



## **Food Foundation calls for Urgent Government Review of School Food**

**13<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **For immediate release**

In light of recent developments on current food provision for Free School Meal pupils during Covid-19 school closure, we are calling on the Government to conduct an urgent comprehensive review into Free School Meal policy across the UK to feed into the next Spending Review.

The review should be debated in Parliament and published before the summer holidays.

#### **Its scope should include:**

1. The current eligibility thresholds for Free School Meals across all four nations. The Government should seek to eliminate disparities between the nations and ensure disadvantaged children are not being excluded from Free School Meal eligibility (in line with National Food Strategy recommendations). The ongoing eligibility for children with No Recourse to Public Funds should be considered explicitly.
2. How funding for Free School Meals can deliver the biggest nutritional and educational impact, supporting children's learning and well-being throughout the school day and during the school holidays (including breakfast provision and the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme). This should include whether the current allowance for Free School Meals is adequate and whether funding for national breakfasts adequately covers all who would benefit from access to provision.
3. How schools can be supported to deliver the best quality school meals which adhere to school food standards and which ensure the poorest children receive the best possible offer. This should include introducing mandatory monitoring and evaluation on an ongoing basis of Free School Meal take-up, the quality/nutritional adequacy of meals, and how the financial transparency of the current system can be improved.
4. What we have learned from Covid-19 and its impact on children in low-income families and the implications of this for school food policy for the next 5 years, as the country recovers.
5. Ensuring that existing school food programmes (such as Free School Meals, holiday and breakfast provision) eliminate experiences of stigma for the poorest students. Review the impact that Universal Infant Free School Meals has had on stigma, health and education.

6. The role of family income (wages and benefits) in enabling families to afford quality food in and outside of school time and during the holidays with choice and dignity.

The process should involve input from all the devolved nations and done in consultation with children and young people, as well as teachers, charities, NGOs, frontline catering staff and school meals service providers. It should draw on evidence of food insecurity and health inequalities.

**#EndChildFoodPoverty**

**[www.endchildfoodpoverty.org](http://www.endchildfoodpoverty.org)**

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