

food
for **life**
PARTNERSHIP



Good food for all

The impact of the Food for Life Partnership



LOTTERY FUNDED

The impact of the Food for Life Partnership

“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 schools across 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 five partner organisations (Soil Association, Health Education Trust, Garden Organic, Focus on Food and since 2013, the Royal Society for Public Health) 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, recognition from the Soil Association for caterers who serve fresh food you can trust (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.



National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)

Qualitative Impact Evaluation of the Food for Life Programme, Teeman D et al, 2011
NFER evaluators systemically 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



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).

Food for Life Partnership evaluation

Orme, J., Jones, M., Kimberlee, R., Salmon, D., Weitkamp, E., Dailami, N., Morgan, K. and Morley, A. (2011) Food for Life Partnership Evaluation. Bristol: University of the West of England <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/14456/>

Teeman, D., Featherstone, D., Sims, D., Sharp, C. (2011) Qualitative Impact Evaluation of the Food for Life Partnership Programme. Slough: NFER <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications>

Kersley, H., Aleksy, K., The Benefits of Procuring School Meals through the Food for Life Partnership. London: new economics foundation <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications>

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8. London Economics (2009), Estimating the economic impact of healthy eating: Final Report for the School Food Trust. <http://www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk/schools/reports/estimating-the-economic-impact-of-healthy-eating>

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.



TERRY ROOK

Food for Life Catering Mark



"Introducing Food for Life has helped improve our school meal uptake and encouraged higher standards of food sourcing across the business - something we are all very proud of. We're seeing increasing demand for Catering Mark menus, and it's clear that this is something of real importance to schools."
 Mark Davies, ISS Education

The Food for Life Catering Mark provides an independent endorsement that food providers are taking steps to improve the food they serve, using fresh ingredients which are free from undesirable additives, trans fats and GM, and better for animal welfare. The Silver and Gold awards build on the Bronze Standards, recognising a further commitment to using local, free range, MSC, Fairtrade and organic ingredients.

The Catering Mark provides achievable framework for caterers to improve quality and traceability, and ultimately uptake of school meals - often while cutting costs. There are now over 700,000 meals served to Catering Mark Standards in over 6000 (UK) schools every day, and over half of London Boroughs are providing Catering Mark meals to schools.

The School Food Plan, an independent review of school food commissioned by the Department for Education which launched in 2013, highlights the Catering Mark as the procurement standard for which caterers should be aiming. This is a key step towards normalising good food in schools.



National framework, local partnerships

"I have commissioned FFLP because I see them as an integral part of the overarching prevention strategy which underpins our life course approach to childhood obesity in Lincolnshire. They deliver an excellent programme that schools love and that is backed up by a sound evidence base. They have also proven to be excellent partnership workers here in Lincolnshire."

Lynne McNiven, Assistant Director of Public Health, NHS Lincolnshire

Impact through local commissioning

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 FFLP is working with 73% of the county's schools who are enrolled on the programme, with 73 schools holding a Bronze, Silver or Gold FFLP award. In addition, as part of a national pilot scheme, the first nursery in the country has been awarded a FFLP Early Years award. This recognises their new approach to a food education framework, setting in motion Lincolnshire County Council's aim to engage as many Early Years settings as possible in their Life Course approach. The commission is entering its third consecutive year and FFLP is firmly embedded in the county's long term health strategy.
- In Kirklees, the FFLP works in conjunction with Kirklees Catering Service and Public Health to engage pupils in transforming their food culture, with the Catering Service now offering the Food for Life accredited Silver menu to all schools in Kirklees.
- Public Health Devon has commissioned the FFLP to work with schools and communities across the county to deliver their evidence-based, multi component food programme that aims to effect behavioural change. Feedback from schools at a local level has indicated that schools value the tailored, flexible support that enables them to make demonstrable improvements in the health and wellbeing of the whole school community.

Commissioning Food For Life at a local level

We recognise that local priorities and resources vary and would expect to work with you to develop a bespoke working model to suit your regional needs.

To find out more about how the Food for Life Partnership can support public health priorities in your area, please contact:

0117 314 5180 / fflp@foodforlife.org.uk



4,800

schools enrolled on the programme so far

700,000

children eating Food for Life accredited meals every day

About us

The Food for Life Partnership brings together the expertise and enthusiasm of five expert organisations – Soil Association, Focus on Food, Health Education Trust, Garden Organic and, since 2013, the Royal Society for Public Health. 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.

The Big Lottery Fund's support for the Food for Life Partnership comes from its £165m Well-being programme, which provides funding to support the development of healthier lifestyles and to improve well-being. 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



TERRY FROOK



Food for Life Partnership April 2014

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