

Government to introduce prepaid smartcards

The Scottish Government has announced a new digital system intended to reduce stigma and make it easier to eat healthily.

Pre-paid digital smartcards will replace food vouchers.

This comes after strong support for changes to the scheme to help those on low incomes to eat healthily.

Healthy Start Vouchers will become known as Best Start Foods and the current paper vouchers replaced by smartcards in Summer 2019.

Respondents to a Scottish Government consultation on changes to the Welfare Foods scheme said the move to smartcards could reduce stigma, increase uptake and be easier for families. They also wanted support and training for retailers to ensure the system was easy for them to use.

The consultation also found overwhelming support for extending the range of eligible foods in the scheme, and providing free milk and healthy snacks to all children in funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

Public Health Minister Joe FitzPatrick said: "Improving Scotland's health and tackling inequality starts with ensuring everyone can have a healthy diet, especially families with young children. Diet impacts on children's health, their learning ability and their life chances as they grow up, but too many low income families face barriers to eating healthily.

"There is clear and strong backing for our plans to further support families, through making the system easy to use and by increasing the foods that families can access. This gives us a

strong foundation for introducing these changes.”