

## BRIEFING NOTE

### MSI ELIGIBILITY FRAMEWORK:

## CASE STUDY EXAMPLES FOR MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL SCHOOL SETTINGS

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Date: June 2025

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Origins of the 2017 Eligibility Framework

The NatSIP Eligibility Framework for Scoring Support Levels document was originally developed in 2015, and most recently 2017. It was originally developed using funding from the DfE.

The Eligibility Framework was devised by experienced practitioners to provide a tool for Sensory Services to guide decision-making over support allocation for individual children and young people (CYP) with hearing impairment (HI), vision impairment (VI) or multi-sensory impairment (MSI) through systematic consideration of a wide range of relevant factors. Whilst its purpose was essentially to promote good practice in the allocation of support, it was ***never intended to be interpreted and applied as a rigid set of criteria.***

The framework was developed for use by local authority sensory support services offering outreach support to children, young people and their families and educational settings, and specifically excluded specialist SI settings from its scope.

#### 1.2 Reason for this briefing note

In 2024, following feedback from and discussions with the sector, NatSIP recognised that there was a desire within special school settings to make more appropriate use of the eligibility framework for children and young people specifically with MSI. This briefing note attempts to address that desire.

The very individual and complex nature of MSI/deafblindness means that overarching tools or strategies are difficult to apply and make relevant to the diverse needs of individual learners.

Following trials, we have proposed, where applicable and suitable, adding a weighting to some of the existing MSI criteria when they are evaluated for a CYP with MSI in a special school. The weighting is not applied in the same way if the CYP attends a mainstream school.

The weighting system devised looks at each of the criteria and suggests what percentage of that score should be used if the child is in mainstream or special school.

To use the weighting system, it is recommended you complete the Eligibility Framework as usual, scoring in the usual way. When that is completed, take the score for each criteria and multiply it by the weighting factor (using either the mainstream or special school weighting factor) to reach a new score.

This is not intended to suggest that any of the ten MSI criteria areas are less important than others, or that attending a special school means a child's support needs are less important. Rather, the weighting attempts to take account of the range and number of needs a child with MSI in a special school may have, and to focus the EF on those factors.

To illustrate the weighting system more clearly, two case studies are included in this document. Our thanks go to those in the sector who contributed to this part of the work.

### 1.3 Purpose of the Eligibility Framework

The wider NatSIP Eligibility Framework (of which this document is a part) is intended to fulfil several purposes in relation to service support for children and young people (CYP) and their families:

- to facilitate benchmarking and data comparison across LA Sensory Support Services
- enable services to provide an equitable allocation of their resources
- to provide services with entry and exit criteria for support
- to provide a means of identifying the levels of support required
- to provide a means of justifying the support provided
- to inform the local offer – the LA’s information on the services it expects to be available locally
- to inform education, health and care plans (EHC Plans) – the multi-agency needs assessments and plans for CYP
- to inform staffing level considerations, the nature of support and allocation of caseloads
- to support the development of Service Level Agreements
- to support service quality assurance and self-evaluation<sup>1</sup>
- to reflect compliance with The Equality Act (2010)<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the NatSIP Eligibility Framework is designed to provide the basis for a fair allocation of available resources, it relies on professional judgement and should only be used as part of a full assessment by a qualified specialist SI teacher. Professionals will know that use of the NatSIP Eligibility Framework is leading to effective identification of support when children are making good progress and achieving good outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the NatSIP Eligibility Framework could be used in evidence for the NatSIP Quality Standards for Sensory Support Services in England (June 2016), e.g. QS B1: -There are thresholds and eligibility criteria for supporting children and young people with sensory impairment that are clear and applied in a transparent way

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

## 2. Case Study Examples

### 2.1 Mainstream - Child D

Child D is 12 years old. She attends a mainstream school. She has a moderate vision impairment; Bilateral optic atrophy and nystagmus and a moderate high frequency sensori-neural loss in both ears.

She misses information at a distance and if multiple things are happening at once. With appropriate resources and modification, she can work independently.

Her skills and abilities categorised into Aitken *et al's*<sup>3</sup> three areas are as follows:

- a) Finding out information
  - Requires adults and peers to present information in an accessible format
  - Needs extra time to process and carry out tasks
  - Needs adult direction to support access strategies – using equipment, positioning etc
  - Keen to be as independent as possible and knows which strategies help, although may not always use them
- b) Communicating with others
  - Very friendly and sociable but can miss out when in big groups and can miss some more subtle communication
  - Able to interact and take part best if things are kept simple and direct and there is time to process one communication.
  - Additional information to support communication is helpful.
- c) Mobility and orientation
  - Keen to be independent and understands the theory of keeping safe. Can miss some unexpected obstacles and finds depth perception more difficult. May not be aware of dangers, hazards or obstacles.
  - May need adult assistance in unfamiliar areas (e.g. trips)

She receives support from the LA:

1. QTMSI support and advice as required plus training
2. QTOD weekly for direct teaching
3. QTVI half termly monitoring

The support above is provided to enable her to access the mainstream curriculum.

NatSIP Eligibility Framework Score (Unweighted) 47

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<sup>3</sup> See: Teaching Children who are Deafblind. Contact Communication and learning. Aitken, S., Buultjens, M., Clark, C., Eyre, and Pease, L., (Eds). David Fulton Publishers. (2000). London. ISBN-13: 1853466743

## 2.2 Child D Score Sheet

No	Criterion title	Mainstream Score	Weighting Factor	Score x weighting factor
1	Degree of MSI	5	1.0	
2	Additional factors relating to MSI	0	0.33	
3.1	Impact of MSI on language and communication development	6	0.33	
3.2	Impact of the CYP's MSI on access to learning and the curriculum	2	0.33	
4.1	Use of personal hearing aids or cochlear implant	3	1.0	
4.2	Development of movement and orientation	2	0.33	
4.3	Independence, self-organisational skills and functional life skills	3	0.33	
5.1	Training and mentoring requirement	2	1.0	
5.2	Transition support	4	1.0	
6.1	Support for effective use of HI specialist equipment by the learner and key staff	5	1.0	
6.2	Support for effective use of specialist VI equipment by learner and key staff	4	1.0	
7	Physical learning environment	5	0.33	
8	Impact of the CYP's MSI on personal, social and emotional learning	4	0.33	
9	Additional factors relating to family support	0	0.66	
10	Multi-agency liaison/role	2	0.33	
	Total mainstream score	47	Total Special School Score	

## 2.3 Special School - Child E

Child E is 6 years old, and in Year 1 in a generic special school. He has CHARGE syndrome.

He is following the curriculum used in this specific special school.

His vision is moderate with significant photophobia. He has profound sensori-neural deafness and is not suitable for a cochlear implant.

As can be the case with learners with CHARGE, there is significant impact on his proprioceptive and vestibular senses. His communication skills are emerging, and hence social interactions require skilled intervention and support.

His skills and abilities in Aitken's three areas are as follows:

- a) Finding out information
  - No access to any speech or environmental sounds.
  - Able to access symbols and pictures, including some which are more abstract.
  - Really motivated by screens - class whiteboard and iPad.
- b) Communicating with others
  - Understands some BSL key words signs. Beginning to use some learned signs expressively at home.
  - Enjoys hand under hand engagement and interaction for limited periods.
  - Responds best to a total communication approach.
- c) Mobility and orientation
  - Able to walk unaided (with supervision) and orientate in familiar spaces and using familiar routes.
  - Can navigate routes requested using images of where he should be going.

He receives support from the LA:

1. QTMSI – fortnightly visits
2. QTVI – once per month
3. QToD – once per month

The support includes advisory work with some direct teaching/modelling as well as delivering training and multi-agency working.

NatSIP Eligibility Framework Score (Unweighted) 65 Score (Weighted) 32

## 2.4 Child E Score Sheet

No	Criterion title	Mainstream Score	Weighting Factor	Score x weighting factor
1	Degree of MSI	7	1.0	7
2	Additional factors relating to MSI	5	0.33	1.6
3.1	Impact of MSI on language and communication development	8	0.33	2.6
3.2	Impact of the CYP's MSI on access to learning and the curriculum	8	0.33	2.6
4.1	Use of personal hearing aids or cochlear implant	0	1.0	
4.2	Development of movement and orientation	5	0.33	1.6
4.3	Independence, self-organisational skills and functional life skills	3	0.33	1.8
5.1	Training and mentoring requirement	2	1.0	2
5.2	Transition support	4	1.0	4
6.1	Support for effective use of HI specialist equipment by the learner and key staff	0	1.0	
6.2	Support for effective use of specialist VI equipment by learner and key staff	0	1.0	
7	Physical learning environment	5	0.33	1.6
8	Impact of the CYP's MSI on personal, social and emotional learning	6	0.33	2
9	Additional factors relating to family support	4	0.66	2.6
10	Multi-agency liaison/role	8	0.33	2.6
	Total mainstream score	65	Total Specialist Setting Score	32

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