

**2 July 2018**

**Update on Progress of  
Recommendations of the Take up  
of Free School Meals and Holiday  
Provision Review Report**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and  
Partnerships**

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**Purpose**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made against the recommendations from the committee's review of Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision.

**Background**

- 2 Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake a review to focus on an aspect of Child Poverty that would complement the work of Durham County Council's Poverty Action Group.
- 3 At a special meeting of the committee on 3 February 2016, members agreed the terms of reference for the Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision review. The objective of the review was to raise awareness of the need to claim free school meals (FSM) for those parents who are eligible, ensuring their children receive a midday meals and the school receives pupil premium funding and to increase awareness of holiday hunger activities taking place in County Durham communities.
- 4 Five key lines of inquiry were considered:
  - What benefits to schools of using DCC eligibility checking service?
  - How can this service better help schools?
  - How can take up of free school meals be increased in secondary schools?
  - What challenges/barriers are preventing take up in secondary schools and how can they be overcome?
  - What is available to help families feed and entertain their children during school holidays?

- 5 The review found that there is still stigma associated with free school meals and therefore consideration is needed to the use of language to describe groups of people who are experiencing poverty.
- 6 Overall take up of free school meals in County Durham is good and most schools within the county use the DCC FSM checking service and found it to be a quick and efficient system freeing up administrative staff to carry out other duties. Twenty-one schools outside of County Durham that use the service too.
- 7 The review group met with young people and asked them for their views on free school meals and holiday provision. Some of the young people indicated they did not take the FSM because they did not like the choices or they wanted to eat their lunch with friends offsite. They also indicated that holiday provision should not focus on the free food but on the activities otherwise it just becomes another handout and they would be reluctant to become involved.
- 8 East Durham Area Action Partnership provided evidence of their work with third sector partners to access funding streams and deliver holiday provision projects.
- 9 The review group's report on Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision was presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 16 November 2016 and was shared with the Children and Families Partnership at their meeting on 2 December 2016.
- 10 The action plan attached at appendix two provides a detailed response to each of the committee's recommendations with a timescale as to when the tasks will be complete.

### **Recommendation**

- 11 Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the progress update on the recommendations from Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision review report and comment accordingly.

### **Background Papers**

- Cabinet Report: Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision Scrutiny Review report – 16 November 2016

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance - None**

**Staffing – None**

**Risk - None**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty –** The review report takes into consideration Equality and Diversity; an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

**Accommodation - None**

**Crime and Disorder - None**

**Human Rights - None**

**Consultation – None**

**Procurement - None**

**Disability Issues – None**

**Legal Implications – None**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT – Take up of Free School Meals and Holiday Provision**  
**REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS CONSIDERED BY CABINET ON: 16 November 2016**  
**UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS – 02/07/2018**

<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
1. Durham County Council uses considerate and positive language in all its communications so as not to stigmatise or disadvantage any person experiencing poverty and encourage partners to do the same,	All catering support staff & cooks are reminded by DCC & T/S the need for confidentiality, respectful language to be used with pupils and parents. Training of cooks during school holiday July 2017. Ongoing review with area managers in regular update training.	School Meals Team	July 2017  Ongoing
<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
2. The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services explore school admissions procedures and give consideration to the inclusion of an option for parents' National Insurance number on the admission forms to enable Free School Meals eligibility checks on all children with the aim of : a. Reducing the need for eligible parents to complete additional forms or from eligible parents missing out on claims b. Improving school funding.	Free School Meal checking procedures circulated to schools. Ongoing encouragement to schools to use these to reduce submission of paperwork by parents. Increased activity Dec 2017 to April 2018 in run-up to introduction of Universal Credit: including extranet reminders. FSM team participate in Universal Credit working group to ensure strategies, which support maximum FSM uptake.	School Meals Team  Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services	Ongoing

<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>3. The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services encourage schools to check all their biometric terminals to ensure PIN code details are kept secure and that information cannot be seen by others when carrying out transactions and to take measures to remove a pupils lunch money balance from the customer screen and to consider alternative options for pupils to keep a check on their balance such as a receipt system,</p>	<p>Correspondence with schools as part of the catering support SLA (including some termly meetings and discussions with head teachers) during Autumn term 2017 to raise awareness of issues.</p>	<p>School Meals Team Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services</p>	<p>Autumn Term 2017</p>
<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>4. The Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services and Director of Transformation and Partnerships ensure all information on community projects providing holiday provision to communities is recorded and mapped centrally to ensure joined up working of all services and partners. Following the mapping exercise that a short electronic guide is produced and shared with schools, AAPs and Councillors to show where activities are located, types of activities offered, if food is included and cost.</p>	<p>Baseline exercise is currently underway to map current and planned provision across the County and will include: council provision including schools; AAP projects/schemes; and voluntary and community sector schemes. Once we have the baseline data we will be looking to see how we can join this up with other work AAP colleagues have already carried out on this issue to design options for improving the issue, which can be presented to the PASG and members.</p>	<p>Corporate Director of Children &amp; Young People's Services and Director of Transformation &amp; Partnerships</p>	<p>June/July 2018</p>

<b>Review Recommendation</b>	<b>Progress report of action taken to implement recommendation</b>	<b>Resib'ty</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<p>5. The Director of Transformation and Partnerships explore additional external funding opportunities for areas that experience levels of child poverty and holiday provision issues similar to those in East Durham and ensure that the model of best practice used by East Durham Area Action Partnership to help communities deliver holiday provision is promoted with other Area Action Partnerships.</p>	<p>Since the last update the Child Poverty Group is in existence. There has been a meeting of Cllr Jane Brown - Portfolio Holder for Social Exclusion and AAP Co-ordinators on 02/10/17 to update on the work of the AAPs, how we engage with Children &amp; Young people in our areas and how particularly we were addressing the issue of Holiday Hunger/ Holiday Provision. Information relating to how each AAP engages with Children &amp; Young People was updated at the end of October '17. An exercise is currently underway assessing the impact and effectiveness of the East Durham AAP provision as a model of best practice prior to wider promotion.</p>	<p>Director of Transformation and Partnerships</p>	<p>Jan 2018</p>