

My ref: Household Support – Christmas
Date: 1st December 2021
Contact: Please contact your school
for more information



People & Communities
Education Directorate

To Parents/Carers of pupils in
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough
Schools and Early Years Settings

Dear Parent/Carer

Household Support Fund and the Christmas Holidays

We continue to operate our Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households over the winter months in response to Covid-19 via our Direct Food Voucher Scheme. We will, therefore, be providing vouchers to cover the Christmas holiday period which runs from 20 December 2021 to 4 January 2022 and also the February half term. Information for the February half term will be sent nearer the time.

Direct Food Voucher Scheme

As for previous holiday periods, a supermarket voucher will be allocated to parents/carers whose child/ren meet the following criteria -

- Funded Childcare and Education for 2-year-olds under the income-based criteria (children aged 2)
- Early Years Pupil Premium under the income-based criteria (children aged 3 and 4)
- Free School Meals (children and young people aged 4 to 16)
- Students in Sixth Forms eligible for Free School meals or for the 16+ bursary (young people aged 16 to 19)

If your child receives Universal Infant Free School Meals (in Reception, Y1 and Y2) but you do not meet the criteria for Income-Related Free School Meals, you will **not** be eligible for a supermarket voucher.

For eligible young people attending Sixth Form Colleges / Further Education establishments, information on how support will be offered will be sent directly by the college.

A detailed list of criteria and information on [how to apply for income-related free school meals](#) are attached to this letter. Further information is also available at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals.

How the vouchers work

We will issue each eligible child/young person with a £30 supermarket voucher by the end of the day on 17th December to cover the Christmas holiday period. The voucher will be sent by email and/or text to the nominated parent or carer. The voucher does not need to be used in a single shopping trip and once claimed will last for at least a year.

If your child is eligible for income-related free school meals, or any of the other criteria listed above, on or before the 6th December, they will automatically receive a voucher for the Christmas holiday period. Any children who become eligible up until the 4th January 2022 will receive a voucher. This will be sent as and when we are notified of this change in circumstance.

Details of the supermarkets which will accept the vouchers and how the voucher scheme works can be found in the frequently asked questions document sent with this letter. Please note that **all** unclaimed Christmas holiday vouchers will be withdrawn on the **28th January**. Once you select a supermarket, the voucher will not be withdrawn and will be valid in line with the date on the voucher claimed. If you **do not** wish to receive the food vouchers, please let your school or setting know as soon as possible so that we can reallocate them. If you would like information and ideas on how to eat more healthily as a family, NHS Change4life has lots of useful information - <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes>.

If your child was eligible on or before the 6th December and you have not received your voucher **by the end of the 17th December** or have any queries about this scheme, please contact winter.support@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. Please include in any correspondence the name of your child, their date of birth and which education establishment they attend. This will avoid a delay in responding to your query.

Wider Support

We understand that there are many families eligible for the Direct Food Voucher Scheme that may need further support this winter. We also know there will be families who don't meet the above criteria but are in need of support. Support can be accessed directly from the Council at:

- For families in Cambridgeshire - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/household-support-fund>
- For families in Peterborough - <https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/household-support-fund>

There is also a network of trusted partners who can help you access further support including information and advice, as well as further food and fuel support or access to other essential supplies. Further details can be found at the above websites.

If you are unable to access the information online, you can call the wider support team on 0345 045 5219. The team is available Monday – Friday 9am-5pm.

I'd like to wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Lewis
Service Director – Education,
Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council

Appendix 1 – Eligibility for Direct Voucher Scheme

Parents eligible for Funded Childcare and Education for 2-year-olds under the income-based criteria (children aged 2)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit, and your household income is £15,400 a year or less after tax, not including benefit payments
- Tax credits, and your household income is £16,190 a year or less before tax
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- The Working Tax Credit 4-week run on (the payment you get when you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds>

Parents eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium under the income-based criteria (children aged 3 and 4)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- [Income Support](#)
- Income-based [Jobseeker's Allowance](#)
- Income-related [Employment and Support Allowance](#)
- Support under [part six of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#)
- The guaranteed element of [State Pension Credit](#)
- [Child Tax Credit](#) (provided you are not also entitled to [Working Tax Credit](#)) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- [Working Tax Credit](#) run-on, which is paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

- Universal Credit - your household income must be less than £7,400 a year after tax not including any benefits you get

<https://www.gov.uk/get-extra-early-years-funding>

Parents eligible for Free School Meals (children and young people aged 4 to 16)

In order to qualify you must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

If you wish to apply for a free school meal, please apply online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or www.peterborough.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Eligible for 16-19 Free School Meals

Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

[Free meals in further education funded institutions: guide for the 2021 to 2022 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-for-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year)

Other Eligibility

Children in care are not covered by the scheme as the costs of meals in the holidays are covered by fostering allowances.

The definition of a child is any person:

- who will be under the age of 19 as at 31 March 2022 or
- a person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit (for example, Child Benefit) is paid or free school meals are provided.

Anyone else (over 19 including those with an Education Health Care Plan) can seek support through the wider support scheme.

How to Claim Free School Meals

We understand that families continue to live in uncertain times, and many are facing changes to their financial circumstances as a result. If you have not previously applied for Free School Meals, or your name has recently changed, and feel you now meet the criteria below, please visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals to apply online;

- Income Support.
- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Child Tax Credit - but no element of Working Tax Credit - and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)) that does not exceed £16,190.
- If you are supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.
- Working Tax Credit during the four-week period immediately after your employment finishes or after you start to work fewer hours per week.
- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400.

Also, schools are continuing to provide support for eligible families, in the form of either food parcels or vouchers, during this period where pupils are unable to attend. Your school will be able to confirm the support that they are offering. The form is simple to complete and will give you an immediate response.