

REPORT REFERENCE: **14.0**
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

REPORT

DATE OF MEETING:	18 May 2011
SUBJECT:	Free School Meals Uptake
REPORT SPONSOR:	Debbie Barnes
NAME OF CONTACT OFFICER:	David Saunders
CONTACT OFFICER TEL NO:	01522 553233
CONTACT OFFICER EMAIL ADDRESS:	David.saunders@lincolnshire.gov.uk
IS THE REPORT EXEMPT?	No
IS THE REPORT CONFIDENTIAL?	No

1. **Purpose:** For Noting

For Noting: - An update on the current position of Free School Meals within Lincolnshire.

2. **Background/Context**

To support the health, wellbeing and achievement of children and young people, Lincolnshire County Council embraces the Department for Education's Healthy Living Blueprint.

Children will benefit not only from having good nutritious meals every day but will also learn valuable lessons for life. Healthy children will achieve more and are more likely to grow into healthy adults.

The Food in Schools Team are responsible for the oversight and efficient co-ordination of the County Council's Food in Schools Strategy and the development & introduction of the Food in Schools Plan.

The Lincolnshire Food in Schools Strategy aims to "Tackle inequalities, especially with regard to Free School Meals.

The current situation has been achieved by use of the following methods:-

- Introduction of on-line applications for Free School Meals
 - 75% of FSM applications are now made on-line
 - Use of the Central Government eligibility checking hub means 90% of applications have a decision within 48 hours
- Introduction of hot school meals into primary schools
 - 97.5% of primary schools now receive a hot school meal.
- Reduction in stigma of FSM's via the introduction of cashless catering systems into secondary schools
 - 40% of secondary schools operate a cashless catering system
- Increasing the uptake of FSM's via the upgrade of secondary school dining facilities
 - 35% of secondary school dining facilities have been upgraded

In 2006, prior to the re-introduction of hot school meals into primary schools, there were an extremely low number of families applying for the sandwich pack-up as a free school meal.

Free school meal numbers have risen dramatically within the county from 2,200 eligible pupils in 2006 to the present situation where 11,646 pupils are eligible for FSM's.

Growth of Free School Meals.

	Primary	Secondary
2010/11	13.2% (99.1)	8.3% (99.3%)
2009/10	11.2% (89.6%)	8.0% (79.4%)
2008/09	9.5% (89.8)	7.0% (79.2%)
2007/08	8.3% (85.5%)	6.3% (79.2%)

Figure in bracket (% of eligible taking meal)

Lincolnshire County Council eligibility is now only approximately 1% below the national average for a similar shire county.

The success of Free Schools Meals throughout the county equates to an additional £5,007,780 of funding for Lincolnshire schools via the Pupil Premium.

3. Recommendation

OBJECTIVE 5 of the Lincolnshire County Council Strategy for Food in Schools – IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND TAKE UP OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN LINCOLNSHIRE states.....

It is an expectation of the Strategy that hot meals should be made available for all Lincolnshire children (particularly in winter). Studies have shown that free school meals uptake is likely to increase if hot meal provision is readily available. This has been evident in Lincolnshire primary schools where hot meals have been introduced, notably in areas of high social deprivation.

The Education Act 1996 prescribes that free school lunches must be available, where requested, to parents who receive one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Support under part vi of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit and an annual income which does not exceed £16,190 (continues from April 2011)
- The guaranteed element of the State Pension Credit.

As of 1 April 2011, schools receive the following amounts per pupil for free school meals:

- Primary £2.08 plus £0.35 for transport costs
- Secondary £2.22
- Special £2.35.

The Food in Schools Team will seek to find and disseminate good practice at all times and will promote the uptake of school meals in general, emphasising that the quality of both hot and cold meals is being improved in terms of nutritional standards, choice and freshness.

The main emphasis will be on further promotion of Free school meals especially within secondary schools. This will be undertaken by the following methods:-

- Greater use of online marketing
- Promotional stands at leisure centres, youth clubs and secondary school events.
- Outlining to schools the financial benefits of increasing uptake of Free School Meals
- Reducing stigma through further introduction of cashless systems

It should be noted that further proposed annual rises to the Pupil Premium up to 2014 increases the importance of Free School Meals's throughout the county. I would recommend that budgets are maintained to continue the promotion of this service.