

CYPE(6)-18-23- Paper to note 8

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Jayne Bryant MS,
Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee

Dear Jayne

During the draft budget session on the 11th of January 2023, I agreed that I would write to the committee and share the interim findings from the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) policy review on the current Year 7 Breakfast Pilot. Due to the proximity between receiving the interim and final report, I have taken the time to share the final findings.

As you are aware an opt-in pilot has been running since January 2021, funded by the Welsh Government and coordinated by the WLGA's Food in Schools Team. To assist in assessing the outcome of the pilot the Welsh Government commissioned the WLGA to undertake a policy review to provide insight into the operation of the pilot. This policy review focused on:

- the number of schools operating the pilot and take-up rates;
- undertaking focus groups with local authorities and schools, who are operating the pilot, to gain further insight into the barriers faced to participate in and implement the scheme; and
- conducting online surveys with Year 7 pupils and their parents to gather quantitative data to find out if they are aware of the additional breakfast.

The WLGA's Food in Schools Team submitted their final policy review report on the 22 of March.

In summary, the report shows that 62 (30%) secondary schools had opted-in by December 2022 with the average spend per eligible pupil per day remaining stable at approximately £0.35. This value reflects the fact that not all eligible learners access the £1 made available to them each day.

In terms of take-up, this was found to be variable between schools and dependant on how well it was promoted within the school, how much it was needed, and when it was made available during the school day. Where schools provided a spend-as-you-like offer take-up was approximately 30% with an average spend of £0.75 per pupil accessing the offer per day. This increased in schools that offered a £1 breakfast deal with approximately 45% of pupils taking this up daily.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

9 May 2023

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It reported that where pupils were missing breakfast at home, this was due to lack of time, long commutes or simply not feeling hungry before attending school. The pilot therefore was seen by several respondents as helping provide sustenance throughout the school day to those who had missed breakfast. There was some anecdotal evidence that this was benefiting the learner's health and well-being, learning and attendance.

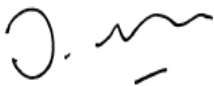
Findings also helpfully identify barriers to the delivery of the breakfast offer. These included: the limited availability of breakfast provisions following COVID-19 being made available to learners either before the start of the school day or at morning break; difficulties adapting cashless catering systems to provide two different allowances (breakfast and lunch); and difficulties recruiting staff during the breakfast period. The WGLA also advocated consideration to the value of the allowance in the context of rising inflation and food prices.

Feedback from a number of councils also cited limited capacity within councils' catering services to engage with the pilot due to its perceived temporary nature, and their current focus on a number of areas including: free school meal holiday provision; re-establishing free breakfast provision in primary schools following the COVID-19 pandemic; adapting to new allergen labelling requirements; working toward wellbeing and sustainability objectives; managing issues in relation to staffing, food supplies and food costs; and delivering universal primary free school meals (UPFSMs).

Whilst the report contains reflections from the WGLA on the pilot, it not does not make a recommendation on the way forward.

Moving forward, my officials will be providing me with advice on the potential next steps. I am committed to ensure no child goes hungry during the school day and will assess the merits of the advice provided, considering issues of affordability, impact for learners, and interplay with other potential options which may exist within the food in schools' space.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Miles', with a stylized flourish.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg