



All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food

Minutes of meeting of the School Food APPG

Thursday 12 May 2022, 2-4 pm – held online.

Present

Sharon Hodgson MP (SH) – Chair

| Name | | | Organisation |
|-----------|-----------|-----|--|
| Caroline | Alexander | CA | Educaterers LTD |
| Kate | Anstey | KA | Child Poverty Action Group |
| Sarah | Atkinson | SA | Surrey County Council, Twelve15 |
| Vicki | Barnard | VB | Educaterers LTD |
| Val | Barron | Vba | Tyne and Wear Citizens |
| James | Bielby | JB | FWD |
| Georgie | Branch | GB | School Food Matters |
| Myles | Bremner | MB | Bremner Consulting |
| Donald | Bundy | DB | World Food Programme |
| Georgie | Branch | GB | School Food Matters |
| Georgina | Burt | Gbu | Child Poverty Action Group |
| Geoffrey | Campion | GC | Chartwells |
| Laura | Chan | LC | Soil Association |
| Linda | Cregan | LCr | ISS |
| Barbara | Crowther | BC | Sustain |
| Louise | Davies | LD | Food Teachers Centre |
| Jo | Dawson | JD | Sustain |
| Lisa | Didier | Ldi | Food for Life Local Programme Manager Leicester City |
| Mark | Driver | MD | |
| Maria | Dunbar | MDu | Leiths Academy |
| Charlotte | Evans | CE | Derbyshire County Council |
| Lily | Fairbairn | LF | Strategy and Impact Officer, Rethink Food |
| Collette | Fox | CF | Pro Veg |

Letterhead designed by pupils at Harehills Primary School, Leeds



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|-----------|------------|-----|---|
| Emma | Fullerton | EF | Lyn Brown MP |
| Jane | Gadsby | JG | Stokes Wood Primary School |
| Grace | Gardner | GG | University of York/ Fix Our Food |
| Lindsay | Graham | LG | Poverty & Inequality Commissioner |
| Vickie | Hacking | VH | APSE |
| Maria | Herron | MH | Office of Sharon Hodgson MP |
| Angela | Hogan | AH | City Catering Southampton |
| Helena | Houghton | HH | Royal Academy of Culinary Arts Adopt a School Trust |
| Isabel | Hughes | IH | Food Foundation |
| Kate | Jeffels | KJ | Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland |
| Andy | Kemp | AK | Bidfood |
| Matthew | Knight | MK | Hillstone Primary School |
| Becky | Larigo | BL | Edwards and Ward School Caterers |
| Lisa | Marley | LM | ProVeg |
| John | McKendrick | JMK | Glasgow Caledonian University |
| Ros | McNeil | RMN | National Education Union |
| Caroline | Morgan | CM | Local Food Links |
| Jason | O'Rourke | JOR | Head at Washingborough School |
| Jeanette | Orrey | JO | |
| Derek | Price | DP | Birmingham City Council |
| Kate | Prince | KP | Kelloggs |
| Melanie | Reed | MR | Rethink Food |
| Miguel | Roe | Mro | World Food Programme |
| Lana | Simpson | LS | The Global Poverty Project |
| Maddie | Sinclair | MS | University of York/Fix Our Food |
| Stephanie | Slater | SS | School Food Matters |
| Caroline | Stebbing | CS | HC3S Hampshire |
| Sean | Turner | ST | School Food Matters |
| Amanda | Whatley | AW | HC3S Hampshire |
| Holly | Whitelaw | HW | Sustainable Food Cornwall |

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: -

- Following the previous Co-Chair stepping down from her position with the Alliance, Brad Pearce Managing Director at CATERed Limited and National Vice-Chair of LACA had been appointed as Co-Chair.
- Representatives from the Department for Education (DfE) attended the meeting held on 12 May 2022 to provide an update on the actions outlined in the 'Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.'
- Members of the Alliance had been surveyed as part of a review into the Alliance and details were discussed regarding governance arrangements and future priorities.
- Arthur Potts Dawson from the World Food Programme attended the meeting held on 12 May 2022 and provided an overview of the work that he had been undertaking and provide details of the World Food Programme coalition.
- Brad Pearce, Managing Director of CaterEd presented at the meeting on held on 12 May 2022, a case study on school meals and the impact of cost-of-living crisis on the school catering service.
- There had been a group discussion regarding future campaigning by the Alliance on extending Universal Infant Free School Meals.

3. What do secondary school aged children think about school food – John McKendrick (JMK) Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit.

JMK presented an overview of the research that had been undertaken by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- The Scottish Government had committed to end child poverty by 2030, and school meals was outlined as one of the actions that could contribute to fulfilling this commitment.
- There were currently 240,000 children in Scotland who were classed as being in poverty which equated to one in four children, and the problem was only growing.
- In 2020, the Research Unit had been commissioned by ASSIST FM to review evidence and produce a report which involved surveying catering leads in Scotland, identifying what worked well, what needed improvement and highlighted 10 schools that had increased meal uptakes in the case studies contained in the report.
- The Unit had also conducted research into breakfast provision in 2021.
- ASSIST FM commissioned the Unit to undertake further research on what secondary school age children thought about school food and to gain evidence for the research children were asked a range of questions regarding school meals.
- 17,000 children responded, from 31 of the 32 local authority areas and over 200 secondary schools were represented in the responses.
- For the schools that had more than 50 pupils responding and individual report was produced which included a summary of the key findings, illustrated responses and comment to support the responses.
- In addition, a report was compiled outlining conclusions nationally and included the key findings, what worked well, what worked less well and a range of broader findings.

JMK concluded by advising on the next steps for the research and possible future priorities.

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

- SH commented that the findings of the research were really interesting, and it highlighted the importance to young people of the lunch break and having adequate time in the school day to eat lunch.
- ST queried if there had been any analysis undertaken into the level of meal uptake and responses received. JMK confirmed that this had not been undertaken, however, was something that he was interested in analysing and welcomed sharing the data with others if they wanted to conduct an analysis of this type.
- In response to a question by CE, JMK advised that the amount of choice of food was not as important as the availability of food, i.e., that their choice had not run out by the time they had reached the front of the queue.
- As a result of a comment from JD, it was confirmed that the eating habits of the children had not been explored.
- MB queried if the survey had highlighted any inequality between the paid meal and free school meal pupil's view. JMK reported that the responses had highlighted that some respondents receiving Free School Meals were using some of their lunch money at morning break which was concerning as this resulted in them having less money for their lunch time meal.
- MD asked if JMK believed that lunch time should be centred around food education which included a lunch time meal. In response JMK commented that there was a lot of pressures on schools to deliver the current curriculum, therefore would not be feasible. However, there was evidence that some schools had very good food education programmes.
- The fact that the responses had shown too much emphasis on healthy eating put children off a school meal was commented on. JMK advised that school catering providers had to get the balance right between promoting and offering healthy meals with ensuring children did not seek an alternative to a school meal.

4. National Education Union (NEU), No child left behind – Ros McNeil (RMN)

RMN presented an overview of the No child left behind campaign that the NEU were promoting and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- During the COVID-19 Pandemic the NEU focused on campaigning for Free School Meals to be extended to cover the school holidays.
- The policy nationally needed to ensure that children were protected from getting caught in poverty.
- The pandemic had provided the opportunity for parents, teachers and support staff to have more one-to-one personal conversations.
- The NEU will be continuing to campaign to ensure parents can afford school uniforms but would also be focusing on campaigning for Free School Meals to be extended to all primary school children.
- The Union believed that Universal Infant Free School Meals were good policy and represented good value for money, they were also keen to understand the barriers as to why Universal Infant Free School Meals had not been extended to all primary school children and have answers to overcoming these barriers.

RMN concluded by commenting that the school day needed to be poverty proofed and it was important that any funding provided to support this increased with inflation.

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

- SH commented that there had been a consensus since 1906 that children who were hungry did not learn as effectively as children who were well fed and there was currently a review was being undertaken to look at where the money allocated to school food would be most effectively spent.
- LD raised the issue of the cost of food for ingredients for cookery lessons and how children who could not afford to provide the food were excluded from the lesson or made to work with another child in the class.

5. APPG Excellence in School Food Winner – Breakfast Boxes – Georgie Branch (GB)

GB presented an overview of the Breakfast Boxes APPG Excellence in School Food submission and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- In March 2020, the organisation was going to launch a Healthy Zones project. However, this was not possible due to the start of the pandemic and associated restrictions.
- It was recognised that many children would be missing out on breakfast provision due to the schools been shut.
- School Food Matters in conjunction with the Urban Healthy Fund put together boxes with food for breakfast provision for 10 days.
- Over four months in the summer 2020, 500,000 breakfasts were provided and there was really positive feedback received from parents and schools.
- During January 2021 this was followed up by extending the breakfast boxes to four further London Boroughs.
- To date 1.1 million breakfast have been provided.

GB concluded by commenting that the eligibility for Free School Meals needed to be extended to ensure families experiencing food insecurity could access a Free School Meal and eligible families should not be required to apply but be auto enrolled.

In addition, she advised that not all eligible children were taking up the Free School Meal that they were entitled to, therefore more work needed to be done to remove the barriers, such as removing the stigma.

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

JD queried if School Food Matters would be continuing to provide breakfast post the pandemic, and it was confirmed by GB that they were unable to continue to supply breakfasts but were campaigning for the provision to be made available to children who were in need of a breakfast.

6. APPG in Excellence in School Food – Stokes Wood Primary School – Jane Gadsby (JG)

GB presented an overview of the Stokes Wood Primary School APPG Excellence in School Food submission and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- The school is located in a city centre, and they have gardens where they grow a range of vegetables.
- A grow and cook at home initiative has been implemented at the school, where children can take what was grown in the gardens home to cook with their families.
- Throughout lock-down in conjunction with Chroma Church Foodbank and other charities, food boxes were distributed to provide families with fresh ingredients, cupboard foods and recipes.
- The school has achieved a Food For life Silver Award.
- To ensure the catering provision was sustainable for the future, they have surveyed the children to establish their favourite vegetables and these were served regularly to reduce food waste, increased vegetarian options were available, there was a bin for crisp packets so they could be recycled, there was also a separate bin for food waste,
- The school were also working with the council to introduce food waste recycling.

7. APPG in Excellence in School Food – Jeannette Orrey – JO

JO presented to the Group details of her career in the school food sector and why she had been nominated for the award and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- JO had taken the opportunity to look back at the presentations she had delivered over the years and commented that there was a need to be proud of what had been achieved.
- When setting out there were many people who said what she was doing would not work or be achievable.
- School Food Standards had been implemented despite the opposition from some parents and children.
- The role out of Universal Infant Free School Meals had put huge pressure on caterers but has been successfully implemented.
- Due to the cost-of-living issues and the impact of COVID-19 the sector was facing its greatest challenge to date and campaigners need to prioritise the most needed interventions and make government listen.

JO concluded by extending her thanks to all the frontline catering staff for their dedication throughout the years.

8. General Discussion – All

SH invited attendees to participate in a general discussion and the key points relating from the discussion were noted as follows: -

- SH advised that the temporary measures that had been put in place during the pandemic for families with no recourse to public funds had now been made permanent, which was welcomed.

- LG commented that the cost of living was escalating rapidly and was having a massive impact on families and children. Questions needed to be asked in Parliament with regard to how the government were planning to mitigate the impact on the school catering service and also families in poverty. In addition, she also reported that COVID-19 was still having an impact on the frontline workforce.
- CE reported that the Catering Service at Derbyshire County Council had seen increases in prices of ingredients up to 79% in some cases, there were shortages of white fish and dairy, the cost of meat supplies had increased, local sourcing was not reducing the impact and suppliers and caterers were finding it difficult to say no to the price rises due to the risks of producers going out of business and no other suppliers being able to supply the required produce.
- AK commented that there were so many pressures bearing down on the sector, including import costs, shortages of produce, food inflation was set to rise by 8-14% over the next 12-14 months, smaller producers were walking away from contracts, food and fuel were more expensive due to the war in Ukraine. However, the funding for Free School Meals had not increased and not all of the funding for the meals was passed onto the caterer.
- M.B advised that the paid meal transactions had declined as family incomes were being squeezed and there had been a rise in the number of children experiencing dinner money debt.
- LG further commented that the issues experience in school catering was being experienced across public sector catering, for example, in prisons, colleagues and hospitals, therefore the issues need to be highlighted under the cost-of-living crisis.
- MD expressed the view that going down the local procurement route resulted in the loss of economies of scale and there was an argument that schools should not be purchasing items such as plates, and cutlery on a school-by-school basis.

SH concluded the discussion by advising that: -

- Questions had been raised regarding the Healthy Start Vouchers Programme going online and the responses received had not been satisfactory,
- The issues raised in the discussion had been noted and she would look to draft a letter setting out these issues and raise it with government.
- A survey would be conducted by the APPG on the impact of the cost of living and attendees were asked to submit any questions that they would want including. Once drafted the survey would be circulated to attendees to distribute to their contacts.

The meeting concluded at 16.00pm