

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD



TO:	Health and Wellbeing Board
FROM:	Cath Taylor, Consultant in Public Health
DATE:	06/03/2023

SUBJECT: School Food Grant Funding Proposal

1. PURPOSE

To inform the Health and Wellbeing Board about a proposal to ensure that children in Blackburn with Darwen in the greatest need do not go hungry whilst at school during the summer term 2023.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

That Health and Wellbeing Board member note the proposal within this report, which is subject to approval at the Council's Executive Board on 9th March 2023.

3. BACKGROUND

Research by The Food Foundation found that in September 2022 four million children were living in households experiencing food poverty or at least food insecurity in the UK. Lack of nutritious food during childhood and adolescence can impact on physical, mental and social wellbeing. It can also have a negative impact on educational attainment with lasting life-time consequences.

In Blackburn with Darwen, 34% of our children live in relative low-income families (2020/21), this is the second highest rate in the Northwest and is nearly double the average rate across England (18.5%). During 2019, Blackburn Foodbank supported just over 11,000 people with crisis food provision of which 42% were children and young people.

Local schools report that some children regularly attend school unable to afford to buy lunch, because their family circumstances mean they fall outside the restrictive free school meal eligibility criteria (in receipt of benefits and having an annual net income of less than £7,400pa). In 2022, there were 26,331 pupils in the borough of which 6,628 or 25.2% were eligible for free schools meals (FSM).

Earlier this academic year, Blackburn with Darwen Council passed a motion to write to the Secretary of State for Education, to call for an urgent extension of free school meals to ensure universal provision for all school age groups and for a review of the restrictive eligibility criteria.

As we await national action, Blackburn with Darwen Council are proposing to implement a School Food Grant Fund to ensure that children in the greatest need do not go hungry whilst at school during the Summer Term 2023. Funding will allow schools to extend their free school meal offer or to support families who are experiencing food poverty or insecurity in other ways.

4. RATIONALE

Schools know their pupils well and are in the best place to respond to the unique needs of their families. Funding will be awarded to schools to enable them to best meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils and families quickly and efficiently. This includes but will not be limited to the following:

- Supporting vulnerable families who do not qualify for FSM but struggle to pay for school meals/appropriate packed lunches. This could include increasing access to FSM where appropriate or providing a daily subsidised option.
- Improving content of packed lunches (with wrap-around support and education to families in order to support healthier and affordable changes).
- Contributing to school 'food larders' to provide direct support to parents/carers (with signposting to Food Banks and wrap-around support where appropriate).
- Topping up lunch pre-payment cards for secondary pupils.
- Providing a nutritional breakfast for all or identified pupils/families.
- Provision of free ingredients for food technology pupils.

Funding will be allocated equitably between schools based on the proportion of pupils who live in the 25% most deprived postcodes (using Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index data) and the size of school. Schools will be able to apply for funding as follows via an Expression of Interest form.

- 1) Up to £2,000 (around 25% of schools will be eligible)
- 2) Up to £5,000 (around 45% of schools will be eligible)
- 3) Up to £10,000 (just over 30% of schools will be eligible)

Expected outputs and outcomes:

Outputs from the funding will vary depending on what activity each school proposes to support. However, if schools propose to use the funding for additional FSMs, this would provide 171,428 meals (at £2.45 per meal) or feed 2,678 additional children throughout the summer term at no cost (64 days, 17th April to 21st July).

A range of funding conditions will apply including compliance with Schools Food Standards and completion of returns detailing the activity funded (e.g. number of meals funded and children supported). A sample of schools will be audited to ensure spend has been appropriately distributed. Schools will be encouraged to engage with other partners to provide wrap-around support for pupils in greatest need via links to Food Banks, Help Hub and mental health and wellbeing support.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total funding for this programme is £420,000, consisting of the following:

- ICB Population Health funding - £25,000*
- Public Health Grant allocation - £25,000
- Household Support Scheme (round 3) – £370,000

*A requirement of ICB funding is that it is spent in 11 of the borough's wards which have been identified as Priority Wards.

10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Funding will be allocated equitably between schools based on the amounts of pupils living in the most deprived postcodes and the size of the school.

The project will contribute to the following public health outcomes for Blackburn with Darwen.

- B. Improving the wider determinants of health:
 - B01 Children in low income families
 - B17 Fuel poverty
- C. Health improvement:
 - C09 Child excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 year olds
 - C15 Diet

VERSION:	1
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DATE:	2 nd March 2023
BACKGROUND PAPER:	

