About Healthy Start – information for health professionals

Healthy Start replaces the Welfare Food Scheme on 27 November 2006. The new scheme offers wider choice, removes inequalities for breastfeeding mothers and encourages earlier and closer contact between health professionals and disadvantaged families.

Healthy Start provides vouchers which can be exchanged for liquid cow’s milk, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables or infant formula milk. It also provides free vitamin supplements. Advice from health professionals forms a vital part of the scheme. If you’re caring for people who qualify for Healthy Start, you’ll need to sign their application form and offer them appropriate advice on breastfeeding, healthy eating and lifestyle.

Who qualifies for Healthy Start?
The Healthy Start scheme is open to pregnant women (once they are ten weeks pregnant) and children under four years old in families on Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance or Child Tax Credit (but not Working Tax Credit) with an annual family income of below £14,155 (2006/07). It is also open to all pregnant women under 18 years of age.

How does the scheme work?
Pregnant women and children aged over one and under four will receive one voucher per week, worth £2.80, for each child/pregnancy. Children under one year old will receive two vouchers, worth a total of £5.60. Babies who are born before the expected date of delivery (EDD) will receive two vouchers until one year after their EDD. Babies who are born after the EDD will receive two vouchers for one full year from the date of delivery to their first birthday.

Where can I find the application form for Healthy Start?
In the Healthy Start application leaflet HS01 or at www.healthystart.nhs.uk. Centrally stocked leaflet racks in GP surgeries and health centres will contain copies from January 2007, or you can order them direct – see right for more details on ordering.

Who should complete the form?
Eligible pregnant women or families should complete Part A and can telephone 0845 607 6823 if they need any help with it. You should complete, sign and date Part B – the health professional’s statement. If Part B is not fully completed, application forms cannot be processed.

What is on the Healthy Start website?
The site contains pages for the public and beneficiaries – including a ‘wizard’ that people can use to check if they are eligible to get Healthy Start vouchers, a downloadable application form, and a Healthy Start shop locator.

There are also pages designed specifically for health professionals, including an online tutorial about Healthy Start.

Where can I get Healthy Start publications?
You can order online at www.healthystart.nhs.uk, or through the Publications Orderline – telephone 08701 555 455 at any time. The main publications you may need are:

- A4 Healthy Start poster (HS50)
- About Healthy Start – information for health professionals (this leaflet) (HS51)
- Delivering Healthy Start – a guide for health professionals (HS52)
- A Healthy Start for pregnant women and young children (HS01)

Please note: Anyone previously on the Welfare Food Scheme is being automatically transferred to Healthy Start. They do not need to fill in an application form until their circumstances change – for example, they become pregnant again.

HS51

DHSSPS
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

NHS WELSH CYMRU

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How quickly will applicants get their Healthy Start vouchers?
Within two weeks of their application being approved, and then once every four weeks.

People who receive Healthy Start vouchers will also receive a mini-magazine, containing information about Healthy Start and a healthy lifestyle, as well as a user guide called Getting the best from Healthy Start.

If the applicant stops getting qualifying benefits or their circumstances change in another way, they must inform Healthy Start. If their address changes they should notify the Tax Credits Helpline, their local benefits office or Healthy Start as appropriate. More information is in their user guide.

Can I provide feedback about the Healthy Start scheme and the application process?
Feedback is very welcome. Please email: healthystart@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Completing the application form

Health professionals should:
- Give appropriate health and lifestyle advice, including diet in pregnancy, breastfeeding, stopping smoking, and the roles of milk, fruit and vegetables in the diet.
- Ask pregnant women and parents/carers of children under the age of four if they know about Healthy Start and suggest they check to see if they are eligible.
- Give potential applicants the application leaflet HS01 – or else advise them where to get it.
- Get applicants to bring the application form to you, so that you can fill in and sign Part B confirming the EDD or child(ren)’s date(s) of birth.
- Complete and sign Part B of the application form for those wanting to apply, and return the form to the applicant for posting.
- Signpost relevant local services such as breastfeeding support groups and healthy eating classes.
- Advise applicants on where they can get free vitamin supplements once they are on Healthy Start.

Health professionals do NOT need to:
- Check whether applicants are receiving the right benefits to get Healthy Start.
- Fill in the applicant’s details in Part A of the form or check that they are correct. The applicant can call 0845 607 6823 for help with the form if required.
- Inform any government department that someone is making an application, or about any later change in their circumstances.

For more information about the scheme including an online tutorial visit www.healthystart.nhs.uk