

Report of: The Director of Children's Services

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Date: 18th December 2014

Subject: Universal Infant Free School Meals



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. The Children and Families Bill 2014 required a commitment from primary schools to offer a free school meal to all children in reception, year one and year two from 1 September 2014. This is known as the Universal Infant Free School Meal (UIFSM).
2. The policy required schools to make a number of changes to their kitchen and catering arrangements and to do so within very tight timescales.
3. All schools in Leeds delivered hot universal infant free school meals on the 1st September 2014
4. Uptake is estimated by Catering Leeds as 86% as predicted.

Recommendations

5. This is an important change and one where elected members can play a key role by working with local headteachers and governors to monitor and continue to encourage uptake of free school meal entitlement by FSME pupils across all key stages, including infants.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides an update to members on the implementation of Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM), overall free school meal take up/promotion and how this links to reducing poverty (as requested by the Scrutiny Board, instead of undertaking a full inquiry).

2 Background information

- 2.1 This a follow up report on Universal Free School Meals (UIFSM), the first report was submitted to the Board in April 2014, and provides detailed background information.
- 2.2 The Children and Families Bill places a legal duty on state funded schools in England including academies and free schools to offer a free school lunch to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 from Sept 2014.
- 2.3 From Sept 2014, schools are required to provide cooking in the curriculum through KS1 to KS3, with an emphasis on healthy recipes.
- 2.4 New duties to comply with revised school food standards will come into effect from January 2015.
- 2.5 The 2013 DfE 'School Food Plan', which applies cross phase, provides policy context and is being promoted alongside the new legislation. It outlines an aspiration to extend universal school meals - this has been reflected in two recent party political manifestos.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The new UIFSM policy has been successfully implemented in Leeds within very short timescales.
- 3.2 A cross council project team supported all schools to implement UIFSM from 1st September 2014. This included Catering Leeds, CEL, Children's Services Built Environment Team, and Early Help/Health and Wellbeing Service.
- 3.3 The roll out plan included a high profile launch event in February 2014 for headteachers, governors and councillors, led by Councillor Dowson and Headteacher Sarah Ruddy, with inspirational keynote speaker Henry Dimbleby (co-author of the School Food Plan and co-owner of Leon restaurant chain). A headteacher steering group was set up to advise on developments. Regular communications took place with headteachers. The communications team provided banners and posters for every school, these promoted the health and financial benefits to families.
- 3.4 A catering provider network met termly, allowing for good intelligence on progress across all schools. Meanwhile the School Food Plan was promoted to both primary and secondary schools through a variety of training courses for school staff.

- 3.5 A large scale operation to enhance kitchen equipment took place within very short timescales, to ensure delivery of 10,000 plus additional daily meals. The capital fund of £2.1m allowed for over 480 heavy equipment items to be ordered and fitted in 180 maintained and voluntary aided schools, with surveys and relevant further works for gas, electrics and ventilation. Typically, this also featured extra crockery, cutlery, kitchen utensils – by example, Catering Leeds purchased 15,000 additional knives, forks and spoons, 4,000 trays and 10,000 plates, bowls and tumblers, and 380 gastronomic serving dishes. Also necessary in most schools were revised dining arrangements and deployment of additional staff – for Catering Leeds, this has meant recruiting an additional 150 staff.
- 3.6 With 50% matched funding, the total cost, of equipment and installation is estimated at £800k, leaving a further £800K for 'phase two' capital projects. There are 3 schools that are high priority due to health and safety considerations, these three schemes are likely to absorb the remaining capital grant. On 16.10.14 the DfE announced £20m additional capital fund for UIFSM - the deadline for applications is 20.11.14, and the results will be known in January 2015. Bids have been submitted for a further 9 schools that meet the bid criteria.
- 3.7 An initial estimate from Catering Leeds is that UIFSM uptake is as anticipated, at 86%. Some schools had to make further adjustments as teething problems were encountered in the initial weeks.
- 3.8 To sustain school meal uptake, Children's Services and Catering Leeds will continue to support schools with kitchen/dining logistics as required; in particular, focus on quality of food, and effective caterer contract management; as well as the new mandatory food standards which take effect from January 2015.
- 3.9 The Health and Wellbeing Service have introduced training for school staff on the new School Food Plan, Cooking in the Curriculum, revised School Food Ambassadors, growing and farm food links, and supported school assemblies where requested. A launch event to promote the new School Food Standards will take place in December.
- 3.10 Councillor Dowson will be chairing a FSM strategy group meeting which will meet in late November. This group will monitor both UIFSM, and FSM take up.
- 3.11 There are two types of school meals data collected in school census returns, analysis from these will be reported. This could include children's & families scrutiny in future 6 monthly performance updates. These report uptake on the Census day. From this autumn UIFSM uptake will now be collected each term. The overall uptake of school meals by those eligible for FSM in all year groups is collected once a year in January. It takes several weeks to collect a census, undertake data quality work and for analysis to be undertaken. The autumn census is not yet complete.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 A range of stakeholders continue to be consulted on implementation of UIFSM. This includes the school meal strategy group, the headteacher UIFSM steering group, caterer's network, headteacher forum as well as individual headteachers and caterers. All schools were provided with advice and resources for communication with parents. All schools and caterers have had an opportunity to provide information about their own kitchen equipment needs. The deputy lead member for Children's Services is regularly updated about progress.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 N/A

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 A key objective within the Best Council Plan 2013-2017 is to build a child friendly city. The offer of the universal free school meal to infants contributes directly to key priorities and outcomes identified within the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2011-2015 to 'improve healthy lifestyles', 'encourage healthy eating' and 'increase uptake of free school meals'. Schools will have a statutory duty to offer UIFSM from September 1st 2014.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The UIFSM policy enabled all infants to have access to a free school meal by September 1st 2014. The allocated UIFSM capital fund grant achieved value for money by responding to need identified through audits carried out in school kitchens and optimising universal pupil access to a free school meal across all schools. Costs were minimised through offering matched funding, and bulk purchasing.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 N/A

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 Risks identified were linked with the short timescales. These risks were mitigated through careful project management and joint work by the project team.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The implementation of UIFSM is a success story in Leeds.

5.2 The impact of universal free school meals, and impact on uptake of free school entitlement and child poverty should continue to be monitored.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 This is an important change and one where elected members can play a key role by working with local headteachers and governors to monitor and continue to encourage uptake of free school meal entitlement by FSME pupils across all key stages, including infants.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.