



Agenda Item 6

**Provision of Meals During Holidays for
Children Entitled to Free School Meals**

Falkirk Council

Title: Provision of Meals During Holidays for Children Entitled to Free School Meals
Meeting: Education Executive
Date: 29 May 2018
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks to provide more information, options and assessment around providing meals for children, entitled to free school meals, during holiday periods.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Education Executive is asked to :-

- (1) Note the success of the 2017/18 holiday meal programme;**
- (2) Note the challenges outlined should Members wish to adopt a more universally targeted provision; and**
- (3) Agree that the current plans for the 2018/19 holiday meal programme continue and that a report is presented at a future date evaluating the outcomes.**

3. Background

- 3.1. Following discussion at the Education Executive on 10 April 2018, the Education Executive requested;

"a report for the next meeting of the Education Executive on the provision of school meals during holiday periods for children who are entitled to free school meals".

- 3.2. Members will be aware that in 2017/18 the Council in conjunction with a number of partners including the Falkirk Food Bank, community organisations etc. ran a programme to provide holiday food. To support this, the Council allocated £75,000 to be used for this purpose. Specifically the money was allocated to

" help support families within some of our most deprived areas with funding will allow work to be undertaken with colleagues in the Foodbank service to enable food to be provided and distributed to such families during the summer holiday period".

- 3.3. *The proposal also includes £25,000 specifically to enable the Falkirk Foodbank to provide some support to events organised by local groups, churches and voluntary organisations over the holiday period that provide food/meals for children.'*
- 3.4. Over the course of 2017/18 the Council and partners developed and delivered a number of initiatives aimed at provided children and their families with food and meals at a time when free school meals would not be available.
- 3.5. To develop this programme the Council established a holiday food programme group. This group determined that a multi faced approach would be best given the need to deliver within a short period of time but also to take account of the following factors:
- ensuring there was no stigma in the provision;
 - identifying and targeting families rather than making this an application process;
 - where possible linking food to other activities – this has the dual affect of feeding children but also providing them with experience and activities that they might not normally be able to access;
 - little or no bureaucracy from a Council, food bank or other organisation's perspective;
 - ensuring the money was used to deliver food etc. rather than administration;
 - to develop a relationship with families in need not necessarily known to organisations; and
 - to learn what works and use try to replicate this for future years.
- 3.6. On the basis of the above, a programme was developed and delivered during summer 2017, Christmas 2017 and Easter 2018.

4. Considerations

Existing Holiday Meal Provision

- 4.1. The initiatives supported included a number of activities designed and delivered in conjunction with a number of key partners. These included:
- Falkirk Community Trust Active Schools team
 - Falkirk Council Community Learning and Development (CLD) team
 - Falkirk Foodbank
 - Aberlour Food group
 - a number of local community organizations.
- 4.2. A summary of the activities undertaken follows:

Active Schools

- 4.3. For the seven weeks of summer 30 children per week were offered and took up a place in the active schools programme for a cost of £5,000. This money paid for additional free places and food to be provided initially at lunch and then throughout the day.
- 4.4. This meant approximately 210 children took part in activities they would not normally have been able to due to cost etc. The children were identified by schools in conjunction with the Active Schools team from the Community Trust.
- 4.5. An additional 61 places was provided during the 2 weeks of the Easter holidays in 2018.
- 4.6. In addition to ensuring children were fed, this approach ensured children had summer experiences they wouldn't normally have had and also give partners / carers a break during that time. This is important in families where day trips, holidays etc. are not normally affordable.

Foodbank Provision

- 4.7. The money allocated by Members had the proviso that the Foodbank be involved. This gave a number of challenges including the Foodbanks' capacity to be able to deliver food parcels to the number of families we hoped to target. It was agreed that we would target **200** families with a food parcel that would accommodate food for a family of 4 for 10 days and that this would be provided once at the start of the summer and then again in the middle of the holidays.
- 4.8. Families were identified by the Foodbank and Children's Services, were asked if they wanted to participate and then the parcel was provided. It was also agreed that CLD would support the delivery of these parcels in order to be as discreet as possible.
- 4.9. It was understood that these parcels were well received by the recipients. One mother advised that through this provision she was able to use the money she saved to help buy her children their school uniform for the new term, something she struggles to do each year. Other recipient was a family where the grandparents were looking after children during the summer while the mother continued to work.
- 4.10. This approach was replicated during the Christmas when an additional 200 parcels were delivered.

Summer Food Grants Scheme

- 4.11. Eight community organizations received funding through the Summer Food Grants scheme to provide families with meals and opportunities to engage in the community during the school holidays. A range of activities, including

summer camps, cooking and food clubs, Crafts, Games, Sports, and socializing events were planned though some were not as popular as hoped.

- 4.12. This fund was made available via a shortened application form. Some targeting took place to ensure coverage across the Council area. In particular in the West of the District, organisations were slow to apply.

Community Learning and Development (CLD)

- 4.13. Community Learning and Development (CLD) team, worked with **19** community organizations to provide a number of short activities and trips during the summer holiday to children in poverty. Projects targeted specific areas of the Falkirk Council district including Langlees & Bainsford, Slammannan, Larbert, Graeme Cluster, Camelon, Bo'ness, and Maddiston. 178 families including 1181 children and young people participated in play schemes, fun day events, day trips, and socializing events. Food was provided as part of all events.
- 4.14. In addition CLD have over the Easter period piloted a family cooking programme with 24 volunteering families. The food cooking activities will take place across two areas: Grangemouth (Kersiebank) and Camelon. The project will explore issues around nutrition and fuel poverty, looking at the benefit of slow cooking over electric cooking, which offer 2/3 value for money. Facilities have been identified in community kitchens in Camelon and Grangemouth to support the cooking programme.

Other Projects out with the holiday food Programme.

- 4.15. In addition to the activities noted above, there are other activities that are supporting children and young people out with the holiday food programme. These include:

Aberlour Food Group

- 4.16. Aberlour Food Group provided support for 20 children and 12 adults with food over summer through a cooking programme. 9 families, who participated, received kitchen utensils, recipes, budgeting and shopping advice, food and ingredients. This was outwith the funding provided by the Falkirk Council.

Supporting Looked After Young People

- 4.17. £10,000 was allocated from the holiday food programme to a project to help support looked after young people. This project helps young people to afford food and fuel during the winter period.

5. Future Holiday Meal Programme

- 5.1. Given the success of the holiday programme and that it was able to be delivered at a cost last year of approx £25,000, plans are already underway to expand and provide similar activities this year.
- 5.2. To this end plans are underway to continue the provision of Active Schools places this summer. The programme will be run over more locations this year allowing more communities to participate. While we are currently planning for the same number of children at the moment we would hope if possible to expand this.
- 5.3. It is also planned to work with the Foodbank to provide 200 parcels twice during the summer break and then again finances permitting during Christmas.
- 5.4. A small grants scheme will again operate for voluntary organisations, churches to run their own programme. This will mean community groups who wish to provide food and activities during summer can apply for funding to do so. A fuller evaluation on the programme will be developed this year in order to inform future programmes in these areas.

6. Consideration of Providing Free School Meals During the Holiday Period

- 6.1. Members have asked about providing a free school meal for all young people who are eligible during the summer holiday period.

Over-all Pupil Eligibility

- 6.2. Currently we have an estimated 2,046 (15.9%) and 1,068 (12.2%) pupils who qualify for free school meals within our primary and secondary schools respectively, 3,114 in total.

Issues to be considered

- 6.3. If Falkirk Council were to adopt universal targeted summer meal provision programme focussed on pupils those pupil eligible for free schools meals, several important and challenging factors would need to be considered:-
 - How to ensure there is no stigmatisation for children who have to attend school during a time when other children don't.
 - How to fund the significant additional cost of providing meals to eligible pupils.
 - Recruitment of catering and cleaning staff (mainly work term time currently).
 - Access to schools during holiday periods not only for the provision of the meals but for their preparation etc.
 - Consideration of minimum demand/uptake levels (for viability).

- How to assess eligibility of P1-P3 pupils who currently receive free meals as part of the universal service provision.
 - The administration of such a scheme would be significant.
 - How meals would be provided if there is work happening on the school as part of the summer planned improvement works.
- 6.4. Members will be aware that Falkirk currently prepares and cooks meals in local schools. This would mean every school would have to open to provide meals.
- 6.5. It is estimated that the costs for providing school meals across our primary and secondary school estate during the holiday periods would be between £0.5m - £0.75m, (assuming an uptake rate of 60% - 80%).
- 6.6. Given the significant challenges outlined above it would be difficult for Members to agree to adopt this without a significant amount of work being undertaken and the appropriate resources identified.

7. Consultation

- 7.1. None

8. Implications

Financial/Resources

- 8.1. As part of Falkirk Council's 2017/18 budget the sum of £75,000 was identified as "one-off" funding to support a holiday meal programme.
- 8.2. The costs for the 2017/18 programme highlighted in section 4 were c £35,000, with the balance of £40,000 remaining to be used with our current 2018 planned programme.

Legal

- 8.3. None

Risk

- 8.4. The risk associated with a targeted universal provision is to ensure children are not stigmatised by the very nature of the service being provided.

Equalities

- 8.5. We will undertake an Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment on our plans which will ensure we fulfil our Fairer Scotland duties.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

8.6. None

9. Conclusions

9.1. The holiday food programme designed over the last year has provided children, young people and their families with invaluable support over the last year. It is provided in a way that ensure not only that we provide food to children but also that they get additional benefits. Work is already underway to build on this over the coming year.

9.2. It is planned that a fuller evaluation of that programme be carried out later this year so that Members can consider holiday food programmes for future years.

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Appendix:

None

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- None