



IAN BYRNE

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House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
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Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

21 March 2022

The Right To Food Campaign

Dear Chancellor,

We are writing to you ahead of your Spring Statement about the injustice of food insecurity faced by millions in our communities, and about our campaign for a Right to Food to be enshrined into UK law.

Crisis of Food Insecurity

Eleven million people in the UK currently experience food insecurity. The use of foodbanks was increasing before the pandemic and has risen dramatically during it. In January 2022 the Food Standards Agency released data which suggested that almost two million people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland needed support from a food bank between mid-2020 and mid-2021.

The situation will continue to get worse as people now face the worst cost of living crisis in 30 years.

Millions of people now face choosing whether to freeze or starve in their homes as the cost of energy, food, essentials and bills rise dramatically.

Food poverty leads to health and life expectancy inequality, malnutrition, obesity and a host of other related problems, including even long term epigenetic changes. It will affect children's educational attainment and life chances. Less measurable but no less important, is the effect on individual human dignity and social cohesion over time in our polarised nations of food banks next to investment banks. The pandemic has demonstrated that in the face of new threats and challenges, society is only as resilient as its most vulnerable and its mechanisms for caring for everyone.

This is a humanitarian crisis requiring permanent solutions, not mere tinkering with a fundamentally broken system. The time for sticking plasters is over. No more reliance on foodbanks, donations and food pantries. **We need systemic change so that all people might live with the opportunity of health, happiness and dignity.**

Enforceable food rights are needed so that Government is accountable for ensuring that nobody goes hungry – and is prevented from making decisions that lead to people being unable to put a meal on the table.

The Right to Food Campaign

Chancellor, the Government in which you serve is responsible for creating an environment that is pushing millions of families into food poverty. The political choices you will make over the next few months are the difference between life and death for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Hunger is a political choice. Fuel poverty is a political choice. Choices made by your Government. Something must change.

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I am leading the Right To Food campaign in Parliament to make access to food a legal right for all. Working with local and national organisations we are calling for the 'Right to Food' to be enshrined into UK law so that we can end the scandal of hunger and foodbanks once and for all.

If reliance on charity alone were considered a sufficient guarantee for basic human needs in the UK, previous generations would not have legislated for universal state schooling and the National Health Service. Solutions to fundamental problems which have transformed this nation for the better. That's why we need to legislate for the 'Right to Food' – we need enforceable food rights to ensure the Government of the day is accountable for making sure nobody goes hungry. And that it is prevented from making decisions that lead to people being unable to afford to put a meal on the table.

The strength of backing for the Right to Food to be enshrined in law from around the country is clear:

- In January 2021 Liverpool City Council passed a motion to become the first 'Right to Food City' in the UK.
- Further endorsements from across the city followed, including from Liverpool FC, Everton FC, faith leaders, businesses, charities and members of the public. A wide range of religious bodies, trade unions and campaign groups have backed the campaign.
- Following Liverpool, councils up and down the country have declared themselves Right to Food towns and cities.
- The TUC Congress has passed a motion calling for the Right to Food.
- We have trade unions and community activists campaigning for it in every corner of the country.

In March 2021 our campaign team made its submission to the National Food Strategy including five key 'asks' which we believe, if adopted by Government, provide sustainable route out of food poverty for millions of people. You can read our submission here: www.ianbyrne.org/right-to-food. The campaign was disappointed that Right to Food legislation was not recommended by the National Food Strategy.

The Right To Food campaign calls directly on you to include provision for our key campaign requests in your Spring Statement on 23 March 2022. We, the undersigned, ask you to *choose to end food poverty* by:

1. Providing universal free school meals
2. Stating how much of minimum / living wages and benefits (on which people are expected to live) is for food
3. Right To Food legislation to be accompanied by oversight and enforcement powers granted to a new independent regulatory body that will hold Government to account
4. Funding community kitchens including dining clubs and 'meals-on-wheels' services for the elderly and vulnerable, school holiday meals for those most in need and community cookery clubs
5. Ensuring food security - and taking this duty into account when setting competition, planning, transport, local government and all other policy

The buck stops at your door Chancellor and the Right To Food campaign calls on you to make the Right to Food a reality for millions of people in your Spring Statement. I also extend an open invitation to you to visit Liverpool, where one-third of the people are experiencing food insecurity.

Yours sincerely

Ian Byrne, Member of Parliament for Liverpool West Derby

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Countersigned by:

Mayor Andy Burnham - Greater Manchester
Mayor Jamie Driscoll - North of Tyne Combined Authority
Mayor Joanne Anderson - Liverpool
Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram - Liverpool City Region
Cllr Nick Forbes - Leader of Newcastle City Council
Cllr Chris Read - Leader of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Keith Aspden - Leader of City of York Council
Cllr Matthew Brown - Leader of Preston City Council
Cllr Terry Fox - Leader of Sheffield City Council
Sharon Graham - General Secretary, Unite the Union
Sarah Woolley - General Secretary, Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union
Ian Hodson - National President, Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union
Dave Ward - General Secretary, Communication Worker's Union
Dee Woods - Director and Food Justice Policy Coordinator, Landworkers Alliance
Dr Mary Bousted and Kevin Courtney - General Secretaries, National Education Union
Gary Smith – General Secretary, GMB
Neil Smith - GMB North West & Irish Region
Baroness Shami Chakrabarti
Apsana Begum MP
Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP
Beth Winter MP
Claudia Webbe MP
Clive Lewis MP
Dan Carden MP
Diane Abbott MP
Emma Lewell-Buck MP
George Howarth MP
Geraint Davies MP
Grahame Morris MP
Ian Lavery MP
Imran Hussain MP
Janet Daby MP
Jeremy Corbyn MP
John McDonnell MP
Kate Osborne MP
Kim Johnson MP
Margaret Greenwood MP
Mary Foy MP
Mick Whitley MP
Nadia Whittome MP
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Richard Burgon MP
Tony Lloyd MP
Zarah Sultana MP
Everton FC
Liverpool FC
Liverpool FC Women
Liverpool FC Foundation
Millwall FC
Millwall FC Community Trust
Elisabeth Hachmoeller - Churches Together in the Merseyside Region
Chloe Schlosberg - Director of Operations, Peace and Justice Project
Gaya Sriskanthan and Andrew Scattergood - Co-Chairs, Momentum
Professor Michel Pimbert - Agroecology and Food Politics, Coventry University
Dr Regina Keith - Food, Nutrition and Public Health, University of Westminster
Professor Eileen O'Keefe - Emeritus of Public Health, London Metropolitan University
Professor Ian Sinha - Consultant Respiratory Paediatrician, Alder Hey Children's Hospital
Professor John O'Keefe - Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London
This Is Rubbish Campaign
Anne Williams - Whitefoot and Downham Community Food Plus Project
Donna Scully - Director, Carpenters Group
Eni Timi-Biu - Founding Director, Create Your Table
Fans Supporting Foodbanks
Granville Community Kitchen
Jon Rutland - Managing Director, Tri Star Medicals
Kerry Lenihan - Aston & Nechells Foodbank
Peter Riddle - Foodbank Volunteer
Rachael Emblem - Croxteth Community Garden
Sharon Noonan-Gunning - Right To Food London
Simone Riddle - Volunteer at Whitefoot and Downham Community Food Plus Project
Cllr Luke Sorba - Lewisham
Cllr Gabriela Salva Macallan - Bethnal Green West
Cllr Jumbo Chan - Kensal Green, Brent
Cllr Nicola Taylor - Erith

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