



**Good Food Nation Bill
20th December 2021**

About 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 Good Food Nation Bill consultation.

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 at making a meaningful difference to people's lives, partly by meeting immediate need and tackling food insecurity, partly by tackling underlying causes of food insecurity.

We do not feel best placed to comment on all of the questions in the consultation. However, we can share our learning from children, young people and families on their needs and wants with regards to food and health.

The scope of the Bill

Children in Scotland continues to believe in the importance of the vision from 'Recipe for Success: Scotland's National Food and Drink Policy – Becoming a Good Food Nation' (2014), that by 2025 Scotland will be “a Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day”.¹

This paper also recognised the change necessary to achieve this, including that 'everyone in Scotland has ready access to the healthy, nutritious food they need'². We believe this must remain a central aim for the Good Food Nation Bill. All children, young people and families have the right to food that is available and accessible to them – financially and geographically – and food that is adequate in terms of nutrition, safety and cultural appropriateness.

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 ideation.³

Children from more deprived backgrounds are more likely to be overweight and obese when entering school, with the diet they consume contributing to this.⁴ The impact of poor diet at this early 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 early mortality rate.⁵

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. An NHS Scotland report has highlighted the value of upstream policy approaches to tackle hunger and food insecurity⁶.

We have previously stated our support for the Good Food Nation Bill as one way to achieve this. The Good Food Nation approach presents an opportunity to co-ordinate Scotland's route to tackling these issues around one key piece of legislation. The Good Food Nation Bill should reach across a broad range of government portfolios from social security, health and education to tackle the systemic issues in ensuring a positive food environment for children, young people and families.

The right to food

Children in Scotland has previously called for the right to food to be incorporated into Scots law. In our consultation response of September 2020, we asserted incorporating a right to food would give children, young people and families a necessary mechanism for redress if they are facing food insecurity. We see this as a

¹ Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, Policy Memorandum

² Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill, Policy Memorandum

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6874757/>

⁴ https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-05/state_of_child_health_2017report_updated_29.05.18.pdf

⁵ https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-05/state_of_child_health_2017report_updated_29.05.18.pdf

⁶ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/2222/food-poverty.pdf>

key measure of accountability for ensuring that the Scottish Government meets its obligation to provide all children, young people and families with access to healthy, affordable food and drink.

A right to food is about more than food insecurity – it is about taking a whole-systems approach to tackling challenges such as poverty, diet-related illness and climate change. It has an opportunity to play a transformative role in supporting children, young people and families who most struggle to access food.

We recognise that In March 2021 the National Taskforce for Human Rights Leadership published its recommendations for a new framework for human rights for Scotland, including the incorporation of four UN human rights treaties into Scots law.

We understand as part of taking forward the Taskforce's recommendations, the Scottish Government will introduce a new multi-treaty Human Rights Bill during this parliamentary session. The Human Rights Bill will set out for the first time the wide range of internationally recognised human rights belonging to everyone in Scotland. This will include the incorporation of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which includes a right to adequate food, as an essential part of the overall right to an adequate standard of living.

We continue to support the principle of a right to food. We are supportive of this being achieved through the Human Rights Bill. If this goes ahead we believe the Good Food Nation Bill should be amended to make direct reference to the Human Rights Bill specifically.

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