

## **Briefing – Healthy Start Scheme and COVID-19**

Many families you are supporting may now be able to claim vouchers for the Healthy Start Scheme due to changes in their income as a result of COVID-19. They might not be aware that they can now claim, so as an organisation it would be helpful if you and your team/volunteers could signpost families to the scheme during this difficult time.

It is also important to let families know that during the COVID-19 outbreak their application does NOT need to be signed by a health professional making the application process much easier for those in need.

### **What?**

The [Healthy Start](#) scheme is run by NHS England. It provides vouchers for pregnant women and families with a child under four years old on a low income to buy basic food items.

It offers:

- pregnant women and children over one and under four years old a £3.10 voucher per week
- children under one year old can get two £3.10 vouchers (£6.20) per week.

The vouchers can be spent with local retailers (search on website<sup>1</sup>):

- plain cow's milk – whole, semi-skimmed or skimmed. It can be pasteurised, sterilised, long life or UHT
- plain fresh or frozen fruit and veg (fruit and vegetables with no added ingredients), whole or chopped, packaged or loose
- cow's milk-based infant formula milk\* (stage one) that says it can be used from birth.

Women and children receiving the vouchers can also get vitamin coupons to swap for free Healthy Start vitamins. Speak to your midwife or health visitor to find out more.

### **Who?**

You can claim Healthy Start vouchers if

- if you're at least 10 weeks pregnant or
- have a child under four years old
- **and** you or your family get:
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk>

- Child Tax Credit with a family income of £16,190<sup>2</sup> or less per year
  - Pension Credit; or
  - Universal Credit with no earned income or total earned income of £408<sup>2</sup> or less per month for the family.
- You can also claim if you are under 18 and pregnant, even if you don't get any of the above benefits.

## How?

Complete the application leaflet, if you have one. If not, download the form from the [Healthy Start website](#), contact the helpline 0345 607 6823, the order line 0300 123 1002 or ask your midwife or health visitor for one. Due to COVID-19 the health visitor/midwife no longer has to sign the form. Make sure you sign it and send by freepost to Healthy Start.

Vouchers will be posted to you within 4 weeks and 4 weeks thereafter. Vitamin vouchers will be sent every 8 weeks.

## Resources

Leaflets can be downloaded from

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/for-health-professionals/healthy-start-resources/>

Or ordered by telephone **0300 123 1002**, quoting the title and reference number:

Healthy Start application leaflet (free milk, fruit, veg and vitamins) (HS01a)

## For further information:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>

Healthy Start helpline: **0345 607 6823**

## \*Additional information on the availability of infant formula milk during COVID-19:

Where you are finding it difficult to buy infant formula milk, the stage 1 / first infant formula should be used for infants in their first year of life. If you are unable to get your usual brand of first infant formula, you can use any first infant formula. Retailers are now limiting purchases of infant formula to help with supply. You may find that local stores, pharmacies and corner shops will have more stock available.

([www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly](http://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly) see Infant Feeding - COVID-19 with other helpful information on infant feeding and updated often).

<sup>2</sup>These amounts might vary due to the Government's Budget/ yearly changes. Check the website for the latest information.