

Universal Free School Meals and Provision of Breakfast in Schools

Background

1. The 2018 Annual General Meeting carried the following motion:

“That this AGM call upon Council to plan and deliver a high-profile national campaign around the established policy of universal free school meals across all sectors. Further research into extending the free school meal entitlement to include the provision of breakfast for the students should be carried out and a report of the findings and associated additional expenditure produced.”

2. This paper explores the benefits of universal free school meals, how breakfast clubs may be included within this provision and any associated benefits this may bring.

Introduction

3. The EIS has a longstanding position of supporting universal free school meals¹. The EIS believes that access to healthy and nutritious meals is essential to enable pupils to learn effectively in schools and for successful educational outcomes. Currently, only P1-3 pupils enjoy a universal free school meal entitlement. This paper examines the expansion of universal free school meals to all children in Primary 1 to 3 and the benefits of expansion of universal free school meals to include breakfast clubs.

Section 1: Universal Free School Meals

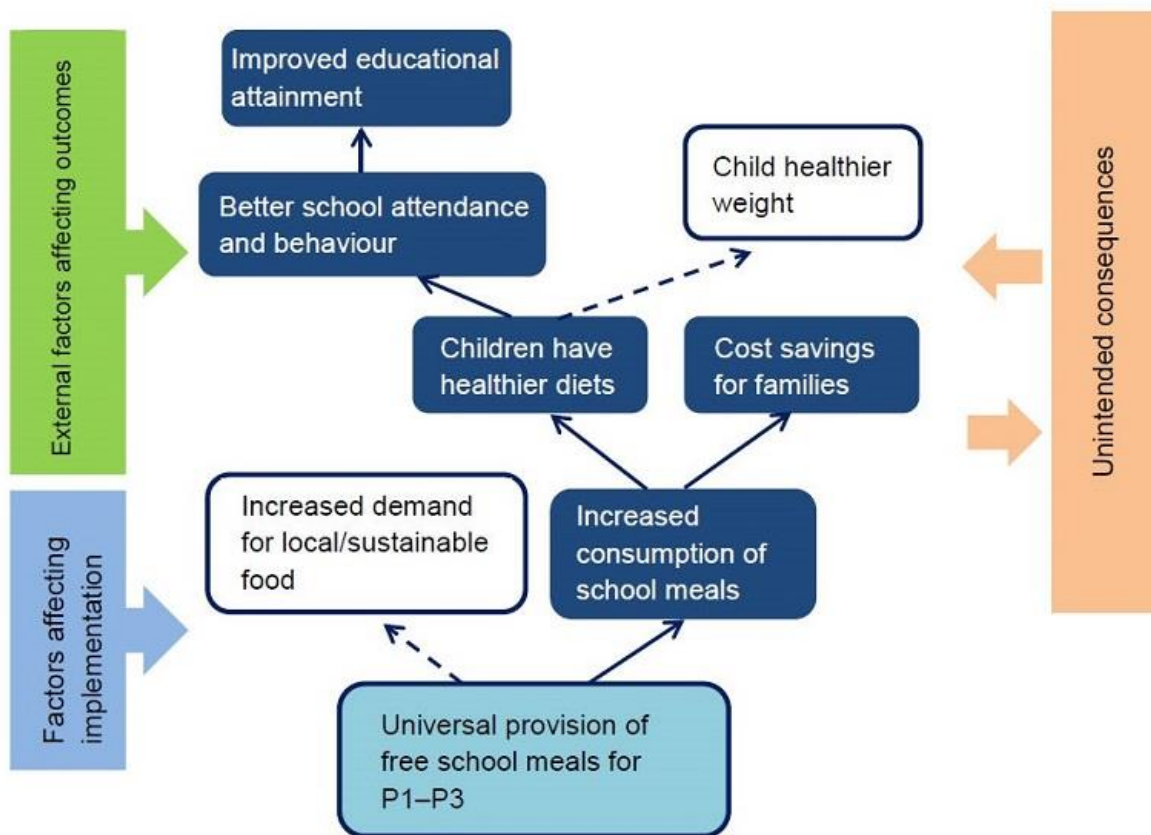
School Meal Provision

4. School meals have been offered or provided by all schools for decades, with longstanding belief that school meals are important for individual development and improved educational outcomes. Maslow proposed the idea that a person’s most basic needs must be satisfied before higher order needs (such as learning) can be addressed. Recent research also shows that well-nourished children perform better at school, not only in terms of educational achievement² but in behaviour and fewer absences.
5. The EIS favours the universal free school meals (UFSM) for all children and young people in school. There is a strong argument that a universal free school meal provision is an effective means of ensuring all pupils have nourishing and nutritionally balanced meals – for example, many pupil packed lunches were believed to be of low nutritional value with an excess of snacks. A universal free school meal provision also enables pupils who live in poverty or near poverty to receive free meals if they are not included in free school meal programme. A universal free school meal provision also has several other advantages such as removing the stigma for pupils getting free school meals, helping child development, improving pupil attendance, improving pupil behaviour and increasing social equality.

¹ EIS AGM 2008

² https://are.berkeley.edu/~mlanderson/pdf/school_lunch.pdf

A diagram from NHS Health Scotland sets out the advantages of UFSM:



6. Evaluation of a free school meals pilot for primary school children over two years in Hull found a “significant impact in all areas of children's schooling...behaviour, social relationships, health and learning”,³ whilst more recent evaluation of the provision of free school meals to all primary pupils in Durham and Newham found that “offering free school meals to all primary school pupils increased attainment in disadvantaged areas.”⁴
7. Over recent years there has been growing debate and interest around the nutritional value of the foods that should be offered as part of the lunchtime menu, with prominent campaigns (initially fronted by Jamie Oliver) seeking to ban certain foods, for example fizzy drinks and highly processed meats.
8. When responding to the Scottish Government call for evidence on the nutritional requirements of food and drinks in schools the EIS championed fruit being made available as a choice to children and young people who make use of school tuckshops and vending machines where these exist.⁵

³ Prof. Derek Colquhoun, Hull Uni, http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1995361,00.html (January 2007)

⁴ Institute for Fiscal Studies, “Offering free school meals to all primary school pupils increased attainment in disadvantaged areas” Claire Crawford et. al. https://www.ifs.org.uk/pr/fsm_260712.pdf (July 2012)

⁵ The Educational Institute of Scotland, “EIS Response to Scottish Government Consultation: Nutritional requirements for food and drinks in schools” (2018)

9. There is also great interest in exploring the application of the same principle to the provision of snacks.⁶
10. The importance of fruit and vegetables as part of a balanced diet should feature consistently, too, in the curricula of early learning establishments. The EIS is concerned that schemes that did provide free fruit to nurseries and primaries for snack time have had their funding cut, with the result that opportunities for young children to taste and find that they enjoy different kinds of fruit, have reduced or disappeared from many establishments entirely.
11. In 2017 the Scottish Government commissioned an independent review into the nutrition requirements of food and drink in schools. The Technical Working Group (TWG) provided evidence-based recommendations to progress school food further towards the Scottish Dietary Goals (SDGs). The primary focus of the TWG was the health and wellbeing of children and young people.⁷

Free School Entitlement

12. The School Healthy Living Survey monitors all publicly funded schools in Scotland including; registration for free school meals, uptake of school meals, both free and paid for. The most recent statistics show that 38% of pupils were registered for free school meals in 2019 and of those registered for free school meals and present on the survey day, 78.1% took a free meal.⁸
13. The national criteria for eligibility to free school meals is complex but most free school meals are provided to pupils from families who receive Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance or any income related element of Employment and Support Allowance.
14. Not all pupils who receive free school meals are eligible to do so under the national criteria as many local authorities have additional initiatives in place that extend the provision of free school meals beyond this criterion.
15. Additionally, the implementation of UFSM for P1-P3 pupils in 2015 meant that eligibility to free school meals was extended to all pupils in P1-P3, and these pupils are included in the School Healthy Living Survey.⁹

Implementing Universal Free School Meals (P1-3) & School Meal Take Up

16. In January 2015, the Scottish Government implemented universal free school meals to all pupils in Primary 1 to Primary 3. Some local authorities have pledged to expand upon this, with Glasgow City Council providing universal free school meals to Primary 4 children, with the intention to provide universal free school meals to all primary pupils in future years.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Scottish Government, "Report of the Technical Working Group: Review of Nutrition Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008" (2017) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/food-drink-schools-nutrition-requirements-review/>

⁸ Scottish Government, School Healthy Living Survey Statistics 2019, 9th September 2019

⁹ Ibid.

17. The most recent Scottish Local Government Finance Statistics (SLGFS) from 2017-2018 show the total number of meals offered and their costs in pre-primary, primary, secondary and special education.

Table 1: Number and Cost of School Meal Provision in Publicly Funded Schools in Scotland¹⁰ (2017-18)

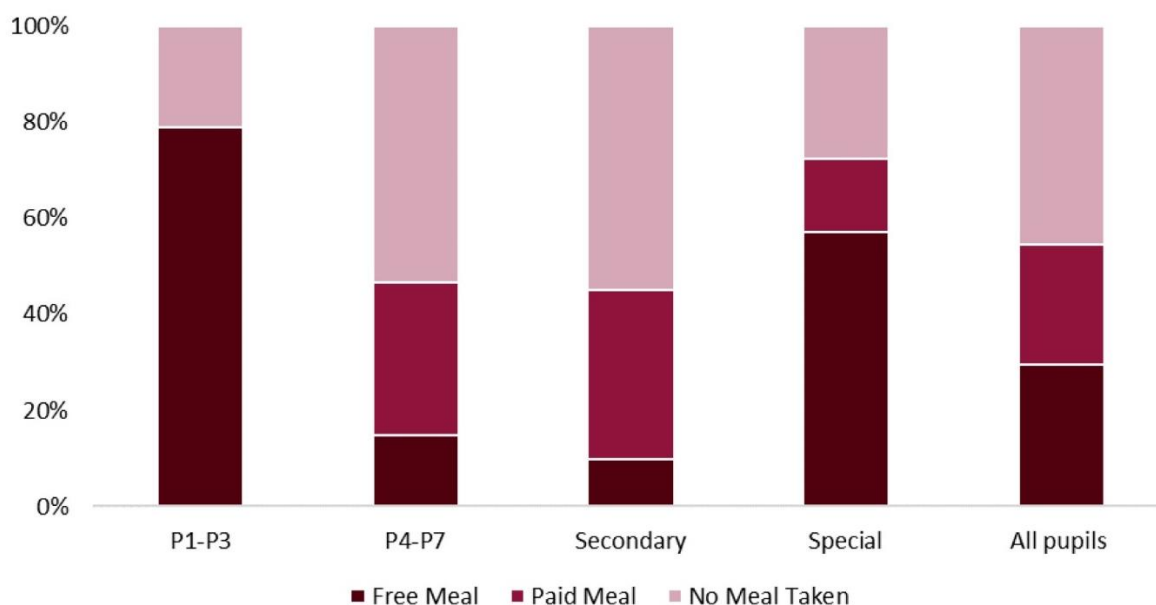
	Pre-Primary Education	Primary Education	Secondary Education	Special Education	Total Education
Number of Free School Meals (units)	418,737,000	29,800,053,000	4,384,125,000	619,417,000	35,222,332,000
Number of Paid for School Meals (units)	309,529,000	13,049,757,000	15,069,757,000	161,284,000	28,590,327,000
Total Number of School Meals (units)	728,266,000	42,849,810,000	19,453,882	780,701,000	63,812,659,000
Cost per School Meal (£:p)	£4.05	£2.78	£3.03	£3.30	£2.88
School Meals (£'s)	£2,953,000	£118,939,000	£59,042,000	£2,577,000	£183,511,000

18. From these figures, it shows that at present £183.5m is spent on providing school lunches. As Table 2 below shows, most P4-7 and secondary pupils pay for their lunches, and therefore much of the £183.5m is recouped from charges to families.

19. Table 2 shows the percentage of children claiming free school meals, or paying for lunches at school during 2017-18.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Table 2: Percentage of School Children Taking Free and Paid for School Meals¹¹

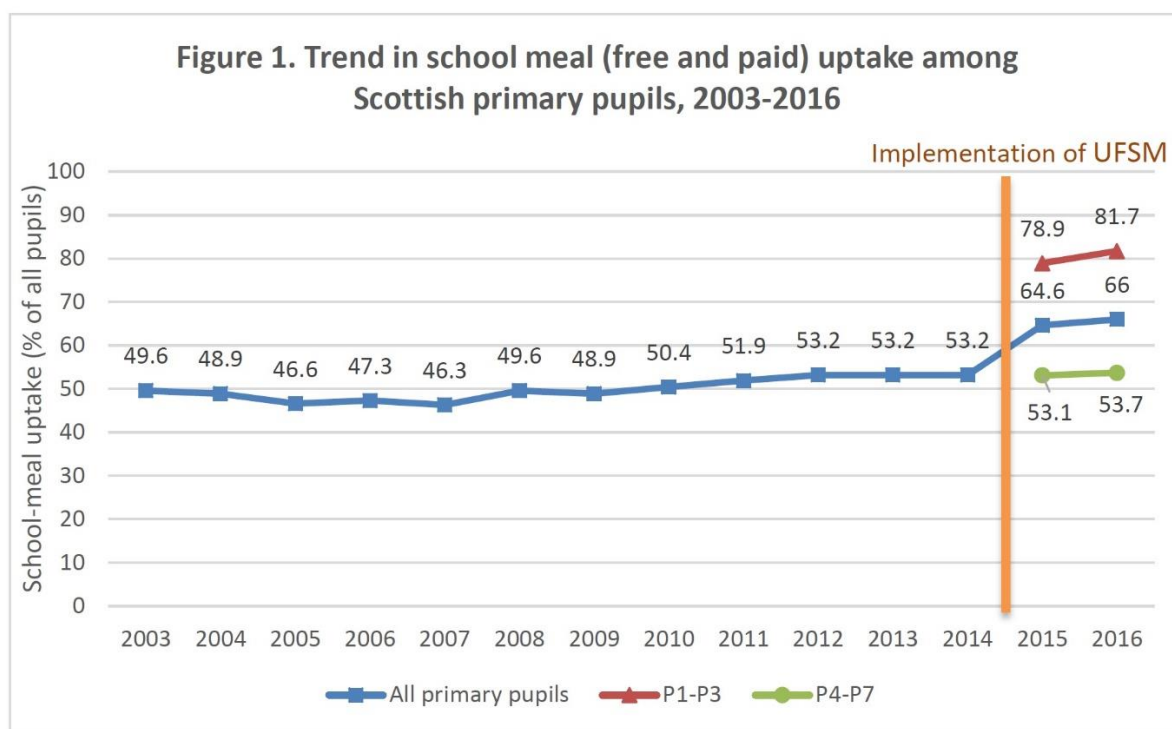


20. NHS Health Scotland¹² evaluated (2016) the universal free school meal implementation and found there to be an increase in take up of both free and paid school meals. The chart below has been taken from the second NHS Health Scotland evaluation report and shows an uptake among Scottish primary school pupils in all age groups.

¹¹ Scottish Government, "School Healthy Living Survey Statistics 2019" 9th September 2019
<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2019/09/school-healthy-living-survey-statistics-2019/documents/school-healthy-living-survey-statistics-2019/school-healthy-living-survey-statistics-2019/govscot%3Adocument/school-healthy-living-survey-statistics-2019.pdf>

¹² <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/evaluation/universal-free-school-meals.aspx>

Table 3: NHS Health Scotland Survey¹³



21. Key findings from the School Healthy Living Survey (2019) show that 38.0% of pupils were registered for free school meals in 2019, up slightly from 2018. Of those registered for free school meals and present on the survey day, 78.1% took a free meal. Of all pupils present on the survey day, 54.5% took a meal (free or paid for) supplied by the school.¹⁴

22. This mirrors research published¹⁵ in England after the introduction of universal free school meals (UFUM) for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils in 2014. In England, UFSM for infants led to a rapid increase in school meal take-up (from an estimated 38% in 2013-14 to 80% in 2015-16) and this was reflected across the majority of schools. Furthermore, according to research many (41%) of school heads thought that the general profile of healthy eating across the school had improved as a direct result of UFSM.

Positive Impacts from Implementing Universal Free School Meals for P1-3 Pupils

23. The Scottish Government has cited raising attainment as one of the drivers of the expansion of free school meals to those in Primary 1 to Primary 3.¹⁶ Whilst there are anecdotal reports of a positive

¹³ NHS Health Scotland, "Evaluating universal infant free school meals, Scotland: second monitoring report of school-meal uptake." (October 2016) http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1186/28354-universal-free-school-meals-report_oct_english.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/evaluation-universal-infant-free-school-meals/>

¹⁶ Scottish Government, "Pupil attainment: closing the gap" <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/pupil-attainment/> last accessed 25th November 2019

impacts to pupils following UFSM for P1-3 pupils, there has been no study of the impacts on pupils attainment arising from the implementation of universal free school meals (P1-3) in Scotland yet.

24. In 2015, shortly after the implementation of universal free school meals for P1-3, the NHS Health Scotland reported¹⁷ that the three main benefits to the implementation of UFSM for P1-3 pupils' parents were; financial savings, time savings (not buying and preparing packed lunches) and nutritional benefits.

Costs of Implementing Universal Free School Meals & Potential Costs of Expanding UFSM

25. Table 1 sets out the gross costs of providing school meals in Scotland in 2017-18. A recent research paper stated that the Scottish Government spent £54m in 2017-18 to deliver UFSM for P1-3 pupils that year¹⁸, i.e. £18m per school year. On this basis, the cost of expanding UFSM, from P1-3 to P1-7 could be estimated to be an additional £72m (at 2017-18 prices). The cost for UFSM, on a similar basis, for the secondary sector for would be around £108m, however, it should be noted that many secondary pupils leave the school premises during lunchtimes and therefore the cost would actually be lower. A sum would need to be hypothecated for the Special School sector. Taken together, the additional annual cost for resourcing universal free school meals to P4-7 & secondary pupils could be in the region of around £180m.
26. The capital costs of expanding canteens and kitchens would be additional and could be substantial in some schools.

Conclusions

27. The reasons for supporting free school meals to facilitate well-nourished children to perform better at school, not only in terms of educational achievement but in behaviour and fewer absences remains unchallenged. The introduction of universal free school meals for P1-3 is the first step of seeking to maximise the benefit of good school food for all, and the logical next steps are the expansion to universal free school meals – in incremental stages beginning with the primary sector (as Glasgow is doing). Schools meals currently cost around £183m and a roll-out of Universal Free School Meals to all primary and then secondary schools does not seem prohibitively expensive.

¹⁷ <http://www.healthscotland.com/scotlands-health/evaluation/planning/universal-free-school-meals/parents.aspx>

¹⁸ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AQRhpimhBJkm8pE3ZALhjg4HRU5xGPYd/view>

Section 2: Breakfast Clubs

28. Breakfast clubs have been run alongside the school day in Scotland for many years now. Many clubs offer children the chance to socialise and learn valuable life skills alongside getting a healthy breakfast to start the school day. Since the introduction of austerity policies in the UK and Scotland just over 10 years ago, the number of children living in poverty in Scotland has increased¹⁹, and there has been growing demand for breakfast clubs to be introduced in more schools.
29. Whilst many breakfast clubs offer additional support, the need to ensure that children and their families have access to nutritious meals is a growing concern for many local authorities with a rise in foodbanks use across the country.²⁰
30. Figures from 2016/17 show that just over 20% of schools in Scotland offer a breakfast service, although there is huge variation across local authorities.²¹ There is also considerable variation in the cost of accessing breakfast clubs, with local authorities such as Glasgow City Council offering it free to primary school children who are entitled to a free school meal²² whereas some children in Dundee City Council are being charged £2 a day to attend the breakfast club.²³

Benefits of Breakfast Clubs

31. In a recent EIS survey over half of respondents said they had seen an increase in the number of children coming to school hungry with little or no food or snacks, or money for the tuck shop. Just over a fifth said they had seen an increase in the number of children demanding or stealing food from other children.²⁴
32. In November 2016 Magic Breakfast and the Education Endowment Foundation published the findings of their The Magic Breakfast project which provided 106 schools with support and resources to offer a free, universal, before-school breakfast club, including to all Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. The aim of the project was to improve attainment outcomes by increasing the number of children who ate a healthy breakfast.
33. The schools in the project were English schools with a relatively high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. The project ran between September 2014 and July 2015. Schools were provided with free food, support from a Magic Breakfast school change leader, and a £300 grant towards up-front costs. The intervention itself was delivered by school staff and volunteers. Table 4 shows the project methodology.

¹⁹ Child Poverty Action Group, "Child poverty in working families on the rise" <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/child-poverty-working-families-rise> 28th March 2019

²⁰ The Scotsman, "The use of foodbanks in Scotland hits record high" <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/use-of-food-banks-in-scotland-hits-record-high-1-4729188> (April 2018)

²¹ Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit, "Are pupils being served? A secondary review of the sector's evidence based on school meal provision at lunchtime in Scotland" John H. McKendrick et. al. Page 35

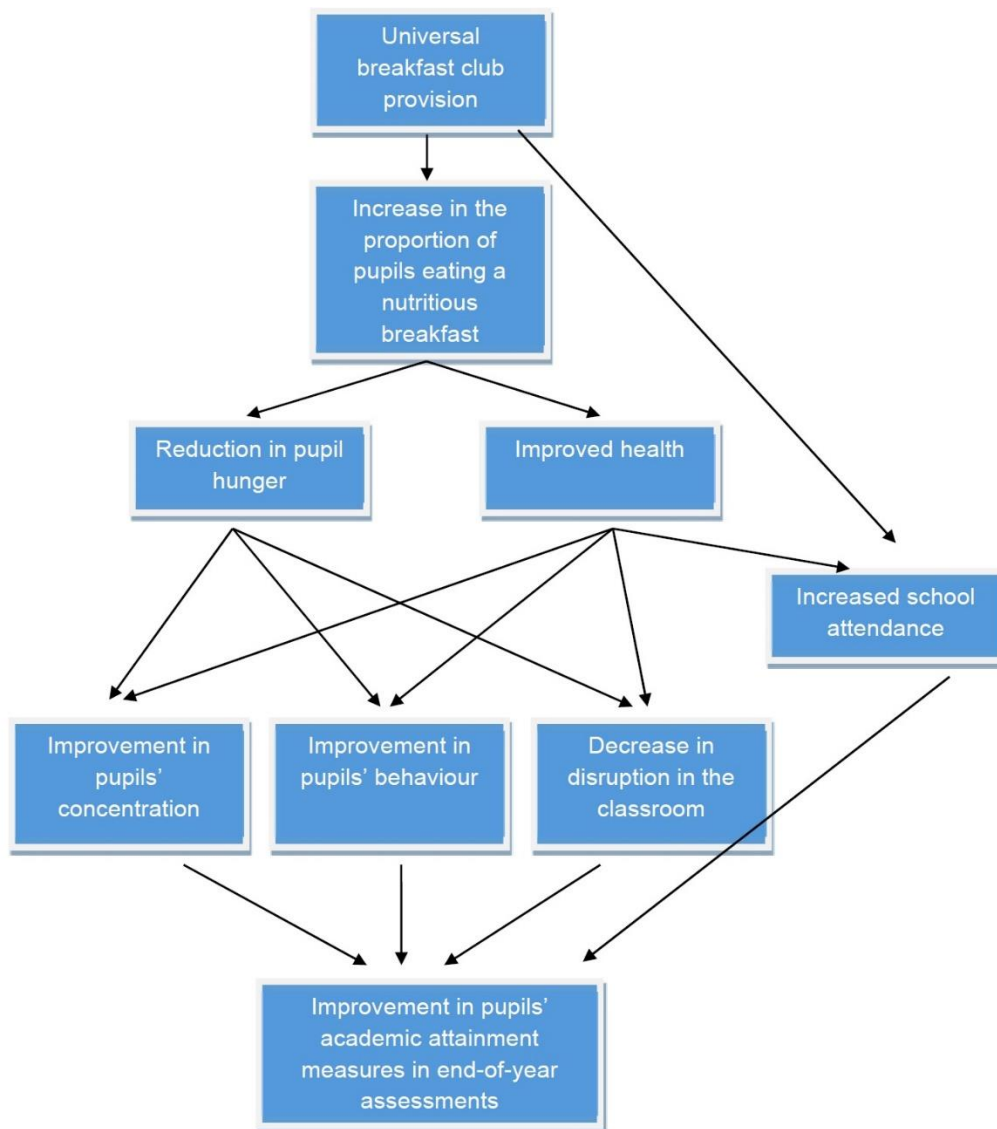
²² Glasgow City Council, "Glasgow City Council Breakfast Clubs in Primary Schools" http://merryleeprimarypc.org/downloads/Breakfast_Service_Consultation_Briefing.pdf

²³ Evening Telegraph, "Dip in Dundee breakfast club numbers blamed on increase in charges for hard-up parents" <https://www.eveningtelegraph.co.uk/fp/dip-in-dundee-breakfast-club-numbers-blamed-on-increase-in-charges-for-hard-up-parents/> 1st October 2019

²⁴ The Educational Institute of Scotland, "How is poverty continuing to affect children and young people's education in Scotland? Interim Findings - EIS Survey 2019" page 6

34. Breakfast clubs present an opportunity to improve pupils' nutrition and diet for less cost than expanding universal free school meals.

Table 4: Theory of Change Model – Magic Breakfast²⁵



35. Key findings from the Magic Breakfast study found that:

- “Year 2 children in breakfast club schools experienced around two months’ additional progress compared to Year 2 children in the other schools in the trial. These positive results would be unlikely to occur by chance.

²⁵ Magic Breakfast, “Evaluation report and executive summary” Claire Crawford et. al
https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/Evaluation_Reports/Magic_Breakfast.pdf
(November 2016)

- “For Year 6 children in breakfast club schools, results for the main outcomes, reading and maths, were positive but could have occurred by chance. However, on other measures of writing and English they experienced around two months’ progress compared to the other Year 6 children. These positive results would be unlikely to occur by chance.
- “The findings suggest that it is not just eating breakfast that delivers improvements but attending a breakfast club. This could be due to the content of the breakfast itself, or to other social or educational benefits of the club.
- “Pupil behaviour, as measured by a teacher survey, improved in breakfast club schools. This is interesting because it shows that breakfast clubs may improve outcomes for children who do not even attend breakfast club, by improving classroom environments.
- “Activities thought to increase take-up of the breakfast provision included promoting it to parents and encouraging all children to attend while sensitively targeting pupils most likely to benefit. The project required additional staff time which some schools found difficult to provide without charging for breakfast.”²⁶

36. A similar study run by the Department for Education found that breakfast clubs had a positive impact in schools with high levels of deprivation. Their key findings included:

- “All schools perceived reductions in the number of pupils being hungry and most schools reported that they felt that the breakfast club was having an impact on pupils eating more healthily;
- “Schools did not generally report any impact of breakfast clubs on overall school attendance figures. Schools reported improvements in punctuality for some pupils and targeted persistent latecomers to attend the breakfast club;
- “Schools generally reported perceived improvements in concentration and in behaviour from pupils attending breakfast clubs. They attributed this in part to children not being hungry which helped concentration and, in part, to the new routine of the breakfast club which allowed pupils to be ready to learn when lessons started;
- “Schools reported breakfast clubs bringing additional social benefits by helping pupils develop new friendship groups. Several saw benefits in pupils developing friendships across year groups;
- “Schools reported additional benefits for pupils with lower self-confidence, with breakfast clubs giving a space for pupils to learn to be more confident;
- “Some special schools reported that breakfast clubs supported learning and helped pupils to adapt to changes in their routine.”²⁷

What makes a Breakfast Club Successful?

37. Alongside the desk-based research carried out in this paper, the EIS also met with Barnardo’s Scotland and Children in Scotland to gather some qualitative research and better understand what makes a successful breakfast club, and the associated benefits that they can bring.

38. One of the key issues that was raised in our meetings with third sector providers was attendance. Feedback from Barnardo’s practitioners showed that stigma can be a barrier to ensuring the children

²⁶ Ibid. Page 4

²⁷Department for Education, “Evaluation of Breakfast Clubs in Schools with High Levels of Deprivation Research Report” Noreen Graham et. al.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603946/Evaluation_of_Breakfast_Clubs_-_Final_Report.pdf (March 2017)

most in need attend, and for others it can be challenging getting children into school earlier than 9am. Following our discussions with Barnardo's they issued a questionnaire to a small sample of their staff who are working in and with schools across Scotland on their experiences of wrap-around care and the provision of food. The results of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix A with some key quotes highlighted below:

- "In my experience, a barrier is that parents do not get their children up and ready out the house in time for breakfast club and this could be for many reasons. Even those families with transport provided do not always get their child to breakfast club; perhaps a stigma associated with breakfast club being seen as something for poor people or people in need; the motivation of parents to make sure that their children are adequately fed and prepared for their day."
- "In some areas there is a stigma attached to using resources such as breakfast clubs as these are perceived for children who come from vulnerable families."
- "If targeted at certain groups it then becomes stigma attached to the breakfast club. Parents are unsure of times / days within the school. Parents require support for routine to get up earlier so children can attend breakfast clubs"

39. Feedback from both Barnardo's and Children in Scotland suggest that the design of the breakfast club can greatly improve the success. Feedback suggests that ensuring there are appropriate opportunities to develop new skills, be active and socialise can broaden the appeal of the breakfast club, and therefore bring in more children and families into this service. Barnardo's practitioners left the following comments regarding the key principles that should be applicable to any universal provision of breakfast clubs:

- "Having a non-judgmental school/home liaison worker who builds strong relationships with the families and encourages them to engage."
- "It varies. For some parents the best motivation is an understanding of how their attendance will help them meet their child's needs. For others it is the opportunity to address their own needs when they may feel saturated in other people's (especially their children's) needs. Some have embraced these opportunities initially as a means to promote contact with peers while others engage if they believe there is a focus to the session (such as an info session, a task etc.) I couldn't narrow it down to one common factor as it is different for all."
- "A welcoming environment with someone who is not directly associated with the school i.e. a teacher."
- "Communicating the purpose of club or activity with food not being the focus; accessible for everyone as there may be hidden food poverty; and to reduce stigma. Support for some parents is required to get through the door initially as they may want to attend but not have the confidence to do so."

40. The qualitative data that is highlighted from breakfast club providers shows that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to the successful implementation of breakfast clubs. Some parents may encourage their children to use breakfast clubs in order to provide wraparound care which supports their ability to work, whereas for other families it may provide an opportunity to access additional support.

41. Breakfast clubs are usually staffed by support workers employed by the local authority or, occasionally, by third sector organisations.

42. The research highlighted within this report indicates that whilst breakfast clubs are an important to ensure that children are getting a healthy nutritious start to their day, they are also important within the wider community.

Costs

43. As breakfast clubs are not a statutory requirement there is considerable variation in the costs associated with provision. As mentioned throughout this paper breakfast clubs are often more than just an opportunity to eat the first meal of the day and are often run alongside various activities. The nature of the activities on offer has been demonstrated to improve attendance but can also greatly increase costs.

44. In 2015, as part of a scoping exercise, Glasgow City Council set out the costs being passed on to families across 9 local authorities in Scotland. As shown in table 5 there is considerable variation between councils.

Table 5: Local Authority Charges for Breakfast Clubs²⁸

Authority	Charge	Comment
East Renfrewshire	£4.25	Commercially operated. Daily rate includes activities.
	£2.00	Subsidised rate for Barrhead schools
North Lanarkshire	£0.90	
East Ayrshire	£0.90	£0.70 for additional siblings
Edinburgh	Free	Limited provision only for 26 establishments
Fife	£1.50	
Highland	50% subsidy	Charge varies between £0.80 and £3.25
Moray	£1.50	
Scottish Borders	£0.50	
South Ayrshire	£0.90	Targetted – only 7 establishments

45. As shown in Table 1, there is variation in the cost of providing school meals in pre-primary, primary, secondary and special schools. At present the Scottish Government spends £2.88 per meal per child in Scotland. Using the lowest and highest charges reported in Table 5 alongside the average cost of a school meal as currently paid for by the Scottish Government some rough estimates have been drawn up in Table 6. The totals included in table 6 are based on the current uptake of school lunches both free and paid for.

²⁸ Glasgow City Council, “Breakfast Club Service: Children and Families Policy Development Centre” <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedDocument.asp?c=P62AFQDNT1DN81DXUT> (August 2015)

Table 6: Projected Costs for Universal Breakfast Club Provision.

Estimated Cost per Meal	Pre Primary	Primary	Secondary	Special Education	Total
£0.50	£1,476,500	£59,469,500	£29,521,000	£1,288,500	£91,755,500
£2.88	£2,953,000	£118,939,000	£59,042,000	£2,577,000	£183,511,000
£4.25	£4,045,610	£162,946,430	£80,887,540	£2,577,000	£251,410,070

46. As there are a considerable number of variables to be considered when setting up breakfast clubs, the figures in table 6 should be treated with caution. From the figures above there would be an estimated cost of £91-251 million.

47. In 2017 the Conservatives pledged to introduce free breakfast clubs in England with £60million set aside for the pledge. Independent analysis said the funding needed to deliver this pledge would have to be between £400²⁹ and £720million³⁰, with the pledge being subsequently dropped.

Conclusion

48. There are considerable benefits associated with the provision of breakfast clubs, however encouraging children and families to use the services provided can often be a challenge. Evidence suggests that by including other services alongside the breakfast club, for example activities or additional support for families can improve uptake.

49. Where evidence exists, there is a positive link to the provision of breakfast clubs with improvements in health, wellbeing and attainment. There is additional evidence in some pilot studies of improved behaviour in classrooms after the introduction of pre-school day clubs suggesting there are benefits to all children, not just those attending the breakfast clubs. From this initial review there is no evidence of poor outcomes resulting directly from the introduction of breakfast clubs.

Recommendations

50. The Committee is asked to consider the following recommendations:

1. To use this report to inform the campaign to support Universal Free School Meals.
2. To campaign for the inclusion of breakfast clubs as part of a universal free school meal programme.

²⁹ Schools Week, "Conservatives backtrack on £60m for primary school breakfasts"
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/conservatives-back-track-on-60m-for-primary-school-breakfasts/> (May 2017)

³⁰ School Week, "Conservatives' free breakfast pledge 'costed at just 7p per meal"
<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/conservatives-free-breakfast-pledge-costed-at-just-7p-per-meal/> (May 2017)

Appendix A

Barnardo's Scotland Questionnaire Results

Responses from 20 members of staff from Barnardo's Scotland working in and with schools

Blurb used in the Questionnaire



The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) are looking to publish a report on extending free school meals to include breakfast, this is a policy commitment resulting from a motion at their 2018 AGM. They have asked if we could provide qualitative feedback and experience from our work with schools. In particular they are looking for case studies to include in the report to illustrate the importance of food for school aged children in relation to their wellbeing and their overall attainment, as well as good practice of running things like breakfast clubs, parent drop-ins, coffee mornings etc.

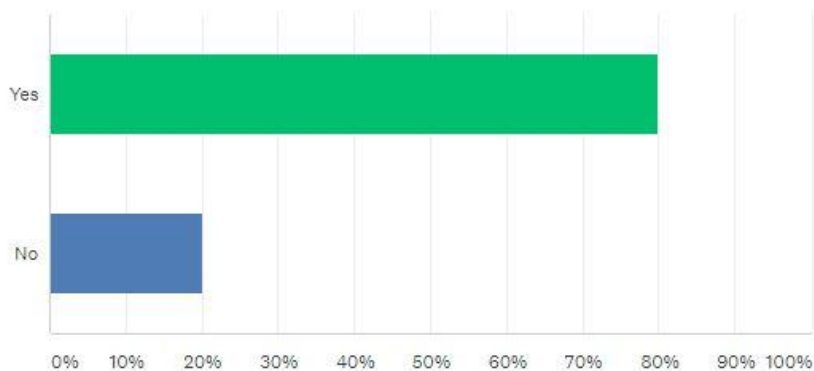
We would value your feedback on the following broad questions, if you could answer the questions in the format of a case study that would be very helpful. All feedback will be provided to EIS to use in their final report; all comments will be anonymised but attributed to Barnardo's Scotland.

Results

Q1

Through your work in schools, do you provide any events, clubs, drop-ins, sessions etc. for children and/or parents where food is provided?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	80.00% 16
No	20.00% 4
TOTAL	20

Q2

Aside from current cost – what are some of the barriers to parents and children utilising breakfast clubs? Thinking about the support we provide to parents to help them engage in school based activities?

12 responses

Key messages are stigma, parental confidence, morning routines and overall costs

Not enough spaces in current breakfast clubs. Not enough staff to run the clubs before school starts. Stigma. Breakfast clubs being used by working parents rather than families in need.

In my experience, a barrier is that parents do not get their children up and ready out the house in time for breakfast club and this could be for many reasons. Even those families with transport provided do not always get their child to breakfast club; perhaps a stigma associated with breakfast club being seen as something for poor people or people in need; the motivation of parents to make sure that their children are adequately fed and prepared for their day.

Stigma can be a factor. Also in my experience some families find routines challenging and therefore struggle to be ready for normal school opening times. Having a time when children have to be organised and out of the house even earlier than the beginning of school can be additionally challenging

Routines - it may be difficult to get to school prior to starting time; parent/child confidence when entering a new group; children may not be able to access certain groups if not accompanied by an adult. Parents may have care of other children who are attending another establishment - i.e., a parent may have to get a child to nursery at the same time the group is on. Some children also get a bus to school and the parent may not be able to afford the additional cost attached to them attending school with the child.

Parents and children getting organised in the morning to come to breakfast club; also if parents have negative memories of school themselves, then they may not engage so quickly.

In some areas there is a stigma attached to using resources such as breakfast clubs as these are perceived for children who come from vulnerable families.

The barriers are parental engagement with school, organization and routine as some parents struggle to get their children into school on time for the school day let alone early for a breakfast club, there may also be a barrier in relation to stigma we find it is much better for the activity to be the reason for attending and the food an extra.

Parent's poor emotional health - confidence levels walking into a room - self esteem

If targeted at certain groups it then becomes stigma attached to the breakfast club. Parents are unsure of times / days within the school. Parents require support for routine to get up earlier so children can attend breakfast clubs

There are families that we work with who find it difficult to be organized in the morning and get out of the house on time. These are the families who are likely not to have breakfast but are the ones who would particularly benefit from breakfast clubs. Cost can be a barrier to attendance, as can social anxiety of children or adults that bring the children. There may also be an embarrassment factor for hungry families, if most other children attend for childcare purposes. Parents may not want their children or themselves involved in school life more than they are obliged to be. This may be because of their own school experiences or their experience of being a parent in that school community.

Parents still need to get their children to school on time so they can attend the breakfast clubs. It is harder to get parents to engage in Secondary schools

Getting children into the schools earlier enough.

Q3

In your experience, what works best to engage parents in breakfast clubs, drop-ins, coffee mornings etc.? What are some key principles to consider which could also be applicable to any universal provision of breakfast?

12 responses

Key messages are the need for flexibility and being tailored to local need; the importance of personal relationships; welcoming environment; food not being the sole focus; support to attend

Having a non-judgmental school/home liaison worker who builds strong relationships with the families and encourages them to engage

A welcoming environment with someone who is not directly associated with the school i.e. a teacher

It varies. For some parents the best motivation is an understanding of how their attendance will help them meet their child's needs. For others it is the opportunity to address their own needs when they may feel saturated in other people's (especially their children's) needs. Some have embraced these opportunities initially as a means to promote contact with peers while others engage if they believe there is a focus to the session (such as an info session, a task etc.) I couldn't narrow it down to one common factor as it is different for all.

Relationships are key - a small amount of parents (usually the most confident or ones involved in the school community) will be happy to attend events at school which are advertised through flyers, newsletters or social media. But parents who are more isolated appear to be more likely to attend if they have built a relationship with someone at the group - possibly the facilitator or other parents - and are invited along personally and/or supported along or greeted for the first session.

No cost; relaxed atmosphere; other families joining in; no stigma; fun time with children; stressing the importance of breakfast from both a nutritional and a learning point of view. Give plenty of reminders of the times and locations of the meals. Have Barnardo's workers that they know and work with there to support and have a bite to eat with them. Leftover food should not be wasted - families could take it home with them; need to involve siblings; give a range of food so that children and adults try different things.

Relationships are key - if families feel overwhelmed or anxious before attending they can feel reassured that you are present to welcome them and offer support if required.

Communicating the purpose of club or activity with food not being the focus; accessible for everyone as there may be hidden food poverty; and to reduce stigma. Support for some parents is required to get through the door initially as they may want to attend but not have the confidence to do so.

To meet beforehand build on the relationship - be there to welcome them on arrival

Open to all within the school; set days /times; friendly approachable staff; range of choice of food so all catered for including children with ASN

In my experience, building trusting relationships between staff and parents is the key to engaging parents in school life. Offering activities that involve their children will usually attract parents. Looking at universal provision, some sort of transport/ waking bus/ escort to get children to school for breakfast may help parents who have younger children and don't want to bring them out earlier, or those who find it difficult to have the family ready.

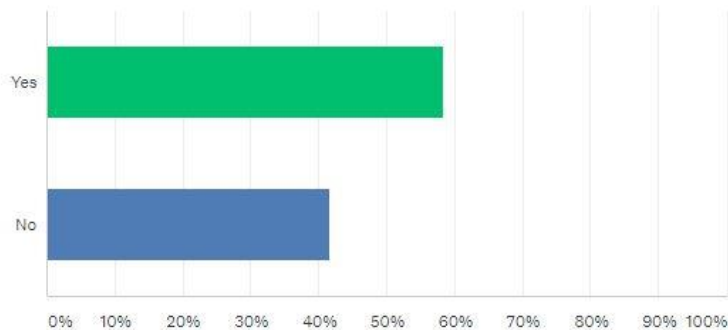
Primary schools are easier to get parents involved and at my breakfast club there is a relaxed atmosphere with music

Inclusivity; peer support.

Q4

Do you have experience of the use of Soft Starts in your schools?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	58.33% 7
No	41.67% 5
TOTAL	12

Q5

What are your thoughts on the use of Soft Starts to provide breakfast for pupils rather than a standalone breakfast club?

7 responses

Key messages are that there are pro's and con's to this approach, potential to work if done well but barriers in some schools/areas.

Probably just as beneficial if not more so; children don't have to be there earlier and attendance would probably be improved.

I think this would work for certain groups of children but having more than about 5 children together eating breakfast takes away from the relaxed start to the day that soft start provides. You may end up needing a soft start to the breakfast club if the two were combined and renamed.

This is a good idea and good be done in conjunction with the existing breakfast club. Breakfast clubs in Inverclyde have changed starting from August 2019 due to council budget demands and there will now be a cost attached of £1 per day for a child to attend unless they are in receipt of free school meals which could pose additional issues for families who would be classed as 'working poor' and a number of children being denied access to breakfast clubs they previously attended due to not being eligible and parents being unable to afford the potential £5 per week cost. Soft starts as described above may be unmanageable for schools to establish due to the financial cost which will be attached to establish.

I think a mix is useful to involve as many families as possible.

There is a place for Soft Starts for children who require this level of support; however I feel that breakfasts should be inclusive to all and accessible for the whole school.

Both support each other in Five to Thrive approach

Very effective; it can be a station where children access breakfast if they choose.

Q6

Please can you give some illustrative examples of why providing food is so important during these sessions?

13 responses

Key messages are around promotion of healthy eating habits and diet; levels of hunger and food poverty; and social cohesion

How can children be expected to attain when food poverty is such a huge issue in Scotland today?

There is always a snack or food element to any of the groups I run within my school. Families have expressed that they do not often eat together and so this important time has been factored in. It allows families to chat about their day while sharing food. Healthy snack is offered and surplus food is given away at the end of each group to families. Before and after school are 'hungry times' for the children and their families and providing snack also helps ease the pressure from families to provide food.

Providing food has encouraged the young people to not only try new food but also start conversations about food. This gives you an insight to their knowledge of food and creates opportunities for learning. This also applies to parents as where I work there is a huge tendency to order from takeaways on a near daily basis (including breakfast). This includes children coming to groups fuelled on a sausage and egg McMuffin from McDonalds or to school fuelled on a can of coca cola and monster munch. Whilst we cannot control what parents feed their children, we can help set new food routines and educate people accordingly and this starts from these small conversations you have during groups where you provide snacks. It also gives opportunities to allow children to eat more healthily during that time.

Snack time provides a focus for the group coming together, to socialise together and to work together to prepare for/ tidy up after eating

It allows families to come together and promotes interaction. Some children receiving food may not have received some at home. Also supports more time to be spent in school outwith the core hours of 9-3.

Food is important because some children come to school hungry and without having had breakfast. This has an adverse effect on their ability to concentrate and engage fully in the classroom. Eating food together is also a great social event; it can develop children's social skills and provide a safe and nurturing environment.

Food is extremely important to these sessions given the level of food poverty locally particularly during summer holiday activities where children are not receiving a school meal.

Children have limited choices of food due to income as many children have no breakfasts or dinners unless in school.

Providing food helps to break down barriers, helps both parents and children to relax which results in improved communication. In addition in certain instances food is required as the young person is hungry. In addition it is an opportunity to educate re diet and healthy options.

Providing food is a motivator for people, it makes the environment less formal and allows people to relax. By providing food and/or cooking sessions we can model healthy eating, and allow people to be provided with food when needing it, without stigma and less embarrassment.

I facilitate a breakfast club within one of Inverclyde's Primary schools and food is donated from Tesco through Fareshare so there is no cost to the Breakfast Club. This session has proved very successful and parents really enjoy coming. I also facilitate a Harvest Group within Barnardo's where fresh produce from Tesco is distributed. Families are enjoying the social part of meeting new people and there is a definite need for surplus food from supermarkets to benefit our families. All the feedback I have received from my families is positive

Many of the children and young people that we work with do not have a breakfast and it will be often lunchtime before they eat.

It provides social cohesion