



All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food

Minutes of meeting of the School Food APPG

Thursday 21 January 2021 – 2.00pm – 4.00pm

Online

Present

Sharon Hodgson MP (SH),

Name		Organisation	Initial
Karen	Ahmed		KA
Sabrina	Ahmed	Vegan Society	SA
Louise	Allen	Food and Drink Federation	LA
Kate	Anstey	Child Poverty Action Group	KA
Mark	Argent	Academy Food Co	MA
Nigel	Argyle	Elygra	NA
Olukemi	Atijosan	Eagle Solutions	OA
Nathan	Atkinson	Rethink Food	NAT
Sarah	Atkinson	Surrey County Council	SA
Charlie	Baker		CB
Valerie	Barron		VB
Jake	Barwood	Totteridge	JB
Kristin	Bash	NHS	KB
David	Beck		DB
Kevin	Bernbaum	EDUCO	KBe
Jacquie	Blake	Nottingham City Council / National Vice Chair of LACA	JB
Ardva	Boyes-Brewer	Social justice	ABB
John	Bielby	Federation of Wholesale Distributors	JB
Rhiannon	Brace		RB
Julie	Brannen	UCL -Institute of Education on Public Funds	JBr
Myles	Bremner	Bremner Consulting	MB
Donald	Bundy	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine	DB
Holly	Burton		HB
David	Byrne	BidFood	DBy
Ian	Byrne	Member of Parliament	IB
Alison	Capewell	WLP Consultancy	AC
Nigel	Carter	Oral Health Foundation	NC
Nadia	Chalabi	Hackney Migrant Centre	NCh

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Secretariat - APSE

Laura	Chan	Soil Association	LC
Paul	Cherrington	WLP Consultancy	PC
Laura	Chepner	Veducation	LCh
Alina	Clark		AC
Stuart	Clarke	R D Johns Foodservice	SC
Jessica	Clasby-Monk	City Catering Southampton (JCM)	JCM
Linda	Cregan	ISS	LCr
Barbara	Crowther	Food Foundation (BC)	BC
Donald	Curry		DC
Louise	Davies	Food Teachers Centre	LD
Greta	Defeyter	Northumbria University	GD
Gerry	Diamond		GDi
Sam	Diamond	Brighton College	SD
Eve	Dickson	UCL	ED
Lisa	Didier	Soil Association	LDi
Mark	Driver	Minor, Weir and Willis	MD
Naomi	Duncan	Chefs in Schools	ND
Daniella	Dunn	Kitchen at School	DD
Kate	Evans	Derbyshire County Council	KE
Yinka	Ewuola	Eagle Solutions	YE
Jessica	Faulkner	Office of Sharon Hodgson MP	JF
Elisabeth	Faure	World Food Programme	EF
Patricia	Fellows	Consultant	PF
John	Figgins	West Sussex County Council	JF
Vicky	Ford	Minister for Children	VF
Andrew	Forsey	Feeding Britain	AF
Stephen	Forster	LACA Chair	SF
Sue	Frayn	Pabulum Catering	SFr
Neil	Fuller	Cater Link	NF
Mark	Gallant	Norse Group	MG
Suzanne	Gomersall		SG
Olivia	Gordon	Oakhill Communications	OG
Lindsay	Graham	Poverty and Inequality Commissioner	LG
Simon	Gray		SG
Emma	Green	British Sugar	EG
Judith	Gregory	Cardiff Council	JG
Vickie	Hacking	APSE	VH
Rachel	Hall	City Catering Southampton (RH)	RH
Laura	Hamilton		LH
Christopher	Hammond	Southampton Council	CH
Lynne	Hindmarch	Greggs Foundation	LHi
Jayne	Hoather	Dolce	JHo
Angela	Hogan	City Catering Southampton	AH
Angus	Holford	University of Essex	AHo
Victoria	Howe	The Farm Kitchen	VHo
Isabel	Hughes	Food Foundation	IH
Rhys	James	Caerphilly Council	RJ
Emma	Jeffcock	Public Health England	EJ

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Diana	Johnson	Member of Parliament	DJ
Andy	Jolley	School Food Campaigner	AJ
Jayne	Jones	Chair of Assist FM Scotland	JJ
Clare	Jordan	Norse Group	CJ
Leena	Kandoi		LK
Lorraine	Kelly	Magic Breakfast	LKe
Andy	Kemp	BidFood	AK
Matthew	Knight	Hillstone School	MK
Lynda	Korimboccus	The Vegan Society	LK
Andrew	Kyle		AK
Gurpinder	Lalli	University of Wolverhampton	GL
Evelina	Lasota		EL
Sue	Leuty	Elygra	SL
Emma	Lewell-Buck	Member of Parliament	ELB
Andrew	Lipscomb	Norse Group	AL
Stephen	Loat	Oral Health Foundation	SL
Seema	Malhotra	Member of Parliament	SM
Rebecca	Marks	William White Catering Butchers	RM
Andrea	McCann		AMc
Kerry	McCarthy	Member of Parliament	KMc
Harley	McDonald-Eckersall	Animal Rebellion	HME
Ian	McGrady	Edsential	IMc
Peter	McGrath	Brakes	PMc
Zoe	McIntyre	Food Foundation	ZMc
Frances	Meek	British Nutrition Foundation	FM
Poppy	Mist		PM
Lynda	Mitchell	LACA	LM
Rosemary	Molinari	Sodexo	RM
Caroline	Morgan	Local Food Links	CM
Zak	Mullen		ZM
Clare	Murray	WLP Consultancy	CMu
Ben	Newman		BN
Nicola	Noble	Surrey Square Primary School	NN
Sharon	Noonan-Gunning	City University London Centre for Food Policy.	SNG
Miguel	Nunes	BidFood	MN
Rebecca	O'Connell	UCL -Institute of Education on Public Funds (ROC)	ROC
Jackie	O'Neil	DfE	JON
Jason	O'Rourke	Washingborough Academy	JOR
Annabelle	O'Toole	British Dietetic Association	AOT
Jeanette	Orrey MBE	Food for Life	JO
George	Oyebode	The Soulstice Collective	GO
James	Ozden	Animal Rebellion	JO
Karen	Pardoe	Vertas Group Limited	KP
Thomas	Pass	Cater Link	TP
Elizabeth	Palmer		EP
Brad	Pearce	CaterEd	BP

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Nicole	Pisani	Chefs in Schools	NP
Neil	Porter		NPo
Leigh	Powell	Unison	LP
Beth	Prescott		BP
Derek	Price	Birmingham City Council	DP
Kate	Prince	Kellogg's	KP
Elizabeth	Readle		ER
Daniel	Reeves		DR
Shannon	Reilly		SR
Alysa	Remtulla	Magic Breakfast	AR
Rachel	Rice		RR
Emma	Riyait		ER
Gemma	Rodgers		GR
Cheryl	Rudge	Birmingham City Council	CR
Karen	Scammel	Sodexo	KS
David	Simmonds	Member of Parliament	DS
Stephanie	Slater	School Food Matters	SS
Dianna	Smith		DSm
Kim	Smith		KSm
Juliet	Snow	The Royal Academy of Culinary Arts / Adopt a School Trust	JS
Anne-Marie	Sowden	CaterEd	AMS
Gavin	Squires	BidFood	GS
Carol	Stebbing	Hampshire County Council	CS
Mark	Stein	Salford University Business School	MS
Rob	Stevens		RS
Martyn	Stockwin	Atalian Servest Food Co	MSt
Joseph	Stratton	Pro Veg	JSt
Rebecca	Sunter	Guys and St Thomas's Charity	RSu
Jill	Swyers		JSw
Katharine	Tate	The Food Teacher	KT
Tristan	Thomas		TT
Lisa	Thompson		LT
Helen	Turner		HT
Tony	Vale	Dolce	TV
Nadia	van Woerkom		NvW
Rachael	Venditti	Allmanhall	RV
Tatiana	Von Rheinbaben	The Good Food Institute	TvR
Megan	Waring	Cater Link	MW
Stacey	Warren	Family Action	SW
Lord Wasserman		Peer	LW
Baroness Watkins of Tavistock		Peer	BW
Alicia	Weston	Bags of Taste	AW

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Amanda	Whatley	Hampshire County Council	AWh
Rachel	White	Public Health England	RW
Freddie	Whittaker	Schools Week	FW
Nadia	Whittome	Member of Parliament (NW)	NW
Jamie	Wickett	Aspens Services	JW
Dale	Wild	Birmingham City Council	DW
Bethan	Williams		BWi
Nelson	Williams	Pabulum Catering	NW
Wendy	Wills		WW
Alison	Woodham		AWo
Liz	Wright	Hyperactive Childrens Support Group (HACSG)	LW
Lucy	Wright	Vegan food teacher	LWr

1. Chair's Welcome

SH welcomed the attendees to the meeting and that the events of the last few weeks had brought school food into the spotlight in a negative way and it has highlighted that as a sector we must do better. Therefore, the first item on the agenda is a policy discussion.

1. Policy Discussion

SH advised that this item was the opportunity for the APPG to hear from representatives across the sector to outline what is happening at a local level.

DS commented that the feedback that he had received from schools was positive on the options available to them and that Local Authorities had a good handle on the situation.

KM advised that there was some misinformation at the start but once this was resolved provision had been really good from the feedback she had received.

JB shared his experience regarding direct / in school catering and advised that they had received lots of produce for free and there had been contributions from many volunteers to deliver fresh and healthy meals. He also commented that school needed help and support to ensure that they could provide the provision required.

RH and JCM reported the experience from Southampton and outlined what was happening in their local area and the points raised included that Harvest Food Partnership had supplied grocery boxes to 750 children eligible for Free School Meals, the uptake was 67% in October, however this had now dropped to 17% with the voucher scheme being in place.

They were now gearing up for the school holiday period where recipe lead boxes would be delivered, grants and other supports had been received, and 1800 families had been supported in the East up until February. It was commented that the lines had been blurred between the Free School Meal boxes and the cooking at home boxes. To date the feedback received from the work had been outstanding.

LP highlighted the experiences of the frontline staff that had been reported to UNISON which included staff hours being reduced in the private sector. UNISON conducted a survey in October that highlighted that there had been a substantial reduction in quality and choice which had in turn reduced the uptake.

It was also commented that the number of staff being put into hardship, on only 43% of the work force surveyed felt valued. LP stated that women were feeding children at school but could not afford to feed themselves and there was very much the feeling that private sector companies were putting profit before service.

In response to the comments raised by LP, SH advised that the workforce and the service need supporting, and they need to be included in the build back better agenda.

RM gave an uptake regarding the school breakfast programme and reported that phase one had been completed in December and phase two of the programme had been extended. It was also reported that the second reading of the Bill regarding school breakfasts had been delayed to at least July 2021.

JJ provided an overview of the work that had been undertaken in Scotland and the main points raised were noted as two Local Authorities food parcels had gained Food4Life accreditation, councils had been providing support to the wider communities by protecting the supply chain, protecting the quality of meals served and protecting jobs. In addition, JJ advised that support was being provided for the community, children and staff welfare was a priority.

BC queried what was happening with the winter grant funding that had been made available to Local Authorities and SH commented that we needed to ensure that the funding was supporting those that needed it most but did not come forward and ask for it.

JF also raised concern regarding how the scheme worked when parents did not engage or they had become expectant / reliant on vouchers.

2. Minister for Children, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Education – Vicky Ford MP

VF stated her thanks and appreciation for all those that had provided meals throughout the pandemic and continued to provide meals.

It was stated that the food parcels that were highlighted in the media were unacceptable and a hotline for reporting such provision had been set up and she made it clear that there was an expectation that school caterers were to meet school food standards.

It was reported that £220 million had been made available for the holiday programme as the need for friendship and fun was much needed and the DfE were working with Local Authorities to develop approaches to the provision and put in measure an alternative approach for delivering the provision online if required.

In response to the comments made by VF, there was a range of comments and questions raised, the key points were noted as follows: -

- NW questioned why are people in poverty and why are working families being required to claim for Free School Meals
- ELB queried who was checking on the standard of what is standard of school food is delivered in schools.
- In response to a query by AJ regarding families with no recourse to public funds, VF advise that the current situation would continue and were families were in the process of applying for benefits they should speak to the school about getting Free School Meals in the period it takes for the application to be completed.
- LG made various comments with regard to school meals which included that the past 10 months had been chaos with guidance and support being issued at the last minute. COVID-19 had highlighted that the school meal system was not for purpose and had not been changed since the 1940s. The reliance on charities was not sustainable, the workforce had been forgotten. It was also commented that the current bad press regarding school meals in England was having a negative impact on the devolved nations.
- In concluding, LG stated that if there was an effective system of monitoring, we would not be in this position, a working group needs to be established to look at the COVID response to identify what works well and the lessons that can be learnt.
- In response, VF advised that the Kent variant of the virus had made it difficult to get a grasp on the data and how to respond. There are some great caterers in the sector and the Department for Education were working with and meeting schools and caterers on regular basis. The government had put in place various schemes to support people with and without children.
- VF comment that school meals had been in place for 100 years and they support children in receiving a nutritious meal and that the breakfast Bill is currently progressing through Parliament.
- DS commented that Local Authorities had welcomed the flexibility to spend the Winter Grant on areas of need in their community.
- In response to a comment by DS, VF advised that the Winter Grant had been paid to Local Authorities in a phased way, in the first phase 50% of the funding was paid, the second phase 25% was paid and in the final phase the remaining 25% was paid.

In concluding, SH advised that a letter would be drafted to VF to press the points raised during the discussion.

3. Laura Chepner, Veducation consultation on Vegan inclusion in primary schools

LC presented to the Group and in so doing outlined the need for including vegan food on school food menus and the main points raised were noted as follows: -

- Veganism was not just a dietary choice, people choose a vegan diet for several reasons such as animal rights concerns, the impact of a meat-based diet on the environment, the associated health benefits of a plant-based diet and for social justice reasons.
- Veducation has been established to support school and parents regarding veganism and the provision of food.
- Education authority guidance states that a parent or guardian has the right to request a meal. However, schools and providers are ignoring the parents' choice and not making a vegan option available,

In response to the presentation questions and comments were raised and the key points were noted as follows: -

KMc commented that she had been vegan for many years, and it was an issue that people got very passionate about. It is generally accepted that people want to reduce meat consumption for environmental reasons, but the current School Food Standards had not been amended to reflect the changes in people's attitudes.

In response to a question, LC reported that the cost of providing a vegan meal was lower than a meal that contained meat and this was based on her personal experiences of shopping for food for her family.

It was commented by EP that the vegan option should be on the menu and a choice for everyone not just as a special request.

4. Dr Rebecca O'Connell and Prof Julie Brannen, Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education on Public Funds

ROC presented to the Group and in so doing outlined the background and details of a study that had been undertaken into families with no recourse to public funds and the main points raised were noted as follows: -

- The number of families impacted by not being able to access public funds is difficult to establish due to there not being a lot of research in the area and the lack of data. However, based on the data available a reasonable estimate would be 287,643 families and 416,643 children that fall into the category of not being able to access public funds.
- The study was conducted with children in low-income families in the UK, Portugal and Norway. It included 51 children from 45 families from areas of deprivation.
- It was highlighted that hunger made it difficult for children to concentrate in school, parents were going without food to ensure their children were fed and there were broader societal impacts for families that cannot afford food.
- Access to Free School Meals has been extended to those without access to public funds but there is no commitment that this will continue.
- Universal Infant Free School Meals should be extended to all children.
- The welfare system should not be used as a tool to deter immigration.

In response to the presentation questions and comments were raised and the key points were noted as follows: -

- JB advised that families with no recourse to public fund had to buy the cheapest available food which was not necessarily familiar to or did not meet cultural requirement and food vouchers further exasperated this as well as stigmatising the family and children.
- It was also commented that some children impacted were born in the UK or had lived here for several years.

5. Nigel Argyle and Stephen Forster, LACA National School Meal Week.

SF stated that it had been a difficult time for the food industry and frontline staff. LACA had worked with the DfE to produce guidance regarding the contents of the food parcels, and it was clear the details highlighted in the media had not met up to the required standard. LACA had circulated details and was working with their members re the standard and contents of the food parcels.

LACA was looking to call on school food experts to look at the challenges brought about by COVID-19

NA provided an overview of the events that had taken place during National School Meals Week, and the key points raised were noted as follows: -

- Hot October promoted the importance of a hot school meal, and a letter was circulated by the Minister that outline that the importance that the DfE placed on schools providing a hot meal at school.
- The activities that had been undertaken in the previous years was not possible due the restrictions, therefore a flexible approach to the activities was developed.
- There were five themed days which included a day to thank the frontline workforce for the work that they had done during the pandemic.
- There had been a positive response to the week, and the resources would b available on the website until Easter.
- Events were also held in Scotland and various suppliers had also participated.

NA concluded by thanking all who were involved in National School Meals Week.

6. Stephanie Slater, Co-Chair of the School Food Plan Alliance, SFPA

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

- The events during the pandemic had highlighted that now was the right time for a review on school food as the issues with the system had been highlighted.
- It was also reported that JJ had presented at the last meeting and provided an overview of the provision that Local Authority caterers had provided for the duration of the pandemic.
-

7. AOB

JB reported that the negative press with regard to the food parcels had impacted on wholesaler and suppliers due to the re-instatement of the voucher system.

AK advised that the impact from the food parcel issues had been more keenly felt by small regional suppliers, and it was estimated that 47% of this time of company could go into receivership by March.

In closing the meeting SH advised that she was supportive of a review into school food and that she had asked Government to continue to support the sector. In addition, it was reported that SH had tabled a Parliamentary question regarding the provision of support required for wholesalers.

Meeting closed at 16.38pm