



REPORT TO SCHOOLS FORUM

10 February 2022

TITLE OF REPORT: Section 98 Discretionary Meals

Purpose of the Report

1. To bring to Schools Forum the proposal to use Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves to enable schools to provide a meal to children when their parents have no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Background

2. In December 2017, Schools Forum agreed that all Gateshead mainstream schools that are part of Gateshead's funding regime could apply for DSG reserves to fund discretionary meals when a parent is in the process of applying for universal credit, but the outcome of the application is not yet known. It was thought that this process could take up to 8 weeks, and this funding was time limited to 8 weeks.
3. From Autumn term 2021 a small number of schools in Gateshead have been asked to provide education to children where their parents are NRPF status.
4. People seeking asylum in the UK, who lack the means to support themselves, are entitled to support while the Home Office (HO) is processing their asylum application. This support is called Section 95 (s95) support and asylum-seekers must apply for s95 support, this can take several weeks for the HO to process this request.
5. Section 98 support is a form of temporary support that is provided to asylum seekers who appear to be destitute, and will be applying for s95 support, or have done and are awaiting a decision.
6. Section 98 support is supposed to be provided for a short period. Generally, it is a full-board HO hostel. This is referred to as initial accommodation (or IA).
7. Under Section 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act (IAA) 1999 children are not entitled to a free school meal (FSM) as the HO is already providing a meal at the full-board hostel.
8. In Gateshead the decision has been made that children that are living with a family in a HO hostel should be provided with a school place if possible and

that schools should provide a school meal for these children to ensure they have a nutritious hot meal at school, and to assist them in the integration into school.

9. Although Section 98 support is to be short term support, there are a number of families that have now been in Gateshead for longer than the 8 week period funded for discretionary FSM.

Proposal

10. That Schools Forum approves for DSG reserves to be used to provide funding for a school meal to schools that have children that are living in IA and attending school, and the number of weeks support is not limited to 8 weeks.

Recommendations

11. That Schools Forum approves for DSG reserves to be used to fund schools that are educating children of parents supported under Section 98 of the IAA, until the school is able to apply for discretionary FSM as the parents move to be supported under Section 95 of the IAA. It is proposed that funding is at the rate in Gateshead's mainstream funding formula for FSM.

For the following reasons:-

- To support schools that have taken children of asylum seekers that are being supported under Section 98 of the IAA
- To enable schools to provide a nutritious meal to these vulnerable children
- To assist children to integrate into school life

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