

A Guide to Disability Access Funding

Introduction

The Disability Access Fund (DAF) was launched by the government in 2017 to provide additional funding to childcare providers to help meet the needs of those children whose needs mean that they are able to access the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The DAF aids access to early years places by, for example, supporting providers in making reasonable adjustments to their settings and/or helping with building capacity (be that for the child in question or for the benefit of children as a whole attending the setting).

Eligibility for Disability Access Fund (DAF)

Early years providers are eligible to receive DAF where a three or four year old child is taking up some part of the free early years entitlement with them and the child is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Four-year olds in primary and infant school reception classes are NOT eligible for DAF funding.

Entitlement

Providers taking three- and four-year-olds that are eligible for the DAF will be entitled to receive a one-off payment of £615 per academic year. DAF is not based on an hourly rate and is an additional entitlement.

Where children are accessing their early years entitlement at more than one provider it is for the parents to decide which provider can apply for the funding. The grant cannot be split between more than one provider.

If a child receiving DAF moves from one provider to another, the new provider is not eligible to receive DAF for this child within the same academic year. The new provider will need to wait until the following academic year to be able to apply for funding for the child.

Identifying eligible children

Early years providers are responsible for identifying eligible children. Providers are encouraged to speak to parents in order to find out who is eligible for the DAF. Parents of children qualifying for Disability Living Allowance are required to provide documented evidence of this entitlement.

How early years providers will receive DAF funding

- The local authority will fund all early years providers providing a place for each child eligible for the DAF in their area at the fixed annual rate of £615 per eligible child.
- The DAF will not be offset against any other funding which the local authority may ordinarily be providing for children eligible for the DAF.
- The DAF is payable as a lump sum once each academic year per eligible child. If a child eligible for the DAF is splitting their funded entitlement across two or more providers, the local authority will ask parents to nominate the main setting.
- The local authority will ask providers for information about how they intend to spend the funding to ensure that it is not duplicating any other funding which they may receive to support the child.
- If a child receiving the DAF moves from one provider to another within a financial year, the new provider is not eligible to receive the DAF funding for this child within the same financial year. DAF funding received by the original setting will not be recouped by the local authority.
- Where a child lives in one authority area but attends a provider in a different local authority, the provider's local authority is responsible for funding the DAF for the child and eligibility checking.
- All early years providers who are eligible to receive funding for the 3- and 4-year-old early years entitlement are also eligible to receive the DAF.

Using DAF to support children with SEND

Providers should consider what reasonable adaptations are required to ensure the child has the same equity of access to the provision as any other child. Resources required to ensure basic entry and reasonable adjustments to the learning environment should be the priority for DAF. This should involve the child's parent(s) and engage with other professionals working with the family to ensure DAF is spent appropriately. This is not limited to, but may include:

SEN early years team, Health Visitor, Paediatrician, Child and Family worker, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Visual Impairment team, Hearing Impairment, Autism outreach

Providers who have more than one child eligible for DAF at the same time may wish to 'pool' DAF. This may provide an opportunity to support an adjustment or purchase of equipment that benefits more than one child.

Providers are encouraged to forward plan in utilising DAF to ensure a child's needs are met for the duration of time that the child will be attending their provision before they start school. However, providers are advised to spend DAF within the term it is awarded.

Any resources purchased as part of DAF remain the property of that particular provider. However, if a child is moving onto another provider, they may wish to make arrangements for the transfer of any resources.

Providers may wish to allow parents to take resources home for weekends and holiday periods if they feel they would benefit the child.

Providers are encouraged to spend the entire £615 on the child eligible and meet the shortfall for any items over this amount. Shropshire Council will not meet any additional requests for funding above the standard DAF grant.

DAF should not be used to fund trips, assessments, 1:1 support or additional staffing, staff training or any other activity outside the definition of 'access' as outlined below.

Definition of 'Access' and responsibility to make 'Reasonable Adjustments'

For the purpose of DAF and early years, access refers to:

- the means or opportunity to enter the provision of space where early education is to take place. This includes either domestic or non-domestic premises.
- the means or opportunity to engage with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with reference to the seven areas of learning and development and welfare requirements.

Substantial disadvantage can be avoided by making reasonable adjustments for disabled children. This means making positive steps to ensure that disabled children can fully participate in early education and enjoy the other benefits, facilities and services offered by the provision.

The reasonable adjustment duty comprises of three requirements:

- Provision, criteria and practices
- Auxiliary aids and services
- Physical features

Purchasing equipment and undertaking adaptations

Providers must ensure that any equipment purchased meet the relevant (safety requirements). Electrical items must be PAT tested yearly.

Providers must ensure any building adaptations meet the appropriate regulations and standards.