

Scaling up universal free school meals

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Universal for pupils, schools & community



Universal school meals is an opportunity to invest in certified and inspected high quality **nutritious meals** that sit at the heart of **whole school approaches to food & health**, and deliver **community wealth building and action on climate NOW!**

- Andy Gold, Newham's Head of Food Strategy
 - Part of the public health team who have historically co-funded Newham's Eat For Free offer
 - Return on investment = benefits for pupils, schools and the wider community
- Michael Hales, Managing Director of Juniper Ventures Newham's local authority catering service
 - 23,000 school meals served each school day across 60 schools
 - Former chair of LACA. 35 years in school meals!
- Paul Taylor, Head teacher, Central Park Primary School, East Ham
 - Advocate for whole school approaches
 - Part of the group that co-designed our grant conditions and principles

WE ARE NEWHAM.



Eat For Free



View the whole pack [here](#)

Newham

In 2009, Newham Council took part in the Government's Universal Free School Meals pilot. When the pilot came to an end in July 2011, Newham decided to extend the scheme through its pioneering Eat for Free programme, ensuring all primary school children in the borough continue to receive Free School Meals.

Benefits of the programme are clear from the number of students eating a school meal in Newham: **over 90% of Key Stage 2 pupils eat lunch at school**, which is a massive increase on the 45% uptake before the scheme began.⁹⁴

The council has received positive feedback about the programme from schools and parents across the borough. A consultation on Newham's Eat for Free programme demonstrated the popularity of the programme, with residents, parents and teachers overwhelmingly supporting keeping UFSM, with over three-quarters of respondents thinking the council should provide FSM for all pupils.⁹⁵

In Newham, **a school meal is much more than the food on a plate**. They have been setting

the example of what a whole school approach to food looks like. In collaboration with schools, Eat for Free grant conditions mean healthier and more sustainable food is served and better food education takes place. The programme also increases investment in the local economy, securing good food jobs at or above the living wage.

For more on the impacts of UFSM in four London boroughs (Newham, Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets), see pp. 16–17.

National academic and media coverage has talked about why Eat For Free and the Newham school meals ecosystem is front-running:

- Grant Conditions Text in all tenders that shape the grant as a tool of Community Wealth Building.
- Grant principles All schools are committed to delivering as part of a whole school approach to health and food with ongoing support from our whole schools health team

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Eat for Free (EFF)

In Newham, pre-Covid data showed 91% of KS2 pupils having a school meal, compared to 60% in comparable boroughs without a scheme and 45% before the scheme began. Today around 50% children are estimated to be in poverty but only around 30% qualify for a free school meal (FSM).

What are the benefits of EFF to our community?

1. HEALTH AND WELLBEING 2. EDUCATION 3. LOCAL JOBS AND ECONOMY (COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING)

<p>On the curriculum Universal participation in meals normalises healthy eating as a core part of the school day – key as we face challenges such as obesity, oral health and food poverty</p> <p>Less packed lunches Only 1.6% (nationally) of packed lunches meet the government's school meals nutritional standard. More cooked lunches eaten equals more children getting a healthier diet</p> <p>Higher quality meals EFF schools all serve meals at the higher Food For Life Bronze standard – an independently certified standard</p> <p>Every school 50 Steps EFF grant principles require all schools to participate in certified whole school accredited programmes on food and health. These are important tools driving engagement and investment in a healthier Newham</p>	<p>Disadvantaged pupils EFF has a marked difference amongst disadvantaged pupils</p> <p>Concentration Pupils who eat a nutritious and filling daily meal have better levels of concentration</p> <p>Performance & Attainment Most recent data indicates that the average primary attainment score (70.75) for all pupils in boroughs with a universal free school meal scheme is higher compared to neighbouring boroughs without the scheme (69). This trend is also prevalent in disadvantaged pupils in boroughs with a universal scheme (65.5) in comparison to boroughs without (61).</p> <p>More time Time spent by parents preparing packed lunches can be better spent with children (e.g. with homework)</p>	<p>Local jobs 86% of those who work in school meals are Newham residents</p> <p>Benefits to Newham workers EFF schools are required to pay London Living Wage and local government pension. Grant conditions have successfully shaped schools' tenders this year</p> <p>Benefits to the Newham economy Without EFF, providers can push for lower wages to generate corporate profits – less money for Newham residents, money leaving the borough</p> <p>Rewarding careers A certified higher standard for meals makes it difficult for companies to squeeze down on working conditions and jobs which results in more working hours for Newham residents</p>	<p>Expanded grant conditions Work so far provides a platform for more innovation with schools co-producing work on community wealth building, food and health that benefits the whole borough</p> <p>Re-investment potential Juniper Ventures is the school catering company that is 100% owned by the council. EFF requires schools to go out to tender on employment terms and conditions that creates a level playing field for all companies. Focus is on quality of offer when choosing a caterer. Any surplus made by Juniper is reinvested in school food or returned to the council</p>
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OTHER BENEFITS: ENVIRONMENT

Climate Now
The grant requires schools to enrol in the Mayor of London Healthy Schools Programme Bronze and the Soil Association Whole School Food for Life accredited programme. In addition to health work, these programmes promote action on climate and environment

AT RISK

Over £2m in wages
if schools are not required to pay London Living Wage and local government pension

384 hours of employment lost every day
if school meal take up drops back to pre-EFF levels (over £1m of lost employment a year)

Anchored spend

We invest £5.889m*, but this keeps anchored all £14m** that our primary schools spend on meals.

* £3m Public Health Grant and £2.889m General Fund
** Our investment plus £8.5m Central government money (FSM at KS2 and UIFSM at KS1)



What's next?

There are 66 participating schools in the EFF programme. Continuing to evolve the grant conditions enables us to increase outputs that advance our agenda on children's health, education, climate and environment and community wealth building.

Eat For Free – new research

The EVIDENCE from London boroughs

This section sets out new research into the wide-ranging benefits of the provision of **Universal Free School Meals** to children in **four London boroughs**. It has been provided for this Evidence Pack by Angus Holford and Birgitta Rabe, Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex.



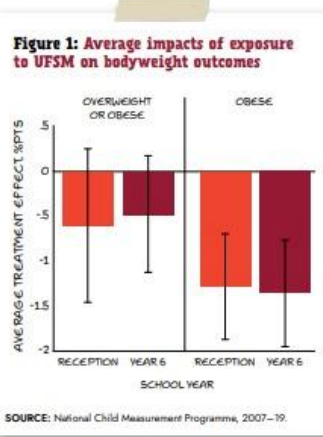
Universal Free School Meals reduces child obesity and helps with the cost of living

The impacts of providing free meals to primary school children has recently been studied by looking at Universal Free School Meal (UFSM) schemes already implemented in primary schools in four local authorities (LAs) in London: **Newham** (from 2010), **Islington** (from 2011), **Southwark** (from 2012) and **Tower Hamlets** (from 2014).³³

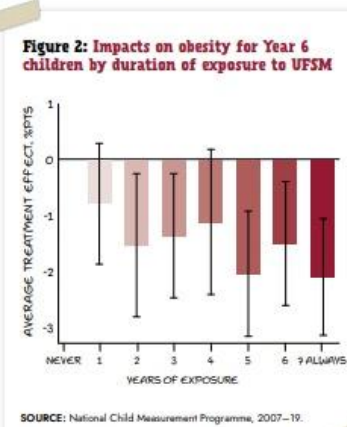
Comparing changes in outcomes in these LAs with those that do not run UFSM schemes enables us to evaluate the causal impact on bodyweight outcomes among Reception and Year 6 children, and on household food expenditure.*

The key findings on bodyweight outcomes are that, compared with what would have happened if UFSM had never been introduced:

- Receiving UFSM reduces prevalence of obesity by 9.3% among Reception children and 5.6% among Year 6 children on average.
- This corresponds to a 1.3 and 1.4 percentage points reduction in obesity (Figure 1). These impacts are substantial, given how hard it is to influence obesity through other interventions involving exercise or healthy eating education.



- Effects are largest among Year 6 children who received UFSM the longest: the reduction in obesity was 8.4% among children who received them throughout primary school (2.1 percentage points reduction – Figure 2).



The key findings on household food expenditure are that:

- Families on average save approximately £37 per month in total on food spending, based on a household with two adults and two primary-aged children (see table).
- About half of this saving is due to reduced spending on 'eating out', which includes takeaways and paid-for school meals.
- The reduction in expenditure is smaller than the value of the free meals, suggesting households are consuming a higher value of food in total.

These results show that UFSM schemes reduce the prevalence of obesity among children and help households with the cost of living. The finding of a cumulative effect over time of providing free meals suggests that starting free meal provision early and maintaining it throughout primary school would maximise the impact on cutting obesity rates and contribute to addressing the significant long-term healthcare and indirect productivity costs of obesity. Universal provision throughout primary school would also ensure that all children have access to a meal of high nutritional standards, while also helping families with school-age children with the cost of living.

- The effect on children receiving UFSM for the first time in Year 6 is smaller than the corresponding effect on Reception children. This indicates that the bodyweights of older children are harder to shift in the short term.
- The overall relationship suggests the impact of UFSM on obesity rates is cumulative, i.e. it adds up over time.
- The impact of UFSM is much smaller in schools with pre-existing high prevalence of obesity (Figure 3).
- This could be because the school and home environment around high-obesity schools is less conducive to losing weight. These families and schools may benefit from additional interventions.

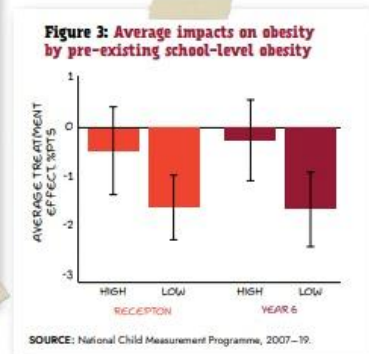


Table 1: Impacts of UFSM on household food expenditure in last four weeks

	Super-market food (1)	Eating out and takeaways (2)	Total (1)+(2)	Market value of UFSM*
One UFSM-eligible child in a one parent, one child family	-£6.20	£5.47	-£11.47	£34.50
Two UFSM-eligible children in a one parent, two child family	-£15.27	£13.46	-£28.23	£69.00
One UFSM-eligible child in a two parent, two child family	-£10.02	£8.83	-£18.52	£34.50
Two UFSM-eligible children in a two parent, two child family	-£20.04	£17.67	-£37.04	£69.00
Sample size	46,765	46,768	46,582	

SOURCE: UK Household Longitudinal Study, waves 1–11. All figures based on 2015 prices.

University of Essex Research on Eat For Free's impact on obesity (and cost of living)

Alongside other exciting research from Nesta highlighted by TES (Borough's with a narrow attainment gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils)

*For full results and methodology, see MiSoC Explorer: Holford, A. and Rabe, B., 2022, Impacts of Local Authority Universal Free School Meal schemes on Child Obesity and Household Food Expenditure <https://doi.org/10.5526/misoc-2022-003>

Grant conditions include

When going out to tender for a school meals catering provider, tender framework specific requirements that any new provider must adhere to shall include:

- i. The provider must, to all employees working on this contract, pay the London Living Wage, as a minimum, and offer all employees local government pensions or a pension with terms and conditions that are broadly equivalent.*
- ii. All new employees, hired by the provider, to work on this contract must be paid London Living Wage, as a minimum, and be offered local government pensions or a pension with terms that are broadly equivalent.*
- iii. The provider must deliver all menus accredited to meet the Food For Life Served Here standards at bronze as a minimum, or to an equivalent independent inspected standard.*
- iv. Provider should be able to demonstrate the clear capacity to on-board new suppliers within a timeframe of three months or less*

Current grant principles

- Becoming a Mayor of London Healthy Schools Programme bronze accredited school, if not already.
- Becoming Food For Life Whole School Accredited, to at least a bronze standard, if not already doing so.
- Becoming a water only school.
- Seeking to amend the structure of the school catering contract delivery by giving schools joint management responsibilities of Lunchtime Supervisors, if not already in place at school.
- Encouraging the practice of Assistant Teachers becoming Lunchtime Supervisors
- Working to engage parents as active partners in supporting healthy eating.
- Ensuring that there is food literacy work integrated into the mainstream curriculum
- Engaging, if not already, in food growing on the school's site – in a format appropriate to the facility and space available
- Requesting that caterers deliver menu co-production with Newham children and families as part of their work with schools
- Schools to actively encourage the uptake of meals targeting >90% take up
- Schools to actively to ensure that parents that choose a packed lunch have the awareness and support required to do this at the school meal's standard.

Scaling up in 2009

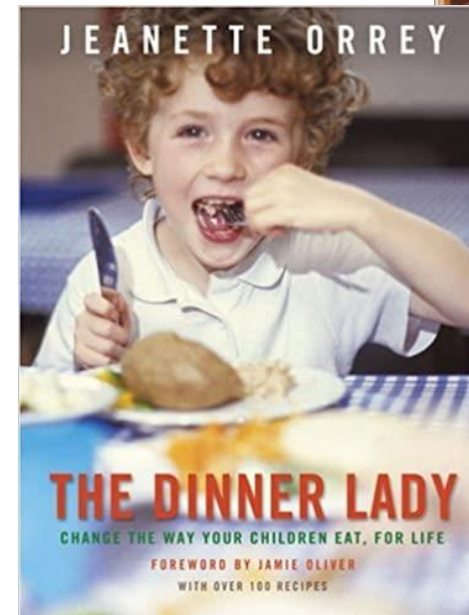
- It was a much larger task of delivering 7 year groups
 - c 100%/doubling meal uptake
 - Schools are being asked (depending on current take up) to add around 25-35% to your current output.
- Pre UIFSM & School Food Review (Immediately post Jeannette Orrey and Jamie Oliver!)
 - Facilities (kitchens and dining rooms)
 - Workforce (skills)
 - Parents & children (take up c 45%)
- It got done - schools, caterer and council working together.
- After 2 year pilot it was backed to continue - funded by the council.

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The School Food Plan

by
Henry Dimpleby
& John Vincent

July 2013



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Dining rooms

How can you improve service flow and throughput in your dining room?

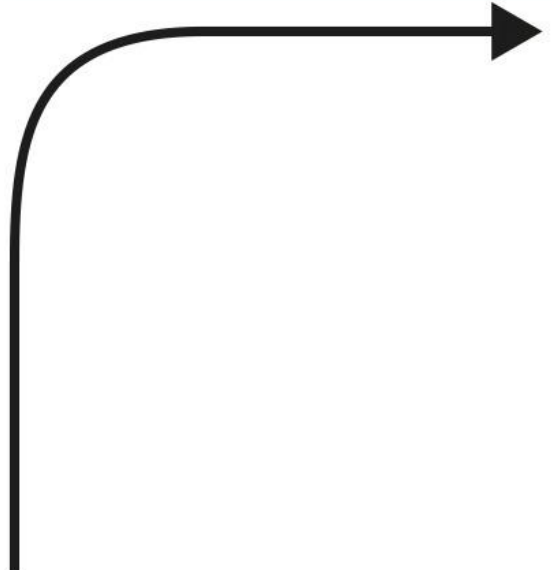
Examples you will see in Newham include:

- Butterfly queues
- Cutlery, water & glasses on tables
- Sides & salads on tables
- Multiple service points eg salads or desserts & fruits on a separate station
- Asking older children to help out with clean down and turnaround



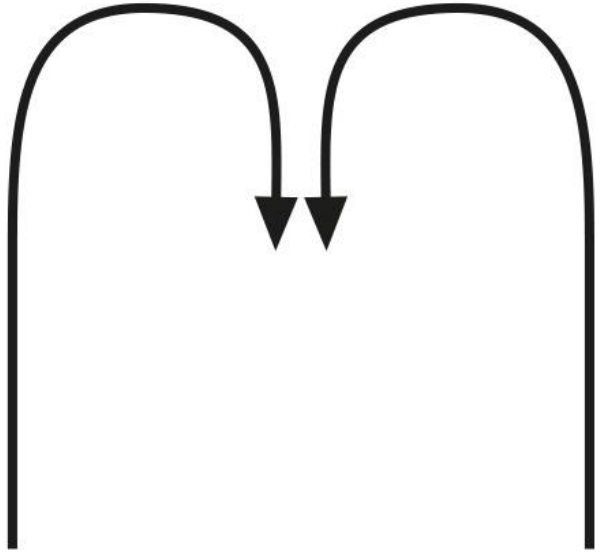
Dining rooms

Traditional Queue



SINGLE QUEUE

Butterfly Queue



QUEUE 1

QUEUE 2

Dining room



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A hub of food inspiration



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Kitchen capacity



What can you expect from your caterer?

- Delighted by the sudden increase in potential meal uptake
- Maximised uptake reduces unit costs
- Eg may be able to negotiate better prices on food due to increased volumes

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Kitchen capacity

What can you expect from your caterer?

- Willing to offer investment in additional light equipment and additional labour (possibly agency whilst the right people are sourced)
- A full check that all equipment is working efficiently
- More storage may be required e.g. refrigeration/freezer/storeroom racking but alternatively more regular deliveries initially from suppliers who should be willing as they will also have a sudden increase in sales

Kitchen capacity – menu

- Work with your caterer's Menu Development Team to form a menu that meets the needs of your school community and can be achieved with the equipment you have available in the kitchen each day

When doing this:

- You can utilise a menu checking service, such as LACA offers, to ensure continued compliance with School Food Standards
- Make sure caterer staff have had the opportunity to practice new dishes



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Make time & make time to talk

Make time

- Start the lunch hour earlier – 11.30 or 12
- Start the kitchen day earlier and finish later to get ahead on prep.

Make time to talk!

Every school is a different challenge and opportunity to improve service flow and kitchen capacity needs eyes on site

- Speak to your caterer and lean into their expertise (they are being offered c 1/3 more revenue!)
- Many council's have continuous improvement officers who are trained in lean methodology and process reengineering



A watershed for education



- 40 years on from the 'great dinner ladies' strike.
- Since then an erosion of Ts & Cs and a strain on services has come to pass.
- This is a watershed moment for valuing very important people in schools!
- Grant principle on London Living Wage as a minimum in all kitchens - really important but just the beginning!
- With c 150,000 vacancies in the broader catering sector.
- Education catering jobs need to be attractive careers!

Valuing our school chefs

Poor terms & conditions = unfilled posts and agency staff

- Increased risk of food safety incidents
- Battles on food quality
- High turnover of area and regional managers

How do we change this?

- Juniper Ts & Cs include RLLW as a minimum, LGPS and other enhanced benefits around sickness and holiday.
- Buy in from staff and a sense of being part of something historic and significant

Ask your caterer about how they are investing the additional revenue!

- Ask for confirmation that they are putting the revenues into London Living Wage (and other increased rates of pay) and additional staffing for 23/24. Labour is 2/3 of the cost of a meal at £2.65)
- Support for kitchen units – has your caterer got it's additional area management, training for new staff and HR support lined up.

Taking back control

- Lunch hour supervisors under the schools control – ideally TAs
- If you are a borough in a conversation with members or being asked to deliver a manifesto commitment re ‘taking back control’/insourcing of school meals, please do reach out for a conversation.



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Scaling up take up

To turn your offer into take up:

- Co-production & tasting with parents
- Whole school approaches to food (that are visible from the playground so parents are connected in)
- Communication & encouragement



Whole school approaches!



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Newham Food Growing Toolkit

www.newham.gov.uk