



All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food

Minutes of meeting of the School Food APPG

Thursday 3 February 2022, 2-4pm – held online.

Present

Sharon Hodgson MP (SH) - Chair

Name			Organisation
Alex	Cunningham	AC	Member of Parliament
Alicia	Weston	AW	Bags of Taste
Andy	Kemp	AK	Bidfood
Andy	Jolley	AJ	School Food Campaigner
Annabelle	O' Toole	AOT	Let's get Cooking & Children's Food Trust
Anne-Marie	Sowden	AMS	CaterEd
Barbara	Crowther	BC	Sustain
Ben	Smart	BS	
Bethan	Cowell	Bco	NFU
Brad	Pearce	BP	CaterEd
Caroline	Morgan	CM	Local Food Links
Christian	Ariwa	CA	Office of Lyn Brown MP
Claire	Theobald	CT	British Nutrition Foundation
Colette	Fox	CF	ProVeg
Dale	Wild	DW	Birmingham City Council
Dame Maura	Regan	MR	Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust
Derek	Price	DP	Birmingham City Council
Emma	Treasure	ET	
Emma	Lewell-Buck	ELB	Member of Parliament
Stephen	Forster	SF	Chartwell
Frances	Meek	FM	British Nutrition Foundation
Gavin	Squires	GS	Bidfood
Georgina	Burt	GB	Child Poverty Action Group
Grace	Gardner	GG	University of York
Gurpinder	Lalli	GL	University of Wolverhampton

Letterhead designed by pupils at Harehills Primary School, Leeds



Ian	Hamilton	IH	Hertfordshire Catering Limited
Jacquie	Blake	JB	LACA
Jayne	Jones	JJ	ASSIST FM
Jayne	Hoather	JH	Dolce
Jeanette	Orrey	JO	Food for Life
Jo	Dawson	JD	Sustain
Judith	Gregory	JG	Cardiff Council
Kate	Evans	KE	Derbyshire County Council
Kate	Anstey	KA	Child Poverty Action Group
Kate	Prince	KP	Kellogg
Laura	Chepner	LC	Vegan Society
Laura	Chan	LC	Soil Association
Leigh	Powell	LP	UNISON
Lily	Fairbairn	LF	Rethink Food
Lindsay	Graham	LG	Poverty and Equality Commissioner
Liz	Todd	LT	Newcastle University
Liz	Wright	LWr	Hyperactive Children Foundation
Lorna	Wightman	LW	World Food programme
Lottie	Leigh	LL	World Food programme
Louise	Davies	LD	Food Teachers Centre
Louise	Payne	LP	School Health UK
Maddie	Sinclair	MS	University of York
Maria	Herron	MH	Office of Sharon Hodgson MP
Matisse	Didier	MD	Christ the King RC School
Matt	White	MW	The University Caterers Organisation (
Matthew	Knight	MK	LACA School Chef of the Year
Megan	Gittoes	MG	British Sugar
Melanie	Reed	MR	
Miguel	Nunes	MN	Bidfood
Mike	Beaton	MB	Royal Marines Education Awareness Team
Mike	Ward	MW	Edwards and Ward
Mike	Meek	MM	Allmanhall
Myles	Bremner	MBr	Bremner Consulting
Naomi	Duncan	ND	Chefs in Schools
Nelson	Williams	NW	Pabulum Catering
Nick	Clegg		
Nigel	Craine	NC	Lancashire County Council
Patricia	Fellows	PF	Patricia Fellows Consulting
P	Berryman	PB	
Peter	McGrath	PMcG	Meals and More
Rachel	Hall	RH	City Catering Southampton

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Rodney	Dempster	RD	Edwards and Ward
Rosemary	Molinari	RM	Sodexo
Ruth	Cadbury	RC	Member of Parliament
Sara	Bryson	SB	Children North East
Sean	Turner	ST	School Food Matters
Simon	Gray	SG	Food Teachers centre
Stacey	Warren	SW	Family Action
Stephanie	Slater	SS	School Food Matters
Stephen	Drane	SD	Edwards and Ward
Stuart	Clarke	SC	Hertfordshire Catering Limited
Suzanne	Spence	SS	Newcastle University
Suzanne	Butler	SB	Tyne and Wear Citizens
Val	Barron	VB	Tyne and Wear Citizens

1. Chair's Welcome

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

2. School Food Plan Alliance (SFPA) 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: -

- A representative from the Department for Education (DfE) had attended the last meeting of the Alliance to provide an overview of the aspects of the 'Levelling up' White Paper that related to school food.
- JO the Co-chair of the SFPA was stepping down from her role as Co-Chair as she was due to retire at the beginning of March.
- It had been agreed that the Terms of Reference, scope and name of the Alliance would be reviewed to ensure it was still fit for purpose.
- Details were provided of the work that was being undertaken to inform government policy regarding public sector procurement.
- A representative from Bite Back 2030 had attended the meeting to present details of the progress of the work being conducted by the School Food Review working group.

3. Cost of the School Day project and 'poverty proofing' research in schools – Georgina Burt (GB) and Kate Anstey (KA) – Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

GB and KA presented an overview of the project and the research that had been undertaken by CPAG and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- There had been a rise in the number of families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) due to the transitional period that was in place and also the increase in families who now met the eligibility criteria due to the impact of the pandemic.
- Not all the children who were in families that are classed as being in poverty received a Free School Meal, and children were not taking lunch due to the cost of the meal.

- The provision of milk in schools varied vastly from school to school.
- Children were impacted by dinner money debt, and this was also having an impact on the choices that they made at lunchtime.
- Young people do not have autonomy on how to spend their FSM allowance and if they do not spend it on a given day, they lose the funding.
- There were limited opportunities for children to give feedback regarding FSM.
- Some pupils do not find the portion size of their school meal adequate.

GB and KA concluded by outlining the recommendations for Government: -

- Provide adequate funding to schools to ensure all curriculum-related costs are removed for pupils and all children have the resources and tools they need to fully participate in school activities both at home and at school.
- Provide local authorities with additional funding and a statutory responsibility to help families with school costs through targeted initiatives such as school clothing grants and subsidies for trips. Initiatives like this already exist in all other UK nations.
- Provide universal free school meals to school-aged children in England so that all pupils have equitable access to food while at school.
- Provide a statutory framework, strategy and additional ring-fenced funding so schools in England can provide programmes, activities and services that go beyond the core function of classroom education, such as breakfast and after-school clubs.

The recommendations for schools were also highlighted and were noted as follows: -

- Plan all teaching, events and activities with affordability and accessibility in mind. Wherever possible, remove or minimise charging for school-related activities.
- Explore and review current school costs. Take a holistic view of the school year and determine the cost of full participation in school life.
- Ensure that all staff, including non-teaching staff, are aware of the nature, causes, extent and impact of poverty and how to reduce the stigma that children can face in school.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for pupils and families to give feedback on their experience of school with a focus on school costs.

In response to the presentation, it was commented that if school meals were funded correctly, dinner money debt would not exist.

4. Funding for Universal Infant Free School Meals – Andy Kemp (AK)

AK provided an overview of the paper that had been compiled by AK, GS and PF in conjunction with LACA, to make the case at a national level for increasing the funding for Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) and in so doing, the key points were noted as follows: -

- Budgets were currently being drafted by government and the provision of funding for school meals was critical to moving forward from the pandemic.
- The objectives of the paper were to raise again the importance and the need for a funding increase for UIFSM. A copy of the details had been sent to MP's and Cabinet Members and a range of organisations in the sector.
- All of the sectors had responsibility for ensuring that the issues facing school meals were understood a government level.

- The cost challenges on the service since the introduction of UIFSM included a 41.8% wage increase, 11.80% increase when measuring food costs against RPI, 7.81% was the increase in just pure food inflation and if measured against the governments preferred measure of inflation costs have increased by 16.70%.
- Taking the inflationary costs into account the funding for a UIFSM should be £2.92.
- The paper recommended that the UIFSM allowance should be increased to £2.87, that the funding should be ringfenced to caterers, meal numbers should be recorded and reported to the DfE and UIFSM should be extended to all infant and junior children regardless of whether the funding was increased.

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

- It was commented that the funding and eligibility of UIFSM should be extended due to the nutritional benefit of the school meal and as an investment in future generations.
- A letter regarding the information presented would be circulated after the meeting.
- SH commented that the cost of living was rising and in response AK stated that the funding needed to reflect that catering staff should be paid a decent wage and the government needed to get real about impact of the cost rises on the school meal sector.
- Following a question by MB it was commented that wider school meal funding also needed to be ringfenced and passed onto the caterer.
- In response to a query from BC, it was advised that caterers had difficult choices to make when it came to food procurement. With the differential in food costs, it was not financially viable to procure from SMEs and local companies as they could not rely on the economies of scale that national companies could.
- It was commented that where the real living wage was being paid, staff were not being remunerated for all the hours they worked as there was not the money in the budget to pay for the required number of hours to do the job.
- It was commented that due to the pressure in the school meals sector, there had been anecdotal evidence that there were catering contractors considering withdrawing from the sector.

5. Royal Marines Educational Awareness Team – CSGT Mike Beaton (MB)

SH introduced MB and congratulated him on receiving an MBE for his work.

MB provided an overview of his role and the work that had been undertaken by his team. In so doing the key points were noted as: -

- The programme used food as a tool to educate young people in many ways, from advising on how to fuel the body to reducing gang crime.
- Food was a really good way to break down the barriers that young people put up when talking to adults.
- The service that the Marines provided was free to schools.

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

- SH asked what the reaction was of the young people and MB reported that by getting them in the kitchen, barriers were broken down, it helps foster trust and allows the more difficult topics to be discussed, especially with the young people who are less engaged.
- In response to a question from LD, it was reported that over the last 10 years, over 15,000 had attended the session a year and MD advised that he had six million followers on social media.
- SH queried what had been the catalyst for the Marines to work with young people and food, and it was confirmed that initially, the project focused on physical activity, but food acted as more of a leveller and had achieved better results.

6. Tyne and Wear Citizens – Just Change – Sara Bryson (SB), Suzanne Butler (SB), Dame Maura Regan (MR), Liz Todd (LT), and Val Barron (VB)

S.B presented to the group and in so doing the key points were noted as being: -

- When speaking to children they query where the change from their free school meal goes and who has the money if they were absent or do not take the meal at all.
- Following looking into the issue, it was found that the money was retained by the catering provider and would not go back to the child.
- MR reported that when she was made aware that the free school meal money that was not spent did not go to the child. Therefore, she sought a solution to the issue.
- The biometric system used for processing school meals was reprogrammed at a cost of £250, and it was calculated that there was an underspend of £17,000 for the year from the change or a child not taking a free school meal.
- This underspend should not be used to prop up school budgets or catering providers, therefore MR appealed to providers to meet with Just Change to see how other schools and providers could take similar action.

In response to questions and queries on the presentation the following key points were noted: -

- SH advised that the issue had been raised previously, and the government has commented that the money was for the meal and was not an allowance for the child. She also commented that concern had been expressed that the government would claw the money back if the underspend was highlighted.

7. Bags of Taste – Alicia Weston (AW)

AW presented to the group and in so doing the key points were noted as being: -

- The biggest killers in the UK relate to diet, with 25% of deaths being attributed to poor diets.
- The poorest 10% in society consume a greater number of takeaways than the richest 10%.
- There were four barriers to a healthy diet, and these were reported as being, economical, structural, psychological, and practical.
- The organisation ran courses to change people's mindset around their food choices.
- The outcomes of the course were being independently evaluated by nutritionists.

In response to questions and queries on the presentation the following key points were noted: -

- Following a query by PMc, it was commented that advertising had an impact on people's food choices.
- ELB asked what areas of the country the organisation covered, and it was reported that they worked in partnership and covered Margate, London, Sutton and Sheffield but could be offered anywhere in the UK.
- J.D commented that Sustain had been working with a charity regarding healthy diets but were finding it hard to meet demand and questioned how an organisation could partner with Bags of Taste. In response, it was confirmed that as the courses were run remotely, they could be run in any area.

SH concluded the meeting by reminding the Group of International School Meals Day which was scheduled on 15 March 2022 and that the date of the next APPG on School Food would be held on 12 May 2022.

The meeting concluded at 15.40pm