

**COVID-19  
UPDATE**



# **CHARTER** 2020

**A plan to tackle children's food  
insecurity and inequalities in obesity  
and protect every child's right to food**



# CHILDREN'S #Right2Food CHARTER

## 1 A NEW CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO FOOD COMMISSION

To achieve the changes set out in this Charter, we need a Children's Right to Food Commission to monitor and improve children's food. It must be established in law and operate across all four UK nations with young people at the heart of its leadership.

1. **Develop a plan to deliver this Charter:** secure evidence to support policy decisions, drive cross-departmental action and share best practice across the four UK nations, reporting progress to parliament

2. **Design and develop a monitoring system for school and nursery food** to prove that money spent on school food is truly delivering quality meals for children
3. **Design and test school food menus and better eating environments for secondary schools** with input from young people that align with school food standards
4. **Plan how to protect children's food security in future pandemics and emergencies:** so no child is ever subject to hunger or poor quality food in a crisis again.

## 2 A NUTRITIOUS START IN LIFE FOR EVERY CHILD

We build foundations for long-term health in early childhood: missing out on healthy diets is leading to health and education inequalities for a whole generation. We must invest in children's nutrition and give our youngest the best chance to fulfil their potential.

1. **Introduce universal infant free school meals in Wales and Northern Ireland** to replicate existing schemes in Scotland and England
2. **Put in place mandatory nursery food standards in England and Scotland** to fix the current variable food standards in pre-school settings
3. **Expand the Healthy Start scheme:** increase its value and the number of children who benefit from it, encouraging support from retailers (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

## 3 A HEALTHY LUNCH EVERY DAY

Covid-19 showed the importance of free school meals and the immediate threat of hunger when they are taken away. All children should have a healthy lunch so that they can grow and thrive, whether in term time or during the holidays, especially if times are tough at home.

1. **Extend the offer of free school meals to more children in need:** apply the income threshold of £14,000 per year used in Northern Ireland to the rest of the UK for more children to qualify

2. **Expand holiday provision permanently** to support all children who normally receive free school meals when schools are closed
3. **Ensure children with no recourse to public funds can access free school meals,** continuing the commitments made during Covid-19
4. **Provide free nursery meals** to children who are entitled to free childcare
5. **Increase the free school meal allowance for secondary school children:** raise the £2.70 currently allocated per meal per child to £4.00.

## 4 STOP THE STIGMA

During the Covid-19 crisis, millions of households faced stress and shame as they were forced to turn to food banks, and many more children now qualify for free school meals. It's time to stop the stigma attached to hunger and make sure no child feels embarrassed or humiliated.

1. **Rename free school meals as the "school meal allowance"** to remove the negative associations felt by many children
2. **Poverty proof school food** including protecting the anonymity of children who receive free school meals and making sure no child misses out on school cooking classes due to lack of money
3. **Develop guidance for schools on food education** adding learning about food poverty and the right to food to the curriculum
4. **Increase funding for free breakfast clubs** so that no child starts school on an empty stomach
5. **Extend the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme to all children** to support children to eat healthily even when budgets are tight at home
6. **Ensure all schools have facilities for children to drink tap water for free:** payment for bottled water should be banned on school premises
7. **Make laws that take food costs into account** when considering changes to support or wages for families.

## 5 HEALTH BEFORE PROFITS

Covid-19 has shown that a strong immune system and healthy weight are critical for the nation's resilience. Children's health must come before the profits of big business, and the government must help make the healthiest options the easiest.

1. **Make food packaging and marketing aimed at children more honest:** clear labelling and

- reduced advertising of unhealthy food
2. **Stop the advertising of unhealthy food** on TV, near schools, online and on social media
3. **Add a premium to business rates for fast food outlets operating near schools** and offer discounts to those with healthier options
4. **Make healthy food affordable:** retailers and fast food chains should make sure healthier options are cheaper than unhealthy ones.

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