

Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee Inquiry into access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food: Submission of evidence from the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
05/01/26

This evidence focusses on 1) improving food governance in Wales to promote access to food 2) national policy recommendations to improve access to food and 3) recommendations for local authorities on access to food.

1. Food governance in Wales – promoting access to food through a national food resilience plan and integrating access to food into the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The current context of food governance in the UK and Wales

Access to affordable, healthy and sustainable food is rapidly rising up the policy agenda across the UK government, devolved and local governments. The UK Government has established a food strategy, the Scottish Government has created the Good Food Nation Act and the Northern Ireland Executive has published its food strategy framework. A growing number of local authorities across the UK are setting their own food strategies.

These strategies or strategic approaches aim to address a set of common challenges – rising food insecurity, growing diet related ill-health and the need to improve food resilience – and outline the need for a cross departmental approach to food and strategic vision for food policy across UK, devolved and local government.

Welsh Government has made important progress towards addressing Wales' food challenges, in particular:

- The roll out of universal free school meals for primary schools.
- Establishing the Community Food Strategy – with two important commitments amongst its six objectives 1) year on year growth of horticulture in Wales and 2) support for Local Food Partnerships in every local authority area in Wales.
- Setting out the Food Matters document framed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act and which outlines the policy levers on food at devolved level and relevant Welsh Government programmes across food.

The [Future Generations Report 2025](#) outlines that without access to local, healthy and sustainable food – Wales cannot achieve the well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

However, access to food is largely missing from the architecture of the Well-being of Future Generations Act – and a result is largely missing from the well-being duties across the public sector. Food is missing from the definitions of Wales' seven well-being goals and is only partially measured in Wales' 50 national well-being indicators through two broad sub-indicators on healthy lifestyles.

Access to food is largely missing from the well-being objectives which public bodies are required to set and meet through their well-being duties. In 2024, only eight local authorities

and only two health boards had integrated food into their well-being objectives and only two health boards. Despite these food gaps in individual public body well-being objectives, in 2025 encouragingly a growing number of Public Services Board are prioritising food as a collective focus.

The Future Generations Commissioner for Wales has outlined recommendations for Welsh Government on food governance in Wales:

Build on the Community Food Strategy and establish a national food resilience plan for Wales. This plan should set a strategic vision and direction of travel for food policy in Wales and set out cross-departmental policy actions to work towards improving Wales' food resilience. The plan should ensure that access to food for current and future generations is integrated across Welsh government policy – ensuring a coherent approach across Ministerial portfolios.

Integrate food into the Well-being of Future Generations Act to complement a national food resilience plan and ensure that access to affordable, local, healthy and sustainable food is integrated into the well-being duties of the Welsh Government and wider public sector.

2. National policies to increase access to food

Welsh Government should expand Free School Meals to all children up to age 16, ensuring every child in Wales, including children from households with no recourse to public funds, have access to healthy and sustainable food at school.

Welsh Government's universal free school meals for primary school children is a crucial step in tackling hunger, improving behaviour and academic performance, and reducing stigma. However, means-tested free school meals in secondary schools leaves many children hungry and at a time when daily fruit and vegetable intake among young people in Wales is [declining](#). The [Bevan Foundation](#) has reported on the number of children from households with no recourse to public funds missing out on free school meals in Wales.

Welsh Government should scale up the Nutrition Skills for Life programme across all schools in Wales, ensuring that every child leaves school food literate, with the skills and knowledge to maintain a healthy and sustainable diet.

To equip future generations with the skills for lifelong healthy eating, Wales should expand food literacy programmes like [Nutrition Skills for Life](#), which teaches children the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to plan and prepare nutritious meals. Norway offers a strong example, where nutrition education is embedded in the national curriculum through a dedicated "Food and Health" subject, alongside national guidelines for school food provision, including vending machines.

Welsh Government and local authorities should ensure all free school meals contain at least two portions of locally and sustainably produced seasonal vegetables. Local authorities should join the Welsh Veg in Schools programme to build resilient local horticulture supply chains.

In 2023, 94% of vegetables served in Welsh schools were imported and none were organic. The Welsh Veg in Schools initiative is changing that by increasing the supply of locally produced organic vegetables in school meals. In 2025 the project is working with thirteen local

authorities, fifteen growers, four wholesalers, Farming Connect Horticulture and Local Food Partnerships. By buying organic local vegetables for primary school meals, local economy and horticultural production are boosted while providing healthy food for school children with a provenance story that encourages uptake. Producing sustainably contributes to biodiversity gain and carbon reduction.

Welsh Government, local authorities and health boards should collaborate to introduce a Welsh fresh fruit and vegetable voucher scheme for low-income households, helping families afford nutritious food while supporting local food growers.

Initiatives like [Cardiff's Planet Card](#) show how targeted support can help families afford fresh fruit and vegetables. Inspired by the [Alexander Rose](#) fruit and vegetables voucher scheme, which has increased fruit and veg intake by three portions a day for participating households, similar programmes could be expanded across Wales to reach communities most in need while supporting local growers.

All public bodies should reduce or eliminate the junk foods and ultra-processed foods (UPFs) sold on their premises and from the meals they provide, such as in schools, hospitals and care homes. Public bodies should ban the advertising and promotion of junk foods and UPFs from all publicly owned advertising and marketing spaces.

Public bodies can also improve diets by restricting the advertising and promotion of unhealthy foods, which are linked to rising obesity and diet-related diseases. Modelling of Transport for London's [healthier food advertising policy](#) suggests a 20% decrease in sugary product purchases.

Welsh Government should maintain its commitment to long term funding for Local Food Partnerships.

Local Food Partnerships bring together partners from a range of different sectors to address social, economic and environmental issues, working together to ensure good food for all. They work across sectors and bring people together to develop a vision for a more sustainable food future, tailored to the local area and responding to local needs. There is now a Local Food Partnership for every local authority area in Wales and they are playing an increasingly important role in shaping local authority and Public Services Boards' approaches to food as outlined in this [report](#) from Food Sense Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

3. Local Authorities and access to food

In November 2025, Food Sense Wales and the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales published guidance for [local authorities in Wales on food](#). The guidance outlines the food policy levers which local authorities control or influence and provides examples from across Wales and the UK on how local authorities can use these levers to improve local food systems. The guidance outlines advice on governance, planning, procurement, access to food, promoting healthy diets and food waste.

Local authorities in Wales and access to food – the guidance outlines the following advice to embed access to affordable, nutritious, and sustainable food within wider poverty strategies, rather than treating it as a stand-alone issue. Local authority-enabled food provision has a significant role in reducing health inequalities and household food insecurity. Significant inequalities exist in household food security, for example disabled people, households with more than two children and people from non-white ethnic groups are at higher risk of food insecurity. **Local authorities should:**

- **Become an accredited real living wage employer:** Cardiff, Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Monmouthshire and Vale of Glamorgan local authorities are accredited.
- **Set out statutory entitlements clearly, ensuring residents know what they are entitled to and how to access it, and communicate support effectively:** [Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Blaenau Gwent and Rhondda Cynon Taf](#) councils have produced cash-first leaflets with the Independent Food Aid Network.
- **Prioritise “cash-first” approaches and income-focused interventions, alongside advice and support to maximise income and build financial resilience.** A "cash first" approach is a strategy for tackling poverty and food insecurity that prioritizes giving people direct cash payments, rather than in-kind support like food parcels. [Shropshire Council](#) is taking a long-term, preventative approach to food insecurity through reframing food insecurity to reduce stigma, integrating it into organisational plans, delivering training to frontline staff and promoting "cash-first" emergency support.
- **Promote uptake of public food provision such as free school meals or Healthy Start Scheme and support community food initiatives nurturing food literacy. Ensure children from households with No Recourse to Public Funds can access free school meals.** In January 2022, the Healthy Start Scheme uptake in Hounslow was 49% of all eligible participants. After [awareness and educational interventions](#), it rose to 57% in January 2023. With further targeted promotion, uptake reached 71% in 2024.
- **Ensure that marginalised groups, such as disabled people, asylum seekers and refugees, have equal access to food, for example by factoring in needs such as culturally appropriate food, physical access to venues, utilising non-digital communication channels.** Conwy County Borough Council and the Conwy Local Food Partnership ran cooking sessions for adults with learning disabilities, resulting in better independence and more confidence in accessing and preparing healthy food.
- **Harness the Welsh Curriculum to encourage learning about and through food and improve food literacy across all ages** - Cardiff Food Hour, Cegin y Bobl, Eco-schools, Healthy Schools Scheme or Nutrition Skills for Life are some of the programs that support schools to provide healthy, sustainable meals and improve food culture (staff training, involving parents and children in menu design. Local authorities can encourage schools to take up Food and Fun programme.
- **Embed [Marmot principles](#) in approaches to improving public health through diets - recognising poverty and inequality as a core driver of ill health.** Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership have aligned their [Community Food Strategy](#) to Marmot principles.