

SUNDERLAND TESTIMONIAL



Background

Sunderland City Council is a firm believer in the effectiveness of the Impact Cashless System having used it across their estate for several years.

Testimonial

Colin Ranson (Assistant Head of Community Services for Sunderland City Council) deals with 16 of the city's secondary schools, and believes that installing the CRB Impact system has been directly responsible for the removal of the stigma attached to free meals, a reduction in bullying and an improvement in healthy eating.

Why Impact?

He explains: "As a three star local authority, we are proactive and progressive in our approach, and as such only work with suppliers who have the same attitude. With CRB, not only do we have a supplier that shares our enthusiasm for customer service, they are also generous with sharing their knowledge and expertise."

Training and Support

"Initially we were concerned that once the system was installed, we might not be able to use it to its full potential. However, due to the excellent training and support offered by CRB, we are all competent and confident when using the equipment."

"There has also been positive feedback from the staff that use the system on a daily basis. The dinner ladies were impressed with the trainers because they wouldn't leave until they were certain everyone was confident with the new technology."

"CRB are happy to engage with parents as well, attending parent evenings to alleviate any fears they may have. Our customers aren't only the children but their parents too, and we have to communicate with them clearly."

Back Office and Business Efficiency

Commenting on the system's Head Office reporting facility, Ranson says: "It gives us the opportunity to know exactly what's happening out in the schools without having to be onsite. We can know at any stage



how trading is going at any lunchtime in any school."

"We are now able to track sales, individually and overall, and to identify profitable and non-profitable sales mixes. This has enabled us to increase our profitability, which allows us to re-invest in the dining facilities and also to further promote healthy eating."

"It allows us to spend our marketing money and promotional money in the right places. Because we know what our customers are eating, we know which areas to target for our healthy eating campaign. Evaluating the success of a campaign is also straightforward and uses fewer resources."

"We also run pilot schemes as we can get the results very quickly, which means we can judge the results and either abandon that pilot or roll it out to the rest of the schools."

Social Inclusion

Ranson continues: "There are traditional problems associated with bullying and dinner money. However, the Impact system allows us to track card usage and trace possible intimidating behaviour. For example, if one person has been buying three meals, we can quickly liaise with the school to see if this child has been bullied, or if there is a more innocent explanation."

This provides reassurance for parents, who sometimes feel removed from what their children do with their dinner money. "Parents who are concerned about the level of money children may ask for can check whether or not the child is spending all the money on food."

Healthy Opportunities

"The system gives us the opportunity to reward healthy lifestyle choices and because the students know they will get rewarded for taking up healthier offerings it has increased the uptake of healthy eating. And if the pupils continue to choose the healthier options they get rewarded with a Citywide 'one card', which will give them free swimming and other opportunities in the council-operated facilities."

"About 12 months ago we introduced free salad and vegetables to our customers and it helped us track that, and the overall success of the project."

"Overall what it allows us to do is offer the children every opportunity to partake in healthy eating and activities without being seen to preach at them."

Future Plans

Ranson is also encouraged that the Impact system, and its technology, will allow the council to develop a Citywide card that will incorporate leisure centres and libraries.

