Information

Sheet Number:

2017-21/168

Providing support for County Councillors

for County Councillors

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| Relevant SLT Director and sign-off date: | Alyn Jones |

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| Date: | 15.01.21 |

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| To: | All County Councillors |

**Food support for Somerset families during January 2021 lockdown**

Members will be aware we have been working throughout the pandemic to ensure Somerset families have access to sufficient food.

Over the Christmas holidays Somerset County Council used funding from the Winter Covid Grant Scheme to ensure all schools in Somerset were able to provide food or vouchers for children who are entitled to Free School Meals. We have also provided additional funds to ensure every eligible child also receives food or vouchers during the upcoming February half term.

During this lockdown, the Department for Education (DfE) asked schools to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school during term time (this includes vulnerable children and the children of critical workers), as well as those children being home-schooled who are eligible for Free School Meals.

Food boxes are encouraged by the DfE, as it helps ensure that schools get to see the children at home from a safeguarding perspective. The DfE has provided a list of items that they recommend go in food boxes, and where food boxes are not possible, the DfE has suggested that schools provide vouchers.

The decision on whether to provide boxes or vouchers rests with the individual schools. However, Somerset County Council is working with them to ensure that Somerset food boxes meet or exceed the DfE standard.

Somerset County Council is providing schools with an additional £427,000 to enhance the level of food provided and meet dietary requirements.

We also recognise that some children are not eligible for Free School Meals but for one reason or another would benefit from receiving food support. Therefore, this funding can also be used to schools to support a wider range of children.

If you are aware of any family who needs food support or has any concerns about the quality of food boxes, please encourage them to contact the Coronavirus Helpline on 0300 790 6275. The advisers will link families to the right support for them and ensure that any concerns are followed up appropriately.

This funding for schools is just part of a much wider network of support in the county during the pandemic which has ensured people in Somerset have access to food, personal, financial and emotional support.

We are working with Foodbanks, FareShare, HIS Church, Somerset Community Council Village Agents and many voluntary and community groups across Somerset to provide food items and frozen meals for immediate use, as well as supporting the development of new community pantries and larders to help communities have longer term sustainable solutions in place.

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