

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc  
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People  
and Education Committee**

Jeremy Miles MS

Minister for Education and Welsh Language

**Senedd Cymru**

Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN  
SeneddPlant@senedd.cymru  
senedd.cymru/SeneddPlant  
0300 200 6565

**Welsh Parliament**

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN  
SeneddChildren@senedd.wales  
senedd.wales/SeneddChildren  
0300 200 6565

18 December 2023

## **Free school meals holiday provision**

Dear Jeremy,

Thank you for your [letter of 1 December about free school meals holiday provision](#). We considered this at our meeting on 6 December.

As we indicated in our [original letter of 25 October](#), we continue to have concerns that the decision to stop free school meals holiday provision was made so closely to the 2023 summer holidays, thereby potentially impacting on the ability of others, such as local authorities or charities, to make alternative provision.

While we welcome the initiatives outlined in your letter, including the Food and Fun scheme and the Playworks Holiday Project, it is concerning that only five out of 22 local authorities in Wales were able to continue to provide free school meal provision over the summer holiday. We understand the significant financial pressures both the Welsh Government and local authorities face, and that difficult decisions have to be made. However, as the cost of living crisis continues to bite hard on families, we are concerned that children and young people must not bear the brunt of the impacts. This is likely to be an issue we will discuss during our forthcoming budget scrutiny.

We note the [recent report of the Wales Expert Group](#) on the cost of living, which said that one of the actions that would most effectively help with the cost of living crisis was to:

*"...target additional interventions towards those in greatest hardship."*

We are concerned that without sufficient data on participation in alternative schemes it is difficult to identify if these alternative schemes are meeting the needs that the more comprehensive programme was addressing.

We note that the Expert Group also welcomed the Food and Fun programme, and called for this to be extended to cover other holiday periods in 2023-24.<sup>1</sup>

1. Can you clarify whether you intend to fund the Food and Fun scheme in other school holiday periods over 2023/24?
2. In your letter, you noted that data on Food and Fun participation levels would be available "later in the Autumn". Can you clarify when this data will be available, and can you commit to sharing this with the Committee? Will this data provide a breakdown of the demographics of the children and young people who benefited from this scheme?
3. We note your comments in the letter that the Welsh Government does not hold data on provision that it does not fund. How then is the Welsh Government able to evaluate to what extent replacement schemes are meeting needs previously met by the free school meal holiday provision? Without this data, how is the Welsh Government able to ensure it is meeting its commitment that no child goes hungry and that the Welsh Government is ensuring that limited funding is being used to its maximum effect?

In light of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's interest in child poverty I am copying this letter to their Chair.

We would appreciate a response by 29 January 2024.

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant MS

Chair

Cc: Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

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<sup>1</sup> [Welsh Government, Report of the Wales Expert Group on the cost of living crisis, 26 September 2023.](#)



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