Magic Breakfast: school breakfast in Edinburgh and Lothians East

Magic Breakfast is the UK's leading school breakfast charity, making a difference to over 350,000 children and young people by partnering with schools to provide breakfasts and expert advice across Scotland and England. Currently, over 7% of young Scots can access a "magic" breakfast every school morning supporting educational equity, reducing barriers to learning, and delivering for busy families. Our mission is to ensure that every child and young person in Scotland is nourished, empowered, and able to thrive.

At Magic Breakfast, our teams work alongside partner schools to develop models of breakfast provision that work for their unique learning environment. This can include traditional models like breakfast clubs but also supports innovative 'grab and go' and classroom-based models. **We base our approach on what works for children and young people, meaning that 94% of our partner schools in the UK report their breakfast provision having a positive impact of readiness to learn.**

But a good breakfast provision is about more than just food. We understand children's rights to education as enshrined in the UNCRC (particularly in Articles 28 and 29) and want to ensure that **the breakfast provision offered to them allows them to best engage with an education directed to the "development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities."**



That's why our approach is underpinned in three ways. **We want to see children and young people nourished**. All our food provision is underpinned by Scottish school food standards and backed by research including with the British Nutrition Foundation. **We want to see children and young people empowered,** and that's why we build strong feedback loops underpinned by children's rights to give them a say in the services we provide. Finally, **we want every child and young person to be able to thrive**. That's why our breakfast provision is designed to offer wider enrichment opportunities through stimulating and positive classroom environments, skills development, improved mental and physical wellbeing, and strong academic attainment.

The Picture in the Region: Edinburgh and Lothians East

Magic Breakfast has been active in Edinburgh and Lothians East for a number of years, supporting our 17 partners schools to ensure that every child and young person in their classrooms are nourished, empowered, and able to thrive.



Across the region there are over 8,500 children and young people in our partners schools who have access to a 'magic' breakfast. This includes pupils in both mainstream and special school settings across primary and secondary in Edinburgh Central; Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh, and Tranent; Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith; Edinburgh North Western; Edinburgh Northern; Edinburgh South Western; Edinburgh Southern; and Midlothian North.

At the same time, Scottish Government funding confirmed by the last Parliament is also delivering for children and young people in the region. **Bright Start Breakfasts, the Scottish Government programme to expand breakfast clubs in primary and special schools, supports 26 schools in the region** across East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs; Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh, and Tranent; Edinburgh North Eastern and Leith; Edinburgh North Western; and Edinburgh Southern.

Delivering for children and young people: meeting Scotland's commitment

Early in 2026, the Scottish Government committed to delivering a breakfast club in every Scottish primary and special school from August 2027 with £44m per year allocated in national funding via the Spending Review. This will ensure that almost 400,000 children and young people will have access to breakfast every school day including 43,996 pupils in Edinburgh and Lothians East. It is of the upmost importance that this promise to young Scots is met.



With just over a year between the 2026 election and the August 2027 commitment, it must be a priority of the new Government and Parliament to design and implement a system of school breakfast provision which works for all of Scotland, including Edinburgh and Lothians East. This system will be vital to delivering the widescale benefits of breakfast.

> **When I come to breakfast club, I feel much better for the rest of the day. If I skip breakfast, I feel tired, can't focus properly in class, and I get really hungry before lunchtime which makes it hard to concentrate on my work.**
>
> **Student, Magic Breakfast partner school, Edinburgh and Lothians East**

Building a better Scotland: the benefits of breakfast

School breakfast provision is a cost-effective intervention that can deliver a myriad of positive and cross-cutting outcomes for children and young people, for families and for Scotland. Our dedicated webpage outlines the impact that Magic Breakfast has in Scotland and offers a series of briefs on the wide-ranging benefits of school breakfast provision.

Our work in Scotland's schools is supported by our **Annual Breakfast Survey** where schools tell us the impacts they see:

- **92% of our partner secondary schools** see a positive impact on students' social skills.
- **96% of partner schools** see a positive impact on children's sense of belonging in school.
- **72% of partner secondary schools** see a positive impact on exam readiness.
- **90% of partner primary schools** see a positive impact on mental and emotional wellbeing.

Research into the Magic Breakfast model has shown that school breakfast provision **can boost attainment in key subjects like English and Maths by two months** in the early stages of primary. The model also can **deliver a 50x return on investment to the wider economy** by reducing expenditure on areas such as behaviour whilst increasing long-term tax revenue.

The Scottish Government's commitment to universal breakfast provision in primary and special schools will offer parents and carers **up to 45 minutes free childcare every morning**, allowing them to take up new job opportunities further supporting the Scottish economy.

Breakfast is also a powerful tool in building better classrooms. The Institute for Fiscal Studies found that **breakfast provision can result in 26 fewer half-days of absence** per class of 30 whilst the Education Endowment Foundation found that **breakfast provision creates a more cohesive classroom environment**, even for those who don't eat. Outwith Scotland, a study in London recommended breakfast provision as an intervention to **support a reduction in knife crime and protect children from gang violence**.

The benefits go even further with school breakfast provision providing a boost for physical and emotional wellbeing amongst children and young people. This moment in the day is vital with **a typical breakfast providing around a third of a school aged child's daily nutrition**. Those who skip breakfast are more likely to consumer higher levels of salt, fat, and sugar whilst regular consumption shows immediate benefits from better nutritional intake and long-term benefits from healthy habit forming. There are also more holistic benefits with a 'magic' breakfast shown to **support calmer environments and allow for better physiological support for students**.

A Parliament for Breakfast? How Holyrood can make a difference

At the 26/27 Scottish Budget, the Government committed to providing universal school breakfast provision in both primary and special schools. We greatly welcome this progress, but this commitment and programmes like Bright Start Breakfasts will only support primary-aged pupils and those in special schools. This leaves hundreds of thousands of children and young people without support because the primary seven cliff edge which will be created will mean that families with children in early learning and childcare settings, or in secondary schools can't benefit from school breakfast. If Scotland is to harness the true power of breakfast, then bold action is needed.



In this Parliament, Holyrood has the power to make a difference and commit to creating a Scotland where no child or young person needs to go without. In Edinburgh and Lothians East we want to see a region where *all* 80,000 children and young people in P1-S6 as well as those in early learning and childcare settings can access the benefits of breakfast.

That is why we are calling on MSPs to support our ambitious three-point plan.

1. **Deliver the commitment to universal primary and special school breakfast provision.**
2. **Expand the universal school breakfast offer to all of Scotland's secondary schools.**
3. **Build on the success of school age commitments and expand provision to early learning and childcare settings, starting with local authority-based settings.**

If you would like to get in touch or learn more about our work, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Scotland team:

Finlay Allmond
Devolved Nations Strategic Lead
finlay.allmond@magicbreakfast.com

Emma Murphy
Policy & Public Affairs Officer
emma.murphy@magicbreakfast.com