

19<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Andy Street

**Subject: Ending the Postcode Lottery for Free School Meals**

We are writing to urge you to commit to championing for more children in your region to have access to Free School Meals if you are re-elected the Mayor of West Midlands Combined Authority.

Our new polling has found that 79% of people in the West Midlands Combined Authority support expanding Free School Meals to more children, while 73% support expanding to all children.

We are sure that you will agree that it is distinctly unfair that while free, hot meals at lunchtime are available to all primary school children in London, with the same provision being rolled out across Wales and Scotland, children across the West Midlands are not getting the same level of essential support.

The stark reality is that, with the exception of London, children in England are only eligible for Free School Meals if their household income is below £7,400 per year after tax and benefits. As a result, [900,000 children](#), including [66,000 children](#) in the West Midlands Combined Authority, fail to meet the eligibility criteria despite living in poverty. Many families are left with limited choices, and this means children end up relying on cheap, unhealthy food that is detrimental to their health or in some cases having to skip lunch completely.

Free School Meals can ensure that all school children can benefit from a hot nutritious meal at lunchtime. Good nutrition in childhood should be non-negotiable; without it, not only do health outcomes worsen, placing extra pressure on the NHS but so do children's life chances. 64% of those surveyed agree that it is a good use of local taxpayer money to expand Free School Meal provision given the health benefits.

In addition, Free School Meals can protect children from food insecurity, help them to learn and thrive academically, as well as help boost the local economy. Our survey also found 95% of respondents in WMCA agree that it is important that children are well fed in order to do well in school. (See [here](#) for our report on opportunities for Free School Meals in the West Midlands).

We would be incredibly grateful if we could therefore meet with you to discuss how to work together to ensure that the Conservative Party commits to expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in West Midlands Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director, The Food Foundation

Paul McDonald, Chief Campaigns Officer, Health Equals

Kate Anstey, Head of Education Policy, Child Poverty Action Group

Dr. Helen Stewart, Officer for Health Improvement, The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

William Roberts, CEO, Royal Society for Public Health

Nicola Close, CEO, Association of Directors of Public Health

Kirsty Blenkins, Evidence & Policy Lead, Deputy Chief Exec, Association Young People's Health

Professor Nicola Heslehurst, Chair of the Board of Trustees, UK Association for the Study of Obesity

Tom Kerridge, Chef and Restaurateur

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Emma Frew, NIHR Research Professor, University of Birmingham

Megan Bridger, Clinical Skills Lead and Lecturer in Dietetics, University College Birmingham

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Councillor Bushra Bi, Birmingham City Council

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Councillor Shabina Bano, Birmingham City Council

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Stephanie Slater, Chief Executive, School Food Matters

Naomi Duncan, Chief Executive, Chefs in Schools

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Barbara Crowther, Children's Food Campaign Manager, Sustain

Daniel Kebede, General Secretary of the National Education Union

Colette Marshall, CEO, Diabetes UK

Katharine Jenner, Director, Obesity Health Alliance

Matthew Philpott, Executive Director, Health Equalities Group

John Hume, Chief Executive, People's Health Trust

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Andrew Forsey, National Director, Feeding Britain

Ruth Galpine, Director, Food for Life

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Sue Pritchard, Chief Executive, Food, Farming & Countryside Commission

Lynn Perry MBE, CEO, Barnardo's

Helena Houghton, Executive Director, Royal Academy of Culinary Arts Adopt a School Trust

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Dr Jo Haidon Consultant Anaesthetist AlderHey Children's Hospital

Dr Mary Boullier, General Paediatric Consultant, Alder hey Children's Hospital Alder Hey Child

19<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Richard Parker

**Subject: Ending the Postcode Lottery for Free School Meals**

We are writing to urge you to commit to championing for more children in your region to have access to Free School Meals if you are elected the next Mayor of West Midlands Combined Authority.

Our new polling has found that 79% of people in the West Midlands Combined Authority support expanding Free School Meals to more children, while 73% support expanding to all children.

We are sure that you will agree that it is distinctly unfair that while free, hot meals at lunchtime are available to all primary school children in London, with the same provision being rolled out across Wales and Scotland, children across the West Midlands are not getting the same level of essential support.

The stark reality is that, with the exception of London, children in England are only eligible for Free School Meals if their household income is below £7,400 per year after tax and benefits. As a result, [900,000 children](#), including [66,000 children](#) in the West Midlands Combined Authority, fail to meet the eligibility criteria despite living in poverty. Many families are left with limited choices, and this means children end up relying on cheap, unhealthy food that is detrimental to their health or in some cases having to skip lunch completely.

Free School Meals can ensure that all school children can benefit from a hot nutritious meal at lunchtime. Good nutrition in childhood should be non-negotiable; without it, not only do health outcomes worsen, placing extra pressure on the NHS but so do children's life chances. 64% of those surveyed agree that it is a good use of local taxpayer money to expand Free School Meal provision given the health benefits.

In addition, Free School Meals can protect children from food insecurity, help them to learn and thrive academically, as well as help boost the local economy. Our survey also found 95% of respondents in WMCA agree that it is important that children are well fed in order to do well in school. (See [here](#) for our report on opportunities for Free School Meals in the West Midlands).

We would be incredibly grateful if we could therefore meet with you to discuss how to work together to ensure that the Labour Party commits to expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in West Midlands Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director, The Food Foundation

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Kate Anstey, Head of Education Policy, Child Poverty Action Group

Dr. Helen Stewart, Officer for Health Improvement, The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

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19<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Sunny Virk

**Subject: Ending the Postcode Lottery for Free School Meals**

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In addition, Free School Meals can protect children from food insecurity, help them to learn and thrive academically, as well as help boost the local economy. Our survey also found 95% of respondents in WMCA agree that it is important that children are well fed in order to do well in school. (See [here](#) for our report on opportunities for Free School Meals in the West Midlands).

We would be incredibly grateful if we could therefore meet with you to discuss how to work together to ensure that the Liberal Democrat Party commits to expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in West Midlands Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director, The Food Foundation

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19<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Siobhan Harper Nunes

**Subject: Ending the Postcode Lottery for Free School Meals**

We are writing to urge you to commit to championing for more children in your region to have access to Free School Meals if you are elected the next Mayor of West Midlands Combined Authority.

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We are sure that you will agree that it is distinctly unfair that while free, hot meals at lunchtime are available to all primary school children in London, with the same provision being rolled out across Wales and Scotland, children across the West Midlands are not getting the same level of essential support.

The stark reality is that, with the exception of London, children in England are only eligible for Free School Meals if their household income is below £7,400 per year after tax and benefits. As a result, [900,000 children](#), including [66,000 children](#) in the West Midlands Combined Authority, fail to meet the eligibility criteria despite living in poverty. Many families are left with limited choices, and this means children end up relying on cheap, unhealthy food that is detrimental to their health or in some cases having to skip lunch completely.

Free School Meals can ensure that all school children can benefit from a hot nutritious meal at lunchtime. Good nutrition in childhood should be non-negotiable; without it, not only do health outcomes worsen, placing extra pressure on the NHS but so do children's life chances. 64% of those surveyed agree that it is a good use of local taxpayer money to expand Free School Meal provision given the health benefits.

In addition, Free School Meals can protect children from food insecurity, help them to learn and thrive academically, as well as help boost the local economy. Our survey also found 95% of respondents in WMCA agree that it is important that children are well fed in order to do well in school. (See [for our report on opportunities for Free School Meals in the West Midlands](#)). [here](#) for our report on opportunities for Free School Meals in the West Midlands).

We would be incredibly grateful if we could therefore meet with you to discuss how to work together to ensure that the Green Party commits to expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in West Midlands Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director, The Food Foundation

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19<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Elaine Williams

**Subject: Ending the Postcode Lottery for Free School Meals**

We are writing to urge you to commit to championing for more children in your region to have access to Free School Meals if you are elected the next Mayor of West Midlands Combined Authority.

Our new polling has found that 79% of people in the West Midlands Combined Authority support expanding Free School Meals to more children, while 73% support expanding to all children.

We are sure that you will agree that it is distinctly unfair that while free, hot meals at lunchtime are available to all primary school children in London, with the same provision being rolled out across Wales and Scotland, children across the West Midlands are not getting the same level of essential support.

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We would be incredibly grateful if we could therefore meet with you to discuss how to work together to ensure that the Reform UK Party commits to expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in West Midlands Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

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