

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET / EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM**

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**REPORT AUTHOR: Jason Rawbone**  
**Professional Lead Catering & Cleaning**

**REPORT TITLE: Update on Free School Meals**

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**REPORT FOR: Discussion / Information**

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We have 2,276 pupils eligible for FSM's across the county.

The week prior to the schools closing 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020 we provide packed lunches for FSM pupils for parents to collect at their local schools. The uptake of these packed lunches was very low. This was the same process most other LA's took with equally low uptake.

Following the closure of all the schools except the 15 hubs schools and the announcement from the Education Minister to bring the Easter break forward, we investigated several voucher schemes that were being made known to us. At the same time our Income & Awards Officer had suggested to pay parents an FSM allowance via BACS payments into parents' bank accounts. The team set up an online form which was communicated to all schools and via Powys's social media, for parents to complete giving their bank details.

With further investigation some of the voucher providers costs for set up and transaction costs were expensive. Therefore, we have set up vouchers via Sodexo. Who have issued more than 1,500 vouchers to entitled families to date, which are sent fortnightly. These vouchers are sent via email to all parents of FSM pupils who we have managed to get contact details for. Once an email is received the parent can redeem the vouchers online, select a supermarket either Tesco, Asda or Morrisons. They then get a bar coded voucher they can either print off or use from a smart phone. We initially issued vouchers of £15 per week per pupil, then increased this allowance to £19.50 per week following the announcement from the Education Minister that each entitled child will receive £3.90 per day. Sodexo will be sending us a weekly report with the number of vouchers that have been sent, number of vouchers that have been redeemed and used. Parents are advised that the vouchers are only to be used to purchase food items.

The BACS payment process has taking a little longer to set up due to having to set up individual payments. However, this is now complete, and the BACS payments are also being paid fortnightly.

We are keeping up to date with what other LA's are doing and we have a Share Point tracker set up by the WLGA Food in Schools Coordinator which all LA's input how they are providing HUB catering and FSM provision.

We will continue for the time being with vouchers and BACS payments, however Cardiff have been working with ParentPay, who are working on reversing the FSM payment back into parents bank accounts, so we have also enquired about that process with ParentPay.