

[Ed Davey's response to the new coronavirus guidelines](#)

People across this country have endured terrible hardships over the past six months: losing loved ones, losing livelihoods and isolating from friends and family.

People are angry to see their hard work and sacrifices utterly wasted by the incompetence of Boris Johnson.

That's why people are so angry to see their hard work and sacrifices utterly wasted by the incompetence of Boris Johnson.

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Author:

[Ending Child Hunger – Your Questions Answered](#)

What are we calling for?

We want the Government to commit to three steps which will make a world of difference to struggling families and help end child hunger:

1. Extend eligibility for free school meals to every pupil in primary and secondary school, whose parents or guardians are in receipt of Universal Credit
2. Food vouchers for every one of those pupils in every school holiday
3. Food vouchers for every one of those pupils during any period of lockdown

Why is this needed?

The coronavirus pandemic has shone a spotlight on the issue of child hunger. But this is not a new problem, and it will not go away when we finally beat this virus. We need the Government to commit to practical and long-term measures, to stop any child going hungry, on any day of the year.

All too often, families with children simply do not have enough to eat

Each year as the school holidays approach, many parents dread the fact they will have to find an extra £30-40 per week to buy meals for their children which are usually provided at school. **With further local and national lockdowns rumoured, parents now also have to worry about how their child will access a free school meal if their school has to close.**

There have been [widespread reports](#) that foodbank usage has soared during the pandemic and that all too often, families with children simply [do not have enough to eat](#). But even before the pandemic, many parents would skip meals so they could afford to feed their children during the school holidays.

Who gets free school meals currently?

In England, every child in reception, year 1 (age 5-6) and year 2 (age 6-7) is entitled to a free school meal. However from year 3 onwards (age 7-8), eligibility is based on whether the child's parents or guardians are in receipt of certain benefits.

With regard to Universal Credit, a child may only be eligible for a free school meal if their household income is less than £7,400 a year after tax (and excluding any benefits). We believe that threshold has been set too low and means that **many children who are living in poverty are missing out on a free school meal altogether.**

The Children's Society estimated that more than a million children living in poverty in England are missing out on a free school meal – and in over half of these cases it is because they are not eligible for them.

What is the Government doing about this?

Following a fantastic campaign by footballer Marcus Rashford, the Government performed a u-turn and agreed to provide a 'COVID Summer Food Fund' – food vouchers during the school summer holiday, for children who are usually entitled to benefits related free school meals.

More than a million children living in poverty in England are missing out on a free school meal

While this was a welcome relief for many struggling families, it didn't go nearly far enough. Many families who needed the vouchers missed out under the scheme, and the Government have made no commitment to extend this in future school holidays or if schools have to be closed during periods of lockdown.

What are the Liberal Democrats doing about this?

We are calling for a plan to tackle child hunger – both during the pandemic and afterwards.

We will be writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling for him to make funding available in the Spending Review this autumn, to **extend Free School Meals to every child whose parents are in receipt of Universal Credit,**

and to provide vouchers to every child who usually gets a FSM during school holidays and lockdown.

We will be reaching out to charities and campaign groups to work with us on this and calling on MPs from other Party's to support us too.

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[World Mental Health Day](#)

This World Mental Health Day, it's more important than ever that we take the time to reflect on our wellbeing.

The coronavirus crisis has exacerbated mental ill health for many people across the UK, and although tackling Covid-19 is the most critical battle our health system is facing right now, it's crucial that we remember to take care of our mental health too.

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[Ending Child Hunger](#)

The Liberal Democrats are calling on the Government to **extend access to Free School Meals** to all children whose families are on universal credit, and **guarantee food vouchers** to those children when schools are closed for holidays or during periods of lockdown.

Coronavirus has shone a new spotlight on the issue of child hunger – but this is not a new issue

The coronavirus crisis has shone a new spotlight on the issue of child hunger, with demand for food banks soaring and almost a fifth of households with children unable to access enough food in the first weeks of lockdown.

However this is not a new issue – and sadly, it will not go away once we've beaten the virus.

Every year many parents feel a real dread as the school holidays approach, at the idea of having to find an extra £30-40 per week to buy meals for their children which are usually provided at school. Now the same parents are worried that access to free school meals will be put at risk if schools have to close for further lockdowns.

Many children living in poverty also miss out on free school meals altogether, because the earnings threshold for eligibility is set too low.

We are calling on the Government to take the following steps to help stop child hunger for good, in the Comprehensive Spending Review this autumn:

1. **Extend eligibility for free school meals to every pupil in primary and secondary school, whose parents or guardians are in receipt of Universal Credit**
2. **Food vouchers for every one of those pupils in every school holiday**
3. **Food vouchers for every one of those pupils during any period of lockdown**

Please join us in calling on the Government to stop child hunger.

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The Liberal Democrats are here for you.

This is an incredibly difficult time for people. Right across our country, coronavirus has caused enormous upheaval and uncertainty.

Too many have lost loved ones. Too many have lost their livelihoods.

In many ways this crisis has amplified pressures in our communities that have for too long been ignored. **That must change.**

But we have endured three deeply disappointing general elections, in five tough years. At the national level at least, too many people think we're out of touch with what they want.

We can't fix this with a catchy new slogan. Or by fighting the same battles, in the same way. **The answer is to listen to what people are really telling us. And to change.**

That's why our new leader Ed Davey has been touring the country, meeting people and listening to their problems and fears, hopes and dreams.

We want to help people get on, and build a fairer, greener, more caring future.

That's who we are. That is what we will be. And that is the future we will build.

If those are your values too, **why not join us today?**

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