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**The case for delinking Disability Access Funding from Disability Living Allowance**

In order for a setting to get Disability Access Funding (DAF) the child must have Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which the parents have to secure through a complicated application procedure. This puts significant pressure on families, and for many parents it is simply too early in their journey to feel comfortable making the application. Consequently, DAF is underspent in many local authority areas, and the lack of access funding that settings can claim is a clear barrier to inclusion.

Removing the link between DAF and DLA would make DAF funding more easily accessible. DAF funding should be available to all children who have a SEND professional involved with them.

The current situation:

* Local authorities in many cases are unable to spend their DAF funding.
* Families are under extra pressure to apply for DLA, which is often stressful and difficult for them.
* Settings are unable to access DAF funding directly and therefore are more likely to turn children away if there is no financial help to allow them to access the provision.

Potential impact:

* DAF funding would go to support the children who need it, rather than being swallowed up by local authority systems when it is underspent.
* Reduced stress on families around applying for DLA, and increased family trust in the system.
* Settings more likely to support children with SEND inclusively with the opportunity to access immediate funding when they arrive.
* Reduction in numbers of parents reporting being turned away from settings and increase in uptake of the early years entitlements among children with SEND.

**No extra funding is needed to make this change**. Local authorities already have the funding pots but are not able to utilise them.

In recent DfE research, focusing on whether DLA was the right proxy for giving DAF funding the majority of respondents said yes, although 80% of comments on the question were concerned that it was not a good proxy. We have spoken to a number of settings and professionals who had not considered the wider implications of the question posed. We would therefore encourage a review of this, and strongly recommend planning to delink DAF from DLA as soon as possible to remove this clear barrier to inclusion.

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