer 2026)
- Continue monitoring **charging practices**
- Feed issues on chains/providers into **regional/national discussions**

Engagement & Data

- Launch **provider demand survey (May 2026)**
- Analyse and publish findings to support planning
- Develop and launch **parent survey (post half term)**

Next Meeting / Ongoing

TBC

Send issues/ celebrations/ questions on to reference group for future meeting agenda items.

Documents



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