

## Deputation to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee on 8 October 2024

Submitted by Rachel Dooley and Kimberley Turner

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### Free School Meals (FSM)

The council is making the advertisement of FSM front and centre in Camden but then failing to ensure the children signed up actually get this entitlement. There is not an accessible offer around FSM in Camden due to the lack of policy to support the application and delivery of the scheme for children not in school.

There are 3 areas that we would like the council to consider and take action on, as listed:

1. A scheme has only recently been set up to pay FSM voucher direct to parents who's children are on an official (listed in their Education Health Care Plans [EHCP]) Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS) package of education. This is welcomed but the council have not offered any back payment to the children who have been on an EOTAS package longer than from March 2024.

What action will the council take to rectify this and give back payment? We would like to know where the policy is going to be displayed and when and how Camden are making sure all EOTAS children get the vouchers?

2. There is a cohort of children who have and EHCP, are not accessing the setting listed on their EHCP because the school is not meeting needs, the council are providing alternative education but these children are not accessing their FSM entitlement. Camden SEND officers are directing the parents of these children to speak to the school. In many cases the relationship has broken down with the school so this is not appropriate. Also the council doesn't control the compliance of school leaders as there is no policy to cover this. It is Camden who are responsible for ensuring the children get this entitlement not schools.

What is the council proposing to do to allow these children to access their FSM as the current way of operating is failing children? Will these children get back payment form the time they have been unable to attend school?

3. There is another cohort of children who do not have an EHCP, are out of school due to unmet needs who are also not accessing FSM along with not accessing any education.

What action will the council take to ensure ALL children entitled to FSM get their entitlement in future?

4. Please can the council supply us with the number of how many children are entitled to FSM under these above circumstances and highlight how many are missing out on their entitlement?