

HEALTHY START

The Issue

Take up of Healthy Start vouchers has declined during the pandemic, and in some areas only half of families entitled to this help are claiming it.

Every young child should have access to healthy food, but not every family is aware, and you can only apply by post.

Healthy Start Vouchers are provided if you are pregnant or have a child under 4, to help you buy basic foods like milk or fruit if you are on certain benefits in England and Wales. They are provided automatically to under 18s regardless of income. Applicants can only apply by post.

Find out more about the scheme here:
<https://www.gov.uk/healthy-start>

1. Find out about the take-up in your area.

Use our tool at foodjusticefinder.com/healthystart to find out how many families in your area are missing out, by not claiming healthy start vouchers.

2. Write to your council to ask them to promote the Healthy Start scheme using the tool

Councils are already working with some of the families that maybe eligible for these vouchers. They also have access to local communications too.

3. Raise Awareness

Using the figures from the tool, tweet and Facebook about this issue and encourage people to take up the vouchers. Other ideas including writing a letter to the paper, and speak to primary schools and nurseries to encourage them to promote the scheme.

FIVE STEPS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY START

A GUIDE FOR CANDIDATES AND COUNCILLORS

Model newspaper letter

Dear Editor,

Healthy Start Vouchers ensures that those that are pregnant or have children under the age of 4, are getting access to fresh milk, fruit and vegetables. But despite the value of the voucher being boosted as part of Marcus Rashford's #ENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY campaign, the take-up of the vouchers by those eligible is plummeting across the country. There is at least £1,095,059.25 in unclaimed vouchers every week, and in [place], take up is just x%, with £x of food doesn't reach those who need it.

As part of the Co-operative Party's campaign, I've called on our local council to take action to make families aware. We also need action from government too, by making it easier for families to apply online.

Yours,
X

Candidate for X

HEALTHY START

4. Pass a motion at the council

If you are already a Councillor or are elected in May then you can make the council take action through a motion.

Model council motion

This Council notes:

- ▶ Healthy Start vouchers, which can be used to buy fruit, vegetables, pulses and milk, provide crucial access to healthy food for those who need it most: qualifying pregnant women, babies and toddlers.
- ▶ Following a recommendation from the National Food Strategy and campaigning by Marcus Rashford, the Government has committed to increasing their value from April 2021.
- ▶ Many supermarkets including the Co-operative have committed to topping up the value of Healthy Start Vouchers, a very welcome initiative.
- ▶ Take up of Healthy Start Vouchers fell dramatically across England last year due to the pandemic as Covid-19 restrictions limited the opportunities and contact points eligible pregnant women and those with young children to access information about them. There is at least £1,095,059.25 in unclaimed

vouchers every week, and in [place], take up is just x%, with £x of food doesn't reach those who need it.

This Council believes:

- ▶ Good nutrition is incredibly important for all, but particularly for younger children and pregnant women.
- ▶ The Co-operative Party is right to campaign for food justice for all, including ensuring that there is access to healthy food for children and families.

This Council resolves:

- ▶ To run an active online promotional campaign for Healthy Start Vouchers, ideally in conjunction with relevant health and care providers to encourage the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers to ensure that our young people get the best possible start in life.

5. Talk to your local foodbanks and encourage them to stock copies of the form. People can only apply by post and not everyone has access to a printer.

The forms can be downloaded [here](#) and at the moment Part B does not have to be filled in, so families can send them straight off to **Freepost RRTR-SYAE-JKCR, Healthy Start Issuing Unit, PO Box 1067, Warrington, WA55 1EG**

The Co-op and Healthy Start

Co-operative Stores have been topping up the value of the government's Healthy Start vouchers since last year, in support of Marcus Rashford MBE's Child Food Poverty Task Force. Funding the top-up themselves ahead of the rise that is due on 1st April 2021, in moves to encourage more people to use the scheme.