

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**REPORT**

<b>To: Education Resources Sub-Committee</b>	<b>Subject: Schools Catering</b>
<b>From: Directors of Education and Leisure Services</b>	
<b>Date: 15 August 1996</b>	
<b>Ref: MM/LA</b>	

**Summary:**

This report describes the provision of catering services to educational establishments and the systems established to monitor the quality of the service.

**Recommendations:**

The sub-committee is asked to note and approve:

- (a) the arrangements for monitoring the performance of the catering contract,
- (b) the proposed submission of monitoring reports to future meetings of the resources sub-committee.

Members wishing further information about this paper should contact:

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MM/LA  
 15 August 1996

## **NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Schools Catering**

#### **Report by the Directors of Education and Leisure Services**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION:**

- 1.1 All catering services for North Lanarkshire council are managed by the leisure services department and delivered by the catering DSO. Over 50% of the catering centres are in the education department. This report describes the service provided to education and the procedures for ensuring a quality service.

#### **2 SERVICE TO SCHOOLS:**

- 2.1 The catering arrangements in each school generally reflect the number of meals served each day. Schools providing more than 250 meals per day should have their own kitchen facilities. Those serving fewer than 100 meals will import meals from a production kitchen in the local area. Schools in the 100-250 meals range are reviewed periodically to establish the most efficient arrangements.
- 2.2 There is a general recognition of the high quality of the catering service. Surveys of parents, pupils and teachers by the previous authority indicated general agreement that school meals provide good value for money. The benefits identified included the following:
- the provision of a hot or substantial meal
  - the provision of a well balanced meal
  - the financial support of free meals
  - the opportunity for pupils to remain on safe premises at lunchtime
  - the wide choice of food, particularly in a cash cafeteria system

#### **3 MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE:**

- 3.1 The quality assurance system established in North Lanarkshire is more rigorous than that in the previous authority. Most of the responsibility rests with the leisure support services, client catering section, but there is also close liaison with and monitoring by the education department. Further details of the system are included in the following paragraphs.

### 3.2 Client catering section:

The section has both a monitoring and service development role. Day to day monitoring, including regular centre visits, will be the responsibility of 6 area client officers reporting to 2 area client managers. They are all qualified catering professionals with the experience and expertise to make rigorous assessments of contractor performance.

The project development team has the responsibility for the design and refurbishment of facilities, the evaluation and purchase of new equipment, the promotion of healthy eating including support for health initiatives in schools, and general policy development.

### 3.3 Monitoring visits:

Centre visits by area officers will identify good practice as well as issues requiring attention. The client section will ensure that appropriate action is taken by the contractor based both on positive incentives and financial penalty.

### 3.4 Head teacher reports:

Head teachers are asked to make 4-weekly returns indicating the level of satisfaction with the service. This information will be used to identify action required either at individual centre or area levels.

### 3.5 Regular surveys:

To ensure the views of individual users are taken into account it is proposed to make comment cards available at all centres and to undertake annual surveys at selected centres.

### 3.6 Financial monitoring:

Particular emphasis will be given to monitoring the cost effectiveness of the service. This includes the rigorous verification of invoices, the provision of period financial reports, the efficient processing of milk subsidy claims and close liaison about contract variations and proposed expenditure on furniture and equipment.

### 3.7 Reports by other agencies:

Reports from other agencies make useful comments on the quality of catering provision. For example, reports from environmental services may require action by the education department, catering DSO and the planning and development department.

### 3.8 The procedures and sources of information described above will feature both in liaison meetings between the education department and the client catering section and in performance review reports to the education resources sub-committee.

#### 4 CCT TIMETABLE:

4.1 The current catering contract ends in September 1998. The proposed timetable for the next round of tendering is outlined below.

- September 1997 : contract advertised for interest
- December 1997 : specification finalised in liaison with education department and following committee approval
- February 1998 : tenders invited
- June 1998 : contract awarded
- July 1998 : preparation period - contract let
- October 1998 : contract begins

#### 5 RECOMMENDATIONS:

5.1 The sub-committee is asked to note and approve:

- (a) the arrangements for monitoring the performance of the catering contract,
- (b) the proposed submission of monitoring reports to future meetings of the resources sub-committee.

Murdo Maciver  
15 August 1996