



Healthy Start vouchers

Trends in take-up and value

May 2020



- Between November 2018 and January 2020, take-up rates in England have plummeted by 13.7 percentage points; from 67.6%, to 53.9%.
- In January 2020, there were 208,829 beneficiaries out of a potential 389,439 eligible beneficiaries. This means that 180,610 households who could have claimed a Healthy Start voucher did not. If all of these people were entitled to one £3.10 voucher per week, then the weekly value of unclaimed vouchers would be £559,891, and the annual value would be £29.1 million.
- The current value of the vouchers is £3.10 and this has been the same over the past decade. Had the voucher value increased in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) we would expect the current value to be around £3.80, i.e. roughly a fifth higher than it currently is.
- The following table shows the number of Healthy Start vouchers redeemed over the past decade, and estimates the annual and cumulative cash loss to beneficiaries resulting from the failure to increase vouchers' value in line with CPI:

Financial Year	Number of vouchers redeemed	Estimated value of vouchers redeemed	Estimated value under Consumer Price Index uprating	Difference
2009/10	31,632,099	£98,059,506.90	£98,059,506.90	
2010/11	31,825,262	£98,658,312	£101,204,333	£2,546,021
2011/12	31,152,563	£96,572,945.30	£102,803,458	£6,230,512.70
2012/13	31,322,441	£97,099,567.10	£105,869,851	£8,770,283.90
2013/14	29,191,004	£90,492,112.40	£101,000,874	£10,508,761.60
2014/15	26,105,893	£80,928,268.30	£91,631,684.40	£10,703,416.10
2015/16	22,691,074	£70,342,329.40	£80,099,491.20	£9,757,131.80
2016/17	19,927,901	£61,776,493.10	£70,943,327.60	£9,166,834.50
2017/18	17,462,707	£54,134,391.70	£63,913,507.60	£9,779,115.90
2018/19	14,585,372	£45,214,653.20	£54,549,291.30	£9,334,638.10
Total	255,896,316	£793,278,579.40	£870,075,325.00	£76,796,716

- The Feeding Britain network recommends that:
 - A Healthy Start (Maximisation of Take-Up and Value) Bill should be introduced, which requires the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to pursue measures that achieve full take-up of Healthy Start vouchers, and to peg their monetary value to increases in the Consumer Price Index (this second point could be included in “connected purposes”, for now)
 - Each local authority should be encouraged by the Secretary of State to run a universal scheme for Healthy Start vitamins (for pregnant women and babies up to the age of six months)
 - A third tickbox should be included on page 8 of the Child Benefit claim form (CH2), underneath the Declaration heading, stating, ‘I consent to the details submitted in this form being used automatically to register my child(ren) for income-related health and educational entitlements, including Healthy Start vouchers and free school meals’