



All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food

**Minutes of meeting of the School Food APPG
Thursday 21 October 2021, 2-4pm – online.**

Present

Sharon Hodgson MP (SH) - Chair

Gemma	Anderson		GA
Nigel	Aryle	Elygra Marketing Services	NA
Nathan	Atkinson	ReThink Food	NAt
Jake	Barwood	Chefs in Schools	JBa
Kevin	Bernbaum	Educo	KB
Joe	Bishop	Magic Breakfast	JBi
Jacquie	Blake	LACA	JB
Sally	Bowman	ReThink Food	SB
David	Bradley	Child Poverty Action Group	DBr
Myles	Bremner	Bremner Consulting	MB
Donald	Bundy	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	DB
Georgina	Burt	CPAG	GB
Ian	Byrne	Member of Parliament	IB
Laura	Chepner	<u>Veducation Consultation</u>	LC
Bethan	Cowell	National Farmers Union	BC
Sophie	Crosswork		SC
Louise	Davies	Food Teachers Centre	LD
Mark	Driver	Minor, Wier and Wills	MD
Naomi	Duncan	Chefs in Schools	ND
Jordan	Eagle		JE
Kate	Evans	Derbyshire County Council	KE
Elisabeth	Faure	London School of Economics	EF
Patrica	Fellows	Patricia Fellows Consulting	PF
Stephen	Foster	LACA	SF
Collette	Fox	Pro Veg	CF
Grace	Gardner	University of York	GG
Harry	Goodwill		HG
Shona	Goudie	The Food Foundation	SG

Letterhead designed by pupils at Harehills Primary School, Leeds



Lindsay	Graham	Poverty and Inequality Commissioner	LG
Judith	Gregory	Cardiff Council	JG
Vickie	Hacking	APSE	VH
Laura	Hamilton	University of Hertfordshire	LH
Maria	Heron	Parliamentary Researcher - Sharon Hodgson MP	MH
Jayne	Hoather	Dolce	JH
Angus	Holford	University of Essex	Aho
Andrew	Hudson	Department for Education	AH
Isabel	Hughes	The Food Foundation	IH
Diana	Johnson	Member of Parliament	DJ
Andy	Jolley	School Food Campaigner	AJ
Matthew	Knight	Hillstone School	MK
Gurpinder	Lalli	University of Wolverhampton	GL
Laura	Lhan	Soil Association	LL
Joe	Mann	Queens College	JM
Ian	McGrady	EdSential	IM
Peter	McGraph	Meals and More	PM
Lynda	Mitchell	LACA	LM
Rosemary	Molinari	Sodexo	RM
Rebecca	O'Connell	UCL - Institute of Education and Public Affairs	RO
Jill	Oliver	Food Teachers Centre	JO
Jason	O'Rourke	Washingborough Academy	JOR
Brad	Pearce	CaterEd	BP
Neil	Porter		NP
Leigh	Powell	UNISON	LP
Derek	Price	Cityserve	DP
Melanie	Reed		MR
Alex	Samuels		AS
Liz	Schult		LS
Stephanie	Slater	School Food Matters	SS
Kim	Smith	TastEd	KS
Anne Marie	Sowden	CaterEd	AMS
Suzanne	Spence	Newcastle University	SSp
Gavin	Squires	BidFood	GS
Astra	Towning	ReThink Food	AT
Sean	Turner	School Food Matters	ST
Stacey	Warren	Family Action	SW
Melissa	Whitelaw		MW
Lorna	Wightman	World Food Programme	LWi
Wendy	Wills	University of Hertfordshire	WW
Liz	Wright	Hyperactive Children Foundation	LW

1. Chair's Welcome

SH welcomed attendees to the Group. She also thanked the speakers for attending the meeting.



2. UNISON – Leigh Powell

LP presented to the group and in so doing, the key points were noted as follows: -

- UNISON had undertaken research into the frontline school catering workforce which had focused the terms and conditions and how the workforce had felt about the return to school in the autumn term.
- A particular focus of the research had been to gain an understanding of the terms relating to sick pay entitlement for those workers required to self-isolate.
- Local authority employees had contractual arrangements that entitled them to sick pay during isolation. Therefore, the research examined what was in place in the private sector.
- 21 of the largest private sectors catering companies were approached to provide details of the terms they had in place for sick pay that were in place. One provider confirmed that they offered sick pay to self-isolating staff, 11 stated that they did not and 9 did not respond, therefore it was assumed that these companies had not offered sick pay to their employees.
- LP commented that the impact of these terms and conditions was that low paid workers, the majority of whom were women were required to support their families on less than £100 a week, and the evidence shows that many of these were not able to access the COVID-19 support grants.
- The research highlighted that there were measure still in place in response to COVID-19 that included, staggered shifts, food being served in classrooms, suspension of self-service provision, for example salad bars. However, over 30% of respondents reported that there was no additional safety measure in place and that they would feel safer if pupils wore masks and test kits were made available from their employer.
- From the survey that UNISON conducted, 71 % of primary school respondents indicated that they felt safe in the workplace, and 69% of secondary school respondents felt safe.
- The research had highlighted that there was no clear approach regarding COVID-19 measures and this was attributed to the fact that the DfE had not issue any clear guidance to schools regarding frontline workers safety.
- UNISON also questioned the workforce about the stresses of the job and two in five respondents reported that they were experiencing stress in the workplace.
- The three main reasons for workplace stress were highlighted as food shortages, staff shortages and job security.
- The research found that 12.7% of the workforce reported that they did not feel valued in their role and 87.3% stated that they did feel valued.

LP concluded by reporting that the percentage of staff that were reporting that they felt valued had increased from the low reported in the previous year.

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

- It was commented that it would be good to carry out a survey of teaching staff to ascertain their views on the return to school.
- In response to a query, LP reported that the survey did not ask employers if they paid the Real Living Wage.
- MB commented that it was good to see that the number of staff reporting that they felt valued had increased.
- SH reported that LACA awarded the outgoing Chairs award to frontline catering staff in recognition of their work throughout the pandemic.

3. Rethink Food – Nathan Atkinson

NAt presented to the group and in so doing, the key points raised were noted as follows: -

- The aim of removing hunger as a barrier to learning commenced while he was a headteacher and this had led to the formation of Rethink Food.
- There were three key programmes that the organisation was focused on which include, Rethink Food Education, Rethink Food Future and Rethink Food Lifestyles.
- With the aim of removing stigma from food poverty the work of Rethink food was focused around eating to save the planet and they currently work with 200 schools across the UK.
- The mission statement had been refined to include food security for life and four pillars had been adopted, availability, accessibility, utilisation and sustainability and NAt provided examples regarding what each of these looked like in practice.
- The pandemic had highlighted the fragility of the food system.
- An online learning platform – The Rethink Food Academy had been developed using an action learning methodology.
- The platform included a variety of modules and was available as a free resource.
- There had also been a physical hub set up in the White Rose Centre that was focusing on the wider issue of food security. The hub had various purposes including providing a point of engagement, a source of information and a creative space for the team to meet, collaborate and develop strategy.
- NP advised that moving forward Rethink Food was looking to continue to work with existing school partners and there was a pilot being undertaken with ASDA.

In concluding the presentation, NAt urged people to get in touch and for organisations to work together as part of a movement to achieve food security.

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

- It was confirmed in response to a question from SH that Rethink Food was looking to continue to partner with schools across the UK and to promote the wider use of the online platform and associated resources.

4. The Global School Health Research Consortium – Donald Bundy

DP presented to the Group an overview of the School Meals Coalition that had been formed and in so doing, the key points raised were noted as follows: -

- COVID-19 had sharpened the focus across the world of the importance of the school meal and as such there need to ensure that school meal provision had to be built back up to at least pre-pandemic levels.
- The Coalition had received support from politicians at the highest level including the President of France, highlighting that school meals were a universal issue.
- The aims of the Coalition had been agreed as restoring what was in place prior to the pandemic in 2023, reaching those that had been missed by 2030 and improving the approach taken to school meals by 2030.
- There was support from 61 countries who had signed a document of commitment / expression of intent, there had been 4 high level declarations made and a further 50 partners had also signed a document of commitment / expression of intent.
- DB advised that there were four initiatives focusing on how to engage, a research consortium, mandate and objective and a community of practice.

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

- LM queried if the evidence of gains and benefits was being collected worldwide or was just focusing on poorer nations. In response, DB reported that traditionally the school meal has been used as an incentive for parents to send their children to school. However, this could be achieved with a cash incentive, therefore, the Coalition were looking to gain evidence of the educational benefits to learning from a school meal. Currently information was being compiled as to what evidence was already available and the areas where further research was required.
- In response to a question from BC it was confirmed that the UK Government and the respective devolved governments had not currently signed up to the Coalition.
- MB asked if the case studies would include details of how to present and frame the argument to decision makers. It was confirmed that the Coalition were interested in capturing this information. In addition, it was commented that hard evidence to support the investment case for school meals had been requested from governments. DB advised that you have to invest in the learner and not just the learning.

5. Hyperactive Children Foundation – School meals project – Liz Wright

LW presented details to the group of the Hyperactive Children Foundation – School Meals Project and in so doing, the key points raised were noted as follows: -

- Hyperactive Children Support Group (HACSG) was the only ADHD support group to promote the link between behaviour and nutrition.
- The organisation was founded in 1977 and was established on the principles of the Feingold diet from the USA.
- Although not currently supported by medical thinking, 60% of children show behavioural improvement with changes to their diet.
- HACSG provides a range of support to families including a telephone helpline, a journal, advice, a database that highlights the list of top chemical additives in food that effect children and research into nutrimental deficiencies.
- The work that the foundation was undertaking with schools included providing information packs, workshops for teachers and providing inset day training.
- LACA hosted a HACSG Award for Excellent in School Meals award that was open to local authorities, schools and other providers. The Award was judged against a set of criteria for excellence and LW congratulated the 2021 award winners.

6. National School Meals Week – Jacquie Blake and Nigel Argyle

JB introduced herself as the new Chair of LACA and reported that there were many challenges currently being faced by school caterers. She commented that the frontline workforce needed to be commended on the hard work that they had put in throughout the pandemic. JB also advised that the key priorities for LACA over the coming months would be campaigning to extend the eligibility for Free School Meals and increasing the funding to £2.51 for Universal Infant Free School Meals.

NA presented details regarding the events scheduled for this years National School Meals Week (NSMW) and in so doing, the key points were noted as follows: -

- NSMW was being held between 8 and 12 November 2021
- The tour of the regions would be conducted virtually this year.
- There was a variety of theme days that were being run and due to the pressures on the service, this year there was the opportunity to hold the theme days any point in the year.
- There was a strong focus on the School Lunch Tucker Trail, which was aimed at getting children to try a school meal if they had not before or had not in a while.
- NP provided an overview of the events that were taking place on each of the days and outlined some of the events that had been planned in the different regions of the UK.

NA concluded by asking everyone to get involved with NSMW and highlighted how people could engage with the events being held through social media.

7. Holiday Activities and Food Update – Andrew Hudson

AH attended the meeting to provide an update on the Holidays Activities and Food Programme (HAF) and in so doing, the key points were noted as follows: -

- The programme had been piloted in 2018.
- This had been expanded to every local authority area for Easter and Summer for 2021.
- As a requirement of the programme the provision had to include food such as a healthy meal and learning.
- The DfE had attended provision in different areas of the country over the summer and was impressed by the creativeness of the providers.
- AH also commented that they had seen great provision being delivered.
- It was reported that the DfE were currently compiling information regarding what has worked well and would be making this information available to local authorities.
- The provision of future funding would form part of the spending review.

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

- SH commented that the results needed to speak for themselves, therefore was pleased to hear that the DfE had visited holiday provision and were positive regarding what was being delivered.
- In response to a question, it was confirmed that local authorities were required to provide a report back to the DfE regarding compliance with school food standards.
- LG questioned if there had been any evaluation done on the programme and AH reported that an external company had been commissioned and they were currently analysing the information and data from the programme.

8. Food Foundation – Early Education on holiday hunger – Grace Gardner

GG presented details of the Fix Our Food project to the group and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- The project had focused on Yorkshire and had looked at the whole food system.
- The research was based in four areas of Yorkshire and was based on documents, observations, focus groups with parents, interviews with 20 provision leads and a survey.
- A report had been produced based on the research that had identified four key findings: -
 1. The provision provided was diverse.
 2. A positive impact on food insecurity had been seen.
 3. There was evidence that the holiday provision benefited children and the wider family.
 4. The best examples had an equality for all who attended and where there was no distinction between the children who attended for free and those who paid to attend.
- Further work needed to be undertaken to reduce the stigma from attending holiday provision.
- Parents reported that the ability to stay and play with their children was welcomed and also some parents commented that the ability to drop their child off and go to work was a positive aspect to the provision.
- Local authorities had rose to the challenge of setting up the provision and a good legacy had been built for the future.

In concluding the presentation, it was reported that there were three clear recommendations resulting for the research.

1. The government had to make a long-term commitment to the programme.
2. Places needed to be made available to all and not just the children eligible for Free School Meals.

3. A continuation of healthy meals as part of the programme was required.

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

- SH commented that she had visited holiday provision in her constituency and there was support being provided not just in terms of a meal and activities but signposting to other services.

9. Update from the School Food Plan Alliance – Stephanie

SH reported that a written update would be circulated to the group.

10. Topical Discussion – All

10.1. Food supply issues

SH advised that the supply of food had been raised as an issue and as such questions had been table in Parliament and a letter had been sent to the Minister.

AJ reported that currently there was a perfect storm, there was a driver shortage, and this was being further exasperated by the lack of tests available for HGV licensing. The government had not responded to calls from the industry to alleviate the issues. Therefore, the supply chain was being impacted.

JB advised that a recent LACA survey had highlighted that there were interruptions to supply. However, the greater issue being reported was with substitutions. In her catering service, training had been given to frontline staff regarding managing the issue and dialogue was being had with suppliers to understand what could be supplied to ensure substitutions were acceptable.

LG advised that the issue was UK wide and there were examples on the Scottish Islands where they had gone without fresh milk for five days. She also commented that there was an ongoing pandemic and public sector food supplies should be protected. LG also expressed concern that the most vulnerable families were being impacted the greatest.

MD provided an overview of his experience and that the issues were the result of a lack of understanding regarding the HGV sector and that the HGV driver profession was undervalued and had been for several years.

In response to comments made in the discussion, AJ advised that haulage companies and drivers favoured supermarket deliveries as these were single drop and more profitable.

To conclude the discussion SH advised that she would send a letter to the Secretary of State responsible for Transport to set out the issues with food supply that had been outlined in the discussion.

10.2. Letter from Ofsted

SH shared a letter that had been received from Ofsted, and it was comment by LD that the response from Ofsted highlighted the following: -

- Food education as part of the curriculum was on the radar of Ofsted.
- There was an acknowledgement that there was no lead for food education in Ofsted.
- Ofsted had confirmed that they were conducting a subject review.

In response to the discussion SH concluded by reporting that the National Director for Education would be invited to the next meeting of the APPG on School Food.

AOB

SH reported that an extraordinary AGM of the APPG had taken place to amend the statement of purpose and confirmed that food education now was included in the statement.

Meeting concluded at 16.50pm