

Subject: Holiday Free School Meals Vouchers. Transition from Household Support Fund to Crisis & Resilience Fund – Information for Schools

Dear Headteacher,

I am writing to update you on upcoming national changes to the funding that supports families during school holidays.

The Department for Work and Pensions' Household Support Fund (HSF) has supported the provision of holiday time food vouchers to all Lancashire households with benefits eligible school-aged children (Reception to Year 11) and, where applicable, benefits eligible sixth form students.

We know that these have been an important source of assistance to many families, and we are grateful for the support that schools have provided in helping to deliver it.

We know that these changes could cause concerns for some families, so we're just keeping you updated at this time.

What is changing?

Central Government has confirmed that the Household Support Fund will end on **31 March** and will be replaced by the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) from **1 April**.

This is a national change affecting all local authorities.

Under the new CRF rules, holiday food vouchers can no longer be funded in the same way. The Government has instead directed councils to adopt a 'cash first' crisis support model, supported by longer-term investment in building household and community resilience.

What support will be available to families?

From 1 April, families needing help during school holidays will be able to apply for crisis support payments via their district council. These payments will:

- Provide direct financial support to households facing immediate hardship.
- Offer flexibility based on personal circumstances.
- Connect families with wider support including income maximisation, affordable warmth, digital access, community coordination, and employment pathways.

These crisis support payments are not a direct replacement for meal vouchers, they are for families who can demonstrate an immediate need.

For your local district council's contact details, please see the list below. These details are for your use at this time but CRF specific contact details for the public will be made available at the beginning of April.

| District | Contact |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Burnley Borough Council | CRF@burnleytogether.org.uk |
| Chorley Borough Council | hsf@chorley.gov.uk |
| Fylde Borough Council | CRF@fylde.gov.uk |
| Hyndburn Borough Council | enquiries@hyndburnbc.gov.uk |
| Lancaster City Council | crf@lancaster.gov.uk |
| Pendle Borough Council | CRF@pendle.gov.uk |
| Preston City Council | household@preston.gov.uk |

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|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ribble Valley Borough Council | benefits@ribblevalley.gov.uk |
| Rossendale Borough Council | crisisandresilience@rossendalebc.gov.uk |
| South Ribble Borough Council | CRF@southribble.gov.uk |
| West Lancashire Borough Council | householdsupportfund@westlancs.gov.uk |
| Wyre Borough Council | crf@wyre.gov.uk |

In addition to crisis payments, families will also be able to access a developing network of Resilience Hubs, which will provide year-round community-based support. These hubs offer practical help with essentials, budgeting, debt, employment, digital skills, and wider wellbeing support, acting as universal access points under a “no wrong door’ model.

Families can also continue to use local food support organisations, including food banks, community food pantries, and voluntary sector partners offering low-cost or emergency food provision. These organisations remain an important source of help alongside the new CRF support arrangements.

A list of local resilience hubs will be made available shortly.

Why is this change being made?

The Department for Work and Pensions has introduced CRF to:

- Provide a robust, cash-first safety net for households facing sudden financial shocks.
- Reduce repeat crises by strengthening prevention and long-term resilience.
- Ensure support is aligned with clear measures of local need, such as deprivation, population, and household characteristics.
- Provide a support structure for families experiencing sudden unexpected financial shocks.

The end of holiday-time voucher provision may cause concern, but families will continue to receive support if they need it, delivered through crisis payments and improved local assistance, as required by Government.

What should schools tell families?

We know that these changes could cause concerns for some families.

At this stage, schools do not need to take any new action. Clear information for families will be provided by district councils during April, as these arrangements start.

We’re just contacting you at this time to keep you updated.

Details on how to access support will be published on the county council and district council’s websites. We will also provide communication materials for schools to share with parents, when appropriate.

At this time, we advise you to inform recipients of meal vouchers that the Easter vouchers will be their final ones, due to the national government changes, and that the new payments will be available to those who need it for future holidays and all year round.

If you are contacted by concerned parents, please advise them that details of future support will be made available ahead of the May half term.

Our commitment

We understand how important school holiday support can be for families. Throughout this transition, our priorities are to:

- Ensure families continue to receive timely and accessible support.
- Keep processes clear and straightforward.
- Provide schools with consistent updates and guidance to support your communities.

Thank you, as always, for your continued partnership in supporting children and young people across Lancashire.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Morotn

Consultant in Public Health

Lancashire County Council