Averting a recipe for disaster

OUR CHILDREN AND THEIR FOOD
A 25-YEAR VISION

Food habits, both good and bad, are formed in the earliest years. The babies of today are the parents of the future and it is our responsibility to ensure the next generation doesn’t suffer because of poor decisions that we make now.

I strongly believe we need to focus our attention on the nutrition of babies and the under-fives – and for anything meaningful to happen, we need a coordinated long-term strategy that focuses on the youngest children.

We need to build a consensus that transcends party politics to create a better future for our children.

This requires bold, decisive joint-action from food manufacturers, retailers, policy-makers, parents, schools and the media.

This is a 25-year challenge which we must start addressing today. As a first step we call on the main political parties to commit to a coordinated ‘Food Manifesto for the Under-fives’ as part of their 2015 election manifesto.

If our politicians can work together, and in consensus, rather than with disparate aims, there is an opportunity to save a generation of children from the twin evils of obesity and hunger. We believe the will exists – and as politicians, professionals and parents we can work towards achieving a joint goal.

A STARTING POINT

I set up Ella’s Kitchen seven years ago with the simple aim of helping babies and young children eat healthily. I began this journey to create foods for the youngest children that would be healthy, convenient and fun, but crucially, so that our brand would help improve children’s relationship with food.

This document is the outcome of a series of roundtable discussions which brought together some of the leading figures in the food industry, spanning restaurateurs, broadcasters, policy-makers, health experts, charities and journalists.

It outlines eight ideas from Ella’s Kitchen which mark the start of our campaign to galvanise support and create a shared vision of how we might encourage our youngest children to have a better relationship with food – from day one.

It is not intended to offer a ‘silver bullet solution’, but with it, we plan to create a ‘Food Manifesto for the Under-fives’ to help avert a recipe for disaster.

I like to believe that little ripples of ideas can form waves of opinion. Ella’s Kitchen was one ripple, and I hope this campaign can be another.

THE METHOD

This report includes insights collected from discussions with some of the UK’s foremost influencers in the food and health industries, charity sector and media. The following chapters will give an overview of the issues raised in these debates.

This qualitative research has been supplemented by new research from YouGov commissioned by Ella’s Kitchen, which provides insight into how parents and teachers view our children’s relationship with food.

YouGov surveyed 796 teachers and 497 parents during December 2012. By exploring the views of teachers, parents and food industry experts, we hope this report provides a platform for further discussion on how we can improve our children’s relationship with food and shape a healthier future.
WE CURRENTLY HAVE AN EPIDEMIC OF OBESITY, WHICH IN FIVE YEARS WILL TURN INTO AN EPIDEMIC OF DIABETES AND IN ANOTHER FIVE YEARS WILL TURN INTO AN EPIDEMIC OF HEART DISEASE

PROFESSOR DAVID HASLAM GP
CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL OBESITY FORUM

87% OF PARENTS AGREED
Cooking and food education should be introduced as a compulsory part of the curriculum.

70% OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AGREED
Cooking and food education should be introduced as a compulsory part of the curriculum.

93% OF PARENTS AGREED
Their knowledge of how to cook influences the extent to which their children eat healthily.

86% OF PARENTS FEEL
More effort should be made by parents to encourage children to eat healthily – 44% said teachers should do more.

96% OF TEACHERS AGREED
It is up to parents to encourage healthy eating – 53% said the onus was on food manufacturers to do so.

45% OF TEACHERS DO NOT THINK
Government does enough to support schools in encouraging children to eat healthily.

72% OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS THINK
Parents have the greatest impact on the choices children make about food – only 1% think schools have the greatest impact.

88% OF TEACHERS SAID
Poor nutrition contributed to children’s negative behaviour.

26% of parents said the price of buying fresh ingredients was the main barrier to children’s healthy eating in the home.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY START

Food habits are formed when a child is first weaned. During that first year they will develop preferences that may last a lifetime. The overarching message from our contributors was: ‘get it right from the start’.

Allegra McEvedy, chef and co-founder of LEON, said: “It’s about how kids can have a better relationship with food. I don’t think you can get them started too young. We all have to come together especially when it comes to the newborns.”

Rob Rees, Chair of The Children’s Food Trust, agreed: “It’s about getting it right from the start – what mothers are eating, what kids are fed at a young age.”

So it is parents that bear the greatest responsibility – to provide nutritious food from day one and frame children’s relationship with food.

In a poll of parents, conducted for this report, 86% agreed the onus was on them to do more to encourage healthy eating.

Equally, in a poll of teachers, nearly three-quarters believed parents have the greatest impact on the choices children make about food – only 1% believed they did.

Of those polled, 93% of parents agreed that knowing how to cook influences the extent to which their child eats healthy food.

If parents do not have the capabilities to fulfil this responsibility, we reach a roadblock. Paul Sacher, Founder & Research Director of the MEND Programme highlighted the issue as one where “many parents do not have the knowledge and skills to improve their own eating habits, let alone their children’s.” So poor habits are passed on from generation to generation.

Prue Leith agreed, highlighting the need for targeted education for parents. “You’ve got to get to what will make the parents change.”

Over and above providing basic healthy food for the family, our contributors identified a role for parents in encouraging a positive, playful relationship with food from the earliest years.

Dr Sam Royston, Poverty and Early Years Policy Adviser for The Children’s Society, had similar views, stating that getting a ‘positive culture about food into children’s early life is absolutely crucial’.

Research done by Ella’s Kitchen shows toddlers who play with new foods through sight, smell, sound and touch before tasting them were more willing to try tasting vegetables.

This was echoed by Rachel Edwards-Stuart, Food Scientist and Flavour Consultant: “There are a lot of things we could do with the smallest youngsters to get them to really understand food. Let’s say they don’t like celery. Is it the texture? Blitz celery, dye it a different colour, or play around with music and food – research has shown that music can affect flavour perception.”

“Is there more we could do about educating the children in terms of food flavours? Put it this way, I’m scared of spiders, probably because I don’t understand a thing about them.”

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“IT’S ABOUT GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START – WHAT MOTHERS ARE EATING, WHAT KIDS ARE FED AT A YOUNG AGE”

ROB REES
CHAIR OF THE CHILDREN’S FOOD TRUST

“IT’S ABOUT HOW KIDS CAN HAVE A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD. I DON’T THINK YOU CAN START THEM TOO YOUNG”

ALLEGRA MCEVEDY
FOUNDER OF LEON, BROADCASTER AND WRITER

“IF YOU LOOK AT THE FAMILY SET OF TODAY, IT HAS TRANSFORMED OVER A COUPLE OF GENERATIONS. A LOT OF PARENTS DON’T COOK, FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. COST OF LIVING, COST OF FOOD, IT’S VERY EXPENSIVE, AND IT’S EASIER TO BUY SOMETHING THAT IS READY MADE THAN SOMETHING FRESH.”

Allegra McEvedy also addressed these barriers to home cooking. “There is a real time issue – parents go out to work now and don’t spend time cooking and teaching children. When we set up LEON, we thought about how we cook at home and aimed to put that in the context of ‘fast-food’.”

“So before we begin to look at what schools can do, our contributors were clear that the focus should be on the earliest years. Education and experience about food begins at home. Only then can schools coordinate a positive contribution to this experience, rather than work against bad habits that have been formed from day one.”

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HOW CAN KIDS LEARN WHEN THEY’RE GOING TO SCHOOL HUNGRY?

The issues surrounding diet-related disease in the UK go beyond simply the over-consumption of processed foods. Food poverty is a growing issue in the UK and as Laurence Guinness, Head of Campaigns for Kids Company, brought to light: “Often, this is not an issue of a good enough diet, it’s a diet at all. There are children that are not getting enough to eat.”

The implications of this stretch from health to learning and behaviour. Yet according to many of our contributors, for children from the lowest income families, these problems can be traced back to a lack of basic food provision. Kids Company currently feeds 2,000 children per week. According to its research, 85% of those children rely on that meal for the main meal of the day.

Similarly, organisations such as Magic Breakfast, founded by Carmel McConnell, are making positive contributions by delivering free, healthy breakfast to 6,500 children every morning in British primary schools. However, there are still thousands of children that these initiatives can’t yet reach and who are turning up to school without having eaten breakfast. This has major implications for their ability to learn.

In a survey of 591 teachers across Britain who belong to the online Guardian Teacher Network, 49% said they have taken food into school to give to children who have not had breakfast.

Laurence Guinness, brought that reality into stark focus, offering insight from his experience at Kids Company: “McDonald’s is a luxury for the kids that come to us. We met a head teacher who had a child that had a lunchbox consisting of three boiled sweets. It’s an issue of education and also, of deprivation.”

Samantha Hyde from Save The Children has witnessed the extent of this food poverty, where “in many cases... there is no money in the family to feed the children, with parents going without food, or no cooker to prepare a hot meal.”

“Recently one mother shared with us that she eats three times a week so that her three children can actually eat. And that’s not created through drug or alcohol addiction, or decisions that she’s made between having two mobile phones or a flat screen TV.”

Dr Sam Royston agreed: “Most worrying, is that it is the income of families with children in their earliest years that are squeezed the hardest.”

Through his ‘Breadline Britain’ campaign for The Guardian, Patrick Butler, editor of society, health and education policy for the paper, has witnessed the same issues: “When people’s income shrinks, they have to buy different kinds of food and one of the problems is that we’re eating junk.”

For babies and young children, the lack of basic nutrients is irreversibly damaging. And between 2009 and 2010, there was a shocking 33% increase of children in England who included no fruit and vegetables in their diet. (2)

The impact of poor nutrition on diet was an issue that health professionals were particularly concerned about. Professor Mitch Blair from The Royal College of Paediatrics commented: “There’s been a five or six-fold increase in rickets in the last ten years. The issue is the one of not only obesity but also nutritional deficiencies, which could affect 25-30% of the entire child population in the system. The deficiencies affect the way your brain develops, it affects your growth, it affects your learning.”

Professor David Haslam’s experience working as a GP, on the frontline of public health, was equally shocking: “I am seeing more and more kids with breathing difficulties because of their weight, obesity-related problems like diabetes, heart diseases and asthma.”

The message is clear – that over and above the abundance of super-sized meals and processed foods there is a deeper issue as a growing number of lower-income families simply cannot provide basic meals for their kids and that is having long-term effects on children’s health and learning.

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GET COOKING BACK INTO SCHOOL

Our contributors were broadly agreed on the solution. As Prue Leith asserted, “growing and cooking food has to be part of the compulsory curriculum in schools.”

In our poll, 70% of primary school teachers and 87% of parents agreed that cooking should be brought back onto the curriculum. Michelle Smith, Schools Project Manager at the Jamie Oliver Foundation, has worked closely with children of early school age. “There is one common underlying issue – we now have three generations of people that were not taught to cook at school and that is why we have the problem that we have: the chain in passing skills on through generations has been lost.”

“We must look at starting food education as early as we can. Primary schools are a good place to start because children are starting to make more of their own decisions in terms of what they want to eat.”

The consensus seems to be that education can’t start too early, from pre-school and nursery level through to primary school. This is when the youngest children are beginning to establish their food choices and make their own decisions about what they eat – both with peers and within the home.

So the need to re-introduce food into school life is strongest at primary level, when children are beginning to establish food preferences, make independent decisions and influence peers. Research also shows that early intervention in food education is more successful in influencing and changing diets in adulthood. It has often been assumed that children will learn cooking skills at home, but as we have discussed, increasingly this is not the case. Allegra McEvedy agreed. “There is a real time issue – if parents go out to work now and don’t spend the time to cook or teach children how, it is important we make food central to the curriculum.”

Patrick Butler said increasing evidence of children coming to school hungry as a result of poverty or parental neglect meant government must treat schools and food as a serious policy issue and that meant “providing food to children… [and] educating kids about cooking food.”

It is largely agreed that having some knowledge of nutrition and how to prepare fresh meals is as essential a life skill as numeracy, literacy, and science.

Prue Leith was clear that the compulsory aspect of cooking education is key. “We have this obsession with choice,” she said. “Schools are expected to offer choice, but you don’t get a choice in maths or history.”

Over and above giving children basic skills, showing children how to cook healthy meals empowers them to make choices about the food they eat and, ultimately, their own health.

The contributors suggested that schools have a broader role to play in improving children’s relationships with food. One approach was to introduce food as a wider part of the education system on a cross-curriculum level.

Currently, cooking is not a compulsory element of the national curriculum. As such, there is a risk that we have a generation of young people with little or no knowledge of how to cook a meal from scratch.

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOME OF THE MORE BASIC SCIENCES ADDRESSING THE ISSUES AROUND FOOD, IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT HOME ECONOMICS

ADAM LEYLAND
EDITOR OF THE GROCER

GROWING AND COOKING FOOD HAS TO BE PART OF THE COMPULSORY CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS

PRUE LEITH
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AVERTING A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SHAPING OUR FOOD CULTURE

Commenting on the challenge that the media faces in addressing the issue of food and health, Patrick Butler picked up on the widespread ignorance of some of the underlying factors that are shaping our national health issues.

“I’ve been writing about social affairs for 20 years, and food never became an issue for me until I oversaw a Guardian investigation called Breadline Britain. We wanted to find out how much austerity is impacting on people, how they were coping with the fact that they didn’t have that much money. I suddenly realised one of the problems is that the media don’t really understand what food poverty is.

“One of the phrases that I came across that I had never heard before was “heat or eat” and that is the choice many people face, do I switch my central heating on or do I feed my kids?”

Adam Leyland struck a more optimistic note but conceded that the media could be doing more to help:

“I’m not nearly as depressed as some people are about the state of British food. British food is today far more diverse, the choice is fantastic and the quality is fantastic. But I do think there is a lot of kosh that is promoted through the media. Journalists have a lot more responsibility than they realise.”

Prue Leith explains: “I worry about the power of manufacturers and sometimes I think, will we ever win? I do think that there is a way to overcome these challenges but it requires effort from the government and the press.”

The message is clear – beyond the influences of home and school, the media plays an enormous role in shaping our food habits and if we want to help our children eat more healthily, then journalists need to get on board.

Throughout our discussions conversation frequently returned to the role the media plays in shaping our food habits – and some of the leading writers and commentators on food in the UK voiced strong opinions. The consistent view was that the media has a responsibility to address the health challenges that we face in a more constructive manner.

Sheila Dillon, presenter of BBC Radio 4’s Food Programme is “not optimistic about the role of the media.”

“I see from when I began as a food journalist, that as newspapers have fallen on hard times, they have dumped most of their specialist reporters,” she said. “The whole issue of food, agriculture, public health is mostly written in the media and reported on the television by people who have no idea what they are talking about.”

“I find the coverage of food in the media extremely depressing. I find it embarrassing actually, most of the time.”

Many of our contributors highlighted this challenge, particularly citing the often conflicting and confusing information published about what is healthy, and what isn’t, and the impact that this has on parents and their children.

Carmel McConnell commented: “We really need to get the balance right between shock and fear in the media, and try to help people not to be terrified of food but to think that cooking and eating is a pleasure, that this is a really enjoyable thing to do.

“We need to start a national conversation that says obesity and malnutrition is too expensive and it is very easily avoidable,” she added.

Of the parents that we polled, more than a quarter (27%) felt that television had an important role to play in encouraging healthier eating habits in young children.

Picking up the theme, Katie Derham, former ITV news presenter, commented: “I actually think we are quite schizophrenic in the media, because we have glorified, quite rightly, the joys and the art of cooking. But as a journalist, there was always a delight to report on the latest hellish stories about the food that we are eating.

“Given the love people have for food programmes and celebrity chefs, and the fact that ministers watch these programmes, I think there’s a responsibility for the media to take a more campaigning role.”

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WE REALLY NEED TO GET THE BALANCE RIGHT BETWEEN SHOCK AND FEAR IN THE MEDIA

CARMEL MCCONNELL
MAGIC BREAKFAST

42% the number of people who, in a recent survey, said TV adverts would encourage them to eat more healthily.
AVERTING A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

OUR IDEAS

CREATE A LONG-TERM, CROSS-PARTY PLAN TO IMPROVE NUTRITION FOR THE UNDER-FIVES

No meaningful change in our relationship with food is possible over a five-year term of government. Plans around diet-related health and nutrition fall victim to the inevitable changes in the Departments for Education and Health. Instead, there must be a 25-year plan for improvements in nutrition for the under-fives, which is not subject to party political lines. Furthermore, we are calling for all major parties to include a long-term strategy around nutrition, in their party manifestos for 2015.

A FOOD ENTHUSIAST IN RESIDENCE IN EVERY SCHOOL

Elect a ‘Food Enthusiast in Residence’ in every school – a local individual who could act as an independent, voluntary expert within nurseries, pre-schools and schools to assess and advise on nutritional and food-related issues.

The ‘Food Enthusiast in Residence’ could be a teacher, parent, local chef or health professional, who would offer information and offer support to teachers and students about how to integrate food into school life, but also to innovate and encourage a positive culture related to food. This would ensure a more cohesive approach to food education between home and school, improving both child and parent’s understanding of healthy eating.

IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR NEW MOTHERS

Work with dieticians and health visitors to extend the Healthy Start programme to include more food types, vitamin vouchers in addition to advice classes for parents, broader eligibility criteria in regards to income and clear assessment processes.

There should be an aim to increase the number of parents and infants taking part in the Healthy Start initiative to over 50%. The maternal diet is known to influence not only a child’s nutritional status following birth but also their predisposition to diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease in later life. The Healthy Start initiative in the UK is an excellent scheme that offers vouchers for milk, plain fruit and veg or infant formula to pregnant women and mothers of children between one and four, who are on Income Support or Jobseekers’ Allowance.

The scheme should be extended to broaden the definition of ‘low-income’ and provide not only vouchers for nutritious foods and vitamins, but nutrition education for mothers in antenatal classes, breastfeeding promotion and referrals to health and other social services at no charge.

DONATE OUR AIRTIME

Call on grocery brands to donate 1% of their annual TV advertisement airtime to public service adverts promoting healthy eating and nutritional education.

A recent survey revealed that 42% of people say that TV adverts encourage them to eat more healthily. (1) There have been very public attempts by brands, most recently by Coca-Cola, to issue ‘healthy messaging’ via advertising channels. What would be more effective would be if these global brands pledged to contribute a portion of their purchased airtime to public service adverts promoting nutrition education and healthy eating for parents, babies and children.

MAKE COOKING COMPULSORY

Dedicate one compulsory hour per week in pre-school, primary and secondary schools to practical cooking and food education, with the aim that no young person leaves school without having played some part in creating healthy meals.

Currently, cookery lessons for primary school children are sidelined within the wider curriculum of design and technology. Food should have greater emphasis in all learning, placing cooking and nutrition at the forefront of nursery, pre-school, primary and secondary education, in the same way as numeracy, literacy and science are core elements of the curriculum.

There should be an emphasis on making food ‘fun’, using it across the curriculum, as a prop and learning tool in all lessons, from maths to science and art.

COOK WHERE YOU SHOP

Call on our major supermarkets to run free weekly cookery workshops for children and parents, and offer discounted ingredients to encourage cooking at home.

Supermarkets hold a unique opportunity to communicate with families, to join the link between food purchase and home cooking. Yet, supermarkets are designed for adults, which often leads to parents and children finding shopping trips stressful. Major supermarkets could host weekly food workshops, for young children and families, encouraging play with food and teaching practical cooking skills they could put into use at home.

OPEN UP THE UK’S PROFESSIONAL KITCHENS

Encourage local chefs and professional cooks to open their kitchens and offer expertise to equip parents of the youngest children with basic cooking skills.

The UK has a thriving restaurant industry and cooking shows on television remain immensely popular. However, many parents still feel they are unable to provide healthy meals for their children, due to barriers around budget, basic cooking knowledge and time constraints. 200 restaurants could open up their kitchens twice a year, providing ideas for sourcing, budgeting, preparing the meals and involving their children.

A FREE BREAKFAST FOR EVERY CHILD

Set a goal to offer every primary school child in the UK a healthy breakfast, for free, regardless of family income and eligibility to free school meals.

There are still too many children arriving at school too hungry to learn. There have been great developments in offering children healthy school breakfasts for free with a pilot scheme in Blackpool offering free milk, fruit juice, cereal or toast as part of a three-month trial. Organisations such as Magic Breakfast are teaming up with grocery brands and investors to fund national schemes.

We now need to make this a national imperative to ensure every child starts the day with a healthy breakfast.

The Healthy Start initiative in the UK is an excellent scheme that offers vouchers for milk, plain fruit and veg or infant formula to pregnant women and mothers of children between one and four, who are on Income Support or Jobseekers’ Allowance. The scheme should be extended to broaden the definition of ‘low-income’ and provide not only vouchers for nutritious foods and vitamins, but nutrition education for mothers in antenatal classes, breastfeeding promotion and referrals to health and other social services at no charge.

Call on grocery brands to donate 1% of their annual TV advertisement airtime to public service adverts promoting healthy eating and nutritional education.

A recent survey revealed that 42% of people say that TV adverts encourage them to eat more healthily. (1) There have been very public attempts by brands, most recently by Coca-Cola, to issue ‘healthy messaging’ via advertising channels. What would be more effective would be if these global brands pledged to contribute a portion of their purchased airtime to public service adverts promoting nutrition education and healthy eating for parents, babies and children.

Dedicate one compulsory hour per week in pre-school, primary and secondary schools to practical cooking and food education, with the aim that no young person leaves school without having played some part in creating healthy meals.

Currently, cookery lessons for primary school children are sidelined within the wider curriculum of design and technology. Food should have greater emphasis in all learning, placing cooking and nutrition at the forefront of nursery, pre-school, primary and secondary education, in the same way as numeracy, literacy and science are core elements of the curriculum.

There should be an emphasis on making food ‘fun’, using it across the curriculum, as a prop and learning tool in all lessons, from maths to science and art.

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were infants, and 2.14 million were women. In FY 2010, approximately 4.86 million were children, 2.17 million.

Of the 9.17 million people who received WIC benefits each month for FY 2011, States reported average monthly participation just below 9 million participants per month. In 1974, the first year WIC was permanently authorized, 88,000 people participated. By 1980, participation was at 1.9 million; by 1985, 3.1 million; by 1990, 4.5 million; and by 2000, 7.2 million. Average monthly participation for FY 2008 was approximately 8.7 million.

Children have always been the largest category of WIC participants. Of the 9.17 million people who received WIC benefits each month in FY 2010, approximately 4.86 million were children, 2.17 million were infants, and 2.14 million were women.

#### WIC PROGRAM

**WHAT**

WIC (Women, Infants and Children) provides nutritious foods, nutrition education (including breastfeeding promotion and support), and referrals to health and other social services at no charge. WIC serves low-income pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk.

WIC is not an entitlement program – Congress does not set aside funds to allow every eligible individual to participate in the program. Instead, WIC is a Federal grant program for which Congress authorizes a specific amount of funding each year for program operations.

**IMPACT**

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, the number of women, infants, and children receiving WIC benefits each month reached approximately 9.17 million. For the first 8 months of FY 2011, States reported average monthly participation just below 9 million participants per month. In 1974, the first year WIC was permanently authorized, 88,000 people participated. By 1980, participation was at 1.9 million; by 1985, 3.1 million; by 1990, 4.5 million; and by 2000, 7.2 million. Average monthly participation for FY 2008 was approximately 8.7 million.

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#### The Children’s Food Trust: Let’s Get Cooking

**WHAT**

The Children’s Food Trust runs the largest national network of school-based cookery clubs. Let’s Get Cooking. This programme gives adults and children the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy food choices and to cook good food. There are over 4,000 after school clubs for children and families across all regions of England and in every Local Authority.

**IMPACT**

So far, 900,000 adults and children have developed new cooking skills through Let’s Get Cooking. And nine out of ten club members use these new skills at home.

Over half (58%) of those who have attended a club report that they are now eating healthier food at home and passing their skills on to others.

#### Food for Life Partnership

**WHAT**

The Food for Life Partnership brings together the expertise of four food-focused charities, helping schools across England to transform their food culture, giving communities access to seasonal, local and organic food and the skills they need to cook and grow fresh food.

The charities include: the Soil Association, Focus on Food Campaign, Health Education Trust and Garden Organic.

**IMPACT**

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#### Kids Company: Plate Pledge

**WHAT**

Kids Company’s Plate Pledge appeal is aimed at tackling the silent epidemic of hunger and malnutrition among London’s most deprived and at risk children. The appeal asks supporters to provide a child with hot nutritious food for a day, week, month or year.

**IMPACT**

As part of the appeal, Kids Company feeds 2,000 vulnerable children each week, many of whom have experienced abuse and neglect. 85% of children who eat at Kids Company rely on the charity for their main meal of the day.

#### Magic Breakfast

**WHAT**

Magic Breakfast provides free, nutritious breakfast food to school children in primary schools across the UK, where many children arrive at school too hungry to learn. The charity is dedicated to ensuring every child starts the day with the right breakfast as fuel for learning.

The school sustainability programme is a grassroots social enterprise process empowering schools to self fund as well as run their own breakfast club, feeding the many children who arrive at school hungry, independent of external aid.

**IMPACT**

The programme feeds 6,000 children in 200 primary schools across Britain.

A child with SEN who was often late for school (15% of the time) was offered a place at breakfast club and within two and a half months, he was only late once.

#### NHS: Healthy Start

**WHAT**

The NHS’s Healthy Start programme provides vouchers to parents to help them buy basic food for their children. This means-tested scheme is aimed at pregnant women or parents with children under four years old.

Vouchers can be spent on: cow’s milk, infant milk formula and fresh or frozen fruit or vegetables.

**IMPACT**

Figures from December 2011 show that 88.6 per cent of the Healthy Start vouchers that were distributed to families in the UK were exchanged for foods during a four-week period. Approximately 550,000 households in the UK received these vouchers in the first quarter of 2012.

At present 15,000 retail businesses (across 30,000 retail outlets) are registered to accept Healthy Start vouchers. Every four weeks 2.6 million Healthy Start vouchers are issued to families across the UK. Around 91 per cent of these are spent and returned to the Healthy Start retailer reimbursement unit. 70 per cent of vouchers are used with supermarkets, the remainder are spent at pharmacies, independent shops, market stalls and on milk rounds.

#### USA: WIC Program

**WHAT**

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SOIL ASSOCIATION:

BETTER NURSERY FOOD NOW

WHAT
The Better Nursery Food Now programme campaigns for better regulation of the food served to children in all early years settings, better inspection to make sure nurseries stick to these rules, better training in early years nutrition and cookery for nursery care and catering staff and accountability from one Government Department for nursery food.

The programme was launched following a report produced by the Soil Association and Organix in 2008, which for the first time examined the state of food served in nurseries and children’s centres in England and Wales.

IMPACT
Since January 2010, the Better Nursery Food Now campaigners have:
- Written to the Secretary for State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, and the under Secretary for State, Baroness Morgan, to ask for changes in regulation of nursery food, inspection of food quality by Ofsted, and funding for nutrition training for nursery staff.
- Worked with Joan Walley, Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent North, to table an Early Day Motion (EDM) in parliament on nursery food.
- Proposed amendments to the Children, Schools and Families bill, so that the bill makes explicit mention of healthy food and extends its provision to Children’s Centres as well as state-maintained nurseries.

LOCAL FOOD

WHAT
Local Food is a £59.8 million programme that distributes grants from the Big Lottery Fund to a variety of food-related projects that are helping to make locally grown food accessible and affordable to local communities.

The programme opened in 2008, and the demand for funding was so great that they had to close the programme to new applications nearly two years earlier than planned.

IMPACT
To date, around 450 projects have received funding totalling more than £42 million, and their work must be complete by 2014. Current funded projects indicate that through their lifetimes they will benefit approximately 2 million people, and 10,000 organisations and community groups. An estimated 800 jobs will be or have already been created, with over 29,000 volunteers engaged and more than 24,000 training sessions offered.

For more information visit www.localfoodgrants.org and the Big Lottery Fund www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

THINGS WE LIKE

What will our society look like in the future? The answer to that question is being formed by decisions we are making today.

The original idea for this report came when I read two articles, which together illustrated the ‘ticking time-bomb’ we are facing.

One reported that a baby girl born in 2011 had a one-in-three chance of reaching their 100th birthday.

Another included devastating research from the Health Survey for England, that said by 2050 50% of adults and a quarter of children will be obese.

Contemporary society has created a recipe for disaster when it comes to nutrition and diet-related health and the statistics speak for themselves.

However, there are practical solutions that can be put into place now that may begin to move us towards a society in which we have a better relationship with food.

This starts today, with the youngest children.

My strong belief is that food can, indeed should, be fun for children. The more a young child is involved with their food – be that in choosing it, preparing it, playing with it or feeding themselves – the more they will try it, enjoy it and grow up with a healthy attitude to food, their diet and their wellbeing.

I set up Ella’s Kitchen to help children have a better relationship with food so that they grow up with healthy habits that will last their lifetime.

We now have a responsibility, as businesses, policy makers and individuals to do everything we can to address this pressing challenge. This will only be done through a co-ordinated and collaborative effort.

PAUL LINDLEY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND FOUNDER, ELLA’S KITCHEN

CONCLUSION
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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This report contains survey data gathered via two online surveys administered by YouGov from 28 November to 12 December 2012 to members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 300,000+ individuals. The sample of teachers is weighted to be representative of the UK school population by school phase, location and teacher gender and while the sample of parents is weighted to be nationally representative of those with children aged under 12. The total size of the teacher poll was 798. The total size of the parent poll was 497.

ABOUT ELLA’S KITCHEN

Ella’s Kitchen’s vision is to help babies and toddlers eat healthier food and help develop healthy eating habits that last a lifetime. Set up seven years ago by Ella’s Dad Paul Lindley, the company has always prioritised health and nutritional value, but never at the expense of taste or convenience. Ella’s Kitchen strive to be Good in Every Sense, offering healthy, handy and fun food that doesn’t cost the earth.

Ella’s Kitchen has been embraced by parents and kids in over 12 countries and now every second of every day someone around the world is eating an Ella’s Kitchen product.