

Free meals and summer holiday activities for children

Thousands more children across the country will get a healthy and nutritious breakfast to set them up for the school day, thanks to an additional investment of up to £11.8 million by the government to support disadvantaged families.

So far around 1,800 school breakfast clubs have been created or improved by the National School Breakfast Programme in disadvantaged areas and thanks to this additional investment up to 650 more schools will benefit in the next year, with resources specifically targeted at the most disadvantaged areas to help make sure every child gets the best start in life.

Underlining the government's bold manifesto pledge to level up across the country and create a £1 billion fund for more high quality wraparound and holiday childcare places, thousands more disadvantaged children will also be offered activities and free meals during the six week summer holiday in 2020, funded by £9 million from the Department for Education. The department will announce the areas that will benefit from this funding shortly.

Schools Minister Lord Agnew said:

We want every child to lead a healthy, active and happy lifestyle regardless of their background. That's why we are giving thousands more children in disadvantaged areas the opportunity to attend a breakfast club, which will help boost attendance, behaviour and attainment, helping them to achieve their best in school.

Where I want children to succeed, I also want them to grow up happy and confident, ready to take on challenges. Investing in enriching, rewarding summer activities next year will help keep them active and encourage them to get involved in their communities.

Family Action, in partnership with Magic Breakfast, will continue to run the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP) until March 2021. This one-year extension will kick-start self-sustaining clubs in schools in disadvantaged areas. So far the two charities have recruited over 1,800 schools in disadvantaged areas, and report that over 280,000 breakfasts are served in these schools every day through the programme.

David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive at Family Action, said:

Thanks to the successful National School Breakfast Programme, we are already providing a free, nutritious breakfast every school day

to over 280,000 children in some of the most deprived areas of England. Family Action is delighted that the new funding announced today by the Department for Education ensures that the NSBP will now continue for an extra year.

The new funding means that we can offer an additional term of support to more than 1,800 existing NSBP schools and support up to 650 new schools to kick start or improve their breakfast provision. Every single meal that is being provided through this programme is making an immediate difference to children across the country every day. It is literally fuelling learning.

Carmel McConnell, MBE, founder of Magic Breakfast, said:

A hungry pupil cannot learn, simple as that, so in the spirit of levelling up and unleashing Britain's potential, it is great news that NSBP funding has been extended. Headteachers tell us that the Magic Breakfast model creates improvements in pupil behaviour, punctuality, attendance and wellbeing as a result of the NSBP.

This funding allows the award-winning Family Action and Magic Breakfast NSBP partnership to reach even more hungry schoolchildren with the nourishment they so urgently need. It's a fantastic investment in their future and the future of this country.

The Holiday Activities and Food scheme follows successful programmes in 2018 and 2019, which saw charities and community groups provide meals and activities such as football, play sessions and cooking classes for children across the country. Around 18,000 children benefited in 2018, and the programme was expanded in 2019, with around 50,000 children enjoying this free holiday provision this year. The Department launched a recruitment process to find co-ordinators to run similar programmes in 2020.

Through these breakfast and holiday programmes, parents will also have access to information so that they can learn how best to provide their children with healthy food, as an additional new strand of our overall provision next year.