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MORE THAN FIVE MILLION PEOPLE IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN HAVE EXPERIENCED FOOD INSECURITY SINCE LOCKDOWN BEGAN

- New data from the [Food Foundation](#) shows more than five million people living in households with children under 18 have experienced food insecurity after just a month of lockdown
- Dame Emma Thompson, the [Children's Right2Food Campaign](#) Ambassador, calls on government to protect and prioritise children
- Parents in the UK have been unable to shield more than two million children from food insecurity
- More than 200,000 children have had to skip meals because their family couldn't access sufficient food during lockdown
- A million children have had less nutritious sustenance; eating low-cost, unbalanced meals because their parents have run out of food
- 2.8 million households with children in the UK report a loss of income
- Half a million children who normally rely on free school meals have received no substitutes at all since lockdown came into effect
- The number of households with children experiencing poverty and isolation-driven food insecurity has doubled since lockdown begun
- 17% of parents in NHS worker families have had smaller meals than usual or have had to skip meals, and 9% have not eaten for a whole day due to lack of access to food
- The Food Foundation is calling for:
 - The government to stop food insecurity driven by a lack of money by implementing an emergency income support scheme to ensure people can buy the food they need to stay healthy at home

- **The DWP to abolish the five-week wait for Universal Credit, and make child benefit a fortnightly payment (thereby doubling it) as well as removing the benefit cap.**

Monday 4th May – New figures from the [Food Foundation](#) reveal that five million people¹ (17%) living in households with children in the UK have experienced food insecurity during the first five weeks of COVID-19 lockdown.

A YouGov poll commissioned by the [Food Foundation](#) found that 2.4 million¹ (17%) children are living in food insecure households, and two million¹ (14%) children have received smaller portions, a reduced number of meals and/or low-cost, less nutritious meals because their parents have run out of food. Households struggling to access to enough food has meant more than 350,000¹ (2%) children have had times when they've not eaten enough, because there wasn't enough food, since lockdown started.

Food insecurity driven by isolation and economic hardship in households with children has doubled since lockdown came into effect (5.7%-11%)³, with parents in 2.8 million¹ (37%) households with children reporting a loss of income.

Half a million¹ (31%) of the children who normally receive free school meals have received no substitute at all since schools closed. A further 130,000 children are stuck with an online code which they cannot download to redeem vouchers for buying food.

Higher levels of food insecurity were also reported by NHS workers in households with children: 17% had skipped a meal, 11% had been hungry and not eaten because of a lack of food, 9% had not eaten for a whole day and 5% said their child hadn't eaten enough.

These figures come as the Trussell Trust reports an 81% increase in people needing support from food banks at the end of March compared with the same time last year. Demand from children for food bank services has increased by 121%.

The Food Foundation is calling on the government to stop food insecurity driven by lack of money by implementing an emergency income support scheme to ensure people can buy the food they need to stay healthy at home.

The DWP must abolish the five-week wait for Universal Credit, and must make child benefit a fortnightly payment (thereby doubling it) as well as removing the benefit cap.

Last week, the government responded to calls for a new cross-departmental ministerial task force focusing on vulnerable groups, which has now been established. This must support a national coordination mechanism to address unmet need for food security.

Over a year ago in April 2019, Dame Emma Thompson joined the [Children's Right2Food Campaign](#) Young Food Ambassadors at 10 Downing Street to call for the establishment of a new, independent Children's Food Watchdog to monitor and improve children's food. The government has yet to provide a formal response.

Dame Emma Thompson, Children's Right2Food Campaign Ambassador, said: "Families who were fighting to put food on the table before COVID-19 now find themselves in an impossible position: just a month of lockdown has seen five million parents and children experience food insecurity. What is undeniable is that our government has yet to extend real lifelines to those who cannot afford food. We need emergency income support to put money in the pockets of families who are suffering, and DWP must ensure child benefit payments are increased and sufficient for alleviating the hardship so many children are enduring."

Anna Taylor, Executive Director of the Food Foundation, said: "Protecting our children should be a priority, but we're leaving them behind in conversations about emergency support and they're falling through the cracks as a result. Having enough nutritious food to eat is a basic right, and without it children's mental and physical health suffers irreparably. The government must act now to put money in the pockets of families who are struggling so that they can buy the food they need to be healthy at home."

Bruce Adamson, Commissioner for Children and Young People Scotland, said: "Poverty and food insecurity was the biggest human rights issue facing children in the UK before the COVID-19 pandemic and this polling reiterates that the pandemic is having a disproportionate effect on those already most at risk. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has warned of the grave physical, emotional and psychological effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and called on governments to activate immediate measures to ensure that all children have regular, permanent and unrestricted access to nutritious food. Despite the significant efforts of schools, charities and communities, we are still falling short of this most basic obligation to ensure children have enough food. It is clear that governments at all levels must do more, particularly through the provision of direct payments to families. Last year the Children's Future Food Inquiry, led by our Young Food Ambassadors, set out clear recommendations for action, they are now more important than ever

Dr Rachel Loopstra, Lecturer in Nutrition, King's College London, said: "It's clear from these data, as well as from trends in food bank use, that families with children are really struggling right now. Children were at higher risk of poverty and in turn, food insecurity, before the COVID-19 crisis, but it is now even harder for families with children in Britain to meet their basic needs. Watching parents struggle to put food on the table and go without food themselves is devastating for children. This evidence, showing that at times children are going without food when we know parents do as much as they can to protect their children, is a sign of just how severe circumstances are for some families."

Notes to Editor

1. Calculations made by the Food Foundation using mid-year population estimates.
2. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,268 UK adults with children in their households. Fieldwork, unless otherwise stated, was undertaken between 24-29 April 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of UK Parents or Guardians with Children living in their Households with Children Under the Age of 18.
3. Food Standards Agency Food and You report, 2018

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW: CASE STUDIES AND SPOKESPEOPLE

Anna Taylor, Executive Director of the Food Foundation

Case studies available on request.

Soundbites on food access from [Children's Right2Food Campaign Young Food Ambassadors](#)

- [Fayeyth, Wales](#)
- [Shane, Northern Ireland](#)
- [Tia, England](#)

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The Food Foundation's [COVID-19 tracker](#) is live, providing analysis of key developments and insights from the front line on how coronavirus is impacting the food system, and how those changes are affecting citizens.

Social Media

Twitter: @Food_Foundation

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About the Food Foundation

The [Food Foundation](#) is a charity working to influence food policy and business practice, shaping a sustainable food system which makes healthy diets affordable and accessible for all. We work in partnership with researchers, campaigners, community bodies, industry, investors, government and citizens to galvanise the UK's diverse agents of change, using surprising and inventive ideas to drive

fundamental shifts in our food system. These efforts are based on the continual re-evaluation of opportunities for action, building and synthesising strong evidence, convening powerful coalitions, harnessing citizens' voices and delivering impactful communications.

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