

Theory of change 2026

magic
breakfast
fuel for learning

Every child and young person in the UK deserves to be nourished, empowered and thriving. Yet the current landscape presents significant systemic barriers creating a 'quiet crisis' in our classrooms with significant numbers of children in the UK at risk of hunger.

When children and young people start their day without food, they face compounding disadvantage, including educational, physical, mental, emotional and social impacts.

This is not a consequence of individual circumstance but a result of systemic pressures that leaves millions of children and young people in food-insecure households.

However, school mornings hold transformative potential. A universal, nourishing, and stigma-free breakfast brings the food and 'magic' that levels the playing field. It is a vital space for care, connection, and belonging that empowers children to feel seen and valued.

Magic Breakfast exists because every school morning will be a platform for possibility rather than a reminder of inequality, and the right of every child to be nourished, empowered, and thriving remains unfulfilled.

Why we are needed

Environment

- **Economic precarity:** Millions of children and young people experiencing poverty and food insecurity
- **Policy fragmentation and gaps:** Lack of universal provision, barriers, and stigma prevent all children and young people in the UK from accessing a free school breakfast provision
- **Systemic inequality:** Significant health, social, and educational disparities driven by inadequate social security.

School

- **Financial strain:** Increasing pressures on school and local government budgets
- **Attainment gap:** A persistent link between socio-economic disadvantage and poor educational outcomes/attendance
- **Nutrition de-prioritised:** A lack of training for school staff on the importance of food and nutrition. No monitoring of school food provision.
- **Hard start:** Fragmented mornings that lack the stability and 'magic' of a nurturing experience.

Home Life

- **Competing priorities:** Families navigating poverty, temporary accommodation, or high-stress environments unable to prioritise breakfast
- **Food deserts:** Lack of access to affordable, nutritious food
- **Morning routines:** Stressed and rushed morning routines, exacerbated by employment conditions and transport issues
- **Hidden hunger:** Families forced to skip or stretch meals to cover housing, energy and childcare costs.

Children and Young People

- **Focus barrier:** Impaired cognitive function, including poor working memory and lack of sustained attention in class due to hunger
- **Physical & mental health:** Rising childhood obesity alongside nutritional deficiencies and high prevalence of mental health disorders
- **Barriers to access:** Long, stressful journeys to school and young carer responsibilities
- **Stigma & exclusion:** Starting the day differently from peers hinders a sense of belonging.

What we do

- We **provide** healthy food and logistics for schools where needed
- We **deliver** expert training & advice for schools, families and communities
- We **empower** children, young people & communities to define and shape the magic of breakfast provision
- We **facilitate** strategic partnerships to maximise impact for children and young people
- We **research** child morning hunger and its root causes
- We **evaluate** school breakfast provision to develop and disseminate good practice model
- We **listen** and **adapt** based on the voices of those with lived experience
- We **communicate** the challenges and impact for our communities
- We **mobilise** supporters and sector partners
- We **advocate** for systemic change
- We **lead** as a trusted partner and expert adviser on school breakfast.

The impact we will have

For children & young people

- Improved dietary intake and sustained healthy eating habits
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Increased educational engagement and achievement
- Increased lifetime earning potential
- Equitable access to the fundamental right of morning nourishment, enabling children and young people to feel empowered and to thrive.

For families

- Reduced household financial strain
- Increased employment potential
- Reduce food insecurity
- Improved wellbeing and relationship with schools.

For schools & communities

- Increased understanding of the value of accessing a non-stigmatising nutritious breakfast
- Resource savings through sufficiently funded school breakfast programmes
- Reduced anti social behaviour and criminal activity linked to child morning hunger
- Increased agency enables inclusive, tailored provision.

For the wider system

- Increased awareness, understanding, and valuing of the impact of school breakfast provision
- Child morning hunger and its root causes are understood and reduced
- School breakfast provision perceived by political decision makers as a national investment in human capital.

The difference we will make

Schools and communities across all UK nations can benefit from the expertise and experience of Magic Breakfast

Schools implement an optimised model of breakfast provision for CYP

Schools, families and communities understand the value and importance of breakfast

Multi-sectoral coalitions are campaigning for school breakfast provision

Children and young people are active agents of change, helping to co-design, shape and evaluate impactful school breakfast provision

National, regional and local government policy and funding frameworks are informed and influenced by evidence

Children and young people can access welcoming, inclusive, enriching spaces within their communities

Government commits to universal school breakfast clubs in all phases of education in all UK nations

Public awareness of the root causes of child morning hunger and the impact of school breakfast is increased

