

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet
dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol,
Y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip

Ein cyf/Our ref JH/PO/25/2026

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

20 January 2026

Dear Jenny

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond as part of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

We recognise that there are significant barriers to overcoming food poverty in a sustainable, preventative way that provides healthy and nutritious food for all. Rising food costs make healthy choices less affordable for many families. Access to fresh produce can be limited in rural and deprived urban areas. Food systems can often be fragmented, and not enough is done to connect local producers directly with communities. In addition, gaps in food literacy mean that too many people lack the skills and confidence to prepare nutritious meals. Despite these challenges, we are determined to build a food system that works for everyone. That is why we are:

- Funding Local Food Partnerships, giving communities a voice in shaping food systems that meet their needs and ensuring healthier food is accessible and affordable.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Huw.Irranca-Davies@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Huw.Irranca-Davies@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- Setting a target to increase public sector procurement of Welsh food by 50% by 2030, strengthening local supply chains and ensuring schools, hospitals, and public services serve nutritious, locally sourced meals.
- Embedding food literacy in education, so that every child leaves school with the skills to prepare healthy meals and understand nutrition.
- Supporting the expansion of edible horticulture and community growing projects, reducing reliance on imports and strengthening local resilience.

The ability for all people to be able to access healthy, nutritious and affordable food, no matter their circumstance, is a basic right and one which the Welsh Government takes very seriously. This is why since 2019 the Welsh Government has invested over £29 million to support community food organisations to tackle food insecurity and provide a wider range of services to help individuals and households maximise their income and build financial resilience.

Funding has supported foodbanks and community food organisations to overcome barriers to accessing, storing and distributing additional supplies of good quality food, including good food surplus. It has also provided funding for Local Food Partnership Coordinators, who seek to bring members of the community together to work towards a more resilient food system, with shorter food miles, less food waste and improved access to nutritional, affordable food for everyone. The Food Partnerships are supporting a range of food related projects which aim to increase access to locally grown produce for all, building community knowledge and skills in growing, facilitating nutrition and cooking skills sessions and helping to reduce the carbon footprint.

Our Emergency Food Aid funding, issued to local authorities to distribute in their areas, is making a real difference to those struggling with affording the cost of food. It is supporting food pantries and co-ops, providing cookery and nutrition classes to families and supporting community growing projects

Tackling food poverty is linked to broader strategies on poverty reduction, health, and education. Our funding reflects this by closely aligning with initiatives that improve household income, reduce inequality, and strengthen local food networks. This integrated approach ensures that while urgent needs are met, we also address structural issues that drive food poverty, helping families move from crisis to stability.

The Healthy Weight Healthy Wales Delivery Plan 2025-27 places a strong emphasis on access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food for all people. It sets out a series of themes, goals and actions to help focus where we can collectively effect the greatest change. Action 9 of the plan aims to support healthy weight initiatives that

reduce health and economic inequalities. This includes initiatives such as Universal Free School Meals ('UPFSM') and our targeted meal offer in secondary schools meaning that more than two thirds of Welsh learners can access a free school meal every day. The Delivery Plan's goals for schools and settings are:

- School meals meet learners' nutritional requirements
- food provided in school premises is healthy by default
- Children develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to plan, grow, prepare and cook affordable and healthier food
- Children experience a range of different foods and understand where they come from
- physical activity is part of the day-to-day life of the school
- All children have opportunities to be active during the school day
- all children have the opportunity to explore and experience a range of sport and active recreation options and are helped to find the ones that they enjoy
- children are physically literate

On 17 December 2025, the Healthy Eating in Schools (Nutritional Standards and Requirements) (Maintained Primary Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2025 were laid before the Senedd. These new Regulations strengthen standards for food and drink provided in maintained nursery and primary schools across Wales, supporting access to healthier, balanced choices for learners, ensuring closer alignment with the latest nutritional guidance. These will come into force on 31 October 2026.

Through the Universal Primary Free School Meal commitment just under 174,000 pupils have become newly eligible for a free school meal, and over 57 million additional free school meals have been served since roll out began in September 2022. This transformational intervention is helping to support Welsh families with the cost of living and keeping much needed money in their pockets. Recognising the priority we place on delivering a quality offer in the face of rising costs, on 10 December 2025 the Cabinet Secretary for Education announced an increase to the rate paid per Universal Primary Free School Meal, from £3.20 to £3.40. This will safeguard continued delivery of the offer and help ensure our learners have the best possible start. In addition, to maximise the impact of our universal primary offer we are independently evaluating it so that lessons can be learned and its delivery can be continually improved.

The "food and fun" School Holiday Enrichment Programme is a school-based scheme that provides healthy meals, food and nutrition education, physical activity and enrichment sessions to learners in areas of socio-economic disadvantage for a minimum of 12 days during the school summer holidays. Children and their families

can also engage in joint physical activity and learn about the benefits of healthy food adopting Community Focused School approaches.

The Community Food Strategy (CFS), published in April 2025, aims to encourage the production and supply of affordable, sustainable and locally sourced food in Wales. An inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) core members was held on 3rd December 2025. This is a dedicated Group with the relevant expertise and specialisms necessary to guide delivery against the objectives of the strategy and measure its progress and success.

The CFS focuses on invigorating and supporting grassroots food-related initiatives and improving the focus on food matters in policy making, planning, and service delivery at a community scale. Towards this goal, the Welsh Government has committed funding of over £2 million in 2025 to 2026 to further develop the network of Local Food Partnerships across Wales and to fund Local Food Partnership Coordinator posts until March 2028. The purpose of this investment is to support the development and long-term viability of local food initiatives by building strong relationships between them and the communities they serve. Grant funding objectives for Local Food Partnerships include a focus on the local availability, affordability, access and consumption of healthy and nutritious food for all community citizens, including for those experiencing poverty and with protected characteristics.

The Strategy underpins the actions within the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales delivery plan, particularly around improving the provision and access to locally sourced, healthy food.

Across Wales there are numerous examples of how healthy, nutritious, and affordable food is being made available to everyone. In Blaenau Gwent the food partnership have introduced a fruit and vegetable voucher scheme across fifty-two households involving a £10 voucher to redeem at an independent greengrocer in Ebbw Vale. Referrals for the scheme have been received from Flying Start, reinforcing the message of giving every child the best start in life. The voucher redemption rate in the first month was 88%.

A pilot project in Brecon and Newtown is providing families with subsidised veg boxes followed by monthly cooking classes. Whilst in Carmarthenshire, the food partnership have been working with children on a menu redesign for schools which involves the pupils visiting farms to understand more about the journey of food.

Food Cardiff's 'Planet Card' scheme offers discounts on organic produce at the city's Farmers Markets and is designed to address the issue of food insecurity and to

improve access to healthy, sustainable food options for people experiencing low-income.

We are supporting the Welsh Veg in Schools scheme which is increasing the number of vegetables our children are eating in their school lunches, improving their diets today and improving their food literacy for the future, while also supporting local farmers and growers. These are just some examples of initiatives which are tackling food poverty by supporting the provision of healthy and nutritious food. The Local Food Partnerships are heavily involved in this and hold regular network meetings where good practice is shared. Later this month I will be meeting Local Authority Cabinet leads with responsibility for Local Food Partnerships and I look forward to sharing with them some of the good practice that is happening across Wales.

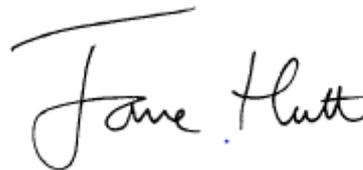
Together, these measures represent a shift away from short-term emergency responses toward long-term prevention addressing both immediate needs and underlying causes. By working in partnership with communities, producers, and public services, we can overcome the barriers to food poverty and build a healthier, more sustainable future for Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y
Cabinet dros Newid Hinsawdd
a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet
Secretary for Climate Change and Rural
Affairs



Jane Hutt AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder
Cymdeithasol, y Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice,
Trefnydd and Chief Whip