

## **PE1708/K**

Petitioner submission of 30 August 2019

We note the content of the submissions provided by the NHS Health Boards and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which outline the existing provisions of vegan food within the public sector.

We would like to specifically address the submissions from the NHS Health Boards which state that they already provide a vegetarian option as standard - by making the simple amendments required to change this to a vegan option however, more people with special requirements will be catered for and food provisions will become more inclusive. We are pleased to see the responses from the Health Boards who stated that they were already considering improving their vegan offering – by mandating this and simultaneously offering advice and support - which The Vegan Society are willing to collaborate on - such improvements will become easier to implement and therefore, more consistent across Scotland.

We still believe there is crucial progress to be made however – most of the submissions indicate that vegan food is predominantly only provided via special request, whilst the aim of our petition is to achieve consistent and guaranteed provision for the following purposes:

### **Vegan Rights**

Our petition asks for a plant-based option to be made mandatory on every standard public sector menu. In practice, this would mean that there would be a plant-based option readily available in every school, hospital, prison, council, care home and any other state or local authority-run institution menu in Scotland, every day. This would be available to everyone, without the need to make a special request. This differs from the current situation that's been outlined in several of the submission responses, where vegans, in theory, can only be catered for by special request.

This indicates an issue with the rights of vegans – in spite of the assertions provided in the submissions that state that vegans can be catered for by many hospitals, in practice, this is often not the case. Where a vegan menu is provided, staff often have little awareness of it and therefore, vegans are often told they cannot be provided for or are offered very limited options, such as plain toast, a single piece of fruit or a packet of crisps, which are not a nutritious meal, and do not meet the standards in the '*Food in Hospitals*' guidance.

Many hospitals do not provide for vegans with any consistency, leaving vegan patients to rely on family and friends, or having to discharge themselves before they are well enough because they are not being provided with food. Not everyone will have friends or family who can bring them food, and many wards do not allow food to be brought in. Offering a plant-based meal as standard on all public sector menus ensures that the growing number of vegans are therefore catered for and are not discriminated against.

### **Personal Testimonies**

We note that the Committee has not received any responses from Local Authorities regarding vegan meal provision in schools. We had understood at the end of the hearing on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 that the Committee was seeking input on the current position in terms of vegan provision in schools as well as in hospitals.

The results of our survey clearly showed that in general Scottish schools do not provide vegan food, and that many people who have attempted to secure vegan provision have been told that this cannot or will not be provided. The recent personal experiences we submitted on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (see annexe) to supplement the survey findings, and to ensure that the current position was captured, include eight personal experiences of pupils or parents with children in nursery or primary school. They each gave clear explanations as to the impact on them and their families of the failure or refusal of our schools to provide for vegans. Their experiences relate to seven different local authority areas.

For the same reasons outlined in relation to hospital provision, fully plant-based options ought to be available every day for all pupils, avoiding the need for special requests and arrangements and reducing the likelihood of mistakes and misunderstandings. If implemented well, ensuring tasty, nutritious options, the availability of plant-based options for all pupils could have many benefits for all, improving carbon footprint, reducing cost and improving uptake of healthy options.

When local authorities push back against requests for vegan provision one of the things most frequently referenced is limitations imposed on them due to the procurement system and the fact that much of the food comes from outside suppliers with a limited list of options. Clearly, we should not be led on this by our existing procurement system, but rather that system should be reformed as necessary to ensure Scottish schools are providing good quality, nutritious meals, ideally using locally sourced produce. That would be in line with the Scottish Government's commitment to sustainability and climate change.

### **Climate Emergency**

In specifically noting the content of the submission from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, it is evident that public sector organisations are already aware of the role of plant-based diets in addressing sustainability and environmental initiatives:

- Plant-based diets are better for the environment and can reduce an individual's food-related carbon emissions by up to 50%.
- Researchers at Oxford University have concluded that eating a plant-based diet could be the single biggest way to reduce an individual's environmental impact on the planet.

Following the declaration of a Climate Emergency in Scotland, it is imperative that government promote environmentally sustainable consumption behaviours - making vegan food mandatory on every menu would not only encourage this, but would also address the food waste concerns noted in the submission; greater accessibility would see a rise in consumption, simply due to the fact that vegan options are suitable for people from a multitude of backgrounds.

To address the concern of cost in the response from NHS Lothian, we acknowledge that there may be an initial short-term cost, but this would be due to a change in supply chains and not as a result of the price of plant-based products. It should be noted that many vegan foods - such as beans and pulses – are not only nutritious and sustainable in comparison to animal products, but also comparatively cheaper in cost. It's evident that our petition falls within the remit of tackling the Climate Emergency and to counter this concern, we believe it would be beneficial for the Scottish Government to consider using funds allocated to tackle the climate crisis, to support public sector institutions in making this move.

### **Government Intervention**

Chatham House research has stated that the public want government intervention on climate change issues<sup>1</sup>, and yet NHSGGC's submission states that they believe that vegan options should be driven by consumer demand. It should therefore be noted, that the UK vegan population continues to soar, having doubled twice in the last four years, as people become further aware of the benefits of a plant-based diet. The private sector has already responded to this, with a boom in supply for vegan options in restaurants, pubs, supermarkets and other shops. The public sector however, has been slower to respond. Following the Climate Emergency declaration, legislating to guarantee plant-based options on all public sector menus, would support the public demand for government intervention and encourage sustainable diets in the wider population.

In 2017, Portugal became the first country in the world to implement a law compelling all public sector institutions to offer a vegan meal on their standard menus without people having to make a special request. California has also passed legislation in September 2018, guaranteeing hospital patients and prisoners a healthy plant-based option at every meal. California's economy is the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest in the world (behind USA, China, Japan & Germany), with a population of just under 40 million people.

It seems likely that more and more nations and states will begin to adopt this approach of guaranteeing plant-based food in the public sector, in the next coming years, and the most recent CCC report asserts that the UK should follow<sup>2</sup>. Scotland has the opportunity to lead the way in the UK, in terms of taking meaningful action to address climate change, as well as protecting the ever-growing number of vegans. These issues are of paramount importance, and it is imperative to take appropriate action now.

### **Further Evidence**

Following the Public Petitions Committee meeting on 5 December 2018, where our petition was considered and the committee decided to write to various bodies (local authorities, local health boards, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body) for more information, we have prepared some further evidence to be considered by the Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/changing-climate-changing-diets>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/net-zero-technical-report/>

## **Nutrition for school-age children**

### **School food**

“It’s recommended that children aged five and over eat diets that are balanced in a similar way to adults, following the principles of the [Eatwell Guide](#). This guide aims to shift people in the UK towards eating more plant-based diets for health and sustainability reasons.

Data from the [National Diet and Nutrition Survey](#) suggest that UK children are not eating enough fibre. This may be linked to the finding that children are also not eating enough fruit and vegetables.

Enabling children to choose vegan meals during their school week can have a positive impact on the quality of their diets. Here are some ways in which vegan food may enhance school catering:

- It’s easy to produce tasty, balanced meals that are rich in fibre and provide multiple servings of fruit and vegetables
- Eating vegan meals can help children to eat more beans and pulses as recommended in the Eatwell Guide

[Scottish school meal guidance](#) provides information about plant-based alternatives to meat and dairy and how to balance meals.

### **Vegan children**

Our latest data suggest that the number of UK residents eating a vegan diet has doubled every two years over the last four years. It’s been estimated that around 600,000 people are choosing to eat this way, and close to half are in the 15-34 age category. This suggests that the number of children eating vegan diets is also likely to be increasing.

All parents need to ensure that their children’s diets are nutritious, and vegans are no exception. If you do your research, and plan carefully, you can provide a totally plant-based diet that contains all the essential nutrients needed for growth and development. The Vegan Society works with the [British Dietetic Association](#) to share the message that well-planned vegan diets can support healthy living in people of all ages. Kids can thrive on vegan diets, and introducing them to a wide variety of plant foods helps them to establish healthy habits for life.

We provide nutrition tips for every stage of life at [vegansociety.com/nutrition](https://vegansociety.com/nutrition), including guides for 5-10 year olds and 11-18 year olds, reviewed by a paediatric dietitian.”

Heather Russell, Dietitian, The Vegan Society

*Biography: After training to be dietitian, and registering with the Health and Care Professions Council, Heather worked in the NHS from 2010 to 2016, specialising in diabetes from 2013. She is now using her dietetic skills to support the work of The*

*Vegan Society. She is a member of the Public Health and Food Services specialist groups of the British Dietetic Association.*

### **Examples of local authorities providing vegan options**

Councillor Alan Robins, Chair of Brighton & Hove Council Tourism, Development and Culture Committee, states:

*“It’s not difficult to provide a well-balanced, healthy vegan option and it doesn’t need to cost any more. I’m very proud that in Brighton & Hove all primary and special schools covered by our school meals contract can provide a vegan option on request.”*

Councillor Robins made it clear to us that Brighton & Hove Council fully support offering vegan options and made a lot of changes following the adoption of their Animal Welfare charter, which he was instrumental in implementing.

Their animal welfare charter states:

*“The council will respect the concerns of those who have adopted a lifestyle that questions the morality of killing animals for food and actively promote vegetarian and vegan alternatives at council establishments.”*

and:

*“The council will encourage education establishments to adopt a policy of animal welfare in all schools with awareness and promotion to pupils of the issues.”*

### **Inclusive nature of vegan food**

We made the case that vegan food is inclusive as it can be eaten by people from all walks of life, including vegetarians and people from various faiths.

To illustrate this, Juliet Hackney, the Chair of the Network of Buddhist Organisations, stated:

*“Plant-based (vegan) food, defined as food that does not use anything that is derived from an animal, such as meat, fish, dairy, eggs, honey etc. is perfectly suitable for the members of the Network of Buddhist Organisations to consume. As such a plant-based (vegan) food option on a menu is safe for our members to choose. There are no dietary restrictions in place in Buddhist doctrine, however some Buddhists chose to be vegetarian or vegan. As such vegan food is suitable to be consumed by all Buddhists.”*

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism in the UK, confirmed:

*“Many Jews would accept strictly vegan food as kosher.”*

Although to get kosher certification the production processes need to be inspected, in practice most Jewish people accept that vegan food is suitable due to the lack of animal ingredients and care taken over cross-contamination.

### **Cost implications**

As previously reported, Councillor Alan Robins of Brighton & Hove Council states:

*“It’s not difficult to provide a well-balanced, healthy vegan option and it doesn’t need to cost any more.”*

Jo Webster, Head of Services (Catering, Cleaning, Caretaking, Resources & Regulations) at Bury Council has told us that a vegan meal can currently cost double the amount of a non-vegan meal due to the procurement process being through specific wholesalers who charge more because of the relatively low demand.

She confirmed that if demand was higher then there is nothing inherent in vegan food that makes it cost more, the current higher cost is purely related to supply and demand.

Our proposal, that all public sector menus would have at least one vegan option, would, by definition, increase demand for vegan food from wholesalers who supply to schools, hospitals and other public sector institutions. This would result in the current cost of vegan food decreasing as the wholesalers could then benefit from greater economies of scale, much as non-vegan food does currently.

### **Examples of plant-based school menu choices (see annexe)**

- School Plates example menu
- Little Green Devils

Our Dietitian, Heather Russell made the following comments on the menu choices:

*“School menus present an opportunity to introduce children to tasty and nutritious alternatives to meat.*

*Soya mince is a high-quality source of protein that can be used to replace meat in dishes like spaghetti bolognese and cottage pie.*

*Serving a burger made from lentils and peas instead of processed meat removes an unhealthy product from the menu and encourages consumption of pulses in line with the UK’s Eatwell Guide. This kind of swap helps children to hit their fibre and 5-a-day targets.*

*Incorporating products like Little Green Devils chickpea burgers and balls can also help school children to reap the benefits of getting more protein from good quality plant sources.”*

Many areas have taken up ProVeg’s **School Plates campaign**, which aims to increase non-meat meals served in schools by having meat-free days and increasing non-meat options.

A council in North West England, reported trialling this campaign in their area, comprising of 40 schools. They reported that a vegan spaghetti bolognese was very popular and the children didn’t notice the difference. 50% of the schools decided to continue with having a meat-free day beyond the trial period. 40% of the schools have 3 choices and will continue to have a vegetarian/vegan option every day.

This shows that with good vegan menu choices and promotion, the demand for vegan options in schools can sustain offering those choices, even in areas not well known for vegan food currently.

**Little Green Devils** is an exciting new brand of vegan food for children from the team at the world’s only vegan and carbon neutral football club, Forest Green Rovers. Their range of 100% plant-based vegetable balls and burgers has been created with a number of large school caterers. They have developed four recipes – Jamaican Jerk, Balti-style, Vegan Cheese and Moroccan-Style. Each product in the range is uncoated, non-fried and free of the 14 major allergens. They are free of palm oil, GMO ingredients, MSG and artificial ingredients.

They have followed the Food Standards Agency’s Target Nutrient Standards (2006) for vegetarian products that are served in schools: minimum 10% protein, maximum 10% fat, maximum 2% saturated fat, maximum 1% salt.

These products are a great example of the nutritious vegan-friendly food that could be served in schools (and other public sector institutions) as standard.

### **Greenhouse gas emissions savings**

Scotland has set itself ambitious greenhouse gas emissions targets, seeking to reduce overall emissions by 42% in 2020 and 90% by 2050.

According to data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, there were approximately 22.7 million meals served in Scottish hospitals in 2018. If just 10% of these meals were vegan, Scottish hospitals could cut their food related greenhouse gas emissions by 2,061 tonnes of CO2 equivalents per year, this is the equivalent of driving to the moon and back 10 and a half times or driving from Land’s End to John O’Groats 5,765 times. Of course, this data is just for hospitals, if schools and other public sector institutions are included, the potential for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is even higher.

It is essential that all sectors address their greenhouse gas emissions and with animal agriculture representing such a big part of this, we will need to encourage more people to eat vegan diets in order to meet Scottish climate change targets.

### **Recent scientific evidence/research that supports our proposal**

Since we gave evidence to the Public Petitions Committee on 5 December, there have been a number of reports have been released, which highlight the urgency and necessity of the transition away from animal agriculture and the increase in plant-based food consumption.

- EAT Lancet Commission: Healthy diets from sustainable food systems  
[https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/01/EAT-Lancet Commission Summary Report.pdf](https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/01/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf)

This report outlines how diets will need to change to support a growing global population, in terms of human and planetary health.

“Food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth.”

The report concludes that the optimal diet is a ‘flexitarian diet,’ which is largely plant-based but can optionally include modest amounts of fish, meat and dairy foods.

“Global consumption of fruits, vegetables, nuts and legumes will have to double, and consumption of foods such as red meat and sugar will have to be reduced by more than 50%.”

- [Greenpeace: Feeding The Problem https://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/issues/nature-food/1803/feeding-problem-dangerous-intensification-animal-farming/](https://www.greenpeace.org/eu-unit/issues/nature-food/1803/feeding-problem-dangerous-intensification-animal-farming/)

This report shows that animal agriculture is becoming more intensive as the number of total farms decreases, their size is heading in the opposite direction.

Worryingly, the report indicates that 63% of all EU cropland is used to feed to livestock, which is a really inefficient way of harnessing the energy within the crops themselves. It also shows that between 18% and 20% of the EU’s total budget is used for CAP payments to producers of fodder for animals.

- IDDRI: An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating  
<https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20iddri/Etude/201809-ST0918EN-tyfa.pdf>

This report shows that Europe would still be able to feed its growing population even if it switched to environmentally friendly approaches such as organic farming. This is necessary due recent research showing insect populations are steeply declining due



to the use of pesticides. Reductions in yields could be mitigated by reorienting diets towards plant-based proteins and away from grain-fed meat.

- The Food Foundation: The Broken Plate <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/The-Broken-Plate.pdf>

The Broken Plate report examines the food system and unpicks some of the underlying policy reasons for its failure to deliver the necessary public goods. It reveals some startling statistics, e.g. 10% of five-year-olds are obese, 20% of 11-year-olds are obese, 3.1 million people are registered with diabetes, up from 2.4 million in 2010.

One of the key ways to address these problems it suggests is through harnessing the power of public procurement. They specifically suggest, 1) Ensuring that publicly procured food sets the standard for healthy and sustainable diets, 2) Food eaten in schools, hospitals, care homes, prisons and the military not only represent a huge volume but a huge opportunity to show what good food is, and, 3) Delivering meals which are in line with the Eatwell Guide should be mandatory for all publicly procured food even if this costs more. These changes would help to drive system-wide change.

### **Vegan athletes**

It is worth also highlighting the achievements of vegan athletes, to dispel any myths around plant-based diets being inadequate for physical activity or performance.

Fiona Oakes is a British marathon runner who holds 4 world records for marathon running. In 2013, she won both the Antarctic Ice Marathon and the North Pole Marathon. Fiona has been vegan since she was 6 years old and runs despite losing a knee cap from an illness when she was 17. Oakes holds the world records for being the fastest female in aggregate time to complete a marathon on each continent, the fastest female in aggregate time to complete a marathon on each continent and the North Pole, the fastest female in elapsed time to complete a marathon on each continent and the North Pole and the fastest female to run a half-marathon dressed in an animal costume – pretty impressive!

Scott Jurek is an American ultramarathoner, who has won many of the sport's most prestigious races multiple times. Jurek has been vegan since 1999. Some of the notable races he has won are the Spartathlon (153-mile race from Athens to Sparta) three times, the Western States Endurance Run seven times, the Badwater Ultramarathon twice and set the speed record for completing the Appalachian Trail (approx. 2,200 miles) by speed hiking the whole trail in 46 days, 8 hours and 7 minutes in 2015!

Other notable vegan/plant-based athletes/sportspeople are:

- Venus Williams (Tennis)
- Lewis Hamilton (Formula One Driver)
- Jermaine Defoe (Footballer)
- David Haye (Boxer)
- Patrik Baboumian (Strongman Competitor)
- Alana Blanchard (Surfer)
- Steph Davis (Rock-Climber)
- Meagan Duhamel (Ice Skating)
- Peter Dunne (Wrestler)
- Kendrick Farris (Weightlifter)
- Kyrie Irving (Basketball)
- Colin Kaepernick (American Football)
- Anthony Mullally (Rugby League)
- Peter Siddle (Cricketer)

As you can see, vegans can be successful in any sport going, proving that plant-based eating does not hinder people excelling in physical exploits.

### **Californian Legislation**

We previously made reference to legislation in Portugal, where plant-based meals are now mandatory in all public sector institutions, however, [California has now also passed legislation](#) in September 2018, guaranteeing hospital patients and prisoners a healthy plant-based option at every meal.

California's economy is the 5<sup>th</sup> biggest in the world (behind USA, China, Japan & Germany), with a population of just under 40 million people, so this is a huge step forward for sustainable and healthy food.

It seems likely that more and more nations and states will begin to adopt this approach of guaranteeing plant-based food in the public sector over the coming years. Scotland has the opportunity to lead the way in the UK in terms of meaningfully tackling climate change and diet-related public health crises, whilst also protecting the ever-growing number of Scottish vegans.

# 5 SMALL CHANGES IN ACTION

We have designed the menu below so that you are able to visualise the 5 small changes in action. As you can see, the changes can be **simple to adopt**.

We will work alongside you, looking at your menu and identifying the small changes that are neither difficult nor time consuming to implement. We can also share a template menu with you which you are free to use and edit to fit the needs of your school.

1

**ENSURE THERE ARE MEAT-FREE MEALS OFFERED DAILY:**  
In the interest of providing balanced nutritious meals, we wouldn't count the light lunch each day to cover this.

2

**MAKE THE MEAT-FREE MEAL DIFFERENT TO THE MEAT-BASED ONE:**  
We should always be striving to promote the vegetable rich options available. Meaningful choice allows us to do this.

3

**HAVE AT LEAST ONE MEAT-FREE DAY A WEEK:**  
This is a great way to boost the intake of vegetables for all. Why not celebrate this across the school and get pupils on packed lunch and staff to join in too!

4

**ENSURE THE MENU'S WORDING AND ORDER DOES NOT SUGGEST THE MEAT-FREE MEAL IS INFERIOR:**  
Let's use language that encourages pupils to choose the healthy option rather than discouraging them.

5

**TAKE ALL PROCESSED RED MEAT OFF THE MENU:**  
This is a no-brainer. More and more research is coming to light in support of the World Health Organisation classification of PRM as a carcinogen.

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

OPTION 1

Fajita Wrap  
(V)

Cottage Pie  
(VE)

Pasta Bake  
(V)

Lentil & Pea Burger  
Burger  
(VE)

Fish & Chips

OPTION 2

Sausage & Mash  
(VE)

Vegetarian Cottage Pie  
Lasagne

Spag Bol  
(VE)

Roast Dinner

Pizza & Chips  
(VE)

ALL SERVED WITH: A selection of delicious vegetables (VE)

LIGHT LUNCH

Sandwich or Jacket Potato: cheese, tuna, beans (VE), salad selection

(V) Vegetarian (VE) Vegan



# VEGAN FOOD FOR CHILDREN



[littlegreendevils.co.uk](http://littlegreendevils.co.uk)

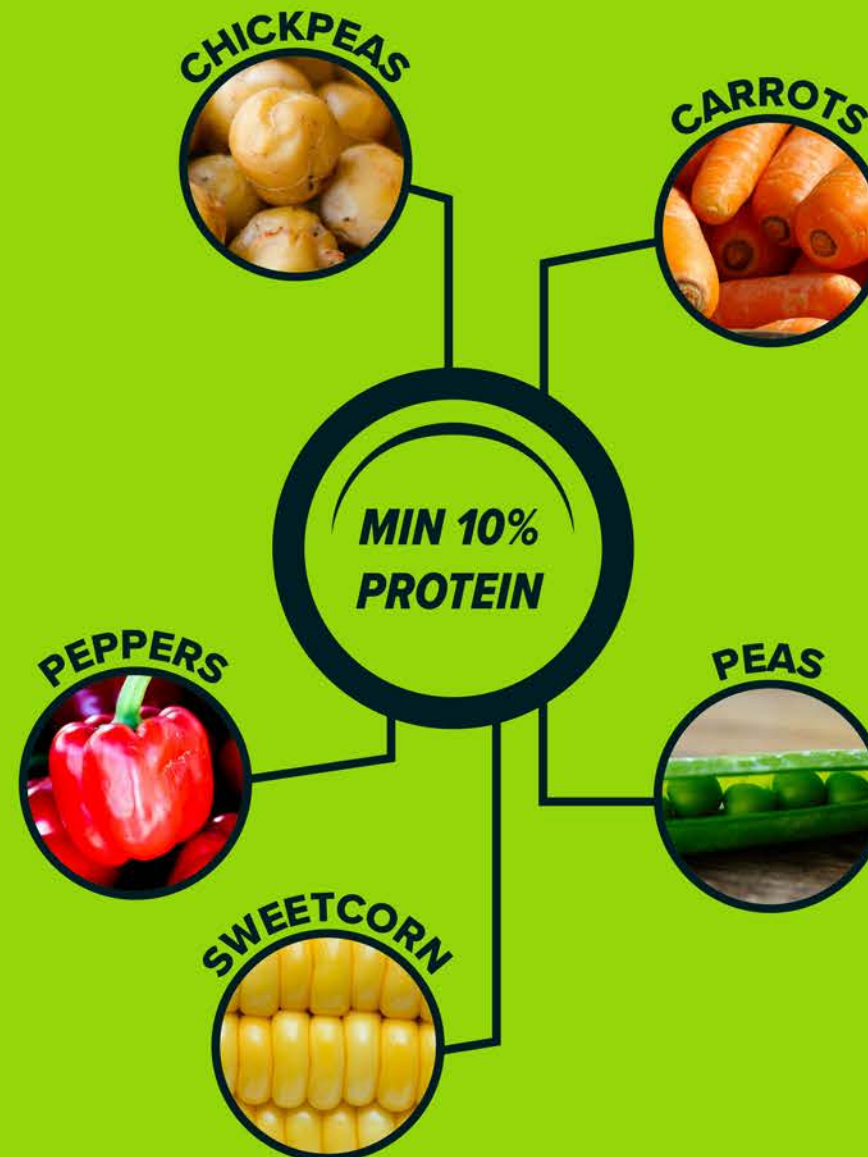
# 100% VEGAN

FREE OF THE 14 MAJOR ALLERGENS

UNCOATED • NON-FRIED

All of our recipes are created to help improve health and performance - the same approach we take with our matchday food for players and fans.

Our foods are packed full of vegetables, visible in each awesome vegan product.



Inclusive for all children - serve anytime on the menu

## Healthy, sustainable food from the kitchen of the world's first vegan football club.

We're at the forefront of something new at Forest Green Rovers – changing attitudes to vegan food in the world of sport.

We're the only vegan club on the planet – and we've been serving delicious vegan food to our players and thousands of fans on match weekends since 2015.

It's a totally new approach – showing a passionate sporting audience how freshly made vegan food is better for health and performance, as well as the environment.

We're now introducing our award-winning food to schools around the country – so pupils and staff can taste the benefits of what our players and fans absolutely love.



**“THE WORLD'S  
GREENEST  
FOOTBALL CLUB”**

**FIFA®**



## For primary schools

### Southern style veggie burger - 60g



### Moroccan style veggie balls - 20g



## For secondaries and FE

### Spicy Jamaican jerk balls - 20g



### Spicy chilli cheese burger - 90g



## Made for school caterers

- ✓ Compliant with all UK legislation for food served in schools  
*Serve dairy-free vegetarian on three or more days and no more than two portions of coated or fried foods per week*
- ✓ Ideal for achieving a 'Food for Life Served Here Gold Award'
- ✓ Suitable for kosher and halal diets (*to be accredited*)
- ✓ Compliant with all FSA target nutrient standards  
*Including min 10% protein for vegetarian products*
- ✓ No palm oil
- ✓ No MSG
- ✓ Made in a nut-free environment
- ✓ Supported by a tailored marketing toolkit
- ✓ Free of GMO ingredients, artificial colours, preservatives and additives.



## Made in Britain

Our dedicated new vegan and free from production facility in Gloucestershire is now ready. This provides us with excellent capacity and enables us to produce stock in good time for spring 2019 menus.

This approach gives us full control over the quality and safety of our products. All of our ingredients have been audited as being free of the 14 major allergens. The site will become a hub of vegan food innovation - and we look forward to welcoming you to visit soon.

## Powered by the wind and sun

Our production is powered by 100% green energy from Ecotricity, Britain's greenest energy company.

## Pioneering compostable packaging

Inside each cardboard case, our products are packed in a fully compostable clear liner. Our case label is recyclable too.

We want to lead the way with sustainable packaging - to show the food service industry that it's simply not necessary to use plastic packaging inside the millions of cases packed each year.

## Contact the team

01453 790 135

[littlegreendeils@fgr.co.uk](mailto:littlegreendeils@fgr.co.uk)

**Forest Green Rovers FC**

The New Lawn, Another Way  
Nailsworth, GL6 0FG

**Little Green Devils products are registered with**





Petition: PE1708 for Guaranteed vegan options in all state entities

## **Personal Testimonies for Petitions Committee**

### **1. Introduction**

The following recent personal experiences have been provided to Go Vegan Scotland since the hearing in December, to assist the Petitions Committee in understanding the impact on Scottish people of our current failure to provide vegan options in our state entities.

We have already submitted the results of our survey of Scottish vegans, which set out a number of personal experiences in hospitals, schools and other public institutions. The personal experiences contained in this document are submitted to supplement the information already given, and to demonstrate that the failure to provide for vegans in our public sector is an ongoing, widespread issue.

We have pulled the submissions into a single document for ease of reference. The submissions have been made anonymous for now as it is not uncommon for vegan related matters to attract negative media and online attention. If names and other details are necessary we can review this with the individuals.

The particular public entities referred to in these personal testimonies are included for the purpose of demonstrating that the failure to provide is widespread, recurring in various local authority areas and under various health boards. They are examples of:

- (a) an almost complete lack of provision in schools day to day, save for specific cases where parents have been able to persuade a school to provide, and
- (b) a total lack of consistency in terms of provision in hospitals.

The proposed legislation would ensure that in every public entity there would be at least one vegan option available to everyone (vegan or not) every day. That would ensure that these situations do not arise again, ensuring compliance with our human rights obligations, as well as making good plant-based options available to everyone.

### **2. Responsibility of Central Government**

Given the response from The Scottish Government, a copy of which was provided to the Committee under separate cover, in which they appear to suggest that responsibility lies with local authorities rather than The Scottish Government, we think it is important to emphasise that this is squarely a central government issue.



Compliance with European human rights is the responsibility of central governments, in this case the devolved Scottish Government. They have taken on the responsibility to “secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in Section I of [the] Convention” in terms of Article 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights “ECHR”).

This is usefully explained in the European Court of Human Rights Guide to Article 1 of the ECHR:

“It should also be remembered that, for the purposes of the Convention, the sole issue of relevance is the State’s international responsibility, irrespective of the national authority to which the breach of the Convention in the domestic system is imputable.

Even though it is not inconceivable that States will encounter difficulties in securing compliance with the rights guaranteed by the Convention in all parts of their territory, each State Party to the Convention nonetheless remains responsible for events occurring anywhere within its national territory.

Further, the Convention does not merely oblige the higher authorities of the Contracting States themselves to respect the rights and freedoms it embodies; it also has the consequence that, in order to secure the enjoyment of those rights and freedoms, those authorities must prevent or remedy any breach at subordinate levels.

The higher authorities of the State are under a duty to require their subordinates to comply with the Convention and cannot shelter behind their inability to ensure that it is respected.

The general duty imposed on the State by Article 1 of the Convention entails and requires the implementation of a national system capable of securing compliance with the Convention throughout the territory of the State for everyone. That is confirmed by the fact that, firstly, Article 1 does not exclude any part of the member States’ “jurisdiction” from the scope of the Convention and, secondly, it is with respect to their “jurisdiction” as a whole that member States are called on to show compliance with the Convention. (*Assanidze v. Georgia* [GC], §§ 146-147).

...Under the Convention, a State’s authorities are strictly liable for the conduct of their subordinates; they are under a duty to impose their will and cannot shelter behind their inability to ensure that it is respected (*Ilaşcu and Others v. Moldova and Russia* [GC], § 319).

See [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide\\_Art\\_1\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Guide_Art_1_ENG.pdf) at para 9.

The failure to provide for vegans in our state entities is ultimately the responsibility of The Scottish Government. That is the case for our schools, hospitals, prisons, care homes, colleges and universities, councils and any other state entities. The Scottish Government is currently failing to meet its obligations, as shown by the results of our survey submitted previously, and as further evidenced by the following personal statements.



### **3. Personal Testimonies**

#### **(a) Recent Experiences in Scottish Hospitals**

1. In August 2018 I was hospitalised for almost 7 weeks due to falling very ill. I was in Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow.

From the moment I joined the ward, my concerns that my dietary requirements would not be catered for were founded.

I was initially offered a cup of tea and on asking if there were any alternative milks, I was bluntly told I was lucky I was getting any milk in my tea given that I was in an NHS funded hospital. And yet, despite the rude way my friendly and somewhat timid request was handled, I understood the response and more or less expected it.

Herein lies the problem. I have taken seriously ill and am overly grateful to live in a country where I have access to medical care and wanting to ensue all medical, auxiliary and clerical staff knew, through my actions, that I valued and appreciated them. Yet here I was, starting off on the wrong foot simply for asking if another milk product was available for my tea. Slightly panicked, I informed my husband that he would need to bring me in almond milk for tea and breakfast cereal.

I was later visited by catering staff to discuss dietary requirements, yet when I advised I was vegan I was met with a blank expression. I then offered to go through the menu with the staff member to pick out what options were available to me. Despite not wanting to cause any more stress on what I know is overworked staff, I'm having to ask if the soup is made with vegetables or animal stocks, does the vegetable curry have milk in it and are there no other lunch or dinner options available. Unsurprisingly, these questions could not be answered.

Here I am, already feeling vulnerable and uncertain at what was ahead of me due to the illness, having to feel like I'm annoying staff within hours of joining the ward and worrying about what I was going to eat.

I was in hospital for 7 weeks and during that time my food options were limited to a baked potato and beans and a salad consisting purely of lettuce, cucumbers and tomatoes. There were no proper vegan meal options.

There was a chickpea curry on the Halal menu and I asked to have this. I was told they only have small provisions of this and as I was not someone who had to eat Halal, I shouldn't be allowed to order from that menu. I was absolutely outraged by this and had to argue the point that those requiring Halal options





were able to order from both the vegetarian and main menu yet I was unable to. I had to speak to the Sister of the ward to get permission to order the curry from the Halal menu. Thankfully the ward sister recognised how ridiculous this was and ensured I was able to order this. When I am in hospital being treated for an illness I shouldn't have to be arguing about getting a decent meal and I worry about patients in a similar position who don't have the energy or support to push for vegan options because they're too ill.

My options over the 7 weeks were the obligatory baked potato and beans, chickpea curry from the Halal menu (which I had to fight for) and a salad consisting purely of lettuce, cucumbers and tomatoes for lunch. No soup, no sandwiches and no other hot meals were available.

As there were so few options for me and I was in for 7 weeks I had to ask my husband, who was already stressed at having to work full time, look after our two kids and trek a 50 mile round trip to visit me in hospital, to also bring me food. Because of the situation we were in and the pressure my husband was under he often had to buy me meals, either expensive food from Marks & Spencer's situated within the hospital or unhealthy quick foods like pakora or chips from a nearby takeaway. This is not what I was wanting to be eating but I had to eat.

I was not allowed to use the hospital cooker or microwave to heat anything up. I was told this was due to cross contamination! Thankfully there was a guest fridge in the day room where I was able to store my plant milk along with plant butter and yoghurt's and fruit packs for example. I was unable to walk in hospital so I always had to ask those serving food or drinks to go to the day room to get my plant milk for me. There were a few staff that I got to know and who looked after me. They always put my plant milk on the tea trolley and saved me having to ask. That honestly made such a difference.

It goes without saying that food is fundamental in the healthy recovery of patients and given that the World Wide Health Organisation identify processed meats as a cause of cancer, access to healthy, animal free food should not be the struggle it is. Furthermore, I have a legal right to be able to access vegan food options in public sector settings so why am I having to have had such a poor and challenging experience at a time that my breakfast or dinner choice should be the last thing on my mind?

## **2. I am a teacher working in Inverness.**

My son, 2 years old, was admitted to the Children's Ward of Raigmore Hospital in December 2018 via A&E.



When we came in by Ambulance it was dinner time and as a breastfeeding mother I was hungry but could not leave my child to get anything off site so was offered a sandwich. My options were cheese and tomato or ham salad. Neither were suitable.

By the time we were admitted on to the ward it was 11pm. By this point I had not eaten anything since 1pm and was quite frankly feeling very low. My son was having lots of breastmilk as a means of comfort and my resources were depleting. Again, once we reached the ward I was offered sandwiches, cheese and tomato or egg mayonnaise. Again, neither was suitable.

I asked for a cup of tea with non-dairy milk (I didn't mind what type – soya, oat, cashew, hazelnut, almond, rice; to name a few) but it was something that had to be collected from the kitchen which was closed so I could only have black tea. Ironically they did have lactose free milk freely available, which was of course not suitable for me.

The following morning the breakfast available was cereal, toast and tea. I asked what cereal was vegan. The staff were unaware that any cereal was non-vegan so I asked if they could find out the brand and I would research it myself. However, this information got lost and nobody got back to me leaving my son and I only having two slices of toast between us for breakfast. I cannot explain the sheer exhaustion felt when a breastfeeding mother cannot eat. Breastfeeding requires an additional consumption of 500 calories a day. When caring for a sick child inevitably the child feeds more for comfort meaning the mother's reserves are being depleted.

On top of this my child was feeding more because he was genuinely hungry as his dietary requirements were not being met.

When the options came for lunch nothing was labelled vegan. I again explained what veganism is and was told something suitable would be sent up. By 10:30 my son was crying from hunger and no matter how much milk he had from me it wasn't enough. I went to the dining hall to see what I could find and bought us some bags of crisps. We hadn't had a decent meal in 22 hours.

When lunch arrived it was a pre-prepared meal. On first inspection it appeared to be some potatoes, kidney beans and peas. However, once I peeled back the top it was pureed vegetables which had been moulded back to their original form. Simply inedible. My son was constantly asking for toast (as that is all he knew was available) or breastmilk. I made a frantic phone call to a friend who brought me in some ready-made sandwiches from Tesco, some fruit, hummus and some almond milk. This cost £15.

Dinner time nothing arrived for us. They rang down to the kitchen but explained



because no request was put through for us (the nurse thought I didn't want anything BECAUSE I was vegan). They said something would be sent up. By 7pm they sent up the same thing as lunch. We were back to square one and I was desperate for a hot meal.

Another panicked phone call to my friend. She rescued us by bringing in another few sandwiches and some appropriate ready meals. It was costing so much for food that I had to seriously consider if I could even afford to stay in hospital with my son.

This pattern was repeated for the few days we were there. Each morning nobody could tell me the brand of cereal so I could find out if it was vegan and although some soya milk did become available it didn't help us when we couldn't fathom the cereal on offer. The only other meals we were offered during our stay were another pre-prepared pureed vegetable dish, fruit salad and a plate of chips.

Over the course of our 3 day stay I spent £65 on food, which is more than a week's food budget in my house.

The understanding and awareness of veganism has snowballed over the last few years. In every city and town it is now possible to get hold of vegan products; restaurants have dedicated vegan menus and the labelling of everyday items; not just food but toiletries, clothing, wine, footwear etc and their availability is simply the norm – mainstream. Therefore, when dealing with any public body one would assume that there wouldn't be any issue accessing appropriate food; particularly in areas of health and education, areas where the most vulnerable people, needing the best nutrition are in greater proportion.

However, Raigmore Hospital in Inverness severely lags behind in addressing the needs of their patients.

**3.** In August 2018 I unexpectedly went into labour three weeks early with my first baby. It was the middle of the night and it was very sudden.

I was admitted to the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Paisley and by 6am on the 19th our lovely healthy baby girl was born.

I was taken up to the ward to rest and a lovely midwife informed me the breakfast trolley was in the corridor. Since I hadn't eaten for over 12 hours and given birth in between I was hungry as I'm sure you can imagine and didn't have anything with me. My husband went up expecting to maybe bring some toast and jam or a cup of tea back but there was absolutely no options available whatsoever. They didn't have a toaster, so just bread & butter, rice krispies and cows' milk was on offer. A poor choice for most people.



The midwife informed us that they can request vegan options, but they would have had to have given notice. Which is astounding given that babies come when they are ready and the last thing on your mind is trying to arrange food options with the NHS Catering Department.

We settled on two cups of black tea and my husband was sent home until lunchtime. The lunch trolley came round and I went out to see what was available then. You would assume the NHS deals with a range of multicultural ladies and so they would be aware of dietary requirements and have some sort of system in place. But no, the only "meal" available to me would have been a dry baked potato and an orange juice.

Thankfully my husband came back up armed with some fresh fruit and hot food he had bought for me to eat, it had only been 18 hours and a theatre assisted childbirth after all.

I would like to add that this is no way an attack on the NHS or the staff. I am aware of the pressures staff face daily as I work for the NHS myself. However more awareness and a better system of catering to all is needed. It is unacceptable that there was no option for me to have any source of nutrition after giving birth.

**4. The following is written about my recent experience as an Out Patient, at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.**

I was recently in hospital for an endoscopy, which requires an empty stomach. I had not eaten or drank since the previous evening. When I came round from the procedure, due to the fact I had been given a sedative, I was required to wait in the recovery room to allow the effects to wear off.

During this time, which would have been shortly after 11am, all the patients were offered food, as it had been about 12 hours since we had last eaten or drank.

On offer was tea or coffee and a selection of sandwiches. There were no alternatives other than dairy and the sandwiches were either meat or egg. As I am vegan, I was only able to have black tea.

My husband had come to collect me and was able to drive me to a place which offered vegan food.

However, had I been on public transport, this would have been a bigger issue as I was feeling light headed and hungry. If we had thought ahead, we could have perhaps made food at home and brought along for later. Although in fairness, when you are going for tests etc to a hospital, it is a nerve-wracking time and it's



not always possible to think ahead. Also, as a tax payer, I do feel my needs should be considered and catered for also.

It of course led me to think about those patients who are in hospital for more than a half day, and how difficult it must be for them, during a trying time. They would no doubt have to rely on relatives bringing them food, which no doubt could lead to times the patient would have no food until visiting time. Not ideal and certainly not conducive to the healing process.

On a side note, since becoming vegan, my cholesterol has lowered 3 points and so I would have thought the NHS would be happy to consider more vegan options on a health basis too.

### **(b) Recent Experiences in Scottish Schools**

1. I went to a high school in West Lothian. I left in June 2018

I became a vegan when I was 14 so when I was in my 3rd year of high school. The hardest part about this for me was definitely lunch time at school because my school had little to none vegan options.

There was the option of soup and they could not even tell me if the baguette it came with had eggs or milk in it. It seemed like the dinner ladies at my school had no interest in helping me because I was a vegan. The other option was a baked potato and beans. I didn't always have time to bring a packed-lunch so I needed options for lunch at school. A cup of soup or a baked potato gets bland and boring over time.

The dinner ladies at my school would also tell me that pasta for example had eggs and milk without even checking or they would just say they didn't know. It isn't fair that schools sell hot dogs, pizza, chicken burgers etc, which are some of the most unhealthy foods on the planet yet they can't provide any healthy vegan options. Even if they gave the option of a veggie sandwich or wrap this would make such a difference to vegan students.

I was a student rep at school and I brought up the fact that there weren't any good options for vegans or vegetarians at our school and I was told this was because they assumed no one was vegan at the school.

Offering vegan options at school would show students how delicious vegan food can be and would be better for their health and the environment too if the school was purchasing less animal based products.



Now I am studying at the City of Glasgow College and they have soup, baked potatoes and veggie burgers, which still isn't a lot to choose from. Students should always have a vegan option and shouldn't have to bring a packed lunch.

2. I am a 13 year old attending a high school in North Lanarkshire.

I've been vegan for two years. Becoming vegan was an easy decision for me after seeing some videos on the awful abuse cows face in the dairy industry, which led me to do more research on the meat and dairy industry as a whole.

Whilst the decision to go vegan was an easy one, living as a vegan hasn't been due to the lack of food provisions particularly within my school.

Currently, there are no vegan hot or cold meals provided within my school, meaning I have to ensure I bring a packed lunch each day. I am really angry that my dietary requirements are not catered for in school and often feel discriminated against. I find this a real issue on cold days in particular when I am not able to purchase a hot meal, even soup to go with my sandwich.

If I am ever running late or my parents have forgotten to replace a vegan item then I'm not even able to consider just going for a school dinner unless I want plain bread or a dry baked potato for lunch.

How is it fair or addressing equal rights when there are various options prepared to cater for those with food allergies and religious restrictions but my legally protected right to practice my moral belief is not?

It is often difficult for me as a teenager having to feel like I am justifying my right to be vegan. This makes me 'different' from the other boys and girls in my year and I have had to defend my beliefs against being teased and being called names for trying to cause no harm to other beings. It would help greatly if schools could provide vegan meals which would then open up conversation about veganism and make it seem 'normal.' Vegan meals are inclusive to all and could actually save money in the long run and provide pupils with healthy options.

I really hope that this is taken seriously as it is a very important issue for me.

3. I live in Dundee, myself and my husband are vegan and we have two children who are 5 and 3. We are a vegan family.

My experience of the provision of school meals within Angus Council has been mixed.



When my son started Primary One in August 2018 I had no idea who to contact regarding his school meals. After several phone calls I was passed to the person in charge of catering for Angus Council.

I explained to her that my son is vegan and she confirmed that this could be accommodated. She did see fit to explain that they would not offer dairy milk alternatives and emphasised that the menu would be very restrictive. She went on to provide unsolicited nutrition advice, stating that a vegan diet is not healthy for young children. I politely thanked her for this and confirmed I did not need advice in this regard and offered to provide her with up to date references confirming the suitability of a well-balanced vegan diet for children. She declined this. I asked her if she had any particular concerns I could address, for example the normal B12 argument, but she was unable to provide any detail, simply stating that the NHS do not recommend a vegan diet (this is not accurate but seems to be a widespread misconception).

Following on from this my son has received vegan school meals, albeit these are limited and unimaginative. I can see how people consider a vegan diet restrictive when you look at what is on offer at school! However, I do like him to have a hot meal with his peers, albeit I will always make sure he has some extras with him to keep him going.

Last Christmas my son's school provided a Christmas lunch for all pupils. I received a phone call at 4pm the day before the Christmas lunch simply stating that there would be no lunch available for him. I was quite confused by this given that the lunch had been organised several weeks prior. With advance notice I would have arranged something nice for him to take, but at 4pm the night before I had very little to put together for a cold packed lunch. I hated the thought of him being the only child not joining in for the lunch and in the end we took him out of school for a treat at a local café instead.

Strangely enough, I subsequently received a Facebook message from a caterer at Angus Council who had heard about this. She said she would ensure that he got a "Christmas lunch" the following week. I understand that he was given vegetables and gravy the following week, which he did not eat. Whilst I appreciate the sentiment, this simply made him the odd one out again and kind of missed the point of joining his friends for a Christmas lunch.

I believe my son to be the first vegan child at this school so I do appreciate it is a learning curve but given the huge increase in veganism in recent years it is unfortunate that provision is so limited.

My daughter is three years old and attends nursery at the same primary school. They are provided with a snack in the afternoon. Her cousin is also vegan and in



the same class. My sister and I provide the school with soya milk and yoghurt for them, but my daughter prefers water anyway.

I do find that my children are ravenous by the time I pick them up from school so I always have snacks with me. I think that a bit of training for the local authority catering staff would be immensely helpful as I believe it is genuine ignorance rather than hostility to veganism which is resulting in these shortfalls in provision.

**4. Our experience of school meals within Edinburgh City Council began in 2017 and continues to date.**

We are a vegan family. Our daughter started school in August 2017. We were given the lunch menu ahead of this date but the only vegan option most days appeared to be a baked potato with baked beans.

I e-mailed the council in July 2017 asking if more vegan options could be made available but did not receive a reply before our daughter started school. Our daughter wanted to try school lunches as all her friends would be having them so we ordered food for the first week. We did not order a Friday lunch as it is a half day. Children can order a Friday lunch to take away but this does not include any vegan options.

On the first day no beans were supplied with the baked potato and on the second day cheese had been added to the tomato pasta by mistake. Nothing could be done to rectify this as the school meals are made in another school (there is no kitchen at our school).

Apparently beans are not available every day with the potato. Luckily, after the lack of beans on day one, I had given our daughter a back-up packed lunch for day two, just in case. She has been taking packed lunches ever since. We feel we cannot trust school meals as our daughter is allergic to dairy, egg, peanut and sesame and we do not want to risk it.

I received an e-mail from the council in August 2017 offering some advice. The lady from the council said that some meals could possibly be adapted for vegans but that they are 'unable to tailor a specific vegan option each day at this time'.

The lady from the council visited our school for a meeting on lunches in May 2018. I took this opportunity to ask about vegan meals. Again, she said that they were not going to offer a vegan dish every day but that I could speak directly to the catering manager of the school who prepare the meals to possibly arrange something.





The next day I received an e-mail from the council lady saying that she had looked again at the menu and suggested dishes which could be adapted e.g. Bean and cheese enchilada without the cheese.

I was really saddened that the council would not even consider a daily vegan option. The council lady was kind enough to offer suggestions but we did not feel that we wanted to take school lunches any further. My daughter has taken a packed lunch ever since.

5. My partner and I have been vegan for nearly six years and we can honestly say it's been one of the best, most exhilarating, rewarding, inspirational decisions we've made.

We watched the documentary Forks Over Knives in early 2013 and everything changed for us. We became vegetarians overnight and, as we did further research, became vegan shortly after.

The reason for not going vegan sooner is we just never really thought about it properly. It never occurred to us that a cow had to be pregnant to give milk, that fish were 'farmed' etc. But as soon as we made the change to veganism we started to think a lot more about the world and why we consider certain practices are the norm. Why is it okay to eat a sheep and not a dog in the UK? Why all the fuss over the horsemeat scandal when 'Cheval' is one of the most common dishes on the continent? And - this is a serious point - why do we let our kids watch Peppa Pig and eat a bacon roll at the same time?

When our daughter was born there was no doubt we would raise her as a vegan. We were sensible about it and did our research. We are confident that she is getting a varied diet with all the nutrients, minerals and sustenance she needs. Frida is a healthy, happy child. She understands what veganism is and will often pick up something in the supermarket and ask 'Is this vegan?' When she is old enough she will be able to make her own decisions about what she eats and how she lives her life, whether she wants to have animals as her friends or her food but, until now, she seems very comfortable with the food she is fed and the ethos we follow as a family.

We have been accused of 'brain-washing' our child, of forcing our veganism on her against her will and been told that it's unsafe to raise a child as a vegan. But we are only doing what our parents did. Raising our child according to how we live our life until they're old enough to take care of themselves.

Shortly after our daughter was born my partner spent a week in hospital. There was no vegan menu. She was catered for but the choice was limited and tended



to be either beans and toast or, occasionally, a vegetable stew that had been lurking at the bottom of the freezer.

When our daughter started nursery, we were assured that she would be catered for as a vegan (and at other nurseries we visited) and, in line with the Standard and Halal menus, a three-week menu plan would be drawn up.

However, there seemed to be some confusion about what a vegan diet entailed and we were presented with a menu including some meals which contained dairy products. We were told our daughter would be provided vegan meals with what was available until a revised three-week menu could be drawn up. We immediately submitted suggestions and listed all the things she could and couldn't have. After several months and numerous emails/conversations with the nursery staff, a three-week plan still hadn't materialised.

Eventually, after further discussions, we were presented with a menu consisting of four meals in rotation - baked potato & beans, beans & toast, pasta & veg and soup – and told if we wanted more choice, we'd have to speak to the caterers. As she was only getting 4 meals compared to 12 for the standard/Halal/vegetarian children we felt it was unfair and requested more vegan meals. We did further research, submitted more suggestions and even checked with the caterers' suppliers what vegan products were available to them. In the end we were told that vegan meals were harder to procure, that they were higher in sodium and that we, essentially, had to make do with the current menu as it stood.

Unsatisfied we contacted Glasgow City Council Catering & Facilities. We were not asking for special treatment, only parity and what we considered to be our child's basic human right. We were told it wasn't policy to provide for vegans as it is a "dietary choice" and that our daughter shouldn't be being catered for. The spokeswoman expressed disbelief that she was being catered for, that the nursery had no right to do so and that, in all likelihood the menu would therefore be revoked. Only medically-referred diets could be catered for and reasons of cost, lack of demand and nutritional concerns were given for not providing for vegans.

We were surprised to read in the Evening Times the very next day in an article relating to the petition regarding public sector menus that GCC were quoted as saying they did provide for vegans.

After further conversations and several follow-up articles in the Evening Times we were delighted, just before Christmas, to be presented with a three-week vegan meal plan with 12 choices, all made from the caterers' supplies with a few adjustments to existing meals. Whilst this has been made available to us on request, we did have to push for it and, to my knowledge, this has not been made public as policy by GCC.



What is required here is clarity. We were told so many different things by different people which made for a very confusing, stressful time. Thankfully it was resolved relatively simply and we are delighted that Glasgow City Council have now confirmed that vegan parents who request vegan meals for children in the GCC school system will be catered for. But other parents shouldn't have to fight the way did. By making it a vegan menu widely available to all parents and children would provide clarity, choice and equality in our schools and nurseries.

We are lucky that we live in Glasgow, one of the most vegan-friendly cities in the UK, and frequently visit many of the wonderful vegan cafes and bars in the city. It's great looking at the menus and not have to worry if there are any animal-derived products on the menu. And more and more cafes, bars and restaurants are introducing dedicated vegan menus. When Greggs gets in on the act with a Vegan Sausage Roll, you know the tide is turning.

For us, veganism is not just a dietary choice, it's an ethos, a way of life. We are not even huge animal-lovers, we just respect animals as fellow beings who share this planet. We believe we have no right to take the life of another sentient being just because we like the taste of their flesh or think their skin would make a nice pair of shoes. With the number of vegans in Scotland and the UK growing rapidly it is only common sense that dedicated vegan choices should be made available on all public sector menus. Schools, hospitals, prisons, are where the food we eat should reflect the society we wish to become. Compassionate, nourishing and wholesome.

**6.** Here is my brief account of when I requested vegan school meals for my daughter:

When my daughter started primary school in August 2015 I requested vegan school meals for her. This was forwarded to Scottish Borders Council and the reply that came back was that they were not able to provide a vegan option for my daughter. The head teacher apologised. This meant that although my daughter was eligible for free school meals for three years (P1-P3 as all Scottish schoolchildren are) I had to provide packed lunches for her as our local authority would not provide appropriate school meals for her in line with our beliefs. As a single parent this added an additional cost to our outgoings that, had she been a meat eater or a vegetarian, I would not have had to fork out for three years, which equates to  $(190 \times £2.10) \times 3 = £1197$  which is a considerable amount of money! I sincerely hope that this discrimination does not continue and every child will be provided for, including those who follow a vegan diet.



7. I am a vegan mother with an 8 year old child attending school in East Renfrewshire.

I am currently experiencing real difficulty obtaining vegan meals for my daughter in school, for which I am paying. There are no vegan options at all on the menu at my daughter's school. All of her friends have school meals and so she is isolated from them when she has to take a packed lunch. When the children have a special food event, such as make your own pizza day, my daughter is excluded instead of arranging for her to make a pizza without cheese or providing vegan cheese (which is readily available in all supermarkets).

Requesting vegan meals through my daughter's school was not successful so I contacted the head of education at East Renfrewshire Council in December asking for at least one vegan option a day. They did not reply to me until 18<sup>th</sup> February. When they did reply they told me I had to speak with the school directly.

I managed to set up a meeting with the head of catering at the school on 4<sup>th</sup> March with the head of catering and someone from East Renfrewshire Council. Their position at the meeting was that they would not be creating any vegan meals for my daughter.

The best they would offer was to modify some of the existing meals by removing the animal products. This would mean, for example, that instead of a chicken and coleslaw wrap my daughter would be given a wrap with dry cabbage and carrots (mayonnaise removed and not replaced with anything, such as hummus). They were not able to confirm clearly that the vegetable sausages were suitable for vegans (did not contain egg, for example). They seemed to think it being Halal was relevant, when of course it is not.

My request to them was for one vegan dish on the menu every day, so that any of the children could have it, but they are not willing to do this. They said my daughter would have to wear a blue wrist band so that the canteen staff know what to give her. That is far from ideal in a school setting, making her stand out like that as different to everyone else.

They refused to provide plant milks, claiming they did not have fridge space for this. They seemed to think plant milk would have to be kept in a separate area from dairy milk, whereas it would be fine to have it with the other milk.

By the end of the meeting they had said they would be providing the modified meals from the following day (having left out the animal ingredients). I sent my daughter to school the next day without a packed lunch but later learned that there had been nothing for her to eat. When my husband spoke with them they said it would be three weeks before they could offer the modified meals.



The situation is not good enough and I will be writing again to East Renfrewshire Council to ask them to do better. If some schools can provide proper vegan meals then I don't understand why this can't be done in all schools.

There is also an issue in school in that the other children seem to think that my daughter "will not grow properly" because she is not eating animal products. That is obviously nonsense and my daughter gets all the nutrients she needs. There is clearly a need for education about a plant based diet and veganism.

8. I go to high school in the Dundee area. There are absolutely no vegan options in my school canteen.

**(c) Recent Experience in Police Custody**

1. At the end of 2018 I was kept in police custody in Inverness from late afternoon until the early afternoon of the following day.

I should have been given something to eat as I was in custody for over 20 hours. I asked about vegan options but there were none and so all I could have was black tea.