



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Victoria Prentis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Christina Rees MP
Chair
APPG on Vegetarianism and Veganism
christina.rees.mp@parliament.uk
cc: vegappg@vegansociety.com

Our ref: PO2021/09087/HP

24 May 2021

Dear Christina,

Thank you for your letters of 11 February to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism about food insecurity and the challenges faced by individuals with dietary restrictions. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Foodbanks are independent, charitable organisations and the UK Government does not have any role in their operation. Decisions about which donations, including the types of food, to accept and make available to food bank users are therefore a matter for food bank providers.

Devolved administrations have received equivalent funding through the upfront funding guarantee provided, which was recently increased to £16 billion for the year to support their COVID-19 response.

Defra also managed a £16 million grant which was facilitated by the food redistributor, FareShare. The scheme allowed FareShare to work with local charities across England and provide food for those struggling due to the immediate impacts of the pandemic. Throughout the 16 weeks of the scheme, FareShare adapted delivery provision to ensure that where possible they were able to support individuals with special dietary requirements.

All schemes which formed part of the Government response to the pandemic will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness and how they could be delivered better in the future.

The Government has also already commissioned an independent review of the food system, led by Henry Dimbleby, which will inform the Government's new Food Strategy. Part One of Henry Dimbleby's report was published on 29 July 2020 and contained recommendations during the COVID-19 outbreak and preceding the end of the transition period. Several of these recommendations were aimed to address food insecurity, including the expansion of the Holiday Activities and Food programme and increasing the value of the Healthy Start vouchers, which the Government has already acted on as detailed below.

Part Two of the review is due to be published in summer 2021. It will include a root and branch examination of the food system and the economics that shape it. Part Two of the review will also contain further recommendations for the Government. Having already taken steps to adopt some of the recommendations from his first report, it is right that the Government carefully considers all further recommendations from this review before taking additional action.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Prentis

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