

# Link2ICT Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service

## Parent/Carer User Guide



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### Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Home Page .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Legal Declaration .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Application Information.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Child's Information .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Application Submission .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>ECS Return – Found .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ECS Return – Not Found .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>ECS Return – Service Down.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Resume Later – Save .....</b>	<b>16</b>

## Introduction

This guide is designed for parent/carers to assist with the online application form to apply for Free School Meal eligibility.

The application form is split into a series of pages. Each of these pages represents a specific area of related data entry, e.g. applicant data; child data etc.

After the home (or launch) page, across the top of each of each page is a series of chevrons, indicating progress towards eventual completion. These chevrons have self-explanatory names:

- Declaration
- Parent/Carer
- Child
- Submit
- End

Data from each completed page will be saved until the applicant decides to either:

- Submit the application
- Save the application details and to return later or
- Cancel the application

Required fields are indicated by an asterisk\* after the subsection heading.

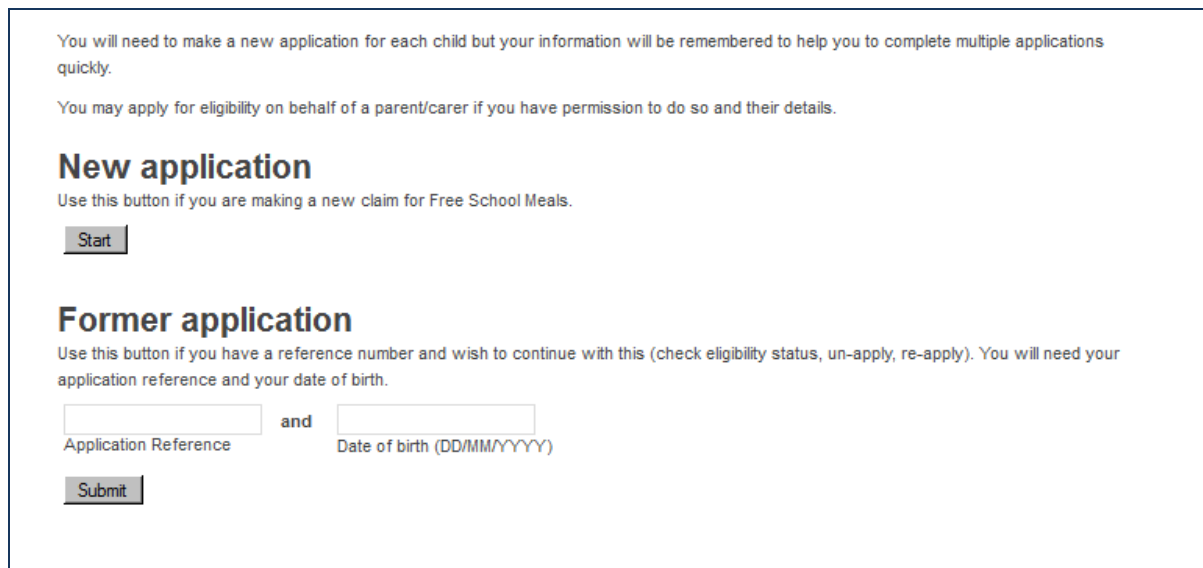
The form may be filled in with the Parent/Carer's authorisation by a member of school staff and if this is the case please note that the values entered should be for the applicant and not the proxy.

## Home Page

The Home Page is accessible from any browser at:

[www.link2ict.org/fsm](http://www.link2ict.org/fsm)

The page that will be seen by the applicant will appear similar to Figure 1 below.



You will need to make a new application for each child but your information will be remembered to help you to complete multiple applications quickly.

You may apply for eligibility on behalf of a parent/carer if you have permission to do so and their details.

### New application

Use this button if you are making a new claim for Free School Meals.

### Former application

Use this button if you have a reference number and wish to continue with this (check eligibility status, un-apply, re-apply). You will need your application reference and your date of birth.

and

Application Reference      Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)

**Figure 1**

This page gives the applicant the option to start a **New application** or open a previously completed one (**Former application**).

### New Application

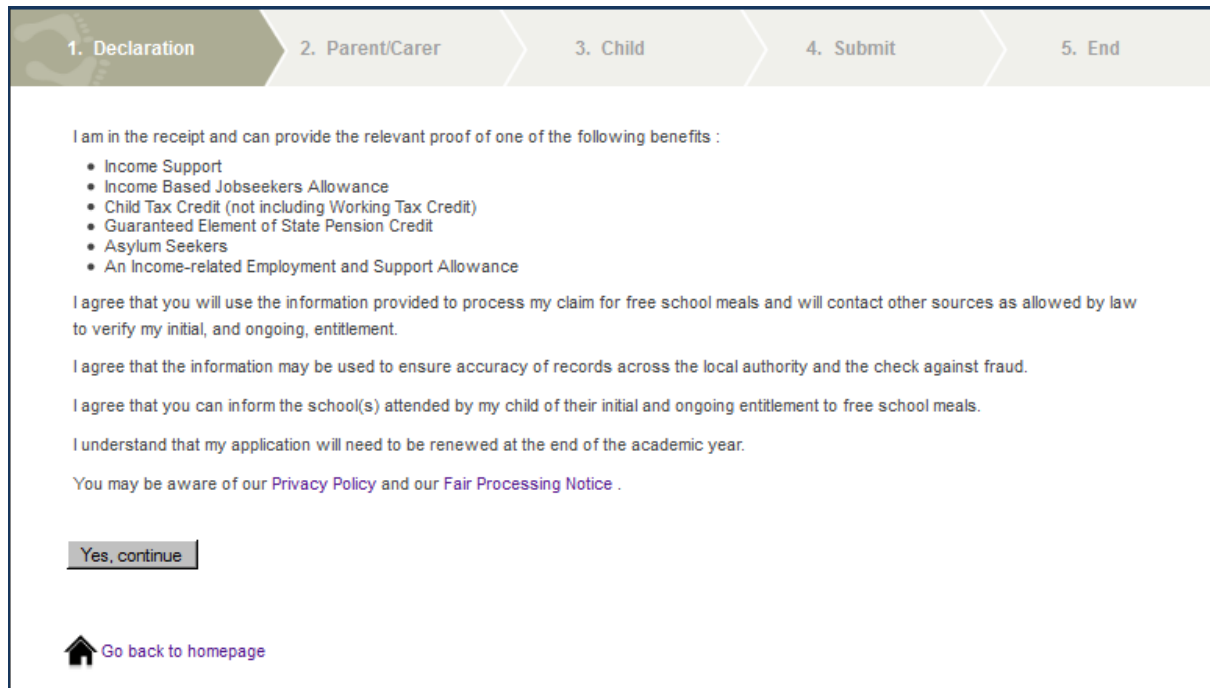
To start a new application, press the **[Start]** button.

### Former Application

To continue with a previously saved application, the applicant will require the 6 character application reference number (previously provided by the system) and the applicant's date of birth as previously entered on that application. This option will be given for ALL submitted applications regardless of the outcome. Note this is different to a save and resume later option for incomplete applications.

## Legal Declaration

The Legal Declaration page will appear similar to Figure 2 below.



1. Declaration    2. Parent/Carer    3. Child    4. Submit    5. End

I am in the receipt and can provide the relevant proof of one of the following benefits :

- Income Support
- Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (not including Working Tax Credit)
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
- Asylum Seekers
- An Income-related Employment and Support Allowance


I agree that you will use the information provided to process my claim for free school meals and will contact other sources as allowed by law to verify my initial, and ongoing, entitlement.

I agree that the information may be used to ensure accuracy of records across the local authority and the check against fraud.

I agree that you can inform the school(s) attended by my child of their initial and ongoing entitlement to free school meals.

I understand that my application will need to be renewed at the end of the academic year.

You may be aware of our [Privacy Policy](#) and our [Fair Processing Notice](#) .

 [Go back to homepage](#)

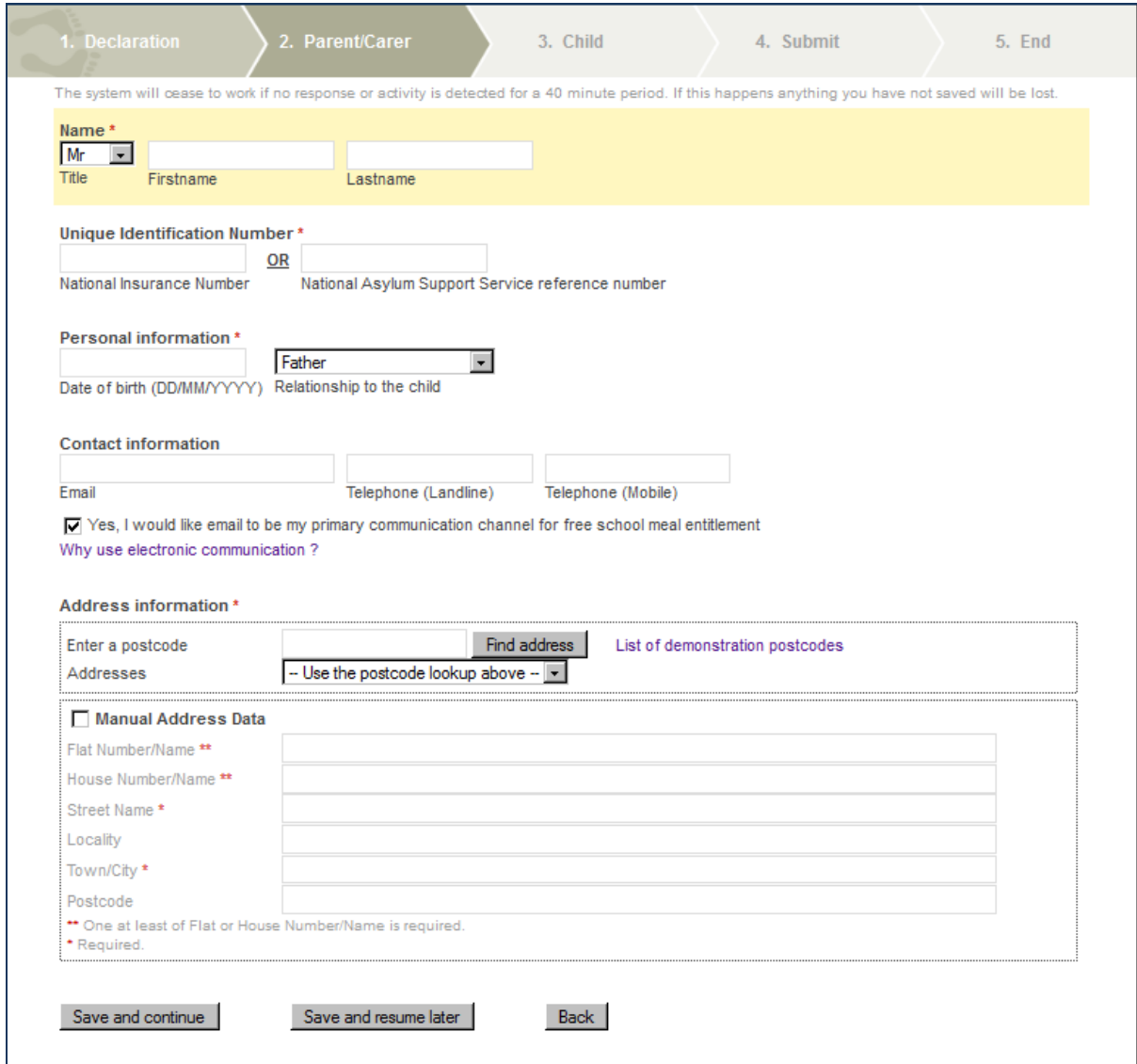
**Figure 2**

This page contains the detail of the information that is required for the completion of the application and information about the process, security and accuracy of the claim. The page also provides a hyperlinks to our **Privacy Policy**.

The applicant should press the **[Yes, Continue]** button to confirm agreement with this declaration and proceed with the application. (If an applicant is unwilling to do this then the application cannot proceed.)

## Application Information

Figure 3 below shows the Parent/Carer data entry page.



1. Declaration    2. Parent/Carer    3. Child    4. Submit    5. End

The system will cease to work if no response or activity is detected for a 40 minute period. If this happens anything you have not saved will be lost.

**Name \***

Mr    
 Title                      Firstname                      Lastname

**Unique Identification Number \***

OR   
 National Insurance Number                      National Asylum Support Service reference number

**Personal information \***

Date of birth (DD/MM/YYYY)                      Relationship to the child

**Contact information**

Email                      Telephone (Landline)                      Telephone (Mobile)

Yes, I would like email to be my primary communication channel for free school meal entitlement  
 Why use electronic communication ?

**Address information \***

Enter a postcode   [List of demonstration postcodes](#)  
 Addresses

**Manual Address Data**

Flat Number/Name \*\*   
 House Number/Name \*\*   
 Street Name \*   
 Locality   
 Town/City \*   
 Postcode

\*\* One at least of Flat or House Number/Name is required.  
 \* Required.

Figure 3

The following lists the data subsections, the fields within each subsection and their data requirements:

**Name\***

- Title** A drop down list is provided which includes all commonly used titles. If the applicants preferred title is not in the list then “Other” should be selected and a further box will appear for free text entry.
- Firstname** The full given first name of the applicant should be entered - not common contractions.
- Lastname** The full legal surname (derived from family, clan or marital association) of the applicant (as written) should be entered.

Note: As the first three characters of this name will be used as a reference by the Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) the accuracy of the **Lastname** field is of critical importance.

**Unique Identification Number\***

One of **National Insurance Number** (also known as NI Number or NINO) or **National Asylum Support Service reference number** (also known as NASS number) **must be provided**.

Note: As the National Insurance Number, if provided, will be used as a reference by the ECS, the accuracy of this field is of critical importance.

Note: As the National Asylum Support Service reference number, if provided, will be used as a reference by the ECS, the accuracy of this field is of critical importance.

**Personal Information\***

The following items are required:

- Date of Birth** In the format DD/MM/CCYY, where:  
DD = Two digit Day (with a leading zero where appropriate)  
MM = Two digit Month (with a leading zero where appropriate)  
CC = Two digit Century (for current applicants should be **19**)  
YY = Two digit Year (with a leading zero where appropriate)

For example, the Queen's birthday would be 21/04/1926.  
This field is validated against calendar values.

**Relationship to the child** A drop down list is provided listing the government approved list of relationships. (There is an "Other Contact" option but no supplementary box will appear if this value is selected.)

Note: As the applicant's date of birth will be used as a reference by the ECS, the accuracy of the **Date of Birth** field is of critical importance.

### Contact Information

**Email** Email addresses are checked against the standard email address format, i.e. *local-part@domain-name*.

**Telephone (Landline)** The telephone number may be entered in either of two formats:  
(a) standard 11 digit UK telephone number format, which will always start with a leading zero, e.g. 02071835700; or  
(b) standard international telephone number format, which will always start with a plus-sign, e.g. +442071835700.  
As the system does not use this number in any automated process it does not matter if applicants introduce spaces into the number and if the system stores the numbers in this way.

**Telephone (Mobile)** The telephone number may be entered in either of two formats:  
(a) standard 11 digit UK telephone number format, which will always start with a leading zero, e.g. 02071835700; or  
(b) standard international telephone number format, which will always start with a plus-sign, e.g. +442071835700.  
It does not matter if applicants introduce spaces into the number.

After the email and telephone data entry boxes there is a tick box which allows the applicant to select Email as the primary communication channel.

Below the tick box is a link which, when clicked, explains some of the advantages of selecting the electronic communication option.

### Address Information\*

Postcode validation is supplied via Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) data supplied by BCC. Applicants should enter their postcode in the box provided. The applicant should select the appropriate address from the list. If the postcode is not found, the applicant has two options:

- (a) If the applicant is sure that the postcode entered is correct then it is either not within the LA or is a very recent postcode which has not been included in the LLPG. In either of these circumstances, the applicant needs to enter the address data manually – see below; or



- (b) The postcode has been entered incorrectly. In this circumstance then the postcode should be re-entered correctly.

### **Manual Address Entry**

If the applicant does not know his/her postcode (or the postcode previously entered was not found) then the address needs to be entered manually. To do this the applicant should click the tick box titled "Manual Address Data".

The following information should be provided:

At least one (or both) of **Flat Number/Name** and **House Number/Name**.

"Flat Number/Name" can be any smaller part of a building, including an apartment or room in a hostel. To avoid confusion the full text should be entered, e.g. "Ground Floor Flat", "Flat 1", "Room 101" etc.

"House Number/Name" can include both a number and a name, e.g. "Rose Cottage, 1". For residents of high-rise blocks, the name of the particular block should be entered here, not in "Flat Number/Name", e.g. "Washington House".

### **Street Name\***

A Street Name must be entered. E.g. Orphanage Road

### **Locality**

This is an optional field which may contain extra details such as district or parish area information or, if the postal town is provided (see below), the name of the town or settlement. E.g.: Erdington

### **Town/City\***

The Town/City of the address must be entered. This may be the town or city that is commonly understood in the area or the official postal town (as defined by the Royal Mail). e.g.: Birmingham

### **Postcode**

The postcode, if known, should be provided for those applicants where the postcode was not found or who reside outside of the LA area.

The following validation will be applied.

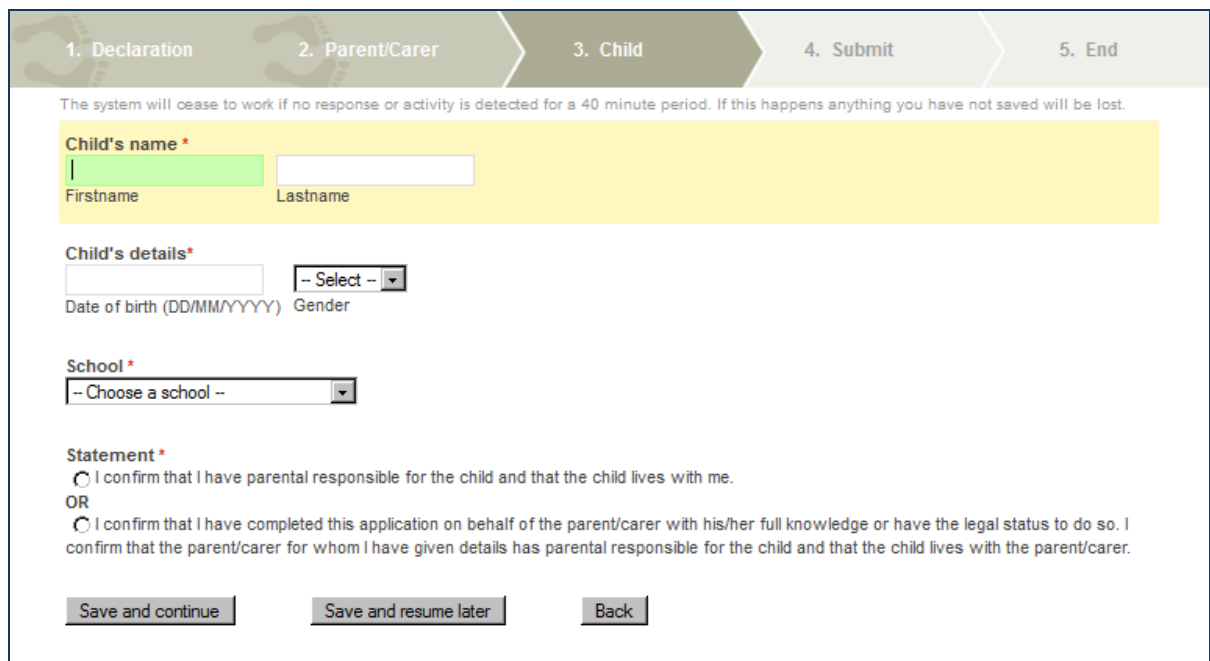
In general, the format is one of "A9 9AA", "A99 9AA", "A9A 9AA", "AA9 9AA", "AA99 9AA" or "AA9A 9AA", where A is an alphabetic character and 9 is a numeric character.

At the end of this page there are the options to:

- Save and Continue** This will save the applicant's current data and move to the next page of the form.
- Save and resume later** This will save the applicant's current data and create a reference so that he/she can resume their application later. (See below for resumption of application.)
- Back** This will return the applicant to the legal declaration page as indicated by the chevrons across the top of the screen. Data from this screen will be saved until the form is exited.

## Child's Information

Figure 4 shows the data input page for information about the child that the application will affect in relation to the receipt of free school meals.



**Figure 4**

The following lists the fields and their data requirements:

### Child's Name\*

- Firstname** The full given first name of the child should be entered -not common contractions.
- Lastname** The full legal surname (derived from family, clan or marital association) of the child (as written) should be entered.

**Child's Details\***

**Date of Birth** In the format DD/MM/YYYY. This field is validated against calendar values.

**Gender** The sex of the child. (Male or Female)

**School\***

A pre-defined drop down list is provided. This list includes all schools which have signed up to use the FSM service.

The school that the child attends should be selected - this will be the school where the free school meal will be provided, if eligibility is confirmed.

If the school your child attends is not in the list please contact the school and they will be able to advise what the problem is. If this is the case unfortunately all previously entered data will be deleted.

**Statement\***

The statement consists of two options, one of which must be selected to confirm the applicant has the legal right to make the application. These options (indicated by radio buttons) are:

I confirm that I have parental responsibility for the child and that the child lives with me.

OR

I confirm that I have completed this application on behalf of the parent/carer with his/her full knowledge or have the legal status to do so. I confirm that the parent/carer for whom I have given details has parental responsibility for the child and that the child lives with the parent/carer.

**One of these options must be selected to proceed.**

At the bottom of the page there are the options for continuation, indicated by buttons as follows:

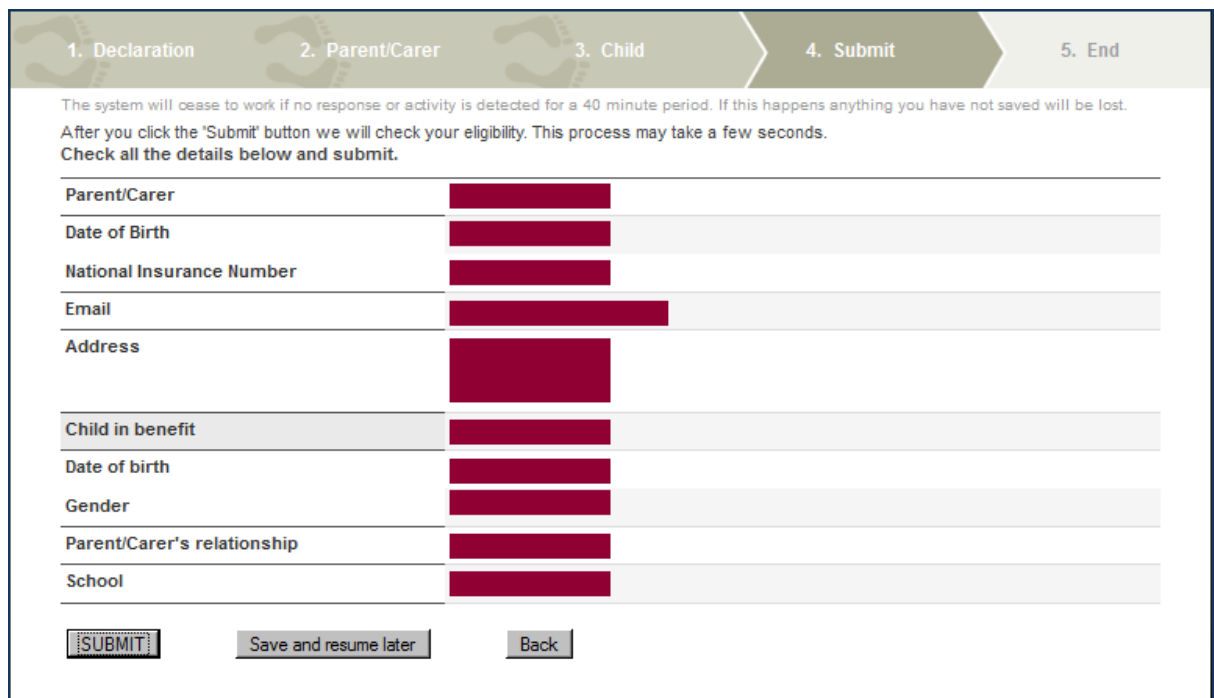
**Save and Continue** This will save the current data from the application and move to the next page of the form (Submit Application).

**Save and resume later** This will save the current data from the application and create a reference so that the application can be resumed in the future. (See below for resumption of application.)

**Back** This will return the applicant to the previous page as indicated by the chevrons across the top of the form. Data from this screen will be saved until the form is exited.

## Application Submission

Figure 5 shows the submit application page:



The screenshot shows a progress bar at the top with five steps: 1. Declaration, 2. Parent/Carer, 3. Child, 4. Submit, and 5. End. Below the progress bar is a warning message: "The system will cease to work if no response or activity is detected for a 40 minute period. If this happens anything you have not saved will be lost. After you click the 'Submit' button we will check your eligibility. This process may take a few seconds. Check all the details below and submit." The form contains two sections: "Parent/Carer" and "Child in benefit". Each section has several fields with redacted content. At the bottom of the form are three buttons: "SUBMIT", "Save and resume later", and "Back".

**Figure 5**

This page is a review of the data that has been captured on the previous pages.

At the bottom of the page there are 3 options:

**SUBMIT** This will save the current data from the application and submit it to the ECS for checking.

**Save and resume later** This will save the current data from the application and create a reference so that the application can be resumed in the future.

**Back** This will return the applicant to the previous page as indicated by the chevrons across the top of the form. Data from this screen will be saved until the form is exited.

After submission to the ECS there are three possible outcomes:

**Found** The ECS has confirmed the eligibility to free school meals.

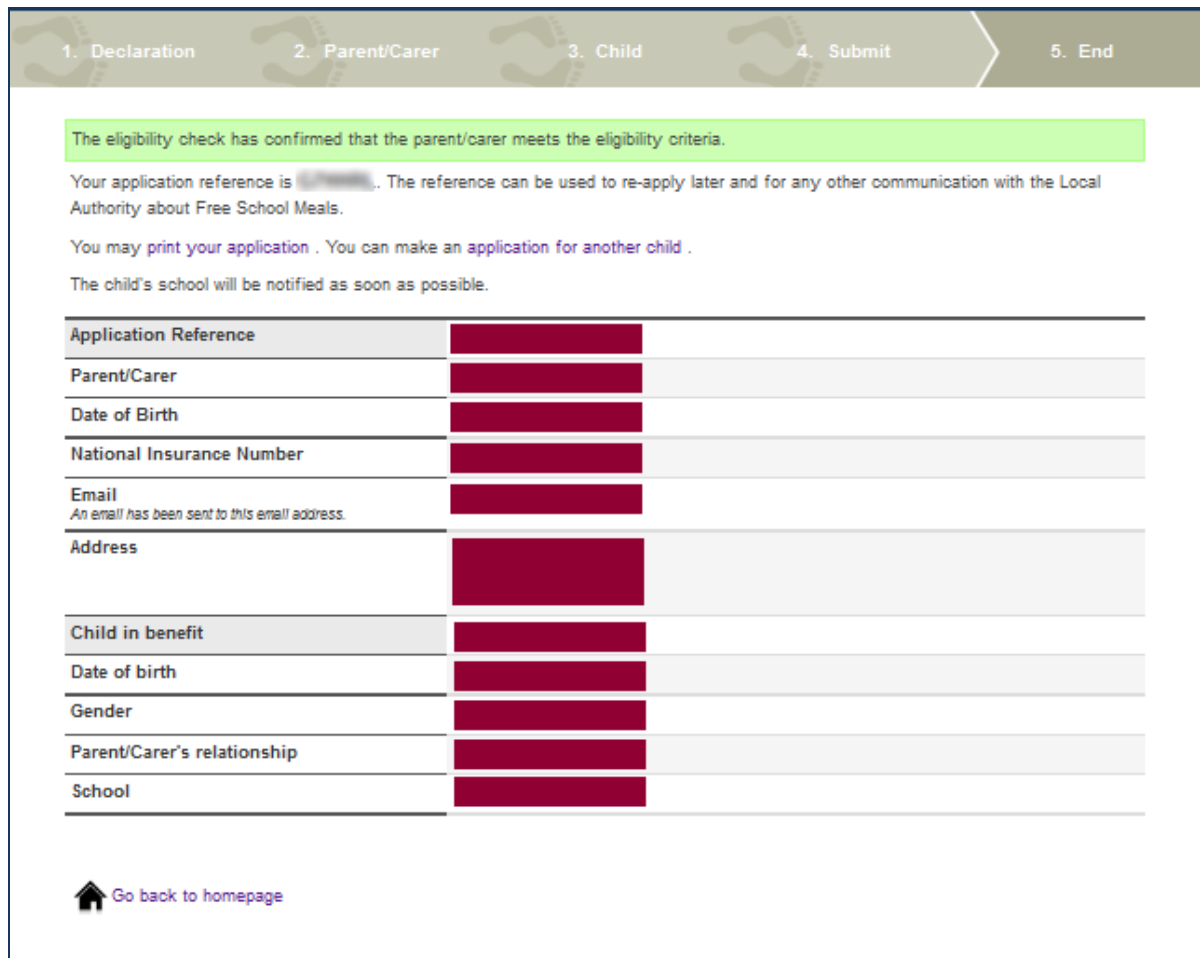
**Not Found** The ECS has **not** confirmed the eligibility to free school meals.

**Service Down** The ECS is unavailable at the current time.

These outcomes are described in more detail in the next three sections.

## ECS Return – Found

Figure 6 shows the screen which will appear if the ECS has returned a “Found” result:



1. Declaration    2. Parent/Carer    3. Child    4. Submit    5. End

The eligibility check has confirmed that the parent/carer meets the eligibility criteria.

Your application reference is [REDACTED]. The reference can be used to re-apply later and for any other communication with the Local Authority about Free School Meals.

You may print your application . You can make an application for another child .

The child's school will be notified as soon as possible.

Application Reference	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer	[REDACTED]
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
National Insurance Number	[REDACTED]
Email <i>An email has been sent to this email address.</i>	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED]
Child in benefit	[REDACTED]
Date of birth	[REDACTED]
Gender	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer's relationship	[REDACTED]
School	[REDACTED]


 [Go back to homepage](#)

Figure 6

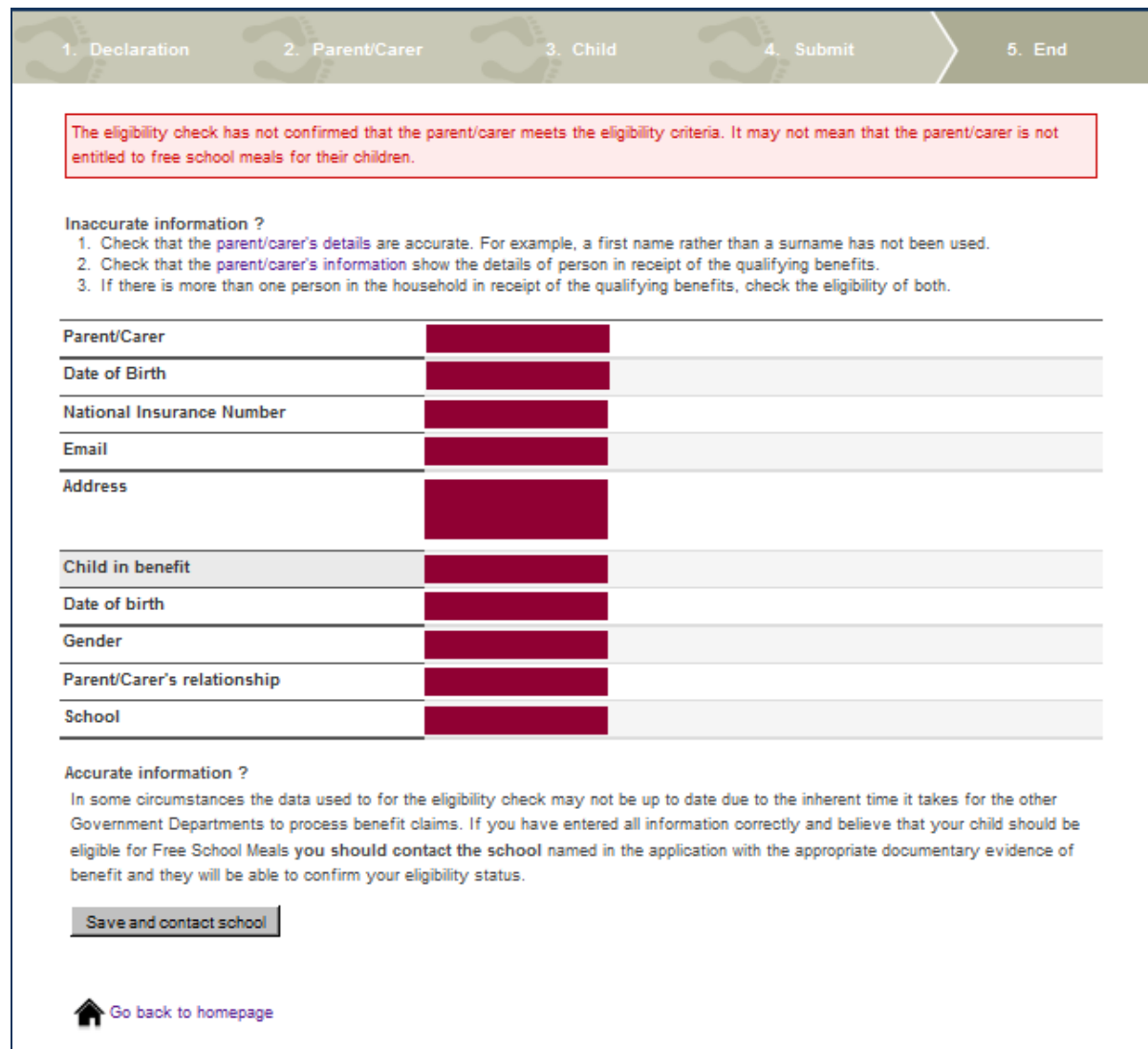
This confirms that the applicant is eligible to claim for free school meals for their child. The applicant should make a note of the application reference and the school and the LA will be notified automatically of the outcome.

**A free school meal can be provided for the child as soon as is practicable by the school.**

If the Parent/Carer has another child at the same or another school that is signed up for the Link2ICT FSM Service, they can click on the link to make an **“application for another child”**. This will return the user to the Child’s Information screen on page 11.

## ECS Return – Not Found

Figure 7 shows the screen which will appear if the ECS has returned a “Not Found” result:



1. Declaration    2. Parent/Carer    3. Child    4. Submit    5. End

The eligibility check has not confirmed that the parent/carer meets the eligibility criteria. It may not mean that the parent/carer is not entitled to free school meals for their children.

**Inaccurate information ?**

1. Check that the parent/carer's details are accurate. For example, a first name rather than a surname has not been used.
2. Check that the parent/carer's information show the details of person in receipt of the qualifying benefits.
3. If there is more than one person in the household in receipt of the qualifying benefits, check the eligibility of both.

Parent/Carer	[REDACTED]
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
National Insurance Number	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]
Address	[REDACTED]
Child in benefit	[REDACTED]
Date of birth	[REDACTED]
Gender	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer's relationship	[REDACTED]
School	[REDACTED]

**Accurate information ?**

In some circumstances the data used to for the eligibility check may not be up to date due to the inherent time it takes for the other Government Departments to process benefit claims. If you have entered all information correctly and believe that your child should be eligible for Free School Meals you should contact the school named in the application with the appropriate documentary evidence of benefit and they will be able to confirm your eligibility status.

[Save and contact school](#)

[Go back to homepage](#)

**Figure 7**

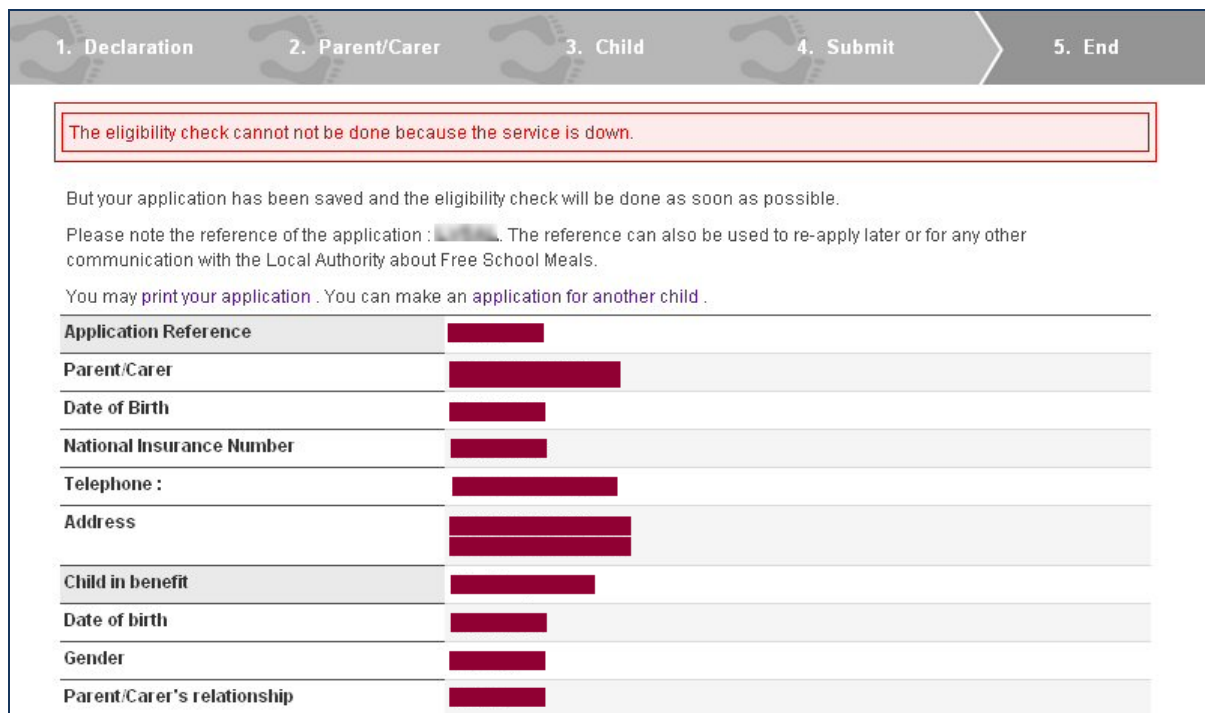
The ECS has NOT found data that would confirm that the applicant is eligible to claim for free school meals for their child. The application will be held by the school for further checking if eligibility systems are updated.

The applicant should make a note of the application reference and if they wish to dispute this outcome they should contact their child's school as appropriate. When contacting schools, applicants should quote the reference number given and present original copies of any supporting evidence. If the school, having seen the physical evidence, agree that the application should be deemed eligible, they will be able to process this and confirm eligibility.

## ECS Return – Service Down

Figure 8 shows the screen which will appear if the ECS has returned a “Not Found” result:

If the ECS is unavailable at the time of submission the following screen will appear:



The screenshot shows a progress bar at the top with five steps: 1. Declaration, 2. Parent/Carer, 3. Child, 4. Submit, and 5. End. The 'Submit' step is currently active. Below the progress bar, a red-bordered box contains the message: "The eligibility check cannot not be done because the service is down." Below this message, there is explanatory text: "But your application has been saved and the eligibility check will be done as soon as possible. Please note the reference of the application : [redacted]. The reference can also be used to re-apply later or for any other communication with the Local Authority about Free School Meals. You may print your application . You can make an application for another child ."

<b>Application Reference</b>	[redacted]
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	[redacted]
<b>Date of Birth</b>	[redacted]
<b>National Insurance Number</b>	[redacted]
<b>Telephone :</b>	[redacted]
<b>Address</b>	[redacted]
<b>Child in benefit</b>	[redacted]
<b>Date of birth</b>	[redacted]
<b>Gender</b>	[redacted]
<b>Parent/Carer's relationship</b>	[redacted]

**Figure 8**

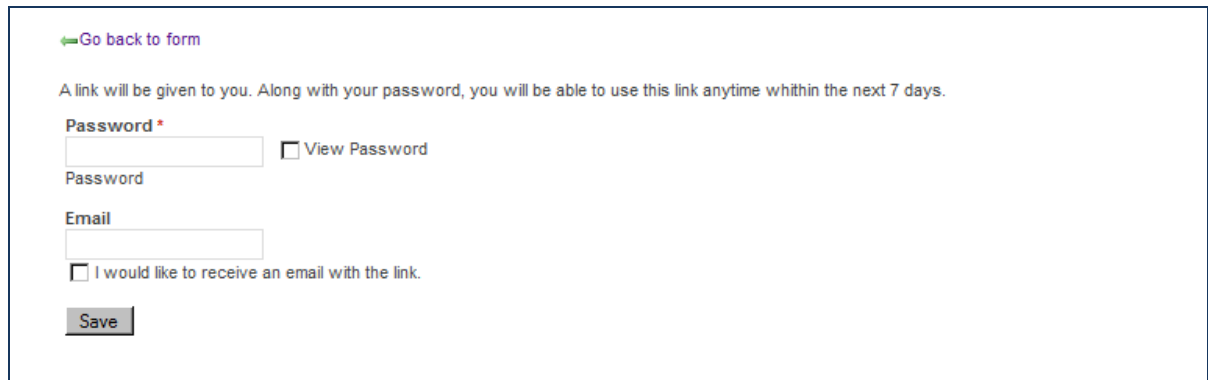
The ECS may not be functioning due to essential maintenance being carried out. If this screen appears the applicant should take a note of the application reference number.

Applications will be automatically resubmitted when the ECS becomes available and the Parent/Carer (and school) informed of the outcome.

## Resume Later – Save

Figure 9 shows the screen which will appear if the ECS has returned a “Not Found” result:

If at, any point during the application, the applicant selects to “Save and resume later” then the following will appear:



← Go back to form

A link will be given to you. Along with your password, you will be able to use this link anytime within the next 7 days.

**Password \***  
  View Password  
 Password

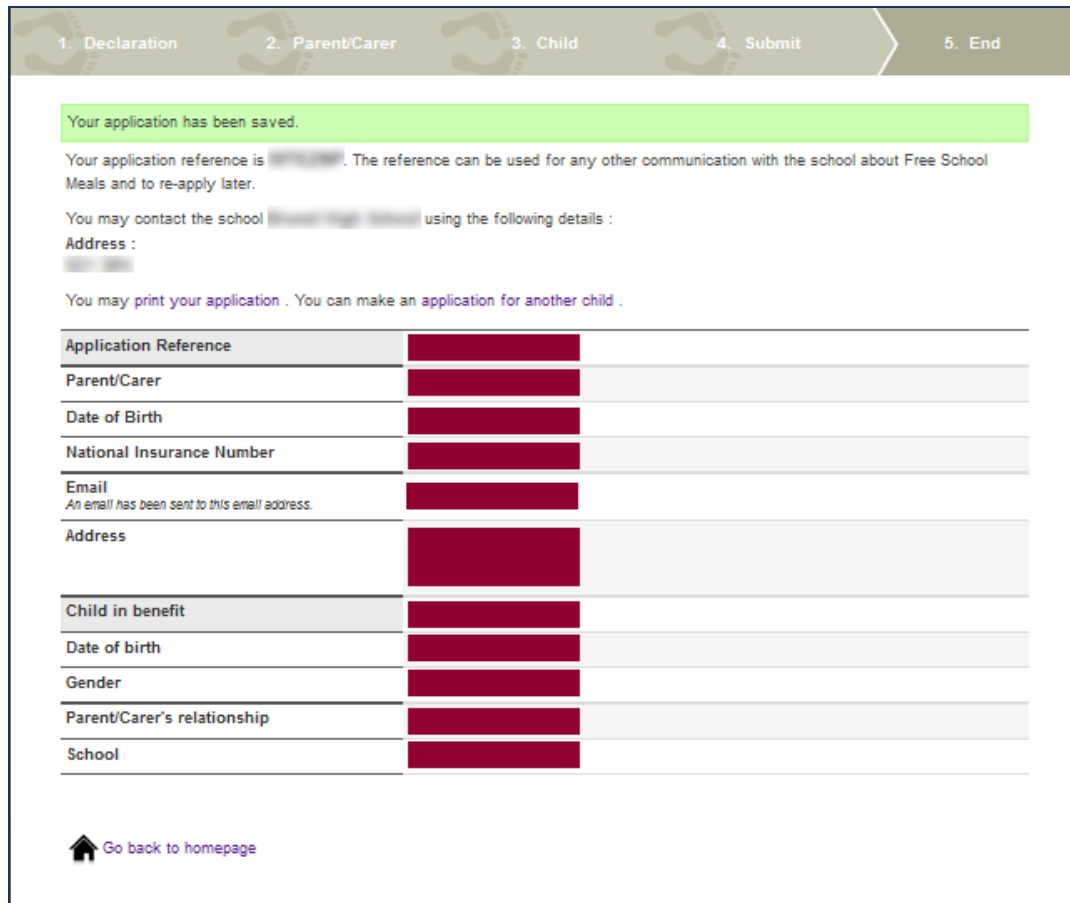
**Email**

I would like to receive an email with the link.

**Save**

**Figure 9**

The applicant will be asked to supply a password and, if they wish to be emailed the link, an email address and a check box to confirm this. After clicking **[Save]** Figure 10 below will appear



1. Declaration    2. Parent/Carer    3. Child    4. Submit    5. End

Your application has been saved.


Your application reference is [REDACTED]. The reference can be used for any other communication with the school about Free School Meals and to re-apply later.

You may contact the school [REDACTED] using the following details :

Address :  
[REDACTED]

You may [print your application](#) . You can make an [application for another child](#) .

Application Reference	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer	[REDACTED]
Date of Birth	[REDACTED]
National Insurance Number	[REDACTED]
Email	[REDACTED]
An email has been sent to this email address.	
Address	[REDACTED]
Child in benefit	[REDACTED]
Date of birth	[REDACTED]
Gender	[REDACTED]
Parent/Carer's relationship	[REDACTED]
School	[REDACTED]

 [Go back to homepage](#)

**Figure 10**