



Free school meals for families with 'no recourse to public funds' during the Covid-19 crisis

On 6th April 2020 eligibility for free school meals support was extended to some families with 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) for a temporary period as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. The Government has said the extension will end when schools have reopened to all children.

Who is eligible?

Children will now be able to access free school meals support during the Covid-19 crisis if they fall into one of the following groups **and** their families earn £16,190 or less per year.¹ In practice, the income threshold of £16,190 a year will only affect your family if you and/or your partner are working.

- Children whose parents/carers are 'Zambrano' carers (non-EEA nationals who are the primary carer of a British citizen child). This includes people who do not have any documentation from the Home Office to prove that they are a Zambrano carer.
- Children from families who have been granted leave to remain with NRPF on the basis of family or private life grounds.
- Children whose families have NRPF and receive support from a local authority under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (for example, from social services or the NRPF team).

In addition, free school meals will also be temporarily extended to children of refused asylum seekers who receive support from the Home Office under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. This group will automatically qualify and will not need to have their income assessed.

¹ Please note the initial maximum income threshold of £7,400 was increased to £16,190 on 28th May 2020 following legal action.

How do you apply for free school meals if you are now eligible?

If your child falls into one of the above groups, you should contact your child's school or local authority to apply. As schools are currently closed, support may be provided in the form of a food package or similar, or a weekly £15 supermarket voucher.

You will need to provide evidence to prove that you are eligible and you may be asked to sign a form to confirm your circumstances. We have suggested below what evidence you may need to provide. If for any reason it will be difficult for you to provide evidence of your situation, explain this to your child's school. They should be flexible about what evidence you can provide during this time.

What evidence should I provide?

a) Zambrano carers

If you are a Zambrano carer and you have a derivative residence card from the Home Office, you can show the school/local authority your card. If you do not have a derivative residence card, you will need to be able to confirm:

- that you are not a British citizen (e.g. your passport; a letter or document from the Home Office that states your nationality)
- that you have a child who is a British citizen (e.g. your child's British passport; your child's UK birth certificate and evidence that either parent was either a British citizen or settled in the UK at the time of your child's birth)
- that you are the direct relative of or legal guardian of the child (e.g. your child's birth certificate)
- that you are the primary carer for the child
- that there are no other family members who could care for the child (this does not include where the child is being cared for by two joint primary carers)

The child who you are applying on behalf of does not have to be British in order to access free school meals support.

You will also need to confirm that your family does not earn more than £16,190 per year after tax.

To show this, you could provide a:

- payslip
- P60

- bank statement
- letter from your bank
- letter from your employer

b) Parents/carers with leave to remain with NRPF on the basis of family or private life grounds

You can show the school/local authority the letter from the Home Office granting you leave to remain in the UK and/or your biometric residence card.

You will also need to confirm that your family does not earn more than £16,190 per year after tax.

To show this, you could provide a:

- payslip
- P60
- bank statement
- letter from your bank
- letter from your employer

c) Families receiving support from a local authority under section 17 of the Children Act 1989

You can show the school/local authority that you are receiving support under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 by providing a document from the local authority confirming this. This could either be a copy of the assessment that the local authority has carried out or a letter from the local authority that confirms you are receiving support.

If you do not have any documentation to prove you are receiving support, ask your social worker/caseworker to give you something to show the school.

If you do not have the right to work and you receive section 17 support, you should qualify. You can show the school a letter from the Home Office or local authority confirming this.

If you do have the right to work, you will also need to confirm that your family does not earn more than £16,190 per year after tax.

To show this, you could provide a:

- payslip
- P60
- bank statement
- letter from your bank
- letter from your employer

d) Refused asylum seekers who receive support from the Home Office under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

If you receive Section 4 support, you can show a letter from the Home Office or local authority confirming that you are receiving Section 4 support and/or an ASPEN card.

Your family will automatically qualify so you do not need to have your income assessed.

Where can I direct schools for more information?

The government's guidance on the temporary extension of free school meals can be accessed [here](#).