

# Denbighshire County Council

## Dinner Money Debt Policies

---

APSE Wales Catering &  
Cleaning Advisory  
Group



12<sup>th</sup> November 2019

# Denbighshire County Council



Denbighshire County Council

School Meal Dimensions



Denbighshire Population: **93,734**

Denbighshire School Pupils: **14,250\***

Primary Schools in Denbighshire *60 inc 1 Special*

Secondary Schools in Denbighshire **7**

Number of Schools that buy back internal Catering Services service: **67 / 100%**

Total Meals Served per Week: **25,000+**

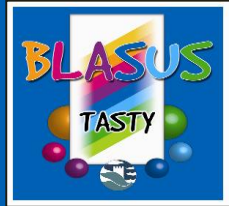




# Denbighshire Catering Services

Denbighshire Catering Services

Dimensions



Headcount: **188**

Full Time Equivalents (FTE): **90.90**

Lead Officer –  
Contracts & Facilities Service

Catering Services  
Management Team

Heacount /  
Full Time Equivalents

Nigel Highfield

Hayley Jones  
(North)

H/C: 124  
FTE: 55.97

Ian Kemp  
(South)

H/C: 64  
FTE: 34.93



# Dinner Money Debt Policies

---

- 1. Denbighshire Catering Services**
- 2. Debt Policy – Implementation (January 2014) £20.00 allowance**
- 3. Debt Policy Review – (July 2016 annually)**
- 4. Challenges (DCC and nationally)**
- 5. Where we are Today**



# Debt Policy Implementation

Reasons for  
Implementing

- £000's of school meal debt being written off each month

Policy

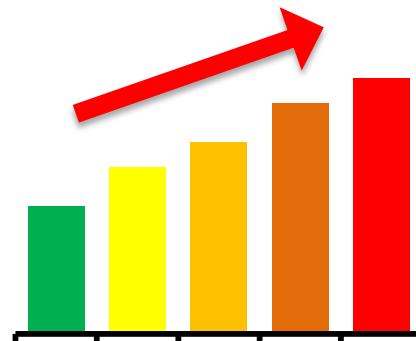
- Implemented 2014
- £15 cut off per child

Reaction

- Dismay of parents, Headteachers and councillors

Challenges

- Debt continued to escalate with introduction of cashless systems
- Debt no longer referred to debtors – Catering Service hold it
- Length of debt
- Children moving to secondary school



# Debt Policy Review



## Procedure for Collection of School Meal debts.



**Policy  
Review:**

**July  
2018**

**Key Change:**

Debt figure  
lowered to £11  
(1 week of  
school meals)





# Challenges (DCC and Nationally)

September 2018:

**DAILY POST**

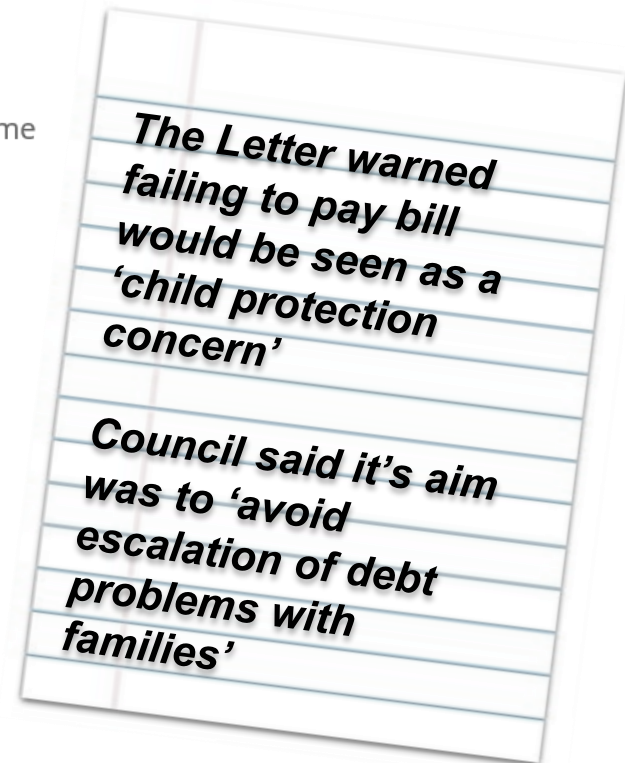
## Single mum threatened with social services over £13 unpaid school dinner bill

The outraged mum said she felt the council was making being poor a crime

**Mail**Online

Single mother hits out at school for 'criminalising poverty' after council threatened to report her to social services when she was late paying her child's £13 dinner money bill

- The letter warned failing to pay bill would be seen as a 'child protection concern'
- Mother, who wished to remain anonymous, said that she 'always clears the debt'
- The parent's child is a student at Twm o'r Nant School in Denbigh, north Wales
- Council said its aim was to 'avoid escalation of debt problems within families'







## Challenges (DCC and Nationally)

**mumsnet**  
by parents for parents

Rowan Davies (Head of Policy and Campaigns, Mumsnet) said schools should offer 'flexibility' to avoid parents feeling 'embarrassed'

**NEXUS**  
EDUCATION

Damien Challenger (Managing Director – Nexus Education) has been on both sides of the table – as part of teaching network Nexus Education, and having received a letter for a £2 meal debt. He said sometimes language in communication with parents can be 'abrasive' and 'puts a parent on the defensive'





## Challenges (DCC and Nationally)



CLILC • WLGA

Parents in Wales owed more than £400k in unpaid school dinner debts at the end of last year, figures have shown.

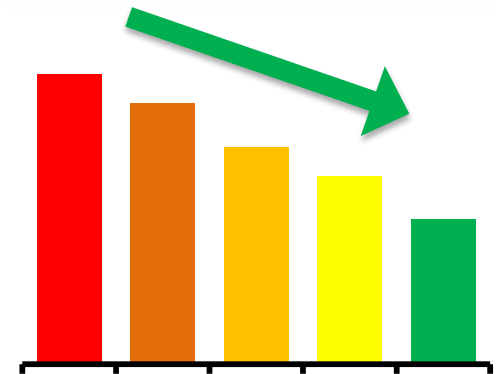


In seven Welsh authorities, the debt has leapt by nearly **90%** in the space of **5 years.**



# Where we are Today

- Schools on board and engaged as in fear of recharges.
- Meals continue to be stopped and Cheese sandwich offered
- Debt has decrease from £48k to £12.5k





# Questions

