

**Briefing Paper to the Health and Wellbeing Board****Wards: All**

20 March 2018

**Healthy School Meals Family Cost Reduction Update****Briefing Paper of the Head of Service on behalf of Corporate Director for Public Health and Adult Social Care.****1. Purpose of the Paper and Summary**

- 1.1 To report on the progress of the agreed action from the 18 July Health and Wellbeing Board: 'That the public health team explore options for undertaking a piece of research to assess the impact of subsidised school meals have on families in the City, with a view to approaching it from a disadvantage, deprivation, financial, welfare angle'.
- 1.2 To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on the ongoing delivery of the healthy school meals cost reduction scheme, including current uptake by families, financial investment and the school food standards.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In 2012 Hull CC Cabinet agreed to reduce the cost of school meals to parents by 30p to cost £1 per meal.
- 2.2 In July 2014 the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed to reduce the cost further to parents of healthy school meals by an additional 50p to cost 50p per meal for all key stage 2 pupils at a cost to the Council of £516k-£677k dependant on demand. The 50p healthy school meals scheme was introduced into schools from January 2015.
- 2.3 The Health and Wellbeing Board has received regular updates about the implementation of Healthy School Meals Family Cost Reduction. Reports have been submitted: January 2015, November 2015, March 2016, May 2017 and July 2017.
- 2.4 Alongside Hull's scheme, nationally the 'Universal Infant Free School Meals' policy was introduced in September 2014 stipulating that all children in England's state funded schools in reception, year 1 and year 2 should be provided with a free school lunch.

2.5 In England a free school meal is a statutory benefit available to school aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits and who have been through the relevant registration process. Free school meals are available to children from the lowest income families; they are worth to families on average about £10 every week, or around £370 every year, per child.

2.6 The numbers of pupils receiving free school meals is also used as a measure by the government of deprivation and pays schools a premium of £1,320 for primary aged pupils and £935 for secondary aged pupils (2016-17 financial year). The premium is additional funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities to close the gaps between them and their peers.

### 3. Issues for Consideration

#### 3.1 Research

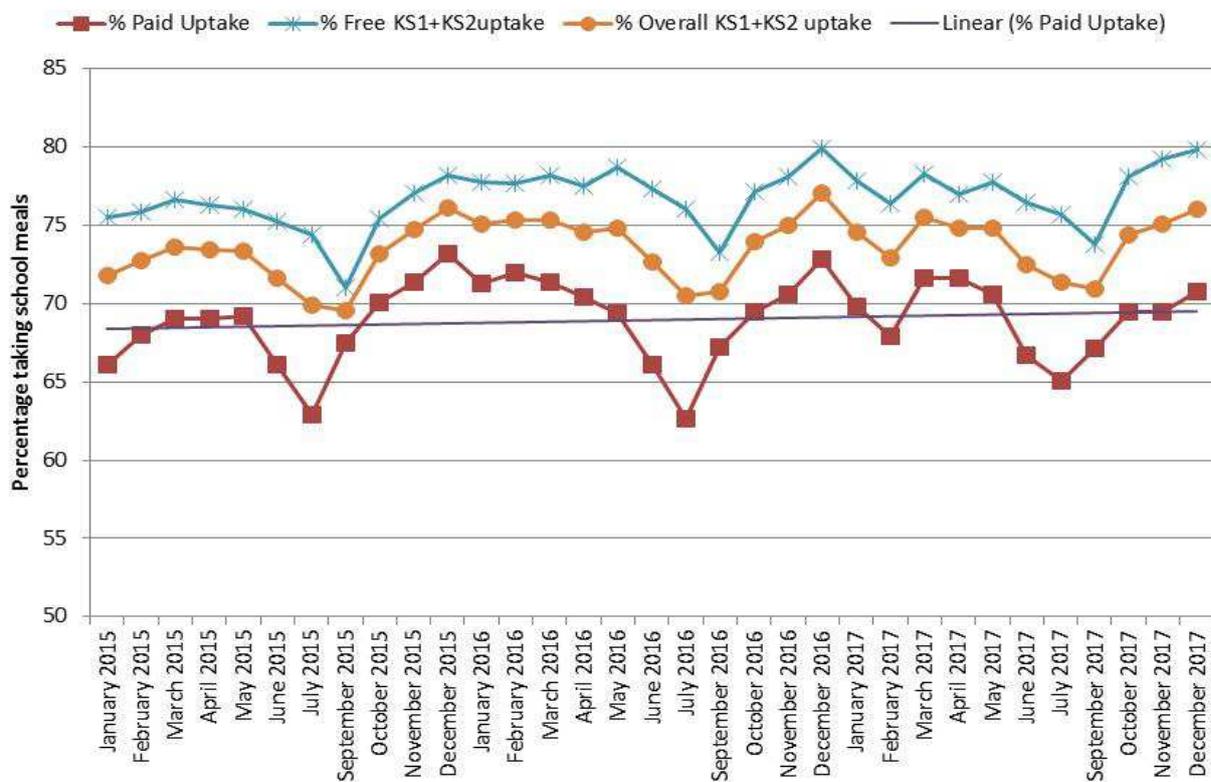
Working with an academic institution was considered as the most cost effective way to undertake any further research. York University has offered the research topic of school meals linked to deprivation to their master's students as a dissertation topic; unfortunately as of February 2018, no students have chosen it to progress. The topic will be offered again as a research option to the part-time students in May 2018. Discussions are also ongoing with Hull University regarding research opportunities including the topic of school meals.

#### 3.2 Uptake of Healthy School Meals Family Cost Reduction

a) The below table shows the uptake of school meals over autumn terms from 2014-1017, the 'paid' column represents the meals costing 50p to parents, the 'free' column represents uptake of free school meals (government funded meals). Please note that the table and subsequent analysis shows data from schools using Hull Catering Service as this data is readily available and the majority Hull primary schools use this service.

Period	No. of school s data based on	Uptake of school meals (%)			Weekly average school meals served		
		Paid	Free	All	Paid	Free	All
September to December 2014	67 / 71	58.4%	73.3%	67.4%	23,3 12	44,9 42	68,2 55
September to December 2015	67 / 71	70.4 %	75.3 %	73.3 %	30,4 21	46,0 58	76,4 35
September to December 2016	68 / 71	69.8 %	76.9 %	74.0 %	31,4 88	49,6 55	81,1 42
September to December 2017	65 / 71	69.1 %	77.6 %	74.0 %	30,5 32	46,4 35	76,9 67

- b) During September to December 2017, 76,967 meals per week were served in Hull primary schools, of which 30,532 were paid for by parents at the subsidised rate.
- c) During September to December 2017 almost three-quarters of primary school pupils ate school meals (74%), compared with just over two thirds during this period of 2014 (67%). There was no change compared with this period in 2016.
- d) 69.1% of pupils in KS2 not eligible for free school meals ate school meals during September-December 2017, a small decrease from the previous year, but a large increase from the 58.4% during September to December 2014, before the 50p school meals were introduced.
- e) Despite this small change in the percentage uptake of paid-for school meals, the actual number of paid-for school meals served each week decreased in September-December 2017 by 3%, owing to fewer schools using the Hull School Meals Service.
- f) Free school meals uptake increased further during September to December 2017, up to 77.6%, compared with 76.9% in 2015, 75.3% in 2015 and 73.3% in 2014.
- g) There is a degree of seasonality, with higher percentages taking school meals in the winter and fewer in the summer, as shown in the figure below, but over the period that 50p school meals have been provided, there has been a very small increase over time, as demonstrated by the trend line on the graph.



- h) The vast majority of schools take part in the scheme and charge parents 50p for a school meal. One school charges £1 (as per the scheme launched in 2012) and another school does not offer a subsidy to parents; participation continues to be open to these schools.

### 3.3 Financial Investment

- a) The average cost of a school meal provided by Hull Catering is £2.18; this is made up of: 80p Hull CC subsidy / 88p school subsidy / 50p cost to parent. Each school has its own cost per meal that takes into account the individual needs and associated adaptations within each school setting, for example the size of the kitchen, type of equipment available, number of serving points on site, sole purpose dining halls etc.
- b) This potentially saves parents in key stage 2 (years 3-6), who are not entitled to 'Free School Meals' £8.50 per week. Based on an average school year of 39 weeks this is a saving to families of: £331.50 per year (based on one child, taking 5 meals per week). A national report into Universal Infant Free School Meals (January 2018) also suggest that school meals saves parents approximately 50 minutes of time per week that it would take to purchase food and make packed lunches.
- c) The below table shows the financial investment into providing healthy school meals family cost reduction by Hull CC:

April-March	Public Heath Subsidy (50p per meal)	Corporate Subsidy (30p per meal)	Total Hull CC subsidy (80p per meal)
2015-16	£550,000	£330,000	£880,000
2016-17	£621,825	£373,095	£994,920

### 3.4 School Food Standards

- a) The new school food standards came into force in January 2015 and apply to all maintained schools, and academies that were founded before 2010 and after June 2014. They are intended to help children develop healthy eating habits and ensure that they get the energy and nutrition they need across the whole school day. In Hull 60% of primary schools are subject to meeting the school food standards.
- b) Hull Catering has achieved the Soil Association silver award that is a quality kite mark for providing healthy, locally sourced food that surpasses the School Food Standards (Jan 2015).
- c) Nine schools (as of February 2018) have opted out of using Hull City Council catering as their provider for school meals, seven are using their own internal catering provision and two are using external providers. The main reasons schools have reported to Hull Catering that they have chosen an alternative providers is due to the cost of Hull Catering provision. If schools are choosing to use alternative

providers for their food this makes it difficult to know if this provision meets the school food standards.

4. Next steps

- Continue conversations with academic institutions with regards research.
- Continue to monitor the uptake and financial investment of the scheme.
- Seek assurances from participating schools that have opted out of Hull City Council Catering service that food provided meets the School Food Standards and the process for claiming the subsidy is robust.

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Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: - None