

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>
Sent: 03 May 2022 15:30
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Free School Meals Primary 4 and 5 and School Holiday Provision - Financial Allocations 2022-23

Hi [redacted],

The below narrative is helpful.

Thanks,

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 03 May 2022 15:07
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>; [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: Free School Meals Primary 4 and 5 and School Holiday Provision - Financial Allocations 2022-23

Caution: This email is from an EXTERNAL source. Please be cautious and evaluate before you click on links, open attachments, or provide credentials.

Hi [redacted],

To follow up from [redacted]'s response below to clarify the position in respect of Bridging Payments – I have provided below a relevant extract from correspondence with East Ayrshire Council in January:

I'm very much aware of the ongoing sensitivities regarding groups currently excluded from the Bridging Payment provision and have explored this previously with COSLA to identify if indeed there is a workaround which could be delivered consistently across councils.

The eligibility for Bridging Payments is set out within delivery guidance published on the Scottish Government website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for local authorities on pandemic support payments - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-authorities-on-pandemic-support-payments/). As set out within the guidance children are eligible to receive the Bridging Payment if they received Free School Meals on the basis of low income during the relevant qualifying period. This is the basis on which the Scottish Government will reimburse local councils.

The reason for this criteria is due to the operational limitations facing local councils. The Bridging Payments make use of pre-existing council data in order to accelerate the support offered by the Scottish Child Payment for as many school as children as possible. The Bridging Payments cannot however mirror the eligibility criteria for Scottish Child Payment – either in terms of the income thresholds used, or the broader qualifying criteria, this is because the required data is not available to

support delivery. Whilst I appreciate there will be isolated instances where councils may be able to identify children who would be eligible were they enrolled in school, there does not appear to be a robust mechanism to identify all eligible children – or the means for families to apply or be assessed for support as there is with Free School Meal provision. I am also aware of the challenges faced with regards to data sharing agreements with UK Government in terms of undertaking the necessary checks to assure income thresholds are met.

Whilst a consistent national approach to provide support for home learners is not possible through the Bridging Payments, the Scottish Government made £25 million of flexible funding available to councils to tackle financial insecurity in their areas in Winter 2021. The guidance for this funding encourages councils to supplement existing measures, this includes the likes of Bridging Payments. Therefore discretionary payments could be made to home schooled children subject to local agreement. The guidance for this funding is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/financial-insecurity-guidance-to-local-authorities-winter-2021-22>

I hope this is helpful.

Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>

Sent: 03 May 2022 14:46

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: Free School Meals Primary 4 and 5 and School Holiday Provision - Financial Allocations 2022-23

[redacted],

Appreciate the response, which mirrors our line of thought.

Best,

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: 03 May 2022 14:42

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>; [redacted]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: Free School Meals Primary 4 and 5 and School Holiday Provision - Financial Allocations 2022-23

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Good afternoon

The lead for school holiday support is now [redacted] (whom I have copied).

I'm not sure if home-educated children have received the Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment, although I'm sure [redacted] could answer that. With regards to support for home-educated children during school holidays, if the family is in receipt of qualifying benefits,

I believe the Scottish Child Payment is due to be rolled out to families with children aged 6 to 15 by the end of December 2022 and any family which meets eligibility criteria for the payment will receive it, regardless of their child's educational arrangements. I think with regards to holiday provision, you would have the flexibility to make payments where the eligibility criteria has been evidenced.

Kind regards

[redacted] | Scottish Government | Support and Wellbeing Unit | Learning Directorate | Area 2-B North, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh. EH6 6QQ

I am working from home at present, please reply by email

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>

Sent: 01 May 2022 16:11

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@northlan.gov.uk>

Subject: Free School Meals Primary 4 and 5 and School Holiday Provision - Financial Allocations 2022-23

Good Afternoon [redacted],

I am contacting you in relation to the Free School Meal Holiday Support Grant and a query we have received re the entitlement of Home Educated children and young people to these payments.

Currently in normal circumstances we don't receive Clothing Grant or FSM applications from families of children and young people within this group and as such would not have the details or knowledge of entitlement to make payment.

Our line of thought is they would be entitled and payment should be made if the FSM awarding criteria is met and can be evidenced. I note this would also provide eligibility for the Scottish Child Bridging Payment.

Just to looking to see if this would the position of your team and f this has been raised by any other LA's?

Many thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] – Vocational Education
Education & Families

Mobile: [redacted] | [redacted]



From: [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 August 2022 16:20
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>
Cc: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ANGUS COUNCIL

Hi [redacted]

The Angus Example text is accurate.

Kind regards
[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Education and Lifelong Learning | Angus Council | [redacted] |
[redacted]@angus.gov.uk | www.angus.gov.uk

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From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 08 August 2022 16:16
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>
Cc: TCPU@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ANGUS COUNCIL

Hi both,

Thanks again for providing this additional information, it's very much appreciated!

As [redacted] noted in his original email below we are hoping to share practice with other local authorities in relation to supporting home learners and propose to write out in the coming weeks.

I've drawn the following from what you've set out below:

Example - Angus. We directly contacted Home educators that we are aware of for their bank account details and eligibility details, with the first payments made to eligible families in Summer 2022. Whilst we have contacted those we are aware of we do not have information on file about all home learners. This is the case if families did not require consent for school withdrawal and did not engage with the local authority to notify of their wish to home educate.

If I've misrepresented anything, or if you would to propose changes for any other reason, grateful if you could suggest edits to the above. Otherwise it would be appreciated if you would be content for this to be included in our note to local councils.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>

Sent: 30 June 2022 16:19

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ANGUS COUNCIL

Good afternoon,

Please see the information requested below.

- How have you identified home-educators eligible to receive Bridging Payments? Has this been through data you might hold in relation to working with these families previously, or some other method? Are you confident you have identified all home-educators in your area who might be eligible?

We directly contacted Home educators from information held on file for their bank account details and eligibility details. There may be other Home educators in the local authority who may be eligible, however, we do not have information on file about them if they did not require consent for school withdrawal and did not engage with the local authority to notify of their wish to home educate.

- How will payments be made? Presumably this will be direct payment to bank accounts?

We directly contacted Home educators that we are aware of for their bank account details and eligibility details. Payment details for Home educators and their home educated children will be manually added to the quarterly Bridging report used for school educated children (which is extracted from various SEEMIS reports). This then goes through a BACS payment directly to the parent/carers bank account.

- Have you included payments to home-educators in quarterly returns to us to date?

We have only made the first Bridging payment to Home Educated children this week, therefore previous quarterly reports did not contain this information. Going forward the quarterly report will contain the small number of Home Educated children's Bridging payment.

Kind regards

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Education and Lifelong Learning | Angus Council | [redacted] | [redacted]@angus.gov.uk | www.angus.gov.uk

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From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 June 2022 15:59
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@angus.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ANGUS COUNCIL

[redacted], [redacted]

Hope you're both well. We received some correspondence from an MSP around Bridging Payments being made in a number of local authorities, including Angus Council, and I'm getting in touch to find out a bit more information about arrangements in your area. Our intention would be to share this information with other LAs in case your system is one they could adopt in their localities.

It would be helpful if you are able to tell us:

- How have you identified home-educators eligible to receive Bridging Payments? Has this been through data you might hold in relation to working with these families previously, or some other method? Are you confident you have identified all home-educators in your area who might be eligible?
- How will payments be made? Presumably this will be direct payment to bank accounts?
- Have you included payments to home-educators in quarterly returns to us to date?

Any other information you may be able to provide about these arrangements would be very helpful indeed. If possible, a response by close on Monday 3 July would be greatly appreciated. Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 August 2022 12:36
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted]

Sorry for taking so long to reply. I've been trying to speak with colleagues between various holidays. We are happy with the text below.

The funding we are using for this is only in place until next year, but if the child payment rolls out as intended then we should not be required to pay out any more bridging payments.

Kind regards, [redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted]
Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team
Aberdeenshire Council (Business Services)
Banff

📞 [redacted]
✉️ [redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
🌐 www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk



From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 12 August 2022 13:04
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>
Cc: TCPU@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted],

Hope you're doing well.

Just to check if you'd had a chance to review the below, if at all possible I'm hoping to issue the note to local authorities next week and would like to include this.

Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | Team Leader | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#)

From: [redacted]
Sent: 08 August 2022 16:15
To: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>
Cc: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted],

Thanks again for providing this additional information, it's very much appreciated!

As [redacted] noted in his original email below we are hoping to share practice with other local authorities in relation to supporting home learners and propose to write out in the coming weeks.

I've drawn the following from what you've set out below:

Example - Aberdeenshire. Funding to support low income families has been utilised to extend the equivalent of Bridging Payments to families in the area who would otherwise meet the low income eligibility criteria for Free School Meals. We have developed an application form specifically for home educators to apply for the payment. The application form has been made available to a local group of home educators and shared with our money advice team in order to help identify anyone who may be eligible.

If I've misrepresented anything, or if you would to propose changes for any other reason, grateful if you could suggest edits to the above. Otherwise it would be appreciated if you would be content for this to be included in our note to local councils.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | Team Leader | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 04 July 2022 17:18
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted]

No, they are not getting holiday provision for free school meals. We are paying the equivalent of the bridging payment only, i.e. £130 four times over the year, providing they are eligible. To be eligible we are assessing their income based on the free school meal criteria which is essentially evidence they are on a low income (I presume this is similar criteria for the Scottish Child Payment).

I am aware that some parents have asked about payments of free school meals but home educated children are not eligible for free school meals as the legislation stands, therefore not eligible for payments during holiday periods.

I can see the confusion this might cause for some people as on one hand we are awarding the bridging payment based on free school meal criteria, but not able to pay anything for free school meals. However, once rolled out the Scottish Child payment won't be based on entitlement to free school meals and these families will be eligible for it, whereas they won't be eligible for free school meals. So we are just 'bridging' the gap. But, as I type this I can see how it is not always very easy to explain!

Kind regards, [redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted]

Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team
Aberdeenshire Council (Business Services)
Banff



[redacted]



[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk



www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk



From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: 04 July 2022 17:00

To: [redacted] <[redacted] [redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hey [redacted]

Thanks again for providing this info. We do have a couple of follow-up questions, but I think you may have already pre-emptively answered these in your initial reply back (but would be helpful if you can confirm) - are the families in question treated as being in receipt of FSMs, and are they receiving, e.g. holiday alternate provision? I'll be on leave for the next couple of days but grateful if you're able to respond by 12 noon on Thursday 7 July.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 04 July 2022 09:26
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Morning [redacted]




I spoke with my colleague and it was as I thought – we have shared a link to an application form with a local group of home educators (not an official group). I think there is someone who ‘chairs’ the group and she has shared the link with everyone involved. We have had very little response so far so I don’t think there are many people who are eligible (we are using the same eligibility criteria for free school meals).

We also have a money advice team and they are aware of the payments and will offer them to anyone who gets in contact if they query the bridging payment.

Not sure if that helps much! Anything else, feel free to ask.

Thanks, [redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted]
Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team
Aberdeenshire Council (Business Services)
Banff

 [redacted]
 [redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
 www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk



From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 30 June 2022 15:30
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hey [redacted]

That’s all v helpful info – many thanks for your prompt response. Look forward to hearing from you again in due course.

Regards
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic

Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 30 June 2022 13:41

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted]

I am off from this afternoon until Monday and need to speak to one of my colleagues who has been dealing with this, but will aim to respond fully next week.

I do know that we are paying by BACS and we have not included any home educated pupils in the quarterly returns. They are not entitled to free school meals so not technically entitled to the bridging payment (although they will get the child payment when it is rolled out). We are paying them from different funding that was made available to support low income families.

We haven't identified all home educators, and not sure if we can. However we have created an application form specifically for home educators to apply for the payment and have made this available to a local group. This is quite specific to Aberdeenshire so probably not relevant to other LA's. We learnt of the local group from the person who made contact with their MSP regarding the payment, so we are trying to reach as many people as we can. I have not been so involved with this part of the process so will speak to my colleague next week to see if there is any more I can advise.

Hope that helps a little meantime. If there is anything else I can help with let me know.

Kind regards, [redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted]

Aberdeenshire Support and Advice Team
Aberdeenshire Council (Business Services)
Banff

 [redacted]

 [redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

 www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk



From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: 29 June 2022 16:04

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@aberdeenshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot

Subject: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Hey [redacted]

Hope you're well. We received some correspondence from an MSP around Bridging Payments being made in a number of local authorities, including Aberdeenshire Council, and I'm getting in touch to find out a bit more information about arrangements in your area. Our intention would be to share this information with other LAs in case your system is one they could adopt in their localities.

It would be helpful if you are able to tell us:

- How have you identified home-educators eligible to receive Bridging Payments? Has this been through data you might hold in relation to working with these families previously, or some other method? Are you confident you have identified all home-educators in your area who might be eligible?
- How will payments be made? Presumably this will be direct payment to bank accounts?
- Have you included payments to home-educators in quarterly returns to us to date?

Any other information you may be able to provide about these arrangements would be very helpful indeed. If possible, a response by close on Monday 3 July would be greatly appreciated. Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 July 2022 12:01
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted],

No problem, I will ensure not to include these parents in any future payments, apologies if I have picked this up wrong from the guidance.

For home learners we have made the following payments:

Winter 2021 - £640
Spring 2022 - £520
Summer 2022 - £520

Total: £1,680

Thanks,

[redacted]
[redacted]

Customer Services
North Ayrshire Council/Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath
Cunninghame House/Taigh Choineagain
Irvine/Irbhinn
KA12 8EE
Tel: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

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From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 20 July 2022 16:48
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Hey [redacted]

No problem at all, and please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

Thanks for providing this further info, and apologies for the delay in responding. I would be grateful if you could revert back to not including Bridging Payments for home educators in future returns. Eligibility for the payments is set out within the published guidance ([Low income pandemic payment - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for local authorities on pandemic support payments - gov.scot](#))

(www.gov.scot) and on this basis payment for these households would not meet the criteria outlined.

“Eligibility for Free School Meals has been identified as the means to identify those children/young people from low income households – therefore only those of school age [P1 – S6 education] who receive Free School Meals on the basis of low income or on local discretion to promote wellbeing are eligible.” [para 5 – [Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments Guidance](#)]

The guidance for the £41m Winter Support funding issued last year indicated that meeting additional costs associated with extending the reach of Bridging Payments, beyond the eligible cohort, was one possible use for this: [Background - Financial insecurity: guidance to local authorities over winter 2021-2022 - gov.scot](#) (www.gov.scot)

As such, unfortunately we will need to off-set future funding to account for payments which have been reported as eligible in error. I'd be grateful if you could let us know how many payments have been made to home educators in East Ayrshire, and the total value of these.

Finally, just to note, we plan to issue correspondence to all LAs to remind / confirm children who do not receive FSMs on the basis of low income are not eligible for Bridging Payments and therefore payments made are not able to be claimed under existing Bridging Payments arrangements. We do however continue to encourage all local authorities to deliver the equivalent of Bridging Payments, through alternate funding sources such as the previously allocated Winter Support Funding, to children who would otherwise be eligible if they were enrolled in school.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 – read the Plan [here](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 12 July 2022 12:12

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi [redacted],

Really sorry for the delay in getting back to you, we went live with our Clothing Grant applications for 22/23 year on 4th July so it has been a bit hectic getting these applications turned round.

In regards to holiday provision, no specific holiday provision is provided for home educators as we do not provide meals throughout the year. Although, North Ayrshire is operating a Community Hub framework which all parents who may be struggling can take their children for meals during school holidays.

When the initial question was posed to us we had checked the mygov.scot website which states parents could get the payment if they met the eligibility criteria for free school meals. With the bridging payments being in place until the Scottish Child Payment is applied to parents benefits we assumed these parents would receive this once this has been implemented therefore would be entitled to the payment. Happy to revert this for the last two payments if this is not the case.

Thanks,

[redacted]
[redacted]

Customer Services
North Ayrshire Council/Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath
Cunninghame House/Taigh Choineagain
Irvine/Irbhinn
KA12 8EE
Tel: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

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From: Graeme.MacLennan@gov.scot <Graeme.MacLennan@gov.scot>

Sent: 04 July 2022 16:59

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Hey [redacted]

Thanks again for providing this info. Just a couple of further questions on this support for home-educators. Are the families in question treated as being in receipt of FSMs, and are they receiving, e.g. holiday alternate provision? I'll be on leave for the next couple of days but grateful if you're able to respond by 12 noon on Thursday 7 July.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 29 June 2022 16:16
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

Hi All,

This topic came up during one of the hardship payments. During comms for the payments being issued in December 2021, a few parents made contact to enquire regarding home-schooled children who are of primary/secondary age.

On investigation the decision was made, due the parents being eligible for free school meals based on the criteria that payment should be made for these parents. We didn't do specific comms regarding home-schooled children applying but word of mouth reached 5 families who fell into this category who applied.

Payments are made for these alongside the bridging payment and relevant details are held to manually add to the report generated from SEEMIS for each payment being issued. These are issued via bank transfer. As a result of these being included in the main payment run they have been included in any relevant returns submitted for the payments.

If you need any further information please let me know.

Thanks,

[redacted]
[redacted]

Customer Services
North Ayrshire Council/Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath
Cunninghame House/Taigh Choineagain
Irvine/Irbhinn
KA12 8EE
Tel: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

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Follow us on Twitter: @North_Ayrshire

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From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 June 2022 16:05
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

*** This email is from an EXTERNAL source. Please be cautious and evaluate before you click on links, open attachments, or provide credentials. ***

Apologies for the typo in the email below, I do of course mean North Ayrshire Council.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

From: [redacted]

Sent: 29 June 2022 16:03

To: '[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk' <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; '[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk' <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>; '[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk' <[redacted]@north-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

[redacted], [redacted], [redacted]

Hope you're well. We received some correspondence from an MSP around Bridging Payments being made in a number of local authorities, including Angus Council, and I'm getting in touch to find out a bit more information about arrangements in your area. Our intention would be to share this information with other LAs in case your system is one they could adopt in their localities.

It would be helpful if you are able to tell us:

- How have you identified home-educators eligible to receive Bridging Payments? Has this been through data you might hold in relation to working with these families previously, or some other method? Are you confident you have identified all home-educators in your area who might be eligible?
- How will payments be made? Presumably this will be direct payment to bank accounts?
- Have you included payments to home-educators in quarterly returns to us to date?

Any other information you may be able to provide about these arrangements would be very helpful indeed. If possible, a response by close on Monday 3 July would be greatly appreciated. Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 11 August 2022 14:12
To: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: For comment - proposed practice example re Bridging Payments [OFFICIAL]

Hi [redacted],

Many thanks for this, to confirm I will amend the data we hold for reconciliation to take account of these payments.

In terms of the approach to these payments, I fully appreciate your frustration here and note that Bridging Payments were never intended to be exclusionary. We undertook a range of discussions with local practitioners and COSLA officials when developing Bridging Payments, however there were a number of considerable barriers noted from a delivery perspective which led to the final approach. This included challenges in the consistent identification and payment of eligible children not in receipt of Free School Meals and the potential to raise false expectations amongst potentially eligible families which local authorities may be unable to consistently fulfil across Scotland. In addition significant concerns were raised in relation to the gathering and processing of data for these families, and the ability for local authorities to establish appropriate application processes and to verify data with DWP given inherent restrictions in how data shared is utilised.

As you will hopefully appreciate, we have tried to implement pragmatic solutions to address this disparity, including encouraging local authorities to utilise the Winter Support Funding to offer equivalent levels of support where it is possible for them to do so.

As you've indicated I will not include East Ayrshire within the practice examples, however I do appreciate your wider help and support on this issue.

Thanks again,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 11 August 2022 09:57
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: For comment - proposed practice example re Bridging Payments [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Hi [redacted]

I hope things are good with you. In terms of the text below while it reflects our current process I wouldn't be comfortable signing it off as part of a practice note without seeing it in the wider context of the guidance so would ask that you please don't use it as an example.

We are disappointed that Scottish Government have taken this approach to home learners, given the very small numbers of involved and the respective cash sums.

Whilst we do understand the specific legislative criteria now to be included in the updated guidance, it does seem to be a very inequitable approach that, as stated previously, impacts on the most disadvantaged children who almost certainly have no choice in terms of where their learning takes place.

We would have expected a more inclusive policy intention and doubt that Leaders when they approved the allocation methodology for the payments were aware of these specific exclusions. It seems, given the current economic climate, the shockingly high poverty statistics in Scotland, and the relatively straight forward procedures available to assess low income families, that a more pragmatic solution could have been reached rather than having to seek alternative methods, which present a level of uncertainty for the families of home learners, potentially different approaches across Scotland, as well as additional admin processes within councils to allow discretionary payments to be made to these children.

In response to the previous correspondence and request to identify the number of home learners who have been included in each of our submitted returns on Bridging Payments, there have been 2 to date who have received the following payments:

Winter 2021:	1 @ £160
Spring 2022:	2 @ £130 = £260
Summer 2022:	2 @ £130 = £260
Total:	£680

As requested, we will of course exclude any further payments made to home learners in future SCP returns.

I hope this is helpful but let me know if you need anything further.

Kind regards, [redacted]

[redacted] | Finance & ICT Service

East Ayrshire Council, Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7BU

Tel: [redacted] | E-mail: [redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: 08 August 2022 16:18

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: TCPU@gov.scot

Subject: For comment - proposed practice example re Bridging Payments

Hi [redacted],

Another small favour to ask – hopefully the last!

As [redacted] noted in his original email we are hoping to share practice with other local authorities in relation to supporting home learners and propose to write out in the coming weeks. The practice examples will sit alongside confirmation of eligibility criteria and encouragement to provide equivalent support where it is possible locally.

I've drawn the following from what you've set out below:

Example - East Ayrshire. Parents of home-schooled children are asked to submit an online clothing grant and free school meals application to assess eligibility for the equivalent of Bridging Payments. If eligible for Bridging Payments they also receive the additional FSM holiday support provision and this is paid as a direct payment at the same time. Before each new payment is made, Education will confirm that the arrangements for these pupils are still current and payment is due. Colleagues in our Education Service retain a register of all home schooled pupils that they know about, however other families who identify themselves will also be assessed.

If I've misrepresented anything, or if you would to propose changes for any other reason, grateful if you could suggest edits to the above. Otherwise it would be appreciated if you would be content for this to be included in our note to local councils.

Many thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

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From: [redacted]

Sent: 08 August 2022 11:15

To: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: For comment - draft updates to Bridging Payment guidance [OFFICIAL]

Hi [redacted],

Many thanks for this – particularly at 22:15 on a Friday night! Hopefully you weren't having to work late as a result of this ask.

Your comments are much appreciate and I'll incorporate the specific provision of the Education Act in relation to attendance / education arrangements to ensure greater clarity.

Hopefully the amended guidance should be live over the next couple of days and we'll move to finalise the note with COSLA which will go out to leads.

Thanks again for your help and look forward to hearing from you soon re amends to reported figures.

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 05 August 2022 22:15

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: For comment - draft updates to Bridging Payment guidance [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Hi [redacted]

Apologies for not getting back to you earlier today. It was COSLA Leaders this morning and I was involved in meetings for most of the day as a result.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the revisions to the Guidance. In paragraph 5 it may be helpful, for absolute clarity, to state that per the legislation pupils must be in attendance at public schools and other educational establishments under the management of an education authority, as well as providing the link to the Act. This would ensure that local authorities, as agents of the Scottish Government for the delivery of the Bridging Payments, can refer parents / carers of home learners to the Guidance should they receive future requests / challenge in respect of eligibility for the support.

Section 35 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (referred to under Section 53 1(b) of ESA 1980) relates to pre-school learners and you've specifically said at paragraph 7 of the Guidance that learners in ELC settings are not eligible.

We are currently identifying how many payments we have made to home learners to date per your request under next steps, but given we only have two the maximum we could have paid to date is £1,560.

As discussed previously, on the basis of equity and fairness, it would be our intention to continue to support these families with payment along with any others who present to us in the future who meet the eligibility criteria for FSM on the basis of low income. These are some of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged children and young people in our communities and the payments have the potential to make a small difference in providing an element of support towards the cost of living for families currently struggling to make ends meet.

Sorry again for the lateness of this response and I'll be in touch in due course with the information requested in respect of previous returns.

Thanks, [redacted]

[redacted] | East Ayrshire Council

Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7BU

Tel: [redacted] | E-mail: [redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: 05 August 2022 10:16

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot

Subject: For comment - draft updates to Bridging Payment guidance

Hi [redacted],

Following my email below I've reviewed the guidance this morning and proposed some changes in order to provide greater clarity on eligibility for Bridging Payments. These are set out in track in the attached.

Before I upload this to our website I wanted to give you a chance to review and offer any comments, so as to ensure the guidance is clear.

I appreciate you will have other work pressures, however if you were able to offer comment today that would be helpful and I can ensure this is corrected asap.

Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

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From: [redacted]

Sent: 04 August 2022 16:52

To: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [OFFICIAL]

Hi [redacted],

Many thanks for this, very much appreciated and especially so quickly after our meeting.

Response on issues

[redacted]

Secondly, in relation to home learners, having reviewed the guidance on Bridging Payments following our conversation, and in light of your email below, I can see where the confusion has arisen.

As you have highlighted below, section 5 of the guidance notes '*only those of school age [P1 – S6 education] who receive Free School Meals on the basis of low income or on local discretion to promote wellbeing are eligible*'. This was intended as the overarching provision, as we understood that in practice payments would be made to pre-existing caseloads of recipients.

Entitlement to Free School Meals is outlined in [section 53 of the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#), in which the following is noted alongside broader provision on income thresholds:

(1) This section applies to—

- (a) pupils in attendance at public schools and other educational establishments under the management of an education authority, and
- (b) pupils who receive school education under arrangements entered into by an education authority under section 35 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (provision of school education by persons other than education authorities).

Therefore in practice, to be eligible for Free School Meals, families must meet all conditions in section 53 of the Education Act. As Bridging Payments are passported by receipt of Free School Meals on the basis of low income, if all criteria are not met then Bridging Payments cannot be made / reimbursed.

By way of background, income thresholds etc were added to the guidance in relation to children currently receiving universal Free School Meal provision (*to highlight families who may meet the income-based criteria*). I will take steps to clarify the guidance on this matter and apologise for any confusion this has caused.

Next steps

As discussed during our call, we have encouraged all local authorities to make the equivalent of Bridging Payments where possible, and have previously highlighted Winter Support Funding as a means to meet this resource pressure.

Unfortunately we are unable to reimburse for payments made to children who are not eligible for Free School Meals on the basis of low income (*e.g. children who meet conditions in s53 of the above Act*).

On this basis we would ask that you:

- 1. Please confirm the number of home learners who have been included in each of the previous returns on Bridging Payments**, we will require to reduce future resource allocations to rebalance / recover these costs.
- 2. Do not include home learners in the total (cost / payments issued) for future returns**, however we would welcome a note of how many payments have been made to this group in the further information / notes box.

Please accept my apologies that guidance available has not been as clear as it should have been on this matter, I will take steps to remedy this as soon as is practicable and as noted will prepare general correspondence for dissemination across local authorities together with our colleagues in COSLA to offer clarity.

If it would be helpful to speak in relation to any of these issues please do get in touch, otherwise I look forward to hearing from you on the points above.

Thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Sent: 04 August 2022 11:26

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Hi [redacted]

[redacted]

Regarding the follow up on home schooled learners we have 2 young people receiving the payments. Both of these were awarded after the parents contacted the Council enquiring about their eligibility.

This was assessed based on the Guidance specifically paragraphs:

5. Eligibility for Free School Meals has been identified as the means to identify those children/young people from low income households – therefore only those of school age [P1 – S6 education] who receive Free School Meals on the basis of low income or on local discretion to promote wellbeing are eligible.

6. To qualify children/young people need to have been registered for Free School Meals on the following dates in both 2021 and 2022.

7c. A child/young person may qualify for Free School meals at local authority discretion if their household experience financial hardship. This could be because:

- i. their immigration status means they have no recourse to public funds.
- ii. they're still waiting on their first Universal Credit award notice.

To establish eligibility for FSM the families were directed to our registration process which allowed their income to be assessed and this was the same process for all of our learners. Both families met the eligibility criteria for FSM on the basis of low income and the SCP bridging payment was duly awarded.

We have reviewed the Guidance again and haven't been able to identify the second specific education criteria referred to when we spoke earlier in the week. We consider both families meet the eligibility criteria for the payments set out in the Guidance on the basis of low income and we would anticipate continuing to make the payments going forward.

There may of course be other families of home learners who we are not aware of and are not currently receiving the payments. However if they were to approach us we would undertake the same assessment and methodology to determine eligibility based on our current understanding of the Guidance. We feel that this is an equitable and fair approach which also falls within paragraph 7, particularly where families are currently experiencing financial hardship. Given our experience thus far the numbers involved are not material.

I hope this is helpful and would of course welcome any further guidance from yourselves on our approach as necessary.

Thanks, [redacted]

[redacted] | East Ayrshire Council

Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7BU

Tel: [redacted] | E-mail: [redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Sent: 02 August 2022 15:31

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot

Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC]
[OFFICIAL]

Hey [redacted]

Thanks for the chat earlier. As discussed, please find attached below the links to the guidance to Local Authorities regarding Bridging Payments and the £41m Winter Support funding.

[Scottish Child Bridging Payments - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for local authorities on pandemic support payments - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[Financial insecurity: guidance to local authorities over winter 2021-2022 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[redacted]

Thanks in advance, and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

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From: [redacted]
Sent: 01 August 2022 09:47
To: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC] [OFFICIAL]

That's great, thanks [redacted] – I'll fire a calendar request over shortly.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

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From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 01 August 2022 09:46
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC] [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Hi [redacted]

I can't do this afternoon but could give you a call around 2pm tomorrow if that works.

Thanks, [redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 01 August 2022 09:32
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC] [OFFICIAL]

Hey [redacted]

Hope you had a good weekend and thanks for your mail. Would you be free this afternoon (between 12-1.30pm or 2.30-4pm) or sometime tomorrow (between 11-12.30 or 2pm-4pm)? Don't imagine we'll need too long, no more than 30 mins.

Cheers,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 – read the Plan [here](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 31 July 2022 22:04
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC] [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Hi [redacted]

[redacted]'s asked me to pick this one up with you. Do you have some time later in the week and I will give you a call.

Thanks, [redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 20 July 2022 12:36
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC]

Hey [redacted]

Many thanks to you and [redacted] for providing this further information. Are you free this week for a chat about Bridging Payment arrangements in East Ayrshire? (related to the below, and also to some correspondence we received on separate issue). If so, if you can suggest suitable dates/times, we'll arrange a call.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk> **On Behalf Of** [redacted]

Sent: 13 July 2022 10:54

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Subject: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC]

CLASSIFICATION: PUBLIC

Good Morning [redacted]

Apologies for the delay in returning back to you.

Further to your email below and in relation to the additional question, yes. Parents of home-schooled children are asked to submit an online clothing grant and free school meals application to access eligibility for the SCP Bridging Payment. If eligible, they also receive the additional FSM holiday support provision and this is paid as a direct payment at the same time as the SCP payment.

I trust that this is helpful but please let me know if you need anything further.

Regards

[redacted]
[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
East Ayrshire Council
Council Headquarters
London Road
Kilmarnock
KA3 7BU
Tel: [redacted]
Email: [redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 04 July 2022 16:59
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC]

Hey [redacted]

Many thanks again for providing this info. Just a couple of further questions on the support for home-educators. Are the families in question treated as being in receipt of FSMs, and are they receiving, e.g. holiday alternate provision? I'll be on leave for the next couple of days but grateful if you're able to respond by 12 noon on Thursday 7 July.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 June 2022 14:05
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Subject: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL [PUBLIC]

CLASSIFICATION: PUBLIC

Good afternoon [redacted],

I refer to your email regarding the processes we use at East Ayrshire to process the above payments to home schooled families. We created process that works well and is understood by families who seek payment. The process is summarised as:

1. Colleagues in our Education Service retain a register of all home schooled pupils that they know about, ie. they have been in a local authority school prior to leaving to undertake home schooling. However, we understand that there may be other home schooled children that have never registered for LA schooling that Education will not be aware of and where such families identify themselves and seek to apply for the grant the we undertake discussions with Education and we also take the family through the eligibility process.
2. We currently have two home schooled children and three children on outwith placements receiving Bridging Payments.
3. Parents will initially enquire if they are eligible for the Bridging Payment. They will be asked to submit an online application for the school clothing grant and free school meals to allow eligibility to be assessed but without any award being made. We built the auto form in-house and the form self validates specific entries in order to speed up the process.

4. If eligible they are manually added to the Bridging Payments list as they are not included on the current schools list. Before each new payment is made Education will confirm that the arrangements for these pupils are still current and payment is due.
5. These payments are made by BACS payment directly to the parent's nominated bank account.
6. These payments are included in the quarterly returns.

I hope this is helpful.

Regards,

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]
East Ayrshire Council
London Road HQ
Kilmarnock
KA7 4DJ

[redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 29 June 2022 16:03
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: BRIDGING PAYMENTS TO HOME-EDUCATORS - EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

[redacted], [redacted]

Hope you're well. We received some correspondence from an MSP around Bridging Payments being made in a number of local authorities, including East Ayrshire Council, and I'm getting in touch to find out a bit more information about arrangements in your area. Our intention would be to share this information with other LAs in case your system is one they could adopt in their localities.

It would be helpful if you are able to tell us:

- How have you identified home-educators eligible to receive Bridging Payments? Has this been through data you might hold in relation to working with these families previously, or some other method? Are you confident you have identified all home-educators in your area who might be eligible?
- How will payments be made? Presumably this will be direct payment to bank accounts?
- Have you included payments to home-educators in quarterly returns to us to date?

Any other information you may be able to provide about these arrangements would be very helpful indeed. If possible, a response by close on Monday 3 July would be greatly appreciated. Look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,
[redacted]

[redacted] | Directorate for Tackling Child Poverty & Social Justice | Tackling Child Poverty & Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | 6th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted] | Mob: [redacted] | e-mail: [redacted]@gov.scot

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COVID-19: For all the latest information and details of support available across East Ayrshire, please visit www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

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From: [redacted] **On Behalf Of** Tackling Child Poverty Unit
Sent: 19 August 2022 09:43
To: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Cc: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@cosla.gov.uk>; '[redacted]' <[redacted]@cosla.gov.uk>
Subject: Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments and Home Learners

[correspondence issued to working level contacts in local authorities]

Dear colleagues,

Given ongoing interest and representation in relation to home educated children, I am writing to reaffirm eligibility for Bridging Payments and to share practice from a number of local authorities who are providing equivalent support for home educated children.

Eligibility for Bridging Payments

As set out in [guidance](#), published in April 2021, local authorities will issue payments for children and young people of school age [P1 – S6 education] in receipt of Free School Meals (FSMs) on the basis of low income eligibility criteria. All payments made to eligible children will be reimbursed by the Scottish Government and should be included within quarterly returns. The next return, which covers Summer 2022 payments, is due by the end of this month.

Whilst home-education is not specifically noted in the guidance, Bridging Payments are passported by eligibility to FSMs on the basis of low income. The eligibility criteria for FSMs is set out in [Section 53 of the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#) which notes provision of school meals applies to:

- *(a) pupils in attendance at public schools and other educational establishments under the management of an education authority, and*
- *(b) pupils who receive school education under arrangements entered into by an education authority under section 35 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (provision of school education by persons other than education authorities).*

Therefore children must be eligible for FSMs on the basis of low income – inclusive of satisfying the education requirements above and income based criteria – in order to qualify for the respective Bridging Payments.

To ensure clarity on this point we have updated the guidance to make reference to the two bullets above.

We continue to encourage local authorities to provide the equivalent of Bridging Payments to home educated children, whose families would otherwise meet the income-based criteria. Please note however, the Scottish Government will not meet costs for such payments through Bridging Payments and alternate funding sources should be identified by local councils.

Building on supports such as Bridging Payments was identified as one possible use for each council's share of [Winter Support Funding](#).

Local practice – identifying home-educated children

A number of local authorities are providing the equivalent of Bridging Payments to home educated children in their area. The examples below have been identified through existing correspondence and highlight two different approaches to gathering data from families:

Example 1 - Aberdeenshire. Funding to support low income families has been utilised to extend the equivalent of Bridging Payments to families in the area who would otherwise meet the low income eligibility criteria for Free School Meals. We have developed an application form specifically for home educators to apply for the payment. The application form has been made available to a local group of home educators and shared with our money advice team in order to help identify anyone who may be eligible.

Example 2 – Angus. We directly contacted Home educators that we are aware of for their bank account details and eligibility details, with the first payments made to eligible families in Summer 2022. Whilst we have contacted those we are aware of we do not have information on file about all home learners. This is the case if families did not require consent for school withdrawal and did not engage with the local authority to notify of their wish to home educate.

I hope that this correspondence is helpful and offers further clarity on this issue. As you know we continue to work toward the expansion of the Scottish Child Payment for eligible children aged 6-15 by the end of 2022, with the final Bridging Payments due to be paid at Christmas.

If it would be helpful to discuss the detail of this note further please contact TCPSU@gov.scot and a member of the team will be happy to help.

Regards,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Strategy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU

[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 January 2023 10:23
To: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: request for clarification: Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment Winter Return [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Good Morning [redacted]

Yes they are assessed on the basis of low income for Free School Meals and are therefore eligible for the SCP Bridging Payment.

Thank you

[redacted]
[redacted]

From: [redacted]@gov.scot <[redacted]@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** TCPU@gov.scot
Sent: 27 January 2023 09:50
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Cc: TCPU@gov.scot
Subject: request for clarification: Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment Winter Return [OFFICIAL]

Hi [redacted] / [redacted],

Many thanks for this return.

Grateful if you could confirm if the home schooled children are treated as being in receipt of Free School Meals on the basis of low income and are therefore eligible for reimbursement. If possible to confirm by close on Monday 30th this would be much appreciated as we need to prepare the information for the Local Government Finance Order.

Thanks again,

[redacted]

[redacted] | [redacted] | Tackling Child Poverty Policy Unit | Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing Division | Scottish Government | Atlantic Quay 4 – c/o Atlantic Quay 5, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G2 8LU | Tel: [redacted]

[Best Start, Bright Futures: Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 24 January 2023 14:59
To: Tackling Child Poverty Unit <TCPU@gov.scot>
Subject: Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment Winter Return [OFFICIAL]

CLASSIFICATION: OFFICIAL

Good Afternoon

Please find attached Winter Payment Return for the Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payment from East Ayrshire Council.

Regards

[redacted] | Finance & ICT
East Ayrshire Council, Council Headquarters, London Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7BU
Mob: [redacted] | E-mail: [redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

[redacted]
[redacted]
Finance and ICT
East Ayrshire Council

[redacted]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk
Tel: [redacted]

MND Scotland is the leading charity in Scotland providing care and support to people affected by Motor Neurone Disease (MND), as well as funding vital research into finding a cure. Please consider donating to the Provost's chosen charity for the next two years to help people living with Motor Neurone Disease.
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