

Food and activity vouchers for pupils on free school meals

Families in Kent with children who receive benefit-related free school meals will once again be provided with food vouchers by Kent County Council to help them over the Christmas break. Those children will also be able to access four days of free activities for school-age children via the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

A £20 food voucher, which can be used in supermarkets and some local shops, will be provided for each eligible child or young person through their school or college. The vouchers, provided by KCC from part of its allocation from the Government's Household Support Fund, will be issued over the next few days.

In addition, those children will be entitled to free access to four days of activities, with four hours per day, over the holiday period. Food will also be provided during these sessions.

The activities vary from district to district but typically include a range of ball games, arts and crafts, bouncy castles, dance classes and even a trip to a pantomime, all paid for from the Government-funded Holiday Activities and Food programme.

KCC has commissioned The Education People (TEP) to manage the day-to-day delivery of HAF, part of which is to encourage providers to come forward and to agree with them the number of funded places they can offer.

Further information about the scheme can be found here:

<https://www.theeducationpeople.org/holiday-activities-and-food-programme-kent-haf/>

Rory Love KCC's Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, said: "We know that, for many families, school holidays can be particularly challenging at the moment because of the extra cost of catering for children at home and trying to keep them occupied with interesting activities.

"I am therefore pleased that, once again, Kent County Council is able to assist some of the county's most vulnerable families in this way, as we have been during school holidays over the past two years."

He also thanked the schools whose staff undertake the administration and distribution of the vouchers. Mr Love urged all parents and carers who feel their children may be entitled to receive benefits-related Free School Meals, but who have not yet applied for them, to visit the website – www.kent.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals – as soon as possible so that no one misses out on this scheme.

Schools are issuing the vouchers to eligible pupils from this week, as they have done for previous holidays, so parents and carers should direct any enquiries to their children's school.

For more information contact Murray Evans at the KCC Press Office

on 03000 416071 or email murray.evans@kent.gov.uk