

## 'Healthy Start' Information for Advisers

As a Citizens Advice Adviser, you are in a good position to raise awareness of the Healthy Start Scheme with local families; explore if a family is eligible and, if so, support them to apply. The Healthy Start Scheme is another way to support families and ensure they are accessing the financial support to buy healthy food, eat nutritious food/meals and help give their children the best start in life.

Some families may not know about the Healthy Start Scheme, whether they are eligible or may not be confident in completing the application form. Currently, around a third of families in the North East who are eligible for Healthy Start are not yet accessing the scheme. If you are in a position where you can let families know about the Healthy Start Scheme and support them with completing the application form, then please do.

---

### The Healthy Start Scheme

---

The Healthy Start Scheme is a government initiative that provides those on low incomes who are pregnant or have young children with a prepaid MasterCard to spend on certain types of **milk, infant formula, fruit** and **vegetables**. They also provide **free vitamins**. The scheme is aimed towards pregnant people or families with young children on low incomes (up to their fourth birthday) receiving certain benefits and can be an excellent way to top up and maximise some of your client's income.



Click the link:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/what-you-should-buy/>

for the current list of items accepted with the Healthy

---

## Entitlement

---

- Pregnant people will receive **£4.25** from the tenth week of pregnancy.
- Babies from birth up to their first birthday will receive **£8.50** per week and;
- Children from one year old up to their fourth birthday will receive **£4.25** per week – if they meet the eligibility criteria. The entitlement is per child.

### Types of shops that are likely to accept the Healthy Start digital payment card are:

- Corner Shops
- Food Co-ops
- Greengrocers
- Market Stalls
- Milk Floats or Vans
- Pharmacies
- Supermarkets

If a person is unsure whether a shop accepts Healthy Start card payments, they should ask a staff member in the shop.

Those who qualify for Healthy Start also have access to free vitamins. The person with the Healthy Start Digital Payment Card must show the card at a Healthy Start vitamins distribution point to be given the vitamins.

For information on Healthy Start Vitamins, please follow the link below:

[https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/getting-vitamins.](https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/getting-vitamins)

---

## Applying for Healthy Start

---

Depending on eligibility and benefit entitlement, there are different ways to apply for Healthy Start, specifically: **online**, by **phone** or **email**.



for

### Applying Online:

#### Families who get Universal Credit can apply online if:

- They're at least ten weeks pregnant or have at least one child under four years old.
- Their family's monthly 'take-home pay for this period' is £409 or less from employment.

### **If people receive Child Tax Credit, they can apply online if:**

- They have at least one child under four years old.
- Their family's annual income is £16,190 or less.

Please check the NHS website on how to apply here:

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/how-to-apply/>

---

### **Applying by Email or Phone:**

**Families can apply by email or phone if the person is at least ten weeks pregnant or has at least one child under four years old and get either:**

- Income Support.
- Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Working Tax Credit Run-On (paid for four weeks if their working hours, or their partner or carer's, are less than 16 hours per week).

**Clients can also apply by email or phone if they're at least ten weeks pregnant and are either:**

- Under 18 years old and not receiving any benefits.
- Receiving Child Tax Credits and the family's annual income is £16,190 or less.
- Receiving income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

They can apply by either: emailing [healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk) or calling **0300 330 7010**.  
Phone lines are open 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday (except public holidays).

---

### **Pregnant Under 18's:**

Pregnant under 18's are entitled to Healthy Start regardless of household benefit entitlements and financial income.

Once the baby has been born, even if the person is still under 18, they must meet the financial eligibility criteria to access the Healthy Start Scheme — for example, Child Tax Credit.

They can apply via email at [healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk) or by phone at **0300 330 7010** and will need the following information:

- Name
- Date of birth

- NHS number
- National Insurance number

Under 18's will receive a paper application by post and will be asked to send a photocopy of a form of ID such as a birth certificate. The paper application must be posted back to Healthy Start (Healthy Start will provide the return address).

---

### **If the person is not a British Citizen, but their child is:**

Families might be eligible for Healthy Start, depending on their immigration status. They can access the Healthy Start Scheme if all of the following are true:

- They have at least one British child under four years old — they can check if their child is automatically a British citizen through this link if they're not sure:  
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/getting-british-citizenship-for-children/>
- Their family earns £408 or less per month after tax.
- They cannot claim 'Public Funds' (for example, benefits) either because of their immigration status or because they do not have immigration status.

Biometric residence permit (BRP) or online immigration status will state if they cannot claim public funds. They might also have a letter from the Home Office about this.

To apply for Healthy Start, they should ask for an application form via email:  
[healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk)

**Applicants should only use this email address if you think they cannot claim public funds because of their immigration status.**

---

### **If families have previously received Healthy Start Paper Vouchers:**

Paper vouchers were part of the old Healthy Start Scheme with pastel branding and stick figures. The Healthy Start Scheme is no longer sending paper vouchers.

To get help buying food and milk, families must apply for a Healthy Start pre-paid payment card.

The last paper vouchers that were issued will have expired on the **24<sup>th</sup> of April 2022**, and therefore, any paper vouchers a beneficiary may have will no longer be in date to use.



---

## Lost, stolen or damaged 'Healthy Start' payment card

---

- To report a lost, stolen or damaged card, the beneficiary must call **0330 330 3090** with their date of birth and client ID (client ID can be found at the top of the letter, which came with the pre-payment card).
- Calls are charged at a local rate.
- They do not need to re-apply to the scheme.
- Once reported, a replacement card will be issued within ten working days.
- Any transactions made before the beneficiary reports the card will get charged to their account.

---

## Contacting Healthy Start

---

- Email: [healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)
- Phone number: **0300 330 7010** – stay on the line to speak to a staff member.



## Change of Circumstances

The beneficiary is responsible for notifying Healthy Start of any changes in their circumstances, including the birth of a child, a pregnancy or losing parental responsibility. The beneficiary does not need to re-apply; they just need to notify Healthy Start by calling **0300 330 7010** or emailing [healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)