

School Food Supplement Vouchers Update

Key Messages

Forum members are asked to note:

- The summary analysis of food vouchers issued to date.
- The recent Government announcement for the continuation of the Household Support Fund Scheme for the remainder of the financial year.

1. Introduction/background

- 1.1. Since October 2020, Sheffield City Council (SCC) has provided food supplement vouchers totalling £21.5m to 33,000 vulnerable families and children in the city; initially via the Covid Winter Support Grant and as of October 2021 the vouchers have been funded via the Household Support Fund (HSF).
- 1.2. Food supplement vouchers have been issued to families with children who are eligible for benefit-related free school meals (FSM) to help contribute towards the costs of food over the school holidays. Families in receipt of income-assessed Early Years Support (2-4year-olds), or young people leaving their care setting (Care Leavers) are also eligible.
- 1.3. Voucher amounts vary depending on the length of the school holidays and the funding available, but the value has typically been a minimum of £15. The most recent issue was £50 for the summer holidays.

2. Analysis

- 2.1. 752k vouchers, totalling £21.5m, have been issued over the lifetime of the project to date; with 694k being redeemed to date¹ (equating to £19.91m).
- 2.2. The average redemption rate of vouchers for 2023/24 is slightly lower than in previous years – 91.67%. The highest redemption rate was in 2020/21 – 94.42%.
- 2.3. Typically, the highest redemption rate of the cohorts has been amongst those families with children in receipt of FSM as we have been able to work more closely with schools to encourage and support redemption than with the other cohorts.

¹ Analysis as at 21 August 2024

- 2.4. When analysed by ward, the highest redemption rate has been in the Manor Castle ward – 95.38% of the 57,294 vouchers issued in contrast to 82.76% of the 3,968 vouchers issued in the Crookes and Crosspool ward.

3. Continuation of Funding

- 3.1. The Government has recently announced (end of August) that the funding for the scheme will be extended until the end of the current financial year and we are awaiting confirmation of what funding Sheffield will receive/approval of how this will be distributed.
- 3.2. We understand that the government is exploring options around how best to provide sustainable support to vulnerable households in the longer term.

4. Recommendations

Forum members are asked to:

- Note the above project lifetime analysis to date and the update regarding the extension of funding.
- Encourage schools and early years providers to continue to provide support to families to ensure maximum redemption rates are achieved.