

Root causes of child morning hunger

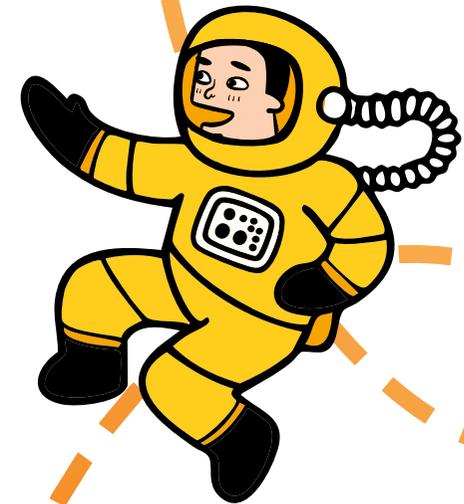
Research paper 2026



**magic
breakfast**
fuel for learning

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Introduction

At Magic Breakfast, we believe that every child and young person should feel nourished and empowered, allowing them to thrive. Yet, across the UK, child morning hunger remains a persistent and often invisible barrier to educational equity and social mobility. This is not a failure of families and has seen efforts at all levels of government that require sustained focus and investment, for example the Child Poverty Strategy¹ and Youth Guarantee.²

Guided by our *Nourishing Futures*³ strategy, Magic Breakfast is evolving. While our commitment to providing food, support and advice to schools remains at our core, we are increasingly acting as a catalyst for systemic change.

Central to this shift is the 'magic' of breakfast time. We will work with children and young people to co-create a shared understanding of what makes school breakfast magical, meaningful, and empowering. By centring these lived experiences, we are ensuring that we can drive a policy agenda that doesn't just fill tummies, but dismantles the root causes of hunger in partnership with others.

The role of school breakfasts

The evidence shows that child morning hunger is complex and often a direct result of deep-rooted systemic barriers. With approximately one in seven children and young people across the UK at risk of hunger, and 2.1 million children and young people living in food-insecure households as recently as June 2025⁴ we are facing a national crisis of potential.

We know that investing in school breakfast is one of the most effective ways to unlock a child's future. Research shows that a nourishing, barrier-free, stigma-free breakfast delivers an extraordinary impact for children and young people.

Providing a free, nutritious breakfast is shown to support improved educational attainment, with those regularly eating breakfast showing higher academic performance.^{5,6} School breakfasts are also shown to improve attendance and punctuality. School staff agree that breakfast positively impacts pupils' readiness to learn and stay focused in class, and helps to reduce feelings of anxiety and depression, fostering a calmer start to the school day.

In terms of health and wellbeing, breakfast consumption is associated with increased dietary fibre and micronutrient intake (e.g. vitamins, calcium, zinc, iron) and promotes more healthy food choices and dietary behaviours amongst children and young people. Breakfast consumption is associated with a lower risk of being overweight and obese, and reduced risk of chronic illness; in contrast, skipping breakfast is associated with increased consumption of snack foods and decreased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Despite this, current provision across the UK remains a patchwork of funding that leaves too many children and young people behind.

This paper aims to move beyond the breakfast bowl and present the root causes of child morning hunger, helping to identify the complex and interconnected issues that children, young people and families face. Using a framework that examines the macro (systemic), meso (school and community), and micro (individual) levels allows us to tackle child morning hunger strategically through our advocacy and influencing, our coalition and partnership work, and our provision supporting schools. Critical to this is ensuring the voices of children and young people are centred, enabling them to lead the design and implementation of effective and impactful solutions.

Framing the challenge

The challenge of child morning hunger is not new. In fact, its place on the national agenda dates back to 1906, when campaigners first successfully argued that a nutritious meal at school was the fundamental prerequisite for a child's opportunity to succeed.⁷ Over a century later, as socioeconomic inequality widens, that principle is more relevant than ever.

To end morning hunger for good, we must look at the systemic architecture of the problem. Hunger is rarely just about a lack of food; it is a complex, cascading effect of structural challenges. By using a **macro, meso, and micro** framework, we can see how policy-driven poverty (macro) creates immense pressure on schools and communities (meso), manifesting as immediate barriers for the child (micro), such as social stigma, household instability, and educational inequity.



Increasing numbers of families, particularly those with two working adults, are now being severely impacted by fuel and food poverty."

Magic Breakfast SEND partner school, Greater London

Three tiers of systemic challenges



Macro

Systemic, economic, and policy challenges

- Poverty and economic insecurity
- Housing policy and cost
- Inadequate social security system
- Childcare costs and policy
- Regulatory and governance structures
- Lack of nutritional expertise in education

Meso

Institutional, organisational, and community challenges

- Logistical barriers
- Institutional and cultural barriers
- Programme funding and design
- Provision design and accessibility
- Community food environment

Micro

Individual and household challenges

- Household and welfare
- Health and wellbeing, including SEND
- Attitudes and behaviours
- Dietary and nutritional specificity
- Psycho-social consequences of poverty

Macro-level: the systemic determinants



The macro-level comprises the foundational economic and political forces that create and perpetuate child morning hunger. Our framework places these systemic factors as the most significant drivers of child morning hunger in the UK today. These factors are shown below, and this section of the report explores some of the key underlying evidence of the macro-level challenges.

Macro: systemic, economic, and policy challenges

Poverty and economic insecurity

- High cost of living, rising inflation, high cost of energy, high cost of food (especially healthy food), low household incomes, low wages, zero hours contract, insecure work, no or limited financial rights (e.g. sick pay, parental pay), limited education / qualifications, low savings, food insecurity, regional inequalities.

Housing policy and cost

- Low supply of housing (especially social housing), high housing costs, high demand for housing, temporary accommodation.

Inadequate social security system

- Benefit caps for families with children, benefits historically not updated, sanctions, slow roll out of universal credit, insufficient housing benefits, low free school meal threshold, limited access to other benefits (e.g. Healthy Start).

Childcare costs and policy

- High cost of childcare, caps on childcare payments, childcare universal credit payment paid in arrears, paying premium for travel / childcare.

Regulatory and governance structures

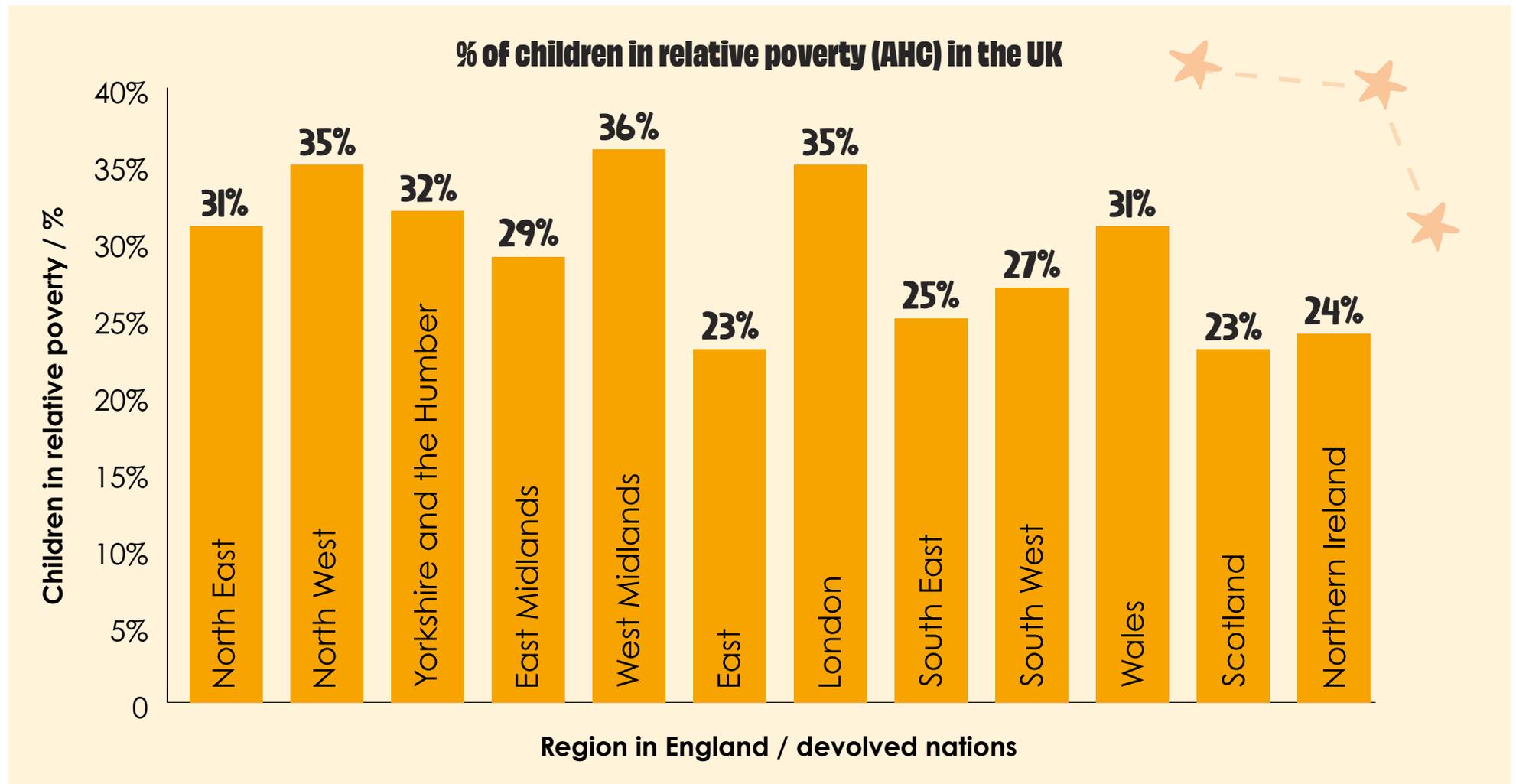
- Inconsistent School Food Standards (SFS) compliance/enforcement.

Lack of nutritional expertise in education

- No nutritional/dietary/school food training included in Initial Teacher Education (ITE).

Poverty and economic insecurity

Child poverty in the UK is pervasive with around 4.5 million children and young people (31% of all children and young people) now living in poverty.⁸ This is the equivalent to nine pupils in a classroom of 30. Throughout the UK there are regional variations in rates of child poverty with the West Midlands showing the highest levels (36%) and the East of England and Scotland (23%) showing the lowest levels, however this remains a UK-wide issue.



The nature of child poverty has shifted: 72% of children and young people living in poverty are in working families.⁸ This figure has steadily increased since 1997 when just under half of children and young people living in poverty were in working families (47%), peaking in 2020 at 76%. Crucially, it shows that employment is no longer a guaranteed escape from financial distress and instead, families can feel trapped by a combination of:

Stagnant wages and precarious employment situations

Low incomes and exploitative zero-hours contracts leave households unable to plan or provide consistently, often compounded by limited financial rights such as no sick pay or parental pay.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 goes some way to addressing these challenges as it steadily rolls out, however families still face stagnant wages – with no real terms wage growth over the past 15 years⁹ – against a backdrop of increased cost of living.

Nutritional compromise

As the cost of living soared, healthy foods are now more than twice as expensive per calorie as less nutritious alternatives.¹⁰ Families are often forced into a choice of sacrificing the quality of food to pay the bills.

Deepening housing crisis

High housing and childcare costs – sometimes exacerbated by Universal Credit childcare payments being made in arrears – place a strain on parents trying to work their way out of poverty. Regional inequalities in access to affordable childcare can leave parents unable to work or having to pay a premium for their childcare.

A survey of paediatricians showed that 96% report poor housing conditions (such as overcrowding or damp) affect the health of children and young people they treat.¹¹

Low-income families often face “housing instability,” or challenges with temporary accommodation making routine attendance difficult.

Rising cost of essentials

People on low-income tend to pay more for essential goods and services compared to people on higher incomes, which is described as the ‘poverty premium’. According to a recent survey,¹² 30% of low-income households incur a poverty premium as a result of doing their food shopping at smaller, more expensive outlets. This is likely due to a combination of factors, for example a lack of transport options or an inability to take advantage of ‘bulk buy’ savings (e.g. a 16-pack of toilet paper is often cheaper per roll than a 4-pack, but costs more upfront).

Furthermore, those living in more socially deprived areas are disproportionately affected by access to fresh, healthy food due to a scarcity of nearby supermarkets or grocery stores – often referred to as food deserts.¹³

30%

of low-income households incur a poverty premium as a result of doing their food shopping at smaller, more expensive outlets.

Wider hardship

Research from Joseph Rowntree Foundation¹⁴ shows that 14.3 million people (21% of the population) in the UK are living in poverty. In 2023, 24 million people in the UK (35.9% of the population) were forced to live below a basic, socially acceptable standard – known as the Minimum Income Standard¹⁵ – however in households with children and young people, this increases to almost half (48.6%) of the population being below the standard. It’s clear that the ‘systemic architecture’ of our economy is placing an incredible strain on the foundations of childhood.



A social security system under pressure

The UK's welfare system should be a safety net, but in recent years policy changes have led to increased hardship for families. Analysis published in the British Medical Journal of UK foodbanks run by Trussell strongly links the substantial rise in food bank use – a definitive indicator of severe food insecurity – to the UK's programme of welfare reform initiated since 2010.¹⁶ In June 2025, the Food Foundation's Food Insecurity Tracker⁴ showed that 34% of households receiving Universal Credit (UC) were food insecure. When 77% of people claiming UC and disability benefits are forced to go without essentials, the system is fundamentally failing to meet basic needs.¹⁷

More recently, the Poverty Strategy Commission¹⁸ outlines a new social contract for the UK where the responsibilities for reducing poverty are shared across individuals, employers, civic society and government. This approach would help to alleviate many of the systemic root causes of child morning hunger presented here, lifting more than four million people out of poverty. The current system creates many barriers to reducing poverty, therefore perpetuating and increasing child morning hunger.

Key policy barriers include:

Social security challenges

The two-child limit – due to be lifted in April 2026 – is a primary driver of deep poverty. However, families are still faced with additional challenges such as insufficient housing benefits, slow rollout of UC, sanctions, and limited access to other critical benefits like Healthy Start. Many of these challenges are explored and addressed by the Poverty Strategy Commission's proposal.¹⁸

Families of children and young people with SEND often face “double disadvantage,” as 16% of parents report leaving employment to support their child's needs, whilst 27% changed their working hours.¹⁹

Moreover, households with disability are shown to face further challenges, including additional living costs, barriers to work and heightened food insecurity; indeed 27% of disabled people in the UK experienced food insecurity in 2024, more than twice the rate for non-disabled people (11%).²⁰

Barriers to receiving free school meals

The current Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility criteria are far too restrictive. Child Poverty Action Group's analysis of Department for Education data shows that around 900,000 children and young people experiencing poverty aren't eligible under current criteria.²¹ Whilst this will be somewhat alleviated from September 2026 when eligibility expands to cover all families in receipt of UC – the Government states that 100,000 additional children and young people in England will be eligible²² – the reluctance to implement auto-enrolment means 250,000 eligible children and young people are still missing out.²³

The cost of inaction

The fact that school breakfast provision has been shown to yield a 50:1 return on investment highlights the fiscal loss caused by allowing children and young people to arrive at school hungry.²⁴ By failing to ensure nutritional stability, the Government incurs massive long-term costs in lost earnings and public service pressure – costs that far outweigh the investment required for universal provision.



Policy fragmentation and an 'ineffective patchwork'

The UK's policy landscape for school breakfast provision is fragmented. In 2023, Magic Breakfast's Hidden Hunger research identified gaps in breakfast provision across the UK, with 69% of UK schools having either no provision or barriers to access.²⁵ The research showed that school breakfast provision is reaching just 1 in 4 disadvantaged young people in England, and 41% of Scottish schools have no provision at all. This leaves the most vulnerable children and young people dependent on a volatile and unsustainable mixture of charitable support and overstretched school budgets.

Since then, we have seen government investment into universal school breakfast with the Department for Education in England beginning delivery of a programme to provide a free breakfast club in every state-funded school with primary-aged children. Similarly, the Scottish Government have committed funding to ensure every primary pupil in Scotland can access a free breakfast club. These are positive steps forward in addressing child morning hunger, however, we also recognise the need for these programmes to be implemented quickly and effectively, and funded sufficiently to ensure positive impact for children and young people. The Mayor of London's expansion of universal free school meals in primary schools can serve as an example for why sufficient funding is important. A recent evaluation showed that, despite positive impacts, nearly half of schools surveyed reported that the cost of delivering meals exceeded the allocated funding in the first year²⁶ meaning schools would have to 'plug' the budget gaps from elsewhere (e.g. pupil premium funding).

Within the broader school food landscape, we see inconsistent governance of school food provision in the UK: deficiencies include inconsistent School Food Standards (SFS) compliance and enforcement, alongside a critical lack of nutritional training

for educators (there is no nutritional/dietary/school food training included in Initial Teacher Education). In 2019, Food for Life estimated that up to 60% of secondary schools in England are non-compliant with SFS, largely due to a lack of monitoring.²⁷

Without consistent national standards, sufficient and mandatory funding, and nutritional training, we are left with an 'ineffective patchwork' that – despite the commitments from government – fails to deliver the educational equity every child deserves.

From systems to communities

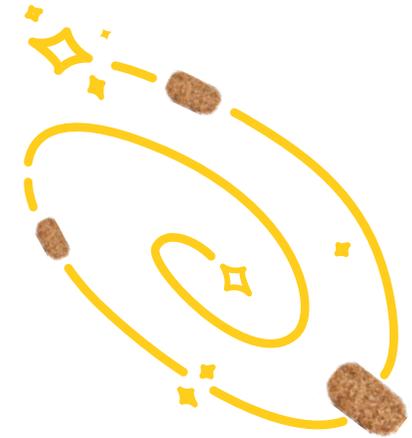
The macro-level challenges outlined above reveal a national crisis of potential driven by a social security system and an economy that do not guarantee basic nutritional security. With 72% of children in poverty now living in working families and healthy calories costing twice as much as nutrient-poor alternatives, the systemic architecture of the UK is effectively outsourcing the consequences of poverty to our educational institutions.

However, this fragmented approach to national policy does not exist in a vacuum. These high-level systemic pressures flow directly into our schools and communities, creating the meso-level challenges explored below. Here, we move from the 'why' of systemic failure towards the 'how' of delivery, examining the institutional barriers and logistical realities that schools face in delivering for our children and young people.



Meso-level: barriers within schools and communities

The meso-level represents the school and community environment. These factors act as 'multipliers' by transmitting the macro pressures into daily operational barriers. Alongside schools and communities, these meso barriers are important to policy makers and school breakfast providers as they can mediate the efficacy of provision by determining whether a child's need for food is met with a meaningful solution.



Meso: institutional, organisational, or community challenges

Logistical barriers

- Morning rush, late arrival at school, living far from school, transport issues.

Institutional and cultural barriers

- Stigma and image, particularly in secondary settings – fear of being seen, not 'cool', perception of provision as 'charity'.

Programme funding and design

- Inadequate core funding for school operational/staffing costs (especially in secondary settings due to complexity).

Provision design and accessibility

- Unsuitability of delivery models (e.g., breakfast club location is not discreet, too early, or too inflexible for adolescent needs).

Community food environment

- Poor food environments in some communities. (Lack of local healthy food access, prevalence of cheap/unhealthy options), food deserts.



Operational realities: cost, staffing, and space

For schools with school breakfast provision, the barriers are tangible. Research shows that 49% of UK schools with school breakfast provision experience barriers, with cost (cited by 27% of schools) and staffing (41%) identified as the primary deterrents.²⁵ In response, the Department for Education in England recognised the challenges faced by schools in implementing the free breakfast clubs programme and is providing additional funding to support costs, including staffing, startup grants and increased per pupil funding.

In Wales, the Free Breakfast in Primary Schools scheme²⁸ has been offering universal access to school breakfasts since 2004. Evaluations of the policy have shown positive impacts for children and young people and families,^{29, 30, 31} however they also unpick some of the barriers to implementation. For example, despite the universal access approach, more than 1 in 7 primary school parents living on a lower income reported that they could not access a breakfast club. In some cases this was due to the schools not having any breakfast provision. Furthermore, there were instances of some schools charging parents for breakfast provision.

1 in 7

primary school parents living on a lower income reported that they could not access a breakfast club.



Funding for school breakfasts in Wales is devolved through the local councils, creating an administrative barrier for schools, who are required to apply for the funding. Furthermore, there is no agreed amount for how much the school should receive for the breakfast club, meaning there is a possibility for underfunded provision.

The challenges seen in Wales are closely linked to the sentiment of primary school teachers in England. While 88% of teachers support mandated breakfast provision in English primary schools,³² they are clear that it cannot succeed without designated funding for the people required to deliver it.

Beyond staffing, schools also struggle with a lack of kitchen facilities or dining space, preventing schools from scaling up to reach everyone who wants breakfast. A DfE survey of primary school leaders in England showed that 51% believe they “won’t have suitable or enough space or facilities” to effectively implement universal breakfast provision.³³

Transport

Despite commitments to free school breakfast programmes across England, Scotland and Wales, transport remains a challenge preventing children and young people from accessing school breakfast.

Evidence from the Early Adopter Scheme pilot in England shows that those children and young people reliant on home-to-school transport often cannot access breakfast clubs.³⁴ Existing Local Authority transport arrangements are often difficult to change due to the additional cost and logistics involved – these issues disproportionately affect children and young people at special schools or those in mainstream education with SEND/ASN who require home-to-school transport.

In rural areas – particularly in areas of Scotland and Wales – public transport determines a child or young person’s ability to access before-school activities, including breakfast clubs.^{35, 36} Parents speak of prohibitive transport costs, timetables and reliability as barriers to children and young people engaging with activities before or after school.

Access versus uptake

The situation in Wales serves as an important lesson in policy design and implementation. While 93% of primary schools offer provision due to legislative mandates, data suggests that only 15% of those attending are entitled to free school meals.²⁵ This 'paradox' shows that simply having a breakfast club is not enough; without expert support to optimise delivery and tackle social barriers, the most disadvantaged children and young people, 85% of our target demographic in this instance, are still being left behind.

Similarly, whilst availability of school breakfast provision can be prevalent, this does not mean every child has access. For example, attendance at school breakfast provision can be affected by a lack of transportation, an unwelcoming environment or a lack of meaningful relationship to adults or peers in school – these barriers can also affect attendance at school more generally.³⁷

The shadow of stigma

Social stigma is a structural barrier that physically excludes pupils and families, especially in secondary settings. School breakfast provision is too often perceived as 'charity' or 'not cool.' This also manifests as a gendered issue; Magic Breakfast's What's for Breakfast? report showed that 17% of girls aged 15 and older report being embarrassed to eat at school, compared to just 5% of boys.³⁸ Furthermore, when schools charge for breakfast, even nominal amounts from 20p to £5, it reinforces this stigma and creates an insurmountable wall for families living 'hand to mouth.'

The way breakfast is delivered in schools can carry a hidden cost of stigma, creating invisible barriers for those who need it most. In secondary schools, for instance, many young people choose to go hungry rather than risk being singled out as 'poor' or 'different'.^{39, 40}



Because my journey takes so long and I have to leave too early I can't have breakfast at home, I eat my breakfast at school."

**Pupil, Magic Breakfast SEND partner school,
South West**

Micro-level: the reality of lived experience

The micro-level is where systemic and environmental challenges manifest as daily, individual challenges for children, young people and their families, causing them to start the day hungry.

Micro: individual and household challenges

Household and welfare

- Adverse childhood experience or life event, domestic violence, addiction in the household, neglect, young carers, social isolation.

Health and wellbeing, including SEND and neurodiversity

- Physical / mental health challenges, disability, circadian rhythm, sensory issues / eating difficulties (including autism, ADHD, or other learning/processing differences).

Attitudes and behaviours

- Lack of education on the importance of breakfast, adolescents skipping breakfast, social / peer pressure (influences, weight loss, culture), unwillingness to wake up early (especially teenagers), low household prioritisation of breakfast.

Dietary and nutritional specificity

- Food allergies / intolerances / dietary restrictions.

Time poverty and household pressures

Financial poverty almost always results in 'time poverty.' For some families, the morning routine is a stressful race against the clock; for larger families (three or more children), this challenge is amplified – 40% of children and young people cite 'lack of time' as a reason for not eating breakfast.³⁷ When parents must start work early or children and young people have caring responsibilities for siblings, breakfast can be easily missed. For these families, a school breakfast is not just a meal; it is an indispensable opportunity that reduces parental stress and enables work or study.

40%

of children and young people cite 'lack of time' as a reason for not eating breakfast.



The psycho-social toll of hunger

Hunger is an emotional and psychological burden. Children describe the feeling as “awful,” like receiving “two punches in the stomach.” The chronic anxiety of food insecurity can even lead to nausea and appetite suppression, meaning a child might feel too unwell to eat even when food finally becomes available. The impact on learning is immediate:³⁷

35%

of children and young people find it difficult to concentrate.

28%

lack the energy to participate.

21%

report being in a “bad mood.”



This compromised cognitive function and mood establishes a self-perpetuating cycle of disadvantage, where hunger impedes learning, resulting in lower educational attainment, which then limits the child’s potential for securing higher-paying jobs and perpetuating the macro-level intergenerational cycle of poverty.

Uptake of school breakfast provision drastically decreases as pupils enter secondary education.

Older girls face uniquely complex psycho-social barriers to eating breakfast, with 20% of girls aged 11-14 years skipping breakfast because they are worried about putting on weight.³⁷ More recently, there has been an increase in eating disorders amongst boys from a (statistically) negligible amount in 2017 to 5.1% in 2023.⁴¹ This trend affects eating behaviours amongst young boys who are concerned about physical perceptions; research shows that 30% of young men are trying to ‘bulk up’, 25% are worried about not having any muscles and those as young as 13 are turning to steroid use as a ‘solution’.^{42, 43}

Furthermore, peer perceptions create a barrier to school breakfast uptake, with 19% of girls aged 15 and older avoid school breakfast because their friends do not attend, demonstrating the power of peer culture as a structural barrier.

Barriers for vulnerable cohorts

For neurodiverse children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND/ASN), the barriers are often physiological or sensory, relating to taste, texture, smell, or the need for a calm, structured environment.

For all children and young people, school breakfast provision offers unique benefits that educational metrics can struggle to capture, however this is especially true for children and young people with additional needs. It can provide a calm, supportive space essential for meeting sensory needs, building communication and practical life skills, and fostering confidence. In SEND/ASN settings, the development of social skills is ranked as the third biggest benefit of breakfast, compared to eighth in mainstream schools, underscoring its unique value.⁴⁴

Mental health can also affect engagement with school breakfast provision. In 2023, around 1 in 5 children and young people had a probable mental disorder.⁴⁵ This can be compounded by food insecurity, which is shown to increase anxiety, shame and loneliness.

These micro-level barriers demonstrate that traditional quantitative metrics alone may be insufficient to capture the full impact of school breakfast.



The interconnected system: breaking the cycle

When we synthesise the evidence across all three levels, a clear pathway emerges. We can map how structural challenges at the macro level result in hungry children and young people.

At the macro level, policy-driven challenges and an inadequate social security system leave families with neither the time nor the money to guarantee a nourishing start to the day. These systemic issues mean schools serve as compensatory social services, however they often do so without the necessary designated funding for staffing or intervention, preventing the implementation of universal, stigma-free models for all children and young people across the UK. The result is a 'patchwork' of provision that fails to reach the communities that need it most. As a result, we see children and young people arriving at school hungry, anxious, and without the mental energy required to engage and thrive. For secondary-aged adolescents, the fear of being singled out creates an additional, invisible barrier to eating.

This is a self-reinforcing cycle: when hunger compromises learning today, it limits a child's potential tomorrow, feeding directly back into intergenerational poverty. Interrupting this cycle requires simultaneous action: we must address the macro policy challenges through our advocacy and influencing, while continuing to provide the meso support (stigma-free models, with ongoing training, support and guidance) that children and young people need to thrive. At the micro level, we need to centre the voice of lived experience, ensuring children, young people, families and their communities can help shape effective and impactful solutions to meet their needs.

Three tiers of systemic challenges



Macro

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- Poverty and economic insecurity
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A framework for systemic change

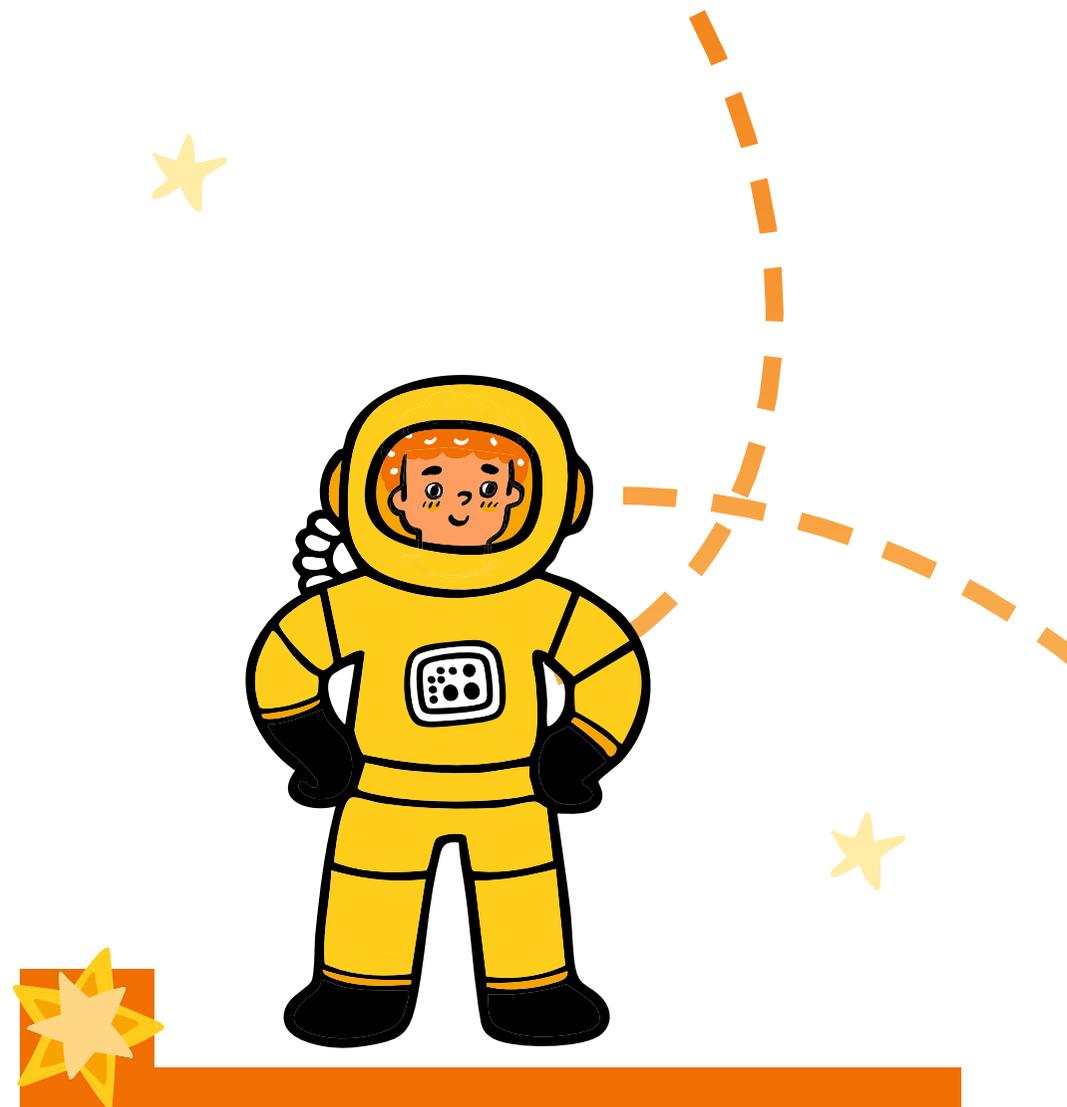
Child morning hunger in the UK is not inevitable; it is a complex societal issue rooted in systemic macro challenges, compounded by meso-level operational barriers, mindsets, power dynamics and resource flows, and manifesting as micro-level outcomes for children and young people.

To achieve lasting change, we must alter the power dynamics and resource flows that currently leave schools to act as compensatory social services without adequate support. Interrupting the root causes of morning hunger requires a coordinated effort across all levels of the system.

At the **macro level**, we must look to **reshape policy and mindsets**. We should advocate for and support a new social contract where the responsibility for child wellbeing is shared by the Government, employers, and civil society as laid out by the Poverty Strategy Commission.¹⁸

At the **meso level**, we must **dismantle the logistical and cultural** barriers that prevent effective delivery of school food programmes. We should look to direct resources toward school staffing, kitchen facilities, and inclusive transport links, and further ensuring that the 'patchwork' of school food provision is replaced by a robust, joined-up approach to delivering equitable, sustainable access to school food for all children and young people.

At the **micro level**, we must **centre lived experience**, ensuring solutions are co-designed with the children, young people, families and communities for whom they exist. By elevating the voices of those with lived experience, we can design stigma-free models that address the unique psycho-social barriers faced by adolescents and neurodiverse learners.



A parent told us about their sense of relief that no matter what they are going through as a family, their child will be able to access food at school first thing in the morning and throughout the day and that this will allow them to learn and realise their potential."

Magic Breakfast secondary partner school, Scotland

The role of Magic Breakfast

Magic Breakfast works at the intersection of school breakfast provision in schools and advocacy for long-term policy and systemic change. Our role is to act as a catalyst for a future where every child can start their day nourished, empowered and thriving.

We continue to build on our history of providing high-quality, stigma and barrier-free school breakfasts, ensuring that the lived experience of children and young people informs every level of our work.

However, our mission extends beyond the breakfast bowl; we are increasingly dedicated to advocating for universal, permanent provision that recognises school food as a fundamental human capital investment. By mobilising the sector, we aim to harmonise the currently fragmented policy landscape, driving consistency in School Food Standards and fostering a collective call to action that addresses the root causes of food insecurity. Through this dual approach of direct support and systemic influence, Magic Breakfast is not just feeding children today, but is actively re-engineering the educational architecture to ensure every child is nourished and empowered to thrive.

The evidence strongly positions school breakfast not as an optional charity, but as an essential, highly cost-effective human capital investment for all children and young people. We are committed to playing our role in driving lasting systemic change to enable all children and young people to feel nourished, empowered and thriving. In doing so, we recognise the efforts of all stakeholders in creating the systemic shifts required to achieve this goal and are committed to the part we play in facilitating change. Our commitments span across all levels of the framework and include:

Macro-level commitment: Driving legislative and policy solutions

We will continue to advocate for school breakfasts, leveraging our research and evidence base to influence government policy toward a fully funded, universal breakfast provision for all children and young people across the UK. We are committed to ensuring equity of access by harmonising the policy landscape and ensuring school food is recognised as a fundamental investment in human capital.

Meso-level commitment: Building capacity and excellence with schools

We will continue to empower schools and communities by providing training, guidance and support alongside evidence-informed delivery models that help overcome logistical and cultural barriers, such as social stigma and limited facilities. We are committed to sharing optimised practice models and innovations that demonstrate how stigma-free, inclusive breakfast provision can be integrated into the school day, ensuring every child can access and benefit from school breakfast.

Micro-level commitment: Centring lived experience and co-creation

We will continue to ensure that our solutions are never 'done to' children and young people but 'created with' them, by embedding the voice of lived experience into the heart of Magic Breakfast. We are committed to a co-production model where children, young people, and families lead the design of magical and impactful breakfast experiences that allows every child and young person to feel nourished, empowered and thriving.

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