

Distribution Sub-Group (2023) Paper 19 – eFSM data decision for the 2024-25 Settlement

This discussion paper has been written by officials of the Welsh Government. Ministers have not had an opportunity to comment on the contents. Exemplifications of changes are provided simply to inform discussion by DSG members. They are not Welsh Government proposals or statements of Government policy for or against changes.

Eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) data within the settlement

Summary

1. This paper provides analysis of the eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) pupil numbers taken from the [January 2023 Pupil Level Annual School Census](#) (PLASC).
2. This paper summarises our options for eFSM data for the 2024-25 settlement following the discussions from the DSG (2023) paper 10.

Views sought

3. DSG members are asked to consider the analysis and options discussed throughout the paper and agree on an option for use in the 2024-25 settlement.

Related Papers

4. Distribution Sub-Group (2023) Paper 10 – Eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) within the settlement.
5. Distribution Sub-Group (2022) Paper 09 – Eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) within the settlement.
6. Distribution Sub-Group (2021) Paper 14 – eFSM on the settlement
7. Distribution Sub-Group (2020) Paper 16 – Assessing the impact of universal credit on the 2020 PLASC FSM data
8. Distribution Sub-Group (2019) Paper 16 – Assessing the impact of universal credit on the PLASC FSM data
9. Distribution Sub-Group (2018) Paper 11 - Free School Meals indicator analysis

Background

10. Eligibility for Free School Meals (eFSM) is used as a proxy of deprivation in the assessment of relative need to spend on teaching and other services in the local government settlement but is not used as a proxy for the need to spend on school meals. More information on the background can be found in papers from previous years.

Options

11. The analysis summarises **4 options**:
 - a) **Option 1:** Freeze the data. The 2023-24 Settlement used a 4 year average of data from 2017, 2018, 2021 and 2022. The advantage of freezing the dataset is that it will give more time for Welsh Government education colleagues and DSG to work with local authorities in smoothing out the data.

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- b) **Option 2a and Option 2b:** Continue to use a long-term average to smooth volatility in the data but update to include 2023 data. This could be a 4-year average (2018, 2021, 2022 and 2023) or 5-year average (2017, 2018, 2021, 2022 and 2023) respectively. The advantage of using an average of the dataset is that it smooths out volatility.
- c) **Option 3:** Use a 3 year average of pupils that are recorded as either eFSM or Transitionally Protected (TP).
- d) **Option 4a and Option 4b:** Use the most recent data available (2023). Either only FSM eligible pupil numbers or FSM and TP eligible pupil numbers. The advantage of using the 2023 data is that it is the most up to date data. A second validation period for the PLASC 2023 data specifically focussing on the accuracy of the data should have led to more robust eFSM or TP data for 2023. However this has caused large swings in the data compared to previous years.

Analysis

Data

- 12. **Table 1** in Annex A shows the number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (eFSM) by local authority. Option 3 and 4b includes pupils recorded as transitionally protected (TP).
- 13. **Table 2** shows the percentage point difference in relative share for each option compared to the data used in the 2023/24 Settlement.
- 14. For context, in 2023-24 the '**primary pupils eligible for Free School Meals**' indicator was used to distribute £116m of the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), therefore a 0.01 percentage point change would equate to a £12k change in SSA.
- 15. For context, in 2023-24 the '**secondary pupils eligible for Free School Meals**' indicator was used to distribute £99m of the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), therefore a 0.01 percentage point change would equate to a £10k change in SSA.
- 16. **Table 3** shows the exemplification of each of the options. Overall for **option 2a**, the distributional impact in AEF ranges from a decrease in Rhonda Cynon Taf (£759k) to an increase in Cardiff (£1,046k). For **option 2b** the distributional impact in AEF ranges from a decrease in Flintshire (£541k) to an increase in Cardiff (£635).
- 17. For **option 3** the distributional impact in AEF ranges from a decrease in Caerphilly (£1,585k) to an increase in Swansea (£1,122k).
- 18. The distributional impact in AEF of using the 2023 FSM data in **option 4a** ranges from a decrease in Flintshire (£2,273k) to an increase in Cardiff (£2,759).
- 19. The distributional impact in AEF of using pupils recorded as eFSM or Transitionally Protected in **option 4b** ranges from a decrease in Rhondda Cynon Taff (£1,549) to an increase in Swansea (£1,162).

Conclusion:

- 20. The exemplifications are based on the isolated effect of the FSM data on the 2023-24 Settlement. FSM data on EOTAS pupils are **not included** in the analysis. Other than the change to the FSM data, the exemplifications do not account for any other changes in data that will be made for the 2024-25 Settlement, or the impact of transfers in and out.

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21. DSG members are asked to consider and discuss the analysis included in this paper and agree on an option for the FSM data for the 2024-25 settlement.

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Annex A

Table 1 - Number of pupils eFSM for each option by local authority, year and primary or secondary

	Option 1: Settlement 2023-24 Data		Option 2a: 4-year average eFSM		Option 2b: 5-year average eFSM		Option 3: 3-year average eFSM or		Option 4a: 2023 eFSM		Option 4b: 2023 eFSM or TP	
	Primary Pupils eligible for FSM	Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Primary Pupils eligible for FSM	Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Primary Pupils eligible for FSM	Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Primary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP	Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP	Primary Pupils for FSM	Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Primary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP	Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP
Isle of Anglesey	862	528	861	537	859	527	1,137	710	851	526	1,167	736
Gwynedd	1,235	731	1,258	794	1,249	765	1,786	1,201	1,308	903	1,904	1,334
Conwy	1,554	920	1,590	987	1,558	949	2,253	1,462	1,572	1,066	2,301	1,632
Denbighshire	1,641	1,044	1,709	1,136	1,661	1,090	2,213	1,554	1,741	1,272	2,307	1,734
Flintshire	2,301	1,415	2,349	1,465	2,231	1,376	2,927	1,923	1,950	1,221	3,053	2,101
Wrexham	2,298	1,097	2,408	1,224	2,329	1,155	2,996	1,662	2,452	1,389	3,122	1,850
Powys	1,303	817	1,386	873	1,322	825	1,636	1,075	1,397	855	1,739	1,171
Ceredigion	694	452	759	533	720	498	1,019	635	825	683	1,055	718
Pembrokeshire	1,541	941	1,506	957	1,525	953	2,098	1,360	1,463	1,001	2,080	1,490
Carmarthenshire	2,829	1,767	2,895	1,867	2,801	1,779	3,432	2,275	2,688	1,830	3,663	2,538
Swansea	4,202	2,487	4,407	2,688	4,291	2,595	5,706	3,702	4,649	3,025	5,900	4,114
Neath Port Talbot	2,824	1,719	3,004	1,809	2,889	1,773	3,577	2,272	3,151	1,991	3,636	2,488
Bridgend	2,555	1,433	2,761	1,605	2,643	1,523	3,295	1,989	2,997	1,886	3,389	2,231
The Vale of Glamorgan	1,740	1,040	1,870	1,144	1,788	1,096	2,344	1,546	1,979	1,319	2,432	1,774
Rhondda Cynon Taff	4,694	2,791	4,708	2,914	4,656	2,834	5,695	3,623	4,504	3,005	5,820	3,896
Merthyr Tydfil	1,137	642	1,211	682	1,170	663	1,577	891	1,303	751	1,687	995
Caerphilly	3,429	2,224	3,645	2,394	3,549	2,315	4,058	2,664	4,032	2,679	4,298	2,907
Blaenau Gwent	1,471	764	1,481	784	1,428	755	1,782	967	1,254	718	1,798	1,038
Torfaen	1,833	1,207	1,923	1,280	1,813	1,199	2,491	1,676	1,730	1,171	2,569	1,811
Monmouthshire	886	509	936	556	883	521	1,125	706	875	571	1,188	816
Newport	2,908	1,750	3,056	1,917	2,958	1,822	3,997	2,613	3,159	2,113	4,155	2,852
Cardiff	7,316	4,420	7,782	5,005	7,490	4,688	8,792	5,907	8,186	5,762	9,146	6,509
Wales	51,253	30,698	53,505	33,151	51,813	31,701	65,936	42,413	54,066	35,737	68,409	46,735

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Table 2 – Difference in relative share (Percentage Points) for each option by local authority, year and primary or secondary

	Percentage Point (pp) difference in relative share									
	Option 2a difference		Option 2b difference		Option 3 difference		Option 4a difference		Option 4b difference	
	Total Primary Pupils eligible for FSM	Total Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Total Primary Pupils eligible for FSM	Total Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Total Primary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP	Total Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP	Total Primary Pupils eligible for FSM	Total Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM	Total Primary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP	Total Secondary Pupils eligible for FSM or TP
Isle of Anglesey	-0.07	-0.10	-0.02	-0.06	0.04	-0.05	-0.11	-0.25	0.02	-0.15
Gwynedd	-0.06	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.30	0.45	0.01	0.15	0.37	0.47
Conwy	-0.06	-0.02	-0.03	0.00	0.38	0.45	-0.12	-0.01	0.33	0.50
Denbighshire	-0.01	0.03	0.00	0.04	0.15	0.26	0.02	0.16	0.17	0.31
Flintshire	-0.10	-0.19	-0.18	-0.27	-0.05	-0.08	-0.88	-1.19	-0.03	-0.11
Wrexham	0.02	0.12	0.01	0.07	0.06	0.35	0.05	0.31	0.08	0.38
Powys	0.05	-0.03	0.01	-0.06	-0.06	-0.13	0.04	-0.27	0.00	-0.16
Ceredigion	0.06	0.14	0.04	0.10	0.19	0.02	0.17	0.44	0.19	0.06
Pembrokeshire	-0.19	-0.18	-0.06	-0.06	0.18	0.14	-0.30	-0.26	0.03	0.12
Carmarthenshire	-0.11	-0.12	-0.11	-0.14	-0.31	-0.39	-0.55	-0.64	-0.17	-0.33
Swansea	0.04	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.46	0.63	0.40	0.36	0.43	0.70
Neath Port Talbot	0.10	-0.14	0.07	-0.01	-0.08	-0.24	0.32	-0.03	-0.19	-0.28
Bridgend	0.18	0.17	0.12	0.14	0.01	0.02	0.56	0.61	-0.03	0.11
The Vale of Glamorgan	0.10	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.16	0.26	0.27	0.30	0.16	0.41
Rhondda Cynon Taff	-0.36	-0.30	-0.17	-0.15	-0.52	-0.55	-0.83	-0.68	-0.65	-0.76
Merthyr Tydfil	0.04	-0.03	0.04	0.00	0.17	0.01	0.19	0.01	0.25	0.04
Caerphilly	0.12	-0.02	0.16	0.06	-0.54	-0.96	0.77	0.25	-0.41	-1.02
Blaenau Gwent	-0.10	-0.12	-0.11	-0.11	-0.17	-0.21	-0.55	-0.48	-0.24	-0.27
Torfaen	0.02	-0.07	-0.08	-0.15	0.20	0.02	-0.38	-0.66	0.18	-0.06
Monmouthshire	0.02	0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.11	-0.06	0.01	0.09
Newport	0.04	0.08	0.04	0.05	0.39	0.46	0.17	0.21	0.40	0.40
Cardiff	0.27	0.70	0.18	0.39	-0.94	-0.47	0.87	1.73	-0.90	-0.47
Wales										

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Table 3 – Exemplification for each option by local authority on the 2023-24 settlement (AEF)

	Option 1	Option 2a	Option 2b	Option 3	Option 4a	Option 4b	<i>£'000</i>					
Unitary Authority	Settlement 2023-24 data	4-year average eFSM	5-year average eFSM	3-year average eFSM or TP	2023 eFSM	2023 eFSM or TP	Option 1	Option 2a	Option 2b	Option 3	Option 4a	Option 4b
Angelsey	123,665	123,500	123,599	123,688	123,312	123,568	0	-165	-66	23	-353	-97
Gwynedd	228,036	228,007	228,095	228,857	228,218	228,967	0	-29	59	821	182	931
Conwy	198,598	198,514	198,571	199,499	198,445	199,481	0	-84	-27	901	-153	883
Denbighshire	188,024	187,978	188,003	188,402	188,140	188,467	0	-46	-21	378	116	443
Flintshire	251,995	251,630	251,454	251,801	249,722	251,791	0	-365	-541	-193	-2,273	-204
Wrexham	224,836	224,964	224,909	225,240	225,198	225,302	0	128	73	403	361	466
Powys	228,665	228,708	228,632	228,483	228,461	228,525	0	44	-32	-181	-203	-139
Ceredigion	129,198	129,425	129,355	129,463	129,852	129,498	0	228	157	265	654	300
Pembrokeshire	212,675	212,240	212,509	212,985	212,029	212,803	0	-435	-166	310	-646	128
Carmarthenshire	338,410	338,166	338,141	337,661	337,147	337,901	0	-244	-270	-750	-1,263	-510
Swansea	418,282	418,303	418,432	419,405	419,078	419,444	0	20	150	1,122	796	1,162
Neath Port Talbot	276,696	276,774	276,865	276,454	277,136	276,294	0	78	169	-242	440	-402
Bridgend	250,182	250,587	250,481	250,246	251,466	250,280	0	405	299	64	1,284	98
Vale of Glamorgan	202,797	202,925	202,880	203,188	203,356	203,338	0	128	83	391	559	541
Rhondda Cynon Taff	471,317	470,559	470,925	470,124	469,634	469,768	0	-759	-392	-1,194	-1,683	-1,549
Merthyr	118,614	118,592	118,620	118,785	118,807	118,899	0	-22	6	170	192	285
Caerphilly	339,960	340,076	340,200	338,375	341,099	338,464	0	115	239	-1,585	1,139	-1,496
Blaenau Gwent	139,730	139,491	139,494	139,331	138,616	139,186	0	-239	-237	-400	-1,115	-545
Torfaen	172,405	172,420	172,231	172,724	171,381	172,622	0	15	-174	319	-1,025	216
Monmouthshire	122,675	122,723	122,637	122,661	122,492	122,777	0	49	-37	-14	-182	102
Newport	289,522	289,654	289,616	290,438	289,936	290,394	0	132	94	915	414	871
Cardiff	593,605	594,651	594,240	592,080	596,364	592,121	0	1,046	635	-1,525	2,759	-1,484
Total Unitary Authorities	5,519,889	5,519,889	5,519,889	5,519,889	5,519,889	5,519,889						