

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



**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**

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

1 December 2023

Dear Jayne

### **Free School Meals Holiday Provision**

Thank you for your letter of 25 October sharing your concerns on the provision of free school meals during the school holidays, as raised at the Children, Young People and Education Committee meeting on 14 September. I am aware of the letter you mention from the nine charities and responded to the letter in August this year.

A decision was taken in March 2023 to extend the holiday free school meal provision until the end of the May half-term holiday 2023. It was clear that this extension was all that could be afforded by the Welsh Government, even with the impact for families over the summer holidays being well understood.

Prior to the summer holidays, we wrote to LAs to encourage them to signpost families to all the local provision available to them; including summer schemes and provision provided by third sector and voluntary organisations. During the summer, a wide range of schemes were made available in each local authority area to support children and young people.

The Welsh Government funded School Holiday Enrichment Programme ( SHEP), branded as the [‘Food and Fun scheme’](#), is school based and operates during the summer holiday period. During Summer 2023, a total of 265 schools participated in 175 SHEP schemes providing 11,100 places to learners per operating day. Schemes ran for a minimum of 12 days across all 22 local authorities. In addition, in response to the cost-of-living crisis, during this Summer, the majority of local authorities offered learners attending schemes a ‘bag bwyd’ (a bag containing pantry staples) to take home. Actual figures relating to levels of participation will be available later in the Autumn following submission of data from local authorities to the Welsh Local Government Association ( WLGA) which manages SHEP.

The £1m Playworks Holiday Project was established to tackle holiday hunger by providing free healthy food / snacks at play schemes during the school holiday periods with the option of increasing existing holiday play provision. The funding is split by formula between the 22 local authorities. The scheme targets areas of deprivation, and can operate in each school holiday period, at the discretion of local authorities in line with the priorities identified in their Play Sufficiency Assessment.

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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.

We are aware during the 2023 summer holiday period, five Local Authorities provided a form of Free School Meal provision to eligible learners during the six week break. However, we do not hold data on the provisions not funded by Welsh Government

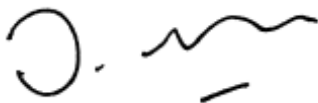
I recently considered whether to reinstate funding for holiday free school meal provision for October half term and subsequent school holidays. Unfortunately, due to the significant financial pressures facing the Welsh budget, provision of free school meals during the holidays has ceased indefinitely.

We are doing everything we can to support people with the cost-of-living crisis by providing targeted help to those who need it the most and through programmes and schemes which put money back in people's pockets. This includes information on [what is available in their local area](#) as well as [resources to help with the cost of living](#). During 2022-23 and 2023-24 we have invested more than £3.3bn in programmes and schemes which put money back into people's pockets.

We will continue to monitor the situation around the cost of living to support families and ensure we meet our commitment that no child goes hungry.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

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