



Local Food For Everyone 25th November 2021

Children in Scotland

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced, and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support, and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

Our related work and learning

Children in Scotland is pleased to be able to respond to the Local Food For Everyone consultation. We do not feel best placed to comment on all of the questions in the consultation, particularly Part B on Vertical Farming. However, we can share our learning from children, young people and families on their needs and wants with regards to food and health.

We conduct a range of work aimed at supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people. A key strand of our work over the past five years has been Challenging Inequalities Through Food which aims to ensure that all children, young people and families are able to access healthy food and drinks across the whole year. Much of this work looks at tackling underlying causes of food insecurity and consumption of unhealthy products.

Our award-winning project [Food, Families Futures](#) aimed to make a meaningful difference to people's lives, partly by meeting immediate need and tackling food insecurity, partly by tackling underlying causes of food insecurity.

Among population subgroups in high-income countries, food insecurity has been shown to be associated with compromised nutrition, poor general health, and a variety of chronic health conditions. Food insecurity has also been shown to be a marker of poor mental health, with studies identifying associations with mood and anxiety disorders and suicidal ideation¹.

Children from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to be overweight and obese when entering school, with the diet they consume contributing to this.² The impact of poor diet at this stage can have a clear impact throughout their life. They are more likely to have poorer attainment in school, be overweight or obese later in life, and have a higher mortality rate³.

We believe these issues must be tackled 'upstream', in national policy for example, to reduce rates of child poverty and support communities to enjoy healthy choices and improved health outcomes.

2 B) Please provide further detail on your response, including whether there are there any further benefits not captured. Please provide examples if possible.

The Scottish Government's consultation document lays out a persuasive case for the need and benefits of local food.

In particular we believe that The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill provides a unique opportunity to enshrine children's right to health in law. Access to good quality, affordable, sustainably produced food is an important facet of this.

The Scottish Government has the responsibility to create a positive food environment that supports the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families and enables them to access healthy, affordable and sustainable food. The Good Food Nation policy goes some way to achieve this. We are convinced by Mairi Gougeon's assertion 'There are many benefits to encouraging greater consumption of Scottish food, as part of a balanced food policy.'⁴

We also agree with Mairi Gougeon's assertion that 'low income should not be a barrier to a healthy, balanced diet'⁵. We know through our work that actions taken to eradicate food insecurity have the power to change habits, broaden experience and challenge health inequalities. We know that consumption of products that are damaging to health and wellbeing is often socially patterned.⁶ It is therefore important that Scottish Government interventions of this nature are supported by ongoing action to tackle the social determinants that drive this consumption, including poverty, inequality and geography.

In Children in Scotland's Manifesto for the 2021-26 Scottish Parliament we call for 'Publishing a revised Climate Change Plan and taking the necessary steps to ensure legally binding targets on greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland are met. This includes a 75% reduction in emissions by 2030 and a clear pathway to net zero by 2045.'⁷ We welcome the Scottish Government's focus on how Local Food could impact positively on Scotland's greener future, including shorter supply chains, less food miles and a reduction in food waste.

4. Do you have any comments on the first pillar of the Scottish Government's local food strategy: connecting people with food?

Place can be a key driver of the food environment experienced by children, young people and families. Research shows that areas of higher levels of deprivation have a greater density of fast food outlets⁸⁹¹⁰. Our Health Inequalities: Participative Research project added weight to this research as we identified a high density of fast food restaurants in the two areas that we worked in¹¹. This clearly demonstrates one way in which children and young people from particular backgrounds face inequalities in the food they can access and subsequently the level of health they are likely to experience.

The Children's Right to Food Charter, developed by children and young people from across the UK, including the Glasgow area, also calls for the government to 'make healthy food affordable'.¹² In 2019 they created a film sharing how hard it was for children and families in certain areas of Glasgow to have access to healthy and affordable food. This was in part related to the outlets available in their area and lack of transport access to other areas.

We welcome Mairi Gougeon's focus on reducing barriers to food. Based on what we have learned from our Food, Families, Futures project, we agree that 'Partnership working across sectors and services can help to overcome barriers through a shared and coherent ambition to make good food accessible locally.'¹³ Local communities know the needs and strengths of local people and organisations.

We are also reassured that 'Learning about food' is a key focus of connecting people with food. We agree that the food and health experiences and outcomes in Curriculum For Excellence are designed to ensure children and young people are taught about food in its widest sense and to understand the impact their choices have on their health and wellbeing, the environment and the economy.

However, we know from our direct work that many children, young people and families face issues with 'food literacy'. Many families do not have the knowledge and skills to cook food and opportunities are not available to develop these skills. This impacts on the ability to prepare healthy, nutritious food and can contribute to consumption of unhealthier products.

We know in some schools there are currently particular issues around the delivery of the Food And Health strand of Curriculum For Excellence. Some schools do not have cooking classrooms and there has been a national shortage of Home Economics teachers in recent years¹⁴. Add the pressures of Covid to this and even fewer young people are developing their knowledge and skills in this area at this time.

These issues must be addressed before a Local Food For Everybody policy will have a positive or significant impact on children and families' health.

5. Do you have any comments on the second pillar of the Scottish Government's local food strategy: connecting Scottish producers with buyers?

Children in Scotland believes that the health needs of children and young people should take precedence over the needs of business. While we appreciate the need

for a supportive environment for industry, we believe that the regulatory environment within which they operate should in this instance be focused on supporting health and wellbeing.

The Children's Right to Food Charter, developed by children and young people from across the UK, also calls for 'health before profits'.¹⁵

14. Do you have any further comments on improvements that could be made to allow for everyone living in Scotland to have better access to healthy, affordable and locally sourced food?

The Children's Future Food Inquiry identified that advertising of foods high in salt, fat and sugar is not well regulated in the UK¹⁶. Their research shows that unhealthy food advertising is more likely to occur during times when families will be watching TV, suggesting it is specifically targeted towards these groups to impact on their purchasing habits. Obesity Action Scotland has also highlighted the importance of advertising in influencing the products children and young people buy themselves¹⁷.

We have previously called for a tightening of advertising guidelines to tackle this issue and welcome the announcement earlier this year of a ban on junk food adverts before 9pm. However, this could go further with many health charities calling for a total ban, for example.

We also believe communities need to know and understand what local food is, its benefits and its availability. We would advocate for the Scottish Government to work with local people and related organisations to co-design the best way to do this.

15. B) Please provide further detail about your answer above, focusing on any changes you think could be made to improve access to healthy, locally sourced food within schools, hospitals or other public institutions

We know the Scottish Government has been focusing on food standards in schools over recent years, including the consultation in summer 2018 and the publication of the Healthy Eating In Schools Guidance 2020.¹⁸

Food and nutrition are of course central to good health and wellbeing. We fully support all schools providing activities and an environment which promotes the physical, social, mental and emotional health of pupils in attendance.

However, based on our Food, Families, Futures work we know these standards are not met consistently across Scotland. We have seen first-hand the range of food served to children and young people.

At Children in Scotland we champion children and young people's participation and inclusion in this process. Children and young people must be actively listened to, treated fairly and have their opinions respected and taken seriously. Their views must be listened to and acted on with regards to decisions that impact on their lives.

It is essential that all stakeholders are involved in the codesign, co-production and evaluation of any food policy and practice, nationally, locally and within schools. A sense of ownership will help ensure engagement and success. On a national or more local level the Scottish Government and Local Authorities should explore the co-production of school dinner menus with a local food focus with children and young people.

Putting children and young people at the heart of these decisions and ensuring meals reflect their views is also likely to increase take-up and reduce the impact of unhealthy outside influences such as local fast food outlets.

If you have any questions about this response please contact, Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Projects and Participation, awoodhouse@childrenscotland.org.uk,