



# Best Practice

*Larder Cymru*

WELSH FOOD FOR SCHOOLS

2025



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government





Our aim at Larder Cymru – Welsh Food for Schools is to increase the procurement of Welsh products by the public sector in Wales, with a specific focus on local authority school meal provision.

**We do this by working with local authorities across Wales to review their existing supply frameworks and menu provisions, to develop menus that incorporate more Welsh produce and suppliers. Lessons learnt and examples of best practice are included in this report.**

The public sector procures more than £85 million worth of food in Wales annually, with local authorities and the NHS accounting for over 80% of this spend.

At the start of this project, it was estimated that public sector purchasing from Welsh companies accounted for 58% of the total spend, with 23% spent specifically on food and drink of Welsh origin.

The Welsh Food for Schools project builds on previous work we have undertaken at Larder Cymru, aiming to increase the range of Welsh food served in school meals. Pilot activity was conducted with Conwy County Borough Council which informed the development and scope of this project.

The key priority of Larder Cymru – Welsh Food for Schools is to build on the opportunities arising from the Welsh Government’s commitment to universal free school meals for primary children and the associated increase in demand. This creates new opportunities for a triple dividend: more local firms, providing more local produce, in a more sustainable environment.

The role of Welsh Food for Schools has been to act as an enabler, supporting local authority catering teams and the supply chain to understand each other’s needs, priorities, systems and procedures, and to develop suitable menus incorporating more Welsh produce.

**David Wylie**  
Project Manager Larder Cymru

“By working with the food and drink supply chain for our schools, Larder Cymru has created valuable opportunities for Welsh SMEs and ensured the benefits of public sector procurement ripple throughout our communities.

“Their commitment to championing Welsh food in our schools not only supports our children’s health and wellbeing but also cultivates a meaningful connection between young people and the food grown and produced on their doorstep.

“Through integrating Welsh produce into our public services, Larder Cymru strengthens our circular economy, significantly reduces food miles, and advances our future wellbeing goals.

“Thanks to Larder Cymru’s dedicated efforts, high-quality Welsh food and drink now stands proudly at the heart of our public sector, nourishing both our communities and our economy.”

**Rebecca Evans**  
Cabinet Secretary for Economy  
Energy and Planning

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# Strengthening local food networks: Gwynedd's drive to attract Welsh producers.

**Cyngor Gwynedd and Larder Cymru were eager to see more local food producers join the supply chain for schools, care homes, and leisure centres in the county.**

The aim was to strengthen links between producers in Gwynedd and across Wales with Welsh wholesalers - ensuring fair prices and a reliable market for local goods.

By creating new opportunities for growers, farmers, processors, and supply companies, the campaign sought to encourage the provision of high-quality, locally sourced produce throughout Gwynedd. This also presented a chance for local businesses to benefit from a stable, long-term market while promoting the health and wellbeing of residents.

To achieve this, a publicity campaign was launched in spring 2025, aimed at encouraging more local food producers to engage with the supply chain. Key strategies included:

- Targeting local, national and specialist media outlets
- Engaging with relevant networks, including farming unions and food and drink promotion agencies
- Collaborating with appropriate influencers across social media and policy circles
- Promoting the campaign at agricultural shows and other related community events

The anticipated outcome is a measurable increase in local producer involvement across Gwynedd's supply chain by 2026.



Local stakeholders welcomed the campaign:

"It's great to see Cyngor Gwynedd promoting the use of local food - something we as a union have been encouraging for years."

**Ilan Jones, NFU Cymru**

"It's essential that we support local businesses and our communities by using the best food available locally."

**Gethin Dwyfor, Oren Foods**

# School meals provision in Cardiff: what matters to parents and carers?

**Following the introduction of free meals for primary aged children across Wales, Cardiff Council was eager to understand parents/ carers views on the food they offered in their schools - and their feedback on free school meals.**

They worked with Larder Cymru on a county wide questionnaire - asking the parents/ carers what their views were of the food offered and how much they valued the use of Welsh produce in school meals.

This was the first time that they had consulted with the parents/ carers on school meals, since the implementation of the Universal Primary Free School Meals.

Parents/ carers can pre-order food from the two-week menu, through the Parent Pay system.

Over 3,000 people from 103 schools completed the questionnaire, to provide a robust response. The main findings were:

- 61% used the school meal service for their child(ren) every day of the school week.

- 95% of the respondents use the school meal service at least once a week.
- Less than 1 in 5 of the respondents rated the school meal service as poor.
- Over half rated the service as good or higher for providing meal options their child enjoys.
- 85% of those surveyed rated the quality of the food as fair or better.
- Over two thirds of the respondents believed that the current range of local and/or Welsh food options were fair or better.
- Some of the general comments indicated a lack of knowledge regarding where the food is sourced from.
- 72% believed it important to have a range of Welsh and/ or local food options on the menu.

In response to the survey finding, Judith Gregory, Cardiff Council's Education Catering Business Manager said, "The survey highlights the value of Universal Primary Free School Meals and the role of Welsh produce in school catering.

"The feedback received from parents and carers shows the value of the catering service and the benefits it brings to children ensuring that they have access to nutritious, hot meals that support their wellbeing and education.

"We would like to thank parents and carers for their participation in the survey and will review all the feedback as we strive to continually improve the service provided."





Caerphilly showcases the exceptional quality of locally sourced ingredients on their new school menus.

Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the first to work with Larder Cymru on their Welsh Food for Schools Initiative.

Larder Cymru Project Manager, David Wylie, explains more about the project and why Caerphilly County Council decided to re-design their school menus.

“Our first task when we started working with Caerphilly was to review their school menus. One of the main findings was that the number of Welsh suppliers was already quite high, and that they were underselling themselves on their menus. They already had a high uptake of school meals – around 70% - which is the top end of the average in Wales.

“We then suggested that they should celebrate the Welsh produce visually on their menus, and then we could monitor the uptake of free meals.

“We got a marketing company, Rose-Innes Design, on board to create colourful and engaging menus.”

Michelle Rose-Innes is the founder of Rose-Innes Designs, and has designed for many brands over the years, including major high street retailers.

She says this was one of the most rewarding briefs she has been tasked with, adding: “I went all out to design engaging menus with professional photos of mouthwatering meals that showcased this quality food and nutritious ingredients. Supplier brand logos were used on the menu footer along with Welsh dragon icons to indicate Welsh produce was used.”

Marcia Lewis, Principal Officer for Caerphilly’s catering service added: “This partnership has played a key role in transforming how Caerphilly Catering highlights local produce on its school menus.

“With the expertise of Menter Môn, Larder Cymru, and Rose-Innes Design, we’ve not only showcased the exceptional quality of our locally sourced ingredients but also transformed the overall look and feel of our menus.

“The professionally designed marketing materials have helped increase meal uptake and uplift staff morale, fostering a strong sense of pride in the high-quality meals we serve daily in our schools.

“This collaboration has truly enhanced the dining experience for our students while reaffirming our commitment to support local suppliers.”

Caerphilly



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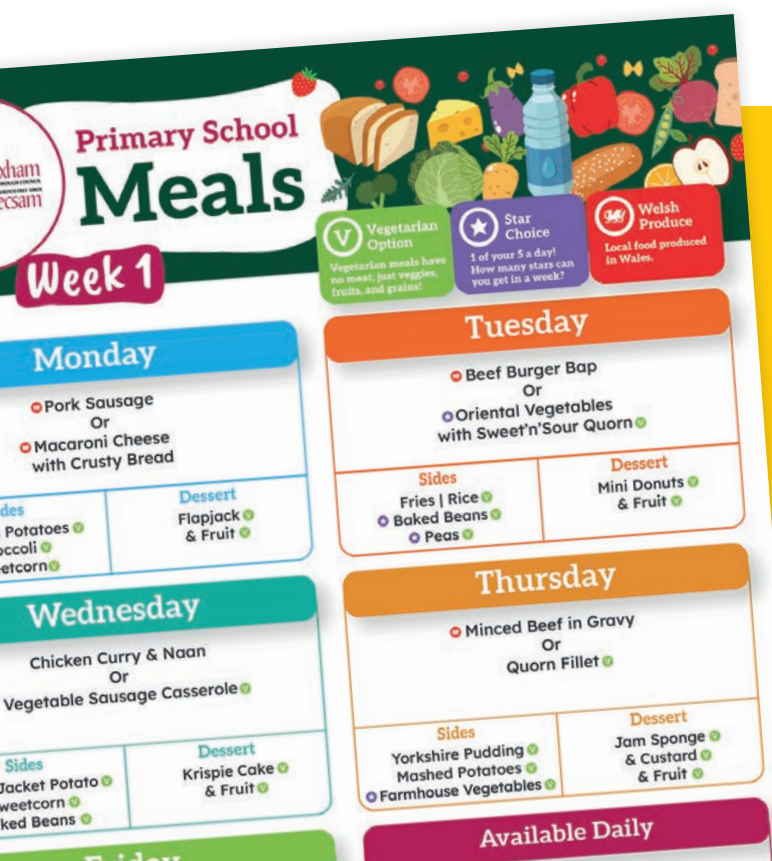
# Larder Cymru acted as a vital link between the design team, suppliers, and our steering group.

Wrexham County Borough Council has 58 primary schools, with a wide range of ethnicities and educational needs that reflect the diversity of their communities. With support from Larder Cymru, the Council developed a vibrant new menu that highlights the food on offer and its origins.

## Why did you want to redesign your menus at Wrexham County Borough Council?

Our previous menu had been available only as a black-and-white Word document for several years. We felt it didn't visually reflect the appeal or variety of the meals provided.

We wanted the new primary school menu to promote and celebrate the range of food we offer, particularly Welsh produce and vegetarian options. We also aimed to use the design as a tool to encourage pupils to eat more fruit and vegetables.



## How did you agree on the final design?

Helen Jones from the Healthy Schools team consulted with several primary school councils and parent groups throughout the design process. The designs were well received, with each group reviewing three options and voting for their favourite.

At the same time, we worked closely with our catering team to ensure the menu complied with Welsh Government regulations, while still appealing to the diverse tastes across the county - all within a limited budget. Feedback from these consultations was shared with our steering group, who used it to inform the final design decision.

## How did Larder Cymru help you?

Larder Cymru acted as a vital link between the design team, suppliers, and our steering group. They collaborated with our suppliers and catering team to highlight the Welsh products already featured in our menu - many of which had not been previously promoted. They also supported our team in sourcing additional Welsh products to include.

From start to finish, Larder Cymru played a key role in driving the project forward, offering valuable support and guidance throughout.

Wrexham

"Drawing on our experience designing for local Welsh food brands, we created colourful, engaging school menus that captivate children while showcasing the Welsh ingredients in each meal.

The menus are both fun and educational, helping students connect with the food they eat. We're proud to have created a menu that not only celebrates Welsh food but also inspires and educates the next generation."

**Lowri Vaughan Williams, partner at Made with Zeal who designed the menus.**

# Supporting health, skills, and the community in Anglesey schools.

**In 2024, Larder Cymru's Welsh Food for Schools distributed a total of £9,000 in grants to 21 primary schools on Anglesey. Each school received funding to deliver a range of activities centred around gardening, cooking, wellbeing, and community engagement. The project aimed to strengthen the pupil's relationship with sourcing and growing Welsh food.**

Schools created vibrant gardening spaces where pupils grew carrots, potatoes, lettuce, and herbs, learning first-hand about food origins and sustainability.

Children not only harvested the produce but also used them in their cooking sessions, shared them with their families, and sold them through small enterprise projects. This practical approach developed essential life skills, promoted environmental responsibility, and some early entrepreneurial thinking - linking the food and drink sector with the curriculum.

Many schools used the fund to deliver regular cookery sessions that focused on practical skills and nutrition. They used fresh, mainly local ingredients, reinforcing messages around healthy eating. Events such as smoothie challenges and healthy pizza-making proved particularly popular, encouraging children to try new vegetables and improve their dietary habits.

The fund also supported wellbeing-focused initiatives, with some schools creating calm garden spaces to support emotional wellbeing. Specific support was provided for pupils experiencing trauma or from refugee backgrounds.

Healthy Weeks were also delivered in many of the schools - combining nutrition, fitness, and mental health education.

Thanks to the funding, schools also managed to strengthen their connections with families and relationship with the local community. Parents were welcomed into cooking and gardening sessions, with local businesses contributing produce and materials, further strengthening the link between food production and the local economy.

Outcomes across the county included:

- Skills development:** Pupils gained practical experience in gardening, cooking, and enterprise.
- Health benefits:** Increased vegetable consumption, understanding of nutrition and through fresher produce, shorter supply chains.
- Wellbeing:** Improved mental health through engaging, active learning.
- Community:** Increased engagement with families and local partners in the food & drink sector.

Anglesey

"Schools created vibrant gardening spaces where pupils grew vegetables, learning first-hand about food origins and sustainability."



# Facts from Wales



Wales leads the UK in providing

**free school meals**

to all primary school children



One in four reception-aged children  
start school living with

**obesity or are  
overweight**



Children who eat well feel well,

**learn better**

and grow stronger



**53,000**

secondary school learners  
get free meals



The public sector  
procures more than

**£85M**

of food in  
Wales annually

School meals can make up a third or more of a child's

**weekday food intake**



**230,000**

primary school children  
get free meals



Around

**20 million**

portions of free  
or subsidised milk  
served yearly



Around

**10 million**

free primary breakfasts  
provided annually

