

National Federation
of Women's Institutes
104 New King's Road
London SW6 4LY

T +44 (0)20 7371 9300
F +44 (0)20 7736 3652
hq@nfwi.org.uk
www.thewi.org.uk

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AA



20 July 2018

Dear Prime Minister

I am writing to urge you to ensure that your Government annually measures the prevalence of food insecurity in the UK. Whilst recent work carried out in this area is to be welcomed, specifically questions included on the Food Standards Agency's 'Food and You' survey, a stronger and ongoing commitment to measurement must be forthcoming. I urge you to commit to more robust measurement, and further would encourage you to support the 'Food Insecurity Bill' currently tabled before the House of Commons.

As the largest women's organisation in the UK, the Women's Institute (WI) retains a strong grassroots ethos at the core of all policy and campaigning work. Over its 103 year history, the WI has worked across a wide-ranging portfolio of issues. As Chair of the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI), I am proud to say that all WI campaigns are member-led. The issues we work on reflect the concerns of nearly 220,000 members who are committed to realising the potential of an active and informed civic society.

In 2016 a resolution was passed by the membership which calls for the WI to work to tackle the issue of food insecurity. Members across the country are organising discussion events to learn about the issue of food insecurity, and to learn how this can be tackled at the local and systemic levels. Through this work, WI members have been disappointed at both the lack and quality of statistics available which measure food insecurity.

There are easy and validated tools for collecting data on food insecurity which are already in use. In the United States, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Household Food Insecurity Survey Module is included within national household surveys. This is also used in Canada. The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) has developed the

Food Insecurity Experience Scale. The Scottish Government has adopted three of the FAO questions in its 2017 Health Survey and is considering including the full set of eight questions in 2018. UK governmental instruments already exist within which either the FAO or USDA measures could be added.

Whilst we welcome the recent limited measurement carried out through the 'Food and You' survey, there were a number of methodological flaws. For example, the survey excluded the USDA's questions specifically on children, and used a relatively small sample size compared to other national statistics. Furthermore, the food insecurity questions are only slated to be included in the survey one more time. We strongly endorse the Food Foundation's work in this area, and recommend its briefing notes to you, which are available at <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FF-Food-insecurity-4pp-V3.pdf>.

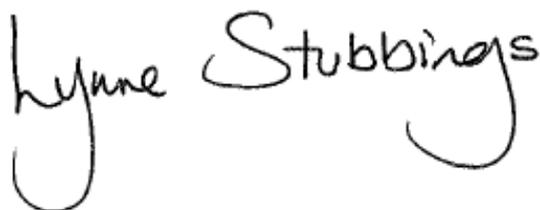
By committing to measure household food insecurity in the UK, the Government would also be working towards meeting its obligations under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – especially Goal Two, which calls for an end to hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

I should like to note that the WI is putting its support behind Emma Lewell-Buck MP's Food Insecurity Bill which is currently tabled before the House of Commons. WI members across the country will be writing to their MPs outlining their support for this Bill, and asking MPs to vote in support of it at second reading.

To conclude, I ask that you commit to a robust annual measurement of food insecurity. Without proper measurement it is clear that both the Government and civil society are ill-equipped to understand the full extent of food insecurity. Only once the true scale of the problem is known do we stand a chance of responding effectively, and ensuring that no-one goes hungry in the UK.

I look forward to receiving your response on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynne Stubbings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Lynne Stubbings

Chair, National Federation of Women's Institutes