

The Continuation of Free Breakfast Club Provision in Primary and Special Schools with the Introduction of a Charge for the Additional Childcare Element.

Frequently Asked Questions

In RCTCBC, all 92 primary schools and 3 special schools provide a free breakfast club and all pupils, from nursery to year six, are eligible to attend. The Council's Education Catering Services supply the staffing and the food to primary and special schools to facilitate access to free breakfast clubs. Some schools provide a free childcare session before the breakfast club, with most settings typically operating between 8.00am and 9.00am.

Cabinet have approved recommendations to consult upon proposals to continue to provide a thirty-minute free breakfast session in primary and special schools but introduce a charge for the additional childcare element operated prior to the breakfast sessions.

Why is the Council's Cabinet considering this proposal, and how would any savings be used?

- The Council is facing significant financial shortfalls of £35 million for 2024/25 and a predicted £85 million over the next three years. Therefore, the Council must consider a range of options to deliver the essential savings necessary to help deliver a legally balanced budget for 2024/2025.
- As a result of these circumstances the Council is reviewing the services it provides that currently go beyond statutory legal requirements, including reviewing the discretionary element of childcare provision offered during school breakfast clubs.
- The income generated from this proposal would be re-invested back into schools funding, to offset cost pressures.

What is the proposed change to service delivery?

- To introduce a fee of £1 per day (rounded down to £60 per term) for parents/carers who make use of the extra half an hour of childcare provision currently in place for children within schools, through the breakfast club service and which, typically operates between 8.00 a.m. -8:30am.

When would this policy be implemented?

- Following Cabinet's approval of the recommendations made during the meeting held on 20th November, a six-week consultation will first be undertaken to inform a future report to Cabinet in respect of these proposals. If adopted these proposals will be subject to future Cabinet agreement and could come into effect from April 2024.

How would parents pay for the childcare service under these proposals?

- In line with current payment arrangements for school meals, parents/carers would only be able to pay on-line for the childcare charges.
- Charges for the childcare element of breakfast club would be based on a charge of £60 per term. This would be payable at the start of each term and be non-refundable.
- The annual charge to parents/carers is proposed at £180.
- Children who have been assessed as eligible for Free School Meals would be exempt from any charge under the proposal.

How does this impact free school breakfasts?

- This proposal will in no way impact any child's opportunity to access a healthy school breakfast, free of charge.
- All pupils from Nursery to Year 6 will continue to be able to access a free school breakfast, which is typically offered from 8:30 a.m. -9 a.m.

What if my child arrives to school at 8:15 a.m. / 8:20 a.m. / 8:25 a.m. (example based on a setting operating typically between 8.00 a.m. -9.00 a.m.)?

- It is proposed that pupils attending the paid additional childcare session would arrive between 8.00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. and would attend the whole session.
- At 8:15 a.m. the doors to the childcare session will be closed and no further admissions will be made to the session.
- At 8.25 a.m. the doors will open in readiness for the start of free breakfast session.
- 8.30 a.m. is the end of the paid additional childcare session and the start of the free breakfast session.

I have more than one child attending the childcare session, does that mean I need to make multiple payments?

- The consultation will seek views in relation to other possible concessions to the £1 charge – such as a capped charge for parents/carers with more than one child making use of the provision.

Will any exemptions be made for children who are eligible for Free School Meals?

- Children who have been assessed as eligible for Free School Meals would be exempt from any charge under the proposal.
- (Note this relates to the underlying eligibility for Free School Meals and not those pupils receiving the Universal Primary Free School Meal provision).

What about children who arrive to school via free school transport?

- The proposal allows some flexibility afforded in arrangements for learners who access free home to school transport.

How can I participate in the consultation process?

- Following Cabinet's decision to commence consultation, the Council will undertake a 6-week public consultation with service users, parents, carers, providers, and stakeholders who are likely to be affected by the proposal.
- That consultation will run from 27th November 2023 to 8th January 2024.
- The consultation includes an online questionnaire on the Council's website that can be found [here](#).
- Letters will be distributed to parents/carers via school messaging systems, and an appropriate consultation would also be undertaken with all staff (and their Trade Union representatives) potentially impacted by the proposal.
- The results of the consultation will be fed back to the Cabinet in the New Year.