

News story: Thousands more school children receiving a nutritious breakfast

Thousands more children across the country are now getting a healthy and nutritious start to the day at a new or improved school breakfast club, the Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi has announced today.

The figures, published by Family Action, follow the investment of up to £26 million announced by the Education Secretary in March for two leading charities to run clubs to improve breakfast for pupils in more than 1,700 schools by 2020.

Since March, 500 schools have already signed up to the National School Breakfast Programme delivered by Family Action – in partnership with Magic Breakfast. Under this programme, Family Action has reported that:

- 15,000 breakfasts are already being served every day to children – many from disadvantaged families; and
- 500 new or improved breakfast clubs have signed up to the programme – with more than 150 already up and running in schools.

This programme is focused on the most disadvantaged parts of the country, including the government's 12 Opportunity Areas – which are receiving a share of £72 million to help raise education standards in areas where children face greater challenges. The government is now encouraging more schools in disadvantaged areas to join the breakfast clubs programme.

Research from the Education Endowment Foundation shows that breakfast clubs that offer pupils in primary schools a free and nutritious meal before school can boost their reading, writing and maths results. As well as providing a nutritious meal, many clubs offer children the chance to be more active and provide extra-curricular activities such as extra reading sessions to improve their learning.

Following the success of the programme to date, which is funded by the soft drinks industry levy, the government is working with the charities to encourage more schools and organisations to provide breakfast. It is part of a wider drive to help children lead healthier lives and support the country's most disadvantaged families.

Minister for Children and Families Nadhim Zahawi said:

We want every child to have the best possible start in life, and that means getting the best possible start to their day. It's fantastic to see the positive effect that new breakfast clubs are having right across the country – particularly in our most disadvantaged areas.

We have already made strides in our attempts to help every child reach their potential, with 300,000 fewer children living in absolute poverty in this country and the attainment gap between rich and poor pupils reduced by 10 per cent, but we know there is more to do.

That's why I want to encourage schools to take part in this rewarding programme that is already providing a boost in so many of our classrooms.

Family Action and Magic Breakfast are already working with the government to help encourage more children to attend the clubs by asking schools to collaborate and share best practice.

This includes £2 million for projects to encourage children to eat a healthy breakfast, and improve the way that schools share best practice.

Today's announcement builds on Family Action's extensive range of family and school support services nationwide, and Magic Breakfast's previous partnership with the Department for Education – establishing breakfast provision in 183 schools from 2014 to 2016.

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

Family Action is delighted to be leading the delivery of the National School Breakfast Programme in partnership with Magic Breakfast. This is a huge opportunity to make a difference to the lives of tens of thousands of children. The progress of the programme so far has been amazing and we are so impressed with the enthusiasm of schools to take part and their eagerness to engage with our dedicated team.

We want to ensure we help as many children as possible start the day with a healthy breakfast and ready to learn, We are encouraging all eligible schools to get in touch with us as soon as possible so you can become part of the programme too.

Carmel McConnell, MBE, Founder of Magic Breakfast said:

We are really happy to work alongside Family Action and the DfE to welcome so many fantastic schools to the National School Breakfast Programme. Each school is receiving the tried and tested Magic Breakfast model of support, which we know boosts educational outcomes, and we are really keen to reach all eligible schools.

Schools tell us that the most important lessons are taught in the morning, so we are delighted that so many more children who may not have access to food at home can now eat a healthy breakfast at school to give them the energy and focus they need to be able to

learn.

The National School Breakfast Programme is part of the government's drive to support an active and healthy childhood. It builds on the recent doubling of the Primary PE and Sport Premium to £320 million a year to improve PE and sport in schools, alongside the £100 million Healthy Pupils Capital Fund to improve school facilities that help young people live healthier lifestyles.

Today's announcement, and the investment of up to £26 million in breakfast clubs, builds on the Government's support for the most disadvantaged families, including £2 million invested in summer 2018 to pilot ways to ensure children get continued access to healthy meals and activities during the holidays.