



Minutes of meeting of the School Food APPG

Thursday 7 March 2024, 2-4pm – Hybrid meeting – Room M, Portcullis House and Zoom.

Present

Sharon Hodgson MP (SH) – Chair

Munira Wilson MP (MW)

Heather	Alexander	HA	World Food Programme
Nigel	Argyle	NA	Elygra
Liz	Axon	LA	Sodexo
Baroness	Blower	BB	Member of the House of Lords
Myles	Bremner	MB	Bremner and Co
Anita	Brown	AB	LACA
Brian	Cape	BC	SIPS
Nick	Capstick	NC	School Food Review Group
Sophie	Crosswaite	SC	ISS UK
Barabra	Crowther	BC	Sustain
Louise	Davis	LD	The Food Teachers Centre
Alex	Dobell	AD	University of Birmingham
Maria	Dunbar Porter	MDP	
Savanah	Dysard	SD	School Food Matters
Gary	Farquhar	GF	City Serve
Patrica	Fellows	PF	Patricia Fellows Consulting
Suzanne	Gomersall	SG	Nottingham Trent University
Judith	Gregory	JG	LACA
Zoe	Griffiths	ZG	
Vickie	Hacking	VH	APSE
Michael	Hales	MH	Juniper Ventures Ltd
Luke	Hall	LH	Youth Parliament member for South Tyneside
Clare	Hanna	CH	Impact Food Group
Andrew	Kyle	AK	Elior
Janet	Lomaz	JL	Surrey County Council

Jack	Lovie	JLo	
Bryan	Lygate	BL	The School Food People
Rosanne	Mead	R,	
Caroline	Morgan	CM	Local food Links Ltd
Kate	Morns	KM	
Ellie	Murphy	EM	Pro Veg
Marie	Murphy	MM	University of Birmingham
Geraldine	O'Callaghan	Goc	World Food Programme
Jill	Oliver	JO	Food Teachers Centre
Heidi	Olli	HO	World Food Programme
Ruth	O'Sullivan	RoS	Brakes UK
Miranda	Pallan	MPa	University of Birmingham
Sarah	Pattison	SP	
Derek	Price	DP	City Serve
Angie	Row	AR	St Marks Meals
Mark	Sargent	MS	LACA
Danielle	Smith	DS	
Gavin	Squires	GS	Bidfood
Jayne	Tinworth	JT	Food Safety Technician Advisor
Sean	Turner	ST	School Food Matters
Tracey	Wareing	TW	Elior
Dale	Wild	DW	Birmingham City Council

1. Chair's Welcome

SH welcomed attendees to the Group and thanked the speakers for attending the meeting. She advised that prior to the meeting the Annual General Meeting for the APPG had been conducted.

2. School Food Plan Alliance Update – Sean Taylor (ST)

ST provided an update from the meeting of the School Food Plan Alliance that was held on the morning Thursday 7 March 2024 and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- There had been a presentation from the University of Birmingham highlighting the results of the EPIC Secondary School Food Study.
- A presentation was given by the University of Essex outlining a study into the impact of Universal Free School Meals.
- A representative from the Department for Education attended the meeting and provided an update regarding Levelling Up funding, a training programme for school governors and reporting for school food.

In response to a question from SH, ST provided details on how the School Food Plan alliance was formed and the work that it undertakes.

3. World Food Programme - Geraldine O'Callaghan, Director

GoC provided an overview of the work of the World food Programme and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- The World Food Programme were the largest supplier of school meals in the world.
- School meals were a safety net for children across the world and £48 billion was spent by the programme a year.
- The programme was seen as building human capital and could be part of climate objectives.
- Research has shown that for every \$1 spent on school meals, there was a \$9 return.
- The School Meals Coalition has 96 countries signed up; however, the UK is not one of the signatories.
- There was work being undertaken to gain momentum and get the UK to sign up to the coalition.
- A Parliamentary Toolkit had been developed to engage with politicians.
- The toolkit sets out evidence and statistics that outline the positive benefits of school meals and provides information regarding what politicians can do to support school meal provision.

GoC concluded by advising that the toolkit would be launched on 30 April 2024.

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

- SH commented that in her capacity as Chair of the APPG, she had written to the Minister of State in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The response received stated that the UK agreed with the sentiment of the Coalition but signing up to it would require a funding commitment, therefore was not something that the government would be looking to do at the current time.
- SH confirmed that she would write to the opposition counterpart with the same ask and re-write to the Minister of State in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office due to the increased number of countries that had now signed up to the Coalition.
- MB expressed disappointment that the UK had not signed up to the Coalition and advised that there had been work undertaken by the sector to provide four UK case studies that are now been used as a blueprint for further global case studies.
- In response to a question by BC, it was confirmed that Scotland and Wales had not signed up to the Coalition.
- It was reported that the Office of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office had put out a call for evidence relating to school meals.

EPIC Secondary School Food Study Results - Institute of Applied Health – Dr Marie Murphy (MM), Miranda Pallan (MPa), and Alex Dobell (AD) – University of Birmingham

MM presented an overview of the EPIC Secondary School Food Study Results and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- In 2019 and 2022 the Fuel study was undertaken to evaluate how well secondary schools complied with School Food Standards and the other actions that school undertook to support healthy eating.

- 36 secondary schools were evaluated in the Midlands.
- The study assessed the food that was served at lunchtime and across the wider school day.
- There were no schools in the sample that were 100% compliant with the School Food standards.
- Broadly the food served at lunchtime was compliant with the Standards.
- The Standards being least well met were compliant drinks, breaktimes and breakfast provision.
- The majority of schools in the sample had not reviewed the food being served against the Standards and Governors and school leaders had not seen this as part of their role.
- It was found that students wanted choice, convenience, and value for money in the food that was being served.
- Caterers advised that they found it difficult to balance the need of providing compliant meals with an appealing offer to students.
- Students reported that they found the dining experience to be busy and a stressful experience.
- Pupils and staff felt that being brought into the school e.g. pack lunches, was often unhealthy and no checks were being conducted to monitor the standard.
- The study found that food education was not given much prominence in the busy curriculum and the type of education was described as patchy.
- Interactive group work was undertaken to establish how school food policy could be improved.
- From the responses there were 26 areas of action that came forward which were mapped onto a food school map.
- The action areas were prioritised the following areas: -
 - There needed to be a review of school food.
 - Funding needed to be increased.
 - National Government were required to provide joined up leadership.
 - Engagement with students was key to positive outcomes and needed to be increased.
 - Support needed to be provided for school's senior leadership and governors.
 - The food offer should be adapted to increase quality and meet students' needs.
 - Monitoring was required of food policies to ensure compliance.
 - There needed to be investment and training by caterers for their frontline staff.
 - The wider issues in the food environment needed to be addressed.
 - Changes to how the food was service had to be adopted to encourage the uptake of healthy food.

In concluding, MM advised that National Government, Department for Education, Local Authorities were all identified as key for implementing the changes needed and she also highlighted the work that was being undertaken to address some of the issues prioritised.

MM reported that the university was keen to work with stakeholders in the sector to take the findings and recommendations forward.

LD reported that the £5 million commitment from government regarding food education had not come to florican and was the funding was being withdrawn. In response, SH confirmed that she would follow up on this to establish what the situation was with the funding.

LACA's School Food Ambassador – Anita Brown, AB, Chair of LACA, Mark Sargent, School Food Ambassador (MS)

AB reported that one of the main focuses for LACA this year was to campaign for fairing funding for school food, and to support this campaign LACA had appointed a School Food Ambassador, Mark Sargent (MS).

AB introduce MS to the Group, and he provided an overview of his background and why he was passionate about campaigning for fairer funding for school food.

In response to a question from SH, it was confirmed that the role of the Ambassador was to bring awareness to as many people who can change the current funding, and to raise the importance of the funding for school meal provision needing to meet the costs of delivering the service.

National School Meals Week update – Nigel Argyl, Elygra

NA provided an update regarding National School Meals Week (NSMW) and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- This year there would be a D-Day event to coincide with the 80th Anniversary of the event.
- A number of resources had been created for schools and caterers and were available on the website - [LACA - National School Meals Week](#)
- There was going to be a roundtable event held at the School Food Ambassador restaurant with a variety of people including school chefs.
- A school lunch event was scheduled on 18 April 2024 in the House of Commons.

Youth Parliament – Member of the Youth Parliament for South Tyneside, Luke Hall (LH)

LH provided an overview of the Youth Parliament and the campaign for school food. In so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- This year there was a focus on wellbeing and health and as part of this young people were asking for free school meals.
- As this was a priority raised by young people, there needed to be more meaningful engagement with them on school food provision.
- The current provision was not meeting the required standards and was not of good quality, therefore young people were leaving school and purchasing food on the high street.
- A holistic view needed to be taken to ensure the school food system worked for young people.
- Universal provision would be the ultimate ask for the Youth Parliament.

In response to a question from GoC, it was confirmed that the issue had being raise via a ballot of young people and focus groups.

It was commented following a question, that it was not a case that the school standards needed to be approved, it was more a case that the current standards were not been met, therefore as a start, the current standards should be complied with.



NC asked if the lunchtime experience had been raised an issue. LH confirmed that this was not explored in detail. However, students experiencing mental health issues had reported that the dining experience made them anxious due to the dining environment.

In response to a question from SH, it was reported that stigma that surrounded free school meal recipients had not been seen as prevalent as previously, but the cost of the meal often exceeded the allowance provided.

AOB

SH provided an overview of the recent Budget and reported that the Household Support Fund had been extended for a future six months and the changes outlined in relation to Child Benefit were both welcomed.

MB provided an update on the work that was being undertaken in relation to auto-enrolment and in so doing the key points were noted as follows: -

- There was a greater focus on Free School Meal registration.
- A number of local authorities have been registering families for free school meals based on a model developed in Sheffield, and more local authorities were looking at doing it in their area.
- Discussions had been had with Ministers and the Department for Education regarding changing the policy to one of auto-enrolment rather than one based on applications.
- There was a letter that had been drafted and MB requested that organisations and local authorities supported the campaign and signed the letter.

Meeting concluded at 16.00pm