

UIFSM: Benefits and Future School Food Service Provision

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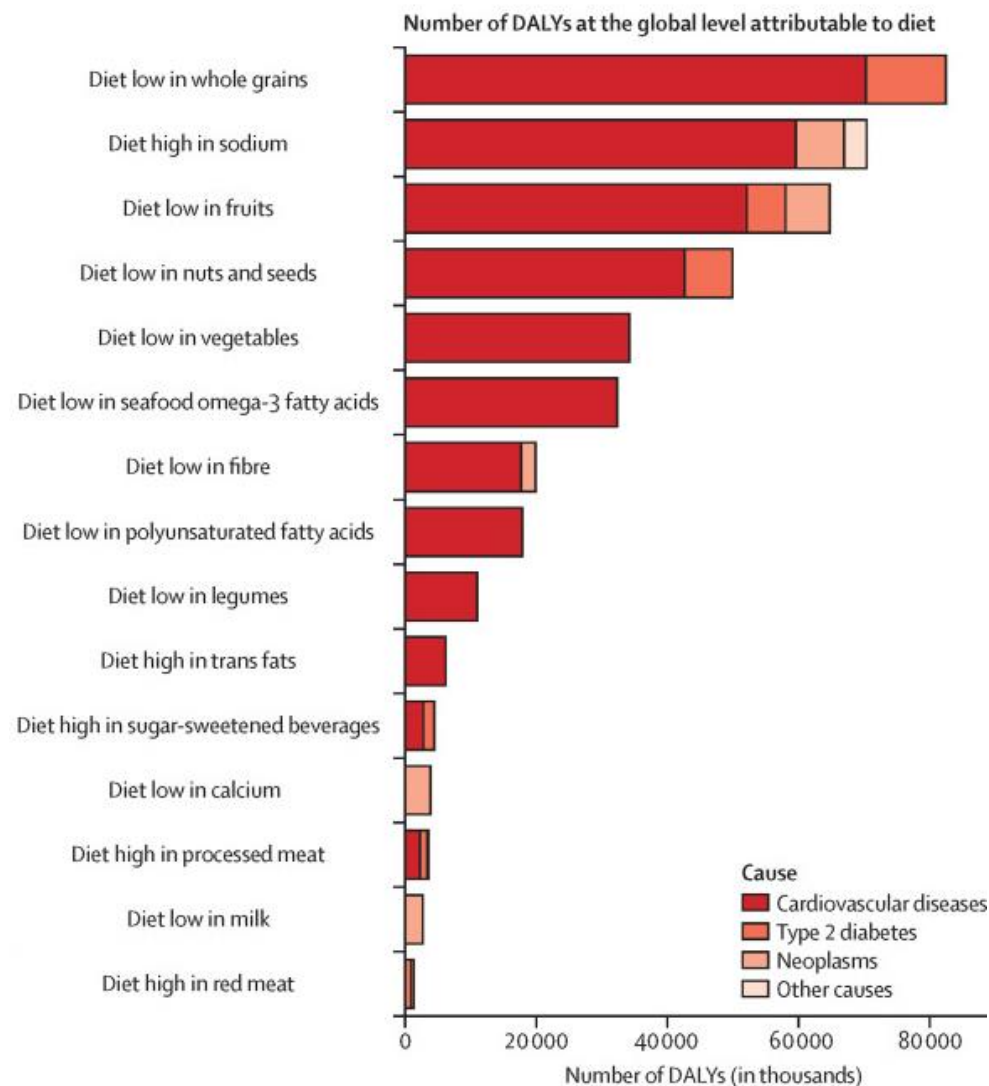
In developing its plans for phased reopening of schools, the DfE has had to grapple with balancing the educational needs of children against the spread of the virus and the lack of school readiness



2,500 children admitted to hospital
suffering from malnutrition (IFAN, 2020)

Dietary habit and risk of future disease

- The Global Burden of Disease
 - A recent Gates Foundation-funded project
 - Data from 195 countries
- Poor diet is responsible for more deaths and illnesses than any other risk factor globally
 - Low intake of whole grains
 - High intake of sodium
 - Low intake of fruits



Developing healthy dietary habits at an early age

- Dietary habits developed at early ages “track” into later life
 - Affects future risk of disease
- Ensuring healthy eating is “normal” can pay dividends for years to come
 - Schools provide the ideal platform to achieve this
- Poor health status in childhood may also track into adulthood

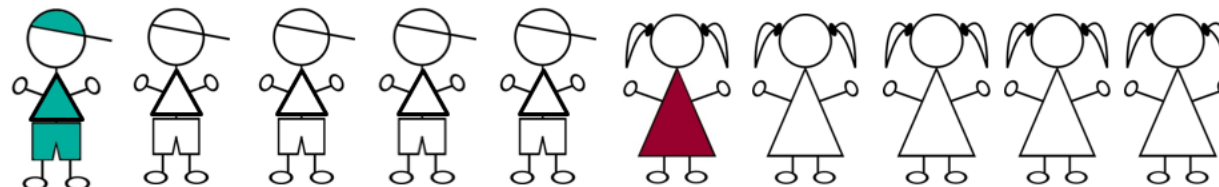


Public Health
England

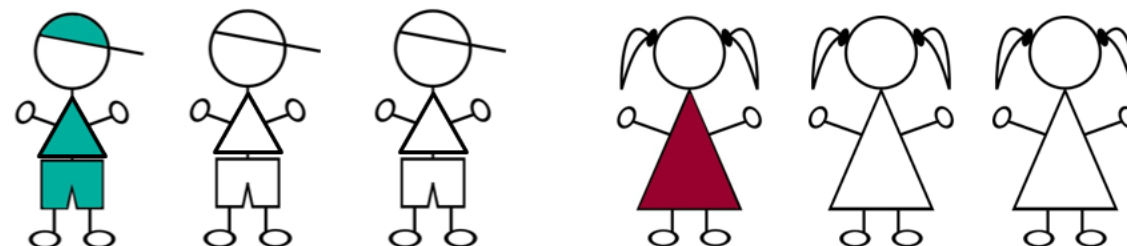
Prevalence of excess weight among children

National Child Measurement Programme 2014/15

One in five children in Reception is overweight or obese (boys 22.6%, girls 21.2%)



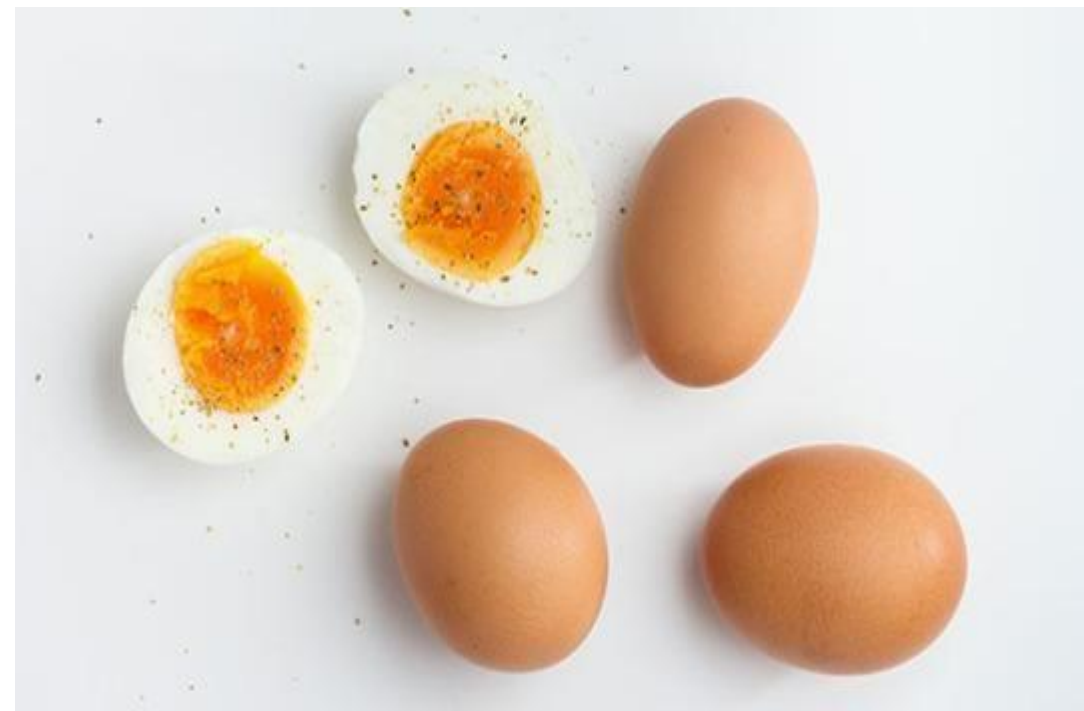
One in three children in Year 6 is overweight or obese (boys 34.9%, girls 31.5%)



Child overweight (including obesity)/ excess weight: BMI \geq 85th centile of the UK90 growth reference

The importance of school lunch

- c. 30% of total energy intake comes from lunch in UK children
- Meal skipping vs. School lunch
 - Worse intake and missed opportunities
- Off-campus food vs. School lunch
 - High fat, sugar and salt options
- Home-packed vs. School lunch
 - <2% of packed lunches meet School Food Standards (Evans et al., 2020)



School lunch and dietary habit

- A single food choice is neither “good” or “bad”
 - ... but dietary habit can be
- Free school lunch provision in Sweden (since 1973) and Finland continues to improve overall population-level habits towards notional ideals



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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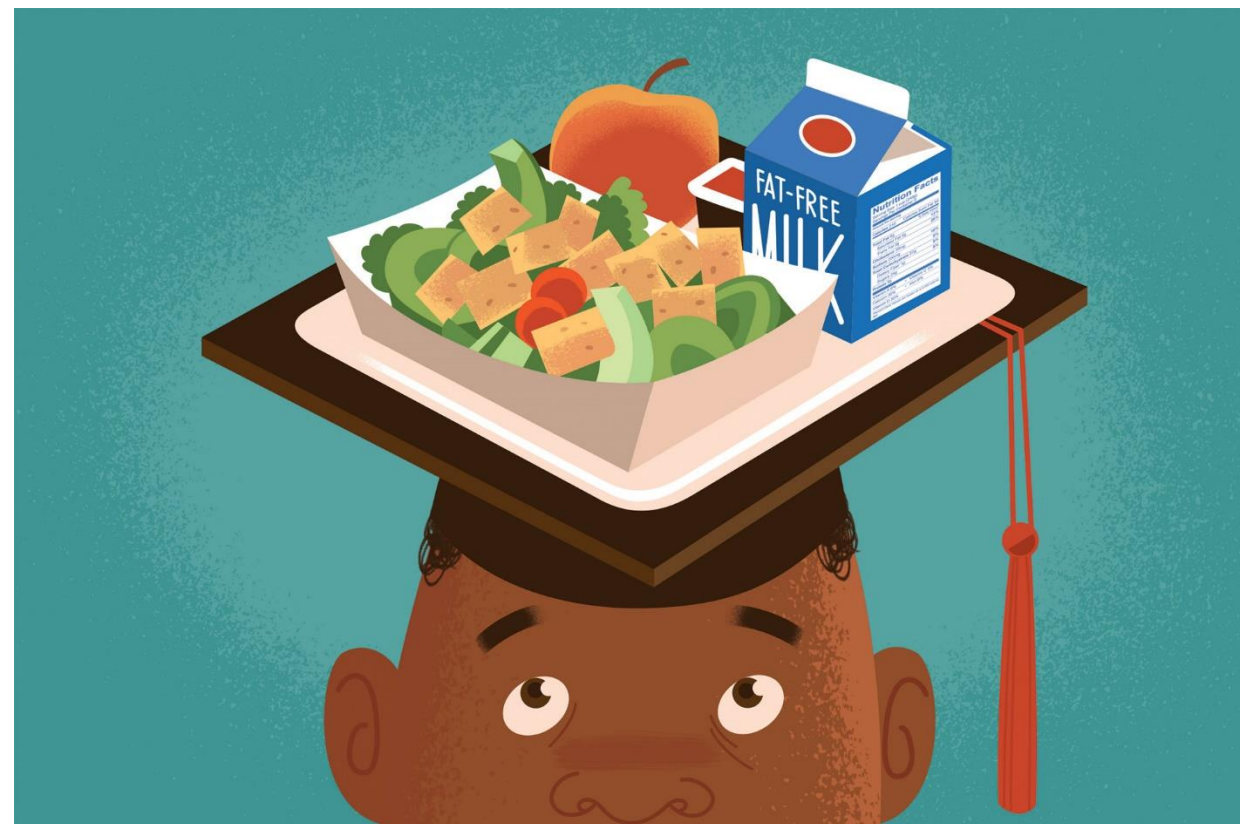
School lunch and health status

- Short-term impacts of diet and lifestyle do not equate to longer-term health outcomes
 - Long-term changes are difficult to measure
- BMI status
 - Strongly linked to long-term dietary habit
 - Ideal body weight status reduces risk of physical and mental health issues
 - Impact of free school lunch uptake on body weight outcome (reduction 7%; Rabe & Holford, 2020)



School lunch cognition and attainment

- Somewhat mixed results
 - ... but few negative findings
- Short-term outcomes
 - Appropriate behaviour
 - Attention
 - Acute tests
- Long-term outcomes
 - Subject-specific test performance?
 - **Reasoning ability?**



Recommendations

- Develop a coherent approach to feeding children at school; not a x or y approach.
- Monitor all food provision to ensure quality and equity.
- Work towards ensuring a consistent quality offer regardless of postcode (free school meal vouchers)
- Extend UIFSM School Meal Service to tackle obesity and malnutrition across all year groups. Cost analysis needs to be undertaken in relation to provision and longer term gains (dietary intake and habits, employment etc.).
- Institutional food insecurity/rights based approach.
- Ensure measures of social value and human capital are included in all catering contracts
- Align to SDGs and the National Food Strategy.