

Dear colleagues,

Free School Meal Transitional Protection

As you are aware, from 2018 criteria used to determine eligibility for free school meals was updated to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) and phasing out of other income-based benefits. To ensure families were not disadvantaged during this rollout, protection arrangements were put in place. This was known as transitional protection.

Any child that was eligible from 31 March 2018 continued to remain eligible during this rollout period. It was expected that transitional protection would end on 31 March 2025. As local authorities have not been provided with any update regarding this end date, we are preparing for the protection to end. We are, however, seeking further advice from DfE colleagues to confirm whether a further extension is being applied, as we are aware that UC is not fully rolled out and the completion date has been extended until March 2026.

Please be aware, therefore, that any child currently eligible for free school meals, or who is assessed as no longer eligible with a start date on your SAM Report of on or after 01.04.18, will continue under the transitional protection arrangements until the end of their current phase of education. So, this will not affect students currently eligible or protected until at least September 2025, when the current Year 6 students will start their secondary education.

If we do receive further information about the end date of transitional protection, we will communicate this to you. In the meantime, further information on FSM and the online application form can be found by visiting [Free school meals and Pupil Premium funding - Derbyshire County Council](#).

Please can we also advise all settings to encourage the parents of any pupils appearing on your SAM report as 'no FSM application made' to apply as soon as possible so they do not miss out on the protection that they may be able to secure. We can process any application up until the 31 March 2025 and if they are found eligible they will be protected until the end of their phase of education. This includes any nursery children.

For further advice or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the FSM Team by email: checking@derbyshire.gov.uk or telephone 01629 535743.

Kind regards,

Sue Upton
Business Services Officer - FSM