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Deprivation and social mobility

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Focus of the briefing

This briefing focuses on available data relating to deprivation and social mobility amongst children and young people aged 11 to 18 years in West Sussex. Areas covered in this briefing include relative deprivation, child poverty, barriers to education and free school meal eligibility. Wherever possible, data is presented specifically for this age group. However, if data for 11-18-year-olds is not available, data for the closest available age range is presented instead.

Deprivation

The Indices of Deprivation (IoD25) measures relative deprivation (how deprived one area is compared with another) in small areas, known as lower super output areas (LSOAs), across England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025).

The IoD25 draws on a range of indicators which are organised into seven distinct domains: Income, Employment, Education, Health, Crime, Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment (Francis-Devine, 2025). These domains are combined and weighted together to form the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD25), the official measure of deprivation in England.

Each small area is ranked from most to least deprived according to their level of multiple deprivation relative to that of other areas and commonly grouped into 5 (quintiles) or 10 equal groups (deciles). Alongside the seven domains, there are two supplementary income indices, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI), which have also been updated.

What does the IoD25 tell us about West Sussex?

Overall, West Sussex is ranked 128th of 153 upper-tier local authorities in England (1 being the most deprived). Across the county, Crawley remains the most deprived area (ranked 126th of 296 local authority districts in England), followed by Arun (ranked 141st). Mid Sussex remains the least deprived area (ranked 286th), followed by Horsham (ranked 279th).

Good to know

The IoD25 provides several different ways to explore ranks among larger geographies (e.g. local authority districts and upper tier local authorities). The ranks reported here are based on 'average score' rather than 'average rank'. Average score gives more weight to extremes (i.e. areas containing highly deprived LSOAs), so highly polarised areas will tend to score more highly on this measure. The ranks reported here may therefore differ from elsewhere due to the choice of measure used.

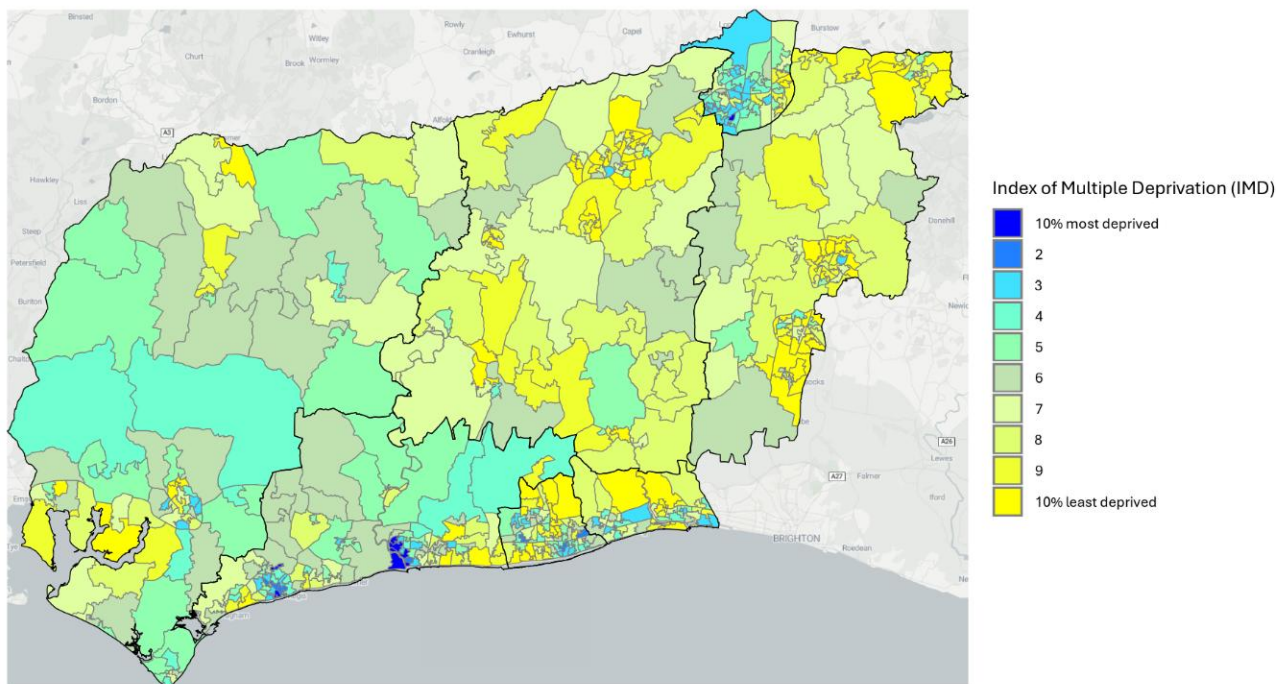
More information on the different measures provided in IoD25 are available in the [published research](#) and [technical reports](#).

West Sussex contains six small areas (1.1%) within the most deprived 20% in England. These small areas fall within Arun (5 LSOAs) and Crawley (1 LSOA). The proportion of LSOAs in West Sussex falling among the 10% most deprived nationally is similar to the previous release IMD19. However, caution should be taken when comparing ranks of areas over time (Public Health and Social Research Unit, 2019).

Figure 1 shows small areas (LSOAs) in West Sussex by national deprivation deciles. Areas shown in blue are among the most deprived small areas in England.

Figure 1 National Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2025 in West Sussex by Lower Super Output Areas (2021)

Small areas are 2021 Lower Super Output Areas; 2025 Local Authority District boundaries are also shown



Office for National Statistics: OpenGeography (via Open Government Licence v3.0)
 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (via Open Government Licence v3.0)

What about the different domains?

Among the domains of deprivation, West Sussex ranked 56th (of 153 upper-tier authorities) for barriers to housing and services, falling among the most deprived 40% of local authorities in this domain. Across the county, Arun and Chichester are among the 20% most deprived local authority districts for barriers to housing and services (ranked 49th and 52nd of 296 local authority districts respectively). For all other domains, West Sussex is among the top 40% of the least deprived local authorities.

To find out more about the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and what this tells us about West Sussex, [read the IMD 2025 briefing for West Sussex on the JSNA site.](#)

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

The income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children (0-15) living in income-deprived families across neighbourhoods in England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025). It is a subset of the Income Domain, which measures the proportion of the population in an area experiencing deprivation relating to low income (Noble, et al., 2025).

Good to know

Families are considered income deprived if they receive specific means-tested benefits or tax credits, such as if they are in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Pension Credit (Guarantee) or Child Tax Credit below a given threshold, amongst others (Southampton Data Observatory, 2024).

Overall, West Sussex ranked 119th of 153 upper-tier authorities in England on the IDACI, with 28.1% of children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families. In comparison, neighbouring East Sussex ranked 85th and Brighton and Hove ranked 98th, with 36.0% and 31.9% of children living in income deprived families respectively. Surrey and Hampshire both have lower proportions of children living in income deprivation (19.5% and 24.0% respectively).

Within the county, Crawley is the most deprived local authority district (ranked 91st of 296) and Mid Sussex is the least deprived (ranked 277th). More than a third of 0- to 15-year-old children in Crawley (39.2%) and Arun (34.8%) are living in income deprived families. However, as district-level data is aggregated from LSOAs, data for this higher-level geography can mask pockets of deprivation affecting children across small areas.

Four neighbourhoods in West Sussex (0.7% of the county total) are among the 10% of small areas nationally with the highest percentage of children living in income-deprived families (indicated by the darkest blue areas in Figure 2). These include two neighbourhoods in Arun, one in Chichester and one in Worthing (see Table 1). Within these small areas, more than two-thirds of children are living in income deprived families.

Across the county, the proportion of children living in income deprived families ranged from 2.6% (Chichester 001A, within Fernhurst ward) to 73.1% (Chichester 011B, within Chichester West ward). Table 8 in the appendices provides a list of all small areas in West Sussex among the 20% most deprived nationally on the IDACI.

Table 1: Lower Super Output Areas (2021) in West Sussex within the 10% of small areas nationally with the highest percentage of children living in income-deprived households

LSOA Code 2021	LAD	Ward Name 2024*	IDACI 2025	
			Score	Decile
E01031493	Chichester	Chichester West	73.1%	1
E01031779	Worthing	Broadwater	68.2%	1
E01031427	Arun	Courtwick with Toddington	67.5%	1
E01031432	Arun	Hotham	66.7%	1

Note. *Lower super output areas have been best fit to ward boundaries to give a sense of 'place'. These geographies are not coterminous, meaning their boundaries do not match exactly.

For further information on the IDACI, read a [summary briefing for West Sussex available on the JSNA site](#).

Household deprivation

The 2021 Census included a household deprivation measure, which classified households in England by four dimensions of deprivation: employment, education, health and disability and housing (see table 2).

Table 2 Four dimensions of deprivation, as defined by the 2021 Census household deprivation measure

Dimension	Definition
Education	No-one in the household has at least a level 2 education or is aged 16-18 and a full-time student.
Employment	Any member (aside from a full-time student), is unemployed or economically inactive due to a long-term sickness or disability.
Health	Any member has a general health reported as 'bad' or 'very bad' or is identified as disabled.
Housing	Household accommodation is either overcrowded, in a shared dwelling or has no central heating.

In West Sussex, 49.1% of households were classified as deprived in one or more of the dimensions of deprivation, lower than England (51.6%). The percentage of households classified as deprived in one or more of the dimensions of deprivation has increased by 2.5% compared to the previous Census in 2011 (46.6%).

For further information on deprived households, read the [2021 census household deprivation briefing on the JSNA site](#).

Childhood poverty

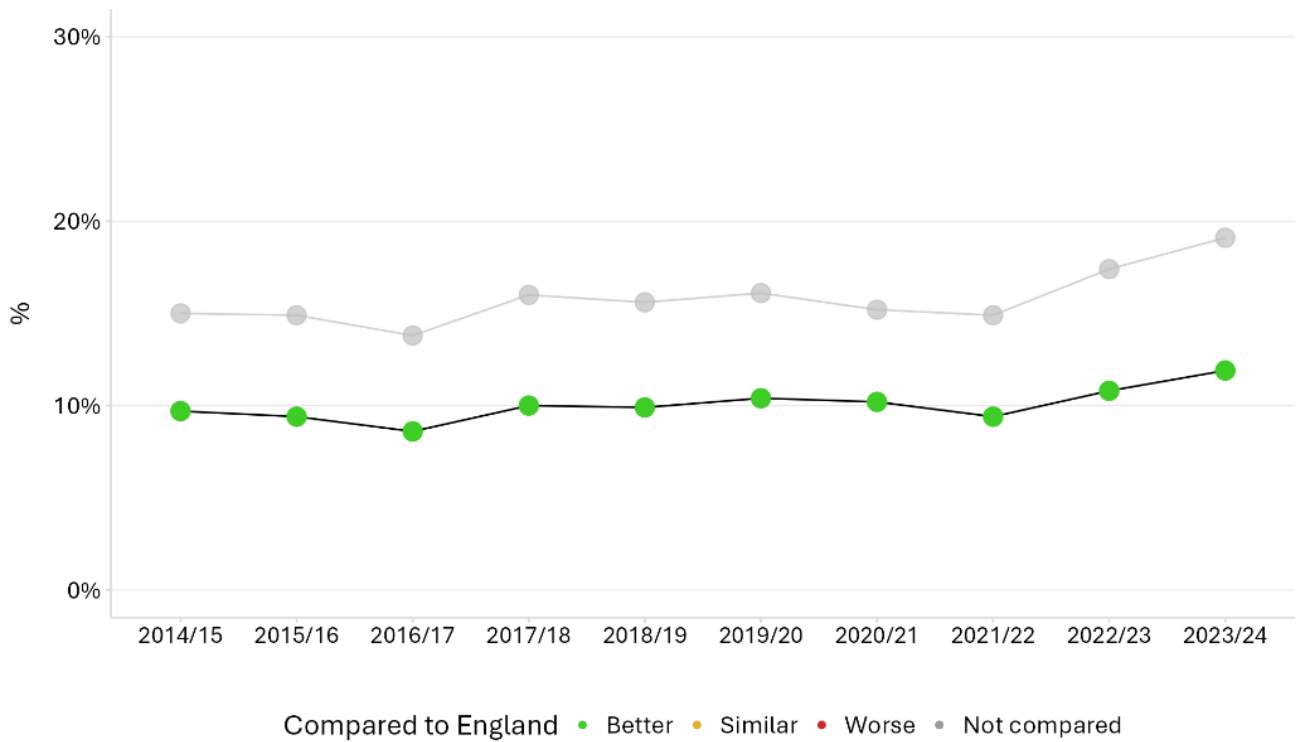
Children in low-income families (CiLIF) statistics provide estimates of the number of children living in relative and absolute low-income families by local area. In these statistics, a family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at some point in the year to be classed as low income (Francis-Devine, 2024).

Relative low income

Relative low income refers to a family whose equivalised income is below 60% of the median in the reference year, before housing costs. This measure helps us to compare across local areas.

In 2023/24, an estimated 22,244 (14%) of children aged 0-15 years in West Sussex were living in relative poverty before housing costs. This was significantly lower than the national average (22.1%). The percentage of children in relative low income families has increased from 12.3% in 2021/22 to 14% in 2023/24.

Figure 2 Percentage of children (aged 0 to 15) living in relative low-income families; West Sussex compared to England; 2014/15-2023/24



Source: OHID, based on Department for Work and Pensions and Office for National Statistics data

Across the district and boroughs, Crawley had the highest proportion of children living in relative low-income families (20.6%) and Mid Sussex had the lowest proportion of children living in relative low-income families (8.2%). All lower-tier local authorities within West Sussex remained significantly better than the national average (22.1%).

Table 3 Number and proportion of children (aged 0 to 15) in relative low-income families in West Sussex, 2023/24

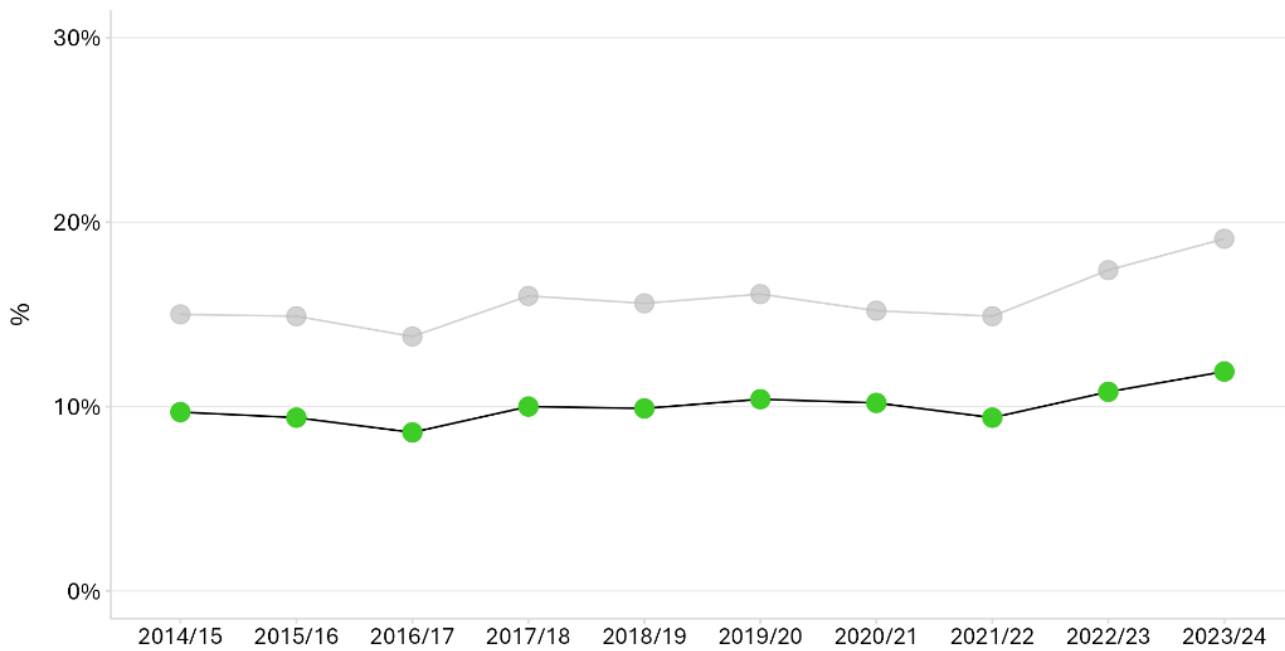
Area	Number of CYP in relative poverty	Total CYP	Proportion of CYP in relative poverty			Versus England
			%	LCI	UCI	
Adur	1,773	11,597	15.3	14.4	16.2	Better
Arun	4,460	25,607	17.4	16.8	18.1	Better
Chichester	2,783	19,811	14.0	13.4	14.7	Better
Crawley	5,344	25,905	20.6	19.9	21.3	Better
Horsham	2,609	26,737	9.8	9.3	10.3	Better
Mid Sussex	2,519	30,573	8.2	7.8	8.7	Better
Worthing	2,759	18,502	14.9	14.2	15.7	Better
West Sussex	22,244	158,732	14.0	13.8	14.3	Better
South East	256,061	1,762,090	14.5	14.5	14.6	Better
England	2,354,691	10,648,350	22.1	22.1	22.1	Not compared

Source: DWP - Children in low-income families, local statistics

Absolute low income

Absolute low income refers to a family whose equivalised income is below 60% of the 2010/11 median income, adjusted for inflation and before housing costs. This helps us to assess how low incomes are faring with reference to inflation. In 2023/24, 18,866 (11.9%) children aged 0-15 years within West Sussex were in absolute low-income families. This was significantly lower than the national average (19.1%). The percentage of children in absolute low income families has increased from 9.4% in 2021/22 to 11.9% in 2023/24.

Figure 3 Percentage of children (aged 0 to 15) living in absolute low-income families; West Sussex compared to England; 2014/15-2023/24



Compared to England ● Better ● Similar ● Worse ● Not compared

Source: OHID, based on Department for Work and Pensions and Office for National Statistics data

Table 4 Number and proportion of children (aged 0 to 15) in absolute low income families in West Sussex, 2023/24

Area	Number of CYP in absolute poverty	Total CYP	Proportion of CYP in absolute poverty			Versus England
			%	LCI	UCI	
Adur	1,513	11,597	13.0	12.2	13.9	Better
Arun	3,720	25,607	14.5	13.9	15.1	Better
Chichester	2,345	19,811	11.8	11.2	12.5	Better
Crawley	4,652	25,905	18.0	17.3	18.6	Better
Horsham	2,230	26,737	8.3	7.9	8.8	Better
Mid Sussex	2,120	30,573	6.9	6.5	7.3	Better
Worthing	2,290	18,502	12.4	11.7	13.1	Better
West Sussex	18,866	158,732	11.9	11.7	12.1	Better
South East	217,501	1,762,090	12.3	12.3	12.4	Better
England	2,030,841	10,648,350	19.1	19.0	19.1	Not compared

Source: DWP - Children in low income families, local statistics

Opportunities for young people

Social mobility

The Social Mobility Commission's (2025) Social Mobility Index captures a range of indicators across the drivers, intermediate and long term outcomes of social mobility. One key driver focuses on the work opportunities available to young people which includes data on youth unemployment from the ONS Labour Force Survey. Based on the latest index published in December 2025, the region of Surrey, East and West Sussex was in the second lowest quintile for youth unemployment across the 41 regions in the UK, with 12.5% of 16 to 24s unemployed, based on combined data from 2014 to 2024.

The Social Mobility Index also includes a 'conditions of childhood' measure which captures whether the conditions a child grows up in are good for promoting social mobility, considering child poverty, parental education and parental occupation (Social Mobility Commission, 2025). The index ranks 205 local authorities into seven groups, from 'most favourable' to 'least favourable' conditions – based on their 'conditions of childhood' composite score. Based on the latest index published in December 2025, West Sussex had a score of 0.83 which is ranked in the 'upper middling' group (fifth highest out of the seven) for childhood conditions.

For further information on the Social Mobility Index, read the [Social Mobility Commission annual report for 2025](#) and access the [data explorer tool](#).

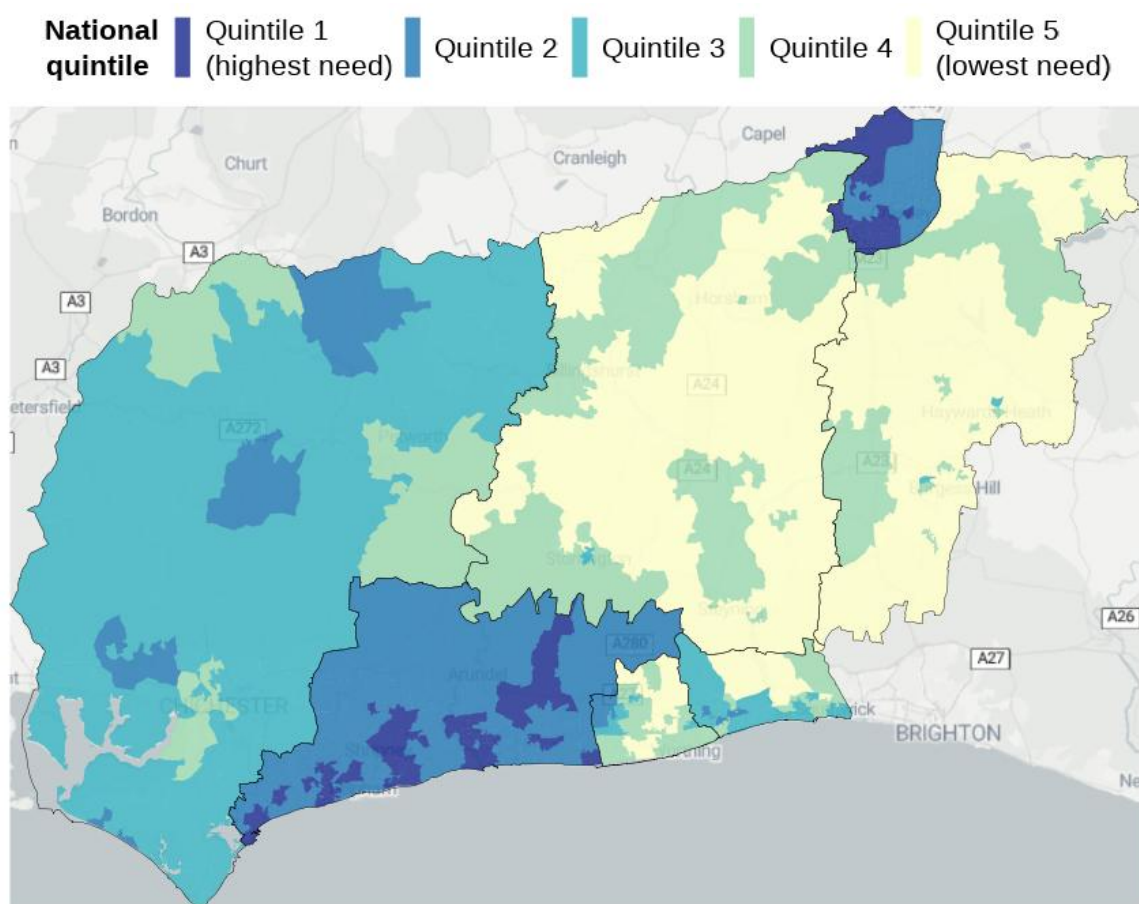
Barriers to education

The hyper-local needs index measures which neighbourhoods in England face the biggest challenges in meeting the five government mission objectives¹. These neighbourhoods are known as 2021 LSOAs which represent an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2025).

One government mission, 'breaking down barriers to opportunity', focuses on improving childcare, schools, further education and opportunities for lifelong learning.

According to this index, neighbourhoods within Arun and Crawley were amongst the 20% of areas with the highest need for better opportunities in education and skills nationally, indicating that these areas may be facing barriers relating to access to early years learning, educational opportunities and quality of education settings.

Figure 4: Hyper Local Needs measure: Breaking down barriers to education among small areas in West Sussex



The HLM is produced by the Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods and the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion.
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For further information on the hyper local needs measure and what this shows us about West Sussex, read [the hyper-local needs index briefing on the JSNA site](#).

¹ [Developing a measure of Hyper-local Need: neighbourhood level data to inform Labour's key missions - OCSI](#)

Free school meal eligibility

In England, free school meals (FSM) are a statutory entitlement available to eligible pupils if their family receive certain benefits (such as universal credit and income support), asylum support or have no recourse to public funds (NRP Network, 2025). In January 2025, approximately 9,650 (15.1%) pupils in state-funded primary schools and 8,275 (16.1%) in state-funded secondary schools in West Sussex were eligible for free school meals.

Since 1st April 2018, transitional protections have been in place during the roll out of Universal Credit. This means that pupils eligible for FSM on or after 1st April 2018 retain their eligibility even if their circumstances change. This arrangement continued until March 2025. Existing claimants that no longer meet eligibility after March 2025 will only continue to receive FSM until the end of their current phase of education. This has been the main driver for the increase in FSM eligibility, as pupils continued to become eligible but fewer pupils stopped being eligible.

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