

# EXCELLENCE IN CATERING PROCUREMENT WREXHAM COUNCIL

Delivering thousands of school meals every day while ensuring they are of a high quality and on budget is a tricky balancing act. But Wrexham Council has found that having TUCO in your corner makes all the difference.



**Sue Williams believes there are many benefits to being a member of TUCO but she can sum them up in just three words: peace of mind.**

In her role as primary schools catering manager at Wrexham Council, Sue can testify that ensuring the smooth running of school meals is a no mean feat.

The council not only serves Wrexham itself – the largest town in North Wales – but also schools in surrounding villages across a county borough that covers a total population of more than 135,000 people.

The council oversees school meals in all but three of the area's 68 schools and delivers 5,000 meals a day in its primary schools alone.

As well as providing fully-costed and nutritionally analysed menus to schools with production kitchens, the council runs six dining centres which produce meals for those that only have basic facilities.

On top of that, the whole operation must keep a firm grip on costs. Like most local authorities, cutbacks to government funding have put great pressure on the

council's finances. It has had to make £52m of savings over the last decade and expects to find another £13m in the next two years.

"We are tasked with being self-sufficient," says Sue. "We therefore try to keep a tight rein on food and disposables costs."

The local authority has used a wide range of TUCO frameworks for many years for its school meals and it saves some £350,000 a year in the process.

Sue adds: "The fact that TUCO give us regular updates on savings goes a long way with heads of departments and

## WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Wrexham Council's school meals service spends more than £1.4m a year through TUCO. Here's the breakdown of latest spend and savings:

FRAMEWORK	ANNUAL SPEND (AUG 16 - JUL 17)	SAVING %	SAVING AMOUNT	PROCESS SAVING
CATERING LIGHT & HEAVY EQUIPMENT	£32,469.83	0.85%	£147.59 £130.77	£0.00
DISPOSABLES & KITCHEN CHEMICALS	£11,848.72	15.65%	£49.67 £1,734.39 £414.30	£0.00
FROZEN & CHILLED FOODS	£698,024.91	29.57%	£293,004.15 £61.26	£0.00
FRUIT & VEGETABLES	£116,297.19	5.14%	£6,301.58	£0.00
GROCERY PROVISIONS & CHILLED FOODS	£271,654.05	11.46%	£20.95 £73.62 £35,055.91 £10.53	£6,000.00
INNOVATIVE FOOD CONCEPTS	£62,864.58	3.00%	£66.82 £1,877.45	£0.00
MILK, DAIRY, MORNING GOODS & BREAD SUPPLY	£221,778.23	5.14%	£566.66 £11,450.42	£6,000.00
SOFT DRINKS & FRUIT JUICE	£17.58	19.51%	£4.26	£0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,414,955.09</b>		<b>£350,970.33</b>	<b>£12,000.00</b>



**"The fact that TUCO give us regular updates on savings goes a long way with heads of departments and elected members to demonstrate that we are getting best value while maintaining quality."**

– Sue Williams, primary schools catering manager, Wrexham Council



## About TUCO

**TUCO is the leading professional membership body for in-house caterers operating in the higher and further education sector. Also among its members are more than 40 local authorities throughout the UK who benefit from savings and support for their catering operations.**

**It provides a platform where members can **Share** and celebrate achievements; **Learn** via a range of courses, professional advice, training and study tours; **Grow** their business through the latest market research, trends and analysis; and **Buy** via TUCO's EU compliant catering frameworks and wide range of suppliers - maximising value through the combined £140m+ annual spend of TUCO members.**

**If you would like to find out how TUCO can support your council's catering department, call us: 0161 713 3420, email us: [info@tuco.ac.uk](mailto:info@tuco.ac.uk) or visit [www.tuco.ac.uk/buy](http://www.tuco.ac.uk/buy)**



## SCHOOL MEALS IN WREXHAM - WHO'S BEING SERVED?

**57 primary schools**

**7 secondary schools**

**1 special school**

**5,000 primary school meals a day**

[wrexham.gov.uk/schoolmeals](http://wrexham.gov.uk/schoolmeals)

[@wxmschoolmeals](https://twitter.com/wxmschoolmeals)

elected members to demonstrate that we are getting best value while maintaining quality."

A catering management team of just six staff, three of which only work during term time, runs school meals in Wrexham. Capacity is therefore a major issue and the fact that TUCO takes care of everything from the tendering process to price checking and liaising with suppliers "leaves us free to manage the day to day side of the operation," says Sue.

"It gives us peace of mind knowing that side is taken care of and that we're getting value for money. To be honest, they are light years ahead of anyone else when it comes to frameworks.

"I find TUCO very easy to work with and

if we have any requests they are always happy to help. We have a long working relationship with TUCO so we have confidence that they have got our back should anything go wrong with suppliers."

TUCO's scale and clout also comes into its own when the council is confronted by issues that require a quick response, such as when the horsemeat scandal arose in 2013.

"We had reports from all of the suppliers on the TUCO frameworks," Sue explains. "It helped us to manage customer and public confidence. When you're dealing with children's meals something like this can become very emotionally charged even if there's nothing to worry about. It meant we were able to quickly reassure people."

The council also benefits from TUCO's wider offer. Like university students, schoolchildren's tastes are changing and they are heavily influenced by what's on the high street.

TUCO research has proved useful in flagging up latest trends and help the council to develop new menus, says Sue. Also, TUCO local authority members across North Wales meet up regularly to share ideas and host presentations from current or potential suppliers.

Sue admits it's difficult to imagine life without TUCO.

"We are a really small team with limited resources and if we weren't with TUCO we'd struggle to take all the work they do as well. Just keeping track of when contracts come to an end would be difficult! With TUCO we don't have to worry about any of that."