

Local Members' Interest
N/A

**Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee /
Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel**

**Executive Response to Final Report and Recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny
Review of the Take Up of School Meals in Primary Schools in Staffordshire**

Recommendations

1. That the Scrutiny and Performance Committee/Panel notes Cabinet's formal response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Working Group.
2. That the Scrutiny and Performance Committee/Panel considers the content of the accompanying Action Plan.
3. That the Scrutiny and Performance Committee/Panel monitor the Action Plan/ implementation of the agreed recommendations on a regular, exception basis until all recommendations have been fully implemented.

Report of Cabinet Member, Children and Young People

Part A

What is the Scrutiny and Performance Committee/Panel being asked to do and why?

4. The Committee/Panel are asked to consider the feedback on the Cabinet's response to the recommendations that were made by the Take Up of Schools Meals Scrutiny Working Group and the arrangements for implementing the agreed recommendations. They are asked to put in place arrangements to monitor the implementation of the recommendations, which helps ensure that this implementation takes place.

Part B

Background

5. A Working Group of Members of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee and the former Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel undertook a review into the take up of school meals in primary schools in Staffordshire as a result of concern about the implications of falling take up.
6. The findings and recommendations of the Working Group, aimed at providing some ideas as to how improvements might be made to support the School Meals Service, assist the schools and benefit children, were endorsed by the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel for submission for Cabinet response. When recommendations do not require a Cabinet decision, a response is sought from the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

7. The response of the Cabinet Member, Children and Young People, to the recommendations, together with the arrangements for the implementation of those that are agreed, are set out in the Action Plan attached to this report. The Working Group are thanked for the work that they have undertaken.
8. **Equalities and Legal Implications** - It is noted that the Working Group explored the legal context in which the School Meals Service operates. They reported that they were assured that there is no differentiation 'at the hatch' of those children receiving free school meals and have made a recommendation regarding integrating arrangements for children eating hot and cold food.
10. **Resource and Value for Money Implications** - Whether school meals are viewed as good value for money is a factor that may influence take up. It is noted that the Working Group's review incorporated a focus on making the best use of resources.
11. **Risk Implications** - Low take up of school meals presents a risk to the future of the School Meals Service and it is noted that the Working Group's recommendations aimed to address this risk.

Contact Officer

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List of Appendices/Background papers

- Action Plan (attached)
- Final Report of the Joint Scrutiny Review of the Take Up of School Meals in Primary Schools in Staffordshire
- Minutes of meeting of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee held on 15 November 2007
- Minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel held on 19 November 2007

Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee and Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Joint Scrutiny Review of the Take Up of School Meals in Primary Schools in Staffordshire

March 2008

RECOMMENDATION		ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DEADLINE
a)	A termly report on levels of take up of school meals in Staffordshire primary schools to be presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel.	Catering Services will produce termly uptake figures for consideration School Meals uptake is a national indicator 52 from April 2008	Head of Catering Service / Support Services	May, October 2008 February 2009
b)	A School Meals Report to be presented annually to Cabinet. Placed on the Staffordshire web.	Cabinet does not take for information items – report needs to go to the lead member	Head of Catering Service / Support services	May 2008
d)	School Governor on each school governing body is nominated to have a lead role in respect of overseeing and promoting school meals within their school. The School Governor (School Meals) to be responsible for working with the Head Teacher, Catering Staff, Catering Service Meals Service, School Council and parents to promote school meals within their school, to include ensuring that increase in the take up of school meals features in school development plans and policies.	Schools recommended to nominate a Governor with lead responsibility for overseeing / promoting school meals.	Head of Governor Support	December 2008

	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DEADLINE
e)	An annual questionnaire or mechanism for engagement with parents on school meals is introduced in all schools. For those schools that already have in place a questionnaire, this to include questions on school meals.	Schools recommended to include school meals questionnaire in systematic parental consultation / survey	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Ongoing
f)	School Councils to be asked to survey pupils for their views on school meals and the results of these surveys to be fed back to the School Meals Service.	Schools recommended to include school meals on School Council agendas	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Ongoing
g)	All schools to undertake a review of their school dining areas and produce an action plan of how the area can be improved. This to involve pupils, catering staff and School Governors. The aim is to create an environment which encourages pupils to eat school meals. This to include dining space, lunchtime management, promoting healthy eating and improving relationships between pupils and staff.	Schools recommended to review dining areas to create appropriate environment	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Ongoing

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h)	Schools to consider looking at ways in which to improve the social experience of eating. This may include the introduction of the Top Table, rewards systems and enabling pupils who take sandwiches and hot meals to eat together.	Schools encouraged to review lunchtime eating and social arrangements	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Ongoing
i)	School Meals Service to consider a recycling scheme for dining room furniture between schools to enable the general level of furniture to improve until schools with poor furniture can afford for it to be replaced.	This already happens where the furniture being replaced is of a suitable standard for re-use in another school	Head of Catering Service	Ongoing
j)	Good examples of schools that have created interesting eating environments for pupils to be shared in the School Meals Annual Report and on the website.	Catering Service will collect details of best practice and include in report and on website	Head of Support Services	Ongoing
k)	All schools to ensure that there are choices of food available for children throughout the lunchtime period. School Councils to be asked to monitor this.	This is an operational standard that will be monitored by annual service review	Head of Catering Service	Ongoing

	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DEADLINE
l)	Schools to review the amount of time given to eat meals and to play to ensure that the right balance is achieved.	Schools encouraged to review time allocation / length of lunch period etc	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Ongoing
m)	Schools to encourage a member of the school teaching staff to eat with pupils. Staff who participate to be offered a free school meal.	Schools to encourage teaching staff / adults to eat with pupils	Healthy Schools Co-ordinator	Ongoing
n)	More rigorous follow up non-payment of school meals.	Non-payment is pursued by the on-site cash collector until it reaches a certain level; debts are then referred to Catering Services when they reach a certain level; these are pursued by the issuing of a debtor account which is chased using the County Council processes	Head Support Services	Ongoing
o)	Where there are large families in primary schools, further research to be undertaken to explore the possibility of offering a free school meal to one child if this would increase the take up of school meals by large families.	No resource available		

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	DEADLINE
c)	The implementation of this Action Plan to be monitored by the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee and the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel.	Support from Scrutiny and Performance Team	