



URGENT PRESS STATEMENT - Embargoed till 00.01 8th November 2020

Food Foundation welcomes significant step in support of #endchildfoodpoverty after Government announcement.

Following a major public campaign, the Government has announced a significant funding package to help alleviate child food poverty. The #endchildfoodpoverty campaign led by Marcus Rashford MBE shows the importance of listening to children and vulnerable families who have shared their experiences of food poverty, to increase awareness and inform Government policy.

Marcus Rashford, MBE, England International Football player said: “Following the game today, I had a good conversation with the Prime Minister to better understand the proposed plan, and I very much welcome the steps that have been taken to combat child food poverty in the UK. There is still so much more to do, and my immediate concern is the approximate 1.7 million children who miss out on Free School Meals, holiday provision and Healthy Start vouchers because their family income isn’t quite low enough, but the intent the Government have shown today is nothing but positive and they should be recognised for that. The steps made today will improve the lives of near 1.7 million children in the UK over the next 12 months, and that can only be celebrated. I want to take this moment to reflect on what has occurred over the last couple of weeks. I am so proud of ‘us’ as a collective. ‘Us’ being the local businesses, charity workers, volunteers, teachers, social workers, carers, and key workers. Together we have demonstrated the power of kindness and compassion. We have shown that when it comes down to the wire, we will always have each other. Seeing the role everyone has played in supporting our most vulnerable children has been the greatest moment of my life. I have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of empathy and understanding. I am fully committed to this cause, and I will fight for the rest of my life for it, because in my mind, no child should ever go hungry in the United Kingdom. I don’t want any child to go through what I went through, and any parent to experience what my mother experienced. I now call on the Government to collaborate with the Child Food Poverty Taskforce to guarantee that no child does. As a collective we are so powerful and we all have

a role to play in this, whether it be volunteering, donating, or as simple as a kind word. Today, I'm overwhelmed with pride that we have made such significant progress. 'We' will not give up on our children. 'We' will not give up on the future of this country. I'm going to bed thankful tonight but under no illusion that there is still a lot more work to be done."

Anna Taylor, Executive Director said: "This is a big win for disadvantaged children. A win for all those brave parents and children who have spoken up about their experiences of food poverty. And a win for the 1.1 million individuals across the country who showed how much they cared by signing Marcus Rashford's petition.

Today's announcement shows the government is serious about tackling children's food poverty - funding programmes worth more than £400m that will improve the lives of more than 1.7million children over the next 12 months. Together this represents significant progress on 2 of the 3 calls in Marcus Rashford's petition and the National Food Strategy Part 1.

But we must keep in mind that a similar number of disadvantaged children (approx. 1.7 million) will continue to miss out on the benefits of free school meals and healthy start because the qualifying income criteria are currently set *far too low*. Children's food poverty, like the pandemic, will not go away until we have a lasting solution in place. We've started the journey today, thanks to the Government's commitment, and we need to see it through so we can #ENDchildfoodpoverty."

Dame Emma Thompson, Children's Right2Food Ambassador said: "This is a big step in the right direction. Huge credit should go to all those who have talked openly about their experiences of food poverty, including the young food ambassadors who have bravely told their stories. The campaign to ensure children's right to food must continue until we #endchildfoodpoverty."

Dev Sharma, 15, Young Food Ambassador from Leicester said:

For so many families, this will be an essential lifeline to put food on the table, and it means so much to me too. I am so glad that the Government has shown it is listening to young people and wants to help those of us affected by food poverty. My fellow young food ambassadors and I have been calling for these changes for some time, and now we know our efforts were worth every second. It is vital that our voices are heard, and that young people are at the centre of these decisions. The announcement today will make such a huge difference to so many children's lives, including mine and my friends, and has encouraged us to continue with our campaign for change.

WHAT'S IN TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT?

Progress against the 3 asks in the [National Food Strategy](#) and [Marcus Rashford's petition](#):

1. Expand free school meals to all under-16s where a parent or guardian is in receipt of Universal Credit or equivalent benefit (estimated cost £670 million; 1.5 million additional children expected to benefit). Currently you can only receive free school meals if your family's income is <£7400 per year after tax and before benefits.

NO PROGRESS YET

2. Provide meals & activities during all holidays (estimated to cost £500million per year) for children on free school meals.

FOR CHRISTMAS TO EASTER: WELFARE ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO GIVE OUT TO NEEDY HOUSEHOLDS FOR FOOD AND BILLS FROM DEC 1 UNTIL END MARCH – COVERING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS - £170M; £16M FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTION CHARITIES FOR CHRISTMAS.

EASTER ONWARDS: £220M ON HOLIDAYS ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME FOR EASTER, SUMMER AND CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS IN 2021 FOR ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND.

THESE PROGRAMMES SHOULD REACH ALL CHILDREN ON FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND THE WELFARE ASSISTANCE GRANTS WILL GO BEYOND. CURRENT GOVERNMENT FIGURES ARE THAT 1.4 MILLION CHILDREN ARE ON FREE SCHOOL MEALS BUT THIS NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO HAVE RISEN SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE START OF THE PANDEMIC.

3. Increase the value of Healthy Start vouchers to at least £4.25 per week, and expand the scheme to reach more children.

COMMITMENT TODAY TO INCREASE THE VALUE OF THE VOUCHER TO £4.25 FROM £3.10; NO COMMITMENT YET TO EXPAND THE SCHEME TO MORE CHILDREN. CURRENTLY ABOUT 500,000 PREGNANT WOMEN AND CHILDREN UNDER 4 IN ENGLAND ARE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SCHEME.

Available for Interview

Anna Taylor, Executive Director, Food Foundation – Sunday 8th November

Notes to Editor

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Social Media

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#EndChildFoodPoverty

#Right2Food

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.

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.

Registered Charity Number 1187611

About the Child Food Poverty Task Force

Formed by footballer Marcus Rashford, the Child Food Poverty Task Force is a group of businesses and charities who, over the coming weeks, will dedicate their platforms to sharing real stories of those most affected by child food insecurity in the UK, supported by real-time statistics. The task force includes Aldi, Asda, Burberry, Co-Op, Deliveroo, The Food Foundation, Fareshare, Heinz, Mars, McDonalds, Iceland, Kellogg's, Lidl, Marcus Rashford, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose & Partners.