

## Statutory changes to income assessed free school meals from 1 April 2018

The entitlement criteria for income assessed free school meals are laid down by central government. As a result of the ongoing roll out of Universal Credit, the criteria and process will change from 1 April 2018. We are still awaiting final guidance from the DfE but this outlines the position as we understand it at the moment. **Please note these changes to not affect universal infant free school meals.**

At the moment SCC FSM consider the entitlement to free school meals for a family – if the parent/carer meets the criteria then all the children are entitled. In the future they will consider entitlement on an *individual child basis*. This is because the criteria are changing and as a result some protection is being offered to those who are already receiving free school meals under the 'old' criteria.

The 'old' criteria – still valid for any new claims made before 1 April 2018 is receipt of one or more of the following –

- Income Support
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Income based employment and support allowance
- Child tax credit with no working tax credit and a household gross income of less than £16,190 a year
- Guaranteed pension credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1991
- Universal Credit, regardless of the level of household income

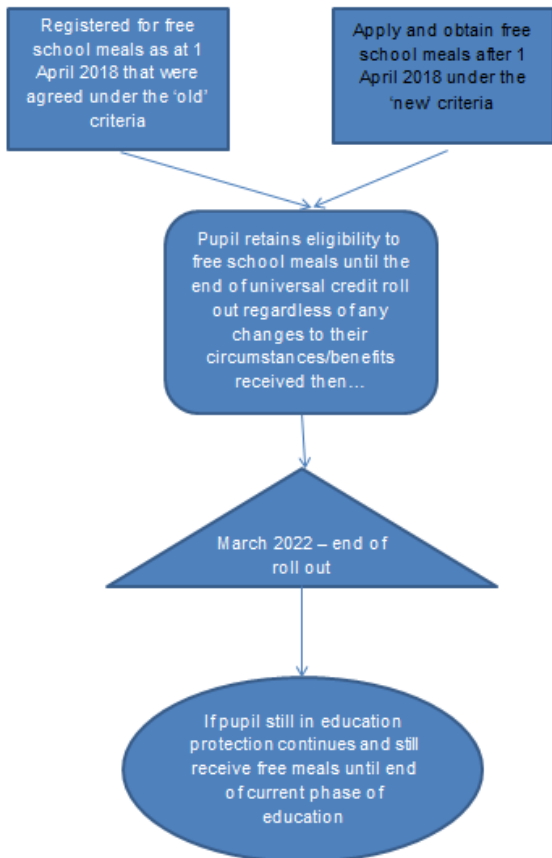
For any new claims made from 1 April 2018 the criteria will be receipt of one or more of the following –

- Income support
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Income based employment and support allowance
- Child tax credit with no working tax credit and a household gross income of less than £16,190 a year
- Guaranteed pension credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- **Universal credit with a net earning threshold of £7,400**

Eventually all the benefits highlighted above in yellow will be replaced by Universal Credit – this transition period whilst benefits are converted to universal credit is known as 'roll out'. It is expected that this roll out will be completed by March 2022.

Government are introducing transitional protection (see flow chart) but as a result one pupil may be entitled (under the old criteria) but another who applies at a later date (under the new criteria) may not. This means we can no longer assume that any younger siblings starting at the school will be entitled if their older sibling is and so an application must be made and assessed for each new child.

### **Transitional arrangements for protected free school meals**



For any queries regarding individual claims please contact free school meals on 0300 111 8007 option 5 or email [freeschoolmeals@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:freeschoolmeals@staffordshire.gov.uk)

**Please note the website [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) will not be updated with the changed criteria until 1 April 2018**