

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP
Secretary of State for Education
20 Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

12th January 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Food parcels for children receiving free school meals

I am writing to you as the Officer for Health Improvement at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health.

Our members are extremely concerned by multiple images that have emerged online showing the contents of food parcels provided to families through the free school meals programme.

The contents of these parcels are not nutritionally sufficient for children and young people. Good nutrition is at the heart of child health, development and wellbeing. Every day, our members see the negative impact of the lack of access to this in their work as paediatricians. Without it, children's health outcomes worsen, and so too do their life chances.

Our [State of Child Health 2020](#) report showed that children and young people entitled to free school meals already have worse health outcomes than their peers. The pandemic has entrenched and exacerbated this reality, and as a consequence, child health inequalities are worsening.

As throughout the pandemic, schools and local authorities across the country are doing their very best to support children and young people. The Government must meet their efforts by:

- 1) Urgently reviewing the approved supplier list
- 2) Providing the resource needed by schools and local authorities so they are equipped to provide flexibility for families in how they want to receive support
- 3) Getting the national voucher scheme up and running in the coming days

What we have seen online in the last 24 hours have been an insult to the dignity of the children, young people and their families who rely on this vital support. I urge you to take action as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Max Davie
Officer for Health Improvement
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health