



London Borough of Enfield

School Meals in the London Borough of Enfield

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1. Background & Objectives

School Traded Services have been tasked with producing a report detailing the landscape of School Meal Provision in the London Borough of Enfield, which has 96 Primary Schools and 39 Secondary Schools.

Free School Meals are provided through Government Funding for families in financial hardship to assist in making sure children get a hot meal for lunch 5 days a week. The funding is provided directly to schools. To be eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), one of the following is required:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (with annual gross income of less than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on
- Universal Credit - Household income must be less than £7,400 a year
- Children who get paid these benefits directly, instead of through a parent or guardian, can also get free school meals.

For pupils in Nursery, Year 1 or Year 2, Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) is awarded meaning all children regardless of background eat for free, and paid for by government funding, provided to the school.

The objectives of this report are:

- To illustrate the wider environment of School Meal Services
- To demonstrate the challenges faced within School Meal Provision
- Highlight how funding is used
- How quality is controlled

2. Scope of Review

The scope agreed for the review was:

Quality of Meals

- Review of supplier cost rises
- Review of food sector environment
- Recruitment challenges
- School Food Standards application

Enfield Catering Services

- Response to challenges in food sector
- Value Add Activities

3. Service Findings

3.1 The Environment

3.1.1 Sector Challenges

Labour shortages and increases in the cost of supply have made the food sector a challenging environment. Media coverage has been dominated by the rises of supply, affecting retail, commercial and families alike. Prices have risen by 20% due to Covid-19, Brexit, and the Russia/ Ukraine conflict.

According to the Guardian, upwards inflationary pressure hitting 10% for the first time in 40 years (Reference 9), is causing a cost-of-living crisis for UK residents.

Alongside the rise in the cost of goods, there has been difficulty in labour acquisition across the Hospitality Sector. Covid-19 is one cause of the labour shortage felt across the hospitality sector with shielding, isolations, and close contact isolations.

Brexit has caused labour to leave the UK, opening more vacancies than cyclical. Since April-June 2020, the Office for National Statistics, shows a 65.5% increase in vacancies from pre-pandemic to January 2022.

The increase in vacancies creates a sellers-market where labour is a scarcer resource than job posts. The consequence is that workers have more choice when seeking employment, meaning areas such as pay, conditions, onboarding time and convenience have become heightened in their importance.

Brexit and labour shortages have affected supply; reduction in HGV drivers created transport delays in the sales journey.

3.1.2 Quality and Consistency Monitoring

The School Food Standards illustrate minimum quality requirements (Appendix 1). These have been mandatory since 2015, and they are monitored by the Governors of the school.

The Soil Association is a charity organisation with the objective of maintaining the quality and consistency of school meals across the industry. (Reference 14) This encourages a farm to fork approach in catering delivery & introducing, where possible, organic ingredients. The 3 tiers of achievement range from bronze to gold depending on the food sector.

Other examples of accreditations which are achieved to indicate quality adherence are MSC, Sugarwise and Red Tractor.

MSC is a charity around sustainable fishing (Reference 15), whilst Red Tractor covers meat, eggs and produce standards and ensures supply chains adhere to regulations, with 450 inspectors worldwide (Reference 17). Finally, Sugarwise accreditations focus on the use of sugar within products and foods (Reference 16).

Internal monitoring is likely to occur across private and public sector caterers. Often this is through site visits to observe meal service and based on the feedback from clients.

5. Related Materials

5.1 References

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5.2 Appendices:

Appendix 1 – School Food Standards and Portion Control

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