

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
ADULT & CHILDREN SERVICES COMMITTEE
19 FEBRUARY 2014

Agenda Item	15.
Report No	ACS/29/14

The Introduction of Universal Free School Meals in P1 to P3 from January 2015

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

This report sets out the implications of the introduction of universal free school meals in P1 to P3 from January 2015.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 7 January 2014 the Scottish Government announced that all Scottish P1-P3 pupils will receive free school meals (FSM) from January 2015. This will affect in excess of 7000 young people in the Highlands, improving health and wellbeing and saving some families at least £350 per year for each child.
- 1.2 There are 7427 P1-3 pupils on the school roll across Highland schools, with 1170 currently entitled to FSM. In general terms there is an absence rate of 5.5% across this range of pupils. The current uptake in Highland primaries for those present, ranges from 53-62%. To date we are not in a position to collect individual year group data on uptake.
- 1.3 Trials in 5 local authorities have resulted in a significant increase in uptake from 41%-69% overall.

2. RELATED ISSUES

- 2.1 The increase in uptake for FSM from 2015 as stated above will raise several issues for the catering service to accommodate and serve an estimated 5000 additional meals per day.
 - Increased pressure in dining room facilities, space and seating areas and the need for additional tables and chairs, cutlery and crockery.
 - Lack of lunch time supervision and support to encourage this age group to enjoy the lunch time learning experience.
 - Increase in catering staff hours ie longer lunch time to accommodate staggered lunch times, earlier sittings for P1-P3, additional preparation, cooking and clearing up.
 - Increase in equipment for transporting food to 43 dining centres and potential increase in conveyance costs with more transportation of containers.

- 10 schools in Highland currently do not have a catering service, Eigg, Invergarry, Altnaharra, Elgol, Badcaul, Muck, Rum, Rosehall, Inverie and Scorage. 9 of these schools have a combined total of 44 pupils in P1-P3.
- Special diet requests are likely to increase and this will impact on food costs and preparation.
- Potential changes to administration and recording of FSM data.
- Increased costs for overheads ie consumables, materials and electricity
- Increase in food costs

3. PROPOSED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

- 3.1 Over the next few months the catering management team will be communicating the changes to FSM arrangements to all Head Teachers, parents/carers and staff. As part of this exercise feedback from parents/carers on potential uptake will be sought. Primary welcome packs and website will include additional information on the changes from January 2015.
- 3.2 A full analysis and information gathering exercise will take place to establish the impact and revenue consequences as detailed in paragraph 2.1.
- 3.3 In addition to current improvements in service delivery eg pictorial menus for this age group, opportunities for developments eg family service and servers in co-operation with the school will be looked at.
- 3.4 The service will investigate and make the necessary amendments to systems, documents and recording material for collecting uptake figures.

4. IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The actual funding allocation is not known at this time. It should be noted that the catering budget is already in a budget pressure situation.

<h3>5. RECOMMENDATIONS</h3> <p>5.1 The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the changes to FSM arrangements from January 2015 • Note the potential impact on facilities, service delivery and revenue consequences.
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Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 6 February 2014

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