# Study Finds UK Free School Meal Allowances Insufficient for Healthy Lunches



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A recent study presented at the European Congress of Obesity (ECO) reveals that the current free school meal (FSM) allowances in the UK are insufficient for students to purchase healthy lunches. Conducted by researchers and involving 42 pupils aged 11 to 15 from seven UK schools, the study showed that the daily budget of £2.15 to £2.70 mainly restricted students to less nutritious meal deals.

The study highlighted that healthier non-meal-deal items were often more expensive and less accessible. Pupils were also pressured to make quick, less healthy food choices due to limited break times. Many students reported feeling hungry during the morning as they could not access their FSM allowance until lunchtime.

Dr. Sundus Mahdi from the University of York pointed out that the portion sizes were frequently inadequate to sustain pupils throughout the school day. Some students even brought additional packed lunches. The researchers concluded that increasing the FSM allowance is necessary to enable students to purchase more nutritious and filling meals.

The study also called for amendments to school food standards, recommending two portions of vegetables with every meal. Separate research by the Food Foundation indicated that providing a healthy packed lunch is 45% more expensive than a less nutritious one, with significant cost gaps across supermarket chains.

In England, 1.9 million children are eligible for free school meals, which are provided to households earning less than £7,400 after tax and before benefits.

**Keywords:**- Free School Meals (FSM) - European Congress of Obesity (ECO) - University of York - Meal Deals - School Food Standards

**Audience:**- Parents - Educators - Policy Makers - Health Researchers

**Perspective:**- Informative

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