

# ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON VEGETARIANISM AND VEGANISM



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FAO: Minister of Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan MP  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
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25 January 2022

Dear Minister for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan MP,

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

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 authored by the charity Vegetarian for Life and 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 whilst 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. With regards to these recommendations, we would like to raise some questions regarding how the department seeks to improve the position of those receiving care.

Firstly, a review was planned this year of the *Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014*. However, the draft Statutory Instrument *The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) (Amendment) Regulations 2022* has been laid to push back the review to 2025.

1. In light of the delayed review time, we would like to ask the Minister if they would consider drafting a Statutory Instrument to amend regulation 14, 4(c) of the *Health*

and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 to include reference to 'philosophical' beliefs? (As suggested in recommendation one of the Inquiry Report.)

While only a small change in wording, this amendment would widen the scope of the protections afforded to those receiving care. The regulations would not solely protect 'religious' values, but reflect the more diverse foundations that underpin a person's belief system. This would also reflect recent interpretations of the Equality Act 2010, that have recognised non-religious belief systems as constituting protected characteristics, such as ethical veganism.

Secondly, we note the recent government White Paper *People at the Heart*. This set out the government's vision for the care system. The paper explained how the government will seek to improve the training of care workers and improve the quality of care. The vision involved creating a portable care certificate and supporting learning, but it was unclear how this would be regulated.

2. Has the government considered how to better regulate the training that care workers receive regarding the cultural, religious and dietary needs of those receiving care? What plans does the government have regarding regulating the training of care workers and bringing changes into force? (As suggested in recommendation three of the Inquiry Report.)

As noted in the White Paper and the Inquiry Report, quality care can only be provided by well trained staff. We are particularly interested in how the government envisions ensuring that all staff in the care sector understand the beliefs of those they care for and are enabled to support individuals to practice their beliefs. We feel that more regulation is needed around the training of care staff.

On a related matter, regulation 18 of the *Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014* currently requires staff to be 'suitably qualified' to perform their work. While the CQC regulates the sector, we would be interested to hear any plans the government has to review how the suitability of staff qualification is ensured.

Finally, we understand that introducing and altering regulations to improve care is only one of the necessary steps to improve the actual quality of care that people receive. As noted in the Inquiry Report, there are clear instances where individuals' beliefs and preferences have not been respected in the care sector.

3. The White Paper, *People at the Heart*, is clear that the CQC will be expected to regulate care to ensure that it is 'personalised and culturally appropriate' and is guided by 'dignity and respect.' Is the government planning a review of the way that care is regulated to ensure that care services fully comply with the government's vision of care?

In order for such a vision of care to become a reality, care must be open and well regulated. Abuses needed to be documented quickly and individuals must be fully empowered to raise complaints where necessary. As such, we would be interested to hear how the government plans to reform care in line with its vision, including how regulations will be strengthened to ensure that people receive quality care without their beliefs being compromised.

We share a vision where all receive quality care, provided with dignity and respect. A fundamental aspect of this is ensuring that people can live according to their beliefs and are able to control basic aspects of their belief systems such as diet.

We look forward to your response to these questions and hope that we can work constructively with you to support enhancements where necessary.

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