

ZAYN

7th November 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to share my concern about the struggles children are living through because of the cost-of-living crisis and to ask for your help to ensure no child living in poverty misses out on a hot nutritious meal at school especially since that school meal maybe the only hot meal they receive all day.

We are all aware that the difficulties facing families right now are profoundly serious. Four million children live in households who experienced food poverty in September 2022 according to research by The Food Foundation. In addition, 800,000 children in England miss out on a Free School Meal even though they are living in poverty. These children are suffering from lack of concentration, some even resorting to stealing food from school canteens because they are so hungry but can't afford to buy lunch. They are also feeling shame which is directly impacting their physical and mental health. I know what that shame feels like, I have seen it first-hand, as growing up in Bradford, I relied on Free School Meals. I personally experienced the stigma surrounding food insecurity. My hope is that in writing this letter we can all ensure that no child ever has to experience this hunger and stigma again as my experience is not unique; it is a struggle that many children in England are sadly going through right now.

As I see it, extending the current threshold and giving Free School Meals to children from families on Universal Credit would be the best way to reach those who need it most. This would stop children from enduring the worst of the cost-of-living crisis which in turn only creates bigger divides between the richest and poorest. Free School Meals are such a big help for the poorest children in our society and they guarantee a reliably hot, nutritious lunch every day at school, so children can thrive rather than worrying about where their next meal comes from.

I hope the government does what's right and makes the changes that are needed. Parents are already doing everything they can, but Government support is desperately needed. No parent should have to make impossible decisions like whether to buy food, turn on the heating, or go into debt. Knowing that their children are getting a good lunch at school would be a huge relief to parents who are struggling. These pressures will only get worse as food and energy prices keep rising.

As Prime Minister, you have the power to change this. Please act in good conscience and commit in your Budget on 17th November to giving all children living in poverty a Free School Meal. Children going hungry is not inevitable and should not come down to a political issue or ideology.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink. The first line reads 'ZAYN' in a stylized, cursive font. The second line reads 'MALIK' in a similar cursive font.

Zayn Malik