

Dingley's Promise and London Economics

Cost of inclusive Ordinarily Available Provision Research

Summary Document

This report estimates that around **254,400 children (15% of all children in early years settings)** would benefit from more inclusive SEND support. To make inclusive practice standard across England's early years sector, the report recommends investment in **staff training, coordination of support, and school transition planning**. The total annual cost is estimated at **£245 million**, made up of **£120 million for coordination and quality assurance, £107 million for workforce training and £17 million for transition support**.

If Government funded training directly, the remaining cost would fall to **£138 million per year**. The report argues that this investment would ensure support is available not only for children with formal diagnoses, but also for those whose needs have been identified early, helping improve outcomes and reducing the need for more intensive support later in life.

Cost of Inclusive Early Years Provision for Children with SEND

Why this report matters

The Government's Best Start in Life reforms create a chance to make early years education more inclusive for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



However:

- Most providers think inclusion training is important, but only about half access it.
- Many local authorities do not have enough places for children with SEND.
- Children often wait a long time for diagnosis and formal support.

This report estimates what it would cost to provide good-quality support for children with SEND as part of **Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)**, meaning support that should be available to all children before specialist funding or interventions are needed.

Importantly, the report argues that support should be available to children whose needs have been identified by practitioners, not only those with a diagnosis or formal SEND support plan.

Funding would enable the following key activities required to assure an anticipatory approach to meeting children's individual needs:

1. SENCO capacity and leadership

- SENCO time – protected/supernumerary for example, 2 hours per week as a baseline to monitor, oversee and champion inclusion.
- Time for observations and assessments
- Time for coaching and supporting practitioners
- Appropriate training and CPD

2. Sensory processing and regulation

- Sensory spaces / regulation areas / Soft furnishings and comfortable seating
- Fidget and tactile resources / Weighted lap items / Ear defenders / noise-reducing headphones

3. Physical environment and accessibility

- Chairs with armrests for children who require/prefer additional postural stability / Adaptable/height-adjustable tables / Footrests / Wobble cushion/ Scissors adapted for individual needs

4. Communication and interaction

- Visual timetables / Props and objects of reference / Signalong/Makaton resources, where appropriate / Mirrors for speech and language activities / Conversation/storytelling props

5. Emotional regulation and wellbeing

- **Emotional regulation resources** / Emotion thermometers/scales /Mirrors for recognising facial expression. safe/ calming spaces

6. Play, learning and cognitive development

- Cause-and-effect resources / Large-scale mark-making resources / Adapted books / Resources linked to children's individual interests

7. Fine and gross motor development

- Playdough and malleable materials / Tweezers/tongs / Push/pull resources / Opportunities for climbing, crawling and movement

8. Independence and self-care

- Adapted cutlery /Easy-grip cups /Practical resources to support independence rather than adult dependency

9. Attention, engagement and transitions

- Timers / Visual countdowns / Transitional objects

10. Environment and routine adaptations

- The layout of the room / Noise levels

All of these vital elements necessary to deliver inclusive practice within enabling environments and through a total communication approach and could be funded with the additional funds directed through the Early Years Inclusion Fund.

This fund currently allocates £47 million to the funding of Ordinarily Available Provision, however nearly 3 x this amount is required to cover the actual cost of this across all settings. Currently with this level of funding Childminders and Smaller settings do not receive this funding as there is not sufficient to cover all type or provision.

Key findings

How many children would benefit?

The report estimates:

- **254,400 children** in early years settings would benefit from improved inclusive provision.
- This represents **14.8% of children in early years settings**.
- **61%** of these children have speech, language and communication needs.
- On average, there are **8 children per setting** who would benefit

What would it cost?

Total annual investment required: £245 million

This includes:

Area	Annual cost
Coordination and quality assurance	£120m
Staff training (CPD)	£107m
School transition support	£17m
Total	£245m

If Government funded all staff training costs, the total cost to providers would fall to approximately **£138 million per year**.

What would the funding pay for?

1. Coordination and quality assurance (£120m)

Funding would pay for additional time for:

- SENCos and key workers to meet with families.
- Monitoring children's progress.
- Planning and coordinating support.
- Completing referrals and paperwork.
- SENCo observations and coaching of staff.

This is about ensuring children receive the right support and that staff can properly coordinate provision.

2. Staff training (CPD) (£107m)

Funding would provide:

- Whole-setting SEND and inclusion training.
- Three training sessions per year for all staff.
- Cover staff so training can take place during working hours.

The report argues that training staff during work time improves:

- Staff morale.
 - Staff retention.
 - Quality of provision.
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3. School transition support (£17m)

Funding would support:

- Additional SENCo time before children move to school.
 - Transition planning meetings.
 - Information sharing between settings and schools.
 - Support for children and families preparing for the move.
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Cost per child

If Government does not cover training costs

Child	Annual cost
Not moving to school next year	£895
Moving to school next year	£1,064

If Government covers all training costs

Child	Annual cost
Not moving to school next year	£473
Moving to school next year	£642

The additional cost for children moving to school reflects the extra transition support needed.

Impact on settings

For a typical setting with:

- **33 children**
- **5 children benefiting from the measures**

The estimated annual cost would be:

Scenario	Annual cost
No Government contribution	£4,800
Government covers training	£2,700
Government covers training and transition support	£2,400

Main messages

Inclusive support should start early

The report stresses that children should not have to wait for:

- A diagnosis.
- An EHCP.
- Formal SEND support.

Early support can improve outcomes and reduce the need for more expensive interventions later.

Training the workforce is essential

Creating inclusive provision across the sector requires all staff to receive SEND and inclusion training, not just specialists.

Relatively modest investment could make a significant difference

The report concludes that an investment of:

- **£245 million per year, or**
- **£138 million if Government funds training**

could help make inclusive practice standard across England's early years sector.

