

# Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) Offer

## SEN Inclusion Fund



Supporting Children to  
Play, Learn and Grow...

Together!



## Guidance Document

September 2024

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## Introduction to Kent's SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF)

Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) Pre-school Settings, Maintained Nursery Settings, Registered Childminders and Registered Out of School Providers (where the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) is accessed)

From September 2017 the SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) became a statutory requirement made available by KCC to enable settings, childminders and out of school providers supporting Pre-School children with special educational needs to secure better outcomes. **It is not designed to provide 1:1 support as research has shown that this is not the best way to support the majority of children.**

If the criteria are met, SENIF can be requested;

- when the child attends a registered Kent setting, a registered Kent childminder or registered out of school provider.
- for a maximum of 30 hours per week pro rata on attendance and eligibility.
- when the child is in receipt of Early Years Education Entitlement (from 9 months old) children in line with the Headcount dates.
- when the child attends a Kent setting registered to take children in receipt of the Educational Entitlements.

The SENIF application process is also utilised for children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).

SENIF requests are considered by the SENIF Finance Manager and SENIF Assistant based on the criteria laid out in this document and is quality assured by the SEND Support & Inclusion Manager (Early Years).

Requests for Specialist Interventions at a Profound, Severe and Complex (PSC) Special School will be considered under the termly Early Years Multi-Agency Planning (MAP) process in each of the twelve districts. Wherever possible the child will access a mainstream pre-school setting alongside the Specialist Intervention.

## SENIF Pre-requisites

Before a setting can make a request for SEN Inclusion Funding there should be evidence that the appropriate strategies, training and programmes have already been tried for the child and have had limited success. Reviewed Personalised Plans submitted for requests for SENIF should be based on the advice of their allocated Specialist Teacher to evidence any impact and progress.

All requests for SENIF will need to evidence that the child's needs are recognised as requiring SEN Support as defined in the SEND Code of Practice 0 – 25.

- EY Settings will have sought advice from the [Early Years & Childcare Equality & Inclusion Team](#) at the Universal Level.
- EY settings will have used [Best Practice Guidance](#) strategies to support the child & recorded the impact of these.
- If the child makes limited progress and it is felt that more intensive support is needed a referral to [EY Local Inclusion Forum Team \(LIFT\)](#) should be made supported by the Targeted or Personalised Plan.  
(Details of EY LIFT meetings can be found on the local district Special School website)
- Allocation of specialist support takes place at EY LIFT meetings. Strategies are given to support the setting and the setting should be able to show how they have implemented these and the impact that they have had on the outcomes for the child. It is good practice that impact should be added to the Best Practice Guidance Audit Tools as an ongoing record of support. The expectation is that children are open to the Specialist Teacher and on their open caseload list.
- An [Early Years Personalised Plan](#) is devised, if not already, implemented and reviewed.
  - It is not necessary to wait for a Specialist Teacher to visit the child before implementing a Personalised Plan. A Personalised Plan can be created from the following, although not limited to:
    - advice received from The Equality and Inclusion Team,
    - suggestions provided by peers at Early Years LIFT,
    - advice provided by Specialist Teachers at Early Years LIFT,
    - advice from other professionals the child is known to,
    - your own experience
- Child does not make expected progress.
- The [Graduated Response Tool](#) can assist you in establishing if you have exhausted all other possible support options before making a request for SENIF

## SENIF Application Process

- Setting discusses SENIF request with the child's family
- Setting completes SENIF Request Form and uploads Reviewed and Current Early Years Personalised Plan(s) as part of the Online SENIF Request Form.

**All paperwork can be found on [SENIF pages](#) of Kelsi**

For children receiving **Portage**, and have been known to this service for at least 8 weeks, and may require SENIF support in order to start at the setting, a home visit / Pre-school Learning Group visit, will be undertaken with the Portage Practitioner and the Early Years setting SENCo / Keyperson to enable the Setting to complete the SENIF Request Form and devise a Current Personalised Plan, including baseline attainment, building upon the Portage Long Term Aims Achieved. The Portage Developmental Profile / and Long Term Aims Achieved will be emailed by the Portage Practitioner to the SENIF Team to be added to the request. The expectation is that for requests using this route a request for SENIF is made prior to the child's start or within their first term at the setting *and no later than the last day of the term in which they joined*, as per the [published term dates calendar](#).

After this time the expectation would be that the child is known to STLS and a request for SENIF is made providing the mandatory evidence.

For children receiving support from **STLS Sensory Service** who may require SENIF support to start at a setting it is recommended that a joint home visit from the Early Years setting SENCo and STLS Sensory Teacher takes place to jointly complete the SENIF Request Form and the Current Personalised Plan, including baseline attainment. The most recent Sensory Service Record of Visit and/or the Record of visit which includes the STLS advised outcomes should accompany the request.

For children attending a **childminder** an initial support visit will be arranged. Where it is established they meet the criteria for SENIF the childminder will complete the full SENIF request paperwork having referred to the childminding process for accessing support.

- The SENIF Team will consider whether the request meets the criteria for SENIF. Additional evidence/reports may be requested.
- Once considered, an email will be sent by the SENIF Team to the setting with the decision.
  - If an agreement is made, details of the payment arrangements and agreement dates will be included on the outcome note.
  - If it is not possible to make an agreement as evidence is missing, a phone call or email will be made to the setting and a deadline agreed. If the missing evidence is not received by the deadline the outcome note will detail the reason(s) why the application has not been agreed.
  - If based on evidence provided a child is not eligible for SENIF (does not meet the criteria) the outcome note will detail the reason(s).
- Reviews of the Early Years Personalised Plan and SENIF funding will be undertaken within the setting with the family at least every two terms.
- Funding will be agreed for up to a year, depending on school entry, and the setting reimbursed monthly subject to monitoring visits which could result in reconsideration of the funding if necessary.
  - The SENIF Team will add the child to the district termly MAP agenda for consideration of any further support from the SENIF Offer.
- The SENIF Offer Implementation Plan (SIP) is available and recommended as best practice when planning how to utilise the funding. This tool will support your discussions with the SENIF Monitoring Officers.
- SENIF agreements are made based on a child's actual attendance, in line with termly headcount submissions. If a child's attendance changes (increases or decreases) it is the setting's responsibility to inform the SENIF Team so that an adjustment can be considered.

## SENIF Criteria and SENIF Levels

How the level of SENIF funding is determined.

### Level 1

- There is evidence that the child is not meeting their milestones, that there is a delay in their development in two or more aspects of at least 12 months.
- The graduated response has been implemented.
- The Equality & Inclusion Adviser has provided universal support and advice.
- EY LIFT has been accessed and advice from a Specialist Teacher has been implemented and evaluated.
- Adult support is required to remove barriers to learning (over 40% of the time)

### Level 2

*All of the above and in addition....*

- There is evidence that the child is not meeting their milestones, that there is significant delay in their development in four or more aspects of 18+ months
- The graduated response has been implemented and outside agency support has been sought and is ongoing.
- Is likely to be known/referred to the Portage Service due to profound, severe or complex needs.
- Is likely to have a Children's Care Co-Ordinator.
- The setting is likely to be in receipt of Disability Access Fund (DAF) for the child (the family are in receipt of DLA and the child is eligible for the 3- and 4-year-old funding)
- A high level of adult support is required to remove barriers to learning (over 65% of the time).

Consideration for additional support will also be given if a child is assessed at their age expected Milestone of Development whilst having a complex health condition that can be unpredictable or unstable or if a child has significant sensory (hearing/visual impairment) needs.

### Level 3

*All of the above and in addition....*

- The child has high level medical/sensory needs (deaf, blind or multi-sensory impairment as confirmed by a relevant medical consultant).
- The child has a life limiting condition and is dependent on an adult for all needs and is considered to be at high risk without this support.

## **Complex Case Advisory Group**

Prior to an agreement being made at Level 3 SENIF, it will be quality assured by Complex Case Advisory Group. This group is the Local Authority's mechanism for Quality Assuring agreements made at this enhanced level and for supporting the SENIF Finance Team with more complex cases such as those where children are in receipt of Continuing Health Funding. The SENIF Finance Team triage new requests for SENIF on their receipt and decide whether additional discussion with this group is required prior to an outcome being sent.

## **SENIF Practitioner Allocations at Early Years LIFT**

Some settings may be allocated SENIF Practitioner Intervention as a recommendation at the LIFT meeting without the need for SENIF to be in place. There are criteria which must be satisfied for an allocation to be made.

## **Early Years Multi-Agency Planning (MAP) Process**

Multi-Agency Planning takes place 6 times annually, once a term in each of the 12 Districts.

### **Purpose:**

- To make decisions about two terms of Specialist Interventions.
- To make decisions about the Early Years SEN Inclusion Fund Practitioners' support to settings as part of the SEN Inclusion Fund offer.
- To allocate / offer training course places to settings as part of the SEN Inclusion Fund offer.
- To plan actions required by different professionals at the point of transition into, or out of, a pre-school setting/access to Specialist Intervention.

If additional support and/or training is recommended the setting will be contacted by STLS/SENIF Practitioner (if working with the child) following the meeting to discuss this further. Settings should not pay for any MAP agreed training they have been offered as this is centrally funded and arranged between STLS and the SENIF Finance Team (See Appendix 1).

## SENIF Finance Manager

### Role:

- To allocate SEN Inclusion Fund to Kent Settings in receipt of FEEE in accordance with the set criteria established by the Local Authority for each dimension of need.
- To make decisions on behalf of the Local Authority with regards Specialist Intervention offers made at each Area MAP.

## Early Years SENIF Monitoring Officers

Early Years professionals employed by the Local Authority.

### Role:

- To arrange a visit wherever possible within two months of a SENIF agreement being made to support the setting in receipt of SENIF. In the case of lots of requests at the same setting this will not engender multiple visits, but the setting may still be visited regularly during the year.
- To provide support and information prior to SENIF agreements being made, when requested to by the Complex Case Advisory Group
- To monitor and evaluate the special educational needs provision in Early Years Private, Voluntary & Independent Settings, maintained nursery classes and childminders across a designated area of Kent in accordance with statutory duties and County SEND priorities in relation to settings receiving SEN Inclusion Funding and the SEN Support Allowance.
- To monitor and evaluate the provision for individual children in receipt of SEN Inclusion Funding in PVI settings, maintained nursery classes and at childminders ensuring that they are making appropriate educational progress.
- Providing advice and guidance to PVI settings, maintained nursery classes and childminders on SEN processes, procedures and statutory duties relating to SEN Inclusion Fun
- Participate in Complex Case Advisory Group Meeting
- To manage Kent SEN Inclusion Fund Budget and reporting functions accordingly.



## **SENIF Finance Assistant**

### **Role:**

- To assist the SENIF Finance Manager in the effective management of the allocation of the Kent SEN Inclusion Fund.
- Daily management of requests from Kent settings for SEN Inclusion Funding.
- To liaise with Kent Settings to ensure appropriate evidence is obtained for decision making.

## **SENIF Practitioner Lead**

Early Years professional employed by the Local Authority.

### **Role:**

- To manage the team on a day-to-day basis.
- To manage the allocation of SENIF Practitioners from LIFT and MAP processes.
- To hold a small case list of children with complex needs which would benefit from SENIF Interventions in PVI and maintained settings as detailed below

## **Early Years SENIF Practitioners**

Early Years professionals employed by the Local Authority.

### **Role:**

- To support, model and advise maintained and PVI settings in receipt of SEN Inclusion Funding and where this has been recommended at an EY LIFT meeting.
- To support settings to implement Personalised Plans, advice and programmes provided by professionals to enable children to make progress and fully access the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- To support settings to monitor the impact that the SEN Inclusion Fund has on children's learning.
- To model ways of working and advise on strategies suggested by the EY Specialist Teacher/Specialist Intervention Nursery Manager.
- To provide guidance to EY settings regarding a range of resources and training that will support and encourage learning to take place for those children who they are supporting.
- To attend Early Years LIFT Meetings.

## Roles & Responsibilities of the setting

The role and responsibility of the setting once SENIF has been agreed will be to:

- Observe the child and provide support to develop their independence.
- Implement and evaluate strategies provided by other professionals.
- Include the child in large groups, smaller groups, and in the delivery of individual programmes as appropriate.
- Review the Early Years Personalised Plan termly, or at least 3 times a year depending on the number of hours the child attends.
- Inform the SENIF Finance Team should a child's attendance hours or attendance levels change.
- Arrange / attend training as identified at MAP or recommended by the EY SENIF Practitioners.
- The setting SENCo should ensure that the child remains the responsibility of the whole setting, and that all staff have an understanding of their needs.

**Settings should be responsible for compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and confidentiality regarding any children's details that they store and share. If evidence is omitted from the secure online SENIF Request Form process, please contact the SENIF Business Team to this.**

## Stretched Funding

SENIF supports stretched funding and in line with this, all applications will be considered on an individual basis. This will be paid in the same way and the Nursery will take responsibility to stretch the funding. The total claimable for stretched funding is equivalent to the total claimable on a 38 week, maximum 30 hours a week attendance (there is no additional value for children accessing stretched funding places). It is the setting's responsibility to detail when a child is stretching their entitlement and advise the stretched hours being taken and over how many weeks.

### Funding payments for settings with agreed SENIF

Payments will be paid monthly, directly into the nominated setting bank account via the established KCC process. Providing the child is eligible, payments will begin from the month after all required evidence is received. **SENIF is not backdated**, this includes any increase in attendance adjustments. SENIF payments will always be made in line with the current headcount submission. **If a child is absent for more than a month it is the responsibility of the setting to notify the Team at [SENIF@kent.gov.uk](mailto:SENIF@kent.gov.uk)** Any overpayments made will be recouped. If the child's hours of attendance reduce after the Headcount data is submitted, then the SENIF Finance Team reserves the right to recalculate the amount of funding that the setting has available to them.

### Funding for children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs)

For children who have a Proposed EHCP or Final EHCP and do not already have SENIF 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 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 the child's current Personalised/Provision Plan including current attainment. There is no requirement for the setting to share the EHCP as the SENIF Finance Team should be able to access this from the Local Authorities Children's Database.

### Funding for children moving settings

It is the responsibility of the setting to inform the team at [SENIF@kent.gov.uk](mailto:SENIF@kent.gov.uk) 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 specific transition section on the Early Years Personalised Plan which should be completed in this instance. The SENIF Finance Team will inform the setting when the last payment will be. From September 2022 the existing SENIF agreement may be able to be transferred to the new setting for either the remainder of the original agreement or for a few months to enable the child to settle, at which point the new setting will be required to make a new request if SENIF is still a requirement. It would be good practice for the setting to complete a SIP within two months of SENIF being transferred to evidence how the funds are being used

## **SENIF Review Form**

From September 2023 a SENIF Review Form will be introduced; this form can be used when SENIF has been in place previously and a reapplication is required to access continued SENIF. This digital form includes space to include the child's current attainment (MAT) so only one piece of evidence is required for continued consideration of SENIF.

### **SENIF for Pre-School aged children in Term 6**

Except in very exceptional circumstances, SENIF agreements will not be made in Term 6 of the academic year for a child who will be of school starting age in the following September (Term 1). This is due to there being insufficient time to evidence any impact from the additional provision provided. SENIF does not have to be in place in order that the receiving Primary School can apply for High Needs Funding. Exceptional circumstances could include the child has recently moved from another setting where SENIF was in place or into Kent with complex needs. It would be recommended making contact with the SENIF Finance team in advance of making a request in this instance to establish if the circumstances around making this late request would be considered exceptional.

### **Specialist equipment**

Any specialist equipment that is recommended through a recent Occupational Therapist's or Physiotherapist's report will be acquired through the NHS Equipment Panel Process.

### **Transport**

It is the responsibility of families to arrange and provide transport for their child to any Pre-School setting including Specialist Interventions.

### **Delayed/Deferred entry to school**

Continued SENIF funding at the Pre-School setting can be considered once a child has reached school starting age if there is written agreement from the receiving primary school that a child has an agreed delayed/deferred entry. For further information on delayed/deferred entry please check Kelsi for the flow chart process.

## Specialist Intervention

Children with special educational needs will usually have their needs met by mainstream pre-school settings. However, it is recognised that there may be a need for a few children to be offered Specialist Interventions deliver by Special School Nursery staff. The decision about the most appropriate intervention for the child will be made at the termly MAP following representations from multi agency colleagues.

Clear evidence of the level of need and the support that has been provided for the child will be submitted by the Specialist Teacher or Portage Practitioner before MAP can conclude that Specialist Intervention is appropriate. Requests for Specialist Intervention should be made in agreement with families and are the responsibility of STLS or Portage to make.

Early Years settings will be notified of the outcome following the MAP outcomes being shared with the referrer. Some interventions will include Partnership working between the Specialist Intervention staff and the PVI / maintained setting and one of the specialist interventions will be carried out at the pre-school setting.

Although it may be agreed that a child would meet the criteria for Specialist Intervention this does not guarantee it can be offered immediately and should progress be made or an EHCP be issued which means it would not be appropriate to offer the Specialist Intervention then it may not take place.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Please always check Kelsi for the [FAQs](#) as these are updated regularly.

## **Appendix 1 – SENIF Offer Training Process**

