

24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Ben Bradley

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

We are writing to urge you to champion increased access to Free School Meals for children in your region if you are elected the next Mayor of East Midlands Combined Authority.

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 East 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](#) 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.

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. [1 in 3 children are leaving primary school an unhealthy weight](#) and [1 in 5 households with children are currently experiencing food insecurity](#) in the UK. Free School Meals can ensure that all school children can benefit from a hot nutritious meal at lunchtime, helping to protect them from food insecurity and to learn and thrive academically, as well as help boost the local economy. (See [here](#) for more on the numerous benefits of Free School Meals).

We would be incredibly grateful if we could therefore meet with you to discuss how to secure support from the Conservatives Party for expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in the East 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 d

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

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Celebrity chef

James Toop, CEO, BiteBack

Stephanie Slater, Chief Executive, School Food Matters

Naomi Duncan, Chief Executive, Chefs in Schools

Myles Bremner, CEO, Bremner & Co

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

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John Hume, Chief Executive, People's Health Trust

Dan Paskins, Director of UK Impact, Save the Children UK

Andrew Forsey, National Director, Feeding Britain

Ruth Galpine, Director, Food for Life

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Dr Naomi Maynard, Director, Feeding Liverpool

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Councillor Bushra Bi, Birmingham City Council

Lindsay Cook, Consultant, Basis

Zoe Miles, Local Food Partnership Manager, Women's Environmental Network

24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Claire Ward

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

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Dear Helen Tamblyn-Saville

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

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Dear Frank Adlington-Stringer

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

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24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Alan Graves

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

Yours sincerely,

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24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Matthew Relf

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Dear Rachel Elnaugh

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Alejandro Iznajar Madero, Associate Lecturer at University College Birmingham

Councillor Marje Bridle, Birmingham City Council

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