

Free School/Early Years Meals and Hardship Payments Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – March 2021

Q Will payment continue for the provision of Free School Meals for children in secondary schools whilst attending on a phased basis?

Payments for the provision of Free School Meals to eligible secondary school children will continue during the phased return. Payment for the period Monday 15 March to Thursday 1 April will be paid by Friday 12 March. This will total £56 per eligible child.

Q When will I receive my Easter Free School Meal payment and my Spring Hardship payment?

The Spring Hardship payment will be paid with the Easter holiday Free School Meal Payment by Thursday 1 April. The payment for the Easter School holidays will be £4/per day for the 11 days of school closure, plus the £100 Spring Hardship grant, a total per eligible child of £144.

Q What is the deadline for applications for the Spring Hardship payment if I have not already applied?

To qualify for the £100 payment all applications for both [School Clothing Grants](#) and [Free School Meals](#) must be submitted by the end of school term on Thursday 1 April 2021.

Q What if my bank account information has changed?

If your Bank Account information has changed since your online application for Free School/Early Years Meals, please contact the Customer Service Team as soon as possible who will be able to advise. The Customer Services Team can be contacted on 0300 1234510.

Q Can you confirm the eligibility criteria for the Free School /Early Years Meals?

Eligibility for Free School/Early Years Meals based on low income, is as set out below:

i. A child is eligible to receive Free School/Early Years Meals, where the household is in receipt of:

- Universal Credit (where monthly earned income is not more than £610);
- Income Support;
- income-based Job Seeker's Allowance;
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance;
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

ii. A child is also eligible to receive Free School/Early Years Meals, where the household is in receipt of:

- Child Tax Credit, but not Working Tax Credit, and household income is less than £16,105;
- both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit and have an income of up to £7,330.

iii. A child might still get a free lunch in school/early years centre if their household experience financial hardship. This could be because:

- Their immigration status means they cannot get help from the Government;
- They're still waiting on their first Universal Credit notice.

Q I qualify for Free School/Early Years Free Meals but I have not received a payment. How can I get one?

If you did not receive your previous payment please phone 0300 1234510 with your name, your child/ren's name/s and the school/early years centre they attend, and when you received your award. We will investigate and get back to you.

Q I think I am eligible for the School Clothing Grant and Free School/Early Years Meals, but have not previously applied. Can I apply now?

If you are eligible for either a School Clothing Grant or Free School Meals/Free Early Years Meals (**not including the universal provision for P1-P3 or the universal provision in our pilot 1140 Early Years Centres**) but have not yet applied for the 2020/21 school session, you can apply now through our application process, which is now available [online](#).

You must include the evidence to support your claim when you submit the online form. Once your eligibility has been verified, you will be issued with a payment in accordance with the published guidelines.

Q I do not currently get a School Clothing Grant or Free School/Early Years Meals, but my circumstances have changed as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). I think I am now entitled, and would therefore be entitled to this support. What should I do?

You should check the [universal credit eligibility](#) and see if you are entitled to any Benefits if your circumstances have changed and apply for these in the usual way.

Once you have any new benefits you are entitled to confirmed, you can make an application for a [School Clothing Grant](#) or [Free School Meals/Free Early Years Meals](#). The application process for these awards are now available online and you should upload your evidence of eligibility when you submit your application form.

You can also seek a referral to the Food Bank if you have no other means of providing food for your family. The new OPAL Helpline **0141 438 2347** established in East Dunbartonshire may be able to help you with this.

You may also be able to apply for a [Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant](#) if your circumstances have left you in a difficult position.

Q My children are in P1 to P3 and normally get a school lunch in line with the Scottish Government policy for free school meals for P1-P3. Why are we not being allocated a payment?

The provision of universal free school lunches for P1 to P3 is a different commitment to the provision of free school meals as a result of the financial impact COVID-19 is having on parents/carers. The Scottish Government guidance is clear that providing school meals or vouchers during this period does not apply to the universal provision of lunches for all P1-3.