

Feed the Future

Policy progress towards healthy, sustainable school food for all

Barbara Crowther, Sustain

Not Just Dinners? Food in a School Setting
ADPH Yorkshire & Humber
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About Us



The alliance for better food and farming advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity.



Bringing together children's and health organisations, professional bodies, academics, unions and school food experts to campaign for policy changes in schools, communities and throughout society so that all children can easily eat sustainable and healthy food.

School meals = healthier and wealthier

Children who take school meals eat **more fruit and vegetables**. Only 2% of packed lunches are compliant with **School Food Standards**

Uptake of school meals associated with **doing better in school** – an increase in attainment can deliver increase in **lifetime income**

Healthy school food contributes to prevention of diet-related disease, and can reduce obesity.

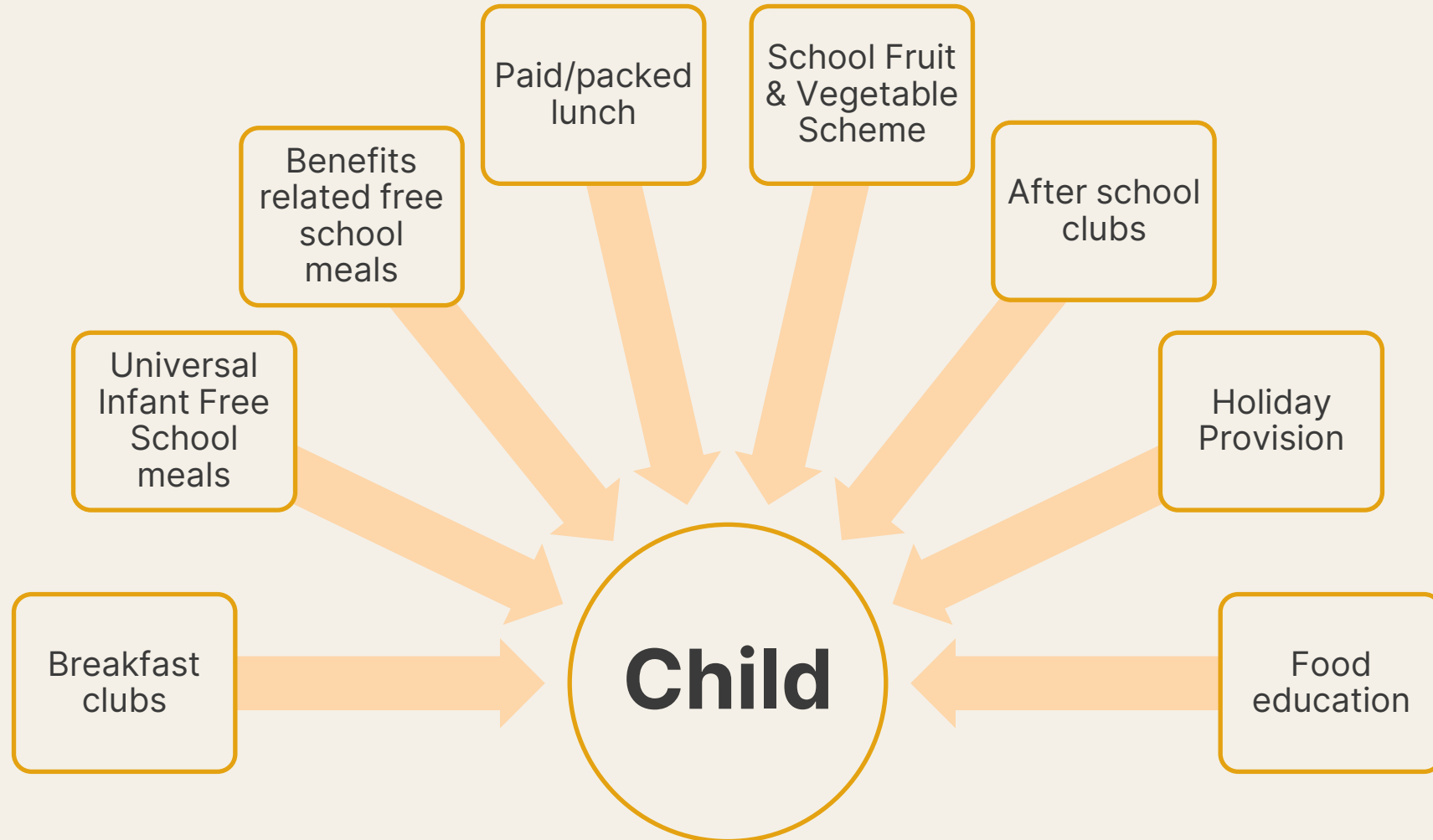
Universal approaches **reduce health inequalities**

Every £1 invested in a free school meal can deliver £1.38-£1.71 in cost-saving, health, education benefits.

Read evidence pack: [The Superpowers of School Meals](#)



Array of policies & support systems



School Food: An overview of national government spending

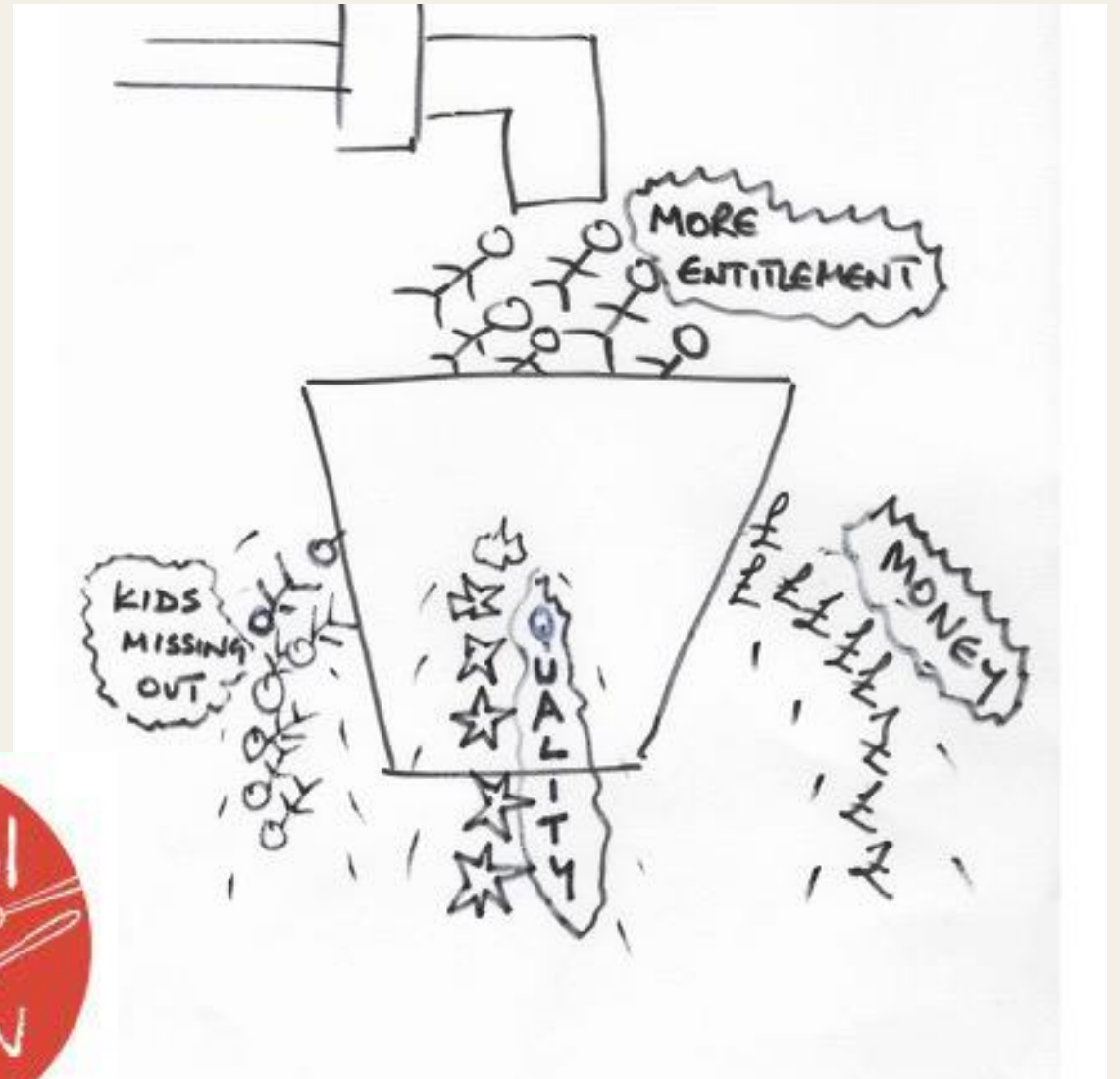
~ £1.4 billion spent on school food interventions in 2019/20

School Food Intervention	English Government Spend 2019/20 (millions)
Benefits Related Free School Meals	633.9
Free School Meals Supplementary Grant	78.5
Universal Infant Free School Meals	609.9
National School Breakfast Scheme	11.8
School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme	40.0
Milk (DHSC & Defra)	c. 5.0
Food Education Ingredients	Not known
TOTAL	1,379.1
Holiday Activities & Food (HAF)	220
Household Support Fund	~30% of 421

- There is no single source of data on government revenue spending on school food interventions.

The “Leaky Bucket”

- The current School Food system has flaws which has been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic
- There are gaps and inconsistencies in the eligibility of free school meals and other school food interventions (such as breakfast)
- But there is also a *'leaky bucket'* - in terms of funding flows, uptake and quality




Five pillars for policy action

Entitlement	Procurement	Accountability	Uptake	Funding
<p>Children missing out</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £7400 threshold for eligibility under UC in England• 800,000 children in poverty not eligible• Universal meals being expanded in pockets• NSBP only in 2500 schools	<p>Uneven quality and standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weighting of quality vs cost in procurement• Stronger health and environment focus in School Food Standards• Effective training & support for schools & caterers	<p>No system of monitoring and reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accreditation system<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publish school food policy & annual reporting• FSA piloting compliance via School Food Standards	<p>Barriers affecting take up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Auto-enrolment and DWP/DFE data integration• Menu and dining facility design• Catering training• Reporting on uptake	<p>Complex and confusing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simplifying funding• Clarity over conditions of grant to ensure funding translates to good nutrition• Small school funding• Capital funding• School Fruit & Veg devolution


The Postcode Lottery of Entitlement

There are still large differences between who can get a nutritious school meal across the UK nations:


ENGLAND

- » Universal Infant Free School Meals (Reception to Year 2).¹¹ 
- » Families means-tested in both primary and secondary school with eligibility for Free School Meals set at family earnings of £7,400 (after tax, not including benefits).¹²
- » Four London boroughs additionally provide meals for all primary school children.¹³

NORTHERN IRELAND

- » No Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM). 
- » Means-tested FSM available in primary and secondary schools, with a threshold of family earnings of £14,000 (after tax, not including benefits). There is also a commitment to review eligibility.¹⁴


WALES

- » All primary school children will get a Free School Meal at lunchtime by 2024. Roll-out is already complete in Reception. 



- » Secondary school threshold for eligibility is £7,400 (after tax, not including benefits).¹⁵

SCOTLAND

- » Universal Infant Free School Meals (Primary 1-3). 
- » Universal Free School Meals rolled out in Primary 4 and 5, with a commitment to extend to 6 and 7, and to pilot delivery in secondary schools.¹⁷
- » Secondary school threshold for eligibility at £7,920 (after tax, not including benefits).¹⁸

Entitlement and access to FSM

- Universal Infant Free School Meals in England since 2013 – feeding 1.25 million children age 4-7.
- 1.9 million children receiving benefit-related Free School Meals. Transitional protections under Universal Credit roll out recently extended to March 2025.
- Scotland currently expanding to all primary schools – both breakfast and lunch, with wrap around holiday care. Currently P1-5 receiving meals, and P6-7 pupils in receipt of Scottish Child Payment will get meals from August 2023.
- Wales committed to Primary School Meals for all, starting with infants in 2022, to be delivered by 2024.
- 5 London boroughs currently providing primary meals for all – Islington, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets and as of January 2022, Westminster City Council. Mayor of London announcement of £130 million for all London boroughs for 2023/24 academic year.

Where are we now on expanding access?

- National Food Strategy, plus #EndChildFoodPoverty & #FeedtheFuture campaigns calling for expansion to all children in households receiving Universal Credit (or other legacy benefits). **We are not yet winning.**
- Many anti-poverty groups, young people & teachers now calling for universal meals, not just a change of eligibility threshold . **There is growing momentum towards universal provision.**
- Cost-benefit analysis shows better ROI (£1.71 for every £1 invested) for universal school meals than targeted approach. **There is an economic case in our favour.**

We asked... they said:

- “We will keep eligibility under review = NO”
- “We believe the threshold is set at the right level” = NO
- “We have expanded school meals more than any other government” = NO
- “We are making money available via the Household Support Fund” = NO
- “Uplifting the threshold to everyone on Universal Credit means half of all families will benefit” = NO

9 March : International School Meals Day Launch of Say YES to school food for all



Thank You!

Any Questions?

Barbara Crowther
Children's Food Campaign Co-Ordinator
Barbara@sustainweb.org
www.sustainweb.org/schoolfoodforall