

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

23 February 2021

Item 6 – Public Participation

From Aaron Donovan

To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Schools

Question (P21-10)

I understand that during the Christmas holidays Wiltshire Council organised a scheme to continue to provide Free School Meals for families who need it. Please can you explain how the scheme worked and confirm if it has continued during the lockdown? How many families have benefited from the scheme?

Response

During the school holidays (Winter break 2-weeks, February half term 1-week) Wiltshire Council provided £15 per child per week to schools to fund lunch provision. The children that were eligible for the funding were already in receipt of free school meal funding during term time, so we continued to provide this funding over the holidays to make sure they didn't miss out. There was a similar arrangement in place across Early Years settings as well. This would be in the form of either: supermarket vouchers, local community store vouchers, food parcels or bank transfers in some cases.

Schools have remained fully funded throughout the lockdown period, so have the finances to provide food provision during term time. There is a national voucher scheme that started during January for schools, provided and funded by the DfE, to provide lunches for Free School Meals eligible children whether they are attending school or not due to current lockdown restrictions. This is one of the solutions schools have used to continue providing for these children, as well as in-house catering teams providing hot lunches on site or as takeaways and weekly food parcels.

Wiltshire Council will provide funding to schools in a similar way for the Easter school holiday and there will be further support available over the summer for children eligible for free school meals.

Across our Early Years settings and Education sites over 10,000 children have benefited from these arrangements, representing over 6,500 families.