

<b>LEWISHAM SCHOOLS FORUM</b>			
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>DfE Consultations: - schools loans and -free meals under universal credit</b>		
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Item No.</b>	<b>7 Appendix D</b>
<b>CLASS</b>	<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>17 January 2018</b>

**Response to the consultation on eligibility for free school meals and the early year’s pupil premium under Universal Credit**

<p><b>Question 1: Do you agree with our proposed net earnings threshold to determine eligibility for free school meals and the early year’s pupil premium under Universal Credit?</b></p>
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Answer

The eligibility threshold of £7,500 does not take into account the higher levels of earnings in London which is higher. London will be disadvantaged were a flat threshold to introduced across England, as higher earnings in London reflect the higher cost of living. This will also impact on our schools’ ability to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, as free school meal eligibility is used to determine additional school funding. The threshold should be adjusted for cost of living.

**Question 2: Do you agree with our intention to protect those pupils who would otherwise lose their entitlement to free school meals, and those children who would otherwise lose their entitlement to the early year's pupil premium, under the new eligibility criteria?**

Answer

While having a protection system is welcome there is inconsistency in the arrangements. The Universal Credit roll out proposes that children receiving free school meals are protected and continue receiving free school meals until the end of their current school phase. Therefore a child at the beginning of year 7 when the proposed changes are introduced would continue to receive several years' of free school meals even if they become ineligible, while a child in year 6 would only receive several months of free school meals if they become ineligible - which seems unfair, especially if they are from the same family.

**Question 3: Do you feel that the proposals in this consultation may adversely affect any children who share one or more of the relevant protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010?**

Answer

It is difficult to assess the impact of the proposed changes and comment due to the lack of published analysis and data.

**Question 4: Do you have any views on the proposed management of the changes to the disadvantage measures or on the metrics we publish for the measurement of disadvantaged pupils' performance?**

Answer

It is important that you publish the data as soon as possible to allow schools to assess the impact.