



# Office for Health Improvement & Disparities

## Update on Healthy Start prepared by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, South East

### NHS Healthy Start

The NHS Healthy Start Scheme helps those who are pregnant or have responsibility for at least one child under four years of age who are on a low income. Families can get help to buy plain, fresh, frozen, or tinned fruit and vegetables, plain cow's milk, infant formula and fresh or tinned pulses. Beneficiaries of the scheme can also get free Healthy Start vitamins for women and children.

[The Healthy Start scheme is now in final stages of becoming a digital service](#), offering an online application process, and introducing a prepaid card to be used for purchasing healthy food and milk. This digital service replaces the paper application forms and paper vouchers. Beneficiaries of the scheme will also be able to also use their prepaid card to collect free Healthy Start vitamins.

The project is now in a transition phase. Since 31<sup>st</sup> January paper application have no longer been accepted. From March 2022 no new paper vouchers will be issued. The priority of the digitisation project has been to invite all current paper voucher beneficiaries to apply online, to continue to receive their Healthy Start benefit. The NHS has sent out direct invitation letters or emails to those in receipt of paper vouchers. All current paper voucher beneficiaries will need to apply online **before the end of March 2022**, to continue to get their benefit.

New communications materials aimed at existing beneficiaries are [now available](#). These include modified resources that allow areas to add local information/logos. Materials targeting new Healthy Start recipients will be released in 2022, including translated materials.

- Those struggling to apply for the scheme [online](#) can call 0300 330 7010 for assistance
- Retailers do not need to reapply to be part of the card-based scheme, they just need to accept Mastercard as a payment method
- British children with no recourse to public funds may be eligible to apply for Scotland's Best Start scheme: [Best Start Foods if you have no access to public funds](#)

To stay up to date with the transition to the Healthy Start payment card, sign up to join the Digital Showcase sessions by emailing: [nhsbsa.healthystart@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.healthystart@nhs.net) Alternatively the showcase is recorded and can be viewed here: [Apply for Healthy Start Digital Showcase December 2021 - YouTube](#). You can find Healthy Start uptake figures at [Healthcare professionals – Get help to buy food and milk \(Healthy Start\)](#). The most recent take-up figure



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(Dec 21) for the South East is 45.8% compared to 49% nationally. However, at present this does not include those in receipt of the card.