

Speech: Nadhim Zahawi's speech at the Children's Future Food Inquiry

It is a pleasure to be with you today for the launch of the recommendations from the Children's Future Food Inquiry. Thank you so much for inviting me to this event.

I am particularly pleased to be hearing from the Inquiry's young food ambassadors today and I believe it is critical that young people have a strong voice in shaping provision. I welcome this opportunity to listen to your views on how we can build a healthier future for children.

I also know that this report has been informed by the experiences of teachers, youth workers, carers, GPs and other practitioners, alongside hundreds of children and young people. I welcome the dedication and expertise that has contributed to this report.

The government will reflect carefully on the report over the coming months and will consider how we can best respond to the important issues raised.

This morning, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight several significant actions that the government is currently taking to support healthy eating, particularly among families on lower incomes. I believe that many of these actions relate very closely to the recommendations highlighted in today's report, and firmly believe that we are working towards a shared overall ambition.

The government is committed to ensuring that children are well nourished and develop healthy eating habits that stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Healthy eating not only supports children's health but also has an important contribution to make in ensuring children are able to concentrate and learn in schools, and therefore achieve their potential in life.

My department plays a critical role in providing healthy, nutritious food for children, delivered through a range of programmes targeted towards the most disadvantaged children. This is part of our strong commitment to promoting social mobility and ensuring equality of opportunity for every child.

The government is keen to support children during the school holidays, and today's report highlights the issues that may arise during these breaks.

For most children, holidays should mean fun experiences and a chance to make lasting memories. We want to make these opportunities available to all children, regardless of their background, and we also want to make sure that children are eating healthily during the holidays.

In summer 2018, our new holiday activities and food programme supported more than 18,000 disadvantaged children – giving them access to nutritious meals

and fun activities.

Following this successful programme we have now increased funding to £9 million for this summer and aim to improve further on the success of the 2018 programme.

I am exceptionally proud of this programme, and I would like to thank everyone who has been involved – including Lindsay Graham, here for her work with Feeding Britain, one of the seven organisations that received funding last year.

We know that these clubs are located in a range of different types of setting and staffed by a wide range of people, often giving their time for free. We want to help these clubs, and the people who work in them, to improve what they can offer to children. We are particularly interested in establishing what type of provision works best and how provision can be effectively coordinated locally.

I am very proud that also, under the Childhood Obesity Plan, my department is investing up to £26 million in the National Schools Breakfast Programme, as delivered by the charity Family Action in partnership with Magic Breakfast. This programme is setting up or improving more than 1,700 breakfast clubs in schools in the most disadvantaged areas across the country.

A healthy breakfast can play a vital role in ensuring children can concentrate, learn and reach their full potential.

I recently visited a breakfast club in Battersea, and its school leaders, teachers and children were overwhelmingly positive about the whole-school impact of their club.

The government strongly values the importance of providing a free healthy school meal to the most disadvantaged children.

Last year, over a million disadvantaged children were eligible for and claimed a free meal at school. In recent years, the government has expanded free school meals provision in several important ways.

Firstly, from September 2014 free meals were extended to disadvantaged Further Education students for the first time.

We have also given free meals to all infant children in England's state-funded schools; resulting in 1.5 million more infants receiving a free school lunch.

In addition, under our revised criteria for free school meals – introduced last April – we estimate that more children will benefit from free meals by 2022, compared to the previous benefits system.

We have also introduced generous transitional protections so that all children will keep their free meals during the change to the new criteria.

Through these free meals, the government is making an important and positive

contribution for many disadvantaged children.

Today's report rightly highlights that children should not feel in any way stigmatised in receiving their free school meals. We know that many schools have found positive ways to address this issue, including engaging well with families and making the most of new technologies available.

To support this, my department provides an online Eligibility Checking System – a simple and rapid online portal for determining children's eligibility for free school meals. We also provide schools with a model registration form and guidance to make it as easy as possible for children to be registered.

Of course, if we are providing free school meals to the most disadvantaged children, we must ensure that those meals meet a high standard of nutrition and quality. Foods high in fat, salt and sugar are restricted by our School Food Standards, and we are now updating them to reduce sugar even further.

This is one of the key ways the Government has committed to improving children's health under the Childhood Obesity Plan, which involves a number of key departments such as the Department of Health, Ofsted and Department for Culture Media and Sport working together to improve health outcomes for all children of all backgrounds.

As a result, we will continue to ensure that the meals children receive in schools are healthy, nutritious and of the highest quality. And as today's report highlights, I know that many children are keen to be involved in shaping the menus offered in schools. I would encourage them to make their voices heard by their school leaders.

Today's report has also highlighted the importance of healthy meals in early years settings.

I would like to take this opportunity to promote the menus and guidance that Public Health England published in November 2017. This guidance supports settings in meeting the Early Years Foundation Stage welfare requirement to provide 'healthy, balanced and nutritious' meals for children.

Before I finish, I would briefly like to touch on a couple of other interesting aspects from today's report.

The report proposes placing a tax on unhealthy foods and using the proceeds to support children. Of course, our government has already taken an important action in this area by introducing the Soft Drinks Industry Levy in 2018.

This incentivises industry to reduce the sugar content of soft drinks. The proceeds from this levy have been used to support important programmes for children's health, including investing up to £26 million in school breakfast clubs in disadvantaged areas, as well as investing in our £320 million 'PE and Sport Premium' for primary schools.

The report also made recommendations around the marketing of unhealthy foods and the availability of these foods near schools. The government is keen to protect children from advertising that encourages demand for unhealthy food,

and is currently consulting on proposals to reduce children's exposure to such advertising.

And finally, I fully understand the importance of listening to the views of children on this issue.

It is vital that government considers children's views, alongside expertise from practitioners and the best available evidence. In addition, I know that many school leaders and local partners are taking positive steps locally to involve children in shaping provision in their schools and communities.

Overall, the Government is truly committed to delivering a country that works for everyone. We are determined to ensure that we target our support as effectively as possible towards the children that are most in need. I am very keen to hear from you about what we can all do to help address these issues, and we will reflect carefully on the recommendations contained in this report.

Thank you again for inviting me to this launch event today and I hope that we can continue to work together to ensure all children are healthy and well nourished.

Press release: Alun Cairns targets eighth London Marathon

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns is preparing to run his eighth London Marathon this Sunday (28 April). Mr Cairns' personal best time of 3:28:02 in 2016 placed him in seventh position on the list of all time fastest MP runners.

This year the Welsh Secretary will raise funds for the Dementia Revolution and Guide Dogs UK, seeking to match the £10,000 he raised for NSPCC Cymru and Atal y Fro women's aid charity following last year's race.

Dementia Revolution is a year-long combined effort between Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Research to raise funds through the London Marathon.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

I look forward to taking part in this year's race and sharing memories with runners of all abilities, who each have their own motivations for completing the course.

The charities I'm supporting are close to my heart and I'm inspired

by their work to provide vital research and services to thousands of vulnerable people in Wales and all over the UK.

Last year's marathon was a challenge due to the heat, so I'm hoping for cooler conditions to record a respectable time and raise plenty of money for these two worthy causes this time around.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

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The Welsh Secretary will raise money for the Dementia Revolution and Guide Dogs UK charities

Press release: HRH The Princess Royal officially opens new UKHO headquarters in Taunton

During her visit, The Princess Royal delivered a speech to an audience of UKHO staff and over 100 guests who gathered from across the world to celebrate the landmark occasion. In her speech, she commended the UKHO for the vital role it plays in supporting maritime navigation, safety, security, and marine development around the UK and worldwide.

The Rt Hon Earl Howe, Deputy Leader of the House of Lords and Minister of State for Defence, was also in attendance. He addressed guests to speak of the UKHO's long and successful history of supplying navigation services to shipping companies around the world, as well as its continued contribution to defence and the long-term prosperity of the UK and its allies around the world.

The new building is designed to provide an open and dynamic workspace for the UKHO's 850 staff, whilst fostering a culture of collaboration and smarter

ways of working through the use of cutting-edge technologies. These state-of-the-art facilities, together with continued investment in new technology and talent, present opportunities for the UKHO to broaden its range of services as a provider of marine geospatial data.

Representatives from 18 countries, spanning five continents, attended the ceremony. Guests at the event included dignitaries from the local community, academics, data suppliers, distributors, and members of the Armed Forces and international hydrographic community.

After the opening speeches, guests were given a tour of the new facilities, which include a high-spec office space, gym, staff restaurant, and an 800 square metre central atrium designed to provide maximum levels of natural daylight throughout the building.

Commenting on the formal opening of the new build, Rear Admiral Tim Lowe CBE, National Hydrographer and Acting Chief Executive, UKHO, said:

It is an honour to welcome Her Royal Highness and guests from around the world here today to share this momentous occasion with us as we officially open our new headquarters here in Taunton.

Today doesn't simply mark the opening of a new building. For us, it marks the beginning of the next chapter in this organisation's long and proud history. It is the next step in the transformation that the UKHO has been undertaking in recent years to become a truly modern marine geospatial information agency and hydrographic office.

The UKHO's new home has been specifically designed to meet our needs as a modern hydrographic office. Its conception, design and construction are just some of the physical reflections of our ambition to drive the advancement of ocean science in the UK and across the globe; strengthening our position as a world-leading marine geospatial agency and completing our transformation into a digital-first, data-centric provider of marine geospatial information services.

Amy Carrillo, Head of People, UKHO, added:

The new building is a huge source of pride for our 850 staff here at the UKHO. With its open and dynamic design, we have created a truly world-leading workspace for our people that cultivates creativity and innovation across the organisation.

From hydrography and oceanography, to software engineering and data science, we employ experts from across a range of disciplines, in a variety of challenging and interesting roles. The new environment celebrates and reinforces our strong links with the local community, and will support us as we continue to invest in our

technology and our people.

Our staff are answering some of the most difficult challenges facing our oceans, and we are confident that this new building will underpin our world-leading geospatial expertise for years to come.

Press release: HRH The Princess Royal officially opens new UKHO headquarters in Taunton

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has today welcomed HRH The Princess Royal to officially open its new headquarters in Admiralty Way, Taunton.