

Record of operational decision

UPDATED March 2020: Decisions in relation Covid-19 should be published on the same day as the decision or at the very latest 24 hrs later.

Decision title:	Decision to reimburse schools who fund the cost of up to £15 per week for free school meals during the October 2020 half term school holiday for one week and for the Christmas school holiday period for c.3,200 eligible children.
Date of decision:	27 October 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Children and Families
Authority for delegated decision:	Council constitution 3.7.9 all necessary decisions in the case of emergencies
Ward:	All wards
Consultation:	<p>Consulted with the Cabinet Member for Children and Families who supports the decision</p> <p>Consulted with the Section 151 officer who has given approval and notes that this should be funded from the COVID-19 grant.</p> <p>Consulted with the solicitor to the council who has required an officer decision to be recorded</p>
Decision made:	Agreed to reimburse schools who fund £15 per week for children eligible for free school meals. Numbers identified are c.3,200 but this may increase as more families identify themselves.
Reasons for decision:	Government funding for free school meals does not cover the October half term school holiday. Not providing free school meal funding during the holiday could increase the risk of hardship to children who rely on the school meal to provide a good meal each day and is made more necessary as part of the COVID-19 response. There is no indication at present that national government intends to provide free school meal funding for the Christmas 2020 holiday period.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The decision provides support for children eligible for free school meals; a vulnerable group at a time of pressure and hardship on a significant number of families due to COVID-19 impact, including restrictions on the ability of parents to earn due to the national lockdown. This has greater impact on those on lower pay.</p> <p>The potential cost for the identified children is c.£48,000 for the October half term; c.£96,000 but could be less, particularly in the October half term. It could be more, particularly for the Christmas holiday. The potential amount will be reviewed and the cabinet member for children and young people and the Section 151 officer will be informed of any potential variance to this estimated figure.</p> <p>The decision will be coordinated with the use of the hardship fund within the council and the plans through Talk Community to support children and families in these circumstances.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>To not fund</p> <p>This could leave a significant number of children potentially without food during the October half term school holiday or during the Christmas holidays.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	N/A

Signed

Chris Baird
Director for children and families

Date: 27 October 2020