



Minutes of meeting of the School Food APPG

Thursday 11 May 2023, 2-4pm – Hybrid meeting –Thatcher Room, Portcullis House and Zoom.

Present

Sharon Hodgson MP (SH) – Chair

1. Chair's Welcome

SH welcomed attendees to the Group and thanked the speakers for attending the meeting. She advised that representatives from the Mayor of London office had been invited to the meeting but were unable to attend. However, they were going to be invited to the next meeting to provide an overview of the roll out of Free School Meals (FSM).

2. School Food Plan Alliance Update – Stephanie Slater (SS)

SS provided an update from the School Food Plan Alliance to the group and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- The roll out of FSM in London had been discussed at the last meeting of the Alliance and it had been confirmed that the funding had been agreed at £2.65 per meal.
- Two representatives from the Department for Education had attended the last meeting and advised that they had no information regarding aligning the current school meal funding with the higher rate of £2.65 agreed in London.
- It had been confirmed that local authorities currently funding FSM to all primary school children would receive the funding from the Mayor of London and it had been indicated that these authorities would use the funding to expand provision further.
- Sheffield City Council had presented details of their approach to auto- enrolment and how there had been an addition 5500 children enrolled, and a conservative estimate of £4 million pounds been gained through the Pupil Premium.
- JBV had reported that the government proposals for wrap around provision had not included a reference to the provision of food, and work was being undertaken to ensure this forms part of the proposal.

- At the meeting, the DfE provided an update on the actions in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. It was confirmed that work was progressing, and further information would be communicated in due course.

In response to a question from SH it was confirmed that auto-enrolment and the pupil premium was included in the School Food Review being undertaken and the Mayor of London's office were also looking at this as part of the roll out of FSM.

3. Economic benefits of FSM – MH, Impact on urban Health and ZM, Food Foundation.

MH presented an overview of the work of Impact of Urban Health and in so doing the key points were noted as follows:-

- The organisation aimed to influence those shaping food options that surround children in three key areas, home and early years, schools and streets and ventures.
- For the area focusing on schools, Impact on Urban Health work with individual schools, support children and young people to advocate for change, and identify and address the wider structural drivers of poor nutritional quality in the school food system.
- Impact on Urban Health had commissioned PwC to undertake a cost -benefit analysis into the expansion of free school meals in England.
- MH reported that amongst the findings, if free school meals were expanded to all families in receipt of Universal Credit for every £1 invested it was estimated that £1.38 would be generated in core benefits and if there was universal free school meals for every £1 invested, £1.71 would be generated in core benefits.

MH concluded by advising that the next step was to continue the work with PwC to undertake further analysis and unpick the broader eco-benefits for expanding FSMs.

ZM presented an overview of the Superpowers of Free School Meals Evidence Pack and in so doing the key points were noted as follows:-

- The evidence pack formed a key part of our Feed the Future campaign launched last October.
- It was the Foundations intention to demonstrate to policymakers the evidence that investment in FSM makes sense socially, morally, and economically.
- It was reported that there was a link between free school meals and attainment. The children who had the greatest improvement in attainment were from less affluent families.
- There was evidence to show that for children from families in the bottom quartile by household income, receiving FSM for 9 years increased lifetime income by almost 6%, a benefit-to-cost ratio of 7:1.
- It was commented that free school meals were a nutritional safety net for children especially in the current situation of rising food insecurity.
- Research undertaken by the University of Essex showed that children receiving UFSM in London Boroughs reduced prevalence of obesity by 9.3% among Reception children and 5.6% among Year 6 children on average.
- Evidence shows that FSM support families with the cost of living impact, with families on average save approximately £37 per month in total on food spending, based on a household with two adults and two primary-aged children.

ZM concluded by stating that evidence alone won't change policy, there needed to be cross party-political will and the roll-out of universal free school meals in London as a one-year cost-of-living intervention provided a huge opportunity to gather further evidence of the impact of school meals on children.

In response to the presentation the following questions and comments were raised:-

- SH commented that we were all familiar with the statistics and it was good to have them all in one accessible format to use in making the case to government for extending FSM. However, the per meal funding needed to increase to ensure the service was sustainable.
- MW advised that there needed to be a push for better funding for school meals and as such she had raised a question in parliament but more needs to be done. MW asked if one year was enough time to gain the required evidence from the roll out of free school meals in London.
- ZM advised that there was an opportunity to evaluate some key aspects of the roll out.
- MB reported that the Lord Mayors Office were looking at some clear indicators of change because of the roll out of FSM such as an improvement in attendance and behaviour and further information would be shared in the coming weeks.

4. School Breakfast -the views of children, young people and parents – AFS, Magic Breakfast

AFS presented an overview of the work of a pupil, parent and caregiver voice survey that Magic Breakfast had undertaken in autumn 2022 and in so doing the key points were noted as follows:-

- Magic Breakfast are a registered charity that provide healthy breakfasts to children and young people in the UK who arrive at school too hungry to learn, provide expert advice to set-up hunger focused, barrier and stigma-free breakfast provisions, campaign for long-term solutions to child morning hunger and conduct research.
- The survey was completed by over 4,200 pupils, 4,650 parents and focus groups were held with 18 schools.
- The survey highlighted that four in five children and young people agreed that it's important to offer children something to eat for breakfast at school.
- Nine in ten parents (91%) agreed that every child should have access to a healthy breakfast at the start of the school day.
- 68% of children who responded to the survey cited barriers or challenges to eating breakfast and examples provide d

Meeting concluded at 16.40pm

