

Cabinet – 2 April 2015

Report of the Director Development and Corporate Services

Electoral Divisions affected: All

Free Schools Meal Lancashire-wide Take-up Project

Contact for further information

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Executive Summary

By sharing information with District Councils it is possible to identify children who are entitled to, but do not currently receive, free school meals. This requires co-ordination and co-operation between the County Council and the Lancashire District Councils.

This report provides details of the outcome of the 2013/14 and 2014/15 campaigns to increase the take up of children entitled to free schools meals.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to note the contents of this report.

Background and Advice

1. Background

Many parents who claim Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support are eligible to claim free school meals for their children, the exception being those households where working tax credit is being claimed by a member of the household which would debar a pupil from being entitled to free school meals. Housing Benefits (HB) and Council Tax Support (CTS) data is held by the District Councils. The aim of this project was to increase the take up of free school meals, and the methodology used was based on the assumption that the children of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claimants should be entitled to free school meals.

By matching the Children and Young People's Directorate records of children currently claiming free school meals against the District Council HB and CTS records those who should be eligible were identified. Once identified they were

then checked to establish if they were already in receipt of their free school meal entitlement.

The pupil premium introduced in April 2011 provides a financial incentive for schools to ensure that all eligible children are claiming their entitlement.

Data sharing principles had been agreed by the County Council and the District Council in the form of a Data Sharing Protocol developed in conjunction and collaboration with representatives from the Districts.

District Councils were provided with lists of current claimants of free school meals in their area. By matching these to their own lists of HB/CTS claimants District Councils were able to identify those people who were most likely to be entitled to free school meals but who were not in receipt.

Each District Council conducted a mailshot to those identified informing individuals of their possible entitlement. The letters also informed them of the data-sharing that would need to take place between the relevant District Council and the County Council.

The districts relied on either explicit or implied consent of the claimants. The mailshot contained the instruction that the claimant make contact in order to either 'opt-in' or 'opt-out' of the campaign depending on the type of consent.

Claimants were given several weeks to respond, depending on the District. The responses were then assessed to find the pupils ID number in order that they could then be matched to the Government's Electronic Checking System (ECS) database.

2. Results of the 2013/14 Campaign

The outcomes from the 2013/14 campaign can be summarised as follows:

- possible claimants identified by District Councils - 3,233
- Cases referred to Children and Young Peoples Directorate for consideration - 1505
- Pupils qualified for FSM - 369
- £value of Pupils Premium –
 - Primary £1300 per pupil
 - Secondary £935 per pupil.

A high level analysis of these numbers is shown in Table 1 below, a more detailed summary of the outcomes is provided at **Appendix 1**.

Pupil Age	No of Eligible Pupils	Total Pupil Premium
Primary	248	£322,400
Secondary	121	£113,135
Total	369	£435,535

Table 1: Results of the 2013/14 Campaign

3. Results of the 2014-15 Campaign

In terms of timelines, the campaign was mobilised in September 2014 and was completed January 2015 when the data was loaded on to the Schools Portal – an overall timescale of 18 weeks. Timing was one of the success factors of this year's exercise – both in terms of the number of weeks to complete the various stages of the project and also the time of year i.e. autumn rather than over Christmas and New Year.

The outcomes from the 2014/15 campaign can be summarised as follows:

- Cases referred to CYP for consideration - 1664
- Pupils qualified for FSM - 351
- £value of Pupils Premium –
 - £1320 per primary pupil
 - £935 per secondary pupil.

A level analysis of these numbers is shown in Table 2 below, a more detailed summary of the outcomes is provided at **Appendix 2**

Pupil Age	No of Eligible Pupils	Total Pupil Premium
Primary	239	£310,700
Secondary	112	£104,720
Total	351	£415,420

Table 2: Results of the 2014-15 Campaign

4. Conclusions

The increase in take up of free school meals from the 2013 /14 and 2014/15 schools meal campaigns is largely as a result of an inclusive and collaborative approach being taken by all stakeholders. Generally the management of the project including key factors such as communications and data sharing has improved.

The comparative outturns from the recent and previous projects are very similar:

- 2013-14 - 369 pupils benefitted with an additional £436,000 pupil premium
- 2014-15 - 351 pupils benefitted with an additional £415,000 pupil premium

It is clearly very important that, for the next campaign, lessons are learnt from this time to ensure that the approach and methodology are further refined and improved.

Consultations

N/A

Risk management

This report is for noting, there are no risk management issues

Financial

The financial implications are set out in the body of this report.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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N/A

Appendix 1 – Outcomes by District 2013-14

LANCASHIRE-WIDE FSM PROJECT 2013-14													
	Lancaster	Wyre	Fylde	Preston	South Ribble	West Lancs	Chorley	Ribble Valley	Hyndburn	Burnley	Pendle	Rossendale	TOTALS
Pupils potentially entitled	34	697	92	91	29	7	6	23	23	221	270	12	1505
Pupils identified as not entitled	4	614	51	24	0	0	2	8	14	71	262	3	1053
Pupils potentially entitled following ECS check	30	83	41	67	29	7	4	15	9	150	8	9	452
Not eligible per ECS (eg independents, home school)	5	14	7	8	21	3	2	3	0	29	0	1	93
Pupils added to system	25	69	34	59	8	4	2	12	9	121	8	8	359

Appendix 2 - Outcomes by District 2014-15

LANCASHIRE-WIDE FSM PROJECT 2014-15

	Lancaster	Wyre	Fylde	Preston	South Ribble	West Lancs	Chorley	Ribble Valley	Hyndburn	Burnley	Pendle	Rossendale	TOTALS
Pupils potentially entitled	21	857	75	67	37	13	4	31	7	292	248	12	1664
Pupils identified as not entitled	2	753	43	15	3	1	1	4	4	102	239	6	1173
Pupils potentially entitled following ECS check	19	104	32	52	34	12	3	27	3	190	9	6	491
Not eligible per ECS (eg independents, home school)	2	26	12	18	11	1	0	3	0	63	2	2	140
Pupils added to system	17	78	20	34	23	11	3	24	3	127	7	4	351

