

**Glasgow City Council****Education Services and Early Years City Policy Committee****Report by Executive Director of Education Services****Contact: Lorna Goldie Ext: 74224****UPDATE ON FREE SCHOOL MEAL PROVISION FOR 2023/24****Purpose of Report:**

To update committee on progress made for the rollout of free school meals for primary 6 and primary 7, and other initiatives around free school meal provision.

Recommendations:

Committee is asked to note the progress made on all elements of the free school meals provision for 2023/24.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No **PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:**

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1 Free School Meals Eligibility Criteria

- 1.1 The Scottish Government updated the eligibility criteria for free school meals for financial year 2023/24. This followed parliamentary consideration of The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (Modification) Regulations 2023.
- 1.2 All pupils in primaries 1 to 5 and special schools are offered free school lunches during term-time. Pupils above primary 5 are eligible for free school meals, from 1 April 2023, if their parents or guardians are in receipt of any of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
 - Any income related element of Employment and Support Allowance
 - Child Tax Credit, but not Working Tax Credit, with an income of less than £18,725
 - Both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit with an income of up to £8,717
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - Universal Credit with a monthly earned income of not more than £726
- 1.3 Eligibility thresholds for families in receipt of both Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit, and Universal Credit were changed to account for the latest rise in the National Living Wage which took effect on 1 April 2023. The rise in the eligibility thresholds will ensure that existing recipients of free school meals under these eligibility criteria will continue to be eligible throughout the financial year for 2023-24.
- 1.4 Education has received revenue funding of £2.208m as part of the 2023/24 budget settlement in respect of this initiative.
- 1.5 An increase to the eligibility threshold for people in receipt of Child Tax Credit has been brought about by changes made through The Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance Up-rating Regulations 2023, which came into effect on 6 April 2023.
- 1.6 Local authorities also have the discretion to offer free school meals to families who are experiencing financial hardship in exceptional circumstances.

2 Continuation of Free School Meals Holiday Payment for Children and Young People during the Holidays 2023/24.

- 2.1 On the 10 May 2023, notification was received that within the Scottish Budget for 2023-24 a commitment of £21.75 million funding was included towards the targeted implementation of free school meal holiday support for eligible children in primary, secondary and special schools during 2023/24 financial year. Glasgow's allocation of this is £4.050m. The approach would continue to involve the provision of support in all school holiday periods (Summer, October, Christmas, February and Easter) for all children and young people in primary, secondary and special schools who are eligible for free school meals on the basis of low income.
- 2.2 Eligibility for the holiday payments is the same as for income-based free school meals during term time. Glasgow award to families is based on £2.50 per day per child.

3 Roll out of Universal Entitlement for Free School Meals for P6 and P7

- 3.1 The Scottish Government has also indicated that the rollout of free school meals entitlement will be rolled out initially to those children whose parent/guardian is in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. This is in advance of Universal Entitlement being rolled out for P6 and P7. At the time of writing we have no formal notification of the funding for either this initiative, or the universal roll-out.
- 3.2 Obtaining information in relation to the numbers of families in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment has proved challenging and Glasgow continues to actively progress this with the agencies involved to aid with our financial planning.
- 3.3 All children in P1 to P5 are automatically entitled to receive free school meals without the requirement for parents/carers to submit an application form. However, there is a requirement for parents of P1 to P5 children to submit a generic clothing and school meals application form should they wish their child to receive free meals within the school breakfast club in order to evidence entitlement.
- 3.4 Parents/carers of children in P6 to P7 are currently still required to submit an application form to assess their eligibility for their children to qualify for free meals. Unless we can progress auto entitlement via data sharing the pilot scheme for the Scottish Child Payment rollout will have to be an application process, which will prove more costly in terms of administrative resource.

4 Capital Funding

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has awarded £2.262m of capital funding for 23-24. This funding is to facilitate the roll out of universal entitlement free school meals. Currently we have a number of schools where the increased take up due to automatic entitlement for P1-P5 has resulted in schools having to stagger mealtimes and various sittings taking place within the dining hall.
- 4.2 The capital will be required to make all the necessary changes to kitchens and dining areas to cope with the expected increase in uptake.
- 4.3 A group has been set up across the Council with representatives from Education, CFM and NRS. This is in order that we can prioritise the limited capital funding to the areas of greatest need.
- 4.4 We have initiated for FISOs to support families who are eligible for entitlement and for schools to be notified in general terms about this. The Financial Inclusion team will also help to promote the roll out of free school meals. Our Customer and Business Services are also involved in the planning stage of this to highlight the administrative consequences.

5 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:

Revenue Funding has been made available of £2.208m for free school meals. It is hoped that this will cover the full cost of the expected uptake.

Capital Funding has been made available of £2.262m for the P6 and P7 rollout. Any adaptations will have to be contained within this funding envelope.

Revenue Funding has also been received of £4.050m for the continuation of the Free School Meals holiday payments.

Legal:

Personnel:

There may be posts required to cope with the administrative processes associated with processing applications.

Procurement:

Council Strategic Plan: Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed.

Yes Grand Challenge 1 ; reduce poverty and inequality in our communities.

Mission 1: end child Poverty in our city using early interventions to support families.

Commitment: work with the Scottish Government to deliver Free School Meals for all Primary school children.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

(no significant impact, positive impact or negative impact)
Positive impact on Child Poverty

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

Yes, this supports wider uptake of those in receipt of specific benefits to access Free School Meals.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

N/A

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

N/A

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

N/A

**Privacy and Data
Protection Impacts:**

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N

No the systems being used have already been subject to a DPIA, and this roll out would only add to potentially other service users being added to existing systems.

If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Committee is asked to note the progress made on all elements of the free school meals provision for 2023/24.