Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

Frequently Asked Questions for Early Years

Date of issue: November 2026

Application, Review and Transition Processes

Can you apply for SENIF in advance of a child starting at your setting?

The expectation is that you are able to provide a reviewed Support Plan to accompany your SENIF Request Form.

However, there are some instances where SENIF is required to be in place to enable children to start due to the severity of their needs. These children are usually known to Portage, the Sensory Specialist Teacher or the Physical Development Specialist Teacher.

Details of how to request SENIF in these instances can be found here: Applying for Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) (new requests) - KELSI

What evidence is required for a child known to Portage who is yet to have started at my setting?

For children receiving Portage, and have been known to this service for at least 8 weeks, who may require SENIF support in order to start at the setting, the following should take place:

- The expectation is that children have been known by Portage for at least 8 weeks so that adequate evidence is available to support any request for SENIF.
- a home visit/Pre-school Learning Group visit, will be undertaken with the Portage Practitioner and the Early Years setting.
- The SENCo/Keyperson completes the SENIF Request Form and the Support Plan building on the Portage Long Term Aims Achieved.
- The Support Plan should include some baseline attainment gathered from the home/setting visit and/or taster sessions the child has had at the setting.
- The Portage Developmental Profile and Long Term Aims Achieved do not need to be attached to these types of requests as this will be shared by the Portage Practitioner with the SENIF Finance Team to be added to the request evidence if they have known the child long enough to complete this evidence. The expectation would be that in this instance a request for SENIF is made prior to the child starting at a setting and no later than the last day of the first term in which they joined, according to the published term dates. After this time the expectation would be that you are able to provide a Reviewed Support Plan. This document details the responsibilities of the family, Portage and Setting.

Do I need to submit a Reviewed Support Plan when a child is known to Portage and I am applying for SENIF in advance of them starting at my setting?

- *No, in this instance a Reviewed Support Plan is not requested.*
- *For children receiving Portage, and have been known to this service for at least 8 weeks, who may require SENIF support in order to start at the setting, the following should take place:*
- *The expectation is that children have been known by Portage for at least 8 weeks so that adequate evidence is available to support any request for SENIF. A home visit/Pre-school Learning Group visit, will be undertaken with the Portage Practitioner and the Early Years setting.*
- *The SENCo/Keyperson completes the SENIF Request Form and the Support Plan building on the Portage Long Term Aims Achieved.*
- *The Support Plan should include some baseline attainment gathered from the home/setting visit and/or taster sessions the child has had at the setting.*
- *The Portage Developmental Profile and Long Term Aims Achieved do not need to be attached to these types of requests as this will be shared by the Portage Practitioner with the SENIF Finance Team to be added to the request evidence if they have known the child long enough to complete this evidence. The expectation would be that in this instance a request for SENIF is made prior to the child starting at a setting and no later than the last day of the first term in which they joined, according to the published term dates. After this time the expectation would be that you are able to provide a Reviewed Support Plan.* This *document* details the responsibilities of the family, Portage and Setting.

How can I send additional evidence to support a request after I've submitted the digital request?

There is space on the request form to upload all the required evidence but any supplementary evidence can be emailed securely to SENIF@kent.gov.uk stating the child's name and your setting name.

Can we apply for SENIF for a child who is a non-British Citizen?

SENIF is only ever agreed in line with a child's entitlement and access to the Early Education Entitlement (EEE), so they would need to be eligible and in receipt of this. Management information have confirmed that in terms of accessing EEE the child does not have to be a British citizen to receive the funding. The 3- and 4-year-old funding is universal for all children.

The 2-year-old funding and funding for Under 2's is subject to the household meeting the criteria whatever the nationality.

How do we inform you if we need to make an adjustment to the agreement because the child's attendance has changed?

For all increases or decreases in attendance when a child is in receipt of SENIF, please complete this form:

Reporting adjusted attendance for a child in receipt of SEN Inclusion Funding

Please use this form to report adjustments in attendance to the SENIF Finance team. Please complete one form per child only when an adjustment is being made to the child's funded hours.

Please note, SENIF is agreed in line with the child Early Education Entitlement as per the current headcount claim. Increases are not backdated, and start from the month following receipt of the form.

Do we need to attach the parental agreement to engage to the request?

No, on the "Parental Agreement" tab, you need to acknowledge the date that parental agreement was gained and hold the agreement to engage form on file.

How many documents can be uploaded to the request?

The request asks for only the required evidence to be uploaded, on the Essential Evidence tab:

- the Reviewed Support Plan

There is space to provide additional evidence you feel may assist the team in considering you request or you can email securely additional evidence to SENIF@kent.gov.uk

The evidence I am trying to upload is too large, what can I do?

There is a 10megabyte limit per form. You can either compress the files you wish to upload to make them smaller or you can securely email the evidence which is too large to SENIF@kent.gov.uk referencing your setting and the child's name so that the evidence can be matched to the request form.

How will I know that the request has submitted?

You will receive an autogenerated email once you have pressed submit to confirm that the request has been submitted.

If a child increases their hours of attendance after headcount week can SENIF be increased in line with this?

- No, for 3 and 4 years olds SENIF is agreed in line with the early education entitlement, as is the Working Families Entitlement. Any increase in SENIF would be in line with the headcount data submitted to management information and would have to commence from the beginning of the following term.
- For any increases or decreases the setting should email the revised hours to the SENIF Finance Team at SENIF@kent.gov.uk (see question above).

A child in my setting I wish to apply for SENIF for lives in another local authority area, do I apply to Kent or their home LA?

Local authorities are funded for places taken up in the local authority in which a setting is based. Therefore, in cases where a child who lives in one local authority attends a setting in another local authority, funding for the child is the responsibility of the local authority in which the setting is based. This applies to all the entitlement funding streams.

If a child in receipt of SENIF moves to a new setting, can the SENIF be transferred or does a new application need to be made?

- It is the responsibility of the setting to inform the SENIF Finance Team as soon as they are aware that a child will be leaving.

- There is an expectation that if at all possible, there will be a transition meeting and sharing of information relating to the child's needs. There is a Transition document available which should be completed in this instance.
- Any existing SENIF can be transferred to the new Setting for no longer than the remainder of the existing agreement. This is determined on a case-by-case basis dependant on individual circumstances and the SENIF Finance Team will advise you of the duration of any transferred funds and the next steps for accessing SENIF ongoing.
- The new setting will need to confirm that the child has been included on the current Headcount and the number of hours the child will take up.
- The new setting will be required to make a new application for SENIF at the end of the transferred agreement.

The SENIF Finance Team will inform the old setting when the last payment will be and if a recoupment of overpaid funds is required.

Who does the setting inform that the child has left?

The SENIF Finance Team at SENIF@kent.gov.uk stating the date they left. Any SENIF which has been overpaid will be reclaimed.

If a child is in receipt of SENIF, but has poor attendance due to illness, how does this affect the funding?

- Lower than would be liked attendance is generally considered to be less than 90%.
- It is recommended that the setting makes contact with the SENIF Finance Team to discuss the attendance levels so that a decision can be made. Decisions are made on case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances.
- Although we appreciate children can be ill there is an expectation that if a child has an extended period of absence, for an illness, hospital stay or an extended holiday then the setting will inform the SENIF Finance Team so SENIF can be put on hold pending the child's return.
- In some instances, Complex Case Advisory Group may be asked to consider these cases.

If a child makes good progress during the SENIF agreement and they have met all of their targets will SENIF be stopped?

If the Local Authority is made aware by the setting, Early Years Quality Adviser or SENIF Monitoring Officer that a child has made good progress as evidenced by the last Reviewed Support Plan a decision about whether it is appropriate to reduce or cease SENIF will be made at Complex Case Advisory Group. Good progress is defined as making progress and meeting their milestones.

If funding is needed for another year, does a new request form have to be completed?

Yes, as the needs of the child may have changed. You can find the SENIF review form on Kelsi Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) Review Form - KELSI.

Are we reminded that our agreement is coming to an end?

No, it is the responsibility of individual settings to manage their SENIF Requests, know when an agreement is due to end and make any subsequent required requests for SENIF. The agreement duration is detailed on the SENIF Outcome note which is sent to alert you that an agreement has been made. SENIF commences from the

month following receipt of all required evidence so to ensure no break in funding all required request evidence will need to be received no later than the last day of the final month of the current agreement.

Parents wish to defer or delay their child's entry to school, is it possible to access SENIF?

It is possible until the end of the term in which a child reaches their 5th birthday provided, they remain in receipt of the Early Education Entitlement, have agreement to delay or defer entry and is not on the role of a school.

Please consult the Deferred Entry Flowchart on the SENIF page of Kelsi for the additional required evidence.

My Setting has received an Ofsted Report Card which includes "Urgent Improvement" and/or Safeguarding is judged as "Not Met" can I still apply for SENIF? Will existing SENIF be recouped?

Yes, you can still apply for SENIF for any existing children in receipt of the Early Education Entitlement. Any existing SENIF will not be recouped.

However, you may receive a visit from the SENIF Monitoring Officer shortly after the agreement is made/the judgement is made if SENIF is already in place and a further visit later in the SENIF agreement.

Existing children who will become or who are already eligible for free entitlement funding can still be claimed for, to ensure continuity of care, and SENIF could be agreed for these children. It will not be possible to agree SENIF for any new children joining your setting after a published Report Card which includes "Urgent Improvement" and/or Safeguarding is judged as "Not Met" where children are not in receipt of the Early Education Entitlement.

On receipt of a second published report card where there is no evidence of improvement and that this includes an "Urgent Improvement" grading for any evaluation area and/or Safeguarding is judged as "Not Met"; the ability to claim Early Education funding will be withdrawn as will SENIF in line with this (the timescales for this are published within the Kent Provider Agreement).

A child attends our Out of School provision, can I request SENIF for them?

SENIF is only agreed in line with eligibility for and receipt of the Early Education Entitlement. If the child has reached school starting age/statutory school age and is on a school roll then they would not be eligible for the Early Education Entitlement or SENIF. If you are claiming part of the child's Early Education Entitlement and you are registered to deliver the EYFS then this can be considered.

Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

How do I apply for SENIF for a Child with a Proposed or Final EHCP?

For children who have a Proposed EHCP or a Final EHCP and where SENIF is not already in place, a request for SENIF can be made. If SENIF is already in place then this will continue for the duration of the original SENIF agreement. There should not be an automatic requirement to adjust SENIF once an EHCP has been issued.

The required evidence for children with a proposed or final EHCP includes the completed SENIF Request Form and their Current Support/Provision Plan including Current Attainment Levels. There is no requirement to submit the EHCP as the SENIF Finance Team should be able to access the proposed/final EHCP from the Local Authorities Children's database.

If a child has a Provision Plan as there is an EHCP in place do we still need to do Support Plans?

Although it is not a mandatory requirement for settings to use the KCC early years Support Plan template, it is preferred as it captures relevant information. However, if this evidence is available within the Provision Plan then this document can be used.

Financial

When the funding is paid into setting bank accounts, will it identify the child for whom it is being paid – e.g. by name, initials, eligibility number?

The reference will include current month, SENIF application number, child's initials and funding end date. E.g. Sept-2020-SENIF-0001.CB.08-2021, and this should be on the remittance you receive. However, accounts payable could add any other payments due to your setting together so the amount you receive may be different to the agreed SENIF monthly amount.

Will the payments be monthly e.g. total sum / 12 months including a payment in August when the setting is closed?

Yes. SENIF is agreed on a 38-week academic year but paid in up to 12 equal parts, depending on agreement length/school start. The outcome sheet will confirm the Per Annum amount (12 months) and the start and end dates will indicate the number of months of agreed funding at the stated monthly amount.

When can I expect to receive the SENIF payment?

Once an agreement has been made payments are devolved monthly via the advance system. PVI Settings and childminders will receive this around the 30th of each month for the duration of the agreement. For maintained nursery classes the Schools Advance process is used to make the monthly payments.

What is the expected time frame for approval of the funding once it is submitted?

You will receive an autogenerated email when you submit your request for SENIF which should detail the current timeframe. The current timeframe will also be updated on the automatic response received from emails to the SENIF@kent.gov.uk email address.

Is the funding back dated to the date of application? If I am requesting an increase due to a child's attendance increasing will this be backdated?

- New requests will commence from the beginning of the following month. This is provided the SENIF Finance Team are in receipt of **all** required request evidence and eligibility criteria is met.
- New requests received on or after the 1st of the month which are agreed will commence from the beginning of the following month.
- Increased attendance requests must be in line with current headcount data submission or they will commence from the beginning of the following long term.
- Increased attendance requests which are in line with current headcount data will commence from the beginning of the following month.

Once SENIF is agreed, is it possible for settings to request a higher level of support because the needs of the child have changed since the original application? How do they make this request?

This would be possible in exceptional circumstances but there would need to be clear evidence that the current provision cannot meet the child's needs. A new SENIF Request form and **additional** supporting evidence to demonstrate how the current level does not allow you to meet the child's needs would be required.

Is there any criteria for spending the SENIF monies?

- SENIF is allocated to settings to support the named child ensuring they are fully included within the setting environment, differentiated where appropriate.
- This could include enhancing existing ratios to deliver specific interventions with the named child, small group work, purchasing relevant resources or attending relevant training.
- Using SENIF to pay for external professionals (such as Private SALT, Autism Specialists, ABA tutors, activity leaders* (i.e. yoga or music teachers) are not appropriate uses of the fund nor is using SENIF to fund Universal resources (that would be available for all children) or consumables (laminating pouches, printer ink, sand, bubbles etc*) *Please note these are some examples and not limited to just these items
- SENIF should not be used to fund additional sessions, including After School Club and Holiday Clubs. SENIF is agreed in line with the child's Early Education Entitlement
- Making adjustments/purchasing resources which would be considered reasonable adjustments (i.e. purchasing stair gate* to close off areas of setting) are also not appropriate uses of SENIF. *Please note these are some examples and not limited to just these items
- If you are unsure you can complete a SEND Inclusion Funding Tool (SIFT) which is sent to you with your outcome and can be found on Kelsi and share it with your SENIF Monitoring Officer before spending any funds.
- Please note if SENIF is used to purchase inappropriate resources a recoupment/adjustment of funds may be made.

Can SENIF be requested for a child who is part of the SLI service – to carry out the programmes daily?

KCC won't fund the NHS to deliver programmes in settings. Funding is not provided for specific interventions but if criteria is met and funding agreed, the setting can determine how this is used in line with the Support Plan.

What is a 'Continuing Healthcare Plan'?

This is a plan provided by the Children's Disability Team for children with life limiting conditions and families could get additional funding. If a family is in receipt of Continuing Health Funding and wish to make an application for SENIF, a member of the SENIF team will visit your setting to discuss the request for SENIF

If I am unhappy with my SENIF outcome can I appeal the amount allocated?

In the first instance please address your concerns to the SENIF Finance Manager at SENIF@kent.gov.uk who will respond accordingly. If you remain unhappy with the response the SENIF Finance Manager will direct you on how to raise your concerns further.

If I need to change my bank details held with KCC for funding payments, who do I contact?

SENIF payments are made via the established advance system to the bank account details held centrally for your setting. The SENIF Finance team are not able to change this. You should contact Management Information to inform them of the change to your bank details and they will advise you of the process.

I need to change my email address held with KCC, who do I contact?

The SENIF Finance team use the registered email address shared with Management Information and are not able to change this. You should contact Management Information MIEarlyYears@kent.gov.uk to inform them of the change to your email address and they will advise you of the process.

Disability Access Fund (DAF)

More information about DAF can be found here:

Disability Access Fund (DAF) - KELSI

Early Education Entitlement (EEE) including Working Families Entitlement

Does every child have an eligibility number even if they don't attend 30 hours?

No.

Please see the Management Information page on Kelsi for more information on the Extended Entitlement

Can two settings apply for SENIF for the same child if they access their 30 hours extended entitlement in different settings?

Yes, pro rata attendance at any other PVI or maintained setting or childminder in line with the extended early education entitlement which will need to be verified with Management Information before the request can be processed.

If a child is not eligible for Free for Two Funding but we have identified that some additional provision would be required, can SENIF be requested?

No, SENIF is only ever agreed in line with one of the Early Education Entitlements – FF2, Working Families Entitlements, Universal or Extended – pro rata with any other PVI place the child attends.

Can foster carers claim the 30 hours extended entitlement for their foster children?

Children in foster care may be eligible for the WPE, providing they meet the age criteria and two additional criteria, being that this is consistent with the child's care plan and the foster parent is taking up paid employment outside of their fostering role.

Foster carers **must** speak to the child's social worker and complete a WPE application form for foster children, please contact Management Information for this form: Contact Management Information - KELSI.

When a child is placed with their prospective adoptive parent(s), they will have parental responsibility for the child and are therefore able to apply directly to HMRC for the WPE. Providers are to note the aforementioned must meet the eligibility criteria in the same way as non-foster parents.

MI will generate an eligibility code for a successful foster carer's application where the designated person has confirmed the additional criteria has been met.
Providers must validate the foster carer's code in the same way as other codes in order to offer a WPE place.

If a child is eligible for Free for Two Funding but is attending a setting that isn't registered to take Free for Two, can SENIF be requested?

No

We have SENIF agreed for a child who is eligible for Free for Two Funding but we have not claimed this funding, can SENIF be allocated?

No, as this is the non-statutory element of the fund SENIF should only be released where the setting are in receipt of the FF2 funding.

Children in receipt of Working Families Entitlement for Under 2's

For children who are under the age of two, and are in receipt of the Working Families Entitlement for Under 2's, SENIF can be considered