

**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES**

**06 June 2022**

**Report of the Director – Public Health**

**Food For Life Grant extension**

**1. Divisions Affected**

1.1 Countywide.

**2. Key Decision**

2.1 This is not a key decision.

**3. Purpose**

3.1 To seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities to:

a) Extend the current investment in the Food for Life programme from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 at a cost of £0.075m via the extension of an existing grant agreement for a period of one year to The Soil Association.

b) Note that the extension will be funded from The Public Health Grant

c) Note that the extension will provide time to review the system and to market test and develop a commissioned approach for the future.

**4. Information and Analysis**

4.1 The Food for Life (FFL) programme is a nationally recognised, and independently evaluated, whole systems school food programme led by

the Soil Association. The FFL Catering Mark is a widely respected scheme and 44% of English primary schools serve FFL meals. The programme plays a part in raising the standards of food quality, provenance, and environmental sustainability in public and private sector catering. FFL works in schools and their wider communities to embed lasting changes in positive food culture, through school meals, cooking, growing and farm visits, taking a whole school approach. Schools receive one-to-one support from a programme manager and have access to a suite of training programmes including farming, cooking, and improving the dining experience. Schools in Derbyshire have now also started supporting each other with DCC's gold standard schools acting as champions for newly enrolled schools.

- 4.2 FFL has been commissioned by Public Health and delivered in Derbyshire since 2013. Around 50,000 'Food for Life Served Here' silver standard meals are being served to 350 primary schools in Derbyshire every day, contributing to our commitment to ensure Derbyshire children have a happy, healthy start in life. Evidence and research suggests that fresh, nutritious, good quality school meals lead to healthy, happy children, improve concentration and performance in the classroom, and positively influences eating habits in later life.
- 4.3 The latest independent national evaluation portfolio of locally commissioned FFL programmes, found that:
- Pupils in FFL schools were about 40% more likely to 'like' or 'really like' school meals, after adjusting for gender, free school meals eligibility and local authority.
  - Free school meal uptake is increased by an average of 13% in Food for Life schools.
  - 45% of parents reported eating more vegetables because of FFL.
  - Pupils in FFL schools consume approximately a third more fruit and vegetables than those in comparison schools.

In addition, a social return on investment analysis conducted in 2016 concluded that the social return on investment of FFL commissioned programmes exceeds £4 for every £1 invested.

- 4.4 FFL has had significant impact on the school catering service across Derbyshire. The team support Derbyshire School Catering Service to maintain the silver standard for all primary schools and bronze standard for all secondary schools, both of which exceed the National Food Standards. The food is freshly prepared and, by sourcing ingredients from local suppliers, contributes significantly to the local economy. Food miles are reduced, helping to protect the environment for the future. The Catering Service link closely with FFL on other healthy eating initiatives

with schools and families, through social media and advertising, family tasting sessions, recipe design and family cookery competitions. This additional activity has helped raise awareness of the quality of school meals and increased uptake by 6.4%. For children experiencing the impacts of food poverty and poor nutrition a free school meal could be the only good nutritious meal they eat all day. The FFL standard meals served ensure Derbyshire children get a nutritious meal that exceeds the national Food Standards.

- 4.5 Both the School Catering Service and FFL are also key partners in the Holiday Activities Fund (HAF), supporting training, sharing healthy recipes, resources and leading cook and eat sessions. Helping families on a limited budget to cook and eat a healthy diet helps reduce widening health inequalities. This work has potential to support children experiencing the impacts of food insecurity and poor nutrition, including malnutrition.
- 4.6 Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the FFL Awards Programme has continued with appropriate adaptations. A blended approach has been introduced with seven new online training courses implemented, covering diverse themes from chicken keeping to smart eating for catering teams. The 87 schools, currently enrolled can access all this training and newly enrolled schools just getting started also access specific one to one support from the programme manager.
- 4.7 Derby and Derbyshire have a joint Childhood Obesity Strategy, 'Childhood Obesity, Time for Action ten-year plan 2020-2030'. A vision of this plan is to 'support and enable children to achieve and maintain a healthy weight by supporting children and families to live a healthy life and make healthy choices through a whole system approach'. FFL is integral to this work, providing training, resources, and support to both the community and the other services such as HENRY, Holiday Activity Fund, community food services, sustainable travel in schools and the emerging LLBD family weight management service.
- 4.8 Food for Life are embedded in the Derbyshire Childhood Healthy Weight Steering Group and have become a key partner in our whole system approach to childhood obesity.
- 4.9 Continuing with the Food for Life investment until August 2023 will enable the current programme of work to continue and give time to review the system and to market test and develop a commissioned

approach for the future. The current programme of work up until August 2023 includes:

- Specific support for all schools in our whole system approach to childhood obesity targeted areas.
- Work with HENRY and expansion of support to early year's providers.
- Work with partners in community hubs/localities as part of the system approach to childhood obesity to provide train the trainer sessions and ongoing support.
- FFL being an active member of the Childhood Healthy Weight Steering Group responding where appropriate to needs as identified by specific work streams.
- Supporting Derbyshire Catering Services to maintain silver and bronze standards.

## 5. Consultation

5.1 A recent engagement survey was distributed to all early years providers across Derbyshire and 76 nurseries, play groups, childminders and other early years providers showed an interest in being involved with FFL. There is also continued demand from schools. Comments from current schools include:

- 'The FFL programme continues to revolutionise and enhance the learning opportunities and outcomes of our children. It has provided a real focus on outdoor learning and food-based education is permeating into our wider school and village community' (Blackwell Primary).
- 'Our school motto is 'Learning together for personal success'. FFL allows us to work collaboratively with each other, local companies, schools, care homes and families to achieve independence, life skills, determination, confidence and above all success!' (Alfreton Park Community Special School).

## 6. Alternative Options Considered

6.1 **Do nothing.** If the extension of funding was not approved the Catering Service may decide not to provide 'Food for Life Served Here' silver and bronze standard meals which would have an impact on the nutritious quality of food, the local economy and potentially the environment. There would be a loss of a key partner in the childhood obesity systems work across the county, resulting in lack of input from FFL in the pilot localities working on the whole systems approach.

- 6.2 **Go out to market for a commissioned service without continuing with the current grant.** The lack of service would leave a gap in provision and not give sufficient time for the whole systems approach to childhood obesity to gain enough momentum to inform future service provision.

## 7. Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

## 8. Background Papers

- 8.1 Cabinet Paper - Investment in population nutrition and physical activity programmes 09 July 2020 [P:\003\\_Lifestyle\Physical\\_Activity\\_and\\_Population\\_Nutrition\Cabinet\Papers\2020\Physical\\_activity\\_and\\_nutrition\\_paper\\_May\\_2020\\_final.doc](P:\003_Lifestyle\Physical_Activity_and_Population_Nutrition\Cabinet\Papers\2020\Physical_activity_and_nutrition_paper_May_2020_final.doc)

## 9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1- Implications.

## 10. Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Health and Communities is asked to:

- a) Agree to the extension of the current investment in the Food for Life programme from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 at a cost of £0.075m via the extension of an existing grant agreement for a period of one year to The Soil Association.
- b) Note that the extension will be funded from the Public Health Grant
- c) Note that the extension will provide time to review the system and to market test and develop a commissioned approach for the future.

## 11. Reasons for Recommendation

- 11.1 Extending the current investment will ensure that the work continues as part of the childhood obesity system wide approach as identified as part of the action plan in the Childhood Obesity Strategy and will give sufficient time for the whole systems approach to childhood obesity to gain enough momentum to inform future service provision.

## 12. Is it necessary to waive call-in period

12.1 No

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**Implications**

**Financial**

- 1.1 The total cost for the period from 01 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 is £0,075m funded by the Public Health Grant.

**Legal**

- 2.1 The Council's Financial Regulations state that grants below of £100,000 require Cabinet Member authorisation.
- 2.2 The Council's standard grant agreement shall be used to set out the terms and conditions for which the grants are made, which provides for clawback of funding in certain circumstances and shall also provide that the Council is not liable for any employment liabilities.

**Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

- 6.1 Resilient, healthy, and safe communities – working with partners to enable individuals and communities to lead happier healthier lives.