[All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism](https://vegappg.org.uk/)

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**Inquiry: Call for evidence**

**October 2019**

**Call for evidence:**

**Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care**

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Vegetarianism and Veganism seeks written and video evidence from those with an interest in this subject.

Please consider the following questions when submitting evidence:

1. What are the experiences of individuals and their families who have had difficulties accessing food in line with their religious or philosophical beliefs while in care?
2. What are the experiences of care staff who are responsible for cooking for or feeding individuals in care, in line with religious or philosophical beliefs?
3. What barriers do care home staff face in providing meals that are in line with individuals’ religious or philosophical beliefs?
4. What actions are care home managers, commissioners, and policy makers taking to ensure individuals are fed a varied, nutritious and healthy diet, in line with their beliefs?
5. What changes could be made on a national, regional, or local level to improve access to varied, nutritious and healthy food in line with the philosophical beliefs of individuals in care?
6. Any other information regarding religious or philosophical beliefs and how these rights can be sustained and met with dignity in care.

Evidence should be limited to a maximum of 1,500 words or a 2-minute video.

The APPG will consider responses to the inquiry and hold an oral evidence session as well as publish responses in the report.

If you wish to submit evidence, please send an electronic copy of your submission to: **inquiry@vegetarianforlife.org.uk** by **Friday 13 December 2019**.

You may also send evidence through the post to:

**FAO: Yasmine El-Gabry**

**Vegetarian for Life**

**83 Ducie Street**

**Manchester**

**M1 2JQ**

The terms of reference for the inquiry are available below.

The evidence that we receive may be made public either as part of the oral evidence sessions, in the final report, or in campaign material. If you wish for the whole, or parts of, your submission to remain private, please note this clearly in your submission. Submissions from persons and organisations will be published unless specifically requested otherwise. Where a person or organisation has stated that they wish for their written evidence to be anonymous, it will be published under the title anonymous.

For further information, please contact **Yasmine El-Gabry, Advocacy & Policy Officer, Vegetarian for Life** at **inquiry@vegetarianforlife.org.uk**

**Terms of reference**

**All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism Inquiry: Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care**

**Background**

Cognitive loss or loss of capacity results in individuals often not always being aware of their own beliefs or morals. However, it is their right to hold beliefs, whether they are religious, moral or philosophical in nature. It is the job of their carers and the care setting to respect these values they hold closely to preserve the individual’s dignity and identity.

Dementia is the leading cause of death in women in the UK and the second leading cause for men (ons.gov.uk, 2019). Further, 70% of all individuals in care homes are diagnosed with dementia or severe memory problems (Alzheimer's Society, 2019). With these shocking statistics, it is important to ensure that while in care, individuals can maintain their dignity and identity. Identity is often strongly tied with an individual’s religious, moral, and philosophical beliefs. Maintaining these beliefs is a right, and essential to preserving identity.

**Key challenges**

Individuals entering care across the United Kingdom face key challenges in receiving food when they have special requests because of their religious or philosophical beliefs.

* Planning and preparing for future individuals in care. There is an estimated 167% increase in demand for vegan catering in care over the past 5 years (vegetarianforlife.org.uk, 2019).
* Addressing current needs for individuals within care who are entitled to varied, nutritious and healthy appetising meals that align with their beliefs.
* Access to a checklist or outline of needs for individuals who are vegetarian or vegan to ensure they have all needs met in an inclusive way.

**Inquiry questions**

The Inquiry aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of individuals and their families who have had difficulties accessing food in line with their religious or philosophical beliefs while in care?
2. What are the experiences of care staff who are responsible for cooking for or feeding individuals in care, in line with religious or philosophical beliefs?
3. What barriers do care home staff face in providing meals that are in line with individuals’ religious or philosophical beliefs?
4. What actions are care home managers, commissioners, and policy makers taking to ensure individuals are fed a varied, nutritious and healthy diet, in line with their beliefs?
5. What changes could be made on a national, regional, or local level to improve access to varied, nutritious and healthy food in line with the philosophical beliefs of individuals in care?

**Definitions**

For the purpose of this Inquiry we will use the term ‘care home’:

“Care homes provide accommodation and personal care for people who need extra support in their daily lives. Personal care might include help with eating, washing, dressing, going to the toilet or taking medication. Some care homes also offer social activities such as day trips or outings.” (Age UK).

We use The Vegetarian Society’s definition for ‘vegetarian’:

 A vegetarian diet does not include:

* Meat or poultry
* Fish or seafood
* Insects
* Gelatine or animal rennet
* Stock or fat from animals

We use The Vegan Society’s definition for ‘vegan’:

“One thing all vegans have in common is a plant-based diet avoiding all animal foods such as meat (including fish, shellfish and insects), dairy, eggs and honey as well as avoiding animal-derived materials, products tested on animals and places that use animals for entertainment.”

A belief is protected under The Equality Act 2010 if it meets the following:

* That the belief must be genuinely held;
* That it must be a belief – an opinion or a viewpoint will not be enough;
* That it must be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life;
* That it must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance; and
* That it must be worthy of respect in a democratic society and not be incompatible with human dignity and/or not conflict with the fundamental rights of others.

**Audience**

Insight and evidence are requested from numerous stakeholders, including but not limited to:

* Individuals with family or friends who are in care and require vegan, vegetarian, or other meals because of their religious or philosophical beliefs.
* Professionals who work in or manage care home hospitality.
* Researchers or professionals who understand the importance of dignity and identity within care.
* Third sector and community interest groups.

**Timetable**

The Inquiry will collect evidence between October and December 2019. Evidence will be collected through an open call for written and video submissions and question and answer sessions with stakeholders at the APPG meetings. The final report of the Inquiry is scheduled for Spring 2020.

**About the APPG**

The APPG on Vegetarianism and Veganism raises awareness and discusses issues facing vegetarians and vegans.

The APPG is chaired by Christina Rees MP and brings together MPs, Peers, and third sector organisations from across the political spectrum to debate, discuss, and campaign for key issues vegetarians and vegans face. The Vegan Society provides the secretariat for the APPG.