



Magic Breakfast: Preparing for scale

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At Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation (Impetus-PEF) we want to make sure that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds don't fall behind their better off classmates at school. Hunger is one of the barriers that can hold them back. An estimated half a million children come to school hungry each day, making it hard to concentrate – and making it hard to learn.¹

In March 2017 we started working with Magic Breakfast, who support 470 schools across the UK to provide healthy breakfasts to children who come to school hungry. They are the rarest of creatures: a charity with proof of impact, in the form of a successful randomised control trial (RCT) funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). The trial results showed that by supporting schools to provide breakfast to tackle hunger, pupils made an extra two months progress in reading, writing and maths.

On top of that, tireless campaigning by their founder and CEO, Carmel McConnell, saw the government announce plans to put the proceeds from the 'sugar tax'² towards funding a national roll-out of breakfast clubs.

Magic Breakfast accomplished all this as a small organisation. This meant that the organisation needed bolstering to be able to deliver on a national scale. That's where Impetus-PEF came in.

Executive summary

In partnership with the EEF, Impetus-PEF is supporting Magic Breakfast to scale up their programme to schools across the country. In this briefing, we take you through how we worked with Magic Breakfast to tackle the following questions:

1. What will Magic Breakfast be scaling up?
2. How can Magic Breakfast use data to make sure schools get the support they need?
3. How fast should Magic Breakfast grow and what does it need to grow?
4. How can Magic Breakfast access government funding?
5. What challenges will Magic Breakfast face as it scales?
6. How will Impetus-PEF continue to support Magic Breakfast to overcome these challenges?

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1. What will Magic Breakfast be scaling up?

In March 2017 we started working with Magic Breakfast, who support 470 schools across the UK to provide healthy breakfasts to children who come to school hungry. In the first phase of our partnership, we took a cross-section of the charity's staff and Board off-site and reviewed their mission and programme design, in our 'Driving Impact' workshop. We considered who in the team needed to do what and when, to make sure schools feed as many hungry children as possible.

To enhance the impact of their programme, Magic Breakfast built on the proven approach used in the EEF trial and drew on their recent experience with 150 new schools. They decided on two improvements to maximise impact – to increase their upfront support to schools and to reduce the 'caseloads' of their team so that they could spend more time with each school.

2. How can Magic Breakfast use data to make sure schools are getting the support they need?

We helped Magic Breakfast to develop an 'outcomes framework' to understand the strengths and weaknesses of a school's breakfast provision. The framework is a list of scales which score each of the main aspects of provision from one to four. The scales capture things like how well a school is doing at providing healthy cereals, or at preventing stigma that might put children off from attending.

The outcomes framework now underpins the charity's work. The data is used to direct support to where it's needed most, and to identify what is working well and where improvements can be made.

3. How fast should Magic Breakfast grow and what does it need to grow?

We brought in expertise from our pro bono network to help the management team adapt for the next stage of growth. Founder and CEO, Carmel McConnell, decided that the time was right for her to focus her efforts on campaigning for long term funding to solve the issue of hunger in UK schools. The Board agreed that she should become Head of Policy and Partnerships and that her long time second in command, Alex Cunningham, would become CEO.

A big increase in the number of schools the charity would work in meant that changes would be required in finance, HR and IT too. The Board agreed that a Chief Operating Officer should be hired alongside a Head of Fundraising, who would focus on raising additional funding.

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At the same time, we enlisted additional pro bono consultancy to work out what size the schools team would need to be to deliver the Magic Breakfast programme in an additional 500, 1,000 and 1,500 schools. Then we factored in the additional costs of the bigger leadership team and an upgrade in their systems. This work allowed Magic Breakfast to assess the implications of different rates of growth on costs and fundraising, and was the foundation for the development of an ambitious but realistic growth plan.

4. How can Magic Breakfast access government funding?

In October 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) announced a tender to roll out support for breakfast provision to schools in disadvantaged areas across the country. We helped Magic Breakfast to look at how they could expand into these areas, which informed their budget for their bid. Magic Breakfast found a complementary partner in Family Action, who brought the experience and infrastructure required to manage a big contract.

In March 2018, the DfE awarded Magic Breakfast and Family Action a [£24 million contract](#)³ to support more than 1,770 schools over the next two years. This is a substantial investment by the government in Magic Breakfast's proven approach, which will help raise the attainment of an estimated 130,000 disadvantaged young people. We're proud to have played our part in this.

5. What challenges will Magic Breakfast face as it scales?

The £24m contract will take Magic Breakfast's programme to ten times as many schools as the original EEF trial. This is a daunting challenge for any charity. The promising impact found in small scale trials is not necessarily guaranteed at a bigger scale; the quality of delivery may suffer. What worked in the original trial may no longer work, or may not transfer as well to new areas.

The decisions made in the 'Driving Impact' workshop should help tip the balance in Magic Breakfast's favour. Charity staff will benefit from a more detailed 'manual', laying out exactly what they need to do with schools and when. Schools will get more support and earlier than before.

Data from the outcomes framework will help Magic Breakfast to check that their approach is still working. We've created dashboards so they can keep a close eye on the progress of each school and quickly identify those which need more help. An external evaluation funded by the EEF will also provide real-time information on what happens as provision expands, helping the management team ensure the quality of delivery remains high.

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6. How will Impetus-PEF continue to support Magic Breakfast to overcome these challenges?

We'll continue our support to Magic Breakfast for the next two years to help them achieve the same progress for the children in the 1,770 new schools. As well as helping them to manage delivery, we'll work closely with the leadership team and Board to continue to build the organisation they need to work well at this size. We'll help the new CEO to build the senior management team, and work with the new COO to strengthen their finance, HR and IT systems. We're also providing the charity with £250,000 of core funding towards the costs of the new roles and systems.

Finally, we'll introduce Magic Breakfast to other like-minded funders who want to co-invest, to make sure that this proven solution to breakfast hunger and raising attainment is on the menu wherever it's needed.

References

¹A Hoyland, KA McWilliams, RJ Duff & JL Walton, [*Breakfast consumption in UK schoolchildren and provision of school breakfast clubs*](#), *Nutrition Bulletin* (2012).

²Department for Education, [*Funding boost to give more children healthy start to the day*](#), 19 March 2018.

³HM Treasury, [*Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect*](#), 5 April 2018.

Background reading

- Impetus – Private Equity Foundation, [*Magic Breakfast*](#).
- Impetus – Private Equity Foundation, [*Driving Impact*](#).

About Impetus-PEF

Impetus – The Private Equity Foundation (Impetus-PEF) transforms the lives of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by ensuring they get the right support to succeed in school, in work and in life.

We do this by finding, funding and building the most promising charities working with these young people and by influencing policy and resources.

We support a number of charities helping to give disadvantaged young people a chance to succeed in school, in work and in life.

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