

National School Breakfast Programme
March 2018 – July 2021

Impact Report



Building
stronger
families

magic
breakfast
fuel for learning

Delivering the National School Breakfast Programme

“

This has been transformational in our school. We have so many hungry children and as we have been able to provide them with a free breakfast, with no stigma, this has greatly helped their educational attainment. This has also enabled them to be ready for the school day.

”

– *Thornbury Primary Leadership Academy*

Welcome

I'm delighted to welcome you to this report which considers the impact of the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) from its launch in March 2018 until July 2021. From the very beginning the programme caught the imagination of schools across England. It was such a tremendous opportunity to provide a free and nutritious breakfast to hundreds of thousands of children in disadvantaged areas every school day and schools rose brilliantly to this challenge committing their own time and resources willingly to make the programme work - even in the face of a global pandemic!

Family Action has been very proud to lead the NSBP. I am grateful to the Government for funding the programme, to our brilliant staff team for all of their hard work, to our partners Magic Breakfast for their expertise, to our supply chain and logistics partners for getting the food to schools so reliably and to every school that participated in the programme for your commitment to the objectives.

Together, we have shown that a nutritious breakfast makes a world of difference.



David Holmes CBE
Chief Executive
Family Action

Magic Breakfast is incredibly proud of the National School Breakfast Programme that we co-delivered from March 2018 to July 2021, and enormously grateful to the Department for Education and Family Action for their invaluable partnership which allowed a rapid and highly successful scale-up of our model and approach to hunger-focused school breakfast provision, to the benefit of hundreds of thousands of children.

Bespoke support, encouragement and challenge by programme staff (School Partners) was key to enabling schools to set up a breakfast provision reaching the most disadvantaged pupils with a healthy breakfast without barrier or stigma. Another key driver was getting buy-in from the whole school through them experiencing the impact of a hunger-focused breakfast, such as improved concentration and readiness to learn.

It is credit to the hard work and imagination of everyone working on the programme – and thanks to the flexibility of the DfE – that we were able quickly to modify the food delivery process when the pandemic led to schools being closed to most pupils. At a time of crisis for many families, the programme continued delivering food to vulnerable children, and we are proud of this as well as the successful scale-up of our school breakfast approach.



Joanne Thompson
Chair of Trustees
Magic Breakfast

The National School Breakfast Programme

Programme overview

The Government-funded National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) was launched in March 2018 to ensure children in the most disadvantaged areas of England had access to a healthy breakfast at school, without barrier or stigma, and where children who would most benefit were identified and encouraged to attend. The programme was delivered by award winning charity partners Family Action and Magic Breakfast, with the shared belief that no child should sit in their morning lessons too hungry to learn. A healthy breakfast at school helps provide children with the energy and nutrients they need to thrive – improving concentration, behaviour, attendance, punctuality, wellbeing and educational attainment.

The programme worked with schools that either had no breakfast provision when they applied to the programme, or a small ‘before school’ club with scope for improvement, usually a paid childcare provision with no or few free places.

The Government funded programme supported 1,812 schools¹, to set up and develop breakfast provision without stigma or barrier in primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs). It further funded an additional ‘Covid-19 response’ phase providing food during the pandemic to a further 650 schools.

We are proud to say that over 375,000 children were fed in schools supported by the programme at its peak (according to data supplied by our schools)².

Sustainability

The longer term aim of the programme was to help schools develop a high impact breakfast provision that was embedded within the school day, with greatest take-up by disadvantaged children and that also delivered a range of benefits to the school that were understood and valued. These were the strong foundations needed to build the will and commitment of school leaders to continue breakfast provision beyond the life of the programme.

Eligibility

Schools were eligible for the programme if at least 50% of pupils fell within IDACI bands A-F (the most disadvantaged categories in the Government’s ‘Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index’) and where there was no existing provision or the provision had scope for improvement³.

Most participating schools received:

- Free, healthy breakfast food delivered direct to the door weekly or fortnightly.
- Support from a dedicated expert NSBP ‘school partner’.
- A detailed resource pack.
- Invitations to regional best practice events.
- A £500 start-up grant to buy necessary equipment such as toasters or a freezer.

In a small number of schools with good existing breakfast provision, but with scope to improve uptake by disadvantaged children, funding was provided for additional free places to stimulate more targeting of children who would most benefit from the programme.

Our food

The NSBP breakfast offering consisted of a selection of low sugar cereals and porridge, as well as special recipe low fat bagels (Vitamin D enhanced, containing wholemeal flour), crafted specifically for us by our supplier. This food offer had the benefit of making it possible for schools to offer ‘no mess’ breakfast for large numbers of children in a short timescale. All breakfast products met School Food Standards (SFS) and regulations in England. Schools supplied their own milk and spreads. The programme offered guidance for schools on SFS relating to breakfast, as well as on portion size for different age children. They were also given regularly updated information on ingredients and allergens in products provided.

Our support

We believe schools need to be supported, influenced, and challenged to set up a breakfast provision that meets all need, as it requires commitment, staffing and budget. Therefore, at the outset, each school was assigned a 'school partner' – an expert advisor, who sought to understand each particular school's circumstances and challenges, in order to guide them through the process and recommend the best breakfast models for their needs, helping ensure the school was able to reach all children at risk of being hungry at school. The number of visits each school received depended on individual circumstances, but the core of the support comprised of a recruitment meeting, planning and launch phase, a visit to the new breakfast provision, and an optimisation and sustainability meeting.

The different types of school breakfast provision

No two schools are the same, so each school had personalised support to build a breakfast provision to fit the needs of that school, working around restrictions due to space, time, staff capacity, facilities or the needs of the pupils themselves. The programme used proven Magic Breakfast models, developed with schools over the last 20 years, and many schools used a combination of models to ensure breakfast was accessible to all target children:

- 1. Traditional Breakfast Club:** A sit down, hall or dining room based classic model where pupils benefit from a nurturing family-style breakfast – involving sitting at a table, learning fine motor skills through using cutlery, socialising with others from a range of ages, and possibly developing independence through pouring their own milk or spreading their own bagels. After breakfast, children can often read, play or get some early morning physical activity.
- 2. Classroom breakfast:** Offering breakfast in the classroom, often as part of what is known as a 'soft start', where classrooms open 15 minutes early. This is a simple solution for schools wishing to make food available to very large numbers of children without incurring significant staff costs.

- 3. Playground bagels:** A tray of warm bagels greeting children as they arrive in the playground every morning is ideal for schools with high numbers of children at risk of being hungry whilst at school, limited staff capacity and dining space restrictions and is brilliant for engaging with parents. For low staffing costs, it is possible to ensure that every child in the school has the chance to access healthy food before the start of lessons.
- 4. Healthy 'Grab and Go':** Whether served on the door at multiple entry points or in a restricted indoor space, this provides a flexible option for serving large numbers in a short time, and is ideal for reaching children who arrive just before the bell and too late for a traditional breakfast club. It is also popular with secondary age students.
- 5. Provision for 'Lates':** All schools are encouraged to be mindful that latecomers may be arriving hungry, through no fault of their own, and that food should be available and offered to all these children as a matter of course, so that it is not seen as something of which to be ashamed.

These core models are flexible and can be combined - schools on the programme were encouraged to be creative and to make breakfast both accessible and fun - many came up with ingenious adaptations for delivering breakfasts to their pupils, including a 'bagel bus', a school in Derby's famous 'Pot of Porridge' and a 'bagel shack' which was declared open by the Warrington Wolves rugby-playing mascot Wolfie!

It is important to note that the majority of schools with a pre-existing club of some kind launched a new breakfast model to run alongside their previous (usually paid childcare) club. Very few schools on the programme did not create a new 'club' of some kind.⁴

Food and deliveries

Schools were encouraged to reach all children at risk of being hungry at school, and were provided with as much food as was needed to ensure all need could be met. Deliveries could be weekly or fortnightly, depending on the needs of the school, their storage capacity and what was most cost effective.

The School Partner role

Schools were guided and supported through their 'school journey', from recruitment, launch, early assessment, optimisation and preparing for sustainability. The expert school partners conducted structured meetings with schools to provide advice, support and resources, but also to challenge where necessary and ensure accountability by monitoring the reality of the breakfast. Advice was offered in a whole range of areas, including:

- Identifying children at risk of being hungry at school
- Extending breakfast provision and improving targeting
- Bringing in 'difficult to reach' children
- Adding value to breakfast time
- Reducing costs and getting the most from the provision
- Meeting School Food Standards
- Promoting breakfast and engaging children and parents
- Monitoring the impact and benefits breakfast provision delivers.

This personalised approach meant the programme could offer ideas and support that were tailored to each school's situation, based on what the experienced staff knew was working well in other schools. It is this tailored approach that enabled us to share innovation and learning, with the ultimate goal of ensuring more children were fed in each school. Schools were given a comprehensive range of resources detailing how they could maximise and optimise their breakfast provision and how they could publicise it to pupils and parents. This included promotional posters for display in school and 'Quick Guides' e.g. the Quick Guide to Classroom Breakfast or the Quick Guide to Adding Value to Breakfast.

The school partners were also able to provide ongoing support, checking in with schools and picking up on food order changes, enabling them to identify issues and move to resolve them swiftly where possible. Many schools experienced challenges, especially when their circumstances changed, whether that was due to building or staffing issues, changes in key school roles (e.g. new headteacher), challenges with Ofsted or budget worries.

As school staff are very 'time poor', school partners were a very powerful way of effecting change, simply by enabling busy school staff to spend an hour reflecting and talking about whether breakfast was running effectively, reaching the right children and delivering all possible benefits.

The EEF⁵ referred to school partners as the 'lynchpin' of support for the programme in their evaluation, stating their dedication, passion and expertise were invaluable in the successful delivery of the programme.

During their period of support, participating schools were regularly surveyed to understand how satisfied they were with the programme. Overall, the satisfaction surveys confirmed that schools were very positive about the support they received. The impact data confirms the very high numbers of children reached and the benefits to schools of that attendance. The EEF⁶ in their evaluation confirmed that the programme had successfully scaled up the Magic Breakfast model and achieved the aim of creating high reach, hunger focused breakfast provisions in the target numbers of schools with a strong will and commitment to sustaining those provisions.

1 This figure includes 12 multi sites provisions

2 Number of pupils 'Over 375,000 pupils' is calculated from Nov 2020 data collection from 2115 schools. This includes their report on how many children were receiving breakfast at school and how many were receiving a take home breakfast.

3 "Scope for Improvement" was defined by the DfE and includes provision where:

It is not accessible to disadvantaged pupils: Cost of provision (above 50p), physical and staffing barriers to providing inclusive provision for disadvantaged pupils (including FSM and SEN pupils), low attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Parent demand not met or poor engagement: Number of places available does not meet parent demand, lack of engagement from parents/carers/pupils. Indicators could include waiting lists, attendance, perceptions of clubs.

It has no childcare benefits: Not open at 8.30am.

4 We calculate that the majority of schools with an existing breakfast club launched a new breakfast model through our data collected from schools who joined the programme between March 2018 and March 2020 This data was collected from school recruitment and launch visits where they agreed models they would try with NSBP support, and recorded if they had any previous provision in place.

5 <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/national-school-breakfast-programme>

6 ibid

NSBP reach



375,000

pupils were provided healthy, daily breakfasts at the peak of the NSBP

Over 2,400 schools joined the programme

(1,812 between March 2018 and March 2020 and a further 650 during the Covid-19 response phase)

Breakdown of 1812 schools by type

Primary	1391
Secondary	293
All Through	30
16 Plus	1
Middle	3
Special school	70
PRU	24



40,250,080

bagels were eaten by pupils through the programme!

Schools who joined the programme between March 2018 - March 2020

84% of these schools had an existing breakfast provision with scope for improvement when they joined the programme, usually a small charging childcare club. However, 89% of these schools started a new 'club' as a result of support from the programme – either by adding an additional model of breakfast provision to go beyond small childcare, or by ending their previous club and changing to a more inclusive, barrier and stigma free, extended reach model.¹

Over **280,000 pupils** a day benefitted from an NSBP breakfast during this time, including 110,000 pupil premium pupils.²

73% of these schools committed to sustaining an in-school breakfast provision beyond the programme, despite the considerable challenges of Covid-19.³

Popularity of breakfast delivery models at launch

Bagel Bar / Grab and Go

188

Playground

538

Other

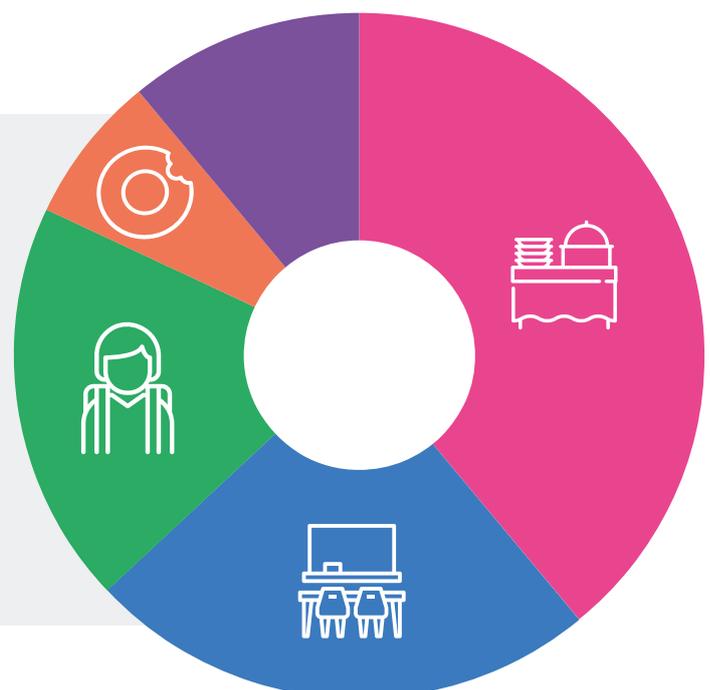
303

Classroom

666

Breakfast Club

1,069



This figure relates to the number of school offering each model. Some schools operated more than one model.

NSBP impact

28%

reduction in late marks in a term



24%

reduction in behavioural incidents



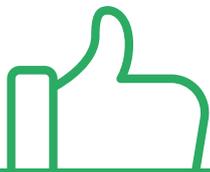
The programme reported new measures of impact:

95%

of head teachers who responded to our survey reported that they were aware of children having inappropriate breakfast (e.g. crisps, fizzy drinks), prior to the introduction of the NSBP.

94%

of those head teachers believe the NSBP has improved this problem in their school.⁴



99%

of schools found the designated NSBP school partner beneficial or extremely beneficial.⁵



With the support from National School Breakfast Programme we have seen a more settled start to the day, less pupils feeling unwell during the morning sessions, behaviour has improved and the number of children late for school has decreased as they want to come in early to breakfast club with their friends.

– St Michaels Junior Church School



In December 2020, 818 NSBP schools responded to our survey and reported the NSBP was important or extremely important in positively supporting:⁶



General behaviour



Readiness to learn at the start of the school day



Healthy eating habits



Educational attainment



Concentration in class



Social skills



Parental engagement

- 1 We calculate that the majority of schools with an existing breakfast club launched a new breakfast model through our data collected from schools who joined the programme between March 2018 and March 2020'. This data was collected from school recruitment and launch visits where they agreed models they would try with NSBP support, and recorded if they had any previous provision in place.
- 2 These are calculated from data collected from our 'data weeks' where schools were asked to complete a set of agreed data. These data weeks occurred in November 2018, March 2019, June 2019 and November 2019.
- 3 1331 schools (73% of 1812 schools on the programme at the time) fulfilled the eligibility criteria for sustainability grants, which were that schools had to be either currently running breakfast provisions or intended to recommence provision following COVID-19 related school closures. This provision had to include some target children, and needed to be before or at the start of the school day. The grant form was sent to schools in February 2021 and forms were completed by March 2021.
- 4 These figures were calculated from responses to our survey of Headteachers, released to all schools engaged with the NSBP on 27th June 2019, and using responses received by 8th August 2019. The number of late marks and behavioural incidents was collected for a full term before receiving support from the NSBP and a full term since receiving support from the NSBP. The percentage reduction was calculated using only those schools which had completed the relevant part of the survey (n=100 for late marks and n=74 for behavioural incidents), rather than all schools which had responded to the survey (n=349).
Headteachers were asked 'before NSBP, were you aware of children arriving at school with inappropriate breakfast food choices?' and 94.81% of n=349 responded 'yes'. Only those who answered yes (n=331) were asked the follow up question 'If yes, what impact do you think your breakfast has had on this?', of whom 93.62% of the n=327 responses answered that it has slightly or significantly reduced children arriving at school with inappropriate breakfast food choices.
- 5 817 respondents answered the question 'how beneficial did you find the designated support from the National School Breakfast Programme Staff?', 24 of whom replied 'somewhat beneficial'. Response options were: Extremely beneficial, beneficial, somewhat beneficial, not very beneficial, skipped
- 6 On 10th December 2020 we released another satisfaction survey to Headteachers of all schools who joined the programme between March 2018 and March 2020 and received 818 responses by 4th February 2021. The percentages used are calculated from all 818 responses for each category, including responses where the respondent was unsure or skipped the question. Response options were: Extremely important, important, not important, unsure/skipped

Innovation

15.7%

increase in attendance
across 53 schools⁴



4.4% Average attendance
at breakfast at start

20.1% Average attendance
at breakfast at end

Innovation played a fundamental role in making the programme a success. We had a clear objective of increasing the take up of healthy breakfasts, particularly in secondary schools, by creating positive change in the beliefs, attitudes and understanding of pupils, parents and the school staff about the benefits of eating a healthy breakfast each day.

A small team of NSBP school engagement partners worked in collaboration with communication experts, Fit2Communicate, to recruit and support over 50 schools to co-develop a toolkit of tested innovative techniques to support a positive impact on attitudes to breakfast generally, as well as an increased take-up of in-school breakfast provision. The aim of this innovation work was to increase the number of students on roll attending breakfast for a minimum of 20 continuous days from an average of just 4.4% to 25%.¹

Schools recruited to the innovation programme each had an individual set of challenges and were provided with a dedicated school engagement partner who supported them to develop a plan of innovative ideas and activities they would trial in order to boost breakfast take-up. They were also provided with a small grant to enable them to manage the cost involved in implementing their plan. Innovative ideas included appointing student health ambassadors and breakfast games. Following the implementation of each of their innovation activities, participating schools measured attendance. They saw an increase in the take-up of breakfast provision, with the average attendance increasing to 20.1%, and with 24 schools increasing attendance to over 25%.²

Further work was carried out to understand if each participating school's breakfast provision would have achieved the same levels of attendance without the intervention of the innovation team. The findings suggested that without the support of the innovation team, the number of

pupils engaging in daily breakfast was unlikely to increase significantly. The success of the innovation projects speaks for itself. After implementing their innovation plans, the 53 participating schools increased daily take up from 2,069 pupils to 9,133 pupils. This equated to an additional 133 students having a nutritious breakfast in each school, every day³.

Regional events

The key to creating sustainable breakfast provision is to enable schools to optimise their provision and recognise the positive impact it has on their school community. Most challenges experienced by schools around offering breakfast have been overcome by other schools, and sharing best practice (either through a school partner, through a resource or directly) played an important role in the programme. Schools are also best influenced and persuaded by other schools and so, to this end, representatives from all programme schools were invited to a series of regional events to hear from leading programme staff and share their successes with their peers.

49 regional events were held in Autumn 2019

464 schools attended
353 Primary, 89 Secondary, 12 SEN, 6 Through schools, 4 PRUs

10.5%
found the event somewhat useful

38.5%
found the event very useful

51%
found the event extremely useful⁵



Very difficult to pick a highlight - from start to finish the NSBP Event was well-worth attending.

- Event attendee, West Midlands



- 1 Fit2Communicate NSBP IP2 Final report June 2020.
- 2 Data for IP project was collected during data weeks like other schools, and it was noted which schools were part of the Innovation Project to enable separate analysis of the attendance figures. Data provided here comes from 53 schools taking part in innovation project. It was collected between November 2018 and June 2019 and analysed by Fit2Communicate.
- 3 ibid
- 4 ibid
- 5 Schools completed an evaluation survey following the best practice events that were held in Autumn 2019. Response options were 'extremely useful', 'very useful' 'somewhat useful' 'not useful.'

Case study

Wheldon Infant School and Nursery sits in the centre of a former mining town, within an area of high deprivation in the north of England. Many families struggle financially and the school was challenged with poor attendance and persistent lateness, both of which were consistently not meeting national targets.

As a result of their NSBP provision:

- Attendance has increased from around 80% to 93-95%.
- Punctuality has increased and the number of pupils arriving late has decreased.
- Pupils are experiencing a calmer start to the day, and an improved morning routine.
- Readiness to learn has increased.
- There are fewer behavioural incidents.
- Parental engagement has improved. Parents are more engaged and feel supported.
- Academic attainment has improved.¹

Although there was an awareness of hunger being an issue in the school with children arriving 'feeling cranky and tired', prior to the NSBP there was no formal breakfast provision.

Headteacher Helen McMullen was aware of the benefits and impact of in-school breakfast as she had previously worked at a school with a successful breakfast club. However, the school faced barriers such as funding, staff time and conflicting attitudes which were pushing breakfast further down the agenda. Despite this, when the School Partner explained the opportunity and potential benefits afforded by the programme, the headteacher and her team decided to take up the offer and experience the impact of a situation where every child could access breakfast at the start of the school day.

The school opted to start a before-school breakfast club to provide low cost childcare but also offering some targeted places to vulnerable families alongside working families. They felt this allowed for a more holistic and calmer start to the day. In addition, they ran a classroom bagel model which ensured food was available to all children at the start of the school day, thus ensuring no child started the school day too hungry to learn.

Initially some targeted families were reluctant to attend the club, and there was even a little resistance from some of the staff, but the school persevered and emphasised that the provision was there to help support families and give their children the best possible start to their morning. They quickly saw the benefits too.

97% of Wheldon pupils now access breakfast on a daily basis. This has had a huge impact on the school and the children love the bagels.

The breakfast offer was highlighted in the school's 2019 Ofsted report:

"The actions you have taken to address the high absence rate of pupils, such as introducing the breakfast club, are improving the school's overall attendance figure swiftly towards the national average"

One family that has particularly benefitted was struggling with morning routine, which resulted in the children often arriving at school late, which led to some behavioural issues. The school invited the children to attend breakfast club, initially for one day a week, however they enjoyed it so much they now attend every day. Their parents appreciate the calmer start to the morning too. Attendance at breakfast club has had a wide range of benefits for the family.

The school told us, "it has opened doors for this family" with benefits for the children of improved attendance, punctuality and behaviour, as well as enabling the school to build a more trusting relationship with their parents.



Here's what the school team told us:

"Coming to school is a more positive experience for the children now"

"This has been such a positive experience for us, our community and our children"

"The impact we have seen has been significant"

"We wouldn't turn back now"

"It has made a massive difference to us"



¹ These figures were provided directly by the school when interviewed in July 2021 by the Best Practice Team Leader.

Sustainability

73%

of schools committed to sustain their provision and thus received sustainability grants of £500 to support their ongoing breakfast provisions in February and March 2021.¹

The key aims the Government set out for the programme were to help schools embed a breakfast provision in the school day, develop understanding and knowledge of the importance of a nutritious breakfast within school staff teams, empower them to lead the delivery of their breakfast provision and build the will to sustain breakfast beyond the end of the funded support.

NSBP schools were offered optimisation/sustainability meetings during the 2019 Autumn term with structured support to review (and measure where possible) the impact of the breakfast provision on their school, across a range of measures. If appropriate, the school was guided to consider not only the value that breakfast had brought to the school, but also how they could further optimise the impact of their breakfast provision. Schools were provided with a range of suggestions as to potential sources of funding for ongoing breakfast provision, including school budget and Pupil Premium and the rationale for doing so. Other sources of funding presented and explored with schools included securing 'gift in kind' or subsidised food, using surplus food redistribution organisations and systems, and seeking local partners, sponsors and funders, as well as applying to grants and foundations. Regional events focused on the long-term objectives of sustainability. In Spring term 2020, schools were prepared for documenting their future intentions in the form of a Sustainability Plan, summarising what they intended to put in place following the end of the programme, and how they intended to fund this.

Following the onset of the pandemic and as the impact of school closures emerged, it became clear that the sustainability objectives of the programme would be significantly affected. Once lockdown was imposed in March 2020, school breakfast provisions were significantly disrupted. Nevertheless, over 1,000 schools switched to take home packs and/or combined, small in-school provision with take home packs for children who were learning remotely. (See Our response to Covid-19 on p.12). The pandemic also had an impact on the development and delivery of Sustainability Plans, which were rescheduled for the Autumn term 2020 and adapted to allow

for the impact of Covid-19 on the schools' ability to run their model of choice due to restrictions, and the uncertainty about what limitations pandemic-related restrictions could place on future provision.

All schools who joined the programme between March 2018 and March 2020 had completed their programme of support by the end of 2020. They were then asked to submit a plan confirming they would continue with/resume an in-school breakfast provision in January 2021, including at least all target children, if they wished to be eligible to apply for a small sustainability grant which they could then use towards breakfast provision costs. As the second national lockdown was announced and schools were forced to close to most children in January 2021, the grant eligibility process was adjusted to allow schools to receive a grant if they were continuing or intended to continue an acceptable provision(s) once school closure ended.

Despite the restrictions of Covid-19 and the considerable staffing and logistical difficulties and challenges to schools in resuming provision at this time, a tremendously encouraging 73% of schools said they were running a breakfast provision or intended to resume provision after lockdown. This is both testament to the commitment of those schools but it also shows that breakfast provision works and is worth investing in, even in the most challenging of circumstances.

Schools continued to fund their provisions in a variety of ways including:

- School budget
- Pupil premium
- Gifted or charitable food
- Charitable grants
- Community grants and donations
- School Fundraising
- Local business sponsorship
- Supermarket partnerships
- Sports club foundations

¹ See details under page 7

Covid-19 response

The pandemic caused much upheaval to schools - not only how to continue to educate children during school closures, but also how to continue to provide essential additional support to children and families, such as breakfast, free school meals and pastoral care.

The National School Breakfast Programme understood the detrimental impact that school closures could have on the many children it served across its schools and so mobilised quickly to adapt our offer to schools and to make it as simple as possible for schools to ensure disadvantaged children could continue to receive a school breakfast. Key to this was the swift introduction of take-home breakfast packs, which were eagerly taken up by many programme schools. The packs consisted of enough bagels, cereal and porridge for one child for two weeks. Schools were provided with guidance on how to distribute the breakfast packs, whilst following social distancing guidelines.

We were amazed by the innovation, goodwill and sheer determination of over 1,000 schools who continued to provide their children with healthy breakfast food at school and at home with help from the programme throughout the pandemic.

The Oasis Academy on the Isle of Sheppey is one of many such schools. The Oasis Academy prides itself on proactively contributing to the local community and involving their students in social enterprises, such as running a dementia café through their community hub.

The community hub lead, Paul Murrey, had been an advocate for the programme in his school since it was introduced. Paul had seen the positive impact that providing a free school breakfast had on the children's wellbeing, ability to learn and concentration. Paul was well aware of the impact the pandemic would have on their community; already an area of high deprivation, he knew how vulnerable their families would be to food poverty. Therefore, Paul set about working with the programme to adapt the breakfast delivery so that they could provide breakfast to as many of their children as possible who were learning at home.

The school arranged a text message system that asked target families if they needed breakfast to be delivered to their homes, whilst also working closely with the Salvation Army and Big Local to set up designated pick-up points around the area, where families could come and collect breakfast food, adhering to social distancing rules, either from a hall or from the school minibus. Paul and his colleague, Eileen Evans, drove the school minibus to transport the food, first tackling the popular home deliveries, followed by a planned route around the Island where they set-up collection points for families to come and collect the food they needed.



Families were extremely grateful to receive this much needed support and felt genuinely supported and cared for by their school. Paul and Eileen's heroic efforts resulted in over 200 families being provided with healthy breakfast food and thanks to government funding, the programme was able to provide Oasis and other programme schools with breakfast supplies throughout the summer holidays and the 2020 Autumn term.

As the pandemic worsened, government funding was further extended and Family Action and Magic Breakfast imaginatively modified the programme to enable a further 650 schools to join the programme under a 'Covid-19 response' phase, reaching a further 100,000 pupils each day. This Covid-19 response adaptation of the programme had a marked difference in emphasis and delivery from schools who joined the programme between March 2018 and March 2020;— schools did not have the School Partner led 'school journey' to embed a breakfast provision in school, as this was not possible under pandemic conditions and restrictions.

Schools joining the programme for the Covid-19 response phase were however expected to commit to our objective of 'no child too hungry to learn' by reaching children at risk of hunger. Commitment to reaching children learning at home as well as in school was a requirement of the offer. Some schools had no in-school provision and focused entirely on take home packs, whilst others combined 'in-school' and take-home provision. Although the focus was on food aid for children whose learning was disrupted by the pandemic, the programme invited schools to engage in our shared practice virtual events to help schools understand the educational, emotional, social and physical benefits of a nutritious daily breakfast and promote the benefits of moving to an in-school breakfast provision beyond the term of the programme. As lockdown ended in March 2021 and schools began to return to normal learning, increasing numbers of pupils were able to enjoy an in-school breakfast.

Breakdown of 650 Covid-19 phase schools

Primary

483

All Through

12

Special School

28

Secondary

119

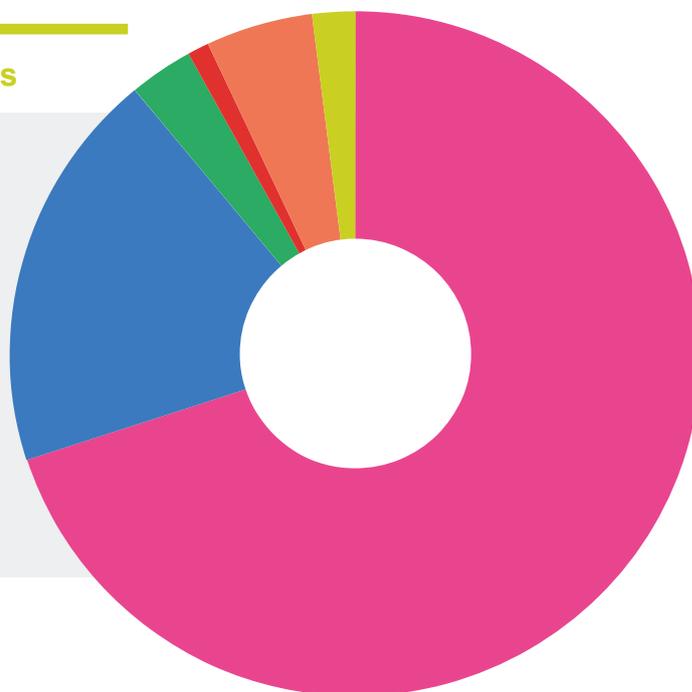
16 Plus

1

PRU

7

Breakdown of 650 schools



Parent insight project

The parent insight project was developed as part of the programme with the aim of sharing with families the benefits of having a nutritious daily breakfast as part of a healthy diet.

Background

School children eat breakfast at home almost half of the year, when school holidays and weekends are taken into account. However, despite the many known benefits of eating a healthy breakfast - such as improvements in academic achievement, and improved wellbeing, concentration, nutritional health, mood and energy - one in five parents with primary aged children reported finding breakfast the trickiest time of day and 60% of parents said they struggled to find time to eat breakfast as a family.¹

Developing useful, family friendly resources

The project carried out a literature review which focused on parental engagement and the nutritional benefits of a daily, healthy breakfast. A parent survey was run and a panel of 16 parents was formed to find out what they would find most useful when considering their children's breakfast².

Recipe ideas

13

Quizzes

3

Tip sheet

14

Growing vegetables

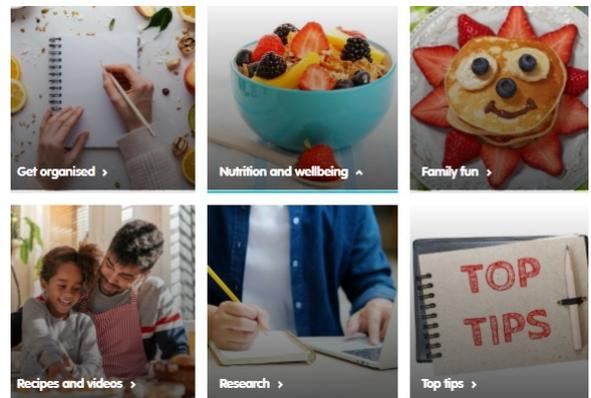
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Parents wanted to work to the principles of simplicity, usefulness, ease, affordability and practicality, so we set about developing a range of parent focused resources.

The resources are organised into 6 categories, with many tips, ideas and help sheets in each category, for example ideas on what to have for weekend breakfast, growing your own breakfast and a wide range of videos and recipes.

All schools participating in the programme were directed to the resources and schools who joined for the Covid-19 response phase were invited to learn more at one of our virtual events, with the aim that they would direct their families to them. A social media campaign was also run to invite families to have a look and try out some of the ideas. Why not take a look? www.family-action.org.uk/BreakfastAtHome



Here's what they told us would be most useful:

- "Breakfast foods that can be prepared in advance"
- "Healthy alternatives to tempt young children"
- "Understanding hidden salts and sugars, for example in breakfast bars and cereals"
- "Child friendly recipes and encouraging them to cook"
- "Weekend recipes to cook"
- "Youtube – good for kids"
- "I don't have a garden – ideas on container garden or window sill gardening"



1 https://www.kelloggs.co.uk/content/dam/europe/kelloggs_gb/pdf/Kellogg's_Reduced_Sugar_Coco_Pops.pdf

2 This data was collected from 16 parents using paper forms in August 2020 at Manchester and Peterborough Children's Centre sessions.

Key learning

As a large scale delivery programme, the NSBP provided an outstanding opportunity to scale up an enhanced version of a previously proven approach to school breakfast provision, and to look for further opportunities to improve outcomes.

Key learning included:

Flexibility from the outset improves outcomes

The programme recognised from previous experience that all schools have unique characteristics and that it was important to consider a school's individual context during their recruitment to the programme. Schools were introduced to a menu of breakfast delivery models from the outset and this was key to some schools taking up the programme offer, particularly those who felt they had a large number of children at risk of being hungry in school but could not offer a large scale traditional breakfast club due to staffing concerns and/or lack of facilities. The extended reach models such as classroom breakfast and healthy grab and go were essential to success, requiring fewer staff and reaching more pupils without barrier or stigma.

Intelligent promotion improves secondary take up

Improving take up in secondary schools was identified as a particular challenge of school breakfast provision. The Innovation Project showed that an intensive programme of repeated promotional initiatives resulted in a marked uplift in attendance, with each promotion having a spike effect on breakfast take up. Promotions that were research based were able to tap into student psychology, by offering incentives to initial attendance with the goal of triggering new habits for the long term.

Whole school buy in leads to optimal outcomes

For breakfast to successfully embed in the school day and be valued and protected, whole school buy in is vital. Commitment from the leadership team, and business managers seeing

a return on investment are important, as is ensuring there are sufficient staff committed to the breakfast to cover for absences and ensure breakfast is safeguarded. Teaching staff need to see the value to actively identify and target children for attendance, and accept a change to the start of the school day. Kitchen staff commitment is a significant advantage and caretakers and cleaners also need to be supported to understand the benefit of breakfast to counter any inconvenience.

Recognising impact builds will to continue

For long term commitment, it is important that the whole school understands the benefit of breakfast. Recruitment of a large number of schools with no breakfast provision, or a paid for childcare provision only, allowed the introduction of a national high profile and structured programme. This encouraged a large cohort of schools to consider, review and measure the impact of breakfast provision on key variables such as punctuality and behaviour at the same time, whilst also providing data led reinforcement of the value that breakfast brought to each and every school.

School Partner support and challenge is key to success

Skilled and knowledgeable School Partners using education, influence and persuasion were key to meeting recruitment targets and to schools embarking on the programme with an ambitious mindset. Schools reported they found School Partner support of huge benefit to the success of their breakfast provision. Support meetings at key points across the duration of the programme required schools to reflect on their provisions, with a School Partner who brought knowledge and experience from a diverse range of schools, as well as bringing best practice from across the programme. School Partners were also key to accountability, providing challenge where necessary.



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This has been a lifeline to many pupils, especially as many families are experiencing severe financial hardship due to the pandemic. It has meant we can ensure pupils receive a good wholesome breakfast before beginning lessons. Some pupils have not had an adequate dinner the night before and eat a lot in breakfast club to compensate for this. Being in an area of deprivation the breakfast club has meant that no child in our school goes hungry whilst in school and they concentrate more in lessons and consequently receive better grades.

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Frederick Bremer School, London



About Family Action

At Family Action we believe no one should be defined by their circumstances. We transform lives by providing practical, emotional and financial support to those who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation.

Family Action passionately believes in the strengths within families. Families may be very different in composition and circumstances but they should all be empowered and supported to enable all members to thrive. In everything that we do, Family Action is rooted in the belief that well-functioning and supported families are a driving force for happy, healthy individuals and communities.

Founded in 1869, the charity was providing services to children and families before the first aeroplane flew, before the first car was invented, even before it was first made compulsory for all primary age children to attend school. Our history is remarkable - we were there at the very beginnings of social work, we created the first Citizen's Advice Bureau and the forerunners of Job Centres. Today, Family Action supports over 60,000 families and hundreds of thousands of children and young people a year through some 200 community-based services, as well as supporting thousands more through national programmes and grants.

This year we have been awarded Third Sector Charity of the Year 2021 for our excellent response to the pandemic where we delivered appropriate and timely services, including the National School Breakfast Programme. We are delighted to be continuing our work with the Department for Education and delivering the newly funded National School Breakfast Programme until 2023; continuing to support schools to feed thousands of children a free breakfast at the start of the school day.



About Magic Breakfast

Magic Breakfast is a registered charity addressing classroom hunger in the UK through the provision of healthy breakfasts to children who arrive at school too hungry to learn. The charity works with over 1,000 Primary, Secondary, ASL/Special Educational Needs Schools and Pupil Referral Units in disadvantaged areas of England and Scotland, providing expert support to help each school identify and reach all pupils at risk of hunger with a nutritious breakfast, without barrier or stigma.

Magic Breakfast's in-school breakfast provision was quickly adapted during the Covid-19 pandemic, when schools were closed to most pupils, so that those children most in need still received nutritious breakfast food, either via their schools (who would distribute breakfast packs to those not eating at school), or via free deliveries of breakfast parcels straight to their homes. The charity continued to deliver breakfasts throughout the school holidays to children whose families were struggling to feed them during the pandemic.

Independent research, funded by the Education Endowment Foundation, involving Magic Breakfast partner schools, found that supporting schools to run a free of charge breakfast club, available to all pupils before lessons, delivered an average of 2 months' additional progress per year in reading, writing and maths for Year 2 (Key Stage 1) pupils. Teachers at the charity's partner schools report improved: concentration in class, energy levels, readiness to learn, general behaviour, healthy eating habits, emotional and physical wellbeing, attendance and attainment in pupils who receive Magic Breakfast provision.



Delivering the National School Breakfast Programme

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