

# News links from September 2020

## Food Poverty

We launched our Red Apple Campaign in September, calling for support for Marcus Rashford's campaign to end child food poverty. Marcus has got many of the large retailers on board but says he is disappointed by the Government's response. One of the ways you can help is to post on social media (see next page) using the hashtag **#endchildfoodpoverty**.

At the same time, [The Food Foundation](#) charity published "**The Broken Plate 2020: The State of the Nation's Food System**". It's full of useful information and graphics including a section on childhood obesity. [Download here](#).

[Food Active](#) and the [Children's Food Campaign](#) surveyed UK parents and found overwhelming support (90%) for the Government extending free school meals to all children in poverty. The survey paints a vivid picture of how children's eating and drinking habits were affected during lockdown, and highlights parents' priorities for children's food as the country recovers. [Read the report](#).

We're pleased that our parliamentarians have also been pushing on these issues, with questions raised by **Tulip Siddiq** MP and **Emma Lewell-Black** MP to the Secretary of State for Education (see [here](#) and [here](#)) as well as our Children First Alliance President, **Baroness Frances D'Souza** raising a similar question in the Lords (see [here](#)). Please follow the links to see the questions and responses. Another questioner, **Daisy Cooper** MP, received a written response from Minister Vicky Ford: see page 3.

# The Red Apple Campaign

## A Red Apple in a Child's Hand #ENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY

"I'M HOLDING THIS APPLE AS A SIGN OF WHAT IS MISSING FROM A CHILD'S HAND. I SUPPORT MARCUS RASHFORD AND HIS CALL ON THE GOVERNMENT TO HELP OUR CHILDREN IN NEED - #ENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY"

TAKE A PICTURE/VIDEO WITH YOU HOLDING AN APPLE. POST IT ON ALL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES. CALL ON OTHERS TO DO THE SAME. *TELL THEM IN YOUR POST THAT YOU SUPPORT MARCUS RASHFORD AND HIS CALL TO - #ENDCHILDFOODPOVERTY*



# Children's Minister indicates progress on School Holiday Provision

**Daisy Cooper** MP asked the Secretary of State for Education about the merits of providing food vouchers to children on free school meals throughout all school holidays. The written answer from Minister Vicky Ford on 15 Sep:

- » *confirmed that the HAF schemes are currently being assessed*
- » *hinted that Government may seek to provide advice rather than to take direct responsibility*
- » *and restated a manifesto pledge re 'high-quality wraparound and holiday childcare places'.*

She said: '...This summer, our £9 million Holiday Activities and Food Programme also worked across 17 local authorities, providing thousands of children with access to healthy meals and enriching activities and building on the success of the 2018 and 2019 programmes. We are currently assessing the scheme to ascertain the best way to provide children with activities as well as food during the holiday period. Our 2020 programme will help to show how free provision can be coordinated in different local areas and it will provide valuable information about what works in supporting this sector in future. From 2021, the government has a manifesto commitment to invest up to £1 billion to help create more high-quality wraparound and holiday childcare places. We will announce further details on this new investment in due course.'

Finally we are getting some detail of how Government intends to progress these issues. Campaigners will need to stay on the case to make sure they deliver this and more!

# *A call for a Covid-19 recovery mental health strategy for children*

As we have reported in previous issues of this newsletter, there is overwhelming evidence that the pandemic is having a serious impact on the mental health of children and young people. **Dr. Lisa Cameron** MP has tabled a motion calling for this to be placed at the heart of the overall Covid-19 Recovery Plan. All MPs can sign :

That this House notes that a survey by the mental health charity Re-Think found that one third of children feel more anxious, sad and stressed now than before lockdown; further notes that the charity Action for Children has asked the Government to prioritise children's mental health in covid-19 recovery planning with sufficient funding; notes that at their press conference of 21 September 2020, Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty and Chief Scientific Officer Sir Patrick Vallance predicted that mental health would be further jeopardised if the virus goes out of control; and calls upon the Government to publish a distinctive Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People, focusing on the covid-19 pandemic with an accompanying commitment that the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people will be placed at the heart of the overall Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

## ***Suicide Prevention***

**Liz Twist** MP, Chair of the **APPG on Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention**, launched a report that calls for early intervention to better support young people before they reach crisis point. The APPG's enquiry heard how support arrives much too late due to service waiting times, thresholds and all-too-common stigma.

[Read more](#)

## ***Every Mind Matters***

Public Health England has launched Every Mind Matters, a campaign to help children, young people and their parents when it comes to mental health and wellbeing.

[More information and links](#)

## ***Report from the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition***

A cross-government approach to put the health of children and young people at the heart of decision making is called for in the **Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition**'s Annual Report. Working across departments would give children and young people across the UK the best chance for good mental health.

[Read more](#)

# Online Harms

As Google and Facebook came under pressure to ban children's ads in an [open letter signed by MPs, academics and children's-rights advocates](#), Minister for Digital and Culture **Caroline Dinenage** MP and the **Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport** launched a call for evidence on the impact of "loot boxes" in video games, looking at "... evidence of the harm or links to problem gambling". [Read more here](#).

Meanwhile an Australian study of 8-11 year olds showed an association between heavy screen time and poorer reading performance ([see here](#)).

**Holly Lynch** MP has secured a Westminster Hall debate on **Online Harms** and this will take place on 7 October: [see here](#).

## **Poverty and Inequality**

The children's charity [Action for Children](#) analysed applications to their Coronavirus Emergency Fund which helped 4.800 families between March and July.

They found that over a third of households had experienced financial pressures due to increased household costs, while changes in employment status or pay left others struggling to meet their family's needs.

The charity calls on Government to increase financial support for families and not to cut Universal Credit by £20 a week from April 2021.

[Read the Report.](#)

## ***Biological and Social Determinants of Childhood Obesity - a study***

The study set out to determine whether the same relationships between early life risk factors and socioeconomic status with childhood BMI are observed in a modern cohort (2000) compared with an historic cohort (1947). They concluded that that children exposed to socioeconomic disadvantage or who have rapid infancy growth in modern environments are now at lower risk of growth restriction, but greater risk of overweight.

[Read more](#)