

Child Poverty Strategy Consultation Response Food Sense Wales

Name: Katie Palmer

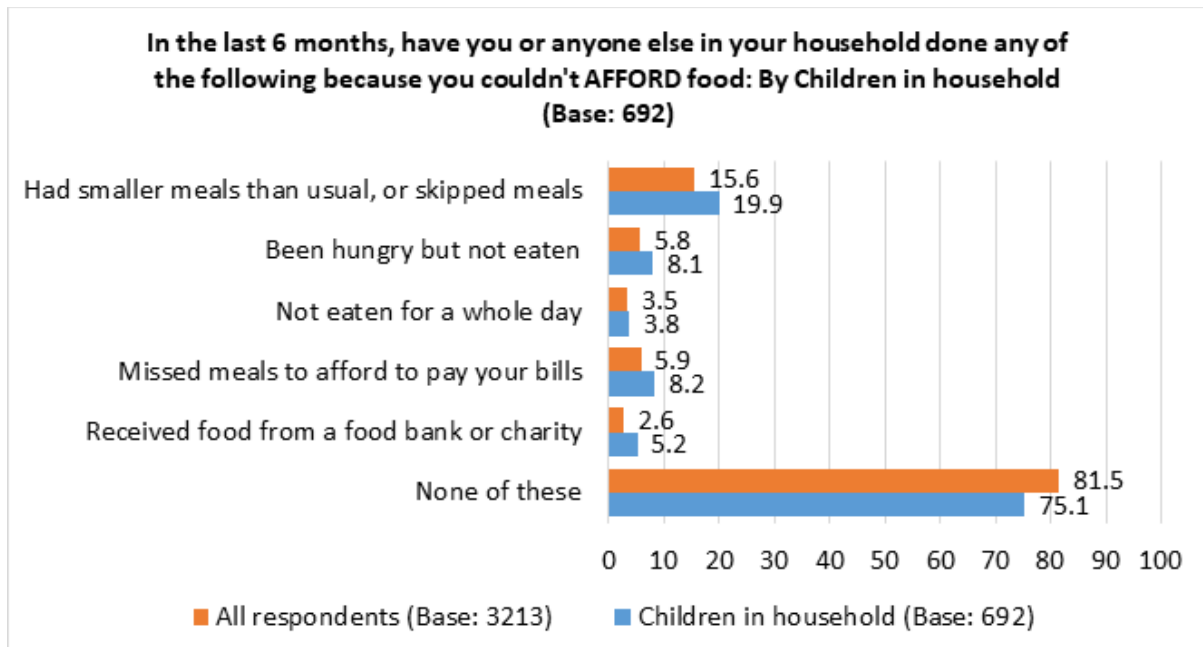
Organisation (if applicable): Food Sense Wales

Please see response under section 17

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Section 17 - This consultation response from Food Sense Wales focuses on household food security in relation to child poverty and draws mainly on Objective 1 and 2.

As a general observation, recognition on the implication of insufficient household resources to secure a healthy diet and the increasing potential for diet-related health inequalities as a result, is lacking. The most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 50% of their disposable income on food to meet the cost of the Government-recommended healthy diet. This compares to just 11% for the least deprived fifth.¹ Over a quarter of respondents in Wales experience low or very low food security (FSA 2023)². And you are more likely to be food insecure if you have children, work in the food supply chain³ or have a disability (Food Foundation). This trend is reflected in local data gathered in Cardiff⁴.



¹ [TFF The Broken Plate 2023 DigitalFINAL 1.pdf \(foodfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

² [F&Y2 Wave 6: Chapter 3 Food Security | Food Standards Agency](#)

³ [Food Insecurity Tracking | Food Foundation](#)

⁴ [Research Reports \(cardiff.gov.uk\)](#)

Almost a third of children aged 5-10 years old eat less than one portion of veg a day (Peas Please 2021)⁵. We also know that intake of fruit and veg tracks household income. Recent research from Veg Power indicates that that 66% parents with children on a household income of more than £30K/pa agree that their children eat 2-3 handfuls of veg a day, this drops to 60% when Household income falls below £30K⁶.

Data from England suggests that Children in the most deprived tenth of the population are on average up to 1.3cm shorter than children in the least deprived tenth by age 10–11 (Food Foundation 2023)⁷. We do not currently collect this data in Wales. Experiencing household food insecurity during infancy and early childhood is linked to increased risk of obesity and whilst we have data in Wales demonstrating this trend at 4/5yrs through the Childhood Measurement Programme⁸, there has not been a full set of CMP measurement data since 2018/19. It is therefore difficult to adequately track the impact of diet-related health inequalities.

Data suggests that you are more likely to suffer from diet related disease if you live in an area of deprivation with 4 in 10 children and young people living with type 2 diabetes from most deprived areas.⁹ More than a third of children in Wales have dental decay by the time they arrive at primary school – a leading cause of hospital admission (tooth extractions under general anaesthesia)¹⁰

There is also an absence of clear linkages between different policy areas that touch on the links between household food insecurity and child poverty, a reflection that there is no overall vision and strategy for the Food system in Wales as has recently been highlighted by the Future Generations commissioner “the well-being plans that councils have to publish under the Act don’t mention healthy diets, and our well-being goals and the 50 indicators that measure our success against them, leave out food”¹¹

Observation 1: Children’s Right to a nutritious diet and the education and skills needed to grow, shop, prepare and share food should form part of a wider vision and Food System Strategy for Wales

Observation 2: There is a lack of data and hence monitoring on the relationship between poverty and diet-related health inequalities in children in Wales

Comments on Objective 1 to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families.

We support the objective to reduce costs and maximise the incomes of families. This starts with fair wages (noting that those working within the food system are more likely to be food secure than the

⁵ Peas Please (2021) [Peas-Please-Veg-Facts-2021.pdf \(foodsensewales.org.uk\)](https://www.foodsensewales.org.uk/peas-please-veg-facts-2021.pdf)

⁶ Veg Power 2023 – The Importance of Role Modelling: Market Insight Report Edition 5: July 2023 What is shaping children’s veg consumption?

⁷ [The Broken Plate 2023 | Food Foundation](https://www.foodfoundation.org.uk/the-broken-plate-2023/)

⁸ [Child Measurement Programme - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](https://www.nhs.uk/child-measurement-programme/)

⁹ Diabetes UK (2022) [50% more children being treated for type 2 diabetes | Diabetes UK](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/50-more-children-being-treated-for-type-2-diabetes)

¹⁰ Research Senedd (2022) Dentistry Part 2 – Wales’ oral health gap [Dentistry Part 2 – Wales’ oral health gap \(senedd.wales\)](https://www.senedd.wales/dentistry-part-2-wales-oral-health-gap)

¹¹ ['We need a new long-term vision for food in Wales' \(nation.cymru\)](https://www.nation.cymru/we-need-a-new-long-term-vision-for-food-in-wales/)

general population) and adequate benefits – which should be linked to the cost of a healthy diet. With respect to food; maximizing the uptake of food related benefits such as Free school meals, Food and Fun, breakfast clubs and healthy start vouchers is key. However, despite the introduction of universal primary free school meals, uptake is not universal. Automatic enrolment for free school meals could increase uptake as seen in Sheffield ¹². Government should prioritise increasing the eligibility for secondary school children soon as possible.

As mentioned in the consultation, training of front-line staff is important. One example is the [Food Related Benefits](#) package developed by Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health team and dietitians in conjunction with Food Cardiff. Food Partnerships have been instrumental in promoting the uptake of Healthy start as this example illustrates:

Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership is working with its local network to promote Healthy Start, including with Flying Start. The Food Partnership has hosted Q&A sessions with Flying Start staff and trained frontline Housing Association staff and disseminated info through Community Hubs and key stakeholders. Currently Blaenau Gwent have the best uptake in Gwent and inspired by the Gwent Marmot Principles work, Blaenau Food Partnership has chaired the Gwent regional work on Healthy Start. This operational group involves all food partnerships for Gwent Local Authorities as well as Early Year leads and ABUHB Health Visitors, Midwifery team and Family Services Manager.

As the consultation references, Food Partnerships have a large contribution towards the organisation and optimization of both income maximization and accessibility of affordable, nutritious food as this example from Food Cardiff demonstrates.

Community Food Retail Network

Food Cardiff facilitates the Cardiff Community Food Retail Network, which brings together 28 individuals from projects including Your Local Pantries, Food Co-ops, FOOD Clubs, Big Bocs Bwyd, Community Fridges, alongside partners like Cardiff Third Sector Council, Cardiff Business School, Cardiff & Vale Health Board, Fareshare Cymru.

The network helps projects share knowledge and resources and work together to co-ordinate action across the city, for example through:

- Regular group meet ups to share best practice
- A whatsapp group to troubleshoot and work together between meetings
- Creating a collective map or directory of projects
- Developing additional local supply chains (e.g. from allotments, local producers)
- Creating a training package for developing and new projects (e.g. Community Food and Nutrition courses, Food Hygiene)
- Peer mentoring between projects

¹² Association of Directors of Public Health (2023). [Autoenrolment of Free School Meals – Webinar | ADPH London](#)

The Independent Food Aid Network has a useful resource to demonstrate the importance of cash first approaches [Infographics | IFAN \(foodaidnetwork.org.uk\)](#) and addressing the root causes of poverty. Food Cardiff worked with Cardiff Council to increase discretionary payments for emergency food provision during the cost of living crisis.

Healthy Weight Healthy Wales is mentioned but there is no explicit mention of the retail sector's responsibility in this regard. Consideration of how healthy, unprocessed foods could be made more affordable (without impacting on producer/farmer income) hasn't been addressed. Food Foundation¹³ for example is calling for action by retailers to make it easier for people to afford the food they need and rebalance the cost of a basic shopping basket to make the healthy options the most affordable. Action to ensure supermarkets stock supermarket basic ranges in their convenience stores (shops often relied on in areas of deprivation) has been called for by Which?¹⁴ who found essential budget range items are hardly ever stocked in smaller stores - even though two thirds (66%) of those on £21,000 or less shop in a convenience store at least once a week. This means that people who have low mobility or no access to public or private transport to reach a larger supermarket are potentially being forced to buy more expensive foods or go without. Welsh Government should also consider its position on UK industry levys (see [Recipe for Change](#)) to help make food healthier and any options under Welsh Government's own tax making powers to increase the access and affordability of healthy food.

Government needs to be alert to further potential access and affordability issues of fresh fruit and veg given climate change, implications of Brexit and the fact that recent reports are saying that almost half (49%) of British fruit and veg farmers fearing they will go out of business within the next 12 months. Again, links between child poverty and a Food System Strategy for Wales need to be made.

Observation 2: Government should set/advocate for minimum wage and benefits levels linked to the cost of a healthy diet and other essentials

Observation 3: Cross Sector Food Partnerships can help build resilience through the co-ordination of on the ground activity. However, the introduction of a national indicator on food within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Linked to a National Food Strategy) is required to fully integrate this work into Wellbeing Plans and to realise the potential of Food Partnerships (also relevant for Objective 5)

Observation 4: A greater alignment and ambition between Healthy Weight Healthy Wales and the Child Poverty strategy could be made, especially across the grocery sector

Observation 5: Optimise the uptake of school meals through increasing the eligibility across all year groups, researching auto-enrolment, ensuring school meals are of the highest quality through

¹³ [Dietary Inequalities | Food Foundation](#)

¹⁴ [Inconvenient truth: supermarket giants failing to stock budget ranges in smaller stores, Which? reveals - Which? Policy and insight](#)

adequate resourcing and effective monitoring and support the development of food education within the new curriculum.

Comments on Objective 2. to create pathways out of poverty so that children and young people and their families have opportunities to realise their potential

There is no mention of Food and Fun (the school holiday enrichment programme) in the consultation. [Food and Fun](#) is a Programme for Government commitment. It is a school-based holiday enrichment programme delivered by school staff and partners. It provides food and nutrition education, physical activity, enrichment sessions and healthy meals to children during the school summer holidays. Its benefits include¹⁵; Improved mental health and emotional well-being; School engagement and educational attainment; Improved aspirations; Improved physical activity and Improved dietary behaviour. The benefits to children, parents and carers and school staff are well documented and efforts should be made to optimize this programme in terms of school uptake across local authorities as part of the child poverty strategy. Potential to inspire children and provide pathways to employment through this scheme have been shown in Carmarthenshire through [Cook 24](#) and in Cardiff where four pupils with additional learning needs gained hands-on experience in a commercial kitchen¹⁶. They had the opportunity to transition into paid employment through Food and Fun and then onto applying for vacant positions within the schools catering service.

Observation 6: Review and scope out the potential of Food and Fun to be a key tool in helping to alleviate child poverty as part of the Child Poverty Strategy

About Food Sense Wales

[Food Sense Wales](#) (hosted with Cardiff & Vale Health Charity) has been supporting the development of cross sector food partnerships since its establishment in 2018. Food Sense Wales evolved from [Food Cardiff](#) (one of the first UK Sustainable Food Partnerships established in 2014) in recognition for the need to establish a national, systems approach to the food system in Wales following on from the success of [Food and Fun](#). It is a delivery partner of Healthy Weight Healthy Wales, a member of the HWHW communications sub group and is currently supporting the role out of cross sector Food Partnerships in conjunction with Welsh Government

Food Sense Wales works with communities, organisations, policymakers and Government across Wales to create a food and farming system that is good for people and good for the planet. We aim to influence and impact on how food is produced and consumed in Wales, ensuring that sustainable food, farming and fisheries are at the heart of a just, connected and prosperous food system.

¹⁵ [Download.aspx \(wlga.wales\)](#)

¹⁶ [Employment opportunities to empower young people with Additional Learning Needs \(cardiffnewsroom.co.uk\)](#)

Food Sense Wales are co-founders and provide the secretariat for [Food Policy Alliance Cymru](#), a coalition of organisations and stakeholders building and promoting a collective vision for the Welsh food system.

Members of FPAC created [this video](#) explaining the challenges in the Food system

Katie.palmer2@wales.nhs.uk