



Community &
Voluntary Services
cheshire east



**Exploring school food programmes /
how are Cheshire East Schools supporting
children and families facing food insecurity**

July 2024



Background

- Food Coordination role / Cheshire East Food Alliance created last year
- Undertook [research to understand the landscape of community food projects](#)
 - Highlighted gaps in our knowledge of the role schools play supporting children and families who are experiencing food insecurity
- Worked with eCaph (Cheshire East Primary Head Teachers Association) and CEC – Education Team to promote this work:
 - Survey link has been shared 7 times the via respective Bulletins (including Governors) / drop-in sessions / CHeSS resources
 - To date 14 responses (9% - response rate)

Why are we interested? Evidence of local support, identify gaps, support funding bids, inform and influence Cheshire East Council, other funders & support national campaigns.

Families are continuing to struggle with the cost-of-living crisis...

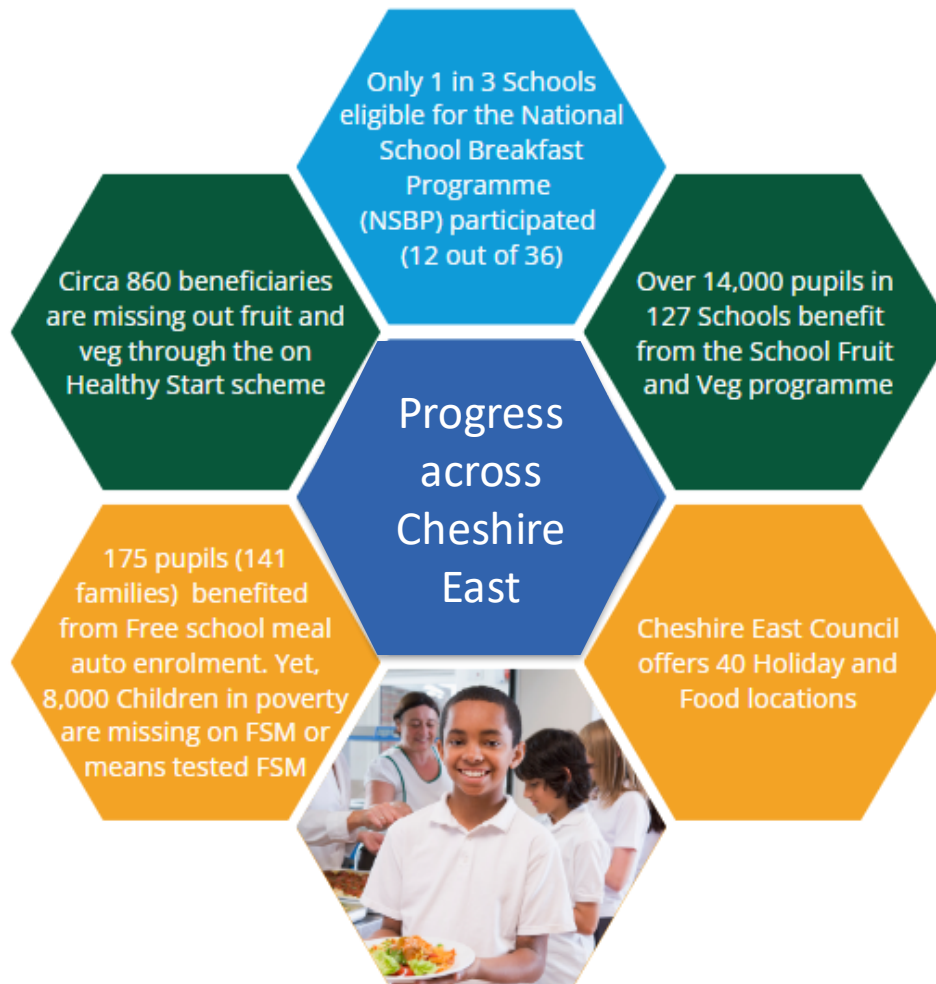
- Trussell Trust food banks distributed 1.2 million emergency food parcels for families with Children (3.1 million overall (23/24))
- 20% of households with Children experienced food insecurity in January
- *Families with Children are the largest group presenting for food aid across Cheshire East*
 - *CEC Emergency Assistance Scheme has been scrapped due to funding cuts. This supported some of the most vulnerable with access to food*
 - *Government funded Household Support Fund (HSF) has only been extended for an additional 6 months*
 - *across 2023 this was used to provide 75K food vouchers across school holidays for families eligible for FSMs.*

Education / school context...

- Policy in Practice reports around 470,000 children are missing out on FSM despite being eligible
- [Feeding Britain research highlights that 900,000 children in England living in poverty are not currently eligible for Free School Meals](#)
- [Fareshare surveyed 9,000 teachers -1 in 4 brought food into school and over a 1/3 stated their school regularly provides food support to children and their families.](#)
- [University of Bristol research \(April 2024\)](#) - cited as many as 1 in 5 Schools are operating food banks
 - Rises to 1 in 4 for the North West; 1 in 3 if you add in deprivation

Education / school context continued...

- Food insecurity increases mental and physical health risks (including dental decay and obesity) and affects educational and lifetime attainment.
 - Academic studies identify a link between improved nutrition and increased academic performance
 - Healthy foods are associated with better learning, concentration, reasoning, memory, self-control and behavior in children and adolescents, in addition to small reductions in school absences
- School support includes free school meals (FSM), School Fruit and Vegetable scheme (SFVS), Holiday and Food (HAF) and the National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP). Plus, Healthy Start.

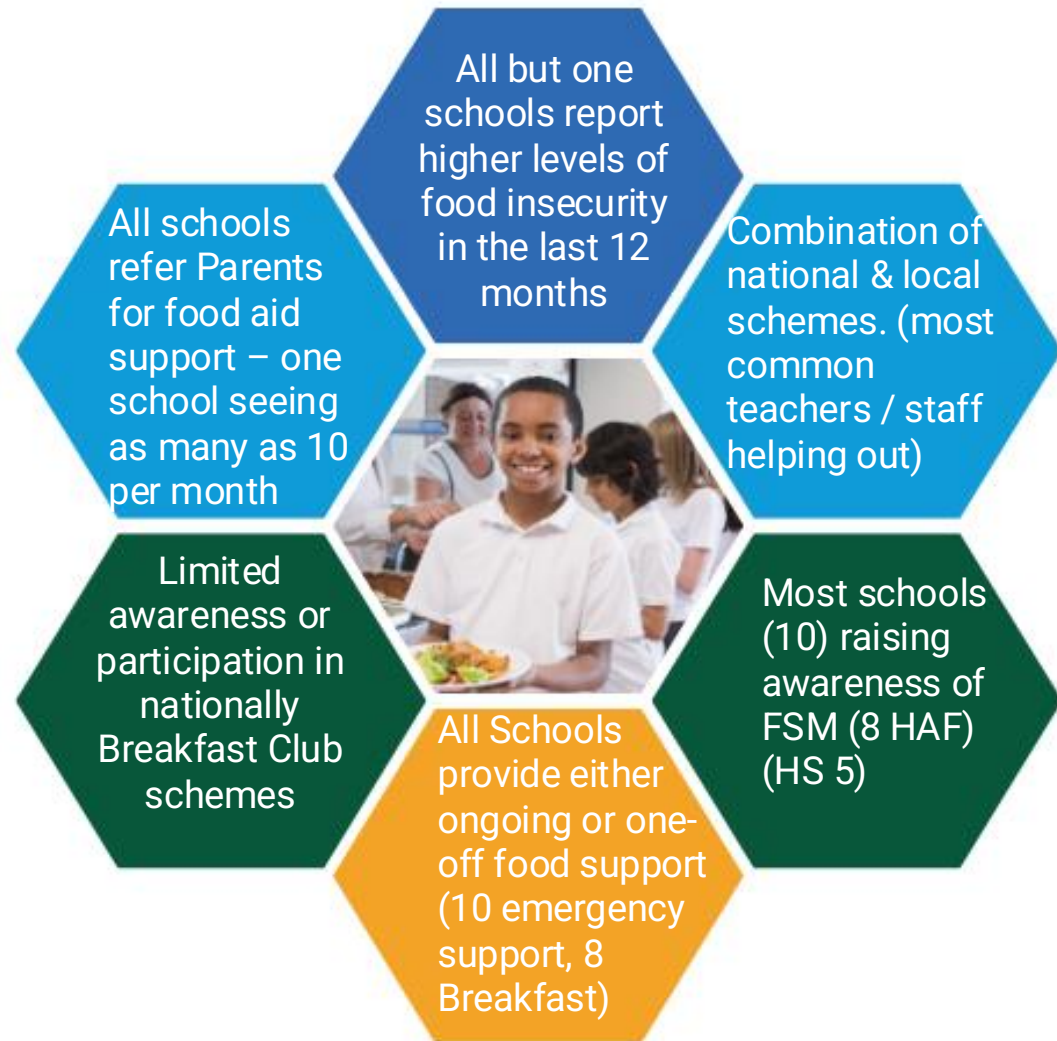


Sources:

Cheshire East Council (https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/financial-support/household-support-fund.aspx)
NHS Healthy Start scheme - April 2024 (<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/healthcare-professionals/>)
Free school meals in the North West report - February 2024 (https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/Free_school_meals_in_the_North_West.pdf)

Summary findings:

- Based on a response rate of 9%
- Survey method: self-completion questionnaire
- Survey distributed through Head Teacher bulletins
- Telephone follow-up
- Data collected – June / July.





Food insecurity Headlines...

Food Security:
No food strategy, commitment to supporting British Farmers

Household food insecurity:
Reduce food prices / End dependency on emergency food parcels

School food:
Free breakfast clubs in every school / No commitment to any existing scheme

Health Inequalities:
Banning junk food ads aimed at children / energy drinks for under 16s.

Food for the planet: Half of all public sector food to produced locally / Environmental land mgt schemes

Around 470,000 children are missing out on FSM despite being eligible for them

1 in 4 North West Schools are operating food banks (Bristol University)

100% of Cheshire East Schools saw higher levels of food insecurity than 12 months ago

University of Bristol - policy recommendations:

- Local authorities and the Department for Education (DfE) should systematically collect data from schools on the food aid work they are doing
- Central and local government should develop research informed guidance for all schools in the UK about providing food support to families through initiatives like food banks.
 - This should identify best practice, with a particular focus on reducing stigma, and acknowledge that everyone has the 'Right to Food'.
- UFSM should be provided to all primary schools across England (happening in Wales, London and is being introduced in Scotland)
- Bradbury and Vince (2023) - work schools are doing to support families with food should be acknowledged by policymakers and in school inspections.

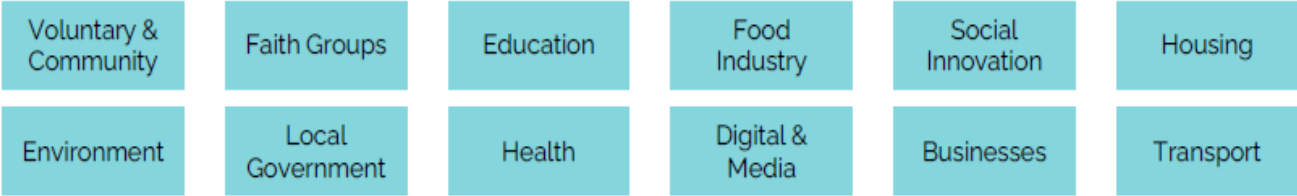
Reframing the Right to Food Strategy

CEFA vision

Ensuring a food secure Cheshire East where residents have a 'right to' affordable, quality, healthy, sustainable food.



Sector Collaboration



Focussed Taskforce Groups

