

Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Thursday, 20 October 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

We would firstly like to welcome you to your post and look forward to working constructively with the Government on this important campaign.

Lambeth councillors backed calls for the right to food to be enshrined in law at our Full Council yesterday evening. The last decade has seen a staggering rise in food poverty across the UK, particularly since the start of the pandemic, and we're calling for urgent action.

In 2020, Lambeth's four biggest food banks had to deliver 39,425 emergency food parcels to people in our area (an 127% increase on the previous year) with 15,020 of these going to children. The Lambeth Food Poverty and Insecurity Action Plan found that food insecurity disproportionately affected our low-income families including Black, Asian, and multi-ethnic groups. The Government's own data has shown the number of people in Lambeth dependent on Universal Credit has risen by 21,000 people to 37,608 in the two years to January 2022.

Lambeth is the number one borough in London in tackling food poverty, according to London Food Link. Whether it is through our Fridge and Freezer Fund, our work with local food banks and community kitchens, our support for families with children on Free School Meals, or our commitment to making our borough a Living Wage Place – Lambeth is tackling food poverty head on.

We're maximising household incomes by becoming a Living Wage employer and leading the way on ending poverty wages and making our borough a Living Wage Place by supporting local businesses to become accredited Living Wage Employers. Our £4.3m Household Support Fund is helping families caught in the grip of the cost-of-living crisis with extra financial support in these tough times.

However, action is desperately needed nationally. That's why we are calling on the government to enshrine the right to food in law and, amongst other measures, introduce a policy of Universal Free School Meals. This longstanding crisis should not be the norm. Food security cannot be a substitute for good incomes and job security for our low-income families in precarious working conditions. The government must step up.

It's devastating for a rich country such as the UK to find itself in this position. This reflects the fact that twelve years of this Government's austerity programme of cuts has left too many people below the breadline.

We urge you to bring forward legislation to enshrine the Right to Food into law, clarifying the government's obligation to protect people from food poverty and introducing legal avenues to hold government bodies accountable for violations. This should stand alongside the creation of a national network of community kitchens including community use of school kitchens and to promote access to public land suitable for community food growing.

We call on you to implement a policy of fully funded Universal Free School Meals across the nation and to work with the Chancellor on a comprehensive package of measures to get to grips with rising mortgages, rents, and food and energy bills. It's time to get our country back on the right track.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Jim Dickson

Joint-Cabinet Member for Healthier Communities
Lambeth Council



Cllr Marcia Cameron

Joint-Cabinet Member for Healthier Communities
Lambeth Council