



PRESS RELEASE

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**YOUNG PEOPLE JOIN DAME EMMA THOMPSON AT WESTMINSTER TO CALL FOR
CHILDREN'S FOOD WATCHDOG**

- **Young people join Dame Emma Thompson at Westminster launch to present their children's #Right2Food Charter, which calls for an independent Children's Food Watchdog**
- **The Children's Future Food Inquiry ambassador Dame Emma Thompson champions the project's final report, which calls for urgent political action on child food insecurity**
- **The Inquiry's recommendations come on the same day as reports that a record 1.6 million food bank parcels were given to people in the past year, with more than half a million of these going to children**
- **One in three (4.1 million) children live in poverty in the UK, with an estimated 2.5 million living in food insecure households**
- **Extensive report marks the first attempt to directly and systematically seek the views of children and young people from deprived backgrounds across the UK**

Thursday 25th April – Today the [Children's Future Food Inquiry](#) ambassador Dame Emma Thompson joins young 'Food Ambassadors' at Westminster to deliver a new [report](#) which calls for an independent Children's Food Watchdog to lead the charge on tackling children's food insecurity in the UK.

The Children's Future Food Inquiry is the first attempt to directly and systematically seek the views of children and young people living in poverty across the UK. It has spent 12 months investigating children's food insecurity in each of the four UK nations, and the project's final report pulls together direct input from hundreds of young people, the frontline staff, academics and experts.

Dame Emma Thompson, Children's Future Food Inquiry ambassador, said: "In a wealthy society that claims to value compassion and humanity, how can we tolerate the injustice of millions of children going hungry?"

"In face of the government's refusal to help, the Children's Future Food Inquiry has brought together hundreds of young people to hear about their lived experience of food poverty, and it's time we listened to what they say. It's the younger generation who will deliver the change that's so urgently needed: we must act now to ensure every child in the UK has their right to food."

The [#Right2Food Charter](#) included in the report presents the Inquiry's young 'Food Ambassadors' (aged between 10 and 18 years) own recommendations for loosening the grip of food poverty on children in the UK and improving their access to enough nutritious food. Their key proposal is for a new Children's Food Watchdog, which will stand as an independent body with children and young people involved in its leadership.

"We had a referral from a local school asking for assistance as one of their pupils had been caught stealing sachets of ketchup to take home because he was hungry."

Crookston Community Group, Glasgow – Children's Future Food Inquiry final report

With the first stage of the Inquiry concluded, the committee (made up of parliamentarians and civil society experts; including the Children and Young People's Commissioner in Scotland and the President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health) will focus on establishing the Children's Food Watchdog, and its first action will be to conduct an economic costing of the full range of measures proposed in the report by the young people as solutions for the problems identified by the Inquiry. These measures aim to tackle the differences in policy and provision across the UK with the aim to achieve minimum equitable standards, including extending the entitlement of free school meals to the 23% of children not entitled to them who are missing lunch due to lack of money; ensuring the funding provided for free school meals is actually sufficient to buy a healthy lunch; and ensuring that more families benefit from the fruit and vegetable vouchers provided through Healthy Start (from which currently only 30% of children in poverty benefit).

"If you're not eating it can really trash your confidence. Makes it hard to concentrate – instead of thinking about what you're learning, you're thinking about food."

Young Food Ambassador – Children's Future Food Inquiry final report

Calls for robust policy responses to children's food insecurity come on the same day as reports that a record 1.6 million food bank parcels were given to people in the past year, with more than half a million of these going to children.

"We have spoken to children who have shoplifted for food, scavenged for food from bins, eaten tissue paper to fend off hunger, bartered for food at school, sold drugs for food, and mugged other children for money for food."

Laurence Guinness, Chief Executive of the Childhood Trust – Children's Future Food Inquiry final report

The Children's Future Food Inquiry report will be launched at a Westminster event co-hosted by Dame Emma Thompson and attended by Nadhim Zahawi MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families. Launches in Northern Ireland, Wales, and Scotland will follow in the coming weeks.

The report was initiated by a cross party group of MPs, peers and civil society experts, including Bruce Adamson, the Children and Young People's Commissioner in Scotland; Professor Russell Viner, President of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health; and Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of Marie Curie and Formerly Chief Executive of The Children's Society. It covers all four UK nations, and looks at the three settings that characterise children's lives: pre-school, school and home. It presents the views of young people and those who work with them on the barriers to nutritious food for children in the UK, and addresses issues including holiday hunger, unhealthy food marketing and the stigma attached to free school meals.

"I didn't have any breakfast cos there was nothing in the fridge. I don't eat breakfast much anyway. When we don't have any food for dinner my Dad will go out to borrow money from our neighbour."

Girl, 11 – Children's Future Food Inquiry final report

The Inquiry's evidence was gathered from workshops with nearly 400 children in 13 different locations around the UK, an academic review of child food insecurity, polling of young people 11-18 years, more than 100 submissions of evidence from people working with children, a UK-wide policy review and secondary analysis of government data on the affordability of a healthy diet.

“I’d say to the government to make sure all children have the same amount of food no matter what their backgrounds are, where they come from, what school they go to, their behaviour or anything. Make sure that all youth has the same amount of food, and has enough.”

Young Food Ambassador – Children’s Future Food Inquiry

Anna Taylor OBE, Executive Director of the Food Foundation, said: “Children living in poverty have told this Inquiry directly that they don’t have enough to eat, and that the food their parents can afford is harming their health. We should care about unlocking our children’s potential, but instead the food insecurity experienced by millions of young people in the UK is hindering their growth, crippling their confidence and making it impossible to learn and develop. The Inquiry’s report and its recommendations prove that there are things we can do, right now, to make sure children have enough nutritious food. It’s an opportunity to right the wrongs we have tolerated for too long – we cannot let it pass us by.”

Sharon Hodgson MP, Member of Parliament for Washington and Sunderland West, Shadow Minister for Public Health and Co-Chair of the Children’s Future Food Inquiry: “As Co-Chair of the Children’s Future Food Inquiry, I have heard directly from young people about their experiences of food poverty.

“I believe that no child should be going hungry or experiencing food poverty. That is why I was proud to Co-Chair this inquiry and speak to young people who are experiencing food poverty in order to understand their hardships and how Government can better support them and their families.

“Children are falling through the safety net, and families are having to rely upon charities and service providers for things such as breakfast clubs, holiday provision and foodbanks. These children, and their families, need support from the Government in order to have access to healthy and affordable food.

“The Government must take this issue of food poverty seriously, and it must include young people in the conversation.”

Notes to Editor

The young Food Ambassadors, Anna Taylor OBE, Sharon Hodgson MP and Baroness Rosie Boycott are available for further comment.

Also available for interview are Nathan Atkinson (formerly Headteacher at an inner-city school in Leeds) and Kevin Mackay (formerly Year Three teacher at a primary school in Leeds).

Please contact:

Pandora Haydon – 07789 712608 / pandora.haydon@foodfoundation.org.uk

Jo Ralling – 07770 500858 / jo.ralling@foodfoundation.org.uk

Images are available [here](#). Photographs of Tia and Corey by Jillian Edelstein.

A short film about the Children's Future Food Inquiry will be available from 9.00 on Thursday 25th April on the [Food Foundation website](#) and [Food Foundation YouTube channel](#).

Social Media

Twitter: @CFFinquiry

#Right2Food

Facebook: @FoodFoundationUK

Instagram: food.foundation

Social media content pack available [here](#).

About the Food Foundation

The [Food Foundation](#) is an independent think tank that tackles the growing challenges facing the UK's food system in the interests of the UK public. It has worked with the Children's Future Food Inquiry partners to coordinate the Inquiry and deliver the final report.

About the Children's Future Food Inquiry

The [Children's Future Food Inquiry](#) was initiated to hear directly from children, young people and those who live and work with them about children's experiences of food and how it affects their lives. An estimated 4.1 million children are living in poverty in the UK, but almost nothing is known about how many of these children experience food insecurity. At the same time children are suffering from record levels of obesity and it is worse in the poorest parts of the country. The Inquiry will particularly focus on children who are disadvantaged, and will investigate this challenge in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and is spearheaded by a cross-party parliamentary group. The involvement of young people in the Inquiry was thanks to the support of the Tudor Trust, Trust for London, The Big Lottery Fund and the Young people and Children's Commissioner for Scotland. The following organisations have been involved in the Inquiry: The Food Foundation, Fixers, Food Sense Wales, Children in Wales, Children in Scotland, Children in Northern Ireland, Leeds Beckett University and the University of Kent.