



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jackson Carlaw MSP
Member for Eastwood

Lorraine McMillan
Chief Executive of East Renfrewshire Council
Sent by E-Mail

Dear Lorraine,

Free School Meals Substitute Provision in East Renfrewshire

I have recently received correspondence highlighting examples of sub-standard food packages delivered to families in East Renfrewshire.

As you are likely to be aware, Manchester United and England Forward, Marcus Rashford, who has led an outstanding campaign on free school meal provision for children, has shared a number of photographs on social media in recent days highlighting examples of inadequate food packages being sent to families while schools are off. This has prompted the correspondence and encouraged constituents to contact me as their local MSP to highlight unacceptable food packages sent to families in East Renfrewshire and to advise that the contents of what is being received does not equate to the full value of free school meal vouchers offered in other local authorities.

Given the nature of the recent communication I have received and from what has also emerged on social and online media, I am extremely concerned that vulnerable families in East Renfrewshire may not always be receiving adequate food provision to support them at this extremely challenging time and the system of sending food packages locally appears to be failing on far too many occasions. In order to remedy the difficulties that have emerged, the specific suggestion has been raised that instead of operating a system whereby food parcels are delivered to homes, East Renfrewshire Council should move to a model that provides families with a weekly supermarket voucher. This would have the benefit of allowing parents to purchase nutritious foods that their children enjoy and prevent unacceptable instances of disappointing food parcels being received.

For me, a system of issuing weekly vouchers does seem to be the right approach going forward and as Eastwood's MSP, I am calling on the council to make this change without delay. It is important that we all learn from experience and to recognise that the quality of food parcels has proved to be inconsistent and vastly inferior to the flexibility of vouchers to parents who can then make decisions appropriate to their family needs.

I hope that the local authority can make this change as a matter of urgency and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Jackson Carlaw CBE MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Eastwood

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