

Recommendations for the Mental Health Prevention Review



The following recommendations have been placed into GOLD, SILVER and BRONZE segments. We envisage that in such a format they can provide you with a succinct set of evidence-based recommendations that you can easily choose to have more details/evidence presented to you.

The GOLD recommendations indicate the best evidenced based options, though they may be the more expensive choices.

The SILVER recommendations are still important but are either cheaper, or they would need less overall change. The SILVER options are also often 'steps to the GOLD recommendations.'

Finally, we have the BRONZE recommendations that may have a lower to no significant associated costs but would still assist in promoting a healthier society and play a part in steps to the SILVER or GOLD recommendations.

These recommendations are brought to you by forty plus professionals with expertise in Food & Nutrition for children and young people.



GOLD OPTION 1

Free School Meals: Adopt universal school meal provision for all primary and secondary school children to improve the next generation's diet, health, and educational attainment. If a stepped approach would be necessary, we recommend introducing universal provision of school meals to primary school children and then expanding the programme to secondary school children. Before enacting universal school lunch provision, enable auto-enrolment process for Free School Meals to ensure eligible children receive what they are entitled to, and schools receive the pupil premium payments they need to support children from disadvantaged households.

National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP): Long-term funding for the NSBP should be decided well before the current programme's end date of July 2024 to allow schools and families to plan long-term and protect the nutritional security of children via ongoing provision. This will remove anxiety for families regarding future planning.

Healthy Start Voucher Card Scheme: Remove the variance of value and purchasing power of Healthy Start vouchers to provide consistency for parents by extending the £8.50 weekly value to eligible children until age five and increasing the value annually in line with inflation. Extend eligibility to all children living in households receiving Universal Credit to provide additional fruit and veg consumption for children most at risk of eating below the recommended 5-a-day minimum. Increase uptake by raising public awareness and ensuring the application process is accessible and straightforward; consider auto-enrolment or an opt-out process to increase uptake.

Increase expertise & commitment by all with excellence in promotion of healthy eating: Commit to education and training for parents, caregivers and practitioners. Including in-depth training of child nutrition guidelines for the out of home sector, educational settings and play provision.

Restrict unhealthy food advertising: Implement restrictions across all sites including streets and transport, but particularly the existing policy commitments on TV and online. Additionally, restrict marketing and promotion of inappropriate commercial infant foods, by implementing the recommendations of the World Health Organisation's Nutrient and Promotion Profile Model.

Educational Food Changes: Removal of processed meat from school and nursery menus. Nursery Food guidelines to become mandatory. Access for all schools to a Registered Nutritionist or dietitian who can support children with overweight, obesity, fussy eating and other nutrition related issues.

High Fat, Sugar & Salt Levy (HFSS): Use the successful model of Sugar Drinks Industry Levy to design further fiscal measures (such as a HFSS Levy) that incentivise industry to sell healthier food and drink options. Invest revenue raised from these fiscal measures, like SDIL, in funding policies to improve children's health, especially for those on lower incomes. This could include expanding access to cheaper, healthier food (school breakfast clubs), to healthy start cards, and breastfeeding support.

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF): Long-term funding for HAF should be decided before the current programme end date of March 2025 to allow time for local authorities, schools, and VCS organisations to continue provision of this much needed programme across the school holidays that supports school attendance, childcare provision, good dietary intake, physical activity, mental wellbeing and skill development; and to attenuate learning loss, rising childhood obesity, antisocial behaviour and crime.

SILVER OPTION 2

Free School Meals: If Universal FSM cannot be met for all schools, start with Primary schools first. An alternative is to make provision for those children whose parents/carers are on Universal Credit. Implement sufficient monitoring and enforcement to ensure all food provided in schools meets the School Food Standards so the full benefits of a school meal are realised. Commission further research: particularly looking at the cost-effectiveness of a universal programme and increasing the monetary value.

Extend current initiatives/regulations: Extension of planning regulations for fast food outlets near schools to include existing takeaways and the hours they can open to reduce access directly before and after school. Free school meals extended to nurseries for eligible families. All schools to have designated water breaks in the day where children are reminded to have a drink to build this healthy hydration habit.

National School Breakfast Programme (NSBP): Monitor and enforce school food standards within the NSBP to ensure good nutritional quality and maximise the programme's benefit.

Local Authority Powers: Increase the powers of local authorities to tackle the flood of unhealthy food and drink advertising in outdoor areas, especially near places children congregate.

BRONZE OPTION 3

Provision of funding to Personal Social Health Education (PSHE): The current PSHE subject is deemed a core subject, but lacks adequate funding.

It is important therefore that there is an increase in specific funding so that Health Education can occur in regard the benefits to physical and emotional health through a healthy diet.

Food Safety & Hygiene Training: Such training implemented for all in educational settings (as highlighted recently by OFSTED).

Weaning Courses: Covering not just first foods but nutrition standards and food environment provided to all families.

National School Breakfast Programme: Expand the NSBP so that all schools meeting the Department of Education's criteria participate, ensuring the programme has the most impact.

Healthy Start Voucher Card Scheme: Make Healthy Start vouchers permanently available to all children from households with no recourse to public funds, including expansion to include all children seeking asylum in a simple and accessible way that doesn't impact asylum claims.

Food Partnerships: Support the creation of a Food Partnership in every local area, as recommended by the Government's Food Strategy.