

June 2026

Ahead of the start of the Autumn Term, Management Information and The Education People would like to remind you of the changes coming into effect and to clarify some further information about claiming the Free Entitlements in light of these changes.

The key changes for the Autumn Terms are:

- term-time only claims in Synergy
- capping will look higher whilst transitioning from stretched to term time only claims, *for children claiming stretched funding prior to Autumn Terms 2026 only*
- monthly payments for all providers, based on three estimate payments and one balancing payment
- the replacement of headcount week with an 'actuals claim period' and a designated census week, which attendance for the term should be based on
- greater flexibility for parents by allowing hours to be increased during the actuals claim period, whilst maintaining that settling in periods or staggered starts **must** not be introduced
- greater flexibility for parents and providers to allow children to move settings during the actuals claim period
- the Parental Declaration Form has been updated, the new version can be found on Kelsi
- A FAQ Sheet for parents is now available on Kelsi

Further information on each of these changes is set out below:

Term-time only claims

You may continue to stretch entitlements for parents, but claims must now be submitted under term time weeks in Synergy. Further guidance and calculators are available on Kelsi and details of the total hours available each term can be found in the Early Years Providers Funding Calendar and Payment Schedule on Kelsi.

Capping

Management Information must ensure no child exceeds the yearly 570/1140 funded hours available. This will mean that some capped hours will look higher in the Autumn and Spring Terms whilst claims are adjusted from stretched to term time. This is because there is a

difference in the total number of stretched hours that would have been claimed and the term time hours now available. Management Information will adjust the hours for you, you will not need to work this out yourselves. *This will affect children claiming stretched funding prior to the Autumn Terms 2026 only.*

Monthly payments

Payments will no longer be made termly. Instead, payments will be made on the 28th of each month, or the nearest working day, and will consist of three estimate payments and one balancing payment. Further details are available in the Free Entitlements Claim Process document and in the Early Years Providers Funding Calendar and Payment Schedule available on Kelsi.

Actuals claim period and designated census week

There is no longer a set headcount week. Instead, an actuals claim period will apply to support the new termly census and provide greater flexibility for parents and providers. However, as The Education People must carry out compliance checks on submitted claims, the week in which 'census day' falls will act as the basis for compliance checks and the **termly claim** will be based on the hours attended during that week.

The designated census weeks for 2026/27 are:

- Monday 28 September to Friday 2 October 2026
- Monday 18 January to Friday 22 January 2027
- Monday 17 May to Friday 21 May 2027

Any child who joins during the actuals claim period, up to and including the end of the designated census week, and has not attended another Kent provider, may be submitted for a full-term claim.

Management Information advises providers to submit claims as early as possible during the actuals claim period, once a child is accessing their full funded hours. This will allow overallocation checks to be completed as early as possible. Claims may be amended and resubmitted at any time before the actuals claim period closes if the child's hours change before the designated census week.

Increases to the Free Entitlement hours

Following feedback from providers and parents, Management Information and The Education People have agreed that Free Entitlement claims may be increased during the

actuals claim period. Claims submitted should be based on the hours attended during the designated census week.

Where a child's hours are increased during the actuals claim period, the revised hours must be recorded on the Parental Declaration Form and re-signed by the parent.

Claims can only be increased during the actuals claim period and cannot be amended once this period has closed and the adjustments window has opened.

Providers **must** not make a settling in period or a staggered start a condition of a child taking up their free entitlement place. This will form part of the compliance check.

Children moving settings during the actuals claim period

As attendance is based on the designated census week, which falls towards the end of the actuals claim period, there is a risk of overallocation if a child moves provider during that time. In these cases, Management Information will accept more than one claim for a child and the funding will be based on the full weeks attended at each provider.

Where a child moves during the designated census week, funding will be apportioned according to the attendance at each provider during this week.

If a child leaves your provision and no subsequent claim from another provider is submitted by the end of the actuals claim period, the claim will be processed for the *full term's* funding.

If you have a child start part way through the actuals claim period but you do not submit a claim by end of the actual claim period, MI will *not* be able to process the claim. You will need to speak to the previous provider and ask for the funding to be transferred, but they are not obliged to do so.

Parental Declaration Form

Following provider feedback, the Parental Declaration Form has been revised to make it more user-friendly for both providers and parents. An ethnicity box and useful links for parents have been added, and the layout has been slightly adjusted to support providers when entering information into Synergy.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet for Parents

Management Information has produced a simple FAQ sheet to help parents understand how the Free Entitlements are delivered in Kent. Providers are encouraged to share this with parents when they register for a Free Entitlement place.