

Britain's favourite fresh produce magazine since 1895



By Michael Barker

Monday 13th July 2020, 11:59 GMT

Covid exacerbates child food insecurity

Actress Emma Thompson calls alarming scale of food insecurity among young people 'a scar on our nation's conscience'



Young people from across the UK have called for the government to act on their Children's Right2Food Charter.

Young Food Ambassadors for the Children's Right2Food campaign have argued that the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in high levels of food insecurity, but that the inequality and food insecurity issues faced by children and families are not new.

In a report published today (Monday 13 July) by the Food Foundation, young campaigners have called on the government to acknowledge that the Covid-19 lockdown has made existing problems with children's food insecurity worse, and that these issues are likely to get more serious with a recession and rising unemployment on the horizon.

The campaign is being backed by actress Emma Thompson, who is supporting calls for a Children's Right2Food Commission to be set up to speed up action across government, and monitor and protect children's food in the UK.

As part of the campaign, the Young Food Ambassadors are releasing a Right2Food podcast series, with the first episode out today.

The report, entitled 'A Year of Children's Food', identifies multiple Covid-19 delays to urgently required policy change, demonstrating that increasing financial and social instability for many families will mean that further delays to policy developments could be all the more devastating for children living in poverty in the UK.

The Children's Right2Food Charter was

delivered to 10 Downing Street in April 2019, but according to the Food Foundation has not yet received a formal response from the Department for Education. The report has now been updated in light of the problems exacerbated by the Covid-19 lockdown, and aims to provide an evidence-based road map for the government to ensure that every children has access to a healthy diet.

Calls for a new commission

The key proposal put forward by the Young Food Ambassadors in their Children's Right2Food Charter is a Children's Right to Food Commission to monitor and improve children's food. The commission would be established in law, operate across all four UK nations and have young people at the heart of its leadership. Its first task would be to

develop a plan to deliver the changes set out in the rest of the charter.

- Healthy food to be more affordable for everyone, and for fast food shops and fast

risk of food insecurity. It's a scar on our nation's conscience and we need our

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

© Copyright Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com 2014. The copyright on this article and all content published on Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com is held by Market Intelligence Ltd - Fruitnet.com Limited, a joint venture between Market Intelligence Limited and Dr Rolf M Wolf Media GmbH. All rights reserved. Neither this article nor any part of it may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, including print-outs, screen grabs and information retrieval systems, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.

FRUITNET.COM

The charter also calls for:

- Plans for protecting children's food security during future pandemics and emergencies;
- Holiday provision to be expanded permanently, not just during the coronavirus pandemic, to support all children who normally receive free school meals when schools are closed;
- Expanding access to free school meals so more children can benefit;
- The free school meal allowance for secondary school children to be raised from £2.70 to £4.00 so it's enough to buy a nutritious meal;
- All schools to have the facilities for children to easily drink tap water;
- Banning of advertising of unhealthy food aimed at children near schools, on TV, online and on social media;

food chains to ensure healthier options are cheaper than unhealthy ones;

- Children entitled to free childcare to receive free nursery meals too;
- Free school meals to be renamed the 'school meal allowance' to destigmatise the entitlement and remove the negative associations felt by many children.

'A scar on our nation's conscience'

Dame Emma Thompson said: "The 'compassionate society' that we pride ourselves on has become an uncomfortably glaring misnomer. If it's justice, humanity and moral duty that we care about here, then why are millions of children going hungry every day? We already had unacceptable levels of food poverty in the UK and the current Covid-19 crisis is leaving many more of our children at

Government to act now."

Anna Taylor, executive director of the Food Foundation, added: "Covid-19 has shone a spotlight on the scale of children's food insecurity and the health risk posed by such high levels of childhood obesity in the UK. We can no longer delay the changes we urgently need to ensure all children across the UK have access to healthy food, and that no child living in poverty falls through the gaps. The solutions to build a more resilient future for our children are set out in the Children's Right2Food Charter. Young people are ready to act. It's time for political leaders to step up and support them."