

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

## NEW APPLICATIONS FOR 2023/24



**\*\*\*Content relates to the Pathway Fund arrangements for 2023/24 and provisionally 2024/25. Funding awards in 2023/24 will be subject to DE budget availability. Funding awards for year two (2024/25) are also subject to DE budget availability therefore even if an award is made in 2023/24, there is no guarantee of all or any funding in year two. Pathway Fund administration arrangements for year two (2024/25), and for any future years, will be determined at a later date.\*\*\***

### 1. Who is eligible to apply?

Applicants will need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- The setting is a facilitator or registered provider of early years education and learning, focused on children 0-4 years;
- Is registered with the Health and Social Care Trust (if a provider of Early Years services);
- No duplication or displacement of existing early years education and learning facilities in the area;
- The project is compliant with the requirements of The Minimum Standards for Childminding and Day Care (if a provider of Early Years services);
- Appropriate governance policies in place
- Safeguarding policies in place aligned with DE policy;
- Appropriate management and financial governance policies and procedures in place;
- Financial need for contribution from the Pathway Fund – including assessment of available reserves;
- 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.

Cost per child place should not exceed £1,500

The average cost per child place of the project cannot exceed £1,500. In exceptional circumstances only, up to £2,000 per child can be allowed where there is a compelling case to show that higher average costs per child 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, Downs Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, Global Developmental Delay.

This is the cost of providing services for **one child place for the whole funding period**. As funding is allocated from 1 April to 31 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**.

**Please refer to the guidance notes for more detail.**

**2. 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.

**3. 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.

The Pathway Fund does not support statutory settings.

**4. Can I apply if I was previously unsuccessful?**

Yes, applications are welcomed from those who have previously applied to the fund and were unsuccessful.

**5. I am a current recipient of the Pathway Fund, can I apply?**

Yes, the Pathway Fund welcomes new, current and previous applicants to apply. In their application, current recipients should either propose a new project or seek to demonstrate improvement (e.g. a deepening of practice to demonstrate increased capacity or enhanced delivery) of their existing project.

**6. We are a new organisation without audited accounts, can we still apply?**

Yes, you can still apply but you must submit your most recent unaudited accounts and your projected income and expenditure.

**7. We are a new organisation and not yet registered with a HSCT, can we still apply?**

Applicants must be a registered provider or facilitator of early years education and learning, focused on children 0-4years. If a provider, please record your Health and Social Care Trust registration details. Please include the registration details for the project for which you are applying for Pathway Fund support.

**8. We are not a registered charity, can we still apply?**

You do not have to be a registered charity to apply for the Pathway Fund. Details of who is eligible to apply is outlined in the guidance notes.

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#### 9. How much can I apply for?

In 2023/24 and provisionally for 2024/25 the Pathway Fund will be administered over two streams and applicants can apply to one or the other, not both. Only one application per organisation will be accepted.

Stream A is for applications from £15,001 - £30,000 per year (applications will be evaluated against the six fund criteria).

Stream B is for applications up to £15,000 per year (applications will be evaluated against the four priority fund criteria).

#### 10. Where can I apply?

The **online application** and guidance documentation will be made available on the Early Years website on the official opening date of **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022**.

#### 11. How do I submit an application?

**Online applications** will be submitted through the online system which is available via <https://www.early-years.org/the-pathway-fund>

Application close for Stream A is on **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022 at 4:00pm**.

Application close for Stream B is on **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at 4:00pm**.

#### 12. Will I receive an update on how my application is progressing?

Acknowledgement of receipt of your application will be issued within 24 hours of submission of your application. You should contact EYO if notification is not received by this time. No further update will be provided until the assessment process is complete and we will then issue notification of outcome.

#### 13. On what basis will my application be scored?

You must describe how the project you are proposing meets each of the criteria of the Pathway Fund. 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.

You may want to tell us about quality improvement targets that will be in practice to confirm incremental quality development.

The criteria (i) – (iv) highlighted in **bold** are most heavily weighted in the assessment process. Please refer to the guidance document for further details regarding the Pathway Fund criteria and minimum threshold scores for both Stream A and Stream B applications.

#### 14. Will I receive feedback if my application is unsuccessful?

Debrief clinics will be available to all unsuccessful applicants.

#### 15. What don't you fund?

There is no capital funding available within the Pathway Fund. Funding for resources may 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. Can I meet with you to discuss my application?

The Pathway Fund team will run a series of information sessions, details are at the bottom of this document.

The Pathway Fund team will be available to answer general queries, by phone or email, relating to eligibility, completing and submitting an application. They cannot provide specific guidance about a project for which you are seeking funding.

You can contact the Pathway Fund office on (028) 9066 2825 (option 2) or email: [thepathwayfund@early-years.org](mailto:thepathwayfund@early-years.org)

Beyond the information sessions the Pathway Team will not be able to meet with you in person during the application period.

#### 17. When will money be available from the Pathway Fund?

Subject to availability of DE funding, it is anticipated that the fund will commence and Letters of Offer will be issued in April 2023. Indicative Notifications of Outcome will be issued in advance of this.

Applicants are advised to factor in costings from April 2023 to March 2024 in their submissions and budget information questions relate to Year 1 only. If successful, the amount awarded will form the basis of Year 2 funding and will be dependent on confirmation of circumstances in Year 2 for the period 2024/25 (subject to DE budget availability). Payments will be made in Line with Code for Reducing Bureaucracy in Grant Funding in the Community and Voluntary sector.

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

Yes. The Pathway Fund provides a contribution towards the overall cost of your project. You will therefore 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.

#### 19. How will the Fund operate with other sources of preschool 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. Please refer to Guidance Notes, Page 13.*

**20. Can groups with low PSEP numbers apply to The Pathway Fund to support work with pre-preschool 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-preschool year.

**21. 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 preschool 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.

### Key Dates

Please register to attend one of the following information sessions, via <https://www.early-years.org/the-pathway-fund>

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

12.00pm to 2.00pm – Via Microsoft Teams

4.00pm to 6.00pm – **NICVA**, 61 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast

**Monday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

2.00pm to 4.00pm – Via Microsoft Teams

6.00pm to 8.00pm – **Holywell Trust**, 10-14 Bishop St, Londonderry

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

6.00pm to 8.00pm – **Tullyglass**, 178 Galgorm Road, Ballymena

**Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

6.00-8.00pm - **Newry Early Years**, 2 Warrenpoint Rd, Newry

**Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

4.00pm to 6.00pm – **The Junction**, 12 Beechvalley Way, Dungannon

6.30pm – 8.30pm - Via Microsoft Teams