**ISF – FAQs (updated September 2022)**

Can we approach panel for advice for a child with an EHCP?

A primary function of the forum is to provide advice and guidance for mainstream schools regarding the provision and practice they deliver for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). This can be for any child in a school and may include children who have an Education, Health and Care Plan. The ISF is mindful however that there is likely to be a wealth of existing advice with regard to meeting the needs of a child with an EHCP and therefore schools should be clear about what additional guidance they are seeking from their peers at ISF.

Schools are unable to access additional inclusion funding (AIF) for children with an EHC plan from the forum as they are already funded via allocation of top up.

### If you attend the panel for advice, can you then continue with an EHC needs assessment or do you have to wait a year?

Decisions regarding requests for Education, Health and Care Assessments are made in line with the SEND Code of Practice 2015. The local decision making process undertaken by the local authority can be found in the EHC panel terms of reference that are available[**here**](https://www.telfordsend.org.uk/localofferservices/info/1/home/9/what_is_an_education_health_and_care_plan)

There is no requirement to wait a year if you have attended the forum for advice and guidance before submitting a request for an EHC needs assessment. Attending the Inclusive School Forum provides good evidence that a school has delivered a high quality graduated approach to meeting needs.

### Is it really the case that only children who are likely to need a special school should be pursuing an EHC plan?

Decisions regarding requests for an Education, Health and Care assessments should be considered in light of the principle that where you feel a child meets criteria for an EHC assessment you should first consider applying for AIF funding, in consultation with the child’s parent. AIF funding, once agreed, will be provided within 10 days of the decision and you will be able to support the child’s needs quicker.

Where you feel a child may require specialist provision then you will need to submit an EHC assessment. Children will not be able to enter a special school without an EHC plan.

### During ‘advice’ at ISF would the forum suggest the need for EHC needs assessment instead?

The forum offers 3 functions. The primary function: advice and guidance offers the opportunity to share best practice, learn from one another and hold a professional discussion in a supportive forum with peers. The second function considers requests for Outreach support and the third function offers access to AIF funding which offers a school more flexibility by providing funding without the need for an Education, Health and Care Plan.

The function and role of the forum is not to consider requests for an EHC needs assessment.

### If following attendance at ISF you are not awarded funding can you, within 12 months, apply for an EHC needs assessment?

If a school is not awarded funding via the Inclusive School Forum (i.e. AIF) then they should carefully consider the merits of requesting an Education, Health and Care needs assessment as eligibility criteria for AIF is similar to an EHC needs assessment. The forum will have offered advice and guidance regarding amendments to a schools graduated approach that should be followed. Once followed a school is able to either reapply to the ISF for AIF funding or where specialist provision may be appropriate request an EHC needs assessment. There is no time frame between the ISF decision not to award funding and either reapplying to ISF or making a request for an EHC needs assessment.

### When applying for AIF do you require advice from other agencies as well as the SENCo?

Yes. The eligibility criteria specifies that the school has demonstrated that they are already supporting a child’s special educational need using quality first teaching and a high quality graduated approach (this must involve evidence that outside agencies have been used during cycles of assess, plan, do and review) at SEN support.

### Is it better to request funding for a group of pupils rather than individuals?

You are not able to request funding for groups of pupils. There are strict rules that govern the distribution of high need funding that is linked to meeting the needs of individual pupils. AIF funding can only be allocated to support an individual child or young person.

### Do you have corporate forms (i.e. provision maps / SEN support plans) that we can use?

There is a Costed Provision Map available on the Local Offer.

### If you are going back to panel year after year should you then be going for an EHC needs assessment?

Where AIF funding is agreed for a child/young person it is allocated for 1 year in the first instance but where appropriate it can continue year on year or be reduced, increased or ceased depending on the progress made by the pupil. For AIF to continue a school must complete an Inclusive School evaluation form annually and return it to inclusiveschoolforum@telford.gov.uk before the cease date.

Decisions regarding requests for an Education, Health and Care assessments should be considered in light of the principle that where you feel a child meets criteria for an EHC assessment you should first consider applying for AIF funding, in consultation with the child’s parent.

### Can we request additional funding for a student refused an EHC needs assessment?

If a request for an EHC needs assessment is declined then schools should carefully consider the merits of requesting AIF funding via the ISF as eligibility criteria for AIF is similar to an EHC needs assessment. The local authority, via the moving forward meeting, will have offered advice and guidance regarding amendments to a schools graduated approach that should be followed. Once followed a school is able to either reapply to the ISF for AIF funding or where specialist provision may be appropriate request an EHC needs assessment.

### How many times can you make a request to ISF?

There are no limits to the amount of requests a school can make to the ISF over the academic year however schools are asked to present only 1 child per forum meeting.

### Does a review take place like an Annual Review?

Where AIF funding is agreed an Inclusive School Provision Plan must be drawn up by the school. This must be shared with parents. Schools are responsible for ensuring progress towards outcomes. There is no requirement for the LA to draw up a plan or monitor its review. Allocation of AIF is for one year from the approval date. The date it will cease is specified in the agreement letter to schools. When the plan is due for review this must be done by the school with parents/carers and any services involved and the Inclusive School evaluation form is completed showing recommendations and next steps.

### What criteria is used to decide on the financial package offered and what is the maximum allocation for a child/young person?

Criteria is specified within the ISF guidance document found on the local offer. Funding is in line with EHCP bandings.

### Can EYFS children be referred to the ISF?

All children in a school from reception age to leaving school age can be referred to the ISF. Children in pre-school settings are able to access alternative funding streams through the local authority’s Early Years Inclusion Panel.

### Can parents of children and young people with SEND make a request for AIF from the ISF?

Parents/carers must be involved in the whole process and consent to their child’s needs being presented at the ISF. Schools must meet and plan with parents/carers so that their views are represented in all decisions. Parents/carers are unable to make a direct application to the ISF but instead must work with their child’s school to consider the eligibility criteria and merit of the setting making an application. An information guide for parent/carers about the School Inclusive Forum is included on the local offer.

### Can AIF funding be used for provision outside of school?

No, AIF funding is to support a child’s special educational needs within school.

### What support is there to understand the process further and help to fill out the forms?

All visiting support services that work in schools including Educational Psychology, LSATs and the SIS team understand the Inclusive School Forum and are able to assist both in supporting your graduated approach and providing guidance with regard to new procedures. We now have a number of SENCos that have attended the Inclusive School Forum and we can sign post a SENCo buddy should you require support. Please email inclusiveschoolforum@telford.gov.uk with any request for a SENCo buddy. In addition a working example of the Inclusive School Provision Plan can now be found on the local offer website.

### Is it possible to have examples of funding that has been granted to share with those who are less experienced?

We have offered the opportunity for SENCOs to observe the Inclusive School Forum to support understanding of how it operates. Please contact inclusiveschoolforum@telford.gov.uk should you wish to take up this offer. In addition we will feature key learning points from the Inclusive School Forum within the SEND newsletter to support colleagues understanding of the process.

### What is the difference between the Fair Access Panel and the Inclusive School Forum?

The Fair Access Panel is currently under review. Further guidance will be issued about the new process and the relationship between FAP and the ISF. Currently FAP has a function of finding school placements for hard to place children. It also acts to provide advice and guidance relating to children’s behavioural issues, provision of learning mentors from the Behaviour Support Team and access to the Linden Centre and Student Engagement Programme. The ISF is a school led forum with three key functions of providing advice and guidance, considering requests for Outreach and access to AIF funding where criteria is met for children with complex SEND.

### Can we apply for ISF if a child is receiving FAP Inclusion Mentor support where the child is not making progress and there is a high possibility that they will receive fixed term exclusions?

Any child, including those in receipt of support via FAP can be referred to the ISF for advice and guidance. However where access to AIF is being sought criteria specifies that children must not be in receipt of support via FAP, or have made a request for FAP resource. Where a child previously received support via FAP but this has now stopped and the need continues or re-emerges then a request may be considered.

### There are now multiple forms to complete regarding various procedures and protocols which puts additional burdens on SENCo workloads– have the forms been cross referenced to ensure that there is no duplication of information already given?

It is recognised that colleagues can be asked for the same information repetitively to access different services and whilst we will consider how to streamline our processes we are mindful of new requirements regarding the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) which come into effect from the 25th May 2018 which requests that we obtain consent throughout our processes