



# Cost-of-living support

Find out what help and support is available to you and your family as the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite.

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## Please get in touch with us to let us know if you're struggling with your finances

We know everyone is feeling the pinch this winter and we want to support those families in our school community who are impacted the most. If you're struggling with your finances, please do get in touch to let us know, as there may be things we can suggest which will help. We want to do everything we can to help you and your child through this difficult winter.

You can speak to Natalie Bucklen by phone on 01634 357770 or by email on [Natalie@blueskiesschool.co.uk](mailto:Natalie@blueskiesschool.co.uk)

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## Contact your local Citizen's Advice Bureau or Family Hub

### Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)

You don't have to be a UK citizen to get support from your local CAB, you just need to be a resident of the local area. The CAB can help you with:

- Getting benefits or other financial support organised
- Accessing support for essential costs (food, bills, rent)

Visit the [Citizens Advice](#)'s website or contact your local branch to book an appointment on 01634 383760. Alternatively you can call the national Citizens Advice telephone service for free at 0800 144 8848.

### Family Hub

Contact your local Family Hub to get help accessing all the support you might need as a family. The hubs are based across Medway. Find out more about the hubs and view details of sessions being run at each hub:

- [Chatham Children and Family Hub](#) - 01634 338833
- [Gillingham Children and Family Hub](#) - 01634 338877
- [Strood Children and Family Hub](#) - 01634 335533
- [Wayfield and Rainham Children and Family Hub](#) - 01634 337733.

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## Check you're paying the right amount of tax

Make sure you're on the right tax code. If you aren't you might be due a refund. Use the [Money Saving Expert's](#) free tax code calculator to find out.

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## Claim any benefits you're entitled to

Use 1 of these benefits calculators to determine whether there are any benefits you could be claiming:

- [Turn2us](#)
- [Policy in Practice](#)

- [Support for migrant families](#) – use this calculator if you are a migrant family, or if you have no recourse to public funds

You may be able to get benefits paid early if you're already feeling the squeeze - this is known as 'a short-term benefit advance' - you will need to contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) office that's dealing with your claim. The job centre for Medway is located at Crown House, The Brook, Chatham, ME4 4LQ.

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### Check you've received all the government's cost of living payments

The government's [cost of living payment](#) is available for those receiving certain benefits or tax credits. You don't need to apply for these – if you're eligible the money should go straight into your account.

If you think you're due a payment, but haven't received one – [report a missing payment](#) to the government here.

**Be aware of scams!** If you receive any emails, texts or phone calls asking you to fill in an application form or asking for your bank details to receive a cost of living payment, **do not talk to them or send a reply**. Get more information on [cost of living scams](#) on the Money Saving Expert's website

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### Find out what help you can get with your energy bills

Take a look at these resources from [Simple Energy Advice](#), the [British Gas Energy Trust](#) and the [Money Saving Expert](#) website.

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### Let us know if you need support with your child's meal

As an independent school, we do not have free school meals (FSM) funding, however we are painfully aware of rising costs and the importance of food for our students development. If you require any support for lunch at school, please do contact Natalie who can discuss options and make any arrangements.

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### See what other support you can get from your local authority

Local authorities have lots of different schemes that you might be eligible for, including:

- The [holiday activities and food programme](#) – access to food and activities over the school holidays
- [Help with transport to school](#)
- [Help with the cost of uniform](#)

Medway Council have a range of information on their website. For their Help for Households, please visit <https://www.medway.gov.uk/householdhelp>

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### Get free or low-cost food

If you're worried about not having enough food to feed your family, you're not alone. There are a number of places offering support.

- We do not run a breakfast club but have food available to any hungry students in the morning. Please let us know if you would like us to specifically offer this to your child.
- If you have a child under 4, and meet the eligibility criteria, you may be entitled to [healthy start food vouchers](#)

- The Medway Foodbank issues vouchers for use at a number of foodbanks throughout Medway. Please contact Natalie if you would like us to make a referral for a voucher.
  - You can also try other free food options – no vouchers are needed for any of these:
    - If you are on **Facebook** you can follow the group **Kent Community Helpers** (previously called Free Food in Kent and Medway)
    - If you are in the Gillingham area, **Gillingham Street Angels** at 43 Skinner St usually have free food available Monday-Saturday 9am – 1pm: 01634 855608
    - **Brompton Community Store**, 6A High St Brompton has free food available Monday – Friday 9.30am – 3pm. You may wish to call first: 01634 844711.
  - Find a local foodbank with these websites: [Bankuet](#), [The Independent Food Aid Network](#), the [Trussell Trust](#), or your local [community fridge](#)
  - Use food waste apps and websites like [Olio](#) (for free food and household items from your local community), [Too Good To Go](#) (for low cost food from local restaurants), or [Low Price Foods](#) (food that has passed its best before date, but is still safe to consume)
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#### Further information

- Contact [StepChange](#), if you're struggling with debt
- Contact [Shelter](#) if you're having issues related to housing
- Get free household goods on [Freecycle](#)
- Contact the [Salvation Army](#) for emergency assistance
- See if you're eligible for [grants from Turn2us](#)
- Single parents can get support from [Gingerbread](#)