

26 January 2023

Dear

Access to Information (ATI) Serial Number: **20025 – Free School Meals**

### **Information requested**

Thank you for your request which I received on 19 December 2023. You asked for details about how much money has been set aside in the Welsh budget to provide free meals to all pupils in primary schools.

### **Our response**

Universal Primary Free School Meals (UPFSM) are a commitment within the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru. Originally £200 million revenue was allocated over three years to support delivery: £40 million for 2022-23, £70 million for 2023-24 and £90 million in 2024-25.

Following agreement from Plaid Cymru, due to an underspend in 2022-23, £11 million was allocated to support meal provision in the school holidays during the 2022-23 financial year (for learners eligible for free school meals). A further £7.4 million was later re-profiled from the same year into 2023-24 and again used to support meal provision in the school holidays and £3.5 million was re-profiled into 2024-25.

In October 2023, due to the demand led nature of this grant to local authorities, as part of the in-year re-prioritisation exercise of Welsh Governments budgets, £11.5 million was offered for redeployment, reducing the UPFSM budget to £58.5 million for 2023-24 (£65.9 million including re-profiling). The changes will be formalised as part of the Second Supplementary Budget 2023-24, being published on 20 February. For 2024-25, the draft budget published on 19 December 2023 reflects an allocation of £3.5 million from Reserves for UPFSM, increasing the budget to £93.5 million in 2024-25.

In summary, and following the reprofiling exercises set out above, the revenue funding set aside to deliver this commitment (excluding the funding repurposed to support meal provision in the school holidays) is as follows:

- 2022-23: £18.1 million
- 2023-24: £58.5 million
- 2024-25: £93.5 million
- Total: £170.1 million

There was also £60 million capital funding allocated as part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning (SCfL) Programme budget (£25 million in 2021-22 and £35 million in 2022-23) for local authorities to invest in improvements to school catering facilities, including purchasing equipment, upgrading existing kitchen facilities, and updating digital systems. We anticipate that this funding will be sufficient for most local authorities and there is no capital

funding ringfenced for UPFSM in 2023-24 and 2024-25. We will continue to review bids as needed on a case-by-case basis, with funding allocated through the SCfL Programme.

Funding is administered annually by a grant which is paid directly to local authorities. The grant offer allocated to local authorities reflects their rollout plans and is intended to support delivery during each financial year.

### **Next steps**

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,  
Welsh Government,  
Cathays Park,  
Cardiff,  
CF10 3NQ

or Email: [Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales](mailto:Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales)

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House,  
Water Lane,  
Wilmslow,  
Cheshire,  
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely,