



Mayor of London's Universal Free School Meals KS2

Uptake & Challenges



The Mayor Of London's proposal to provide Universal Free school meals to all children in KS2 affects 71 schools and the families of 9045 children in Lewisham

Additional Meals

The introduction of the scheme could see an increase in the uptake of school meals by around 5574 every day across all schools with an increase of 4682 a day at maintained schools.

On average, 74 extra meals could be in demand at each school but some will face an increase upwards of 150 meals daily and this will lead to challenges:

- A shortfall between the funding given and the real costs
- Additional appliances and equipment required to deal with a 20-30% increase in school meal demand.
- Service times extended to serve the additional meals.
- Additional staff required (recruited and trained). A service standard of 8-10 meals per labour hour is guided by industry and so it is likely that an average of 7 additional hours will need to be worked at each site equating to 2 extra staff members.
- The scheme ending after only one year when families have become used to the help.
- A reduction in applications for FSM impacting school finances more broadly

Grant Conditions



- The GLA will fund on an average of the primary pupils taken on census days in October 2022, January 2023 and June 2023 extrapolated across the year multiplied by £2.65 per day and reduced to 90% as this is the assumed take up.
- Payment will be made termly in advance. To allow for upfront costs it is proposed that half of the funding would be paid in July 2023, with a further 20% in December and a further 20% in March. A balance of 10% would be held back for the final payment as set out below.
 - Based on the census day returns in October 2023 and January 2024 a balancing payment or claw back would be made before the end of the summer term 2024.
- Allocation does not include any provision for capital expenditure that may be necessary for LEAs or Academy Trusts to provide. An assessment of the potential need for such capital investment will be made in each LEA / Academy Trust and the extent to which alternative remedial steps other than such investment can be taken to ensure the Mayor's commitment can be implemented.
- The grant agreement that will need to be made between each LEA and the GLA will need to promote the Mayor and his investment in schools' meals through branding and communication in line with further guidance from the GLA that will be provided. Further, the grant agreement will also require a commitment from each LEA to take part in the evaluation of the programme, including data collection.
- Grant conditions would be accompanied by grant giving principles which set out a series of standards boroughs are encouraged to work to and this will include compliance with national school food standards.

Grant Conditions



- The grant must be spent on provision of school lunch.
- Local Authorities/ Schools and their catering providers must participate in evaluations or reviews of the Mayor's Emergency Free School Meals provision, as needed. Monitoring will aim to minimise extra reporting burden and instead where possible draw upon existing data sets.
- The Mayor's investment must be promoted in any branding/communications. This includes ensuring references to the expansion explains the source of the funding as the Mayor of London and supporting the distribution of a communication from the Mayor to all affected families, parents or carers.

Grant Principles



Grant principles will also be provided, setting out national or pan-London initiatives which we would encourage adoption of through borough schemes. This will include:

- **Pupil premium** – to support approaches which continue to maximise registration by eligible families which may otherwise be impacted by the move to a universal approach through the Mayor’s Emergency Free School Meals funding.
- **Supporting families and communities** – by paying London Living Wage (LLW) to catering staff and including LLW in any future tenders; and committing to wider action to support families struggling due to the cost of living crisis.
- **School food standards** – meeting school food standards and ensuring school food is culturally appropriate.
- **Healthy schools** – taking a whole school approach to healthy eating, participation in Healthy Schools London and adoption of water only policies.
- **Sustainability** - Meet sustainable catering guidelines and support environmental aims.

Financial Implications



£2.65 per meal is not as high as the allocation for Free School meals and may not meet costs at every school.

For those of you who have not populated the impact assessment, some urgent attention will be required. With a likely increase of meal uptake between 20 – 40 % you will need to identify the costs associated with delivering the scheme including appliances such as ovens, fridges, freezers, water heaters and numerous pieces of additional equipment such as potato rumpers, mixers, shelving, pots and pans, plates, cutlery etc. Lewisham has identified some funding for this requirement, but it must be the minimum additional needs only and not used to repair / replace existing equipment. We have engaged ES catering to deliver to supply and install additional items and are now working our way through requests.

As all other London schools will be setting up to place orders for similar equipment, demand is likely to be high leading to shortages and difficulty securing contractors so there is some urgency to place orders in time for September.

Additional labour costs should be covered within the allocation of £2.65. There is an industry standard which suggests around 8-12 meals per labour hour. This can be hugely variable depending on special dietary needs, facilities available, school size, servery size etc. but if your additional demand is e.g. 70 meals, you should expect to have to add 7-8 hours labour to your service and you will need to work with providers to ensure recruitment and training gets underway in good time.

FSM Applications



We already know from census data that having UIFSM at KS1 can lead to a reduction in FSM applications. In Lewisham, the average FSM in KS1 is 20% and in KS2, this rises to 30%. It is more important than ever to keep applications at the maximum.

- When Islington introduced UIFSM in 2010, they asked all parents to ‘register’ for the offer (language is important here as you cannot make it compulsory to apply) and collected the information needed for the eligibility checker (transparently). This led to a 10% increase in FSM eligibility.
- There is some eligibility software which links to the DWP. All you need is parents name, DOB and NI number.
<https://pps.lgfl.org.uk/> - Even if you don't use the service.
Education Software Solutions - <https://www.ess-sims.co.uk/products-and-services/online-free-school-meals> (I'm advised it's £700 + VAT)
- Other suggestions include offering a reward for applying (even if unsuccessful) such as some free uniform or after school activities, wrap around care etc.
- Help with applications at open days, welcome events or by appointment.

Household Support Fund



The household support fund is in place for another year to March 2023 and we will continue to use it to provide vouchers for FSM eligible children in the holidays (subject to approvals).

The allocation allows for 2 weeks at Easter and Christmas (£30), 6 weeks (£90) for the summer holidays and 1 week (£15) for the half term holidays.

Additional days for bank holidays, strikes, inset days etc. cannot be funded.

Lewisham is also considering the best use of 'one off' monies (you will recall a late allocation last year) to further support food at school. Ideas and suggestions are welcome. It will be further informed by the returns from last term.

and finally



Many of you have asked if you can ask parents for a top up to the grant e.g. 15p if you are paying your caterer £2.80. It is up to schools to consider this decision in the context of their wider pupil population and circumstances. The LA advises that the Governing body of the school undertake any risk and equality impact as examples to ensure no young people/families are placed in a compromising position e.g. stigma, bullying etc.

The Mayor of London has said this is a free meal, so there should be no expectations for contributions.

When deciding, your governing bodies should consider;

1. If more children might take a meal on the day of census than on average, similar to UIFSM
2. The allowance for UIFSM is £2.42 and no top up was requested for these meals
3. If the cost of meals might reduce due to economies of scale. Those schools who have contracts are advised to have some initial discussions on the impact even if you are not in a 'price per meal' contract.
4. How much you are charging parents currently.