

Date: 2nd October 2026
Your Ref:



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Dear Parent/Carer

Important Update on School Holiday Food Vouchers

Now the summer holidays have ended I am writing to let you know, as early as possible that the Free School Meal (FSM) holiday food vouchers have come to an end. FSM's during term time remain available for eligible children.

This change follows the UK Government's decision to end the Household Support Fund (HSF), which has funded school holiday food vouchers for eligible families over recent years. The new Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF), which has replaced the HSF, has different funding criteria and does not permit funding to be used for universal FSM holiday food voucher schemes. As a result, local authorities are unable to continue providing this support after the summer holidays.

I understand that this news may be concerning, particularly at a time when many families continue to face financial pressures. I want to reassure you that a range of national and local support remains available to help families access financial assistance, food support and advice when needed.

National Support

The Government has set out a longer-term Child Poverty Strategy focused on increasing incomes, reducing household costs and improving access to food:

- **Higher incomes:** From April 2026, the two-child limit in Universal Credit has been removed, supporting larger families, alongside wider work to help parents move into and progress in employment.
- **Lower household costs:** The Warm Home Discount is being expanded to more households receiving benefits, providing help towards energy bills.
- **Food support:** From September 2026, FSM's will be extended to all children in households receiving Universal Credit, and free breakfast provision will be available in primary schools.
- **Help for families:** The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will continue until 2029, alongside expanded childcare support for parents receiving Universal Credit.



Local Support in Greater Manchester

A range of support is available locally for anyone who may need additional help:

- Free welfare benefits, financial and debt advice to help maximise income and reduce household costs.
- Support is available through trusted community organisations, including help to access benefits and other forms of financial assistance. Support will soon be available through GM Live Well Centres as well.
- An out-of-hours Citizens Advice helpline, providing access to advice at times that are convenient for families. Call or SMS to 0161 850 5053
- Continued investment in holiday activities and support through the HAF programme, including opportunities for some families who are not eligible for FSM's. For more information about HAF visit www.bolton.gov.uk/HAF.
- A local welfare assistance scheme, offering emergency support with food, energy costs and other essential items through a simple application process.

I appreciate that this change may be disappointing and understand the impact it may have on some families. While the decision to end the HSF has been made nationally, we remain committed to working with partners across Greater Manchester to ensure families can access the assistance they need and to help prevent financial hardship wherever possible.

If you require this letter in a different language, please visit www.bolton.gov.uk/freeschoolmealvouchers and use the accessibility link located at the top right hand side of the page.

Support is available, and I would encourage anyone who may be struggling to seek advice as early as possible. Further information, including useful contact details, can be found in the enclosed leaflet or by visiting www.bolton.gov.uk/freeschoolmealvouchers.

Yours sincerely,



Phil Rimmer
Assistant Director
Revenues Benefits and Customer Services

