



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Free school meal costs for self-isolating or shielding learners

Guidance about local authority costs for free school meals when learners are self-isolating or shielding.

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Advice on LA costs in respect of FSM provision for self isolating learners

The Welsh Government has allocated at least £420,000 to help ensure that pupils who are in receipt of free school meals are still able to receive provision if they are not able to attend school because they are shielding or self-isolating.

Local authorities will be able to claim from Welsh Government's COVID-19 hardship fund for additional costs incurred in respect of pupils who are in receipt of free school meals and who are shielding or self-isolating. The additional funding available is based on a weekly allowance of £3.90 per pupil per day or

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£19.50 per week.

The funding made available is based on the assumption that local authorities will where possible meet the first £2.50 per pupil, per day (£12.50 per week) of any costs incurred, with the Welsh Government paying costs in excess of this amount up to a maximum of £1.40 per pupil, per day or £7.00 per week. Local authorities are reminded to guard against double funding.

However, the Welsh Government is aware that local authorities will have fixed costs associated with the provision of free school meals. On this basis the Welsh Government accepts that the majority of the budgets for free school meals are likely to be committed. In these instances the local authority may experience difficulties in meeting our expectation that they will meet the first £2.50 per pupil, per day cost. In these cases we would expect local authorities to investigate if savings have been made in school catering budgets. If this is not possible and where a local authority can demonstrate that no further budgetary offset is possible, then we will make reasonable exceptions and will pay in excess of £1.40 per pupil, per day. Local authorities are reminded that they will need to demonstrate that the arrangements they have put in place for the provision in lieu of free school meals represent the best possible value for money taking account of any health and safety restrictions.

The additional funding is available only in respect of pupils who are isolating as a result of COVID-19. It is not available in respect of pupils who are absent for any other reason.

We will also compensate local authorities for reasonable administrative costs incurred when making free school meal provision for eligible pupils required to isolate due to COVID-19. Again, the principle of optimum value for money should apply.

Welsh Government's guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19) is clear

that those who have previously followed shielding advice no longer need to do so and can now follow the same rules as the rest of the population in Wales (**Guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19)**). We expect that the majority of children will not be asked to shield again in the future. However there are a small number of children with certain conditions or receiving certain treatments, such as for cancer care or those at risk of severe infection due to an immunodeficiency who will stay on the shielding list and so may be advised to shield again in the future. These children and young people/their parents or carers will have been notified by their paediatrician or GP whether their child should remain on the Shielding Patients List.

The Chief Medical Officer has advised (**Updated advice - You do not need to shield after 16 August 2020**) that, in the future, if people need to shield, they will be advised to do so on an individual basis where their doctor can look at their own risk and decide what is the best advice for them. The first group for whom doctors will do this, is children. For patients under 18 on 16th August 2020, their paediatrician or GP has been asked to review their record to check if they need to remain on the Shielding Patients List. They should have received a letter containing the confirmation of the outcome of this review. The aim was to write to children again by early September. Local authorities could identify pupils who still need to shield and who therefore need to not attend school, by asking for sight of this letter.

Schools and local authorities will need to be more flexible when a pupil is said to be self isolating as official confirmation of this may not be available. There will be instances where the school has asked the pupil to self-isolate which will be quite clear cut, but, where the pupil is said to be self-isolating because a family member has tested positive or is waiting for a test, the school will need to use discretion to accept the parent's word (although it would still be reasonable to ask for details of why the pupil is self-isolating and the likely timescale). As a general rule we do not expect this fund to be used to cover pupils whose parents have chosen not to send them to school where the pupil is not required to shield

or has not been instructed to isolate.

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