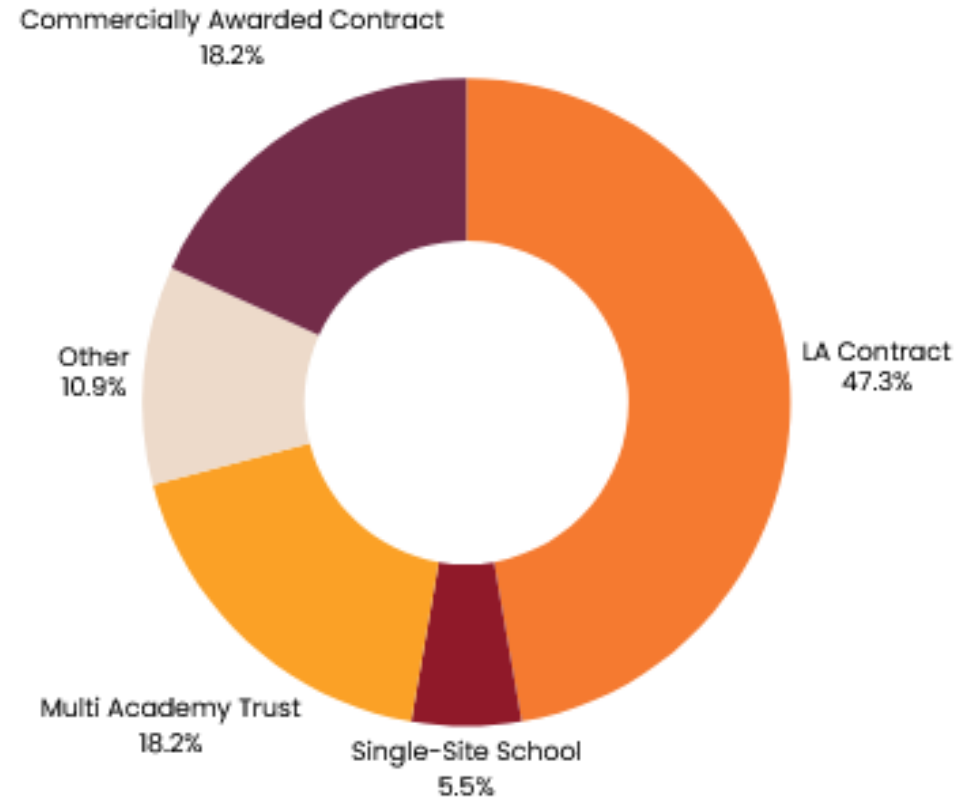
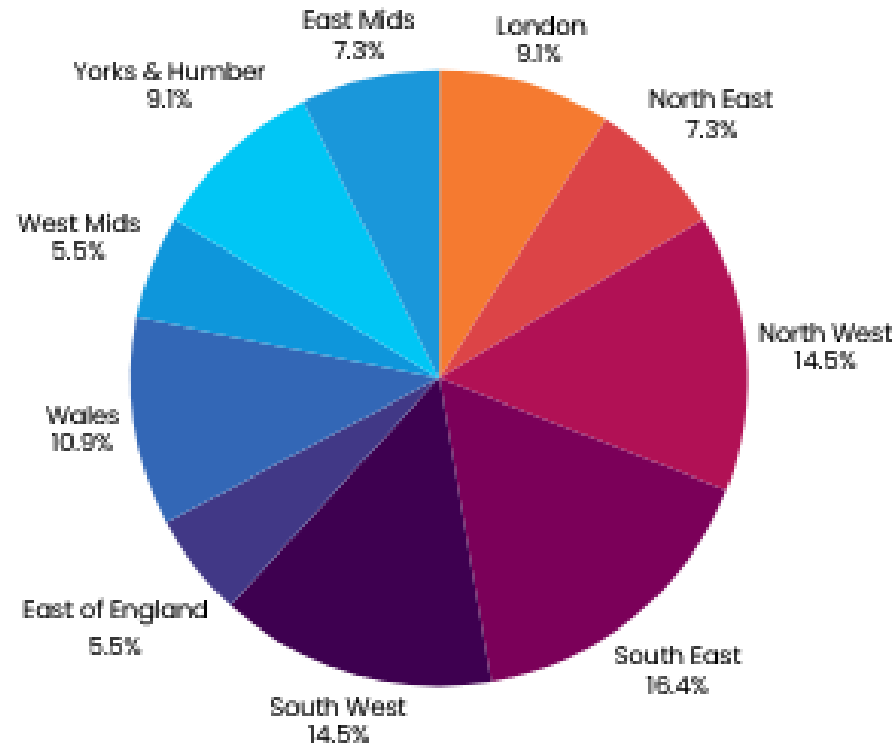


Survey Results



Members from across the LACA membership ranging from single-site providers, LA's and large commercial providers from England & Wales completed the survey.

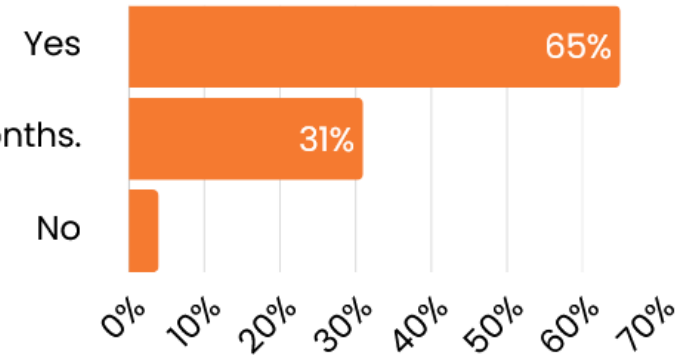
These respondents provide services across more than 4,695 schools feeding c. 1.4m pupils every day.



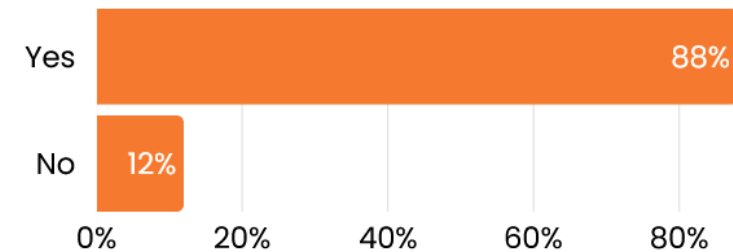
Who responded?

Are you able to maintain the School Food Standards/Guidelines (England/Wales) on your current menu cycle?

Yes, but changes may be needed within six months.



Do you believe the current School Food Standards/Guidelines (England/Wales) need to be reviewed?

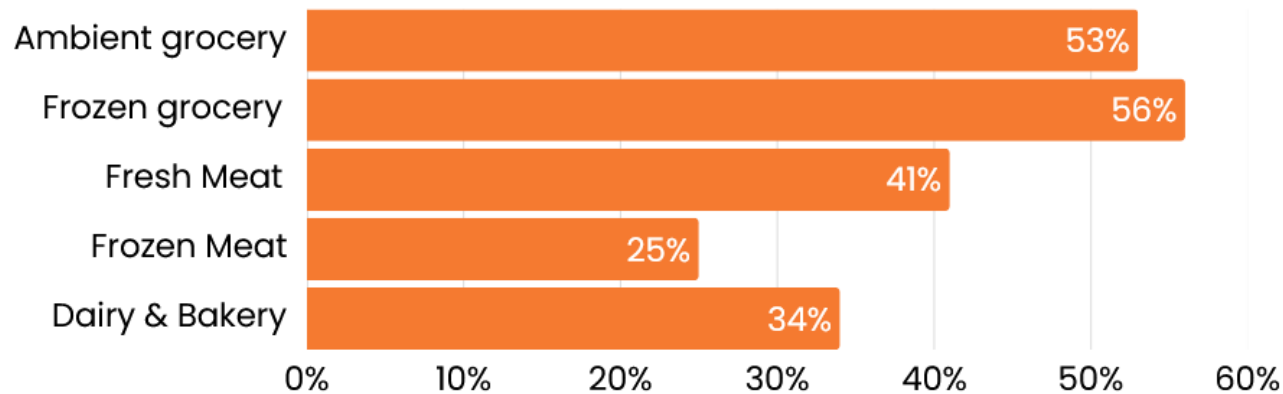


- **Portions:** Age-appropriate sizes; flexible across meals (breakfast, lunch, after school)
- **Nutrition:** More plant-based foods; updated guidance on UPFs, sugar, salt, and fats; clearer definitions of processed/fried foods.
- **Menu Appeal:** Focus on meals pupils will eat; culturally appropriate, practical, and low-waste options.
- **Support:** Better training, guidance, and consistent enforcement across schools.
- **Funding:** Standards must match resources; review FSM allowance.
- **Sustainability:** Integrate sustainable choices and reduce food waste.

A full summary of feedback is available in the full report.

59% of survey respondents have continued to experience shortages and substitutions that impact their operation in the past six months, this has changed very little since May, when **58%** of respondents reported they were experiencing issues.

We asked which food categories have been most affected over the last six months:

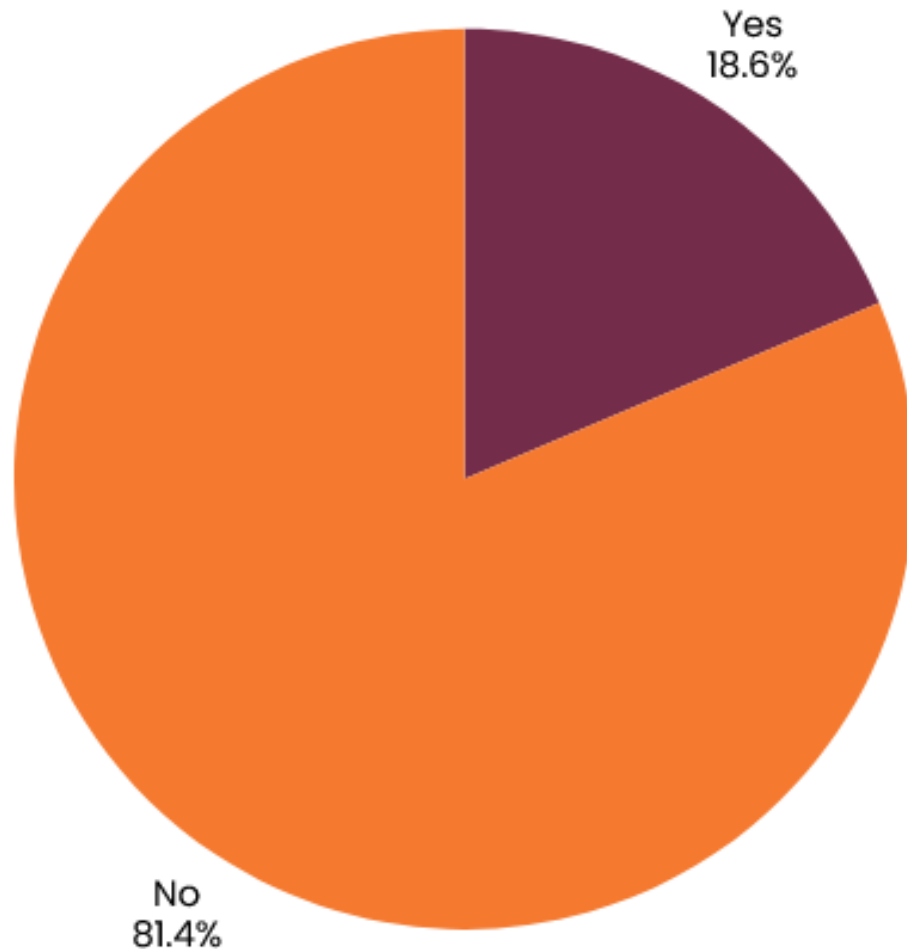


What emphasis do you place on supporting “buying British/local foods”?

- **High support in principle** - many respondents describe it as a “high priority”, “central to what we do”, or “very important”
- **Cost as a major barrier** – many want to buy local/British, it is often more expensive and not always feasible within budget limits.
- Rising food costs and budget pressures are making it **“increasingly difficult” to maintain local sourcing**
Some admit they can **no longer afford to prioritise local on current menu costs.**
- **Regional and policy support** - there is a clear policy alignment with national/local government priorities, but **economic feasibility remains a challenge.**



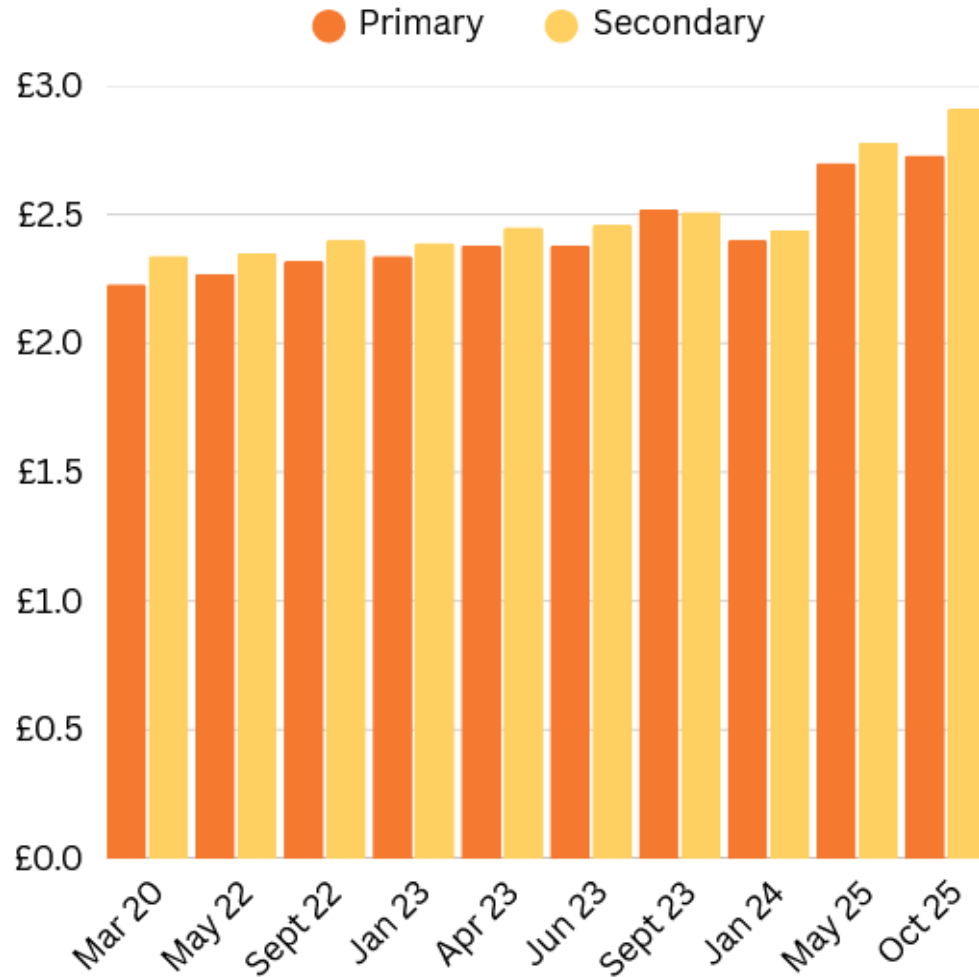
UIFSM and benefit FSM are currently funded at £2.61 across England (£3.00 in London).
Are you able to provide a SFS compliant, nutritionally balanced meal within this funding rate? (England only)



Only **2 in 10 respondents (19%)** reported that they are currently able to provide a **School Food Standards (SFS) compliant meal** within existing funding rates.

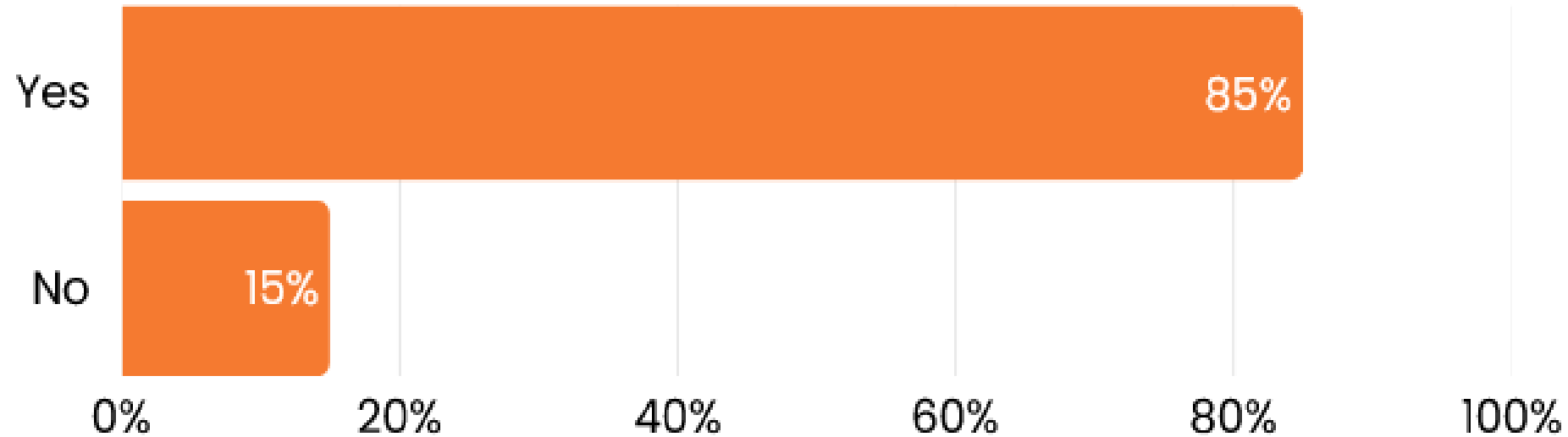
Among the **81%** who said they could not meet the standards at current rates, the average funding level required to do so was estimated at **£3.25 per meal**.

On average, the price of a school meal has **increased by 26.5%** since March 2020.



Date	Primary	Secondary
Mar 20	£2.23	£2.32
Sept 22	£2.32	£2.40
Jan 23	£2.34	£2.39
Apr 23	£2.38	£2.45
Jun 23	£2.38	£2.46
Sept 23	£2.52	£2.51
Jan 24	£2.40	£2.44
May 25	£2.70	£2.78
Oct 25	£2.73	£2.91

Has the number of requests for medical diets increased for your service in the past six months?



On average, respondents who reported an increase in requests for medical diets noted a rise of around 24%.

79% of respondents are confident this is managed effectively in their operation.

What do you consider are the benefits of the Government's free breakfast schemes? (England only)

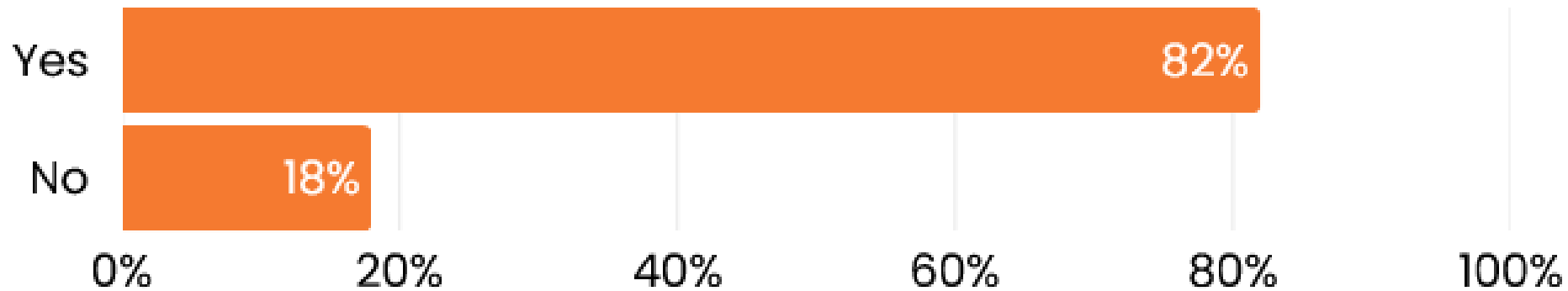
Benefits:

- Supports children who might skip breakfast, **improving focus** and classroom readiness.
- **Encourages punctuality and attendance.**
- **Provides social interaction** and communal mealtime.
- Helps parents manage work and schedules.

Downsides /challenges:

- **Limited impact** in schools with existing breakfast provisions.
- **Low pupil uptake** reduces effectiveness.
- **Funding often seen as insufficient;** some argue lunch provision is more impactful.
- **Operational challenges** for staff; scheme sometimes used for childcare rather than nutrition.
- **Lack of clarity** on nutritional standards and monitoring

Health professionals are reporting that we should be investing in our children's future to help ease the cost pressure on the NHS in later life, one way of doing this is to provide FSM for all, do you support this?



Responses show there is strong support for providing **free school meals (FSM)** to all primary and secondary pupils, with **ring-fenced** government funding to ensure sustainability.

They highlight the significant benefits to health, education, and social equity, noting FSM as a key tool to **tackle childhood obesity**, support learning outcomes, and **reduce long-term NHS costs**.

Members can
download the
full report from
our website.

