

Help with food and financial concerns

Introduction

This factsheet looks at sources of support for Royal Greenwich residents who are experiencing food and/or financial concerns due to the rising cost of living. It also includes information about the [Household Support Fund](#) which has been made available to local authorities to support vulnerable residents with essential bills.

We produce a separate 'Extra help if you are experiencing hardship' factsheet focusing on more general sources of help with the cost of living – it available here:

www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits-advice

Topics covered in this factsheet include:

- [Greenwich Supports](#)
- [Free School Meals](#)
- [Free meals for children during school holidays](#)
- [Royal Greenwich's Emergency Support Scheme](#)
- [Emergency food needs](#)
- [The Household Support Fund](#)
- [Other sources of support \(such as food clubs and cookery clubs\)](#)
- [Benefits advice from the Welfare Rights Service.](#)

Extra help if you're struggling with the rising cost of living



Help is available for residents who are struggling with benefits, everyday costs, food and supporting their families via Greenwich Supports (www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/greenwich-supports). This brings together information

about sources of support for residents from the council, local charities and community groups in one place. Check out the council's Greenwich Supports webpages to find out if you could get extra help and the online directory for details of support offerings across the borough. If you are in crisis and need support, please call Live Well Greenwich on 0800 470 4831.

Free School Meals

Free school meals are available for all infants (in reception or year 1 or 2 at school) regardless of parental income and for children in year 3 and above whose parents receive any of the following:

- Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit (guarantee element);
- Universal Credit based on net annual income of £7,400 or less;
- Child Tax Credit based on gross annual income of no more than £16,190,
- Working Tax Credit (but only during the 4-week run on period after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit),
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act.

Free school meals are also being extended to all primary school children in London for one year from September 2023. Eligibility has also been permanently extended to include some children of groups who have no recourse to public funds.

If your child attends an academy school

Generally, the council cannot provide free school meals for children who attend academies in the borough. However, they are available for the following academies which have a local agreement with the council: Charlton Park, King's Oak, Leigh Academy, Woolwich Polytechnic, St Thomas More, St Paul's, Stationers' Crown Woods, Royal Greenwich Trust and Waterside Primary. You will need to apply, and Greenwich's Pupil Benefits section will assess your entitlement. Contact the school directly if your child attends an academy that's not on this list to see if your child can get free school meals from them.

You may also wish to apply to Greenwich's [Emergency Support Scheme](#) if you are struggling and your child qualifies for free school meals.

How to apply

There's no need to claim separately if you're applying for [Council Tax Support](#), your entitlement will be assessed automatically as part of the claims process. In other circumstances, you will need to complete an online registration/application form (www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/xfp/form/613). Alternatively, contact

- the school;
- the Pupil Benefits Section (call 020 8921 2570 or 020 8921 2530 or email pupil-benefits@royalgreenwich.gov.uk);
- The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, Woolwich, SE18 6HQ.

Further information is available on the [Royal Greenwich website](#).

Free meals for children during school holidays

Special measures are in place to provide targeted free school meal payments and support to eligible families during the school holidays.

Families with qualifying child/ren who received free school meals during the last school year will have received payments of £15 per child in the

May half-term and will receive £60 for the summer holidays. Payments are made automatically – there is no need to claim.

The Council's [Holiday Activities and Food Programme](#) (funded by the Department of Education) also provides free holiday club places for children aged 4 to 16 who receive or qualify for free school meals. The clubs offer a variety of free activities and access to a healthy lunch.

There is also a universal free meals programme for all children and young people in the borough during school holidays. Visit the Royal Greenwich website to find out more about the [holiday meals programme](#).

Healthy Start

Healthy Start (HS) is a government scheme that targets pregnant women and children under 4 years old in low-income households. It provides eligible families with £221-£442 a year to spend on fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables, dried or canned pulses, milk (including infant formula) and vitamins. This is an important source of help that many low-income families miss out on.

Who qualifies?

- All pregnant women aged under 18 for the whole of their pregnancy regardless of income;
- Women aged 18 or over who are at least 10 weeks pregnant and families with children aged under 4 years old receiving any of the following qualifying benefits:
 - Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - Child Tax Credit only based on gross annual household income of up to £16,190;
 - the four week Working Tax Credit 'run-on' because you're no longer treated as being in work;
 - Universal Credit based on income of £408 or less a month.

How much is Healthy Start worth?

- £4.25 a week from the 10th week of pregnancy and for children aged between 1 and 4 years old
 - £8.50 a week for children under 1.
- Pregnant and nursing women and children over six months old also receive free vitamins which can be collected from local children's centres.

How to apply

Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit claimants

Apply online via the Healthy Start website (<https://services.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/apply-for-healthy-start/>).

Other benefit claimants

Apply by calling 0300 330 7010 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm) or email healthy.start@nhsbsa.nhs.uk

If you're eligible, you will be sent a Healthy Start prepaid card that can be used anywhere that sells Healthy Start food items and accepts Mastercard®. The card will be automatically topped up with your award every four weeks.

Remember: if you're receiving Healthy Start while you're pregnant, this support will only continue once you've had your baby if you're receiving a qualifying benefit. Call the Healthy Start helpline (0300 330 7010) after the birth to find out what you need to do next to ensure that support continues. Please [get advice](#) if your claim is refused or if your payments stop.

If your child is a British citizen but you cannot claim public funds

You can also get this help if your child (aged under 4) is a British citizen but you're not and:

- you cannot claim public funds because you're subject to immigration control; and
- your family earns £408 or less a month.

Email Healthystartclaim@dhsc.gov.uk to request a form.

Royal Greenwich's Emergency Support Scheme

What is the Emergency Support Scheme?

The Emergency Support Scheme is a discretionary Greenwich Council scheme to assist residents in crisis or needing help with one-off items.

What help is available?

There are two types of support:

- [Emergency Support Payments](#) for residents whose health and safety is at risk and are without enough resources to meet essential short-term needs in an emergency or crisis. You don't have to be receiving benefits to qualify.
- [Community Support awards](#) for residents needing help with one-off items (usually household items, furniture and removals) and satisfying the qualifying benefits and savings conditions. You may qualify for an award, for example to relieve exceptional pressure on you and your family or to help you resettle in the community following a stay in a care home, hospital, or prison. Other conditions also apply.

How to apply

Apply online via the Royal Greenwich website (www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ess).

Please call 020 8921 2078 if you need help with the online form. If your emergency support payment application is successful, you will be issued with a cash payment which you can redeem at the Post Office. Successful community support awards are usually provided in the form of household items and furniture rather than cash payments.

Emergency food needs

Greenwich Community Hub

The Community Hub service and the Live Well service which have been supporting residents since the beginning of the pandemic are still available. They can support you on a range of issues, including if you have emergency food needs and cannot go out and have no other

support networks to assist you or if you have children under age 5. They will pick up any other support needs you may have and refer you to other appropriate services as needed. You can contact the Community Hub to find out more or to request support by:

- completing an online form (www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/communityhub)
- calling 0800 470 4831 (Monday to Saturday 8.30am to 6pm).

Greenwich Foodbank

Foodbanks are community organisations which support people with emergency food needs. They work with referral agencies (such as citizens advice, children's centres, social services, housing support officers, health visitors and local charities) to issue food vouchers to those in need of emergency food in times of crisis. If you can't afford food and need help, please call 0800 470 4831 to speak to Greenwich Community Hub (see above) about getting a voucher.

Greenwich Foodbank has welcome centres around the borough where food parcels (containing a minimum of three days tinned and dried food) can be collected on presentation of a food bank voucher. Foodbanks also provide support and signposting to other services. Visit the website for further information: <https://greenwich.foodbank.org.uk/get-help/>

Good Food in Greenwich

Visit the Good Food in Greenwich website for information about eating well and food-related local updates (www.goodfoodingreenwich.org).

Household Support Fund

The government has made additional funding available to local councils via the Household Support Fund (HSF) to support households most in need with essential bills (such as food, clothing, utilities, and other related wider essentials).

In Greenwich, the HSF is being used to fund many initiatives such as targeted payments to vulnerable residents including:

- care leavers
- households with nil recourse to public funds
- families with pre-school children
- families with children receiving free school meals during school holidays
- families receiving Greenwich Telecare Service.

You can access this support via any of the following routes:

- Stay Warm, Stay Safe - <https://livewellgreenwich.org.uk/winter/>
- Live Well Greenwich - <https://livewellgreenwich.org.uk/>
- Royal Greenwich's Emergency Support Scheme - www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/ess

Food Clubs

Family Action run food clubs providing members with low-cost food. There is a £1 yearly membership fee, after which you can buy a bag of food worth £10-15 for just £3.50 from food clubs across the borough. It is aimed at people living or working within 15 minutes of one of the following clubs:

- Valley Central Community Hub, SE7 8BL
- Eltham Green Community Church, SE9 6DH
- Jubilee Centre, SE28 8DU.

Email Londonfoodclubs@family-action.org.uk to find out more or to register as a member. The website also includes further information: www.family-action.org.uk

If you need benefits advice

For benefits advice and/or to check if you're missing out on any entitlements, contact:

**Welfare Rights Service
Public Advice Line
(for borough residents only)
020 8921 6375
(or textphone 18001 020 8921 6375)
Mon, Wed, Thurs: 10am -1pm**

If you need help with claims (including managing your Universal Credit claim), call the **Universal Support Team** on **020 8921 3333 (Mon to Fri, 10am-4pm)** or email universal-support@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

You can also contact both teams via the Royal Greenwich website using an [online contact form](#)

Drop-in face-to-face advice is available at locations around the borough (excluding public holidays) – find out more here: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/advicehubs
Alternatively, visit the Royal Greenwich website (www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/benefits) to view benefit pages, [download factsheets](#) or use our free [online benefit calculator](#).

This factsheet was correct in June 2023



Welfare Rights Service
Woolwich Centre
35 Wellington Street
Woolwich
London SE18 6HQ
Telephone 020 8921 3333
Textphone 18001 020 8921 6375
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk