

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

What is DAF?

Children aged 3 and 4 years old, who are in receipt of the *Disability Living Allowance (DLA)* and accessing *universal 15 hours* of funded childcare per week could be eligible for additional funding through the *Disability Access Fund (DAF)*.

Childcare providers could get access to a one-off payment of £859 per calendar year (up from £828) for each eligible child, that could aid in making reasonable adjustments to the setting and improve accessibility to the learning environment.

Who decides what to spend DAF on?

Providers should liaise with the *family and any other agencies* working with the child to gain a deeper understanding of how to use the DAF funding effectively for each individual child. For example, another setting, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy.

What can DAF be used for?

The fund is to help providers make reasonable adjustments within their provision to support children to access their funded hours. Childcare providers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments and ensure they support the equity of access for all children to their provision under the Equality Act.

Where to get further information?

More detailed information is available on the SCC website linked below and Nasen have some Case Studies available;

[Disability Access Fund \(DAF\) - Staffordshire County Council](#) / [Resources listing | Nasen](#)

How to apply for DAF

Providers can apply for DAF via the Early Years Provider Portal. Technical guidance to support this process can be found on the portal. Providers must note how DAF is intended to be used and the child's DLA award letter will need to be evidenced.

Staffordshire providers can submit DAF applications for eligible children who attend their provision but reside outside of Staffordshire.

Applications received and approved before the 20th of the month will be paid by no later than the 20th date of the month thereafter.

If a child, eligible for DAF, is splitting their funded hours across two or more providers, their parent(s) will need to nominate the provider to whom they wish the payment to be made. This will usually be the provider where the child is accessing the majority of their funded hours.

A DAF grant will only be paid once a year for an eligible child (this can be from any date within a term). If a child receiving DAF moves from one provider to another, the new provider is not eligible to receive DAF until a year after the date that the council approved the original application. If an eligible child remains with the same provider for more than a year, that provider can re-apply for a second grant a year after the original application.

Can DAF be used for one to one support?

In exceptional cases, where a setting is well resourced to cater for the specific child and suitable resources or training cannot be identified, it may be appropriate to use the DAF funding to aid a child to attend more funded hours at the setting by way of increased adult to child ratios.

What can DAF NOT be used for?

DAF funding cannot be used for increasing adult to child ratios for children who already receive a set number of hours SEND Early Years Inclusion Funding from Early Years Forum. In these cases, settings will need to consider an alternative use for the funding.

Is the DAF funding audited?

Yes, there is an audit process and you need to keep effective records of proof of spending and decision making to support the use of the DAF.

Questions to ask when thinking about how to use the fund effectively....

What is the child's developmental stage in each area of learning and development?

Using this information, identify what are the main priorities for the child to develop and what resources you already have within the setting to support this?

Consider from this information what additional resources would benefit the child, you may also wish to purchase resources that are part of a child's targeted plan informing your cycles of Assess, Plan, Do, Review (APDR).

Some examples of how to use DAF in the setting are:

- Communication aids such as resources or training – for example for children using PECs, you could consult with the Speech and Language Therapist and source PEC's resources for the child along with PEC's training for practitioners, communication cards, BIGMack buttons/talking tins, or other systems the child may be using. Please consult with both the family and the child's Speech and Language Therapist.
- Sensory toys or resources to aid sensory regulation – for example if the child has a sensory need to throw, or a behaviour preference to throw, you could source a set of soft balls and a bucket and direct the child to only use this resource to carry out throwing in a specific space.
- Adapted cutlery and tableware for children who have a difficulty in self-help and independence skills, such as bowls that suction to the table, or matting to stop bowls and cups moving unnecessarily when promoting independence, specific cutlery for a child's needs may also be appropriate.
- Physical resources for children experiencing physical difficulties, such as an appropriate set of steps to practice stepping up and down, hoops for practicing and refining balance to step in and out of, ribbons and scarves to develop motor skills in preparation to develop fine motor skills for writing and other tasks.
- Social stories or specific stories can also be appropriate for children with an emotional or social need, or emotion stones, dolls and other resources to support personal, social and emotional development.