



National facilities management services seminar 2009

The Free School Meals Pilots in Scotland

The Free School Meal Trial for P1 to P3 pupils in Scotland

- Scottish Government's drive to improve the nations health and encourage good eating habits from a young age
- Trial ran from October 2007 – June 2008
- East Ayrshire
- Fife
- Glasgow
- Scottish Borders
- West Dunbartonshire
- Project Evaluation carried out by IPSOS Mori

The Free School Meal Trial for P1 to P3 pupils in Scotland

- Child focussed benefit contributing to health and well being of pupils
- Potential to influence the decision about universal free meals for all pupils
- Influence healthy eating and social skills
- Head start for Scottish Borders Schools in meeting Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The overarching aim of the evaluation was to inform roll-out in other areas by exploring:-

- change in uptake of school meals by P1-P3 pupils
- process and practical issues for local authorities and schools
- the range of potential health and other benefits of the trial
- the impact of the trial on the costs of providing school meals
- any unexpected impacts and barriers to roll-out in other local authorities.

A step change in delivery – the project planning process in Scottish Borders Council

Project Board

Strategic Vision and Steer

- ❖ Head of Service for Education and Facility Services
- ❖ Senior Managers
- ❖ Elected Members
- ❖ Directors

Project Team

Planning and Development

- ❖ Senior Managers
- ❖ Head teachers
- ❖ Operations Managers
- ❖ Business Support
- ❖ Procurement
- ❖ Property and Facilities
- ❖ Human Resources
- ❖ Finance
- ❖ Public Relations

Meal Numbers 2006 -2007 in Scottish Borders Primary Schools

- Cook Freeze Service = 36%
 - Cook Fresh Service = 38%
 - Cook Fresh with Dining Centres = 34%
- TOTAL primary meal numbers = 36%

A step change in delivery which created new opportunities

- Closer Partnership working between Education and Facilities Management)
- Review School Meal Administration System
- Review Parent/Pupil Meal Ordering System
- Review Catering Facilities and Capacity

Sustainability -the challenges

- Only 12 weeks till D- day
- Menu
- Kitchen Facilities and equipment
- Catering Operations
- School Management of lunch time
- Administration of menu selection

Sustainability- the menu

- New Menu in place by end of September
- Takes account of consultations
- Takes account of HMIE Feedback
- Developed Menu planning cycle
- No longer nutrition obsessed
- Poor sellers have been dropped
- Menu choices clarified

- But.... Work in progress and still room for improvement

Sustainability – the kitchen facilities and equipment

- Mixture of services – cook fresh, cook freeze and dining centres
- Reviewed catering capacity of each school kitchen
- Identified equipment requirements and placed orders

Sustainability – the catering operations

- Lack of staffing capacity due to low uptake of meals.
- Difficulties in recruiting enough staff.
- Difficulties in recruiting staff due to long HR and Disclosure Checks process.
- Difficulties in getting existing staff to work longer hours

Sustainability - school management and administration

- Management of large numbers of young children through lunchtime
- Impact on packed lunch arrangements
- Reduced access to hall for curriculum
- Dining Room Supervision
- Administration – meal choice/ pilot evaluation data collection

Lessons learnt

- Planning went well but we only just made it in time
- Took much longer to organise than you would imagine
- Employment processes very tight despite fast track arrangements
- Training week prior to pilot was essential

Meal Numbers

(Take-up in 2006-2007 was 36%)

Projected Meal Numbers

P1- P3: 3'056 = 85%

P4 - P7: 2'745 = 55%

Total: 5'745 = 67%

Actual Meal Numbers

P1 – P3: 2'296 = 64%

P4 – P7: 1'931 = 39%

Total: 4'227 = 51%

Evaluation of the free school meal trial for P1 to P3 pupils

- Implementation relatively straightforward
- Problems minor and quite quickly remedied
- Non FSM numbers went from 41% to 69%
- FSM numbers went from 89.2% to 93.6%
- P4 –P7 numbers went from 47.3% to 49.9%
- Increase higher in smaller schools and school with lower levels of FSM registration
- Main reason for non-uptake is that some children are “fussy eaters”

Practical issues: limited time and space

- Space and logistics in the dining room

Successful strategies adopted:-

- staggering the times pupils arrive in dining room
- setting tables in advance
- Operating different queuing systems or service areas
- Allowing slightly lengthened lunchtimes
- Using alternative accommodation (especially for packed lunches)

Evaluation of the free school meal trial for P1 to P3 pupils

- Lead-in and start time of the trial
- Impact on the quality and quantity of food
- Impact on workloads
- Potential health and other benefits
- Costs
- Future research
- Free Meals for all P1 to P3 from 2010



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