



Friday, November 29th, 2024

Dear Prime Minister,

We, at LACA (the School Food People), representing the schools food industry, are writing to you to address the pressing challenges facing the school food industry in the UK but particularly England.

As advocates for nutritious and accessible meals for our children, we believe it is crucial to bring to your attention the significant hurdles that threaten the quality and sustainability of school food services.

Cost Challenges

The current funding for free school meals (benefit-based Free School Meals (FSM) and Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM)) is not aligned with the real costs of provision.

This discrepancy places immense pressure on local authorities, schools, academies and caterers, who strive to deliver healthy meals within increasingly tight budgets. The rising cost of ingredients, coupled with ongoing inflation, has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the standards our children deserve.

This is further compounded by the recently announced increase in employer National Insurance contributions.

Breakfast Provision

Breakfast is a critical component of a child's day, yet it must be treated as a standalone service with adequate funding. The School Food Standards (SFS) require that breakfast provision meets specific nutritional criteria, which necessitates proper financial support. Without this, we risk compromising the health and well-being of our children.

Cost of Living Pressures

The ongoing cost of living crisis has exacerbated these challenges. Families are feeling the pinch, and many children rely on school meals as a vital source of nutrition. If funding is not increased to at least £3 per meal, we face the grim reality of declining standards and inadequate service provision. This is not just a financial issue; it is a matter of public health and social equity.

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Call to Action

We urge you to recognise the importance of investing in our school food services to “raise the healthiest generation of children ever”. By increasing funding and ensuring that it aligns with the true costs of provision, year-on-year, we can safeguard the health of our children and support their educational journeys.

Together, we can create a future where every child has access to nutritious meals, regardless of their background.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your support in advocating for the necessary changes to ensure that our school food services can thrive.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Judith Gregory'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Judith Gregory
LACA National Chair

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