



Universal credit and legacy benefits

The old eligibility rules were ended on 31st March 2018 and a four year roll-out for free school meal checks has been implemented until 31st March 2022 for the change-over to universal credit.

If you are eligible as of 31st March 2018 or become eligible **at any time** between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2022 your child will be protected, regardless of your change in financial circumstances, until the end of the phase of education they are in as of 31st March 2022 (the table on the next page provides further information).

Please note eligibility does **not** cover every child and siblings will need to be checked separately.

For universal credit there is a threshold:

If your take home pay for the most recent month is more than £616.67 then you are not eligible

If your **combined** take home pay for the most recent two months is more than £1,233.34 then you are not eligible

If your **combined** taken home pay for the most recent three months is at least £1,850 then you are not eligible.

Further information on eligibility criteria can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

Requests

A request for free school meals must be made in order for a child to become eligible. The cost of school meals cannot be claimed for any period prior to a claim for free school meals being made.

Your entitlement commences on the date when an application is made to the school. Claims to be reimbursed for any school meals previously paid for during your period of benefit entitlement will not normally be met.

Children in early years or reception classes who are below compulsory school age must be attending both before and after the lunch period, in order to be eligible to receive free school meals.

Free school meal eligibility will be checked when a child enters reception as EYPP will stop.

Children in the care of the Local Authority, e.g. foster children, or of a voluntary organisation, cannot be considered for free school meals.

How to make a claim:

Please complete an application form (making sure the NI number is clear and readable) and give it to your school office and they will send the request to the council.

Eligibility and transitional protection

The following table shows at the end of which phase of education your child's protection will end if you become entitled between now and 31st March 2022.

		If you become entitled during the academic year beginning									
		Sep-18	Sep-19	Sep-20	Sep-21	Sep-22	Sep-23	Sep-24	Sep-25	Sep-26	Sep-27
End of primary school	Rec		Rec	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6		
	Yr 1	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6				
	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6						
	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6							
End of secondary school	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11			
	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11				
	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11					
	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11						
No recheck required	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11							
	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14					
	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14						
	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14							
	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14								
	Yr 13	Yr 14									
	Yr 14										

If you are ineligible

Please do **not** contact the council if you have a query. Please ask the school to contact them on your behalf. If you do contact the council the customer service team will ask you to contact the school. **There are no exceptions.**

The check may return an ineligible result in which case please contact HMRC and DWP to confirm your current financial circumstances and check whether you meet the eligibility criteria.

The check may alternatively return “no trace – check data” which may either mean (a) the school has provided the wrong details and will ask to you re-confirm or (b) if you have recently applied for benefits your details may not yet be on the system as it takes three weeks.

Data protection

Information contained on the application form is personal data and will be held in a computer securely. The information held is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR.