



Promoting Healthy Start in Shropshire

Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

Interim report, November 2019

Improving advice on Healthy Start

We have identified that Healthy Start is not commonly included alongside other benefits when families check their eligibility to benefits. Whilst online benefits checkers highlight main benefits such as Universal Credit, Disability Living Allowance and Housing Benefits, they do not tend to include information about health-related support such as Healthy Start and assistance with prescriptions.

Nationally we feel that it is important that benefits checkers highlight eligibility to Healthy Start vouchers and we have identified a number of sites where information could be improved, which has been followed up by the Food Power team. Locally we have been working with our Citizen's Advice Service to ensure that Healthy Start is flagged in their systems and then raised in benefit check discussions by advisors. We are also working the public health team on local communication on Healthy Start across the county.

Challenges and learning

We have found that frontline NHS staff are very stretched and have very limited time for conversations around Healthy Start. Local pressures on staff make it unlikely that Healthy Start is going to be a priority over the coming months. Encouraging discussions around Healthy Start alongside wider benefit eligibility may encourage families to sign up.

Next steps

We intend to work with other advice-giving agencies in Shropshire, including Housing Associations, the welfare team at Shropshire Council and debt support agencies to ensure that Healthy Start is discussed with eligible families to encourage them to take up the vouchers.

This activity was assisted by financial support and other advice from Food Power.
www.foodpower.org.uk

The logo for Healthy Start, featuring the words "HEALTHY" and "START" in a large, blue, hand-drawn, blocky font, stacked vertically.

Healthy Start Vouchers in Shropshire

In Shropshire, 1 in 5 children live in poverty (Action on Child Poverty)

“Healthy Start can be promoted in many settings. Ensuring it is discussed in conversations about benefits entitlement makes sure it is not missed.”

Emily Fay, Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

Outcomes

- A greater awareness of Healthy Start amongst advice agencies
- Healthy Start better promoted
- Healthy Start raised in conversations around eligibility to benefits

