

Free School Meals

The barriers and facilitators to free school meals (FSM) uptake, and recommendations to help increase uptake.

Parental

Parental shame and embarrassment is a barrier, along with being unaware of the nutritional benefits of FSM.

The benefits of FSM in comparison to packed lunches need to be highlighted.



Food offered

Pupils who receive FSM have poorer choice of food available to them along with smaller portion sizes.

For pupils accessing FSM, they often experience longer queuing times.



Stigma

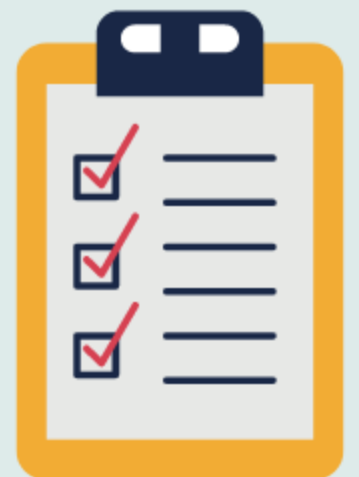
Pupils who receive FSM often mention they experience stigma. This is more prominent in secondary schools.



FSM adoption methods

Adoption of an auto-enrolment approach is a facilitator.

This helps to capture more pupils who are eligible.



Anonymised payment

Anonymised payment methods help to not single out pupils who receive FSM by using more discrete methods.



Nutrition education

Cooking classes for families can help increase willingness to try new foods, which may lead to increased FSM uptake.

Educating parents on the importance of FSM and how it can be a healthy choice is another recommendation.



Canteen environment

Make the canteen a welcoming space for pupils to eat and ensure enough time is provided so pupils don't feel rushed. Also make sure enough variety is offered, taking into account culturally appropriate options.



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