Department for Resources & Business Change

South Gloucestershire Council

Date: 6th October 2026
Reference: FSM vouchers

Dear parent or carer,

Changes to free school meal holiday supermarket vouchers

We are writing to let you know about an important change to the support available during school holidays for families whose children receive benefits-related free school meals.

Until now, you may have received supermarket vouchers to buy food for your children during the school holidays. The holiday voucher scheme was funded through a previous government grant. The government has changed the conditions attached to this funding, which means councils can no longer use it to provide holiday supermarket vouchers. Councils are now required to use the funding to provide targeted support to households experiencing financial crisis. This is a national policy change and is not a decision made by South Gloucestershire Council.

As part of our commitment to help residents through this transition period, South Gloucestershire Council continued to provide supermarket vouchers for eligible children until the end of the summer 2026 school holidays. However, from September 2026, holiday supermarket vouchers will no longer be available. The first school holiday affected will be the October 2026 half-term.

We understand that this news may be disappointing, particularly for families who have relied on this support during school holidays. We want to make sure you have plenty of notice of this change and make you aware of the alternative support on offer to help you and your family.

What other support is available?

If you are struggling with the cost of living, a range of support and advice is available through South Gloucestershire Council and our partner organisations.

Support includes:

- Emergency payments for families on a low-income experiencing a financial crisis
- Help to access enough food to eat, including food banks and community kitchens
- Advice on managing money and reducing household bills
- Support with debt and financial wellbeing
- Help to increase your income
- Mental health and wellbeing support
- Seasonal support and activities for children and families during school holidays

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Free school meals during term time

If your child is eligible, they will continue to receive free school meals at school in the usual way.

Eligible children can get free school meals through one of the following support arrangements:

- **Targeted support:** For children up to age 16 whose families receive certain benefits and/or have a low income. Eligible children will also have access to our Holiday Activities and Food programme during the main school holidays. These clubs and activities provide eligible children with a healthy meal each day they attend.

- **Expanded support:** From September 2026, children in households who do not quality for targeted free school meals, but are receiving Universal Credit, will receive free school meals until age 16.

- **Universal support:** available to all children in Reception, Year 1 and 2.

Please use the following links for further information:

- Cost of Living support: www.southglos.gov.uk/costofliving
- Crisis & Resilience Fund: www.southglos.gov.uk/crisis-and-resilience-fund
- Free School Meals: www.southglos.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals
- Holiday and Food programme: www.southglos.gov.uk/HAF

We remain committed to supporting children and families across South Gloucestershire and making sure help is available for those who need it most.

Yours sincerely,

Cost of Living team

South Gloucestershire Council