

1. When will the fund be launched?

The Pathway Fund will be launched on **Thursday 3rd January 2019**.

2. Who will the Pathway Fund be open to?

The Pathway Fund will support all providers or facilitators of registered Early Years education and learning services focused on children 0-4, including:

- Registered Sessional Day-care settings (Out of Schools, Summer Schemes, Playgroups, Crèches)
- Registered Full Day Care Settings (day nurseries)
- Registered Childminders

3. How/when will applications be available?

The application document will be made available to download from the Early Years website on the official launch date of **Thursday 3rd January 2019**.

4. When must applications be submitted or returned?

Applications for the Pathway Fund will open on **Thursday 3rd January 2019**.

Application close for Stream A is on **Monday 4th February 2019 at 4:00pm**.

Application close for Stream B is on **Monday 28th January 2019 at 4:00pm**.

Please note only applications received by post (including Royal Mail and Courier Service) will be accepted and you will need to plan well ahead for this when preparing your application. Hand delivered applications will not be accepted so as not to disadvantage those living in rural areas of Northern Ireland.

Email copies will not be accepted.

5. How will funding be allocated?

Funding will be allocated in ranked order within the amount of funding available. It is unlikely that all eligible applications will receive funding. At the cut-off point the amount awarded will be determined based on the amount of funding available and the level of funding requested by the ranked applicant.

Funding will be awarded to provide a **contribution towards the overall cost of the project** highlighted by the setting towards meeting the overall cost of delivering the project including e.g. salaries, running costs, specified equipment etc.

Stream A awards will be made for over £15,000 up to £30,000.

Stream B awards will be made up to £15,000.

6. How will applications be assessed?

Applications will be assessed to confirm if eligible for application. If eligible, the application will be evaluated against established criteria and an overall score awarded; and placed in rank order according to score.

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Eligibility Criteria

Applicants will be required to demonstrate that:

- The setting is a facilitator or registered provider of early years education and learning, focused on children 0-4 years;
- The project/setting is registered with the Health and Social Care Trust. This does not apply to facilitators;
- Financial Need;
- Cost per child should not exceed £1,500.

Applicants must meet an average cost per child place criterion of no more than £1,500 per child place (or £2000 in exceptional circumstances**). This is the cost of providing services for **one child place for the whole funding period**. As funding is allocated from April to March and the aim is to ensure optimum level of provision to recipient children, it is expected that for a standard programme the funding period will be **12 months**. Cost per child is calculated by dividing the total amount requested from the Fund by the number of child places in the proposed project. Where the duration of a project is less than the full funding period (e.g. a Summer Scheme) the cost per child place should be **pro-rated** accordingly, i.e. a three month project should have a cost per child of no more than $3/12 \text{ months} \times £1,500 = £375$.

In exceptional circumstances, where projects provide evidence of compelling need, consideration may be given to cost per child up to the value of £2,000 per child. Please note that this applies to exceptional cases only such as specialised programmes with children with very specific, complex needs;

- Additionality – the applicant is not receiving funding from another source for the provision in the application and that, without grant funding, the project could not begin, or could only begin at a later date, or could only begin on a smaller scale.

N.B: This can be activity for which the setting has received Pathway or other funding in 2017/18 – providing they have not secured funding for the proposed service since receipt of Pathway/ other Fund.

Activity could include a new cohort of children receiving similar activity to that for which support was provided in 2017/18.

Quality improvement targets should be in practice to confirm incremental quality development.

- The project is compliant with the requirements of The Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day Care;
- The project has appropriate governance and safeguarding policies in place;
- No potential for duplication of existing early years and childcare facilities in their area;
- No potential for displacement of existing early years and childcare facilities in their area;

*If there is potential overlap between the proposed Pathway Project for which you are applying for financial support and any Sure Start provision, then **discussion between both parties must have taken place before the Pathway Fund application is submitted and you must confirm that an agreement regarding service delivery has been reached which is in the best interests of the children concerned**. You are asked to **submit evidence** which supports this confirmation.*

Only applicants who meet all of the above Eligibility Criteria will be assessed and scored against the Assessment Criteria.

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The criteria in **bold** are to be most heavily weighted;

- I. **Providing quality education and learning services in areas of social disadvantage to address both educational and social disadvantage;**
- II. **Ensuring children with additional needs receive appropriate early years support;**
- III. **Provision of services/support to children at risk of harm;**
- IV. **Addressing access to/improvement of infrastructure of services in rural areas and other areas where there is little or no provision;**
- V. Improving access for children with additional needs;
- VI. Improving the integration and building of community relations from an early age;
- VII. Delivering community-based services using a social economy model;

Whilst your project does not need to meet all criteria, the more criteria your project meets and the higher level of score you achieve, the more likely it is to receive funding.

7. What period will funding be awarded for?

2019/20 funding will be allocated for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

8. Will the Pathway Fund focus on specific areas?

In support of the DE vision “**An education system that is recognised internationally for the quality of its teaching and learning, for the achievements of its young people and for a focus on meeting their needs**”:

The Pathway Fund is outcomes focused. The Fund outcomes are:

- Improved development of children who are at risk of not reaching their full potential within the school system; and
- An enhanced more sustainable early years sector.

Included within the set of 7 assessment criteria for the fund is that settings will be evaluated on the extent that they provide quality services in areas of social and educational disadvantage and/or are addressing access to/improvement of infrastructure of services in rural areas and other areas where there is little or no provision.

9. What is the budget for the Pathway Fund?

The Pathway Fund in 2019/20 will be subject to the availability of Department of Education (DE funding).

Stream A applications will be from the value of £15,000 to £30,000. Stream B applications will be to the value of £15,000.

10. Is there a limit to the amount applicants would receive?

Stream A applications will be from the value of over £15,000 to a maximum of £30,000 and Stream B applications will be to the value of £15,000. Amounts applied for should be justifiable and accurate, based on confirmation of need and commensurate with the stated service deliverables stipulated against the outcomes, objectives and criteria within the application documentation. The Pathway Fund is a contribution towards the overall cost of the project.

11. Is there a minimum amount that can be claimed?

There is no minimum amount – but each application will be scored against the degree to which it meets each of the Fund criteria and it is unlikely there will be sufficient funding to meet all applications.

12. Is there capacity to apply for training?

The Fund focuses on delivery or facilitation of services however, there is an opportunity for groups

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who apply to consider training costs associated to building quality within their services through workforce development for specific expertise in relation to the target group and sustaining the early years sector. However, as there is a maximum level of funding you should prioritise the costs you identify by those that are essential to delivery of the project and you will need to demonstrate how all proposed activities will contribute towards achievement of the Fund criteria.

13. When will money be available from the Pathway Fund?

It is anticipated that the fund will commence and Letters of Offer will be issued in April 2019. Applicants are advised to factor in costings from April 2019 to March 2020 in their submissions.

14. Does the project have to claim a percentage of overall costs?

The project needs to clearly outline all costs associated with operating the service that they are requesting support for and details of all known and expected income and expenditure. Allocations will be made on the basis of a contribution to meet the overall costs of the project, based on confirmed financial need.

15. Will the Pathway Fund cover capital costs?

There is no capital funding within the Pathway Fund. Resource funding will be available for some small items of equipment (which would not be capitalised in the applicants' accounts) subject to the project outlined in the application. There is no money for new buildings, extensions to current buildings, refurbishments or similar.

16. Will income received by the Project be taken into account?

Yes. You will be asked to provide income (current, projected and applied for) for your organisation and for the project you want Pathway Funding for. This will be taken into consideration in respect of your financial need.

17. Does our organisation have to present independently audited accounts?

All charities, regardless of legal structure, are now required to have their annual accounts scrutinised by an external person, the level of scrutiny will depend on income of the charity. If a charity's governing document contains a requirement that the accounts must be audited, then the governing document must be followed.

The three different types of scrutiny are outlined in the table below:

Accounting and audit thresholds effective from 1 January 2016

Minimum requirement	Scrutiny of accounts	Presentation of accounts
Up to £250,000	Independent examination (by a person with requisite skills)	Receipts and Payments
Over £250,000, up to £500,000	Independent examination (by a *qualified person)	Accounts must be prepared on an accruals basis
Over £500,000 (no assets threshold)	**Full Audit	Accounts must be prepared on an accruals basis

*the list of qualified person is prescribed in Section (65) of the Charities Act (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/νια/2008/12/section/65>)

**The Charities Act does not require charities to take the value of a charity's assets into consideration when determining if a full audit is required.

The Charity Commission is currently consulting on the directions for independent examiners.

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Whilst these new regulations are for groups currently registered as a charity, the CCNI are encouraging all settings to follow the same standard as part of best practice and therefore The Pathway Fund will take into account the above requirements. Further information can be viewed at: www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/manage-your-charity/annual-reporting/accounting-and-reporting-essentials/

18. How will the Fund operate with other sources of pre-school funding?

The fund will not duplicate activity funded under the Pre-School Education Programme (PSEP) or other such sources of funding, but can be used to enhance or extend existing provision. *The project for which the setting is seeking funding from the Pathway Fund must be in respect of provision which is additional to, and does not interfere with, that funded under the PSEP.*

19. Can groups with low PSEP numbers apply to The Pathway Fund to support work with pre pre-school children who attend the same session as PSEP funded children?

The application must be in respect of provision which is additional to, and does not interfere with, that funded under the PSEP.

The application would have to show clearly how it meets the criteria and objectives of the Pathway Fund, demonstrating a quality service with an appropriate curriculum in place for children in the pre pre-school year.

20. Can groups in receipt of PSEP funding apply to the Pathway Fund to increase the length of session they provide?

Yes, provided that the application supports provision which is additional to that funded under the PSEP. The full pre-school curriculum must be provided within the period funded under the PSEP to ensure that children who do not choose to participate in the extended provision are not disadvantaged in terms of their access to PSEP funded provision.

21. How can groups access funding to support children with SEN?

If you have a focus on special needs in your setting, you need to describe what that is and how you make that accessible to parents and children. In **exceptional circumstances**, up to £2,000 per child's place may be allowed where there is a compelling case to show that higher average costs per child place are essential to meet costs associated with provision to children with complex needs e.g. severe development delay for a child on the ASD spectrum (this must be evidenced – see evidence requirements in Stream A and Stream B guidance notes).

22. Can I apply for funding to support after-school provision?

The Pathway Fund will be focused on children aged 0-4.

23. How can I find out more?

Monday 7th January 2019	Pathway Fund Information Session NICVA, 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast 6:30pm to 8:30pm
Tuesday 8th January 2019	Pathway Fund Information Sessions Tullyglass House Hotel, Ballymena 2:00pm to 4:00pm Newry Early Years Centre, Newry 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Wednesday 9th January 2019	Pathway Fund Information Sessions

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



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	Fermanagh Early Years Centre, Ballinamallard 4:00pm to 6:00pm Everglades Hotel, Derry/Londonderry 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Thursday 10th January 2019	Pathway Fund Information Session The Junction, Dungannon 4:00pm to 6:00pm
Monday 14th January 2019	Pathway Fund Information Session Omagh Enterprise Centre, Omagh 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Tuesday 15th January 2019	Pathway Fund Information Session Corr's Corner Hotel, Newtownabbey 4:00pm to 6:00pm

24. We are a Nursery Unit within a school, are we eligible to apply?

A statutory setting would not be eligible to apply to the Pathway Fund. Some settings may however use the title of “nursery unit” or “nursery school” but not be a statutory setting, these services would be eligible to apply to the Pathway Fund.

25. We are an afterschool who support children from 4 – 11 years old, are we eligible to apply?

You are eligible to apply if, as an organisation, you are a provider or facilitator of Early Years education and learning for children aged 0-4 years. Your proposed project would need to support only children in the 0-4 age group – and the evaluation and scoring would only take account of the service delivered to this age range.

Useful Links

Code of Practice for Reducing Bureaucracy in Grant Funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector 2015

<http://www.early-years.org/pathway-fund/code-of-practice.pdf>

Check Super Output Areas

<http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/AreaProfile.aspx?Menu=True>

Rural Childcare - Investing in the Future

<http://www.early-years.org/pathway-fund/RuralChildcare.pdf>

Reserves Policy – Sample

<http://www.early-years.org/pathway-fund/2017/reserves-policy.pdf>

Rural Needs Act(NI) 2016

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2016/19/pdfs/nia_20160019_en.pdf

For further information please contact The Pathway Fund Office on 028 9066 2825 (option 2) or email thepathwayfund@early-years.org