Link2ICT Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service
Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs
Updated

Where can I access the Link2ICT FSM Eligibility Checking Service?
The system can be used anywhere using any device with an Internet connection. It is a self-service portal so the parent/carer creates access using their details. The system will generate them a password if they want to go back into a partly saved application.

How does the school receive notification of FSM eligibility?
The school will receive a daily email with details of all new eligible pupils. Audits are carried out every week to check continuing eligibility and emails are sent out to notify of any changes. This ensures that if a parent/carers situation changes and they become eligible neither the parent/carer or school need to do anything to reapply.

As well as e-mail notifications the school at any point can log on to their own portal and review current applications, changes and export/print several reports on their data.

Is the system secure?
The OFSM system will provide the highest level of data security and will comply with all appropriate regulations and codes of practice. More information on this is available on the Link2ICT knowledgebase

Will the database show us if their situation changes?
The data is audited by the ECS regularly and the school will receive updates as appropriate.

Why can't I connect to ECS directly as an individual school?
The FSM Eligibility Checking Service itself is a government provided system aimed at LA's. In order to connect to the system there is a very strict Code of Connectivity which requires compliance with GCSx and the authorisation of the BCC Section 151 officer. It would be very difficult if not impossible for school networks to achieve this compliance, hence the constant redirection to the LA super user.

What if the parent/carer does not have Internet access at home?
Schools may want to offer an area in school at certain times where parent/carers can use a computer to fill in their application, either alone or with help from a member of staff.

The parent/carer is not comfortable using a PC. Can someone apply on their behalf?
Parent/carers can provide their details and ask a school member of staff to fill in the online form on their behalf. The parent receives instant notification of their entitlement and also an e-mail confirmation if they choose to receive it.

What about non-English speaking parents?
The system is only available in English so any Parent/Carers should follow the same procedure as they would if filling in a form manually. The school will be able to fill in as per the earlier question if the parent/carer gives them authorisation alternatively the following browser options are available to auto translate:

By default, Chrome offers to translate pages written in a language you don't understand.

You can control whether Chrome will offer to translate webpages.

1. On your computer, open Chrome.
2. At the top right, click More ⋮ › Settings.
3. At the bottom, click Advanced.
4. Under "Languages," click Language.
5. Check or uncheck "Offer to translate pages that aren't in a language you read."

We are about to migrate to a new MIS will this have an effect?

The system works independently of whichever MIS the school uses. It is the schools responsibility to make sure that FSM information is kept up to date in their MIS. The Link2ICT FSM Eligibility Checking Service gives the school an accurate, up to date record to be able to make this task as simple as possible.

System shows as not found but parents' paperwork shows they are eligible?

Firstly there is a lag on the Home Office database that can result in it being up to 2 weeks out of date. To accommodate this ALL Not Found applications are rechecked daily for 30 days. Only after this time will the application be flagged as Not Found (ECS) and even then will be subject to the weekly audit.

There is another scenario that the FSM team in DfE dispute but that other LAs have found. This is where contribution based' jobseekers or ESA are being claimed then this will take precedent on the results showing a not found even though the claimant is eligible under child tax credits.

If you are sure that the claim is legitimate it can be changed to Eligible (School) through the application data screen. However be aware that it may be changed back as a result of audit.

3 Year or 1 Year Commitment?

In light of the recent government announcements around FSM's for infant children, the uncertainty around the process ongoing and feedback from groups like this Link2ICT will now be changing the commitment for this service to 12 months from Sept each year and pro-rata for any part year. We are not aware that there will be changes in the link between PP and FSM so it is anticipated that schools will still want new intake parents to apply for eligibility even if they will be getting a meal by default. It may be that the service is rebranded in the future but we just don't know any more at present.

Do schools still have to check eligibility of parents/carers?

The Link2ICT service removes the need for schools to do any evidential checking for eligibility - parents and carers do this directly online. The information is personal details and NI number. The submitted information is then stored securely and rechecked on a regular basis. Changes in circumstances then trigger funding or remove the meal entitlement. This element of the service is a key differentiator - information is submitted only once and takes no more than a couple of minutes from any device (phone, pad, PC, Laptop).

What if the parent/carer chooses the wrong school when filling in an application?

If the parent/carer informs the school that they should have chosen another school then they can move the application to the correct school as per page 13 of the School Back Office User Guide.

If a school finds an application for a child that is not at their school then they should change the status from eligible to Inactive (Withdrawn by School/LA) as per page 13 of the School Back Office User Guide.

If you have any other questions please visit the Link2ICT Support Portal or contact us on Tel: 0121 303 5100, Email: servicedesk@link2ict.org