

For Immediate Release **14th January 2021**

**Statement from Robin Mills, Compass Group UK & Ireland Managing Director
Chartwells Free School Meal Food Parcel Commitments *(including half-term provision)***

As Managing Director of Compass Group UK and Ireland, the company which owns Chartwells, I want to tell you what's happened with our free school meal parcels following school closures and – most importantly – what we're doing to put things right.

The first thing I want to do, personally and on behalf of Chartwells and Compass, is to say sorry. The quality and quantity of the produce in the images on Twitter fell short of our usual standards.

We've undertaken a number of immediate actions to put things right:

- Apologised to parents who have contacted us about their parcels
- Committed that we will not charge the schools affected by any shortage
- Created extra quality assurance checks at the supplier level and within each individual school – including photographing every batch of parcels when it goes out
- Confirmed that our colleagues in each school will sign off on batches of parcels as they leave the school
- Allocated additional Chartwells employees and provided extra guidance to support them
- Set up a free helpline for concerned schools and parents that will go live on Monday

Getting nutritious food to children at home during lockdown is critical. We are stepping up to meet this challenge in multiple ways, ensuring everything we do meets the exacting standards which rightly apply to children's food:

- Created a supply chain specifically to serve children with these parcels
- Moved to one-week parcels to include more fresh produce
- Increased the quantity and variety of products
- Provided a detailed recipe guide to help families prepare nutritious lunches

- Committed that we make no profit on the provision of food parcels

In light of this week's events, and the very challenging circumstances many families find themselves in, we feel that it's right we go further:

- We will provide free breakfasts to all children currently receiving a Chartwells lunch parcel from 25 January for the duration of school closures
- In addition, for those same children, we will offer schools the option of lunch parcels through the February half term at no cost

As a member of the Marcus Rashford Child Poverty Taskforce, we are very focused on the review of the free school meals system. We have also engaged closely with policymakers, and together with the industry we have developed a series of protocols to ensure this doesn't happen again.

We are moving quickly to fix the problem and to deliver on our commitments.

ENDS

For further information please contact Compass Group UK & Ireland Communications Team on 01895 554 999 or email uk.communications@compass-group.co.uk

Editor Notes:

Compass Group UK & Ireland

We're the UK's leading food and support services provider: the people behind the food, hospitality and services that brighten your day, make you smile and put a spring in your step. Operating in some 6,000+ locations across the UK & Ireland, we provide expert catering, cleaning, and facilities management services to a range of clients and sectors across the country. In the UK and Ireland we're tens of thousands of talented people providing tasty, well-cooked food and support services to improve the health and wellbeing of workers, school children, hospital patients, military and visitors to the nation's major sports and cultural events.

For more information, please visit: www.compass-group.co.uk

