



# TUCO

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## Excellence in catering procurement

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**– Ella Coackley,  
Halton Council**

### Halton Borough Council

Since joining TUCO in 2007, Halton Council's schools catering service has saved up to 21% on many different contracts. They now have increased buying power, higher supplier standards and staff have set their sights on winning yet another prestigious national catering mark.

**Ella Coackley, Schools Catering Manager at Halton Council has had a busy few weeks.**

"The free school meals initiative has taken up a lot of time. We've had to sort out volumes of food, freezers for storing, getting in masses of light equipment, delivery of food as well as recruiting and training more staff."

Despite the extra demand, Ella feels that everything has gone very well. "Considering the pressures of the last two weeks, all our suppliers have delivered."

One reason for this smooth delivery, Ella believes, is TUCO, the catering consortium that Halton Council use to procure food and light equipment for the 65 schools and

nurseries it serves.

TUCO supplies a total of 28 council catering departments and 340 university and college food operations with £100m worth of goods and services each year, using economies of scale to drive down prices and increase supply chain quality.

Ella Coackley explains: "Being part of a consortium that includes universities, colleges and other local authorities means there is more pressure on suppliers to get their act together as there are lots of other members so we have more muscle with the supply chain."

It is this 'muscle' that Ella credits for the

high quality of Halton's schools catering service; not just over the past few weeks but ever since 2007, when the council first began working with TUCO. Since then she believes the department has become much more operationally efficient.

"When we transferred to Brakes, which is the supplier we now use for much of our frozen food, there were significant savings. On groceries we made big savings too. Another provider, The Little Food Company are also great. They can supply next day with lots of good food for high schools, things like chicken breasts, bacon and an excellent variety of spot deals."

On soft drinks, Halton's schools catering team have saved over 21%. More than 16% has been slashed on their disposables and chemicals bill and one tenth on fruit and vegetable prices. Savings figures are calculated by benchmarking against other purchasing organisations through the Catering Price Index or comparing the winning tender for each framework against the average of all other tenders received.

### What's on the menu?

Halton Borough Council spent a total of £2,320,658 on catering through TUCO between April 2013 and March 2014. Not all of the spend goes towards school meals but these figures do show the significant savings made by Halton Council.

Frameworks Used	Total Spent	% Saving	Savings Total
Frozen	£855,193	12.24%	£104,675
Grocery	£638,928	7.00%	£44,724
Meat & Poultry	£330,502	10.00%	£33,050
Soft Drinks	£189,706	4.00%	£7,588
Fruit & Vegetables	£111,285	6.68%	£7,433
Milk & Bread	£30,261	21.23%	£6,424
Light Equipment	£34,009	16.66%	£5,665
Confectionery	£47,024	10.20%	£4,796
Disposables & Chemicals	£25,530	5.50%	£1,404
Water	£58,220	1.77%	£1,030
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£2,320,658</b>		<b>£216,789</b>





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– Ella Coackley, Halton Council

Another reason Ella Coackley turned to TUCO is food safety. Like all local authorities, ensuring that children are eating safe food in school is a major priority for Halton's catering team.

“To tell you the truth, food poisoning is our greatest fear. We have got to be mindful of it constantly, particularly with meat suppliers.”

When the horse meat scandal broke in 2013 local councillors in Halton demanded to know where the meat being eaten by the borough's school children was coming from. Ella was able to quickly get certification through TUCO to allay all concerns. She says that one of the biggest benefits of using TUCO is knowing she has support around food safety and that TUCO is taking care of that side of things.

Indeed, any supplier tendering for a TUCO framework has to go through a rigorous inspection procedure. This involves food safety auditor STS (Support Training Services) assessing the systems a provider has in place around the manufacture, dispatch and supply of ingredients. A company can only achieve accreditation if they have demonstrated certain high standards.

Sustainability is another big issue for Halton Council's schools catering service. Ella wants her team to work towards the Soil Association's coveted Food for Life catering mark. The scheme provides an independent endorsement that food providers use local, organic ingredients which are free from additives, are better for animal welfare, and comply with national nutrition standards.

“Many of the university catering teams that TUCO also buys for are working towards this catering mark and some have already achieved gold standards. We are using the same top quality suppliers as these universities, making it easier for us to achieve this standard too.”

“We've already achieved the Institute of Hospitality's Hospitality Assured standard and now we want a Food for Life mark too!”

Ella Coackley is so confident in the quality of TUCO suppliers and the value for money they can generate that she has convinced the schools catering managers in three nearby councils to start buying from TUCO too.

“I have encouraged other local authorities to go with TUCO because they get highly competitive supplier rates, and, at the end of the day, as councils, we've got to get the best prices and be as economic as we possibly can.”

## SCHOOL MEALS IN HALTON – WHO'S BEING SERVED?

- ▶ **50** primary schools
- ▶ **6** secondary schools
- ▶ **4** special needs schools
- ▶ **5** nurseries
- ▶ Total of **12,000** meals a day



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.org** or visit **www.tuco.org/buy**

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