

**REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**REPORT ON: FREE SCHOOL MEALS PAYMENTS AND COMMUNITY FOOD PROVISION**

**REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

**REPORT NO: 167-2020**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update on implementation of current term time provision and outline options to mitigate against the impact of Covid-19 restrictions and minimise the risks for our most vulnerable children and families for the summer holiday period (29 June – 10 August).

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the following: -

- Continue payment of Free School Meal Payments during the summer period from 29 June to 10 August
- Continue to support the Community Food Banks at £10,000 per week for the period 29 June to 10 August
- Continue with the Dundee Bairns Food Project and meal provision within the community support centres during the period 29 June to 10 August

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 Dundee City Council was allocated £1.152 million through the Scottish Government's Food Fund to support free school meal payments and community food support. This funding has been fully committed on current payments to families, supporting community food projects and packed lunches provided to communities working in partnership with Dundee Bairns.

3.2 Additional resources will be required to deliver measures to continue the current arrangements for payments to families in receipt of free school meals and to tackle food insecurity over the summer period through community provision of food, packed lunches and for provision in the Community Support Centres.

3.3 The estimated costs for the options outlined for the holiday period from 26 June to 11 August is as follows;

| <b>PROVISION</b>                                | <b>ESTIMATED COST (£)</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Option 1 – Packed Lunches-Dundee Bairns/<br>CSC | 69,700                    |
| Option 2 - Free School Meals                    | 457,312                   |
| Option 3 – Community Food Provision             | 60,000                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                    | <b>587,012</b>            |

3.4 The Scottish Government has just announced an additional £12.6m to support Free School Meals. Whilst the specific allocation to the Council is not yet known it is anticipated it will cover the bulk of the £457k requirement to help continuing payment for Free School Meals over the summer period.

3.5 The Scottish Government has also announced an additional £15m for wider support, including food, within the wider community. Again the allocation to the Council is not known and the exact

conditions have not been specified. However there is potential that this could fund some or all of the remaining £130k expenditure. The Third Sector have confirmed that applications for additional funding to support the Community Food Provision are also being submitted

3.6 An update on the latest Scottish Government position will be provided once available.

## **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

### **4.1 CURRENT PROVISION – CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### **Free School Meal Entitlement**

From March 23 we have been paying £11.25 per week per child for those children and young people eligible for free school meals (FSM) or for P1 – P3 pupils who are eligible for the school clothing grant.

As at Monday 25 May, the families of 6857 children & young people are receiving these weekly payments (6843 direct payments and 14 receiving vouchers). This has provided each eligible family with an additional £157.50 per child over the 14-week period from the 23 March until the end of term.

#### **Community Support Centres**

Since the introduction of the CSCs on March 30<sup>th</sup>, attendance has been increasing steadily and on the 20 May 535 children were present (389 children of key workers and 146 vulnerable children). These children have been receiving meals on site.

#### **Home Delivery Service**

To provide a food safety net for some of our most vulnerable children we initiated a small-scale meal delivery service. Demand for this has increased substantially and we now have the capacity to deliver up to 497 hot meals per day. 361 meals have been getting delivered daily from Monday 18 May and additional referrals are being considered in relation to agreed criteria.

#### **Partnership with Third Sector**

From March 30 we have been working very successfully with Dundee Bairns and their supporting community organisations to provide packed lunches to families and 740 lunches are now distributed daily across the whole of the City. This work is supported by a strong network of community-based organisations and Communities staff and School and Family Development Workers.

#### **Current Provision – Wider Community**

Since the beginning of lockdown, we have been working closely with DVVA and our third sector food providers to provide a co-ordinated and comprehensive response to families in financial need across the City.

In practical terms we have supported our Third Sector Food Insecurity Network to provide emergency food by procuring a total of £60k worth of food for them to distribute (£10k per week) since mid-April. This has assisted our food providers to help a total of 17,853 people during the month on May, an average of 4463 every week.

DCC have also been directly providing weekly food packages for 84 people in the marginalised groups (Travellers/Gypsy, homeless, early release prisoners & those requiring substance use support.) This has helped to ease some of the pressure on the local emergency food providers as these were often repeat customers.

In addition, the Council is also supplying appropriate dietary substitutes for 3 shielded people (2 x diabetic and 1 x vegan) who have been in contact to request this service and supporting the third sector providers by delivering food parcels to households where a potential safety risk has been identified.

## 4.2 POTENTIAL PROVISION FOR CONSIDERATION

The following areas of provision have been central to our overall food delivery process to date (**Appendix 1**) and to continue to deliver all or elements of this requires consideration of the following.

### **Packed Lunches**

Tayside Contracts have confirmed that during the holiday period they will not have the available staff capacity to continue to make the hot meals for the delivery service. This is due to the fact that they will be reliant on volunteers to staff this

Based on their available volunteers, they will be able to operate 5 kitchens across the city, each with a Cook and 2 or 3 catering assistants. This would provide capacity for circa 300 cold bagged meals to be prepared at each kitchen, a total of 1500 per day.

This would enable Dundee Bairns to continue to provide their current level of a total of 740 cold meals (during May they provided a total of 14,425 packed lunches, an average of 721 lunches per day).

Dundee City Council could support 50% of the costs with Dundee Bairns providing the other half; a total cost to the Council of **£29,700** for the 6-week holiday period.

The other 760 daily packed lunches would be distributed to the children and young people attending the Community Support Centres. This would cost approximately £40k for the 6-week period assuming that the numbers attending the CSC are in the region of 500 per day.

### **Free School Meals**

To continue to support families during this next phase of restrictions, it will cost £76,218.75 per week to provide direct financial support for children & young people eligible for free school meals. Over the 6-week holiday period this would amount to a total of **£457,312** (This is based on removing the 76 eligible sixth year pupils who have now left school and obtaining the bank details for the outstanding 275 eligible children).

This would provide each eligible family with a total of £67.50 per child for the holiday period.

### **Community Food Provision**

To continue to support our Food Insecurity Network at the current level will require a financial contribution from the Council of **£60,000**. Based on the May Food Fund return of a weekly average of 4463 this would enable circa 27,000 people to benefit over the 6-week holiday. This would ensure families in financial need across all of the City will have access to support. 24 local food organisations of varying sizes have been involved in this effort to date and have brought in an additional £25,359 of funding to support this effort.

For those presenting with a food need, we have ensured that they are triaged through either our helpline or Communities staff, to ensure that all their financial needs are understood and supported appropriately; Money Advice, Energy Advice, Scottish Welfare Fund and Crisis Grants. Access to wellbeing support is also tied into this process. The Council will continue to provide support to those in the marginalised group during this 6-week period.

### **Mitigating Risk**

The loss of the hot meal delivery service will have an impact on our most vulnerable families. This is a referral-based service based on criteria developed jointly with Children & Families Service; Red category/Critical status, SW involvement/closed to SW within 3 months, Kinship Care, Additional Support Needs & the family being referred from 2 schools (nursery/primary/secondary).

There are currently 350 children receiving these meals and feedback (appendix 2) shows that the food and daily contact is welcomed.

Consideration is needed as to how we ensure that these most vulnerable children are given access to food either through;

- Supporting them to attend the Community Support Centres
- Prioritising the Dundee Bairns lunches for these families – this would require additional delivery drivers to manage this as Dundee Bairns volunteers are unable to provide this service.
- Working with the Food Insecurity Network to develop a family food box to be delivered on a weekly basis. This could include menu ideas & recipes and information links to other community supports. If the Network is unable to meet this additional demand, the Council could provide this although with the imminent closure of Michelin, another distribution centre would need to be identified.

The workers supporting these families would continue to have a key role in ensuring that, not only are the children's wellbeing needs being met, but that any food needs are identified and communicated to the Council's nominated Food Lead.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

5.1 The proposals presented in this report for addressing food insecurity over the summer holiday period involves a combination of the FSM payment of £11.25 and community food provision.

5.2 The Scottish Government's economic forecast suggests that it may take some time for the economy to return to pre-pandemic levels. There are also concerns that the longer the Council continues to provide direct payments, the more likely it is that people may become reliant on them. The FSM payments introduced by the Council were always intended to be an interim measure and it's unlikely that these will be sustainable beyond the school holiday period.

5.3 While the direct payments are effective in ensuring that people have the funds to pay for food, there are concerns around the long term financial viability if further funding from the Scottish Government is not provided.

5.4 As a consequence, the support required is likely to change after the summer as children return to school. After the holidays, schools will not be able to return to full capacity. The Council will require to review working with Tayside Contracts how it provides Free School Meals from August onwards.

## **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report has been subject to an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

## **7.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Council Management Team were consulted in the preparation of this report and agree with its contents.

**GREGORY COLGAN**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

**18 JUNE 2020**

**PAUL CLANCY**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

**18 JUNE 2020**

## APPENDIX 1 CURRENT FOOD RESPONSE

### DUNDEE PARTNERSHIP COVID-19 FOOD RESPONSE

#### KEY PRINCIPLES

- ⇒ Responding quickly & creatively
- ⇒ Assessing all needs at point of contact
- ⇒ Promoting a whole family approach
- ⇒ Working together to ensure all available resources are used to best effect

**SHIELDED GROUP** If you have a serious health condition such as an organ transplant, undergoing active chemotherapy or receiving immunotherapy or have severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma or severe COPD and have received a letter advising you to shield, Dundee Partnership will;

- ⇒ Make contact with all individuals on our Shielded Lists to check you are okay and have supports in place
- ⇒ Support you to register for the national food box deliveries and/or priority supermarket slots as well as medicine deliveries
- ⇒ Provide you with an emergency food package through our third sector Food Insecurity Network or DCC until the above is in place

**CATEGORY 2 GROUP** If you are over 70 years old, or have a long-term health condition (including chronic neurological conditions), are disabled, pregnant, or are eligible for the flu jab, Dundee Partnership will;

- ⇒ Provide support via our helpline to triage all support needs (financial, shopping, energy advice, etc)
- ⇒ Provide emergency food provision if you are self isolating and have no means or support to buy food
- ⇒ Provide regular food packages for marginalised groups who have difficulties in accessing food

**FAMILIES IN FINANCIAL NEED** If you have children eligible for Free School Meals, live in a low income household, recently lost employment, aren't normally engaged with services or have complex needs, Dundee Partnership will;

- ⇒ Pay £11.25 per week directly to you for your children's free school meals entitlement either through direct bank payments or vouchers
- ⇒ Provide hot meals on site at our Community Support Centres for the children of key workers and vulnerable families
- ⇒ Deliver 400 hot lunches daily to the children of our most vulnerable families
- ⇒ Distribute 740 cold packed lunches daily to vulnerable families through a network of community food organisations
- ⇒ Provide trained staff in your local community to help assess your family's needs and support you to get the appropriate financial and wellbeing support.

**CITY WIDE SUPPORT** For other more general support, Dundee Partnership will;

- ⇒ Direct you to appropriate shopping & delivery services if you are able to pay for your food but have no one available to support you.
- ⇒ Provide access to personal hygiene products

## **APPENDIX 2 FEEDBACK**

We are working on ways to gather more feedback on the food support we have been providing but from the limited information we have at the moment, it is apparent that generally the support is appreciated;

### **Hot Meal Service**

The children & the families receiving the hot meals deliveries have appreciated this service. Feedback through the delivery drivers highlights how much the children enjoy their meals;

'I love all the food but my favourite is the Chicken curry'

'I love the macaroni cheese and getting fruit every day'

Children & Families workers have welcomed these vulnerable children getting at least one hot meal per day, especially over such a prolonged period.

### **Packed Lunches**

Dundee Bairns and their partner community organisations are providing a service across all the ward areas and tell us that the communities appreciate the packed lunches and that there is never any waste. Communities Officers and School & Family Development Workers are working closely with Dundee Bairns to target the lunches and make sure that those families in need are helped to access them.

### **FSM Payments**

Parents speaking to Council staff administering this payment have been sharing their appreciation of this support.

'It is a bit of a struggle as it is now, it would be greatly appreciated to receive some help'

'Thank you for all your help. It is much appreciated'

'Thank you for getting back to me that's great about Alyssa receiving this it's a great help'

### **Marginalised Groups**

As a homeless service we provided emergency accommodation to people who find themselves roofless, often with no personal items, money or food. Having the food boxes on site we have been giving to these people when they have been booked into accommodation. This has been invaluable at not only providing the food but taking some of the pressures associated with being roofless and trying to source food away. I have seen first-hand the sense of overwhelming relief and gratitude that these people have been given the parcels.

We regularly refer people to foodbanks throughout the city, when people have no money, income or find themselves in extreme poverty for a variety of reasons. In the current situation the demand for foodbanks has gone up. Since we have started receiving the boxes, this has meant that we haven't had to refer anyone to them, helping to relieve some of the pressure on the foodbanks during this difficult time.

In view of the timescales involved this report was approved by the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Executive Director of Children and Families Service in consultation with the Convener of the Policy and Resources Committee, Labour Group Spokesperson, Conservative Group Spokesperson, Liberal Democrat Group Spokesperson, the Independent Member and the Lord Provost.

|                                                                           |      |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| <i>Gregory Colgan</i><br>Executive Director of Corporate Services         | Date | 18th June 2020 |
| <i>Paul Clancy</i><br>Executive Director of Children and Families Service | Date | 18th June 2020 |
| <i>John Alexander</i><br>Convener of Policy and Resources Committee       | Date | 23rd June 2020 |
| <i>Kevin Keenan</i><br>Labour Group Spokesperson                          | Date | 26th June 2020 |
| <i>Derek Scott</i><br>Conservative Group Spokesperson                     | Date | 23rd June 2020 |
| <i>Fraser Macpherson</i><br>Liberal Democrat Group Spokesperson           | Date | 23rd June 2020 |
| <i>Gregor Murray</i><br>Independent Member                                | Date | 23rd June 2020 |
| <i>Ian Borthwick</i><br>Lord Provost                                      | Date | 23rd June 2020 |