



March 2023

## LACA Round Table

### School Meals & the Cost-of-Living Crisis in England

“If not now, when? Act now to safeguard our children’s future!”

#### The Mission

As major stakeholders of the school food sector, our collective goal is that all school-aged children and young people should, every school day, have access to freshly prepared, great tasting hot meals. These should be made from seasonal and sustainable produce and products, which ensure that all meals are nutritious and meet the mandatory School Food Standards.

Children & young people in England are significantly under-supported when compared to their peers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: -

- England’s eligibility threshold for benefit-based Free School Meals is 89% lower than that of Northern Ireland
- Funding for FSM in England is markedly lower than other UK Nations funding levels per meal - 20% less than Wales and 37% less than Scotland.

To Government, we collectively say that **appropriate levels of funding for universal infant free school meals and benefit-based free school meals (adjusted annually and accounting for Government increases to the National Living Wage and food inflation)** must be made available to schools and school caterers through **simple, identifiable and accountable funding streams** that reach the school kitchen and the children and young people.

To protect the health and well-being of our children and young people, the Government needs to: -

1. Reform school meal funding to secure simple, identifiable and accountable streams that reach the school kitchen and are used to feed the child and young person.
2. Increase funding for UIFSM and Benefit-based FSM to address current inflationary and labour cost pressures **and** commit to ongoing annual increases adjusted for inflation
3. Extend eligibility to Benefit-based FSM to all children and young people whose families and carers are in receipt of universal credit, recognising that
  - schools will require support to upgrade kitchen infrastructure for ambient, cold and frozen storage, preparation, production and resource
4. Make school meals a priority by committing to comprehensively reforming the school food system, which supports schools and caterers to adopt a whole school approach to school food including delivering the very best possible school meals to **all** children and young people



Our ultimate mission is that all children and young people receive a free, freshly prepared, great tasting hot school meal made from seasonal and sustainable produce and products, which creates both consistency across all communities and community wealth.

This will benefit their health and ensure that children and young people living in poverty are not missing out, and also support local communities through increased employment opportunities, increased environmental sustainability and support British farmers and growers through local and regional procurement to create a sustainable school-food eco system.

Signed by: -

