



Good food for all

The impact of the Food for Life Partnership



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"Jamie Oliver deserves credit for putting school food back on the political agenda. However, the most ambitious programme in the UK to date has been the Food for Life Partnership, which champions a whole-school approach and is working with 3,800 schools in England to enable children to eat good food, learn where it comes from, how it is produced and how to grow it and cook it themselves."

Kevin Morgan, professor of governance and development, Cardiff University, April 2011

This report describes the impact of the Food for Life Partnership in its first five years of funding by the BIG Lottery. The report summarises the evidence from three independent research studies. It focuses in particular on the four main areas of impact: children's health, tackling inequalities, improving education, and local enterprise and sustainability.

How the Partnership works

The Food for Life Partnership is far more than a school meals programme. It harnesses the expertise of the four partner organisations (Soil Association, Health Education Trust, Garden Organic and The Focus on Food Campaign) and uses food as a way to improve the whole school experience – making lunchtimes a more positive feature of the day and enriching classroom learning with farm visits and practical cooking and growing. Some schools use the programme as a vehicle to boost attainment or tackle inequalities. Some value the impact it has on encouraging positive health and well being. Others have mobilised the programme to build links with their community. In all schools, the focus on 'pupil voice' means that pupils take ownership and decide their own priorities.

The Food for Life Partnership has this transformational impact in the schools and communities it works with because it gives pupils, teachers and community groups the confidence, resources and training they need to lead the change themselves. It has succeeded where many similar programmes have failed to make long-term changes. The achievements of schools are recognised in an award scheme that gives them a motivational framework for continuous improvement. The achievements of caterers are recognised by the Food for Life Catering Mark, a Soil Association accreditation scheme for all caterers that put quality first (see p10).

The independent evaluation team

University of the West of England (UWE) and Cardiff University

Food for Life Partnership Evaluation, Orme J et al, 2011

This evaluation consisted of a range of data collection strategies including a pre- and post-cross-sectional study with 111 FFLP Flagship Schools over a 24 month period.



University of the
West of England



National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Qualitative Impact Evaluation of the Food for Life Programme, Teeman D et al, 2011
NFER evaluators systematically selected 15 schools, reflecting a range of FFLP and school contexts, in order to provide a qualitative insight into the implementation and outcomes of FFLP.



new economics foundation (nef)

The Benefits of Procuring School Meals through the Food for Life Partnership: An economic analysis for FFLP, Kersley H, 2011
nef looked at the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of the Food for Life Partnership in two areas (Nottinghamshire and Plymouth).



Read the full reports online: www.foodforlife.org.uk/evaluation

The evidence

"I am massively encouraged by the success of the Food for Life Partnership. This evidence proves what the best teachers know – that food education and school meals doesn't just have a big impact on kids' health, it also helps them to concentrate and succeed in school. The FFLP is doing an amazing job making sure that no kid leaves school unable to cook and unsure where their food comes from."
Jamie Oliver, June 2011



Good for children's health

Our challenge:

- 1 in 4 children age 2–10 are overweight or obese, and eating habits form at an early age

Our impact:

- 28% increase in primary school-age children reporting eating 5-a-day
- 45% of parents report eating more vegetables

Good for tackling inequalities

Our challenge:

- 20% of children entitled to free healthy school meals don't eat them due to a range of issues including stigma and the temptation of local food outlets

Our impact:

- Free school meal take-up went up by 13 percentage points in FFLP schools over two years and by 20 percentage points in secondary schools
- "Evidence points towards the FFLP's potential to contribute to helping 'close the gap' for disadvantaged children in terms of their health and academic attainment." (Teeman et al, 2011)

Good for improving education

Our challenge:

- Schools have to show that a focus on wellbeing doesn't distract from achievement and results

Our impact:

- Twice as many primary schools received an Ofsted rating of Outstanding following their participation in FFLP
- Participating schools saw greater increases in attainment than national figures. Secondary schools started with average attainment levels 3.3% below the national average and managed to close this gap to 0.6%

Good for local enterprise and sustainability

Our challenge:

- Healthy & sustainable school meals are under pressure from local authority cuts

Our impact:

- School meal take-up rose by 5 percentage points over two years, making them more cost effective
- Over £3 in social, economic and environmental value was created for every £1 spent on Food for Life menus, mostly in the form of new jobs in the local economy

Good for children's health

"Analyses of student characteristics show statistically significant associations between healthy eating and FFLP related behaviours – such as participation in cooking and growing at school or at home; participation in farm and sustainable food learning; and attitudes to school food. This suggests that the FFLP model for changing behaviour has an empirical evidence base."

(Orme et al, 2011, p.107)

Healthy eating

- Pupils had healthier eating habits following their participation in FFLP, with a 28% increase in the proportion of primary school-age children reporting eating five portions of fruit or vegetablesⁱ, and the proportion reporting eating four or more portions increasing by 30% (Orme et al, 2011, p.114).ⁱⁱ
- "The findings show statistically significant associations between higher participation in cooking, growing, sustainable food education and farm-based activities – and positive healthy eating behaviours" (Orme et al, 2011, p.109).
- The Partnership's strong focus on community participation has also led to healthy behaviours travelling home, with 45% of parents reporting eating more fruit and vegetables as a result of FFLP and 43% changing their food buying habits (Orme et al, 2011, p.141).ⁱⁱⁱ
- These findings fit with other studies which have shown that children involved in growing food, and those in schools with strong farm links, have higher fruit and vegetable consumption.¹



Emotional health and wellbeing

- "All of the schools commented on the contribution the FFLP made to helping them better plan, develop further and more effectively focus health-related activity ... FFLP helped initiate, develop and maintain momentum on health-related activity" (Teeman et al, 2011, p.28).
- FFLP promotes emotional health and wellbeing by giving children a positive lunch-time experience and more access to nature and active time outdoors via growing activities and farm visits. Research by the School Food Trust concluded that lunch time was the key period that governed whether or not a child felt 'happy' in school.²
- Other research has highlighted the benefits of outdoor activities to children with behavioural difficulties: Faber Taylor et al (2001) found that such activities improved symptoms of ADHD by 30%.³ Further research suggests that contact with nature can help children who experience stress – lowering stress levels and increasing self worth.⁴



ⁱ 5-a-day reported consumption increased by 5 percentage points from 16% to 21%, and 4-a-day by 12 percentage points from 37% to 49%.

ⁱⁱ Pupils were surveyed at enrolment (baseline) and after 18-24 months (follow up) of the programme. For matched school and year groups, over 2,500 primary and 2,000 secondary school students took part.

ⁱⁱⁱ 740 parents completed a five point Likert scale against a number of statements about family behaviours.

Good for tackling inequalities

"Evidence points towards the FFLP's potential to contribute to ... helping 'close the gap' for disadvantaged children in terms of their health and academic attainment."

(Teeman et al, 2011, p.52)

Effective in areas of high deprivation

- "FFLP schools tended to be situated in areas with high levels of deprivation. In particular almost half the FFLP Flagship primary schools were in wards in the top two quintiles for deprivation. With an average increase of 13 percentage points after two years, free school meal take-up has markedly increased for FFLP Flagship Schools. This is reflected in primary schools with high free school meal eligibility (top FSM quintile, n=8) where overall take-up increased by 6.6%, from 49.5% to 56.1%. These trends suggest that participation in the FFLP Flagship programme has been effective for schools within areas of high social deprivation" (Orme et al, 2011, p.94).

Parental engagement

- "Activities associated with FFLP attracted high levels of parent engagement and acted as a basis for involving a wide range of parents in school life. This is important given the recognised challenges schools face particularly within deprived communities in successfully engaging and retaining parental involvement" (Orme et al, 2011, p.169).



School meals for all

- FFLP interventions may be of greatest significance to the most disadvantaged children: "Children from lower socio-economic groups or disadvantaged communities are particularly vulnerable to obesity and more likely to experience poor diets" (Orme et al, 2011, p.8).
- The FFLP model has given a powerful boost to attempts to increase take-up of free school meals in disadvantaged communities. Nationally over the two-year period of evaluation (2007/8–2009/10) free school meal take-up went up by an average of 13 percentage points in FFLP schools (Orme et al, 2011, p.93). For comparison, national background figures available for the year 2008/9–2009/10 show that free school meal take-up was fairly static in primary schools (79.3%–79.5%) and increased slightly in secondary schools (65.7%–68.4%).⁵
- The strongest increases in free school meal take-up occurred in FFLP secondary schools (20.9%) and in schools achieving FFLP's Silver or Gold award (21%) (Orme et al, 2011, p.100).

Good for improving education

"Pupils are healthier, therefore they are happier, therefore they are achieving more in the classroom and in exams. After lunchtime we used to have around 10 to 12 call outs for challenging behaviour in an hour. We did a survey two years ago after joining the FFLP and we were down to four. I think there is a correlation there between improved food provision in school and better behaviour after lunchtime."

Seamus O'Donnell, headteacher, Archbishop Ilsley Catholic Technology College

Learning and attainment

- FFLP schools saw a greater increase in pupil attainment compared to the national average. Pre-FFLP, the Flagship secondary schools had a below average attainment figure (-3.3%), but managed to close the gap to -0.6%. FFLP primary schools had higher than average pupil attainment prior to the scheme, and increased this difference from 4.3% to 7.3% (Orme et al, 2011, p.151).
- UWE's evaluation found that more than twice as many FFLP primary schools received an Ofsted rating of Outstanding following their participation (37.2% compared to 17.3% outstanding pre-enrolment) (Orme et al, 2011, p.152).
- According to the evaluation by NFER, "interviewees consistently reported that FFLP had contributed to their school improvement agendas, helping improve attainment, behaviour and school environments" (Teeman et al, 2011, p.45). The UWE research found similar results: 80% of senior teaching staff in FFLP Flagship Schools reported that the initiative had been effective across a range of school development priorities, with 56% stating that FFLP had been either effective or very effective in helping the school to improve pupil behaviour, attention and attainment (Orme et al, 2011, p.157).
- In addition, NFER found that the opportunities for experiential learning through the FFLP were "particularly effective at helping engage or re-engage pupils with learning issues and challenges" (Teeman et al, 2011, p.47).
- Other research has shown that in schools where improvements were made to the food and dining room, pupils were more likely to concentrate in afternoon lessons.⁶ Similarly, in Greenwich – the London borough where Jamie Oliver's Feed Me Better school food campaign began – test results among 11 year-olds in English and Science have shot up and absenteeism owing to sickness has fallen. Researchers from Oxford University and the University of Essex say the positive effects on educational attainment are comparable in magnitude to those seen after the introduction of the literacy hour in the 1990s.⁷
- School Food Trust research found that healthier school food has a positive impact on pupils' academic achievement and therefore on their lifetime earnings, returning the Government's investment tenfold.⁸

School meal take-up

- The average FFLP school saw school meal take-up rise by 3.7 percentage points in their first year and by 5.0 percentage points over two years. The impact was greatest in secondary schools (+5.7 percentage points), schools achieving our Gold awards (+6.1 percentage points) and the most disadvantaged quintile of schools (+7.1 percentage points) (Orme et al, 2011, p.99).
- These increases mostly occurred from 2007/08–2008/9 when national school meal take-up fell by 3.7 percentage points in primary schools and by 2.6% in secondary schools.⁵

"The key to a low cost in providing a school meals service is not to reduce the food cost but to increase sales and thus spread staff and other overheads further."

Ian Crook, business manager,
Bath and North East
Somerset Council

“Ofsted Inspection Reports are twice as likely to rate schools as Outstanding across ten areas of judgement on school performance for the period following FFLP enrolment.”

Orme et al, 2011, p.165



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Good for local enterprise and sustainability

"The results of both case studies suggest that there are substantial economic and social benefits to be gained from public procurement practices which focus on a sustainable agenda around seasonal and local produce."

(Kersley, 2011, p.29)

Social and economic benefits

- The new economics foundation's (nef) Social Return on Investment (SROI) research was carried out in Nottinghamshire and Plymouth. They found that the share of ingredient spend on seasonal, local produce had risen dramatically as a result of adopting FFLP practices, by a nominal £1.65 million in Nottinghamshire and £384,000 per year in Plymouth (Kersley, 2011, p.2).
- The SROI calculation found that over £3 in social, economic and environmental value was created for every £1 spent. This does not take account of any of the health, educational or cultural benefits of a whole-school approach to food which are the primary objectives of FFLP. Adding these benefits would result in a substantially higher return on investment (Kersley, 2011, p.2).
- The greatest share of the benefits is experienced by local businesses – wholesale and primary producers – in the form of greater business security and, especially, enhanced local presence which leads to additional contracts and income. Of the total £5 million of benefit generated, around £3.6 million (69%) accrues to local suppliers (Kersley, 2011, p.25).
- Further benefits accrue to local employees through additional jobs, improved job security and enhanced wellbeing (Kersley, 2011, p.25).
- nef also looked at the multiplier effect of procuring a higher share of ingredients for school meals from the local economy. The multiplier calculation, based on the ratio of the initial injection of money to the local economy and the total circulation of that money within it, shows that currently for every £1 spent initially from the Nottinghamshire school meals budget on seasonal, local ingredients, a further £1.19 of economic activity is being generated (Kersley, 2011, p.27).

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Case studies

"Our work with the Food for Life Partnership and other healthy schools initiatives has had a great impact on reducing obesity. At Carshalton the percentage of obese pupils fell from 10% in 2002 to just over 2% in 8 years, and exam results increased from 32% 5 GCSE A*– C to over 90% in the same time period. This really demonstrates how nutrition and healthy life choices play a key part in supporting academic achievement."

David Hall, assistant headteacher, Carshalton Boys Sports College, London

The Oval Primary

in Birmingham is a shining example of a school that has fully integrated the Food for Life Partnership across its school curriculum to the benefit of the children. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is twice the national average; over a third of pupils have learning difficulties and almost half are from minority ethnic groups.

The school was judged 'Outstanding' in a 2010 Ofsted survey of its personal, social and health education provision, and it was noted that the school's FFLP activities successfully and actively engaged staff, pupils and parents in "improving the quality of food across the school and beyond".

Headteacher Rachel Chahal says, "Food has such a huge impact on the children. Learning about what they eat – or should eat – is just so important for their physical, personal and intellectual development. Children at The Oval understand where food comes from, not because they've read about it, but because they've actually seen it first-hand."

Rachel adds, "Our school meal take-up has increased 7.8% since joining the Food for Life Partnership because our food is such high quality and the children have a lot of input. Parents appreciate that and so do the children. The result is the children! They're positive, noticeably happy, contented and keen to learn. In the future, when they think back to their time at school, they'll have vivid memories because their learning has been linked to food, from growing to cooking and tasting it."

Following the success of The Oval, Birmingham City Council caterer City Serve has committed to making Food for Life accredited Bronze, Silver or Gold menus available to all of their schools.



Carshalton Boys Sports College

in the London Borough of Sutton has made the FFLP model central to its drive to transform its food culture and combat obesity in the school and wider community. The school serves a diverse population, with a high percentage of students eligible for free school meals, and also a higher than average proportion identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities, including emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Carshalton has integrated the FFLP programme across the curriculum, with the science department leading on farm visits and FFLP ideals incorporated within work schemes for each department.

David Hall, assistant headteacher, says, "The FFLP has been a catalyst to take our work forward in ensuring pupils feel safe and are happy and understand the connections between food and feeling good and being healthy. We have many awards but the FFLP has pushed us further and given us clear support and guidance to reach the next step in our School Development Plan."

The college is particularly keen to involve parents, who are given regular opportunities to contribute towards the shaping of school policy. Staff look for ways to involve parents in FFLP activities, using a recent school car boot sale as an opportunity to give out salad and herb window boxes.

"We thought it would be a good way to reach out to the wider community, and hopefully success with their window box will inspire some to be more adventurous and have a go at growing other foods. Parents need to be involved as they are the ones who make food decisions within households and are therefore key to improving children's diets," David adds.

Having achieved considerable success in driving down obesity levels, the school is leading training on this issue across the London boroughs. Crucially, the healthy focus has also been accompanied by increased exam success, and this year the school was ranked 42nd in the country for sustained improvement in GCSE results.



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Food for Life Catering Mark



“Over the last couple of years we’ve noticed an increasing number of tenders are asking for the Food for Life Catering Mark as a contractual pre-requisite, which is a fantastic measure of its recognition and success amongst customers.”

Penny Richards, Caterlink

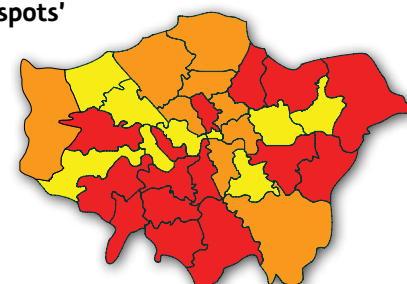
The Food for Life Catering Mark is a Soil Association accreditation scheme that provides a widely recognised benchmark for catering that puts quality first.

Caterers source ethical and environmentally sustainable food, champion local food producers and make it easier for people to eat healthily. The Catering Mark’s Bronze, Silver and Gold awards offer stepping stones for continuous improvement.

For school meal providers, the Catering Mark is a guarantee that they meet the food provenance requirements of the FFLP award for schools. By May 2011, 40 local authority and contract caterers were serving Food for Life menus to more than 290,000 pupils in over 2,800 schools.

School meals in over half of all London boroughs are now Food for Life accredited. In Richmond, local campaigning group School Food Matters has worked to engage schools in FFLP and helped the Borough Council re-tender school meals to secure Food for Life Silver standards at the same time as achieving savings of up to 40p per meal.

Food for Life Partnership London 'hotspots'



National framework, local partnerships

The Food for Life Partnership award framework offers schools a great way to benchmark their achievements nationally and helps them to make progress via the whole-school approach that is key to achieving the evaluation outcomes. Schools receive access to the training and resources they need to offer practical food education, engage their community and work with their caterer to raise school meal standards and take-up.

The FFLP approach is open to innovation to meet local needs, and has already been taken up by a wide range of local partnerships to deliver against goals on public health, education and sustainability. For example:

- In Lincolnshire, the local authority has dedicated a full-time post to FFLP, using it as a tool to develop the school meals service during an important transition in which nearly every school has replaced packed lunches with hot school meals. 189 schools and 17 caterers in Lincolnshire are now involved in Food for Life and over 3,000 Food for Life Gold school meals are served each day.
- In Doncaster, FFLP works in conjunction with Doncaster Catering Service and the Doncaster Healthy Schools team to engage pupils in transforming their food culture, with the School Meals team now offering the Food for Life accredited Bronze menu to all primary schools in Doncaster.

- In Oldham, the benefits of FFLP are widely recognised, with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council providing a Silver menu to 98 schools across the borough. The Director of Children's Services and the Director of Public Health have worked together to deliver a clear message to schools, jointly writing to headteachers to encourage them to engage with FFLP.

If you would like to explore what value FFLP can bring to the table in your area, or if you are already in a FFLP 'hotspot' and want to keep up the momentum, then we would be delighted to hear from you.

E: fflp@foodforlife.org.uk

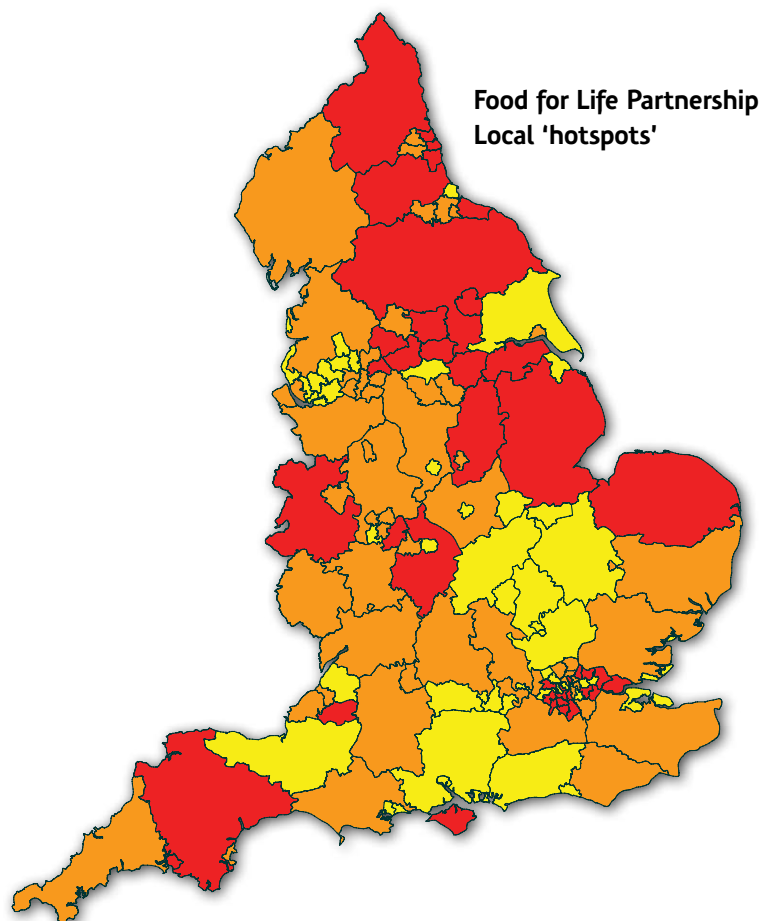
3,800 schools enrolled on the programme so far

150,000 people in the wider school community are benefitting

300,000 children eating Food for Life accredited meals every day

Key

- A FFLP 'hotspot': Food for Life Catering Mark accredited school meals served in most schools. FFLP actively championed by health and education stakeholders.
- Food for Life Catering Mark school meal standards on the way and stakeholders engaged in the FFLP programme.
- Individual schools engaged in the FFLP programme.



About us

The Food for Life Partnership brings together the expertise and enthusiasm of four food-focused charities - Soil Association, The Focus on Food Campaign, Health Education Trust and Garden Organic. We hope you will be inspired to join us and the thousands of schools and communities already embracing the opportunity to enjoy food for life. Our grateful thanks to the Big Lottery Fund for their support.

www.foodforlife.org.uk

45%

of parents report eating more vegetables as a result of the Food for Life Partnership programme

The number of children eating five or more portions of fruit and veg increased by

28%

in Food for Life Partnership primary schools

twice

as many primary schools received an Outstanding Ofsted rating after working with the Food for Life Partnership

Free school meal take-up increased by an average of

13%

points in Food for Life Partnership schools

For every £1 invested in Food for Life menus, the social, economic and environmental return on investment for the local authority is

£3



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food for life PARTNERSHIP June 2011

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