

**NO CHILD
LEFT BEHIND**



The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

National Education Union
Hamilton House
Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9BD
0345 811 8111
neu.org.uk

Tuesday 13 July 2021

Dear Prime Minister,
CC: Chancellor and Education Secretary

We write to you today because we believe action to counter food insecurity for children is urgent and can't wait. There are 1.7 million children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in England. Over half a million of those became eligible for FSM between March and December 2020 as the economic impact of Covid-19 took effect.

Food insecurity is a part of everyday life for many children eligible for FSM, and for those growing up in poverty in the UK, this bites particularly hard during periods of school closure.

The public have made their support for ensuring children receive FSM in the holidays really clear. More than one million people signed Marcus Rashford's petition last year calling on Government to expand eligibility and access to Free School Meals.

Over the course of the pandemic the Government sensibly acknowledged the shocking reality of holiday hunger by expanding the FSM voucher scheme to include the Easter and summer holidays in 2020, as well as the week of the May half-term. And while the expansion of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme is welcomed, it has limitations. Local authorities are only able to provide support to families for four days a week, across four weeks of the holiday, which is equivalent to 16 out of 30 weekdays.

We urge the Government to re-introduce the scheme implemented during previous school holidays, in which families were allocated £15 per child every week, to cover the entirety of the upcoming six-week summer break.

Come September, many children will come back to school hungry, malnourished and unable to concentrate. The Government has pledged to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds aren't left behind - but a lack of regular, dependable nutritious meals has a huge impact on learning and engagement when children and young people return to school.

Government must act now – before the end of term – to confirm the direct funding for provision of the Free School Meals voucher scheme for eligible children over the summer holidays, to leave no child behind. School leaders need clarity as soon as possible.

Yours,

Dr Mary Bousted & Kevin Courtney,
Joint General Secretaries, National Education Union

Cosigned by:

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle
Green Party

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb
Green Party

Lord Blunkett
Labour

Lord Hendy QC
Labour

Lord Knight of Weymouth
Labour

Kim Johnson MP
Labour, Liverpool Riverside

Apsana Begum MP
Labour, Poplar and Limehouse

Dan Carden MP
Labour, Liverpool Walton

Maria Eagle MP
Labour, Garston and Halewood

Caroline Lucas MP
Green, Brighton Pavillion

Clive Lewis MP
Labour, Norwich South

Kate Osborne MP
Labour, Jarrow

Mick Whitley MP
Labour, Birkenhead

Diane Abbott MP
**Labour, Hackney North and
Stoke Newington**

Daisy Cooper MP
Liberal Democrat, St Albans

Emma Lewell-Buck MP
Labour, South Shields

Stella Creasy MP
**Labour and Cooperative,
Walthamstow**

Emma Hardy MP
Labour, Hull West and Hessle

Jane Malcolm
CEO, Level Trust

Andy Elvin
CEO, TACT Fostering

Claire Donovan
**Head of Policy, Research &
Campaigns, End Furniture Poverty**

Paddy Lillis,
General Secretary, USDAW

Thomas Lawson
Chief Executive, Turn2us

Fiona Ellwood
Society of British Dental Nurses

Thomas Croft & Diana Skelton
**National Coordination Team, ATD
Fourth World**

Jon Richards
Assistant General Secretary, UNISON

Christina Marriott,
CEO, Royal Society for Public Health

Anela Anwar
Chief Executive, Z2K

Eddie Crouch, Chair
British Dental Association

John Tizard
**Director, Taxpayers Against
Poverty**

James Toop
CEO, Bite Back 2030

Debs McCahon
Chief Executive, Woodcraft Folk

Sally Bunday MBE
**Director, Hyperactive Children's
Support Group**

Kate Bell
**Head of Rights, International,
Social and Economics, TUC**

Dr. Maria Bryant
**Chair, Association for the Study
of Obesity**

Celine McStravick
**Strategic Director, National
Children's Bureau**

Jill Attenborough
CEO, County Trust

Joe Howes
CEO, Buttle UK

Victoria Benson
Chief Executive, Gingerbread

Dan Paskins
**Director of UK Impact, Save The
Children UK**

Deborah Lawson
**Assistant General Secretary
(Voice section), Community
Trade Union**

