



## **Written evidence submitted by The Food Foundation for the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill**

### **About The Food Foundation:**

We are a young, dynamic, and impactful charity with a mission to change food policy and business practice to ensure everyone, across the UK, can afford and access a healthy diet supplied by a sustainable food system. We are independent of all political parties and business. We work with others who believe there is a problem with the system and want to change it. Visit our website for more information: [www.foodfoundation.org.uk](http://www.foodfoundation.org.uk)

### **Summary**

The Food Foundation welcomes the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill and its aims to protect children and improve education.<sup>1</sup> However, to achieve this aim it is critical that the Bill includes measures to protect children from food insecurity, which is vital both for their ability to learn and their health. As well as the Bill making breakfast provision statutory, it presents an opportunity to go further by strengthening existing nutritional safety nets – including Free School Meals and the Holiday Activities and Food Programme – to give all children the chance to learn and thrive.

This Bill is also an important opportunity to support children in their early years, currently not included in the legislation, which are crucial for children’s long-term health and wellbeing. The Bill should include a measure to support younger children’s wellbeing, through strengthening the Healthy Start Scheme so that all eligible children receive their entitlement.

This submission focusses on providing evidence for the need to use the Bill as an opportunity to:

- 1) Ensure that breakfast clubs reach children at greatest risk of food insecurity.
- 2) Introduce national monitoring of school food quality throughout the school day to ensure that children receive nutritious meals that support their health and ability to learn.
- 3) Introduce auto-enrolment for all pupils eligible for Free School Meals.
- 4) Make the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme a permanent statutory provision.
- 5) Introduce auto-enrolment onto the Healthy Start scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> As stated on Department for Education, *The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill: what parents need to know*, The Education Hub, December 2024: [The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill: what parents need to know – The Education Hub](#)

This submission is also relevant to proposed Amendments 28, NC2, NC5, NC8 and NC41.

### **Introduction:**

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill is a critical opportunity to introduce measures to tackle food insecurity among children, in turn protecting children's wellbeing and their ability to learn. Food insecurity rates are extremely high, particularly amongst households with children, and contribute to widening health inequalities across the UK:

- Food Foundation data from June 2024 found that 18.0% of households with children were affected by food insecurity, compared to 11.7% of households without children.<sup>2</sup>
- More healthy foods are over twice as expensive per calorie as less healthy foods. As such, the households with children in the most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 70% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government recommended healthy diet. This compares to just 12% for the least deprived fifth (Figure1).<sup>3</sup> Families facing food insecurity are also more likely to consume energy-dense and nutrient-poor diets than food secure households.<sup>4</sup>
- Among households that reported experiencing food insecurity in January 2024, 59.9% reported cutting back on purchasing fruit, compared to 10.7% of food secure households. A similar pattern was observed across vegetables (44.2% of food insecure households cutting back compared to 5.5% of food secure).<sup>5</sup>

### **Figure 1:**

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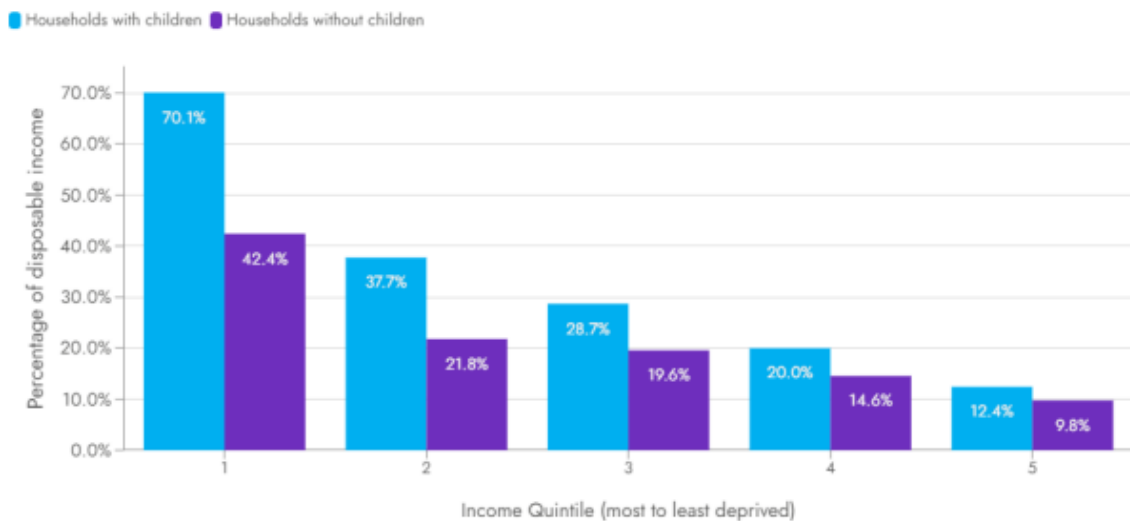
<sup>2</sup> The Food Foundation, Food Insecurity Tracker, Round 15 June 2024, available here: [Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation](#)

<sup>3</sup> The Food Foundation, *The Impossible Challenge: Affording healthy food for low income families with children*, July 2024: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/Affordability%20.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Food Foundation and City University, *From purse to plate: implications of the cost-of-living crisis on health*, March 2023: [TFF Cost of living briefing.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> The Food Foundation, *Food Insecurity Tracker Round 14*, January 2014: [Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation](#)

### Percentage of disposable income required to afford the Eatwell Guide by income quintile



The cost of the Eatwell Guide was calculated in May 2022 (FoodDB, Oxford University) and adjusted to April 2024 using CPI inflation data (Office for National Statistics).  
Income quintiles were calculated from the Family Resources Survey / Households Below Average Income 2022/23 (Department of Work and Pensions)



Food insecurity holds a host of negative consequences for children's health:

- Obesity levels among 10 to 11 year olds has increased by 30% since 2006 and type 2 diabetes among under 25s has increased by 22% in the past 5 years.<sup>6</sup> These are health problems that are largely preventable, if children had access to healthier diets.
- A greater reliance on cheap, high calorie foods for many food insecure households also contributes to widening health inequalities: children in the most deprived fifth of the population are more than twice as likely to experience obesity compared to the least deprived fifth.<sup>7</sup>
- Food insecurity not only affects children's physical health but their mental wellbeing too. Research conducted in 2020-1 found that 31% of food-insecure children feel stressed or worried every day, compared to 10% of food secure children.<sup>8</sup>
- Hunger is holding children back from reaching their potential at school: in a 2022 survey of over 500 teachers, when asked about children coming to school hungry, 88% reported pupils being excessively tired, 84% reported them being easily distracted, and 74% observed disruptive behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The Food Foundation, *A Neglected Generation: Reversing the decline in children's health in England*, June 2024, [TFF Children's Health Report\\_SEPT.pdf](#)

<sup>7</sup> The Food Foundation, *The Broken Plate 2023*, 2023 available here: [The Broken Plate 2023 | Food Foundation](#)

<sup>8</sup> Yang T.C. et al., *Are free school meals failing families? Exploring the relationship between child food insecurity, child mental health and free school meal status during COVID-19: national cross-sectional surveys, 2022*, *BMJ Open*: [e059047.full.pdf](#)

<sup>9</sup> Chefs in Schools, *Survation Chefs in Schools 2022 Survey*, 2022: available: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Below we set out the evidence for measures that should be considered within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill that would help to reduce food insecurity and increase access to healthy food for low-income families.

### **1. Ensure breakfast clubs reach children at greatest risk of food insecurity**

The inclusion of breakfast clubs in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill has the potential to reduce food insecurity and improve children's health, provided these are designed to reach children from lower socio-economic groups. Consideration should be given to evidence that:

- Many children skip breakfast and therefore may need to be incentivised to attend: a survey of primary and secondary schools in Norfolk conducted in 2017 found that 21.1% secondary and 11.7% of primary school children had only a non-energy drink or nothing at all for breakfast.<sup>10</sup>
- Skipping breakfast has been found to be more prevalent amongst pupils from lower socio-economic groups.<sup>11</sup>
- Skipping breakfast also becomes more common among older pupils, who are currently not included in the Bill's breakfast provision, with one survey finding that over half of girls aged 15+ report skipping breakfast on most or every day.<sup>12</sup>

The National Schools Breakfast Programme (NSBP) currently funds 75% of the cost of breakfast clubs in up to 2,700 schools nationally. These schools must meet eligibility criteria based on levels of income deprivation of pupils' families.<sup>13</sup> Funding for the NSBP runs until July 2025. The breakfast club offer will replace the NSBP in primary schools but there will be a gap in provision amongst secondary schools, Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision schools at secondary level in areas of high deprivation, which are currently receiving subsidised breakfasts.

### **Recommendations:**

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<sup>10</sup> Hayhoe R., et al, *Cross-sectional associations of schoolchildren's fruit and vegetable consumption, and meal choices, with their mental well-being: a cross-sectional study*, 2021, BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health, available: [Cross-sectional associations of schoolchildren's fruit and vegetable consumption, and meal choices, with their mental well-being: a cross-sectional study | BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health](#)

<sup>11</sup> Gibson-Moore H., et al., *No food for thought - How important is breakfast to the health, educational attainment and wellbeing of school-aged children and young people?*, 2023, Nutrition Bulletin, Volume 48, Issue 4, p.458-481, available: [No food for thought—How important is breakfast to the health, educational attainment and wellbeing of school-aged children and young people? - Gibson-Moore - 2023 - Nutrition Bulletin - Wiley Online Library](#)

<sup>12</sup> Magic Breakfast, *What's for breakfast?* Children, young people and parents reflect on their morning routines, May 2023: <https://www.magicbreakfast.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/whatsforbreakfastreport2023optimisedandinteractivev.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Department for Education, *National school breakfast club programme*, March 2024 update, available: [National school breakfast club programme - GOV.UK](#)

- Monitoring and evaluation should be introduced as part of the Bill to understand how well breakfast clubs are reaching pupils from low-income families (e.g. proxied by Free School Meal eligibility).
- Breakfast clubs should continue in secondary schools currently eligible for the NSBP.

This evidence is relevant to amendment 28.<sup>14</sup>

## **2. Introduce national monitoring of school food quality to ensure that children receive nutritious meals that support their health and ability to learn.**

The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill gives the ‘appropriate authority’ the power to decide what food to offer in the breakfast club, provided they meet the applicable ‘food standards duty’ (Clause 21).

### **A healthy breakfast has multiple benefits for children including:**

- Boosting educational attainment for pupils: evaluation of 106 breakfast clubs, where a nutritious breakfast was provided by Magic Breakfast, found that Year 2 children in schools with a breakfast club experienced around two months’ additional progress compared to Year 2 children in the other schools.<sup>15</sup>
- Improving mental wellbeing: there is an association between the type of breakfast and lunch consumed by pupils and their mental wellbeing. Analysis of a survey of primary and secondary schools in Norfolk conducted in 2017 found a positive correlation between fruit and vegetable consumption and mental wellbeing, with the highest well-being scores amongst students consuming five or more portions a day, and lowest amongst secondary school children who only consumed an energy drink for breakfast.<sup>16</sup>
- Increasing intake of key nutrients that are currently below recommended levels of intake at a population level: this includes fibre (in wholegrain cereals, wholemeal breads, fruit, vegetables and beans), B vitamins (in fortified breakfast cereals, milk and yoghurt) and iron (in fortified breakfast cereals, wholemeal breads and dried fruit).<sup>17</sup>

### **However, evaluation of existing breakfast schemes finds that breakfast clubs are often failing to meet the school food standards:**

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<sup>14</sup> House of Commons, *Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (Amendment Paper)*, Committee Stage: Thursday 23 January 2025, available: [children\\_day\\_pbc\\_0123](#)

<sup>15</sup> Education Endowment Foundation, *Magic Breakfast: Evaluation report and executive summary*, December 2019, available: [Magic Breakfast report.pdf](#)

<sup>16</sup> Hayhoe R., et al, *Cross-sectional associations of schoolchildren’s fruit and vegetable consumption, and meal choices, with their mental well-being: a cross-sectional study*, 2021, BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health, available: [Cross-sectional associations of schoolchildren’s fruit and vegetable consumption, and meal choices, with their mental well-being: a cross-sectional study | BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health](#)

<sup>17</sup> British Nutrition Foundation, *Good Breakfast Guide*, available: [Good Breakfast Guide \(Booklet \(Small\)\)](#)

- Evaluation of the breakfast offer at 17 primary schools in Yorkshire found that fruit and water were not always offered at breakfast.<sup>18</sup>
- Results from the scale-up evaluation of the NSBP found that from 1,743 schools, 33.2% were failing to serve fruit and 23.7% were serving sugary cereals or spreads.<sup>19</sup>
- While there is good practice in some schools, many schools are still failing to meet the School Food Standards: Food for Life estimates that up to 60% of secondary schools are non-compliant with the School Food Standards because of a lack of monitoring.<sup>20</sup>
- Similarly, Birmingham University’s EPIC project found that secondary schools are not meeting the school food standards throughout the school day, but particularly at breakfast and brektime.<sup>21</sup>

Although the Bill states that breakfasts should meet School Food Standards, there is no provision for monitoring compliance. The Food Standards Agency, supported by Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, have piloted a model for monitoring, which found that Food Safety Officers were able to conduct checks on standards alongside their normal food safety and hygiene checks. The pilot worked well for schools and the Food Safety Officers, although it found that their needs to be a follow-up process for addressing non-compliance.<sup>22</sup>

#### **Recommendations:**

- The Children’s Wellbeing Bill should introduce a national system of monitoring school food standards, and a process for supporting schools where there is non-compliance. This monitoring should include monitoring of the food offer at breakfast, brektimes and lunch.<sup>23</sup>

This evidence is also relevant to proposed Amendment NC41.

### **3. Building on the benefits of breakfast clubs, ensuring all eligible pupils can receive a Free School Meal at lunch would further help to reduce food insecurity and improve children’s health.**

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<sup>18</sup> Gansallo P., et al., *Breakfast Clubs: A Yorkshire Based Review*, August 2024, available: [Breakfast-Clubs-Report-August-2024.pdf](#)

<sup>19</sup> Bogiatzis-Gibbons D., et al, *The National School Breakfast Programme: Scale-up Evaluation Report*, September 2021, Education Endowment Foundation, available: [National-School-Breakfast-Programme.pdf](#)

<sup>20</sup> Food for Life, *State of the Nation: Children’s Food in England 2018*, Soil Association 2018: [state-of-the-nation-soil-association-report.pdf](#)

<sup>21</sup> Murphy M. et al., *Promoting Healthier Food in secondary schools*, May 2024, [Epic Food Study: Promoting healthier food in secondary schools](#)

<sup>22</sup> Food Standards Agency, *News: Food Standards Agency publishes final report on School Food Standards compliance pilot*, August 2024, <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/food-standards-agency-publishes-final-report-on-school-food-standards-compliance-pilot>

<sup>23</sup> House of Commons, *Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (Amendment Paper)*, Committee Stage: Thursday 23 January 2025, available: [children\\_day\\_pbc\\_0123](#)

Free school meals at lunchtime have multiple benefits for children's wellbeing including:

- Increased attainment, attendance and earning potential: there is already strong evidence that a free school lunch improves children's health, academic performance and future earnings.<sup>24</sup>
- Reduced food insecurity: Free School Meals assure children one hot meal per day and take significant pressure off family budgets.
- Improved children's nutrition and health: School meals should guarantee that children receive a nutritious meal. Fewer than 2% of packed lunches meet School Food Standards.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, as they are embedded during the school day, a free school lunch is accessible to all eligible pupils, whereas breakfast clubs risk being missed by pupils who are unable to get to school early.

Although exact figures are unknown, the latest figures suggest that approximately 11% of children in England are missing out on their statutory right to a free school meal, despite meeting the eligibility criteria.<sup>26</sup> This may be due to the administrative burden of the current application process or stigma associated with applying.

In response to this gap between eligibility and free school meal take-up, some local authorities have piloted 'opt-out' schemes, whereby eligible families are signed up to free school meals unless they choose not to. When successfully introduced, these local schemes have helped to increase uptake, particularly amongst minority groups.<sup>27</sup>

However, these local authority-led 'opt-out' schemes are resource intensive and challenging to implement,<sup>28</sup> and therefore may not be feasible for all local authorities. Reported challenges include receiving conflicting legal advice about data-sharing, capacity and time pressures and enrolling pupils who attend school in a local authority different to the one they live in.<sup>29</sup> A local-led approach also creates an unfair postcode lottery depending on which local authority manages to implement the process.

Instead, a national process of Free School Meal auto-enrolment is needed, which would register eligible families using benefits data, unless families decide to opt out. This requires data-sharing

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<sup>24</sup> Feed the Future, *The Superpowers of Free School Meals Evidence Pack*, 2022, available: [FSM Evidence Pack\\_0.pdf](#)

<sup>25</sup> Evans C.E.L et al., *A repeated cross-sectional survey assessing changes in diet and nutrient quality of English primary school children's packed lunches between 2006 and 2016*, 2020, BMJ Open, [e029688.full.pdf](#)

<sup>26</sup> Lord A., et al. *Pupils not claiming Free School Meals*, December 2013, Department for Education, [DFE-RR319.pdf](#)

<sup>27</sup> Oxley R., et al, *Improving access to free school meals: evaluating the implementation of a new free school meal auto-enrolment process*, 2024, The Lancet, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(24\)02007-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(24)02007-5/fulltext)

<sup>28</sup> Bryant M., et al, *FixOurFood Free School Meal Auto-enrolment action-oriented project*, Nov 2023, available: <https://fixourfood.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FixOurFood-Auto-E-Report-Nov-2023-v5.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> The Food Foundation, Fix Our Food, Bremner and Co. *Local Authority Case Studies*, 2024, <https://fixourfood.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/FixOurFood-Auto-E-Report-Nov-2023-v5.pdf>

between the Department for Work & Pensions (who hold data that identifies children who are eligible for these schemes) and the Department of Education (who administer the scheme).

**Recommendation:**

- The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill should introduce a national process of auto-enrolment for Free School Meals. This will require a nationwide system and data-sharing process between the relevant government departments.

This evidence all supports proposed amendments NC2 and NC8.<sup>30</sup> Amendments NC31 and NC32 would also improve access to Free School Meals.

**4. The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill is an opportunity to make the Holiday Activities and Food Programme a statutory provision:**

One of the aims of the HAF programme is to ensure that children receive a healthy and nutritious meal during the school holidays.<sup>31</sup> The school holidays are a known pressure point for families, where they face extra food and childcare costs and can have reduced incomes due to time off work to care for children. Evaluation of the HAF programme shows multiple benefits to families, including:

- In a qualitative review of holiday clubs delivered in Yorkshire as part of HAF, parents reported that children were eating more healthily and experiencing a wide variety of foods during holiday programmes.<sup>32</sup>
- Analysis of meals at five holiday clubs in areas of high deprivation found children eligible for free school meals who attended a holiday club had better quality diets on days they attended a club than non-attendance days.<sup>33</sup>
- Providing free childcare to working families and reducing the costs associated with the loss of free school meals.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> House of Commons, *Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill (Amendment Paper)*, Committee Stage: Thursday 23 January 2025, available: [children day pbc 0123](#)

<sup>31</sup> Department for Education, *Holiday activities and food programme 2023*, updated March 2024, [Holiday activities and food programme 2023 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>32</sup> The Food Foundation and FixOurFood, *A Yorkshire-based review of the implementation and impact of the Holiday Activities and Food programme*, October 2021, [HAF Evaluation PrelimReport 0.pdf](#)

<sup>33</sup> Crilley E., et al, *The Diet of Children Attending a Holiday Programme in the UK: Adherence to the UK Food-Based Dietary Guidelines and School Food Standards*, Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health 2022, 19(1), 55; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010055>

<sup>34</sup> Feeding Britain, *Healthy Holidays*, accessed January 2025: [Healthy Holidays - Feeding Britain](#)



- Helping to reduce learning loss over the summer holidays and instead providing enriching activities and physical activity.<sup>35</sup>

However, HAF funding is currently committed on a short-term basis. Whilst the current funding has just been extended for a year, short-term extensions periodically leave local authorities unable to plan provision in the long-term, creating uncertainty for club providers and leaving children and risk of holiday hunger if funding is not renewed.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill should enshrine the HAF programme in law. This means going beyond committing to short-term funding and making the HAF programme a permanent statutory provision.

This evidence is also relevant to proposed amendment NC5.

### **5. Introducing auto-enrolment for the Healthy Start scheme as part of the bill will support children from low-income families in their early years to get the best start in life**

The early years are a critical window of opportunity to support lifelong health, aid a child’s development and learning, and to lower the risk of diet-related illnesses later in life.<sup>36</sup> Gaps in achievement are already seen at the start of primary school, and dietary inequalities during infancy and early childhood are contributing to nutrition-related ill health across the UK. The early years are therefore a critical component of ensuring child development and wellbeing.

- Food insecurity levels are highest among households with young children. According to data from the Food Foundation, almost 1 in 4 (23.6%) of households with a child under the age of 4 were experiencing food insecurity in January 2024.<sup>37</sup>
- In the first year of school, the prevalence of obesity is over twice as high amongst children living in the most deprived areas in England (12.9%) compared with those living in the least deprived areas (6.0%).<sup>38</sup>
- By age 5, UK children are up to 7cm shorter on average than their peers in other high-income countries, indicating poor-quality diets.<sup>39</sup>
- Almost a quarter (24%) of 5-year-olds have dental decay, with 2.5 times as many children in the most deprived fifth affected compared with the least deprived fifth.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Feeding Britain, *Healthy Holidays*, accessed January 2025: [Healthy Holidays - Feeding Britain](#)

<sup>36</sup> Blake-Lamb TL, et al. *Interventions for Childhood Obesity in the First 1,000 Days A Systematic Review*. Am J Prev Med. 2016 Jun;50(6):780-789. [Interventions for Childhood Obesity in the First 1,000 Days A Systematic Review - PubMed](#)

<sup>37</sup> The Food Foundation, Food Insecurity Tracker, Round 14, January 2024, [Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation](#)

<sup>38</sup> NHS England, *National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2023/24 School Year*, November 2024: [National Child Measurement Programme, England, 2023/24 School Year - NHS England Digital](#)

<sup>39</sup> NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, *Height: United Kingdom, 2020*, [Height > Data Download > NCD-RisC](#)

<sup>40</sup> The Food Foundation, *Broken Plate 2023, 2023*, [TFF\\_The Broken Plate 2023\\_Digital\\_FINAL..pdf](#)

The Healthy Start Scheme provides £4.25 per week to pregnant women and parents of children under 4 in very low-income families. The value is £8.50 for children from birth until their first birthday, and can be spent on fruit, vegetables, pulses, cow's milk and first infant formula. The scheme has been shown to:

- 6) Increase spending on fruit and vegetables: research found that this increased by 15%, equivalent to an additional 1.8kg of fruit and vegetables per month, or 22 portions.<sup>41</sup>
- 7) Improve dietary choices: one survey found that women registered for the scheme reported that Healthy Start made them think more about their health and diet, and this led to families establishing good habits for the future.<sup>42</sup>
- 8) Positively impact household finances: reports from interviews with Healthy Start recipients, local authorities and third sector organisations indicated that the Healthy Start scheme was highly valued, positively impacted household finances and what families ate.<sup>43</sup>
- 9) Help with the cost of infant formula, although these costs remain very high<sup>44</sup> with only five brands available in a standard 800g tin within the value of a weekly Healthy Start payment for a child under one (£8.50).<sup>45</sup>

However, various factors, including lack of awareness of the scheme, complex eligibility criteria and application processes, means that many eligible families are not signed up to receive Healthy Start.<sup>46</sup>

### Recommendation:

- The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill should introduce a national process of auto-enrolment for the Healthy Start scheme. This will require a nationwide system and data-sharing process between the relevant government departments.

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<sup>41</sup> Griffith et al., *Getting a healthy start: The effectiveness of targeted benefits for improving dietary choices*, *J Health Econ.* 2018 Mar;58:176-187. [Getting a healthy start: The effectiveness of targeted benefits for improving dietary choices](#) - PubMed

<sup>42</sup> McFadden A., et al., *Can food vouchers improve nutrition and reduce health inequalities in low-income mothers and young children: a multi-method evaluation of the experiences of beneficiaries and practitioners of the Healthy Start programme in England*, *BMC Public Health* **14**, 148 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-148>

<sup>43</sup> Barrett M. et al., *The Healthy Start scheme in England "is a lifeline for families but many are missing out": a rapid qualitative analysis*, *BMC Medicine*, 2024, [The Healthy Start scheme in England "is a lifeline for families but many are missing out": a rapid qualitative analysis | BMC Medicine | Full Text](#)

<sup>44</sup> The Food Foundation, *The First Infant Milk Formula Update October 2024*, November 2024, [Kids Food Guarantee: First Infant Milk Formula Update October 2024 | Food Foundation](#)

<sup>45</sup> First Steps Nutrition Trust, *Costs of infant formula, follow-on formula and milks marketed as foods for special medical purposes available over the counter in the UK*, November 2024, [Costs-of-IF-FOF-and-milks-marketed-as-FSMP-available-over-the-counter-in-the-UK- November-2024.pdf](#)

<sup>46</sup> Due to data quality issues, data on the number of people eligible for Healthy Start and the take up rates have not been available since January 2023. Previous figures but the take-up at around 60% (NHS): <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>

Links to relevant Food Foundation briefings:

- [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill Recommendations](#)
- [Free School Meal auto-enrolment](#)
- [Healthy Start](#)

The Food Foundation, January 2025

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