

24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Keane Duncan

**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 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Our new polling has found that 73% of people in Yorkshire\* support expanding Free School Meals to more children, while 67% 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 York and North Yorkshire 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 80,000 children in Yorkshire and the Humber, 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. 62% 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 97% of respondents in Yorkshire agree that it is important for children to be well fed to do well in school. (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 Conservative Party for expanding the provision of Free School Meals across the whole of England to ensure that every school child in the York and North Yorkshire 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

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Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Celebrity chef

Councillor. Bob Webb, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education - City of York Council

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Myles Bremner, CEO, Bremner & Co

Barbara Crowther, Children's Food Campaign Manager, Sustain

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Andrew Forsey, National Director, Feeding Britain

Ruth Galpine, Director, Food for Life

Sabine Goodwin, Director, Independent Food Aid Network

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

Lynn Perry MBE, CEO, Barnardo's

Selina Treuherz, Sheffood Partnership Coordinator

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Lindsay Cook, Consultant, Basis

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

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24<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear David Skaith

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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 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

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

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Dear Felicity Cunliffe-Lister

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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 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

Yours sincerely,

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Dear Kevin Foster

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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 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority gets a hot nutritious meal during the school day to boost their health and learning.

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Dear Keith Tordoff

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Yours sincerely,

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Dear Paul Haslam

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