



23 August 2021

I'm a single parent and lost my job during the pandemic. My local Citizens Advice helped me apply for Universal Credit which has been really helpful to cover some of the income I've lost. But I'm very worried about the upcoming £20-a-week cut to Universal Credit - I don't know how I'll be able to pay for the school uniforms and shoes, especially as they grow so fast! Is there any other support out there to help plug the gap?

If you're on a low income or employed, you might be able to get help with some of the costs of sending your child to school, including school meals, transport and uniform. It's always worth talking to your local education authority to see what support is available as some of their resources and offerings can differ. The following information is for England.

Free school meals

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 automatically get free school meals. If you have older children you can apply for free school meals if you get certain benefits. In your case as you're on Universal Credit and you applied after 1 April 2018 you would be eligible if you earn less than £7,400 a year without benefits. You can see the full list of eligibility requirements on the [Citizens Advice website](#).

To apply for free school meals you need to contact your local authority, you can check the details at [Gov.uk](#) by typing your postcode in.

Transport

If your children are aged between five to 16, your local education authority might offer free or lower cost transport if you don't live near school or your child's unable to walk there. You need to apply to your [local education authority](#) for help.

Uniforms and other costs

Your local education authority might also be able to help with some other costs, like uniforms, music lessons or trips and activities. There may also be local charitable schemes to help with these costs, it's worth checking with the school to see if it knows of any. Schools can also sometimes also advise on finding secondhand uniforms.

What's next

If your child is staying in education after year 11, you must tell HMRC's Child Benefit Office if you want to continue receiving child benefit and any extra support for children within means-tested benefits. When your child turns 16, HMRC will send you a letter asking whether your child will stay in education or training. You must reply to this letter to keep getting Child Benefit.

To find your local Citizens Advice for advice, visit www.caox.org.uk.

We give people the knowledge and confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem.

- The four Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire, Oxford, North Oxfordshire and South Northamptonshire and South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse all exist to provide free, confidential, independent advice in Oxfordshire and they are all members of Citizens Advice, the national charity
- For Citizens Advice general local free telephone advice, visit www.caox.org.co.uk.
- Citizens Advice Freephone Adviceline 0800 144 8848 and Textphone: 0800 144 8884
- Citizens Advice in Oxfordshire are supported by more than 670 trained volunteers and 52 paid staff working across 14 advice centres. In the last year, we helped 27,000 people across Oxfordshire with 78,000 issues.
- Citizens Advice is made up of the national charity Citizens Advice; the network of independent local Citizens Advice charities across England and Wales; the Citizens Advice consumer service; and the Witness Service.
- Citizens Advice helped 2.7 million people face to face, over the phone, by email and web chat in 19-20. We had 3.5 million visits to our national website. For full service statistics see Citizens Advice monthly publication [Advice Trends](#).