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A review of the English school meal: 'progress or a recipe for disaster'?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the discourse on school meals, as evidence suggests that political agendas feed into policy making. The paper fills a void by proposing new insights into how school meals could be reformed, following reflections from a doctoral study and a review of the changing narrative on school food in England. Recommendations include rethinking the coverage on school meals by taking into account this multifaceted area of inquiry by recognising the importance of the physical context of the meals as well as the subjects of school mealtime.

Introduction

History suggests that school meals are political and driven by contemporary discourse. It also suggests that policy changes have not enhanced the health and wellbeing of eaters. Paying attention to the physical context of the meals and the subjects of those (school pupils) alongside nutrition offers an important contribution to the growing interest in this topic. I would like to unpack the discourse as outlined above in finer detail. School meals provide significant benefits to healthy dietary behaviour at a crucial time in children's lives: when eating habits and food preferences are being shaped (Lucas, Patterson, Sacks, Billich, & Evans, 2017). The establishment of the school meal service represented a significant development in the history of public health and marks a period often regarded as the first building block of the creation of the welfare state (Harris, 1995). It is discouraging to read about the recurring theme of the justification for and effects of administrative structures and policies on school meal provision from its inception. Harris (1995) talks at length about the separation of school meal provision from mainstream public health.

The English system is varied and Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) means children have access to school meals up until the end of Year 2 (age seven). From this point, school meals cost approximately £2.30 per day on average (Holford & Rabe, 2020). Free School Meals (FSM) are available to disadvantaged pupils throughout their school lives. There is an increasing interest in policies, particularly those aimed at establishing healthy school meals in an English context (Department for Education [DfE], 2013). Very little research explores the history of school mealtime. The work of

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Andrews (1972) is the last known paper which provides a review of school meal provision from the perspective of an educationalist. Evans and Harper (2009) provide a historical review of English school meals from the perspective of nutrition. More recently, Rose, Lake, Ells, and Brown (2019) debate school food provision in England, focusing on 1940 onwards and highlighting lessons learned as well as possible solutions for future school food reform. So, 11 years on from the work of Evans and Harper (2009), how have school meals changed and which key historical events have shaped school meal provision? This paper aims to provide a review of the school meal which outlines key historical periods to the present day. It has been structured with two key sections: (1) English school meals: past to present; and (2) Experiences of school mealtime. The first half of the paper focuses on the English school meal by presenting a context followed by a historical account of events. The second part of the paper draws on the experience and context of eating school meals and the subjects themselves by addressing key questions and 'current thinking' on the school dining environment.

English school meals: past to present

This section is split into three parts, which include: 1) the first 100 years: 1870–1979; 2) 1980–1999; and 3) 2000 to the present day. However, it is important to provide a context to the issues before delving into chronological periods. School food in England has consistently been associated with controversial decision making over time, yet its importance for the health of future generations has gained considerable momentum in both historical accounts (Cook, Altman, Jacoby, & Holland, 1975) and recent years (Taylor, 2017). In 1944, the National Schools Meals Policy was introduced, requiring school meals to provide a balanced and appropriate level of protein, fat and calories. Nutritional standards were then abolished in 1980, and it was not until 2001 that these standards were re-introduced. In terms of the focus on obesity, it is an increase in childhood poverty that has led to the government drive to monitor school meals closely and more recently form holiday hunger working groups (Thompson, Smith, & Cummins, 2018).

For the first time in almost two decades, childhood poverty has risen in absolute terms, as opposed to the growing measure of relative poverty (Wickham, Anwar, Barr, & Law, 2016). For Wickham et al. (2016) poor health associated to children limits their development and decreases life chances inside and outside the confines of school. Furthermore, when schools in England were locked down in March 2020 following a global pandemic, the government would have to make significant efforts to respond to those families who were socio-economically disadvantaged (Thompson, 2020). We also know food poverty has an adverse impact on children's lives in relation to both health and engagement in education (Gooseman, Defeyter, & Graham, 2020). This significant increase in childhood obesity (Pike & Colquhoun, 2008) has led to a policy response from the government. Following a report in 2012 from 152 Local Authorities (LAs) in England, uptake of school lunches was recorded at 61% in the primary schooling sector, down from 78% in 2010–2011, and 38% in the secondary education sector, down from 54% in 2010–2011 (Nelson, Nicholas, Riley, & Wood, 2012). Uptake of Free School Meals (FSMs) for primary schools in the year 2017–2018 consisted of the 14.1% of pupils who are known to be eligible to claim school meals (DfE, 2017). In secondary schools, for the same year, it was 12.9%. Overall, uptake of FSMs declined compared with previous

years. Therefore, uptake of school meals and uptake of FSMs has consistently decreased over the last 10 years and continues to do so. It is estimated that 1.9 million children are currently in receipt of FSMs (Farquharson, 2020). This paper begins to review the first 100 years of school meals in England, dating from 1870 to 1979, in order to review key movements during this period before moving on to the final two significant phases: 1980 to 1999 and 2000 to the present day.

1870–1979

There appears to be a growing number of review papers which address the history of school meals in England in particular, which includes work by Evans and Harper (2009), Atkins (2007), Welshman (1997) and Harris (1995). However, very little has been written about the pedagogical function of school mealtime and how recent reforms shape school leadership thinking on school meals. The writings on school meal history appear in a more anecdotal form in which the perspectives of dinner staff and their lived experiences are presented. Therefore, it is useful to return to the review by Evans and Harper (2009) and consider a further review extending beyond 2009. Moreover, the history of school food reform in England could be presented in two parallel forms, either as a history of welfare in which the primary concern is the health and wellbeing of children, or as a history of warfare (Morgan & Sonnino, 2013). This paper, however, seeks to intertwine both positions of welfare and warfare in order to illustrate how they affected school food policy reform alongside social and economic influences.

The 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act marked an important historical moment in legislation,althoughschool meals had been provided, particularly in Manchester, England – the first city to provide school meals for poor and badly nourished children – since 1879(Evans & Harper, 2009). School meals wereimplementedfirst to support malnourishment and to develop healthy citizens, butalso to raise a strong workforce (Rose et al., 2019). More importantly,the introduction of school meals became marked as a key periodcontributingto the modern welfare state:

> The passage of the Education (Provision of Meals) Act 1906, and the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act of 1907, establishing medical inspection in state schools, marked the beginning of the construction of the welfare state. For the historian, feeding was the more important measure, not because it was wider in scope or more beneficial but simply because it occurred first. (Gilbert, 1966, p. 102)

Following a successful campaign in Bradford, England, the Education (Provision of Meals) Act was passed, which enabled local authorities to provide free school meals. The campaign was led by Margaret McMillan and Fred Jowett, members of the School Board. Although the campaign was an illegal activity, the pair came to be known as the pioneers, as they made their attempts to persuade Parliament to persuade all education authorities to provide meals for children (Conkbayir & Pascal, 2015). The basis for providing free school dinners was derived from the views of both educators and politicians who thought that if hungry children were to learn, they needed to be fed first (Marshall, 2017).

The influence of warfare during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was instrumental in the decision to provide school food. In the late nineteenth century, it

became evident that the poor home conditions of many children affected their physical state, and although voluntary bodies made every effort to provide a meal service, this was not sustainable (Andrews, 1972). During the Second World War, school meal provision was distributed further. Over 1.6 million free and subsidised meals were served daily, which made up one-third of the school population at that time (Marshall, 2017). A more practical approach to education was adopted in order for children to benefit from education reforms, and it was the Liberal government at that time who were involved in steering this provision. The Education Act (1944) made it compulsory for every local education authority (LEA) to provide a school meal, which became a significant feature of the welfare state (Gillard, 2003). This particular legislation was a state welfare approach which was universalist, and which prioritised school meals as a crucial part of children's daily consumption (UNISON, 2005). During the Labour government (1945–1951), the proposal to provide all school meals free of charge was disregarded, as it was deemed unrealistic in terms of spending (Gillard, 2003). In 1951, 84% (Smith, 1997) of children consumed school milk and the typical daily diet consisted of cereal or eggs with bread and butter for breakfast, meat, potatoes, a vegetable and a pudding for lunch, and biscuits and jam for tea. The work of Atkins (2007) is most notable in relation to school milk. He identified how milk was not attractive at the beginning of the twentieth century due to its image problem: expensive and potentially infected. This suggests that whilst nutritional standards were introduced as early as 1941, they were based on energy, fat and protein consumption. This approach was cheap, so until the early 1970s, England had a comprehensive school meals service providing children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to access FSM. The introduction of a Conservative government in 1979 saw a complete change in attitude towards school meals at a time when nearly two-thirds of pupils in England ate school meals. In a time of austerity, the Conservative minister of education, Mark Carlisle, highlighted three key reasons for the neglect of school meal reform: 1) savings in public expenditure; 2) to ensure the burden of cuts fell on the school meal service and not on education itself; and 3) to provide parents and children more freedom of choice (Morgan & Sonnino, 2010). This period of history is marked as being a controversial time, during which nutritional standards for meals were abolished following the Education Act of 1980.

1980–1999

In 1980, the UK entered a recession, which had a huge impact on the economy (Crafts, 1991). Unfortunately, this led to financial pressures which also affected school budgets. School meals became a burden to government budgets and public spending, and the obligation of LEAs to provide meals was stopped in 1980 under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government (Marshall, 2017). Through the reduction of public expenditure, schools became restricted and food choices driven by costs. Consequently, schools began to use convenience foods, which became problematic due to the processed foods available. This resulted in the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), which meant local authorities began to place school meal services out to tender (Morgan, 2006). The marketisation of school meals meant that school lunches in secondary schools became consumer driven, with less popular foods phased out. Costs were driving food choices as opposed to options being up for debate, and there

was no sign of a national survey (Nicholas, Powell, & Smith, 2006). Ultimately, the guiding principle was the 'lowest bid wins'. This approach placed economy above quality in terms of the provision of the service, which led to the introduction of CCT (Evans & Harper, 2009). The Social Security Act (1986) limited FSMs to children whose parents received additional benefits (Evans & Harper, 2009). The Local Government Act (1988) had an adverse effect on trying to improve the health of children as well as schools' approaches to school meals: the workforce became deskilled, leading to a loss of kitchens in schools (Von Hinke, 2011). Furthermore, the 1988 Act was not merely introduced as a tendering regime, but also as a system of enforcing sanctions on local authorities who failed to abide by the provisions (McShane, 1995). Whilst no statutory nutritional standards were in place during this period, statistical analysis was conducted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in order to monitor the nutrient contents of food, based on pupil food choices. Therefore, this suggests that the concept of nutrient-based guidelines did not completely disappear. In 1992 the Caroline Walker Trust published guidelines for the first time in order to help the government establish food standards (Rees, Richards, & Gregory, 2008). The information was later used by the School Meals Review Panel (SMRP) in establishing government standards.

2000 to the present day

Following a Nutrition Survey, published in 2000 and based on young people aged 4–18 years, the severe extent of health concerns was exposed (Gregory, Lowe, Bates, & Prentice, 2000). More specifically, the survey highlighted how for many children, intakes of saturated fats and sugars were considerably high, with intakes of vitamin A, zinc, magnesium, calcium, potassium and iodine being significantly lower (Crawley, 2005, p. 9). In addition, findings suggested children were consuming less than half the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables daily, with approximately 20% of 4–18 year olds consuming no fruit at all in the average week (Crawley, 2005). The report by Crawley (2005) found how an improvement in the nutritional quality of school food supported cross-government policies in enhancing the health and wellbeing of children, as well as improving education whilst reducing inequalities through the tackling of chronic disease. At this time, reducing diet-related health problems such as obesity, cancer, coronary heart disease and diabetes was estimated to cost the NHS (National Health Service) in the region of £4 billion each year (Morgan, 2004). In 1999, the national Healthy Schools Programme was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in collaboration with the Department of Health (DoH) to reduce health inequalities in school.

The push from both the DfES and the DoH led to school food reforms and, most notably, the re-introduction of minimum Nutritional Standards, under the Education (Nutrition Standards for School Lunches) Regulations of 2000. On 1 April 2001, statutory nutritional standards for school meals were reintroduced (Evans & Harper, 2009). Ultimately, this led to the launch of the Food in Schools Programme, which involved helping schools to implement a whole-school approach to healthy eating and drinking. The Education Act 2002 led to the reform of free lunch eligibility, meaning the number of children in receipt of FSMs increased (Evans & Harper, 2009).

In February 2005, school meals were pushed further into the political discourse by chef Jamie Oliver in the television series 'Jamie's School Dinners'. Essentially, the television programme caused an uproar based on the evidence presented, suggesting, from a case study based on food consumption at Kidbrooke School in Greenwich, England (Conlan, 2005), that pupils were consuming a quarter of a ton of chips every week. The programme led to the setting up of the School Food Trust (SFT) in 2005, which aimed to advise parents and schools whilst also providing governors with advice on their responsibilities regarding school food (Crawley, 2005). The impact of this exposure on school meals led to the then Labour Government announcing a number of measures in May 2006, most notably a new set of nutritional standards for school meals.

In April 2012, former education secretary Michael Gove requested the services of John Vincent and Henry Dimbleby (founder of the Leon restaurants) to carry out an independent review of school food (Long, 2018). This led to the publication of the School Food Plan (DfE, 2013). Recommendations from the School Food Plan (DfE, 2013, p. 10) were targeted at head teachers, as those who could influence the vision of schools in adopting a more forward-thinking mentality. In light of these reforms, it is timely to debate the idea of a utopian school meal in line with recommendations made by the government. Furthermore, the second part of this paper introduces current debates on school meals, including reference to school food pedagogies alongside the policing of school food and potential implications.

Holiday hunger has also become a priority area, particularly through which a growing bank of research evidence presents us with accounts of the stark reality of food poverty on families (Gooseman et al., 2020). To provide context, holiday hunger refers to food insecurity during school holidays. Approximately 10% of children in the UK are said to live in households experiencing severe food insecurity. We have also learned that hunger in childhood has been linked with chronic health conditions and internalising problems such as anxiety and depression (Ke & Ford-Jones, 2015). It was found that holiday hunger forms part of a broader, year-round experience of deprivation alongside poor dietary habits.

One solution in response is to adopt a multi-agency approach in order to address such complex and inter-related needs. We need to reduce food poverty and holiday hunger in order to reduce the injustice and reliance on food banks. To do so, we need to provide evidence to heighten the profile of such issues and find ways to reduce the number of children going hungry. We need to devise sustainable policies to address these issues, and engagement with schools, activists and young people is crucial in this. Following a campaign led by the England and Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford, the Government committed to providing free school meals to children in England during the 2020 summer holidays (Keith, 2020). This example shows the potential positive effects of influencing opinion, here through research. We also know that in November 2020, Marcus Rashford led a campaign forcing Prime Minister Boris Johnson into a second U-turn on child food poverty (Guardian, 2020). The aim of the campaign was to extend FSMs to children from low-income families during school holiday periods in England.

Experiences of school mealtime

How do the subjects themselves experience school mealtime? How do power relations shape children's mealtime experiences? Can school meals act as a sustainable tool for

improving the health of children's food consumption? What about the relationship between food and poverty? Ultimately, it is argued that school meals can act as a platform to promote healthy and sustainable food behaviour, as school meals rest at the heart of public interest in being able to improve the health and wellbeing of future citizens. Therefore, social engineering of the school meal policy is imperative, and with the recent introduction of the National Food Strategy (Defra, 2019), plans for a review of food systems will involve examining the Childhood Obesity Plan (Department of Health and Social Care [DoH], 2016). The release of the 'Time to Solve Childhood Obesity' independent review (DoH, 2019) has also made recommendations for the sector. FSMs are used as a proxy for measuring poverty in England and Wales. It was found, from the proportion of pupils eligible for FSMs in each local authority, that more than 70% of FSM pupils did not meet the expected standards of attaining at least five A*–C grades at GCSE level at the end of Key Stage 4 (Jospeh Rowntree Foundation, 2015). Policy responses on the Citizens UK campaign entitled 'Just Change' highlights the stark reality and impact of poverty on children's lives. Free School Meals provide an essential lifeline for children and young people who may not otherwise be able to afford a nutritious meal (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2019). With the increase in families being trapped in poverty due to low pay, the rising cost of living and an ineffective social security system, more attention needs to be paid. Therefore, at this point, it is important to highlight policy narratives which are shaping the school meal on both local and national levels.

School lunch surveillance

As interest in school food policy increases, international government efforts to address the 'obesity epidemic' also continue, although the delivery of such policies is not necessarily being governed appropriately (Pike & Colquhoun, 2008). The management of the school site has been riddled with school food policy objectives which aim to produce young people as 'healthy subjects' (Pike & Colquhoun, 2008). This suggests that in the modern-day school, the management of mealtimes needs to be given careful attention to ensure children are able to access not only a nutritious meal, but to be able to have the space to interact with both peers and teachers (Earl & Lalli, 2020; Lalli, 2019a, 2019b, 2020).

The policing of school lunch has become commonplace (Pike, 2010, 2008), due to the pressures of improving school meals. While rigorous nutritional guidelines have been put in place across schools in England, much of the evaluation of mealtimes has focused on nutritional quality, with little evidence of how children are said to experience such changes (Addis & Murphy, 2018). It is interesting to highlight how school meal reform can impact heavily upon children's uptake. More specifically, *consumption* and *identity* are identified as reoccurring themes which impact upon the uptake of school food, namely due to the desire to conform to peer group norms (Addis & Murphy, 2018). As the school environment is said to be highly regimented (Pike & Colquhoun, 2008), it can be argued that thinking about children's agency could help support future policy initiatives. Ultimately, such studies highlight tensions between decision making on diet, and it is often said that reform should take place by addressing individual behaviour. Children's and particularly teenagers' eating habits are embedded within the context in which they occur (Lucas et al., 2017). Therefore, thinking about school mealtime involves

thinking beyond forcing certain behaviours upon children in schools. It is about thinking holistically, taking the views of children into account, but the policing of this space and crucial part of the school day (Lalli, 2019a) often warrants much debate on the perceived notion of a 'healthy subject' (Pike & Colquhoun, 2008), rather than preparing a good citizen.

However, the implications of an authoritarian system mean that the voices of those in schools, including senior leadership, teachers, pupils and parents, will need to contribute to ensure policy is being enacted, but, more importantly, that it is appropriate. In relation to wellbeing, then, it is appropriate to think about the work of Sen (1985), who argues for a capability approach in striving for freedom in enhancing one's quality of life. In turn, children's agency needs to be given consideration alongside policy intervention (Hart & Brando, 2018).

School food choices

School meals have been identified as a platform for promoting decision making in leading a healthy life and developing positive eating behaviours (Oostindjer et al., 2017). The roles of the food and eating environments are crucial in school meal reform. The food environment specifically includes all factors directly relating to the way food is provided, i.e. portion sizes, presentation and visual appeal (Oostindjer et al., 2017, p. 3949) . It has been found that small changes in the food environment, such as the order of food in a school lunch queue, can potentially influence food choices (Oostindjer et al., 2017). The eating environment is referred to as a space for social learning (Lalli, 2019a, 2019b) and the benefits of eating together mean that the space in which such eating is taking place needs careful attention, as sociability plays a crucial role (Andersen, Holm, & Baarts, 2015) in enriching children's wellbeing. With these ideas in mind, it is useful to consider the impact of overcrowded dining halls and shortened eating times, which are said to create time pressure on children (Moore, Murphy, Tapper, & Moore, 2010). Consequently, this is said to be destructive for children's eating experience and reduces any opportunity for social learning during mealtime (Lalli, 2019a, 2019b).

Policy implications

Robust measures are needed in which school policies place focus on healthy eating in order to help with establishing healthy behaviours (Rose et al., 2019). The growing interest in creating school environments that are said to help facilitate healthy and sustainable food behaviours (Oostindjer et al., 2017) mean that policy reform is being enacted, specifically to address this very concern. Examples of current thinking around such reforms include the mandate of nutritional standards and guidelines, the restricting of marketing near schools and in wider spaces such as public transport, alongside the eliminating of unhealthy foods often found in school vending machines (Godin, Hammond, Chaurasia, & Leatherdale, 2018). The implications of imposing such forms of policy are being occupied by the continuous society pressures in which individuals have become accustomed to eating 'on the go' in spaces where agile working is not feasible at a time where food choices are being governed (Leahy & Wright, 2016). The wider aspects of health and wellbeing in society cannot go ignored, as food poverty continues to become associated with conditions such as obesity and malnutrition, further

exacerbating reliance on the third sector to fill the void (Thompson et al., 2018). The implications for school meal reform are threefold: first, that the enforcement of policy is required for any improvements to take shape; second, that any improvement is dependent upon uptake of school meals; and, third, that the monitoring of such phenomena needs to be given close attention (Lucas et al., 2017). The recommendations are summarised below and include 10 actions for the government and 6 actions for the public.

For the government

(DfE, 2013) The first recommendation is to ensure cooking is embedded within the curriculum and to integrate cooking into Key Stages 1 to 3. In response to this, as of 8 July 2013, the DfE incorporated cooking into the latest national curriculum. The second is to introduce food-based standards for all schools. In response to this, the DfE aimed to test and introduce revised food based standards, based on a nutritional framework. The third recommendation is to encourage uptake of good school food; the fourth, to ensure breakfast clubs become self-sufficient; and the fifth, to set up flagship boroughs in order to highlight the impact of improving school food, which will help provide a positive model. The sixth recommendation involves investigating the case for extending FSM entitlement; the seventh is to provide adequate training for head teachers which will involve incorporating these ideas into head teacher training. The eighth is to work closely with Public Health England in order to promote policy which aims to improve children's diets in schools; the ninth is for Ofsted inspectors to take school meal provision and the priority of promoting healthy lifestyles into account when inspecting schools. The tenth recommendations to measure the success of the ways in which the School Food Plan is supporting the health and wellbeing of children in schools.

For the public

(DfE, 2013, p. 11) In order to help implement the School Food Plan, the government, together with schools and charities, will need to address the following: (1) to share best practice and present ideas on the School Food Plan website (www.schoolfoodplan.com); (2) to develop the image of school food and promote positive images of school lunches in different media outlets; (3) to allow opportunities for school cooks to work closely with industry and with the rest of the catering sector so that school cooks are included in high-profile events around the country; (4) to develop the skills of the workforce; (5) for caterers, kitchen designers and manufacturers to work to together to provide good food for small schools; and (6) to work towards ensuring schools are fairly funded throughout the country.

Conclusion

A number of questions emerge as I reach this point. First, we know that eligibility for meals has been problematic. A key question moving forward is to ask who is eligible and why. How do we ensure those most vulnerable have access to food but also evaluate whether families are taking up FSM? If they are not, then why not? Historically then, school food provision has been inconsistent, so what does this mean for provision in the twenty-first century? With almost a third of children aged 2–15 overweight or obese (DoH, 2016), tackling childhood obesity requires working closely in taking action (ONS,

2014). One of the ways in which this could be done is to follow the School Food Plan (DfE, 2013). What about the impact of food poverty and access to nutritious food? There is more to consider than merely what is presented on the dinner plate both at school and in the home environment. It is just as important for existing academic research to highlight key ideas and evidence within a school meal setting. Wickramasinghe, Rayner, Goldacre, Townsend, and Scarborough (2017) measure outcomes based on nutritional impact and Hart (2016) explores the complex social context of food practices and how they influence the roles of food in primary schools in England. These studies illustrate the multidisciplinary context in which school food resides, and it is crucial that more examples of success stories are published in both academia as well as media discourse to support schools in moving forward and developing suitable techniques in school food reform. For example, one of the ways in which school meals can be reformed is through prioritising more space and time for mealtimes. Whilst more attention needs to be given to school mealtime, the opportunity for ensuring meals served are nutritious and help the whole child in terms of their wellbeing are potentially problematic. For this reason, a conscientious approach needs to be adopted to ensure a multi-agency approach is adopted in such reforms. Most notably, the work of Harris (1995) still reflects the tensions which prevent school meals from undergoing consistent reform, by and large due to growing administrative structures, which impinge upon school meal provision. Measuring the success of this activity is also problematic and cannot be merely translated through statistical government reports, but through observing the day-to-day interactions during mealtime. Further studies can showcase such phenomena.

Recommendations for policy making practice

The School Food Plan (DfE, 2013) is the most recent and comprehensive document. It details 17 recommendations for improving school food provision, but this plan is yet to be evaluated in greater detail. However, a new study is due to commence in 2019, funded by the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), which will involve an evaluation of the plan. It will be interesting to learn about emergent issues. Historically, when cross-government initiatives have been implemented, the profile of school food has been raised. For example, the National Healthy Schools Programme (1999), through which the DfES and the DoH worked together, helped to build a healthy environment in schools which ultimately led to the re-introduction of Nutritional Standards in 2001. This became a key movement leading to greater improvement of school food provision. However, with the marketisation of school meal provision, it is inevitable that on the basis of the 'lowest bid wins', quality of provision is lost and such approaches need managing carefully if school meals are to work well for shaping the whole child.

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