

Benefits of Automated Audits for Free School Meals

Online
Free School Meals

connect *digitally*

Local authorities (LAs) using the Department for Education Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) can incorporate a regular automated audit process which will not only quickly identify claimants who are no longer eligible for free school meals but will further improve the service to the parents/carers and bring about a number of efficiency and financial benefits for central government, LAs and schools.

✓ **Benefits for parents/carers**

- Reduction/elimination of debt incurred through provision of free school meals when parent/carer ceases to be eligible
- Reduction in stress for claimants as there is less likelihood of accruing debt

✓ **Benefits for schools**

- Less reliance on parents/carers for notification of change of circumstances
- Up-to-date parent/carer data – change of circumstances picked up more quickly
- Reduction in need to follow up debts accrued due to incorrect meal provision
- Accurate statistics (including numbers of FSM recipients, up-to-date eligibility information)

✓ **Benefits for local authorities**

- Timely, fast, easy identification of claimants who are no longer eligible
- Less reliance on parents/carers for notification of change of circumstances
- Reduction in the amount of debt accrued/written off
- Efficiency savings through reduced/removed need for a reclaims process
- Reduction in costs associated with prosecution (in LAs where parents/carers are taken to court to retrieve debt)
- Reduction in costs associated with incorrect meal provision
- Accurately targeted funding for those who are most in need (correct provision of meals)
- Up-to-date parent/carer data – change of circumstances picked up more quickly
- Accurate statistics (including numbers of FSM recipients, up-to-date eligibility information)
- Removes the need for a renewals process
- Indication of potential issues with centrally held data – frequent audits can reveal any unexpected patterns in FSM eligibility

✓ **Benefits for central government**

- Accurate FSM data ensuring fair allocation of pupil premium funds
- Efficiency savings through accurate FSM data

For more information on Connect Digitally visit the Community of Practice on communities.idea.gov.uk or email us at connectdigitally@hertscc.gov.uk

connect *digitally*

Department for
Education



CD1124/701