

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON VEGETARIANISM AND VEGANISM



C/O Vegetarian for Life
83 Ducie Street
Manchester
M1 2JQ

FAO: Briege Donaghy CEO
7th Floor Victoria House,
15-27 Gloucester Street,
Belfast
BT1 4LS

02 March 2022

Re: APPG Inquiry Report: *Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care*

Dear Ms Donaghy,

We are writing regarding the recent publication of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry Report, [*Respect for religious and philosophical beliefs while eating in care*](#). This document was published in November 2021 by the APPG on Vegetarianism and Veganism.

The report, referencing various case studies, raised a series of concerns about how individuals' values and beliefs are failing to be respected while eating in care. Case studies were brought to light where lifelong vegans and vegetarians were given fish or meat, going against their fundamental beliefs and values. It is estimated that more than 10% of the UK population may have dietary restrictions owing to religious or philosophical beliefs.

Dietary choices, such as veganism or vegetarianism, can be a fundamental aspect of someone's cultural or religious identity. People have a basic human right to be able to practice their beliefs. Naturally, to ensure that people have dignity in care, their beliefs and values must be fully respected.

In the report, four recommendations were made, suggesting how to better protect the rights of those receiving care in relation to philosophical and religious beliefs around food and diet. Of the four recommendations, two were particularly relevant to the work of the RQIA.

- Recommendation 2: This recommended altering the wording of the RQIA's indicators to assess care providers. It was suggested to alter the terminology used in Indicator E1 in both Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) Provider Guidance 2019–20 Adult Residential Care Homes and RQIA Provider Guidance 2019–20 Nursing Homes – Nutrition relating to dietary needs, to include the phrase 'including their religious or philosophical beliefs or cultural background'.

While this is only a small change in wording, this amendment would better encompass the scope of the protections afforded to those receiving care. These changes would ensure that the guidance would reflect the more diverse foundations that underpin a person's belief system. This would also better reflect recent interpretations of the Equality Act 2010, that have recognised non-religious belief systems as constituting protected characteristics, such as ethical veganism.

Recommendation 4: This recommended improving the guidance on display in catering areas to ensure that clear, easy to digest, information about specific diets is readily available to caterers at the point of food preparation. This would remind caterers to both check the dietary needs of those in care, and to ensure they had a reference point when preparing food.

Additionally, the report recommended mandatory qualifications. While we recognise the staffing issues facing the sector at the moment, we appreciate that this is not the preferred time for such a change. However, we are interested to understand how the RQIA currently regulates the workforce to ensure that it is suitably qualified and whether this includes reviewing care staff training on cultural and dietary needs.

I would welcome your thoughts on the above and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you, alongside representatives from Vegetarian for Life.

Yours sincerely,

Officers of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Vegetarianism and Veganism

Christina Rees MP, Chair
Henry Smith MP, Vice-Chair
Kerry McCarthy MP, Vice-Chair
Darren Jones MP, Vice-Chair