

# **Best Start Foods available to more people as rules relaxed**

**The Scottish Government has changed a benefit which will allow around 20,000 people to access funding to help with food shopping.**

The eligibility rules for Best Start Foods come into effect today which will make it easier to qualify for money to buy healthy food. More than 46,000 people already received the benefit in 2022/23 receiving money on a prepaid card every four weeks to help buy food from pregnancy until a child becomes three. Income thresholds which were formerly a part of the calculation have been removed making it simpler for parents of young children to receive the benefit.

Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville said: “This is an important day for the Scottish Government in terms of our mission to tackle poverty and protect people from harm.

“In 2024-25 we are committing a record £6.3 billion for benefits expenditure, providing support to over 1.2 million people.

“This is £1.1 billion more than the UK Government gives to the Scottish Government for social security, demonstrating our commitment to tackling poverty.

“Making this investment allows us to take measures like the one which comes into force today – giving critical help with buying healthy foods to those who need it most.

“It will further benefit the whole economy when cards are used

and the cash is spent.”

The changes were welcomed by charity Edinburgh Community Food Aid Network.

Their Chief Executive Officer, Brenda Black said:

“The importance of nourishing food for both mother-to-be and infant cannot be overstated: the first 1000 days of a child’s life are crucial for growth, development, and long-term health.

“We welcome the positive changes in ‘Best Start Foods’ to help thousands of extra families in Scotland access a healthier diet.

“Edinburgh Community Food’s team of skilled nutritionists promotes Best Start Foods’ within our communities, to improve and sustain the health and wellbeing of future generations of Scots.”



Shirley-Anne Somerville Social Justice Secretary PHOTO

courtesy of The Scottish Government