

# Hidden Hunger

The state of UK breakfast provision in 2022



**magic  
breakfast**  
fuel for learning

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Magic Breakfast is a registered charity that believes no child or young person in the UK should be too hungry to learn. The charity partners with schools in areas of disadvantage, providing healthy breakfasts to their pupils and bespoke expert advice and support to their staff. Magic Breakfast is working with over 1,000 Primary, Secondary, ASL/ Special Educational Needs Schools and Pupil Referral Units in England and Scotland, offering breakfasts to over 200,000 children and young people each day.

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# Foreword

This report is a call to arms for policymakers, educators, parents, young people and indeed all who care about children's learning and life chances. School meals have been around for a long time. Nursery Pioneer Margaret McMillan first won the case for a limited form of free school meals in 1906. Although, back then, school 'dinner' tended to be breakfast.<sup>i</sup>

The argument was that a nutritious meal at school ensured every child had the same opportunity to succeed. The evidence from education experts, academics and economists now proves this. A healthy breakfast before class boosts grades, reduces absences and in the long term increases economic value and life chances.

This is why breakfast matters – and why we argue it should be provided in school, alongside lunch, free to all those who need it.

Thanks to the generous support of our partners and donors, Magic Breakfast is able to help 215,000 children and young people get a nutritious breakfast each day through partner schools.

But we know we can't solve this on our own. We also find that, with 2.5 million children and young people at risk of hunger<sup>ii</sup>, governments are not matching commitments made to expand free breakfast provision with the funding and action needed to tackle the scale of the problem. The findings in this report demonstrate that disadvantaged children and

young people are experiencing starkly different levels of support even within the same counties, towns and cities.

Shockingly, across the UK we find 7 in 10 schools have either no form of breakfast provision or limited free places. Average numbers of pupils accessing free breakfast in areas of similarly high disadvantage can vary by a factor of three. This demonstrates how, without proper funding and design, many children and young people fall through the gaps even where provision exists.

This report offers practical and modestly costed recommendations for governments to immediately fund the scaling-up of free breakfast provision, and to adjust provision design.

We remain optimistic that the desire for change is there from policymakers. But action is needed now. The UK is in the midst of a serious cost of living crisis which is likely to escalate for many families in the coming months.

Let's return to the first principle from 1906. No child should experience hunger as a barrier to learning.



**Lindsey MacDonald**  
CEO

# Executive Summary

This report is based on the largest study of school breakfast provision in the United Kingdom (UK) to date, recently carried out by Magic Breakfast. This research sought to understand the level and nature of breakfast provision, including the barriers for both schools setting up provision, and for disadvantaged children and young people accessing provision. Findings from this research are situated in broader narratives on poverty, attainment, and government school food policy. This framing and insights from the report demonstrate that we will not be able to level up across the country and address the attainment gap unless we provide consistent and funded breakfast provision.

## Key Research Findings

1. **Millions of disadvantaged children and young people in the UK are at risk of missing out on a healthy start to their day.** In England 2.7 million (74% of) disadvantaged children and young people could be missing out on breakfast, in Scotland it is as many as 250,000 (88%) and in Northern Ireland 50,000 (51%). In Wales, Government data highlights breakfast provision is not reaching 85% of disadvantaged pupils.<sup>iii</sup> Addressing this child hunger crisis will have significant, positive outcomes for attainment.
2. **Uptake of breakfast provision varies across schools with similar levels of disadvantage, but expert advice and support can improve uptake within a school.** In Magic Breakfast partner schools, the average uptake in the UK is 209 pupils per school which is significantly higher than the national average in each nation. This reflects the important role that tailored advice and support plays in optimising provision.<sup>1</sup>
3. **49% of schools in the UK have barriers to children and young people attending provision.** 55% of schools in England, 51% of schools in Northern Ireland, 16% of schools in Scotland and 10% of schools in Wales have barriers to disadvantage children and young people accessing provision. Simply having breakfast provision is not enough. Significant government investment is needed to ensure schools are not excluding the most vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils.
4. **20% of schools in the UK have no breakfast provision.** 41% of schools in Scotland, 27% of schools in Northern Ireland, 18% of schools in England and 7% of schools in Wales have no breakfast provision. The higher level of breakfast provision in Wales highlights the important role governments can play in increasing levels of school breakfast provision.
5. **Costs and staffing are the most common barriers to schools setting up provision.** 27% of schools cited cost and 41% cited staffing. Government funding is needed for staffing, without it breakfast provision cannot be scaled to meet the needs of children and young people at risk of hunger.

<sup>1</sup> Magic Breakfast schools receive support and advice from School Partners. School Partners are Magic Breakfast staff members who are located across the UK so that each school has a named contact to optimise their breakfast provision through advice, support and challenge. School Partners support schools to effectively use resources to optimise their breakfast provision, identify ways to remove barriers and reduce stigma, and identify hidden hunger within a school.

Throughout the UK, this research has found **a patchwork of provision with no coherent framework** to target the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in the country.<sup>2</sup> Current funding is not sufficient to reach all children and young people unable to learn due to hunger.

Increasing investment in school breakfast provision is also pertinent given the UK is currently experiencing a cost of living crisis. This in turn is **increasing demand for school breakfast provision** with families living in poverty having to make difficult decisions on how to spend their limited resources.<sup>iv</sup> As many schools support breakfast out of their budget, this will become increasingly difficult as demand increases and school budgets fall in real terms in the most deprived areas.<sup>v</sup>

In England, current Department for Education (DfE) funding only reaches, at best, a quarter of children and young people in the most deprived schools in England. It also requires schools with stretched budgets to cover 25% of the costs of food supply from September 2022.<sup>vi</sup> In Scotland, there is currently no government funding for school breakfast provision and as a result, scattered provision has emerged with 41% of schools not offering any provision at all, the lowest level of provision of all four nations. Similarly, in Northern Ireland there is no government funded programme specifically for school breakfast provision. Wales has the highest level of school breakfast provision, at 93%, which demonstrates the important role of government funding in improving levels of provision, however, secondary schools are currently not funded through this mechanism. This demonstrates some of the key failings of the current way school breakfast provision is provided: it is underfunded, leaving schools to carry the burden of costs, and it lacks expert

support to help schools scale-up breakfast provision.

Independent research funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), found that primary schools offering a free, nutritious breakfast can boost attainment for pupils at KS1 (Year 2/Primary 3) by two months over the course of a year.<sup>vii</sup> The same research also found that pupils' concentration and behaviour improved in schools with breakfast provision, and schools with provision reported fewer absences, with 26 fewer half-days of absence per year for a class of 30. At higher levels, a study by Leeds University found that students who regularly ate breakfast achieved nearly two GCSE grades higher.<sup>viii</sup> Given this clear link between breakfast provision and closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, we argue that now is the time to invest in school breakfast provision.

School breakfast provision is **cost-effective, with every £1 spent returning over £50 for the economy in the future.**<sup>ix</sup> Children do not choose where they live or where they go to school, so breakfast provision should not be a postcode lottery.

Our UK recommendations rest on the principle that **all nations should design breakfast provision in an inclusive, barrier and stigma free way that is effective in reaching all pupils at risk of hunger.** This requires a free school breakfast delivery model that offers flexibility in the type, timing and location of free breakfast provision as well as funding food, school staffing costs and additional advice and support for schools.

We offer additional recommendations on specific funding solutions for England and Scotland, the nations where Magic Breakfast currently operates.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout the report the term disadvantaged is used to describe those pupils in the relevant nation entitled to free school meals or living in areas of high disadvantage using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). For further details on these terms and how they are applied in this report see Appendix 1. We also use the term vulnerable; a definition is provided in Appendix 3.

# Recommendations

## UK: Summary of key recommendations

- a. Governments must act now to address the risk disadvantaged children and young people face from the attainment gap and rising food insecurity.
- b. In England we propose the Government expands breakfast provision to schools in areas of high disadvantage using £75m in additional Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) funding.
- c. In Scotland, we propose the Government makes good on its promise to roll out Universal Provision to all primary and special schools using £28m in unspent Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
- d. We propose Wales and Northern Ireland consult schools, local authorities and breakfast provision experts on how best to extend coverage of free breakfast provision as a route to closing the attainment gap.

**Future breakfast provision should be designed and funded to ensure it is barrier and stigma-free for pupils and sustainable to operate for schools.**

- a. Food costs, expert support and advice and contributions to school staffing costs need to be funded in each nation's breakfast provision.
- b. Breakfast provision should be transparently monitored and evaluated to ensure it is achieving the desired outcome in ending classroom hunger as a barrier to learning.

## England

**Recommendation One:** Revise the current National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) food tender.

Amend the DfE 2021-2023 NSBP tender to include:

- 100% of the food supply costs for existing and newly recruited schools
- Funding for expert advice and support for schools
- Start-up grants for new schools starting the programme

**Recommendation Two:** Invest £75m to deliver amended tender.

£75 million of new funding should be allocated to this amended 2022 tender, with the aim of reaching 75% of schools with high levels of disadvantage currently not able to access Government support.

**Recommendation Three:** Fund breakfast using the existing SDIL.

We propose pegging the SDIL to inflation, as is done with tobacco. We support proposals raising the top rate of the levy which contributes 95% of receipts and expanding the scope of the levy to 4.5g of sugar per 100ml, in line with current High Fat, Salt, and Sugar guidelines.

**Recommendation four:** Make Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDAC) school level data publicly accessible.

This data is the DfE's official measure for deprivation at a school level. It is not publicly available. Publishing it would assist wider efforts to close the disadvantage gap for children and young people.

## Scotland

**Recommendation One:** Invest in school breakfasts in primary and special schools.

Magic Breakfast estimates an annual cost of around £28m to deliver our recommended model of provision in all primary and special schools in Scotland. This money should be allocated from unspent PEF.

**Recommendation Two:** Work to eliminate barriers faced by children and young people to accessing breakfast provision.

The second briefing in Magic Breakfast's spring 2022 policy brief series, *Delivering Breakfast*, identifies a series of barriers to delivery and recommendations for the Scottish Government to address them.

**Recommendation Three:** Follow through on pledges to devise a national pilot project for secondary students.

There is time in this Parliament for the Scottish Government to deliver on its manifesto pledge to roll out universal provision at primary and special schools, as well as a pilot project for secondary schools.

## Local Authorities

**Recommendation One:** Use local resources to identify breakfast cold spots.

Local Authorities should act now to map and fill gaps in the areas of highest disadvantage with the least provision. They should work with the third sector, businesses and breakfast providers to come up with local solutions and resources to reach more children.

**Recommendation Two:** Make the case for national provision.

Local Authorities should support the case for a national funding solution that is both practical and sustainable and make the case that this funding should cover food, school staff and expert advice.



# Headline statistics

**69%**



of schools in the UK have **no breakfast provision or barriers** to children and young people accessing breakfast provision



**78%** of schools do not have breakfast provision or barriers to accessing it



**17%** of schools do not have breakfast provision or barriers to accessing it

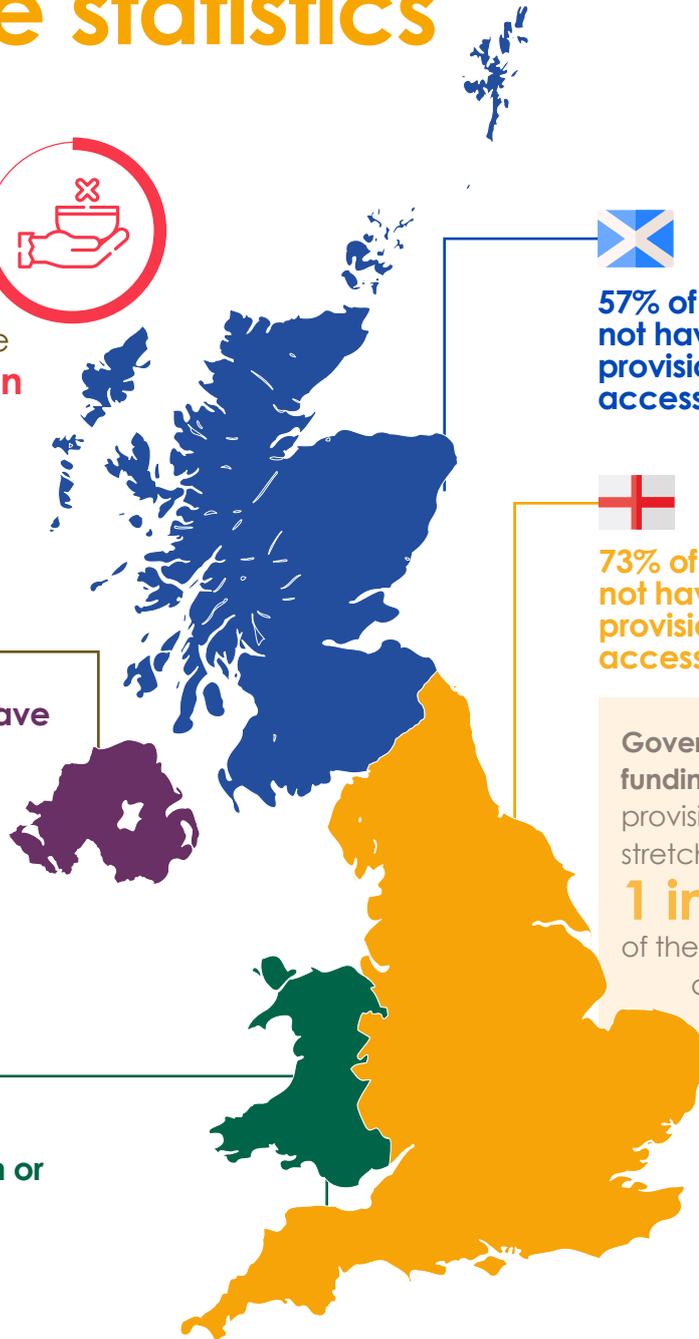


**57%** of schools do not have breakfast provision or barriers to accessing it

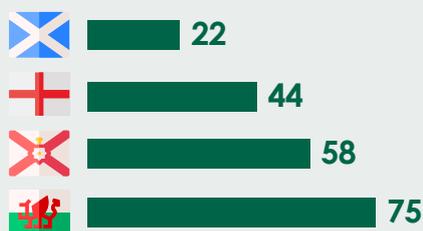


**73%** of schools do not have breakfast provision or barriers to accessing it

Government funding for breakfast provision in England stretches to just **1 in 4** of the most disadvantaged schools.



Number of pupils per school accessing breakfast provision on average each school day\*



**209**

pupils on average in Magic Breakfast partner schools



Barriers to setting up school breakfast provision:

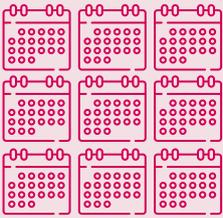


**27%** of schools cited cost



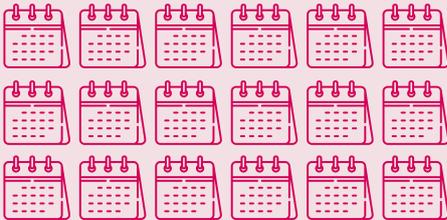
**41%** of schools cited staffing

\* Excluding Magic Breakfast partner schools



In **England**, by the time they **finish primary school**, disadvantaged pupils are **9.3 months behind** their wealthier peers

By the time pupils **finish their GCSEs**, this gap has **increased to 18 months<sup>x</sup>**



The proportion of pupils achieving **five or more** awards at **National 5** in Scotland: <sup>xiv</sup>



**83%** from the **least deprived** areas



**47%** in the **most deprived** areas

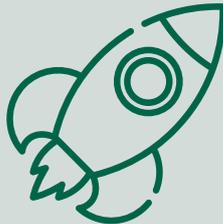
Breakfast at Key Stage 1 can lead to

**2 months additional progress**

for pupils over the course of an academic year<sup>xi</sup>



At GCSEs, students who **regularly eat breakfast** achieved nearly **two GCSE grades higher<sup>xii</sup>**



For every **£1**

invested in breakfast provision now, this can generate

**£50** in returns for the economy in the future<sup>xiii</sup>



# Introduction

On any given day before the Covid-19 pandemic, 1.7 million children were at risk of hunger in the United Kingdom (UK).<sup>xv</sup> Were you to put this report down and walk into a class of 30 children, you would find that on average, 9 of them are living in poverty.<sup>xvi</sup> Between August 2021 and January 2022, 2.5 million children were living in households that experienced food insecurity.<sup>xvii</sup> Many of these children are going into school too hungry or malnourished to concentrate. This is denying them the chance to fully take part in their education, and further contributing to the significant attainment gap that exists for disadvantaged children and young people.

However, breakfast provision is about more than just food; it is about inclusion, equality of opportunity and giving every child the best start in life. Key to achieving this is providing expert advice and support to schools so they can remove barriers to attendance at breakfast provision and reduce the stigma associated with free school meals (FSM) for children, young people and their families. To support the diverse communities we work with, Magic Breakfast has a suite of models and techniques that we can offer schools to ensure their school breakfast provision reaches all children at risk of hunger. Furthermore, we support schools to do this without burdening the school budget and by using limited staff resource effectively.<sup>xviii</sup>

School breakfast provision can have a dramatic impact on a child's life outcomes through improving their school attendance, academic attainment and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> There are also wider benefits; a single year of breakfast provision at Key Stage 1 (Year 2/ Primary 3) can result in economic returns in excess of £9,000 per child.<sup>xix</sup>

Given this, and evidence from the EEF that the attainment gap has widened further as a result of the pandemic, Magic Breakfast wanted to understand the landscape of school breakfast provision across the UK.<sup>xx</sup> It is more important than ever to ensure that current provision is meeting the needs of disadvantaged children and young people. In conducting this research, we hoped to highlight the scope this cost-effective intervention has for closing the attainment gap.

As there is limited data from which to garner this understanding, Magic Breakfast contacted schools, local authorities, and stakeholders for information on breakfast provision and combined this with publicly available data. This allowed us to paint a picture of what provision does exist, how it is funded, and the barriers to children and young people in accessing this provision.

This research highlighted that a lack of national policy to deliver breakfasts at scale has resulted in an ineffective patchwork of delivery by the third sector, local authorities, schools, businesses and in England, the Government. This approach does not reach the majority of disadvantaged children and young people in the UK. Breakfast provision in the UK would benefit substantially from a delivery model evidenced to achieve clear outcomes and social impact, as well as adequate, sustainable funding.

If the UK is to be truly levelled up in a way that is fit for the future, you must begin by investing in children and young people. We know that school-based breakfast provision has dramatic positive outcomes for hundreds and thousands of children and young people every school day. We also know that it is a cost-effective

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3 See Appendix 3 more detail on the impact of breakfast provision on attainment, attendance, the economy and schools.



solution to increasing attainment, bringing 2 months of additional progress in an academic year for Key Stage 1 pupils.<sup>xxi</sup> However, the level of disadvantage, gaps in breakfast provision and barriers to access that this report highlights shows that more needs to be done to support

vulnerable children and young people.

We call on all Governments to act urgently and go further in scaling up school breakfast provision with adequate, sustainable investment for tangible long-term benefits.

# Method

Magic Breakfast sent a questionnaire to all schools in the UK between November 2021 – March 2022 asking whether they had school run breakfast provision, the nature of this provision (if they had existing provision) and barriers to establishing provision if they did not have existing provision. We also sent Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Freedom of Information Act (Scotland) 2002 requests to all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales. This formed the primary dataset for our analysis. The response rate for UK schools was 20%. There was no requirement on schools to complete the questionnaire and consequently, results cannot be considered representative of the whole UK school population but instead are indicative of trends.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this report we use different measures of disadvantage to understand need. Across the UK, FSM eligibility is often used as a proxy for disadvantage. It is important

to note that comparisons cannot be drawn like-for-like across nations using this measure as each nation has its own FSM criteria. This report also uses IDACI which is an English index which measures a child's likelihood of coming from a low-income household based on their postcode. IDACI is used by the DfE as the eligibility criteria for the NSBP which is targeted at schools with a high level of disadvantage.<sup>ix</sup> Schools with a high level of disadvantage are defined as schools with at least 40% of pupils on roll in IDACI Bands A-F. Similarly, in Scotland, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is used as a proxy for disadvantage and is a relative measure of deprivation in a given area. IDACI and SIMD provide a more accurate understanding of the level of disadvantage in a school and area. However, it must be noted that even in areas of low deprivation there will still be disadvantaged children and young people.



<sup>4</sup> See appendix 1 for further details.

# England

The need to address hunger as a barrier to education in England is clear. 3.6 million children and young people are living in poverty.<sup>xc</sup> Already, 11% of all households with children are food insecure<sup>xc<sup>i</sup></sup> and this is likely to grow amidst the cost of living crisis.<sup>xc<sup>ii</sup></sup>

School food policy in England lags behind other UK nations. It has the joint-lowest threshold for FSM entitlement and no permanent, suitable funding for school breakfast provision. The current Government funded school breakfast programme (the NSBP) is funded by the DfE and delivered by Family Action.<sup>xc<sup>iii</sup></sup> So far, it has failed to reach key targets half a year into the programme and Magic Breakfast believes that this failure cannot be fully attributed to issues arising from Covid-19. Despite several recruitment drives, the changes to this iteration of the programme (including passing 25% of the cost of food supply onto schools, no grant funding, and no bespoke support to set up an effective provision) mean that the programme is unable to operate at scale. This inability to operate at scale refers both to schools recruited, and uptake within schools.

## Breakfast Provision

Our data shows that out of approximately 22,000 schools in England, 85% of primary schools, 68% of secondary schools, 73% of Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools, and 85% of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), have some form of breakfast provision. However, only 33% of those schools have no barriers for disadvantaged children and young people accessing provision, meaning children in 12,000 schools may not be able to attend provision. On top of this, 18% of schools – which is 4,000 schools – have no breakfast provision at all.

With 3.7 million pupils living in disadvantage (defined as the number of pupils in IDACI bands A-F), our research highlights that only a quarter of these pupils (26%) are being reached with breakfast. This means that there could be as many as 2.7 million children and young people who are too hungry to learn at the start of the school day.

## The Funding Gap

Government funding provided through the NSBP, amounting to £24m over two years, is available for 2,500 schools with high levels of disadvantage until July 2023.<sup>xc<sup>iv</sup></sup> This funding was to cover food and delivery for the first two terms, with 25% of the food supply costs being passed onto schools for the remainder of the programme.<sup>5</sup> With funding available for only 2,500 schools, only 1 in 4 schools considered to meet the Government's criteria for disadvantage have access to Government funding for school breakfast provision.<sup>6</sup> This means, at best, 75% of schools that the Government considers disadvantaged do not have access to this support. At the time of writing, the rollout of provision was behind schedule. DfE funded provision had reached 1,515 of the intended 2,500 schools.

With state-backed provision failing to reach over 75% of schools with high levels of disadvantage, and an unsuitable funding model, the charity sector, businesses, and schools themselves have stepped in to fill the gaps.

Based on our research, the most common source of funding for school breakfast provision is school budgets. While it is heartening to see educators recognising the value of school breakfast provision for their pupils

<sup>5</sup> This has since been amended and now schools will receive free food and delivery until July 2022.

<sup>6</sup> There are 10,425 schools with 40% or more of pupils on roll in IDACI bands A-F according to the 2021 IDACI schools list supplied by the DfE.

and prioritising this, we know that schools are under considerable financial strain. School spending per pupil has fallen by 9% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20 which means schools must make difficult decisions regarding what interventions to prioritise, putting the longevity of this funding source at risk.<sup>xcv</sup> After school budgets, the next most cited source of funding was the third sector and businesses including Magic Breakfast, Kellogg's and Greggs Foundation, as well as other food only providers such as Warburtons and Fareshare.<sup>7</sup> Local authorities also have a small stake in breakfast provision in England with two local authorities providing breakfast provision at primary level. Therefore, breakfast provision - where it exists - is funded by a patchwork of providers, leaving millions of children and young people at risk of missing out on learning, and those who are currently receiving breakfast at risk of losing their provision.

This precarious funding situation requires urgent attention given the broader economic climate.<sup>xcvi</sup> With the cost of living crisis pushing families to the limit, this in turn increases demand for provision, and the related increased cost of feeding children at breakfast is being borne by overstretched schools and the third sector.<sup>xcvii</sup>

## Effective Implementation

### Uptake

While schools providing breakfasts is, overall, a good thing, it is important to scrutinise uptake, as uptake indicates how well-advertised, how accessible, and how impactful provision is within a specific school.

In non-Magic Breakfast schools, typical daily pupil uptake is 44 pupils per school, significantly lower than Magic Breakfast's typical daily uptake of 209 pupils. In schools that marked themselves as receiving NSBP funding, the typical daily uptake was above average for England, but below Magic Breakfast's average, at 89 pupils. This is also significantly lower than the previous NSBP delivered by

Magic Breakfast, which included expert advice and support for schools and reached, on average, 152 pupils per school at its peak.<sup>xcviii</sup>

This lower uptake within schools on the current NSBP is concerning. However, it is likely the result of a lack of expert advice and support and challenge, which is a recommendation we make to address this. Previous evaluation of the 2018-21 NSBP by the EEF emphasised the importance of this tailored, expert advice and support describing it as a 'lynchpin' in the success of the programme and its ability to deliver at scale.<sup>xcix</sup>

### Barriers for Schools

In schools without breakfast provision the most common reasons identified for not having provision include limited staff capacity (45%), cost (36%) and lack of awareness of demand for provision (28%).

Furthermore, these same barriers can also have an impact on the scale of provision within a school with existing breakfast provision. The importance of considering these barriers for schools in any funding model is shown by the failures of the current NSBP to reach key targets half a year into the programme.

### Cost

Our research highlighted that approximately 67% of schools with breakfast provision have a charge and have limited free places, with charges ranging from 20p to over £5 per day. Magic Breakfast's experience tells us that free places or the ability to request free breakfast is not enough, with families feeling stigmatised and therefore, not accessing provision. Even a charge of 20p per day can be insurmountable for families who live hand to mouth, and this will only worsen amidst the cost of living crisis.

### Staffing

In most cases, 'cost' and 'staffing' are two sides of the same coin. In many schools, the precise reason that staffing for breakfast provision is an issue is that staff costs place further budgetary pressures on schools. Without

7 At the time of research between 800 – 1,500 schools had joined the NSBP, placing the Programme behind school budgets and third sector funding.



**2.7 million children**

living in areas of high disadvantage at risk of starting the school day **too hungry to learn**



**Only 24%**

of schools, at best, are supported with **Government funding** for school breakfast provision

**16,000 schools**

**without breakfast provision** or barriers to disadvantaged children and young people attending breakfast provision



adequate staffing then breakfast provision cannot be optimised; with opening times limited, free places capped, and the extent of the provision scaled back.

Both cost and staffing can also be addressed through effective funding mechanisms. Sustainable funding for breakfast provision must include staffing.

### Hidden Hunger

Lack of awareness of demand for provision is particularly concerning when 2.5 million children are at risk of hunger in the UK.<sup>c</sup> It is therefore critical that tailored support is provided, alongside resources and education for schools to identify hidden hunger. This is clearly an effective approach with pupil uptake significantly higher in Magic Breakfast schools, where this support is provided.

### Overall Trends

Despite investment in breakfast provision by Government, the short-term nature of this funding, and scaling back of investment more recently, has resulted in a patchwork of provision throughout England that does not reach three quarters of disadvantaged young people. As a result, children the length of the

country are missing out on hours of learning every morning, with 4,000 schools not offering breakfast provision and a further 12,000 with barriers to disadvantaged children and young people accessing provision.

Breakfast support which includes free food and delivery, as well as tailored expert advice and support for schools to establish accessible, stigma free breakfast provision has proven positive outcomes for children, young people and the economy. However, these positive outcomes can only be achieved if we address the barriers for schools establishing provision identified here, including cost, staff resource, and need for external support and challenge.

We know that breakfast provision can improve attendance and attainment and as we emerge from the pandemic, these are key concerns for policy makers, government and educators. At present, the majority of children and young people cannot access a stigma, barrier free breakfast provision. Children and young people do not choose where they live or where they go to school; if we want to truly 'level up' education and close the attainment gap then increased funding is needed for breakfast provision.

# Scotland

The need for support for children and young people in Scotland is undeniable. Around a quarter of Scottish children live in poverty<sup>ci</sup> and two of the top four local authorities in the UK with the highest percentage of students eligible for FSM are in Scotland.<sup>cii</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that unless more is done by the Scottish Government then they will significantly miss their own interim child poverty targets.<sup>ciii</sup>

The Scottish Government has committed to introducing universal free school breakfasts for primary and special school pupils.<sup>civ</sup> The leading party in government, the Scottish National Party, has committed to introducing a pilot provision of free school breakfast for secondary students.<sup>cv</sup> Magic Breakfast has welcomed these pledges and we are committed to supporting the government to design a hunger focused and barrier free model of provision for Scotland's children and young people.

The Scottish Government's commitments go further than those of the UK Government, who operate England's NSBP. The commitments go even further than the Welsh Government, who provide funding to primary schools should a request to the local authority be made.<sup>cvi</sup> The Scottish Government's commitments, if enacted, would lead the UK. However, Scottish children and young people still face a postcode lottery today in accessing breakfast provision.

Whilst there is a diversity of breakfast provision across Scotland, it is patchy and inconsistent. 41% of schools in Scotland have no breakfast provision at all.

## Breakfast Provision

This report finds 59% of schools in Scotland have breakfast provision. Whilst this represents a majority of schools, it is concerning that two fifths of children and young people do not have access to any breakfast provision at school. Breaking this figure down, 74% of secondary schools offer some form of breakfast provision, whilst the figure is 56% and 67% at primary and special schools respectively. Although the highest proportion of coverage is at the secondary school level, it is important to note that recent research has found that only half of secondary pupils eat breakfast 'most days' or 'everyday'.<sup>cvi</sup> Furthermore, our own research highlights there is often a charge which creates barriers for those most in need of provision.

285,000 children and young people in Scotland are living in disadvantage (defined as those pupils in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2), yet our research highlights almost 90% are missing out on school breakfast provision. This indicates there could be as many as 250,000 children and young people who are too hungry to learn at the start of the school day.

## The Funding Gap

Local authorities are the largest funder of school breakfasts. Three quarters of Scotland's local authorities deliver some form of local authority funded breakfast provision. Each local authority determines its own eligibility criteria and only eight local authorities provide breakfast free of charge to all pupils in schools they support. Across Scotland, only 40% of primary schools and only 23% of special schools are supported by local authorities. At secondary level, the figure is even lower, with 17% of schools being supported. It is important to note that in the majority of cases breakfast provision is not universal and is therefore, not able to be fully hunger focused or barrier free.<sup>cvi</sup> Whilst the Scottish Government have committed to free

school breakfast provision, there is currently no central funding mechanism for breakfast provision. Those councils who do support breakfast provision do so within their standard budgets.

After local authorities, our evidence shows that PEF is the second largest source of funding for breakfast provision. This is then followed by third sector provision, with Magic Breakfast indicated to be the largest third sector provider. Magic Breakfast is also the only major private or public provider who delivers both food aid and expert advice related to provision design and targeting.

One in five schools who reported their funding mechanism stated they are wholly or partly funded through PEF. Magic Breakfast encourages PEF funding of provision and in our policy briefing, *Delivering Breakfast*, we explore how PEF can be used to fund national provision.<sup>8</sup>

Amongst those schools which deliver some form of breakfast provision and record how it is financed, 40% are wholly or partly funded through charity and private financing. This shows that the Scottish Government is not doing enough to support children and young people at risk of hunger. A patchwork system of private and charity provision is not good enough to ensure children and young people do not lose out in a postcode lottery. It is within the gift of the Scottish Government to develop a universal provision model which is flexible enough to support every child and young person in Scotland.

## Effective Implementation

### Uptake

The average uptake recorded in non-Magic Breakfast schools was only 22 pupils per day, the lowest of any UK nation, whilst the average uptake of provision at a Magic Breakfast partner school in Scotland is 105 pupils per day, a difference of 131%. This would suggest that

around 90% of children and young people living in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2 are missing out on fuel for learning. To counter this, breakfast provision needs to be designed in a way which maximises support for disadvantaged children and young people.

One reason for this is that most schools do not have staff with the experience and time to develop a hunger focused breakfast provision. We know that when schools in England received this advice and support as part of the 2018-2021 NSBP there was a 32% increase in uptake of pupils on roll.<sup>cix</sup> Universal provision is of no use to Scotland's children and young people if it does not reach those who need it the most.

### Cost

One barrier to uptake within a school can be cost. Of all schools with breakfast provision, a quarter record having a charge for this provision. Charging ranges dramatically from 20p to £6. For families eligible for the Scottish Child Payment, it would be the equivalent of having to pay up to one and a half times their entire payment on breakfasts at school.<sup>cx</sup> Of those schools who charge for breakfast provision, just over half offer some free provision. In most cases this is provided on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of staff and is often capped. Where there is structured entitlement, it is most often done using FSM eligibility. Such limits on eligibility create unnecessary barriers and stigma that make it harder for children and young people to access the provision they need.

Our research showed 43% of schools with breakfast provision record having no charge, or unlimited free spaces. A small number of schools with no charge do cap available spaces. However, simply offering free breakfast is not enough to ensure it reaches the children and young people who need it the most. As the above sections highlight, expert advice and support is needed alongside any breakfast provision in order for schools to design provision which is hunger focused and barrier free.

<sup>8</sup> To read more on models of provision see our policy briefing delivering breakfast: <https://www.magicbreakfast.com/news/magic-breakfast-scotland-spring-policy-briefing-series-2022>



**250,000 children**  
and young people at risk of hunger potentially **missing out on provision**



**40%**  
of breakfast provision in Scotland is partially or wholly **funded by businesses and the third sector**



**1,300 schools**  
**without breakfast provision** or barriers to disadvantaged children and young people attending breakfast provision

### Barriers for Schools

Schools without breakfast provision identified a number of barriers to establishing provision. 43% of those schools who identified barriers to delivering provision mentioned either staffing, cost, transport or facilities. Magic Breakfast works with partner schools across the UK every day that face these common barriers and these are not unique to Scotland. In our policy briefing, *Delivering Breakfast*, we identified the effects of these barriers and how the Scottish Government could work to overcome them.<sup>cx</sup>

### Hidden Hunger

Schools without provision also identified a perceived lack of demand for breakfast provision. Of those schools that provided reasons for not delivering breakfast provision, 45% mentioned lack of demand as a reason. Scaled up, this would suggest that one in five schools in Scotland do not see a demand for breakfast provision, an unrealistic figure given that 6 children in every Scottish primary school classroom live in poverty.<sup>cxii</sup> This highlights the need to support schools to identify where children and young people in their communities are at risk of being too hungry to learn.

### Overall Trends

The most concerning revelation identified is the lack of correlation between provision and deprivation. Magic Breakfast has identified no significant relationship between the provision of breakfast and the level of disadvantage in

a given area. Using both the SIMD and FSM it has been found that areas with significant levels of disadvantage do not, as a rule, have higher levels of breakfast provision. We know that poverty is one of the most significant drivers of child morning hunger. Therefore, it is exceptionally worrying that children and young people living in areas of high disadvantage are not provided with equitable policy interventions.

According to data we have collected, 26% of Scottish secondary schools, 33% of Scottish special schools, and 44% of Scottish primary schools, do not have breakfast provision. This suggests that there are around 1,000 (41%) schools not delivering breakfast in Scotland. Additionally, due to barriers put in place to accessing provision, such as cost, there are a further 300 schools who may not be reaching children at risk of hunger. Given this, a majority of Scotland's schools, children and young people at risk of hunger are not able to fully access breakfast provision if and when they need it.

Children and young people do not choose where they live and do not choose where they attend school. It is for this reason that postcode lotteries in services for children and young people are the most egregiously unfair. Magic Breakfast stands ready to support the Scottish Government to turn policy pledges into practice and deliver universal, hunger focused, and barrier free breakfast provision.



# Wales

Out of all four nations Wales has the most sustainable and extensive approach to school breakfast provision, as a result of legislation. This funding is a key mechanism for supporting the 200,000 children and young people in Wales who live in poverty.<sup>cxiii</sup> However, despite this, there are still children and young people who may be at risk of starting the day too hungry to learn due to how the Welsh model is delivered. Without a focus on monitoring and advice and support for schools, many schools have created barriers that prevent breakfast provision from reaching the children and young people who need it most.

## Breakfast Provision

As a result of legislation, 93% of schools in Wales have some form of breakfast provision. Furthermore, the majority of these schools have some free provision. However, as outlined in detail below, despite 81% of schools with provision offering free provision, barriers can still exist for pupils at risk of hunger. Furthermore, without legislated funding for secondary schools, provision is lower at secondary level with only 76% of secondary schools providing breakfast provision.

## The Funding Gap

The funding gap is significantly lower in Wales as the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, places a duty on a local authority to provide free breakfast each school day for learners at a primary school.<sup>cxiv</sup> As a result, all 22 council areas in Wales provide funding for free school breakfast provision. However, “there is no legal requirement for the governing body to operate a free breakfast service at their school. If a governing body decides to operate a paid-for breakfast service and provides the breakfast itself, it may charge pupils for the breakfast provided.”<sup>cxv</sup> There is also no requirement under the Act to provide breakfasts to secondary schools.

Outside of statutory local authority funding, some schools also opt to subsidise breakfast provision with funding from their own budget, and some local authorities choose to fund secondary schools at their discretion. A small number of schools receive support from charities, however funding via the local authority in line with Act is the predominant approach. The significant number of schools delivering breakfast provision in Wales highlights the important role legislation can play in increasing the breadth of breakfast provision.

## Effective Implementation

### Uptake

Uptake is highest out of the four nations, with typical daily uptake around 75 pupils per day, per school. Despite this, data gathered by the Welsh Government suggests that only 15% of those accessing breakfast provision are entitled to FSM.<sup>cxvi</sup> Furthermore, the below sections highlight that there are still barriers to children accessing provision. Magic Breakfast does not currently operate in Wales, however, with uptake higher in Magic Breakfast schools, specifically amongst disadvantaged pupils, there could be some benefit to rolling out elements of the Magic Breakfast model in Wales, specifically tailored expert advice and support for schools to optimise their provision.

### Staffing

The funding some schools receive for staff may be a factor in the higher pupil uptake of breakfast provision compared with Scotland, England and Northern Ireland. This funding allows more children and young people to attend with higher staff-pupil ratios, and means more resources can be given to preparing and delivering provision, removing staffing as a barrier to establishing and expanding provision.

### Cost

There are concerns regarding how free



## All 22 council areas

in Wales provide some funding for free school breakfast provision



# 93%

of schools **have school breakfast provision** as a result of legislation

# 17%

of schools **still have no breakfast provision or barriers** to children accessing provision



breakfast is integrated with paid childcare provision. Under the terms of the Act, schools **may not** charge a fee for breakfast provision provided by the local authority, however, they **may** charge for the childcare element.<sup>cxvii</sup> This has led to confusion over what constitutes childcare, and the introduction of de facto costs to some provision creating barriers for many pupils who need it most. We know this impacts families - one parent told the BBC: "Some parents won't be able to afford it [breakfast provision] and it's important that children have something healthy to eat before starting their school day."<sup>cxviii</sup> This highlights that without a clearly defined statutory obligation and a clearly defined concept of what constitutes extra-club childcare, schools, already stretched to the limit, could expand the definition of 'childcare', implementing economic barriers to access.

### Hidden Hunger

Furthermore, 10% of schools indicated that they limit free places at breakfast provision, or that free places are given out on a discretionary basis or based on status. Expert advice and support to schools can highlight the issues this can cause with reaching children at risk of hunger by acknowledging that morning hunger can be a reality even for those not considered vulnerable and is often 'hidden'. As a result, limited places and allocating based

on perceived need can hinder the ability of provision to reach those most in need.

### Overall trends

The importance of considering cost and hidden hunger at breakfast provision is borne out by a report from Child Poverty Action Group in March 2022, which highlights that with no obligation to provide free school breakfast provision on schools, and without monitoring of implementation and support, some children are missing out and the policy objective is not being fulfilled.<sup>cxix</sup> The report states: "1 in 10 parents said they would like to use a breakfast club but could not access one, either because there was not enough space for their child (numbers were limited) or because their school did not have any breakfast provision. Worryingly, this increased to just a little more than 1 in 7 families living on a low income who could not access a breakfast club."<sup>cxx</sup>

Despite the best intentions of the Act, and the impressive scale of provision in Wales, there are still issues with the delivery of provision that create barriers for children at risk of hunger. If Wales wants to increase the effectiveness of its investment in school breakfast provision, especially for disadvantaged pupils, it should monitor how this legislation is implemented, and consider providing expert advice to schools on how to optimise their school breakfast provision.

# Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has the second lowest level of breakfast provision and the most schools with barriers to children and young people accessing provision. 100,000 children and young people are living in poverty and this is impacting their attainment with disadvantaged pupils 32% less likely to achieve five GCSEs than those not entitled to FSM.<sup>cxxixcxxii</sup> There are, however, some funding mechanisms in place which with additional investment could ensure that all children and young people start their day ready to learn.

## Breakfast Provision

Almost three quarters (73%) of schools in Northern Ireland have some form of breakfast provision. This includes 77% of primary schools, 58% of secondary schools and 50% of special needs schools. Despite good coverage of breakfast provision, there are still around

300 schools without provision and a further 570 schools with barriers to pupils accessing provision.

With almost 98,000 pupils entitled to FSM in Northern Ireland, this research indicates there could be as many as 50,000 disadvantaged children and young people, starting the day hungry.<sup>cxxiii</sup>

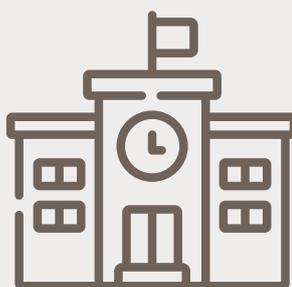
## The Funding Gap

Currently, Northern Ireland has no dedicated funding for school breakfast provision. Furthermore, there is no statutory duty placed upon local authorities to provide breakfast. A common source of funding for breakfast provision is extended schools funding. This funding is allocated to schools with high levels of disadvantage to support children's achievement (including attainment) through





**50,000 pupils**  
could be missing out on  
**fuel for learning**



**870 schools**

may not be reaching all pupils at risk of hunger as they have **no breakfast provision** or barriers to pupils accessing provision



**Extended schools funding**

supports schools to run school breakfast provision

funding programmes for children and the community beyond the school day, such as breakfast clubs.

Adequate, sustainable funding can have positive outcomes on disadvantaged children and young people by reducing barriers to attending breakfast provision such as cost and limited free places. In the third of schools with no charge, or unlimited free spaces, the primary way provision is funded is by the Education Authority or by grant funding including from Greggs Foundation and Kellogg's.

## Effective Implementation

### *Uptake*

Northern Ireland has the second highest average uptake at 58 pupils per school. This suggests that funding for disadvantaged schools could be having some impact on the uptake within schools.

### *Cost*

Our research indicates that over 70% of schools with provision, charge for this provision and

have limited free spaces, with charges ranging from 35p - £3. As explained in previous sections, this is likely creating barriers for children and young people in accessing provision.

### *Barriers for Schools*

In those schools without breakfast provision, the main reasons for not offering provision remain consistent with other nations, with teachers citing a lack of awareness of demand for provision (45%), limited staff resource (32%) and cost of providing provision (23%).

## Overall Trends

With almost 900 schools without breakfast provision, or barriers to children and young people accessing provision, more needs to be done to address child morning hunger. In Northern Ireland, schools with high levels of disadvantage do indicate higher rates of provision. This is encouraging and likely the result of extended schools funding which, if expanded, could be an excellent lever for raising attainment and relieving poverty. The Northern Ireland Executive should invest in school breakfast provision to achieve these aims.

# Local and Regional Government: England

## Introduction

This section focuses on recommendations to enable English local authorities and city regions to provide breakfast as a tool to level up education. In Scotland, our separate mapping report on local authority provision details challenges that will be overcome with the planned roll out of universal provision.<sup>cxxiv</sup>

## Breakfast Provision

Local Authority funding for school breakfast provision differs significantly across Great Britain. In Wales, as a result of legislation, all local authorities fund some level of breakfast provision. In England and Scotland, there is no requirement placed on local authorities to offer funding for breakfast provision and as a result, support is inconsistent and in England, almost non-existent.

## The Funding Gap

The opposite map highlights the disparity in local authority funded school breakfast provision across the three nations.<sup>9</sup> In England, only two local authorities reported funding school breakfast provision. Hammersmith and Fulham and Blackpool. That is 1% of local authorities. In Scotland, 24 local authorities (75%) provide some funding for school breakfast provision, however, the nature and extent of this provision varies.<sup>10</sup> In Wales, 22 councils fund free school breakfast provision; however, this funding is not available to secondary schools and there is some criticism of how the funding is delivered, as it can create barriers for those at risk of hunger.

While preceding sections of the report provide more detail about the influence local authority funding has on breakfast provision in each nation, what the opposite map illustrates is not only the effectiveness that legislation can have on the level of school breakfast provision but also the important role local authorities have in ensuring no child starts the day too hungry to learn.

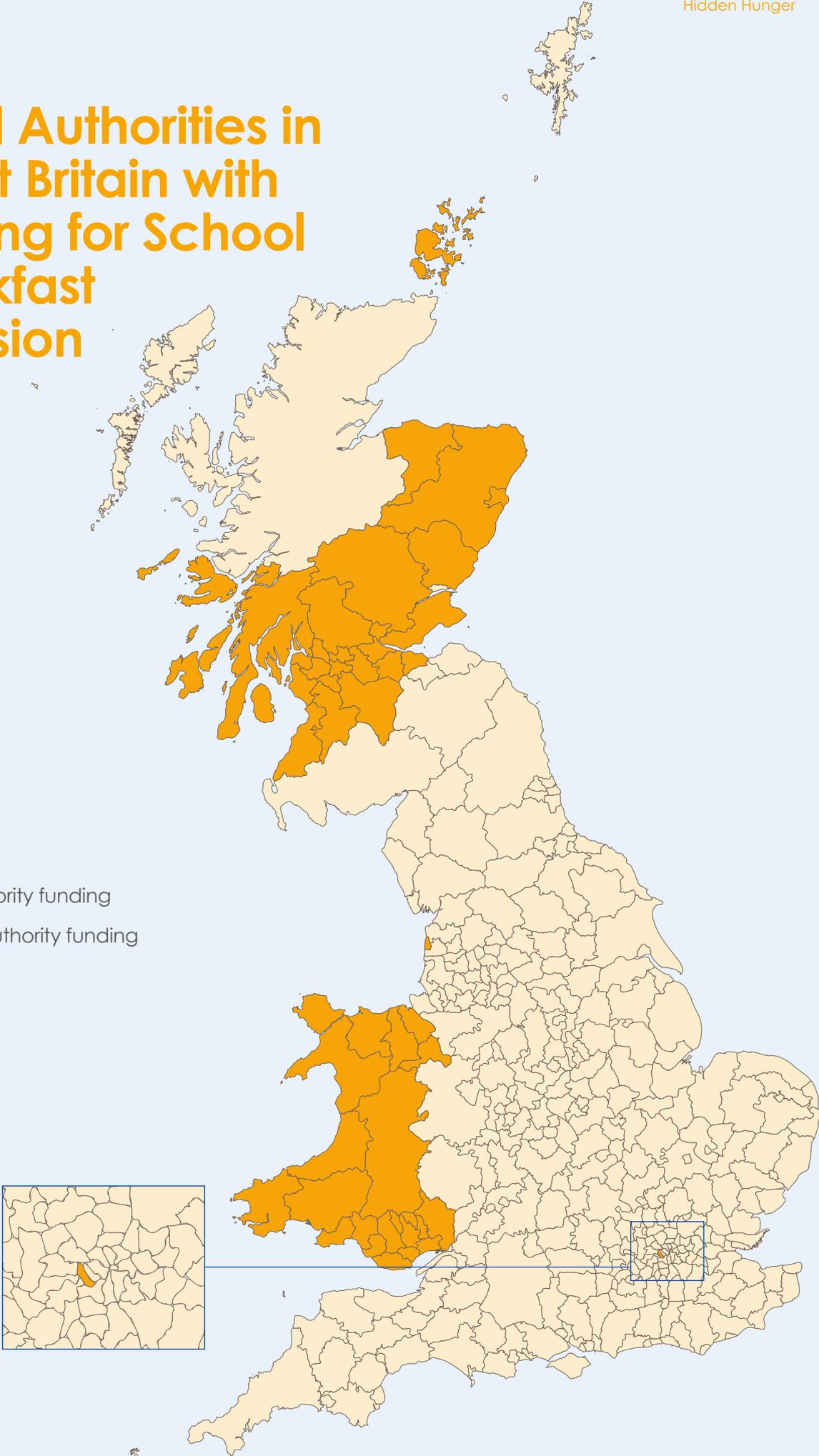
<sup>9</sup> An interactive version can be found here: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/katie.freeman8824/viz/LASchoolBreakfastFundingGB/Sheet3>

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the Scottish Local Authority model see this report: <https://www.magicbreakfast.com/news/local-authority-breakfast-provision-analysis>

# Local Authorities in Great Britain with funding for School Breakfast Provision

## Key

- Local authority funding
- No local authority funding



## Effective Implementation in England

The Levelling Up white paper states that “by 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased.”<sup>cxxv</sup> This paper also reveals two key changes to local and regional approach of this flagship Government Policy – devolving more powers to local leaders and developing a group of Educational Investment Areas (EIAs), where investment will be targeted to boost attainment. Breakfast is a powerful tool to level up and achieve these aims.

### Barriers at the Regional Level

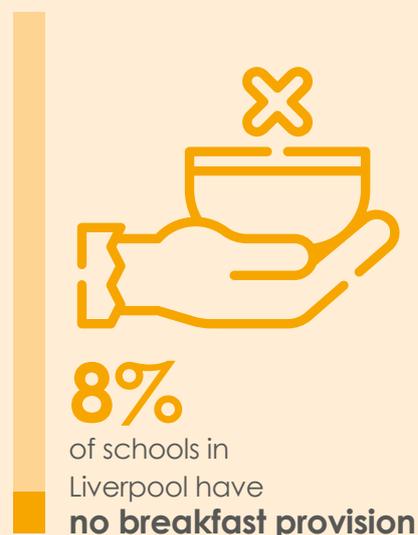
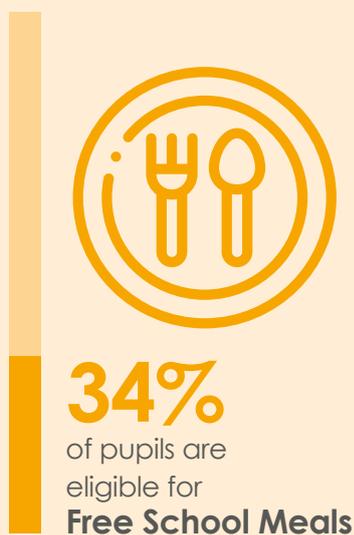
As part of our comprehensive look at UK breakfast provision, we took into account England's 53 EIAs. These areas cover the third of local authorities where educational outcomes are currently weakest and where Government plans to target investment for improved outcomes. An example of how breakfast provision can be used to support these important aims of the Government can be seen with the North-East cluster of EIAs (Sunderland, Doncaster and County

Durham). Disadvantage is high in this area; 80% of schools have more than 40% of pupils on roll in IDACI bands A-F and 28% of pupils are eligible for FSM. Despite this, 67% of schools have no breakfast provision or barriers to disadvantaged children attending provision (such as cost or limited free places). Investing in breakfast provision that covers all schools' costs (including staffing) and that is sustainable would in and of itself improve attainment in the North-East and amplify other investment including 'catch-up' funding. You cannot level up on an empty stomach.

### Barriers for Schools

In areas of high disadvantage, cost represents a significant barrier to schools, both in terms of setting up breakfast provision and to uptake in schools with breakfast provision. The primary barrier to schools setting up provision in Liverpool was cited as 'cost'. Schools simply cannot afford to run free breakfast provision against a backdrop of real terms spending cuts.<sup>cxxvi</sup> Furthermore, these costs cannot be passed on to disadvantaged children and young people as even what looks like a nominal charge of £1 per day can be more than a struggling family can afford.

## Liverpool



In areas with comparatively lower levels of disadvantage, a key barrier is awareness of hunger. In Luton, another EIA, a main reason for why schools do not have breakfast provision was a perceived 'lack of demand for provision'. This highlights that a child living in poverty who attends school in an area with comparatively lower levels of deprivation can often be camouflaged by aggregates. Without funding for all schools and areas, some children will miss out on breakfast provision.

## Overall Trends

Areas that invest in school breakfast provision see positive outcomes for their children and young people. Local leaders can act now and should not wait for the breakfast provision central funding debate to be solved.

At a local level, there are individual local authorities like Hammersmith and Fulham that are trailblazing, directly funding school breakfast provision including funding for food and delivery, expert advice and support for schools and grants to cover additional costs such as staffing and white goods. In the last year Hammersmith and Fulham has provided half a million breakfasts to children and young people in the borough. Despite not being

considered an area of high disadvantage, in terms of ranking, 27% of pupils in the borough are entitled to FSM demonstrating there is still need within the community. Since implementing provision one school commented: "Many of our families did not consider breakfast to be an important part of their children's day until the introduction of bagels and other breakfast items at school. They now appreciate and know the need for a good breakfast for their children and the impact this has on their day and their learning." Furthermore, schools are seeing improved classroom environments resulting in increased attainment, attendance and readiness to learn.

Magic Breakfast's 2014 partnership with the Mayor's Fund for London, although challenging in terms of the funding available, extended provision to schools across the capital. Other city regions could unlock funding or partnerships, working with civil society and local corporate partners to extend provision.

All areas suffer from a disparity in provision and this is no less apparent in the 53 Local Authorities designated as EIAs. Local leaders could leverage wider central Government funding to close the attainment gap.

## Luton



**77%**

of schools in Liverpool have high levels of **disadvantage**



**23%**

of pupils are eligible for **Free School Meals**



**22%**

of schools in Liverpool have **no breakfast provision**

# Recommendations

## UK: Summary of key recommendations

- a. Governments must act now to address the risk disadvantaged children and young people face from the attainment gap and rising food insecurity.
- b. In England we propose the Government expands breakfast provision to schools in areas of high disadvantage using £75m in additional Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) funding.
- c. In Scotland, we propose the Government makes good on its promise to roll out Universal Provision to all primary and special schools using £28m in unspent Pupil Equity Funding (PEF).
- d. We propose Wales and Northern Ireland

consult schools, local authorities and breakfast provision experts on how best to extend coverage of free breakfast provision as a route to closing the attainment gap.

**Future breakfast provision should be designed and funded to ensure it is barrier and stigma-free for pupils and sustainable to operate for schools.**

- a. Food costs, expert support and advice and contributions to school staffing costs need to be funded in each nation's breakfast provision.
- b. Breakfast provision should be transparently monitored and evaluated to ensure it is achieving the desired outcome in ending classroom hunger as a barrier to learning.



## England

**Recommendation One:** Revise the current National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) food tender.

Amend the DfE 2021-2023 NSBP tender to include:

- 100% of the food supply costs for existing and newly recruited schools
- Funding for expert advice and support for schools
- Start-up grants for new schools starting the programme

**Recommendation Two:** Invest £75m to deliver amended tender.

£75 million of new funding should be allocated to this amended 2022 tender, with the aim of reaching 75% of schools with high levels of disadvantage currently not able to access Government support.

**Recommendation Three:** Fund breakfast using the existing SDIL.

We support proposals raising the top rate of the drinks levy, which contributes 95% of receipts, and expanding the scope of the levy to 4.5g of sugar per 100ml, in line with High Fat, Salt, and Sugar guidelines.

**Recommendation four:** Make Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) school level data publicly accessible.

This data is the DfE's official measure for deprivation at a school level. It is not publicly available. Publishing it would assist wider efforts to close the disadvantage gap for children and young people.

## Scotland

**Recommendation One:** Invest in school breakfasts in primary and special schools.

Magic Breakfast estimates an annual cost of around £28m to deliver our recommended model of provision in all primary and special schools in Scotland. This money should be allocated from unspent PEF.

**Recommendation Two:** Work to eliminate barriers faced by children and young people to accessing breakfast provision.

The second briefing in Magic Breakfast's spring 2022 policy brief series, *Delivering Breakfast*, identifies a series of barriers to delivery and recommendations for the Scottish Government to address them.

**Recommendation Three:** Follow through on pledges to devise a national pilot project for secondary students.

There is time in this Parliament for the Scottish Government to deliver on its manifesto pledge to roll out universal provision at primary and special schools as well as a pilot project for secondary schools.

## Local Authorities

**Recommendation One:** Use local resources to identify breakfast cold spots.

Local Authorities should act now to map and fill gaps in the areas of highest disadvantage with the least provision. They should work with the third sector, businesses and breakfast providers to come up with local solutions and resources to reach more children.

**Recommendation Two:** Make the case for national provision.

Local Authorities should support the case for a national funding solution that is both practical and sustainable and make the case that this funding should cover food, school staff and expert advice.

# Appendix 1: Method

## Disadvantage

To understand the level of disadvantage in UK schools, Magic Breakfast accessed the most recently published publicly available FSM data for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.<sup>cxxvii</sup>

FSM is a statutory benefit available to school-aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits and is used as a proxy for disadvantage in the UK.<sup>cxxviii</sup> While FSM criteria is not universal throughout the UK, it does allow for comparisons to be drawn between nations and estimates of children living in disadvantage to be garnered.

England and Wales FSM data includes pupils who are protected in the transitioning period from legacy benefits to universal credit. Scotland FSM data does not include pupils below P4 who at the time of publication were automatically entitled to FSM. In England, pupils entitled to the Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) scheme are not included in the dataset, but those eligible are. Independent schools have also been excluded from the datasets used.

In England, the IDACI is also used to understand levels of disadvantage. IDACI measures a child's likelihood of coming from a low-income household based on their postcode. IDACI is used by the DfE as the eligibility criteria for the NSBP, which is targeted at schools with a high level of disadvantage.<sup>cxxix</sup> Schools with high a level of disadvantage were defined as schools with at least 50% of pupils in IDACI bands A-F, adjusted to 40% as part of the most recent iteration of the Programme.<sup>cxix</sup> In this report, we use the 2021 IDACI schools list supplied by the DfE through a Freedom of Information Act 2000 request.

Magic Breakfast's experience suggests that there are limitations to FSM as a proxy for disadvantage and food insecurity. We are continually told by schools that many of the pupils arriving at school hungry are those just above the threshold for means tested benefits such as FSM or who are not entitled to some benefits such as those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). As a result, IDACI has proven to be a more accurate representation of disadvantage in a school, in England.

Similarly, in Scotland, the SIMD is used as a proxy for disadvantage. It is a relative measure of deprivation in a given area that considers income but also other factors including employment, health, access to services and crime.<sup>cxix</sup> Schools with high levels of disadvantage are defined by Magic Breakfast as those with more than 40% of pupils on roll in SIMD deciles 1-4 (quintiles 1 and 2); these deciles represent the 40% most deprived areas of Scotland.

## Local Authority Breakfast Provision

To map local authority funding of breakfast provision in Great Britain, Magic Breakfast requested information entitled to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000<sup>cxxii</sup> and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.<sup>cxxiii</sup>

The charity requested data from all of England's 152 local authorities responsible for education and Wales's 22 councils. The request was made in November and December 2021 (respectively) and data was received until March 2022. All councils in England responded and 21 councils in Wales responded. Partial data for the one missing council was obtained from the Welsh Government website.<sup>cxxiv</sup>



In Scotland, Magic Breakfast requested data from all of Scotland's 32 councils. The requests were made in January 2021 and the data was received between February and April 2021. All 32 councils responded.

### UK School Breakfast Provision

Magic Breakfast requested information entitled to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The charity requested data from 22,000 schools in England and data was received from November 2021 to March 2022. A similar request was made to all schools in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland in January 2022.

Data was collated, cleaned and analysed by Magic Breakfast. Approximately 6% of schools in Northern Ireland, 24% in Wales, 57% in Scotland and 17% in England responded to the request.

The datasets contain an overrepresentation of disadvantaged schools, which should be considered when interpreting the findings. Furthermore, Magic Breakfast schools in England have been excluded from the above numbers and added as a proportionate sample size based on Magic Breakfast's size of the whole school population (4.5%) and the sample size.

### Extrapolation

To work out the estimated number of schools without breakfast provision it is assumed that the sample size collected is representative of the population. The uptake of primary and nursery, secondary, SEN/special and where relevant PRU schools, indicated in the sample, is then scaled to the entire school population for a given country, giving an estimated percentage of schools with and without provision.

To understand the number of pupils entitled to FSM possibly missing out on breakfast provision, the entire FSM population was estimated for each country. The estimated number of pupils currently reached was calculated using the typical daily uptake, multiplied by the estimated number of schools with provision that were not Magic Breakfast schools in Scotland and England. In Scotland and England, the number of pupils reached in Magic Breakfast schools was then added to this total. The total estimated number of pupils reached with provision on a typical day in the population level sample size was then removed from the total number of pupils entitled to or registered for FSM in the applicable nation. The same method was used to calculate IDACI pupils and SIMD pupils missing out on breakfast provision.

# Appendix 2: Table of Key Research Figures by Nation

	No. of schools*	Schools with provision and no barriers	Schools with provision and barriers	Schools without provision	Average daily uptake (pupils)	No. of disadvantaged pupils
<b>England</b>	22,504	5,950 (27%)	12,081 (55%)	4,023 (18%)	44	3,677,144 (IDACI bands A-F)
<b>Scotland</b>	2,477	1,066 (43%)	397 (16%)	1,014 (41%)	22	285,707 (SIMD quintile 1&2)
<b>Wales</b>	1,424	1,180 (83%)	146 (10%)	98 (7%)	75	99,135 (FSM)
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	1,123	244 (22%)	571 (51%)	308 (27%)	58	97,631 (FSM)

\*Schools list excludes independent schools and in some countries nursery schools, providing an indicative figure of the number of schools in each country.

# Appendix 3: Disadvantage and Attainment

While FSM, IDACI, and SIMD are all used to understand the level of disadvantage in a school and allocate funding or support, it must be noted that all schools will have some level of hunger amongst pupils. Therefore, targeted solutions only focusing on the most disadvantaged areas and schools will never reach all children and young people starting the day too hungry to learn. Furthermore, alongside supporting disadvantaged children and young people, Magic Breakfast also exists to support those who are vulnerable. There are many reasons why a child may not have access to breakfast provision beyond food insecurity, including neglect, mental health issues and difficult home circumstances.

In England, 20.8% of pupils are eligible for FSM, a number which has continued to rise in recent years.<sup>cxxxv</sup> As well as FSM, IDACI is also used in England to understand the level of disadvantage within a school and has been used by the DfE to allocate funding for the NSBP.<sup>cxxxvi</sup> As discussed in the method, IDACI has proven to be a better indicator of hunger within a school when compared to FSM. In England, there are approximately 10,400 schools that currently meet the Government's criteria of disadvantage.<sup>10</sup>

In Scotland, a fifth of pupils are eligible for FSM.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Alongside FSM, in Scotland SIMD is also used to understand levels of disadvantage within a school community, and like IDACI is often considered a more accurate indicator. In Scotland, there are approximately 285,000 pupils living in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2 (the most disadvantaged) and around 1,070 schools (over a third of schools) with more than 40% of pupils on roll living in SIMD quintiles 1 and 2.<sup>cxxxviii</sup>

Out of all the countries in the UK, Northern

Ireland has the highest threshold for FSM eligibility, with a net household earnings ceiling of £14,000.<sup>cxxxix</sup> Across all school types during the 2020/21 academic year, 97,631 pupils were entitled to FSM. This was an increase of 945 pupils on the previous year.<sup>cxl</sup> In Wales, nearly 129,000 school-age children are currently living below the poverty line, which amounts to seven children in a class of 25. However, over 70,000 of these pupils are not eligible for FSM, mainly because they are in working families with earnings above the income threshold of £7,400.<sup>cxli</sup>

These levels of disadvantage are particularly concerning given we know the impact that poverty has on attainment. In England, by the end of primary school disadvantaged pupils are over 9 months behind their peers. This doubles at secondary school with disadvantaged pupils 18.1 months behind their peers in GCSE English and Maths.<sup>cxlii</sup> Furthermore, this gap has a regional component to it; analysis by the Education Policy Institute indicates that the top 5 largest gaps in GCSE English and Maths are all located in the North of England, conversely the smallest gaps are clustered around London.

In Scotland, although exam results and other attainment measures have improved nationally, there is wide variation between local authorities, with some getting worse rather than better. Analysis by Audit Scotland showed that the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more awards at level five was 82.7% for pupils from the least deprived areas, compared to 46.5% for school leavers from the most deprived areas - a gap of 36.2%.<sup>cxliii</sup>

In Northern Ireland, during the 2018/19 academic year, only 49.5% of school leavers

<sup>10</sup> Data taken from list of IDACI schools supplied under a FOI request to the DfE.

entitled to FSMs achieved at least five GCSEs (including English and Maths), compared with 78.5% of non-FSM school leavers.<sup>cxliii</sup> In Wales, during the 2020/21 academic year, pupils at GCSE level who were eligible for FSM achieved, on average, 0.29 grade lower than their non-FSM peers with the same prior attainment and characteristics. This difference is larger than in previous years.<sup>cxliii</sup>

We know the dramatic effect education can have on children and young people's life chances. The widening attainment gap across the UK speaks to the need for a more targeted approach to support vulnerable children and young people. In doing so, we would be able to tackle the systemic inequalities that exist in the education system.



# Appendix 4: Impact of Breakfast Provision

This appendix outlines the impact of breakfast provision on educational attainment, school attendance, and lifetime earning potential.

## Attainment

By the end of KS2 educational inequality driven by disadvantage is already starting to manifest, but breakfast can send children into KS2 with the best possible start. Independent research, funded by the EEF and carried out by the IFS, found that primary schools offering a free, nutritious Magic Breakfast can boost attainment for pupils in key subjects at KS1 (Year 2) by two months over the course of a year.<sup>cxvii</sup> At a higher level, a study by Leeds University found that students who regularly ate breakfast achieved nearly two GCSE grades higher compared with students who rarely consumed breakfast on a school day.<sup>cxlviii</sup>

## Attendance and Behaviour

The same IFS research also found that pupils' concentration and behaviour improved in schools with breakfast provision. This suggests that breakfast provision provides an opportunity to improve outcomes for all children, not just those who attend, by creating better classroom environments. In the same study, schools with provision also reported fewer absences, with 26 fewer half-days of absence per year for a class of 30.

In Magic Breakfast partner schools:<sup>cxlviii</sup>

- 81% of schools report breakfast provision increased attainment
- 79% of schools report breakfast provision increased attendance
- 94% of schools report breakfast provision increased energy levels, engagement, and readiness to learn.

## Poverty and Cost of Living

In addition to the impact on children's academic attainment, breakfast represents a truly effective poverty lever. Pre-pandemic research from the Social Market Foundation identified breakfast clubs as being used at a greater rate than England's FSM programme by families classified as having very low child food security, third behind food banks and holiday clubs.<sup>cxix</sup> This demonstrates that breakfast must be considered as important as other policy interventions on this issue.

## The Economics of Breakfast Provision

Our 2021 report, *The economic cost-effectiveness of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision*, outlines clearly the economic impact of the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision for one year to pupils completing Key Stage 1 (KS1).<sup>ci</sup>

The key findings were that Magic Breakfast provision could generate long-term benefits to the economy of around £9,200 per child. Approximately £4,000 of these benefits will go to Government through increased tax revenue and reduced public services costs. This means that for every £1 invested in breakfast provision at KS1, the return on investment is over £50 in benefits.<sup>cii</sup>

There are an estimated 298,000 pupils completing Key Stage 1 at schools with high levels of disadvantage<sup>1</sup> in England. If all of these pupils received the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision it would generate total long-term economic benefits of around £2.7 billion.

In Scotland there are 22,100 children in the equivalent year group at schools with high levels of disadvantage. If all these pupils received the Magic Breakfast model of school breakfast provision it could generate further long-term economic benefits of around £200 million.

More than 90% of these benefits are likely to be in the form of improved life-time earnings for the beneficiaries, with the remainder due to reduced costs for SEN, truancy and exclusions, with the cost of our provision being around £180 per pupil, per annum in 2020 costs.

Additionally, given the likelihood of continued price shocks and negative economic outlook, Magic Breakfast calculate that breakfast provision for a two-child family can save the family around £200 per year in food costs alone.

### Case Study: Magic Breakfast Partner School

Lourdes is a large secondary located in an area of disadvantage, with over two thirds of the school roll living in areas of high deprivation. Prior to joining the Magic Breakfast programme, the school provided a small breakfast provision to those pupils most in need, funded via staff donations. However, without permanent funding and advice they were unable to reach all children at risk of hunger in the school.

Magic Breakfast partnered with the school in October 2019. A local Magic Breakfast School Partner worked with them to set up their breakfast provision, ensuring it was free and accessible to all pupils without barrier or stigma.

The school launched by offering two models of breakfast provision, both free to all pupils; one a traditional breakfast club and the other a grab-and-go model where pupils could eat breakfast in designated areas of the school while accessing activities or enjoying a quiet place to study.

A particular favourite was known as "Techy Breky" where they opened an IT room for an hour before school started, with a healthy Magic Breakfast also made available. The school noted that the young people attending this breakfast provision showed a significant improvement in the quality of the homework they submitted.

Despite a strong start, within a few months of the breakfast provision launching, schools were asked to close in response to the pandemic. However, this did not deter staff from continuing to reach children and young people at risk of hunger with the school using alternative delivery sites to reach 150 families with breakfast food.

Ensuring children are able to access food to start their school day is hugely important to Lourdes' Teacher, Kathleen McBride, who believes that the school's Magic Breakfast provision has been significant in supporting children to engage in their education: "Meeting the most basic needs of our young people [with breakfast] allows them to trust, engage and ultimately learn."

The school is committed to continuing to deliver breakfast to all pupils who need it and believes that this provision is key to addressing the heightened emotional, physical and educational needs of pupils as a result of the pandemic.

# Appendix 5: About Magic Breakfast

## About Us

Magic Breakfast is a charity which seeks to ensure that in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, no child or young person is sitting in morning classes too hungry to learn. As an established leader in the school food sector, we have been providing healthy breakfasts to children and young people at risk of hunger for over two decades. We directly support around 1,070 schools in areas with high levels of disadvantage. On an average school day, Magic Breakfast provides over 200,000 breakfasts to children and young people.

Since 2018, Magic Breakfast has been working in Scotland to deliver fuel for learning to children and young people in schools in disadvantaged communities.<sup>ciii</sup> Across four years, Magic Breakfast has delivered around 1.5 million breakfasts to children and young people in Scotland. Now working across 10 local authorities, we support around 4,000 children and young people every school morning.

Every school community is unique, so at Magic Breakfast we tailor support to our partner schools based on their individual environments and challenges. Integral to this bespoke approach are our School Partners, who are Magic Breakfast staff members located across the UK so that each school has a named contact to optimise their breakfast provision through advice, support and challenge.

## A Brief History of Magic Breakfast Provision

In 2013, the DfE published the School Food Plan, a report commissioned with the intention of improving school food and the health of

schoolchildren.<sup>ciii</sup> The report was instigated by the then Secretary of State Rt Hon Michael Gove Member of Parliament (MP), and led by Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent, founders of the food chain Leon. Their work was guided by an expert panel of stakeholders including Magic Breakfast's Founder, Carmel McConnell MBE. One of the recommendations that came from the report was the establishment of breakfast clubs in schools with high levels of disadvantage, and in 2014 Magic Breakfast was awarded the first Government tender for school breakfast clubs.<sup>civ</sup>

From 2018 to 2021, for three years, Magic Breakfast was proud to work in partnership with Family Action and the DfE in the creation of the NSBP. Magic Breakfast was able to use our years of expertise to scale up our model to hundreds of new schools all across the country.<sup>civ</sup> At its peak, schools supported by the programme ensured 375,000 children received a free, nutritious breakfast every school day and our team of expert advisors were described as the 'lynchpin' to this success.<sup>cvi</sup>

In April 2021, Magic Breakfast made the decision not to bid for 2021–2023 tender for government funded school breakfast provision. The DfE, under then Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, had cut investment to the programme, removing some of the most important aspects of breakfast funding, including its hunger focus and expert advice and support for schools. We felt the new terms did not adequately meet the charity's objectives of reaching children at risk of hunger without barrier or stigma. In short, the new tender was trying to reach more schools with less money and no focus on those at risk of hunger, with a greater burden on schools.<sup>cvi</sup>

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Company registered charity: 04977015  
Registered charity number England: 1102510  
Registered charity number Scotland: SC048202

St. Magnus House  
3 Lower Thames Street  
London  
EC3R 6HD

 /magic\_breakfast  
 /magicbreky  
 /magicbreakfastuk  
 /magicbreakfastuk

020 7836 5434  
info@magicbreakfast.com  
www.magicbreakfast.com