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Inclusive Early Years Fund Strategy Planning Tool for PVI Settings

A practical best practice tool for inclusive provision, strategic planning and investment



How to use this tool

Use this tool to bring together the information that will help you reflect on inclusive practice, resource use and impact in your setting.

It's designed to support your existing planning, reflection and evidence-gathering, helping you bring together the information you may need for internal review, Local Authority conversations, SENIF or IEYF funding evidence, and ongoing improvement planning.

While not a statutory requirement, this framework reflects best practice aligned with the Early Years Foundation Stage, inclusive provision principles, and early identification and intervention.

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Example executive summary

This example shows the type of information an early years PVI setting might include.
It is designed to support your thinking, rather than prescribe what your setting should write.
When you're ready, use the editable version to complete your own.

Evaluation area	Evidence	Priorities
Top 3 areas of need (Setting context)	Based on practitioner observations, key person knowledge, learning journeys, and developmental tracking	• Speech, language and communication development delays across the setting • Personal, social and emotional development needs linked to regulation and attachment • Sensory processing differences impacting engagement and play
Top 5 strategic priorities (2026–2028)	Key areas identified to strengthen inclusive practice and children's developmental progress	• Strengthen early identification through high-quality observation and key person systems • Enhance adult-child interactions to support language and communication development • Support emotional wellbeing and regulation through relational practice • Develop enabling environments that reduce sensory overload and support engagement • Strengthen partnerships with families to support consistency and co-production

Example executive summary

Evaluation area	Evidence	Priorities
Key investment areas (IEYF / SENIF / Setting Resources)	Summary of how resources are used to support inclusive provisioned	• Workforce development, such as training in speech and language development, attachment, regulation or inclusive practice • Targeted support strategies, such as small-group language programmes, nurture-based approaches or sensory play provision • Environment and resources, such as calm spaces, visual supports, sensory resources or structured continuous provision • External services and partnerships, such as speech and language therapy, early years advisory teams, health visitors or SEND support services
Expected outcomes & impact (12–24 months)	The developmental and experiential difference this provision is expected to achieve	• Improved communication and development, such as children being more able to express needs and ideas • Increased engagement and participation, such as sustained play and improved access to activities and routines • Improved emotional wellbeing and regulation, such as reduced dysregulation and greater ability to self-regulate with support • Stronger child experience and belonging, such as children showing confidence, security and a sense of belonging within the setting

Example executive summary

Evaluation area	Evidence	Priorities
Leadership & accountability	How inclusive practice is monitored, reviewed, and developed	• Regular review by the setting leader or SENCo • Inclusion embedded within setting development plans • Ongoing reflection through staff meetings and supervision • Use of observations, learning journeys and child voice to inform practice • Review of resource use and impact in a proportionate and manageable way

Your executive summary

This section provides a high-level summary of inclusive practice within your setting. You can use it as a standalone activity, but we recommend working through the three planning sections first and using those insights to inform your summary.

Reporting period:
Setting:
Date:

Evaluation area	Evidence	Priorities
Top 3 areas of need (Setting context)		
Top 5 strategic priorities (2026–2028)		
Key investment areas (IEYF / SENIF / setting resources)		

Your executive summary

Evaluation area	Evidence	Priorities
Expected outcomes & impact (12–24 months)		
Leadership & accountability		

1. Setting context & needs assessment

1a. Commonly occurring needs & cohort profile

Use this section to capture emerging and evident needs you are seeing across your setting.
Draw on observations, progress tracking and practitioner knowledge.

Broad area of need (Developmental Domain)	**Specific area of need** (Observed Patterns of Development)	**% of Children observed**	**Developmental trends over time**	**Projected need**
Speech, language, and communication development				
Personal, social, and emotional development				
Sensory Processing and Regulation				
Delayed developmental milestones				
Early indicators of neurodiversity				

1b. Barriers to learning experienced by children

Detail the developmental, environmental, and relational barriers that may impact children's engagement, learning, and sense of belonging. Include how children's behaviours, interactions, and play experiences help identify these barriers.

Where possible, add brief comments, observations or developmental information to show how each barrier affects children. For example: **"A significant proportion of children demonstrate sensory sensitivities, with noise levels and transitions between indoor and outdoor provision impacting regulation and sustained engagement."**

Barrier to learning	**Baseline position**	**Target outcome**	**Implementation phase** Short term: 0–6 months Medium term: 6–18 months Long term: 18+ months	**Impact review** e.g. measurable change in engagement, regulation, participation, development or sense of belonging over time
Environmental barriers Examples may include overstimulating or unpredictable environments; limited quiet or calming spaces; noise levels affecting focus and regulation; or lack of clear visual structure or routine cues.				

1b. Barriers to learning experienced by children

Barrier to learning	**Baseline position**	**Target outcome**	**Implementation phase** Short term: 0–6 months Medium term: 6–18 months Long term: 18+ months	**Impact review** e.g. measurable change in engagement, regulation, participation, development or sense of belonging over time
Developmental and learning barriers Examples may include delayed speech and language development; limited vocabulary impacting communication and play; difficulty accessing adult-led activities; or challenges with attention and engagement.				
Social, emotional and attendance barriers Examples may include separation anxiety; difficulty forming secure relationships; dysregulation during transitions; or limited ability to express needs or emotions appropriately.				

1b. Barriers to learning experienced by children

Barrier to learning	**Baseline position**	**Target outcome**	**Implementation phase** Short term: 0–6 months Medium term: 6–18 months Long term: 18+ months	**Impact review** e.g. measurable change in engagement, regulation, participation, development or sense of belonging over time
How are children communicating their experiences and needs? Examples may include observation of play patterns and interactions; key person notes capturing emotional responses; use of visual supports or emotion cards; interpreting behaviour as communication; or child-led play used to identify preferences and stress points.				
What evidence of lived experience is being captured? Examples may include learning journeys showing progress over time; observations linked to EYFS areas of development; parent/carer insights; case studies of children's development; transition records; or practitioner reflections on engagement, regulation and participation.				

2. Resource use & investment planning

Existing vs. planned future resource use

Use this section to reflect on current provision and plan strategic improvements to inclusive practice.

Area of expenditure	**Current practice / provision**	**Planned development / investment**	**Rationale & evidence base** (e.g. observation data, EYFS progress tracking)
Workforce development Examples may include training in speech and language, attachment, regulation or inclusive practice.			
Targeted support strategies Examples may include small-group language support, nurture-based approaches or sensory play opportunities.			

Existing vs. planned future resource use

Area of expenditure	**Current practice / provision**	**Planned development / investment**	**Rationale & evidence base** (e.g. observation data, EYFS progress tracking)
Environment and resources Examples may include calm spaces, sensory resources, visual timetables or structured continuous provision areas.			
External partnerships Examples may include speech and language therapists, early years advisors, health visitors or SEND support services.			

3. Inclusive practice implementation framework

Worked early years example

For early years planning, we've adapted the DfE's 7 principles of inclusion to reflect the PVI context, including child development, key person practice, enabling environments and early identification.

This example shows the type of information an early years PVI setting might include. It is designed to support your thinking, rather than prescribe what your setting should write. When you're ready, use the editable version to complete your own.

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
1. Inclusive leadership	• Ensure a designated Inclusion Lead or SENCo oversees inclusive practice across the setting. • Embed inclusive values within daily routines, policies and team discussions. • Build a reflective team culture where children's needs are regularly reviewed. • Schedule regular leadership review of inclusive practice and provision.	Barrier: Staff may have inconsistent understanding of inclusion, leading to reactive rather than proactive practice. Evidence: EYFS emphasis on inclusive practice and reflective leadership.	• Inclusion is discussed regularly in team meetings and supervision. • Staff demonstrate shared understanding of inclusive approaches. • There is clear oversight of children with emerging or additional needs.	R / A / G

Worked early years example

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
2. Early identification and responsive support	• Use ongoing observations and key person knowledge to identify emerging needs. • Put early support strategies in place without waiting for diagnosis. • Monitor progress through learning journeys and regular review meetings. • Work closely with families to share concerns early and agree next steps.	Barrier: Delays in identifying needs can lead to difficulties escalating. Evidence: Strong research base on early identification improving developmental outcomes	• Reduced time between concern and support being put in place. • Clear tracking of children identified with emerging needs. • Evidence of timely adaptations in provision.	R / A / G

Worked early years example

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
3. High-quality adult interaction and teaching	• Provide CPD on high-quality interactions, language modelling and scaffolding play. • Support practitioners to extend children's thinking through responsive engagement. • Adapt communication approaches, such as visuals, simplified language and modelling. • Ensure all staff support independence and participation rather than over-directing.	Barrier: Inconsistent adult-child interactions can lead to missed opportunities to support development. Evidence: EYFS research on sustained shared thinking and language-rich environments.	• Observations show high-quality adult-child interactions across the setting. • Children show improved communication, engagement and participation. • Children show increased independence in play and learning.	R / A / G

Worked early years example

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
4. Enabling environments	• Create predictable routines supported by visual cues and consistent structures. • Develop calm, low-stimulation spaces for regulation. • Ensure continuous provision is well-structured and accessible. • Adapt environments in response to children's sensory and developmental needs.	Barrier: Overstimulating or inconsistent environments can impact children's engagement and regulation. Evidence: Research on enabling environments and their impact on learning and wellbeing.	• Children demonstrate increased engagement and sustained play. • There is reduced dysregulation or distress within the environment. • The environment reflects children's needs and supports independence.	R / A / G

Worked early years example

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
5. A safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance, and participation in learning	• Develop strong key person relationships to support attachment and security. • Embed consistent routines and emotionally supportive responses. • Use regulation strategies, such as calm spaces and co-regulation. • View behaviour as communication and respond accordingly.	Barrier: Emotional dysregulation, anxiety or difficulty forming secure relationships can affect children's engagement, confidence and sense of belonging. Evidence: Attachment theory and trauma-informed early years practice.	• Children show increased emotional security and confidence. • There is a reduction in dysregulated behaviour. • Strong, consistent relationships are observed between staff and children.	R / A / G

Worked early years example

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
6. Partnerships with families	• Establish strong daily communication with parents and carers. • Share observations and strategies to support children consistently across home and setting. • Involve families in decision-making and support planning. • Provide guidance and signposting where needed.	Barrier: Limited communication can lead to inconsistent support for children across home and setting. Evidence: EYFS and the SEND Code of Practice emphasise partnership working with families.	• Positive parent/carer feedback on communication and involvement • Increased consistency between home and setting approaches • Evidence of co-produced support strategies	R / A / G

Worked early years example

Inclusion theme	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
7. Multi-agency working	• Engage early with external professionals where appropriate. • Develop clear referral and communication pathways. • Work collaboratively with health, early help and SEND services. • Support smooth transitions, such as into Reception, through information sharing.	Barrier: Delayed or fragmented external support can make it harder for children with additional needs to access the right support at the right time. Evidence: The SEND Code of Practice promotes joined-up working across services.	• Referrals and engagement with external services happen in a timely way. • Support for children is better coordinated. • Transitions into next settings or school are smoother and better informed.	R / A / G

Your implementation framework

Use this matrix to **review your current practice and plan how your setting will strengthen inclusive early years provision.**

RAG rating key:

- Red = not yet started
- Amber = in progress
- Green = fully embedded

Inclusion principle	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
1. Ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion				R / A / G 
2. Evidence-based support prioritising early intervention				R / A / G 

Your implementation framework

Inclusion principle	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
3. High quality adaptive teaching with curriculum designed for all learners				R / A / G 
4. Enriching provision beyond the classroom that all children can access				R / A / G 
5. A safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance, and participation in learning				R / A / G 

Your implementation framework

Inclusion principle	Planned activities and approaches	Target barriers addressed and evidence base	Suggested success measures (Impact evaluation)	Current RAG
6. Strong partnerships with families and wider services				R / A / G 
7. Inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility				R / A / G 

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Ready to bring your planning to life?

Once you've identified your setting's priorities, the next step is putting the right support in place.

Thrive can **help you turn your IEYF planning into practical support for PSED, inclusion, communication, regulation and readiness to learn.** We'll help your team identify needs earlier, strengthen everyday inclusive practice and respond more consistently to the barriers affecting children's engagement, participation and sense of belonging.

Explore Thrive for nurseries