

School Wellbeing



## Covid 19: Information for schools on Free School Meals, access to food and supporting families in food poverty

Food and access to nutrition is of course a concern for schools and families during the coming months. This guidance aims to provide national and local information, advice and guidance for how to support your pupils and families to access meals and maintain a balanced diet. It will be important to support those who may be at risk of food poverty or who are entitled to Free School Meals (FSM).

### 1.0 Free School Meals

The Government has produced advice for schools on FSM which can be read in full at the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance/covid-19-free-school-meals-guidance-for-schools>

The advice for schools is:

#### Contact your catering team.

- Schools should speak to their school catering team (in house), or school catering provider to see if they can prepare meals or food parcels that could be delivered to, or collected by families.
- If schools use a private catering provider, contact them to see what alternative arrangements are available.

#### Catering Leeds schools

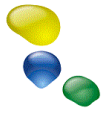
- If your school meals are provided by Catering Leeds (CL) then there is a plan in place to deliver meals or food hampers for means tested free school meal children (and families who are highlighted as vulnerable by Headteachers) every school day (Monday to Friday).
- Utilising hubs across the city CL have established distribution points for each school to have their allocation collected from these sites or delivered directly where this is proving hard to arrange.
- The provision includes catering for all children who may have a special dietary requirement.

#### The DfE National Voucher Scheme (Eden Red)

If your school catering service cannot provide meals or food parcels, you should offer families an alternative. The DfE have developed a national scheme to provide supermarket vouchers via the Edenred online portal. Schools will not have to pay for these vouchers as the costs for this scheme will be picked up centrally by DfE.

Before ordering vouchers, you should check which pupils are eligible and currently in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. Vouchers should be made available to the adult with caring responsibility for that child.

**The DfE guidance has now been updated to confirm that you can continue to offer meals, vouchers or use the national voucher scheme for free school meals eligible pupils over Easter.**



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[FAQs for parents and carers is available to download here](https://www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk/resources/644) or please visit <https://www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk/resources/644>

### How to order Eden Red vouchers

- Schools will be able to access the voucher scheme using the Edenred portal. Edenred have now sent schools an activation email, explaining how to access the portal and order vouchers.
- If you have not received your activation email or are having any issues registering, please email [freeschoolmeals@edenred.com](mailto:freeschoolmeals@edenred.com)
- Once you have activated your account on the Edenred portal, you can begin to create vouchers. Edenred will provide schools with a step-by-step guide to ordering vouchers through their online portal.

### Supermarket vouchers

- Schools can also order supermarket and shop vouchers directly from a number of retailers – usually through your corporate division. They recommend sourcing vouchers for supermarkets or shops in the local area. **Where possible they should be restricted for use against age-related products.**
- [Guidance](#) is available setting out how the DfE will compensate schools who additional costs in providing free school meals or vouchers to pupils affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

We recommend that vouchers are sent to schools with advice for parents and pupils to use them for a balanced meal each day, where possible, in line with the [Eatwell Guide](#).

This is to help pupils maintain their health and good nutritional status.

You could also send home copies of your current school lunch menu and recipes to help give parents and pupils ideas for meals.

## 2.0 NEW Free School Meals Claims

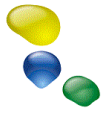
In these challenging times, it is important to acknowledge many parents and carers may now be eligible for FSM if their circumstances have changed as a result of work or income being affected. You may want to support parents and carers to **check if they now meet the eligibility criteria** and submit a FSM application.

You can find full details of the FSM eligibility criteria and the link for how to claim at the website below.

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/residents/council-tax-and-benefits/free-school-meals>

If parents/carers are waiting for a decision of Universal Credit (UC), they can still submit an application but a decision won't be reached until their UC is confirmed. If they are successfully awarded a FSM, then their child/children will keep their entitlement until the end of UC roll out (which is currently set for 2023) and then until the end of either their primary or secondary phase.

Parents and carers can also contact Leeds Welfare and Benefits Service on 0113 222 4404.



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### 3.0 Emergency Food Provision

If you have for families who are finding it difficult to access food due to financial constraints, self-isolation or accessibility of food provision, you are able to make a referral on their behalf.

Please visit <https://www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk/resources/642> to download the following resources for emergency food provision in in the city.

- A poster for organisations (this could be displayed in your school staff room) detailing how to make a referral.
- A poster for public use (this can be displayed in your school reception, classroom windows and/or your school website).
- A referral form for families. You need to complete this on behalf of a family/individual and send to [lwss@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:lwss@leeds.gov.uk).

### 4.0 Food banks and similar services

Due to the rapidly evolving situation, for up to date information on where help and food provisions can be accessed in the city, including food banks and similar services, please visit; <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/leedsmic> or <https://leedsfoodaidnetwork.co.uk/category/news/>.

The Welfare Support Scheme can make deliveries and arrange local places for food parcels to be collected. They have relaxed their usual eligibility criteria, including extending the service to people with no recourse to public funds. Their number is 0113 376 0330.

Leeds City Council have set up a phone line which can be used to direct people to the correct area of assistance needed. This number is: 0113 3781877 or through the website <https://news.leeds.gov.uk/city-unites-to-help-those-in-need/>

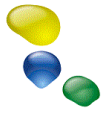
Council Hubs / One Stop Centres that have re-opened and can make referrals, issue vouchers and food parcels are as follows:

Armley  
Dewsbury Road  
Compton Centre  
Merrion Centre

### 5.0 Cooking at home and providing meals

With many children spending additional time at home, they will be consuming more food and meals than usual. Families may want some advice on menu planning and cooking low-cost, simple meals that are healthy and nutritious for the whole family.

**Below are some useful tips and advice you may find helpful for your families and pupils.**



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- You could send home copies of your school lunch menu to provide ideas for balanced weekly menus
- Encourage parents to batch cook dinners and freeze for quick meals during the week (as many parents may be working while caring for children).
- Involve children with meals times. Depending on their age and ability, children can help out with tasks such as washing vegetables, setting the table, peeling, mashing, chopping or mixing. Older pupils may even be able to plan and prepare full meals for the family.
- Go for at least one plant-based day a week, this can help to keep costs down and also to support a reduction in climate change and ease demand for meat and fish.
- Sticking to a routine of 3 meals plus 2 healthy snacks can provide helpful structure for children and also help them to maintain their energy throughout the day.
- Try to use non-food items for rewards such as praise, play time, stickers, family rewards, collective rewards (such as putting a piece of pasta in jar) or 1 to 1 time with a grown up.

**Below are some useful websites that may help with general advice for eating well and recipes for child-friendly and family meals.**

#### [Change4life](#)

Fun and family friendly information for eating well and keeping active. Tips, ideas, recipes and games to help keep kids and adults happy and healthy. You can also encourage parents and pupils to download the free app and food scanner.

#### [Food a Fact of Life](#)

Age-appropriate recipes for children, lessons and curriculum resources that parents can use at home to help educate their children about healthy eating, cooking and where food comes from.

#### [NHS Choices Eatwell](#)

Information and advice on food, nutrition and the Eatwell Guide. This website also provides advice on digestive health, recipes ideas and guidance for teenagers.

#### [British Heart Foundation](#)

Recipes and advice on keeping healthy and eating a balanced diet for heart health.

#### [Food Wise Leeds](#)

A city-wide campaign to unify, promote and celebrate those delivering good food work across Leeds. Information on local food projects and initiatives. The FoodWise website has a recipe page with simple budget recipes from the **Cooking on a Shoestring** cookbook produced by Zest Leeds. All the recipes make easy delicious meals using basic fresh and store cupboard ingredients.

## **6.0 Growing food at home**

With spring approaching, spending time outside as a family learning how to grow food, could be helpful for some families. Plants and vegetables can be grown in small or large spaces including windowsills, buckets, gardens, raised beds, containers and even old wellies. You could provide pupils with packs of seeds and plan home learning and projects around growing activities.



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Schools could also contact local garden centres, community allotments and supermarkets to see if any support or resources are available.

#### LESSN

Leeds Edible Schools Sustainability Network (LESSN) provides links to wide range of resources suitable for schools and children, as well as videos for how to grow different types of vegetables.

### **7.0 General advice and guidance for food and healthy eating in school or for families**

The Health and Wellbeing Service are still here to provide support for schools around nutrition, health eating, cooking and general advice on food. Please email [schoolwellbeing@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:schoolwellbeing@leeds.gov.uk) or call 0113 3785254 and ask to speak with the Healthy Eating Adviser.

You can also visit [www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk](http://www.schoolwellbeing.co.uk) or follow us on twitter at @schoolwellbeing and @healthyschools\_ for the latest advice and updates.