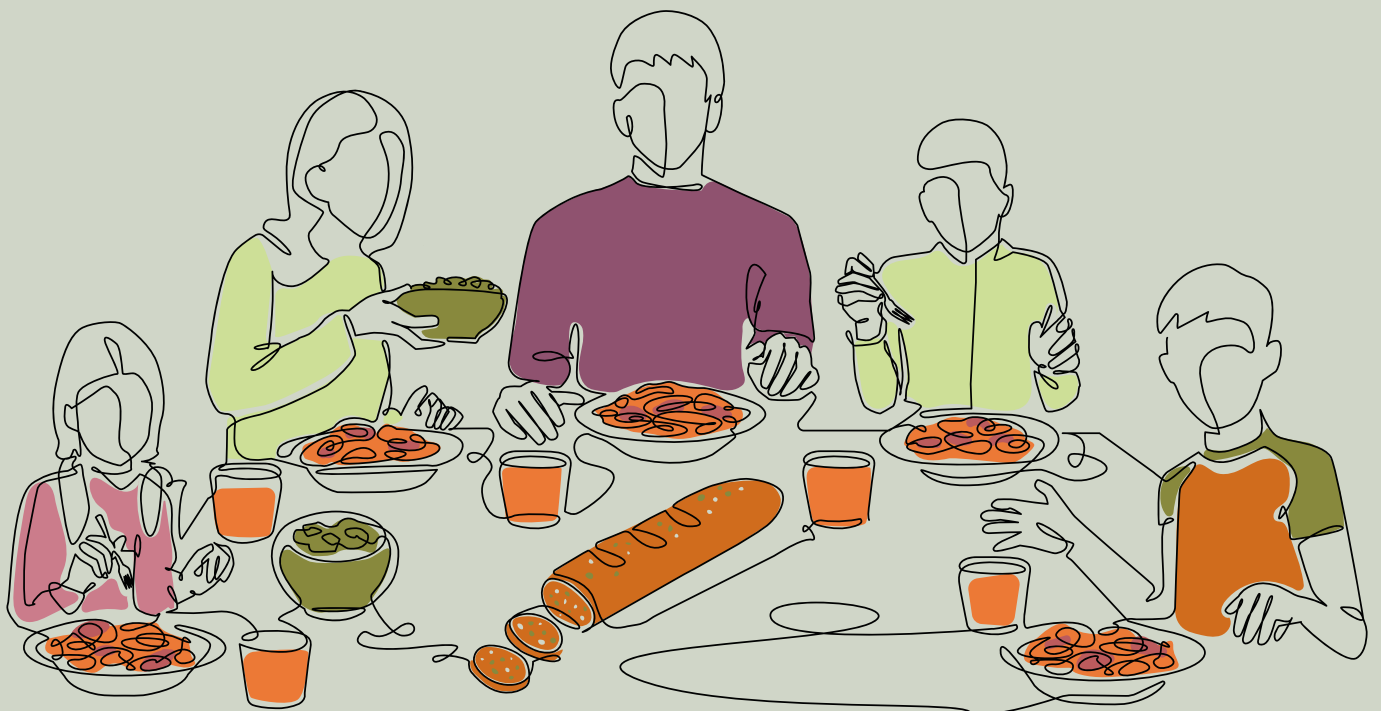


# Our Right to Food: Affording to eat well in a Good Food Nation

## Summary Report

**NOURISH SCOTLAND**



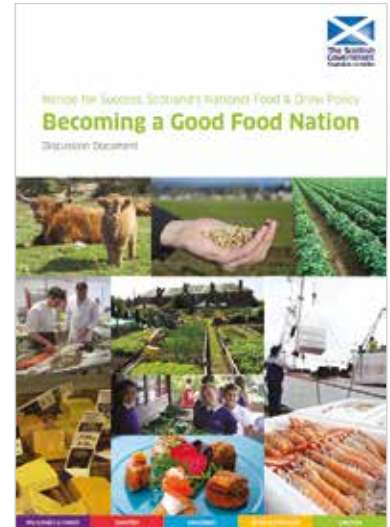
**Project team:** Dr Chelsea Marshall, Lærke Hass, Josephine Heger, Stephanie Mander and Pete Ritchie.

**Steering Group:** Action on Sugar, Broke Not Broken, City, University of London, Food Standards Scotland, Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, Loughborough University, Making Rights Real, Obesity Action Scotland, Public Health Scotland, Robert Gordon University, Scottish Government and University of Ulster.

**Acknowledgements:** We are grateful to the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and Scottish Government for their funding and support, and to all the steering group members, community advisors and community researchers who have contributed their time and expertise to the Our Right to Food project.

## Context

The Scottish Government has a vision to become a “Good Food Nation, where people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day”.<sup>1</sup> The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 was a significant step towards reaching this vision, and it recognises that promoting good food is interlinked with a wide range of outcomes, including social and economic wellbeing, environmental, health and physical and mental wellbeing, economic development, animal welfare, education and child poverty. The Act also acknowledges that action will be needed not by one department on its own, but that all parts of government, at national and local level, will need to work together to achieve this shared vision.



Alongside this, the Scottish Government has committed to introducing “world-leading human rights legislation” to incorporate a wide range of human rights into domestic law.<sup>2</sup> Work is underway to develop this Human Rights Bill, and there is plenty of work to be done in parallel to lay the groundwork for understanding the current state of rights realisation in Scotland and strengthening our monitoring framework. Implementation of Scotland’s human rights commitments will require collaboration and coordination across government. For these rights to be meaningful, we need to be clear about our shared aspirations and to develop mechanisms for understanding how policies and practice are helping to progressively realise human rights.

Bringing human rights into Scots law as guiding principles for decision-making is an important step towards improving social, economic and health outcomes, and this should be celebrated as a key marker of progress towards realising the right to food.

At the same time, there are significant challenges to overcome.

We know that too many people in Scotland cannot afford the food that they need to keep healthy and well, and that the financial pressures on some households are greater than others.<sup>3</sup> For years, the Scottish diet has stayed fixed – making little progress towards meeting the government’s dietary goals – and people living in the most deprived areas remain more likely to experience diet related ill health.<sup>4</sup>

In order to address the gap between the challenges we face and our shared vision of a Good Food Nation, we needed to understand more about what the right to food looks like in today’s Scotland, measure how financially and geographically accessible this is for people in different situations and begin to ask how government policies are helping to progressively realise the right to food.

<sup>1</sup> The Scottish Government (2014) [Recipe for Success: Scotland’s National Food & Drink Policy – Becoming a Good Food Nation](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government (2021) [New Human Rights Bill](#).

<sup>3</sup> In 2021, 12% of large families and 34% of single parents reported that they had worried about running out of food in the previous 12 months, compared with 9% of the population overall: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-health-survey-2021-volume-1-main-report/pages/9/>

<sup>4</sup> Food Standards Scotland (2020) [Situation Report: The Scottish Diet: It needs to change 2020 update](#).

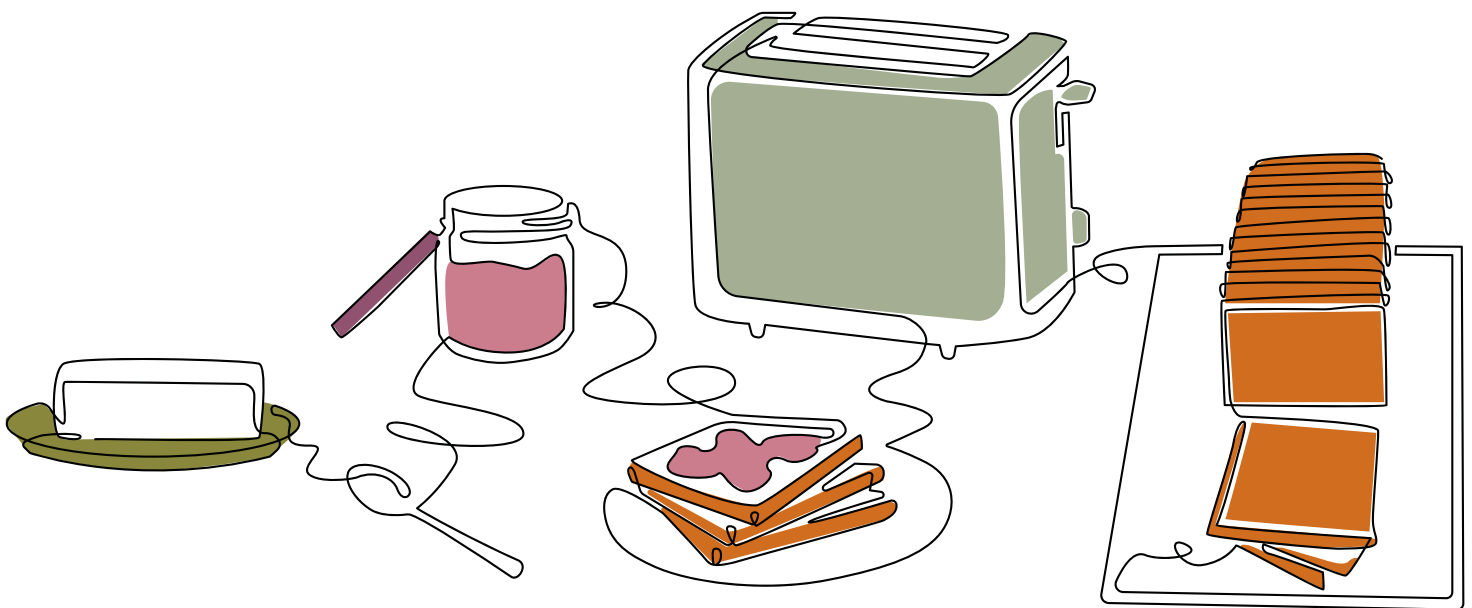
## Rights based approach

For the right to food to be realised, food must always be adequate, available and accessible. The Our Right to Food project aimed to develop a way of measuring rights realisation that reflects the different elements of the right to food, in particular what people in Scotland mean by 'adequate' and how accessible this way of eating is for people today. UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Michael Fakhri, explains that for food to be 'adequate':

*"... people must decide for themselves what is appropriate food based on their own ecosystems, based on their own culture based on their own daily life. So, the idea of adequacy is to empower people to choose what type of food is good food for themselves."*<sup>5</sup>

**UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food**

This project involved people living in Scotland today in a process of 'deciding for themselves' what appropriate food is for small and large families. We then found the price of this way of eating to see how affordable this is for typical Scottish households.



<sup>5</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Michael Fakhri: <https://youtu.be/iaBMwzGdzcc>

# What we did

## STEP 1: Creating Case Study Families

With advice from our steering group, we chose to focus on two household types that are at higher risk of food insecurity than average in Scotland.

### Large Family

Browns and Robinsons

Two adults and three children, aged 7, 10 and 15



### Small Family

Harris-McGregors and MacDougalls

Single mother and two children, aged 2 and 5



We recruited four groups of volunteer 'community advisors' to help us imagine the lives of the families who might live in each household, complete with names, jobs, preferences and interests. Community advisors were women from across Scotland who know what it is like to shop for, prepare and share meals in small and large families.

The families were invented, but by drawing on the experience and knowledge of community advisors, each household was designed to be recognisable as a family who might reasonably live in Scotland today. We used 'personas' to help the community advisors and project team imagine the priorities, preferences and aspirations of individuals in each household and the family as a whole. Rather than asking about their own personal preferences, this approach positioned community members as *advisors* and allowed us to imagine the needs of the case study family, while still drawing on lived experience.

*Why? We wanted to involve policymakers, experts and experts by experience in a process that increased our understanding of the right to food by focusing on the realities, challenges and priorities of specific case study families.*

## STEP 2: Developing Weekly Meal Plans and Shopping Lists

We worked together with community advisors to imagine and construct a 'meal plan' that contained all the food and drink the case study family might have in a typical week. We discussed not just **what** family members would choose to eat, but **how** and **when**. We looked at rhythms and routines, including school meals, holidays and special occasions like birthday parties. We talked about a reasonable and acceptable balance of cooking from scratch versus eating out or having an easy night in. We discussed what people would take pride and pleasure in and what we should include to ensure the family would not feel embarrassed or ashamed by what was included.

With support from public health nutritionists and Food Standards Scotland, we reviewed these meal plans to see where there were opportunities for each family member to choose healthier options that would be closer to the recommendations of the Eatwell Guide. The community advisors discussed these changes in great detail and made decisions based on what they believed would be acceptable to the case study families.

We then sought advice from nutritionists, school meal specialists and experts in household food waste to translate the weekly meal plans into detailed shopping lists that accounted for all of the family's food and drink costs.

Throughout the process, we used three criteria to find a balance of foods that were:

- ▶ A good fit for people's lives
- ▶ Enjoyable
- ▶ Healthy 'enough'



*Why? We wanted to explore what families would choose to include in a shopping list if income from benefits and wages were sufficient.*

### STEP 3: Monitoring Cost and Affordability

Once the shopping lists were finalised, we calculated the cost of each category of food and drink, as well as the overall cost, so that we could monitor changes to the price of the lists over time. We have been tracking the price of the shopping lists quarterly since December 2021.<sup>6</sup>

With support from analysts at the Scottish Government, we calculated what each case study family's household income would be if the parents worked the jobs and hours that were imagined by the community advisors. We then calculated the proportion of household income after housing costs that would be needed to cover the cost of the shopping lists. This helps us understand how affordable this way of eating would be.

*Why? We wanted to use the shopping lists as tools to measure the realisation of the right to food in Scotland.*



### STEP 4: Exploring Local Accessibility

Since April 2022, we have used the fruit and vegetable section of one of the shopping lists to explore the availability and price of 'healthy foods' in different parts of Scotland. We have worked with teams of volunteer community researchers and staff at the Healthy Living Programme to gather and reflect on local data.

*Why? Again, we wanted to use the shopping lists as tools to measure the realisation of the right to food in Scotland.*



<sup>6</sup> All grocery items were priced at Tesco online. Out of home, takeaway and celebrations (birthdays and holidays) were calculated separately.

## What we learned

Taking pride and pleasure in our food relates to what, where and how we eat. It involves having the time, energy and resources to prepare and eat a balance of foods that promote physical and mental wellbeing, feeling recognised for effort put into shopping and preparing food and being able to enjoy food alone and in company with our friends and family.



It also includes being able to access a reasonable variety of foods nearby and to afford some choices about the quality and brands of food we eat and have available for guests. Taking pride and pleasure in our food means being able to afford strawberries when they are in season and having a choice about how often we buy a weekday lunch, order a takeaway or eat out with friends or as a family.

Working alongside community advisors, and with input from public health nutritionists and policy experts, we arrived at a set of weekly shopping lists that can be used as tools to measure progress towards realising the right to food in Scotland. This approach helps to understand what is *adequate* by being specific about the contents of the shopping lists, and how *accessible* this is for families by exploring whether these foods are available in different parts of Scotland and how affordable this way of eating is for different households.

### What is 'adequate'?

- ▶ Daily and weekly rhythms affect the amount of time and motivation parents have to prepare meals from scratch, and this was considered to have a greater effect on meal preparation than kitchen skills.
- ▶ Sharing meals as a family is valued and prioritised as part of our weekly and monthly food patterns, despite the challenges that busy schedules and differing dietary preferences and restrictions pose.
- ▶ Being able to celebrate special occasions and to afford some choice about quality and brand are seen as essential parts of realising the right to food.
- ▶ Compared to the Scottish population, the case study families would be eating significantly more fruit, vegetables and fibre, less red and processed meat, fewer free sugars and slightly more total fat and saturated fat. The healthiest weekly meal plans that could be agreed by community advisors did not meet all the expectations of the Eatwell Guide or the majority of the Scottish Dietary Goals.



## How accessible is this?

- ▶ The cost of the shopping lists increased 16.5% for the small families and 13.5% for the large families between December 2021 and December 2022. While discretionary items like sweets and crisps increased by 9% during this time, fruits and vegetables had gone up an average of 20% and dairy items like milk, cheese and yogurt by 29%.
- ▶ The shopping lists would currently cost between 25% and 37% of the case study families' household income after housing costs.
- ▶ There is a significant difference between the cost of selecting only the cheapest food and drink available and the items the groups thought the case study families would find acceptable – this 'dignity gap' for the cost of a weekly shop was 34%.
- ▶ There are significant differences in the price of some fruits and vegetables across Scotland. These were exaggerated in rural areas where lack of affordable transport can present additional challenges to accessing a variety of high-quality healthy foods.

## Promoting human rights

- ▶ Scottish Government policies to provide direct support to low-income parents are important levers for fulfilling the right to food for eligible families, and the extension of universal free school meals and promotion of the living wage will provide protection to even more families.
- ▶ Involving community advisors in the co-production of weekly shopping lists for case study households is a useful and replicable approach to understand the content of the right to food and measure its realisation over time.

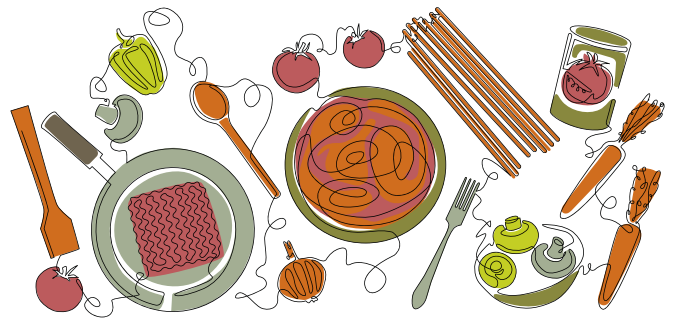


# Cooking and eating patterns



Daily and weekly rhythms affect the amount of time and motivation parents have to prepare meals from scratch, and this was considered to have a greater effect on meal preparation than kitchen skills.

Community advisors started their work together by imagining where, when and how each family member would eat throughout the week. Details like having more time to make a pot of soup or prepare a roast chicken at the weekend, compared with finding an easy meal to make quickly when you are busy and tired on a Wednesday, affect the balance of how large and small families prepare and share food.



Each of the groups imagined that the case study parents would have busy lives, between working full-time or part-time jobs, getting children to and from school or after school activities, trying to see friends and family and the daily rhythm of shopping for, preparing and eating meals. This busyness, alongside the practical and emotional challenges of negotiating healthy choices every day, was seen to be a key factor in their decisions about meal preparation.

*“The lists that we were creating here, it would have been easy to just say, ‘Oh, I’m gonna have all the fruit and veg under the sun and nothing else.’ That’s the way that we think it should be, but in reality, it doesn’t work like that. And to have different types of families – like the single parent family, which I can relate to – it can be difficult to make meals as healthy as possible. You don’t always have the time to cook from scratch. All of these things were incorporated in the discussions that we had, which was really good.”*

**Community Advisor**

Community advisors believed it was reasonable to assume that the parents in each case study family would have the skills and confidence to make at least a few favourite recipes, and the main challenge was about finding the motivation and energy to make ‘proper meals’ every day. This was especially true for groups exploring the lives of the single mothers with young children, who would have all the challenges of encouraging and negotiating healthy choices with their children without another adult to share the practical and emotional weight.

Community advisors often described how they felt 'less alone' and 'less guilty' as a result of being part of a group where they could openly discuss the realities of the day in and day out decision-making about meal preparation with other people who understood. The discussions were not aiming to improve group members' cooking or budgeting skills, but it was clear that group members valued the opportunity to swap and share tips with each other in a trusted and non-judgemental space. For single parents, this was especially valued by mums who can feel embarrassed and ashamed if they are not 'getting it right all the time'.

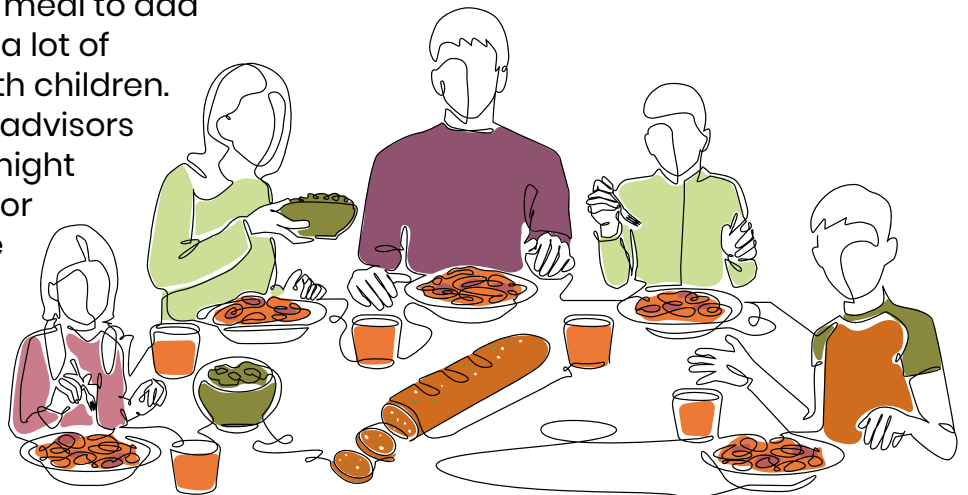
*"... it is quite sort of helpful and reassuring, to hear other people's strategies and perspectives and how they approach their weekly shop. And it makes you feel, I guess, less guilty or bad for not being the perfect mum or the perfect cook or the perfect this and that."*

**Community Advisor**

Sharing meals as a family is valued and prioritised as part of our weekly and monthly food patterns, despite the challenges that busy schedules and differing dietary preferences and restrictions pose.

Community advisors believed most parents would make an effort to prepare or buy meals that family members with differing preferences could enjoy together. For the larger families, with children aged 7, 10 and 15, this included 'crowd pleasers' like spaghetti Bolognese, chicken pesto pasta and chickpea curry. Meals like rice and bean fajitas or chicken and veggie burgers were also included to allow each member of the family to choose the toppings and fillings they enjoyed most while still having a single meal together.

Parents with young children might aim to eat together but perhaps not always the same meal. As one community advisor explained, "there's only so much kiddie food you can eat!". Spaghetti Bolognese was considered a good choice when trying to eat together, and a good meal to add extra vegetables without a lot of additional negotiation with children. Other nights, community advisors expected a single mum might make something simple for the children while she ate something like salmon, rice and vegetables.

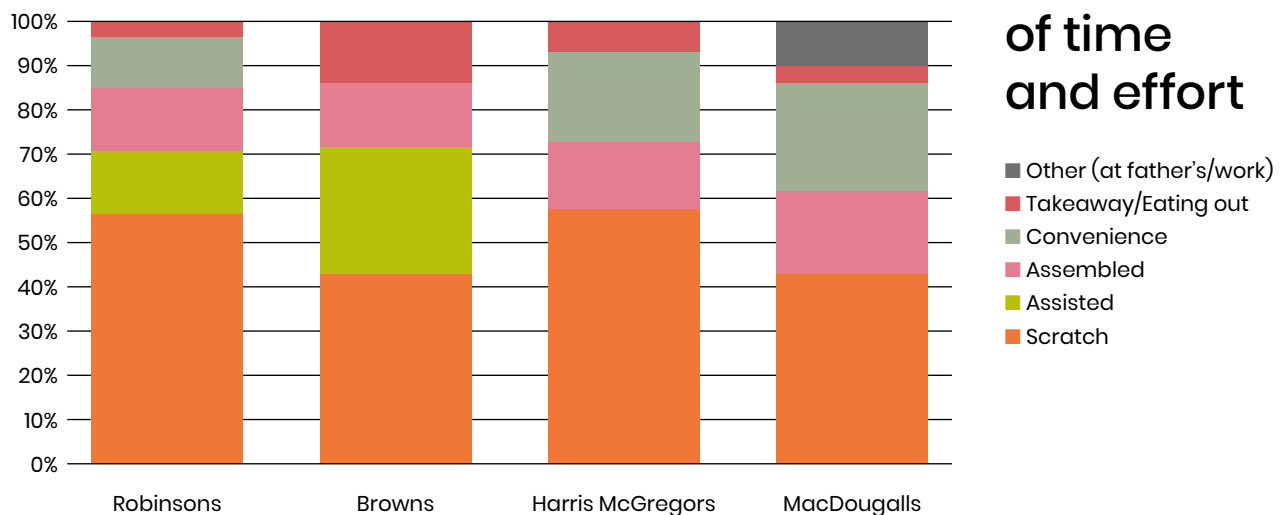


When the group members reviewed what they had included for each case study across the week, they agreed that the conversations had led to a good balance of foods, meals and meal preparation that they felt most families would enjoy and would be a good fit for their lives.

*“I wouldn’t be embarrassed or ashamed to tell anybody that I had tuna pasta for my dinner last night, or I’m having mince and potatoes tonight. I think there’s a balance here with what people eat in normal everyday life.”*

**Community Advisor**

**Evening Meal Preparation of Case Study Families**



**Balance of time and effort**

Being able to celebrate special occasions and to afford some choice about quality and brand are seen as essential parts of realising the right to food.

Each shopping list includes all the food and drink that a small or large family would need in a typical week, and additional money for special occasions like birthdays, holidays and eating out as a family is included so that the lists represent the full cost to the family.

Each group of community advisors discussed how often the family would be likely to have a takeaway or eat out as a family, and they agreed on the amount of money they thought a small or large family would need to spend to celebrate each birthday and major holiday. Views about what was reasonable to spend on these occasions varied considerably, and the final amounts represent the compromises each group made when thinking about the balance between healthy ‘enough’, a good fit for the family’s life and what most people would enjoy.

Birthdays came with particular pressures on parents to 'keep up' with other families – while some community advisors felt the case study family would be happy to make a cake and share a favourite meal at home, others believed parents would feel pressured to buy an expensive cake and book an activity to host their child's friends (and parents, if the child was younger). Although the groups did not include the costs for these more expensive birthday parties, it was clear that never being able to splurge on something like this would feel constraining over time. One advisor suggested that it would be better if parents had room in their budget to host a "bigger deal birthday" every couple of years:

*"If you wanted to take all the kids and their friends to soft play and then for pizza or something, that always works out so much more expensive. You might not do it every year, but maybe you will have been able to do it for one child a year at least. It gives you that sense of, "I've treated my friends' kids, and I feel like I'm able to do something nice for my children, something really memorable."*

**Community Advisor**



# Healthy aspirations

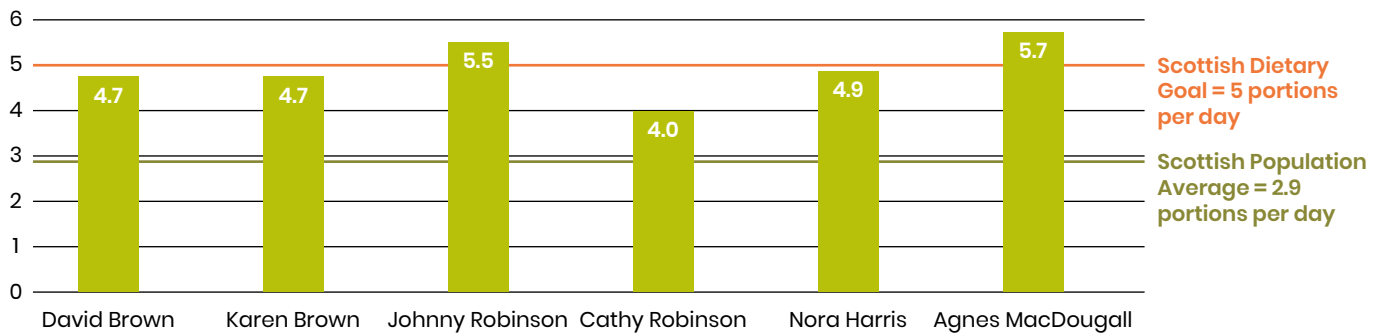


Compared to the Scottish population, the case study families would be eating significantly more fruit, vegetables and fibre, less red and processed meat, fewer free sugars and slightly more total fat and saturated fat. The healthiest weekly meal plans that could be agreed by community advisors did not meet all the expectations of the Eatwell Guide or the majority of the Scottish Dietary Goals.

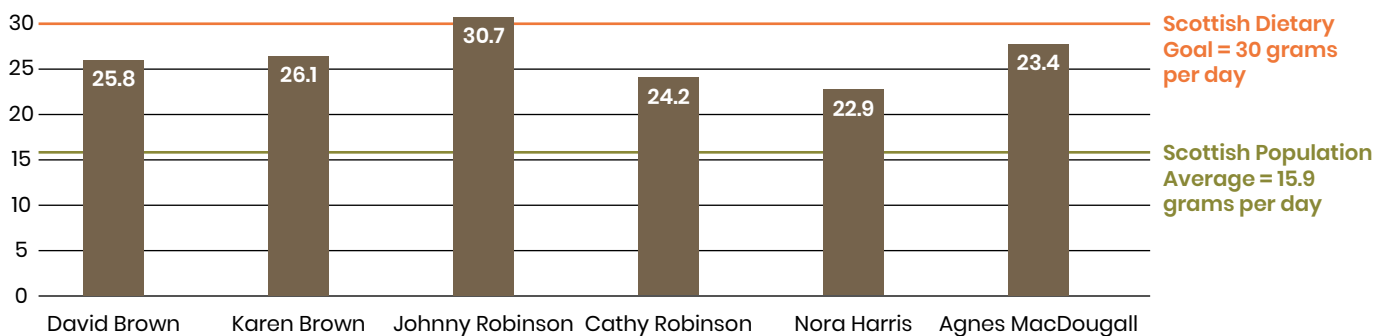
Community advisors were familiar with the Eatwell Guide and believed most families in Scotland would aspire to eat a 'balanced' diet across the week, including a variety of fruit and vegetables and fewer processed foods and meats. Group discussions about the healthy aspirations of the case study families, and how these compared with government guidance about healthy eating, contain useful signals to local and national decision-makers about how to promote the enjoyment of a healthy, balanced diet.

## How does this way of eating compare with the Scottish population?<sup>7</sup>

**Fruit and Veg (portions/day)**

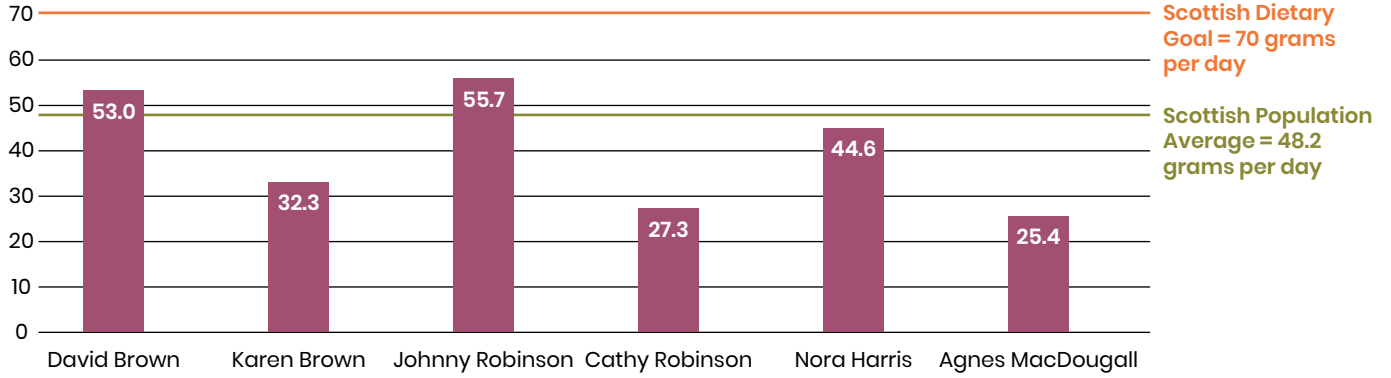


**Fibre (grams/day)**

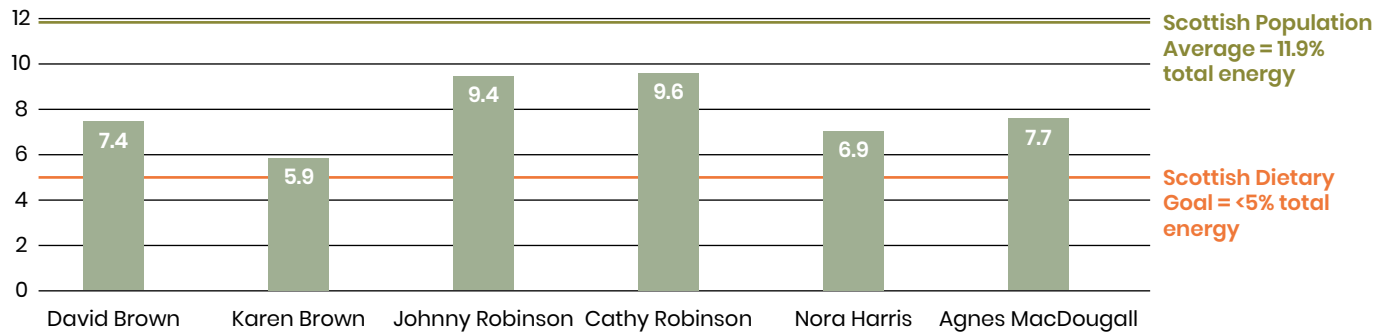


<sup>7</sup> Food Standards Scotland carried out the nutritional analysis of the meal plans to compare with both the Scottish Dietary Goals and the Scottish population averages. The menus themselves have not been endorsed by FSS as a healthy diet to follow.

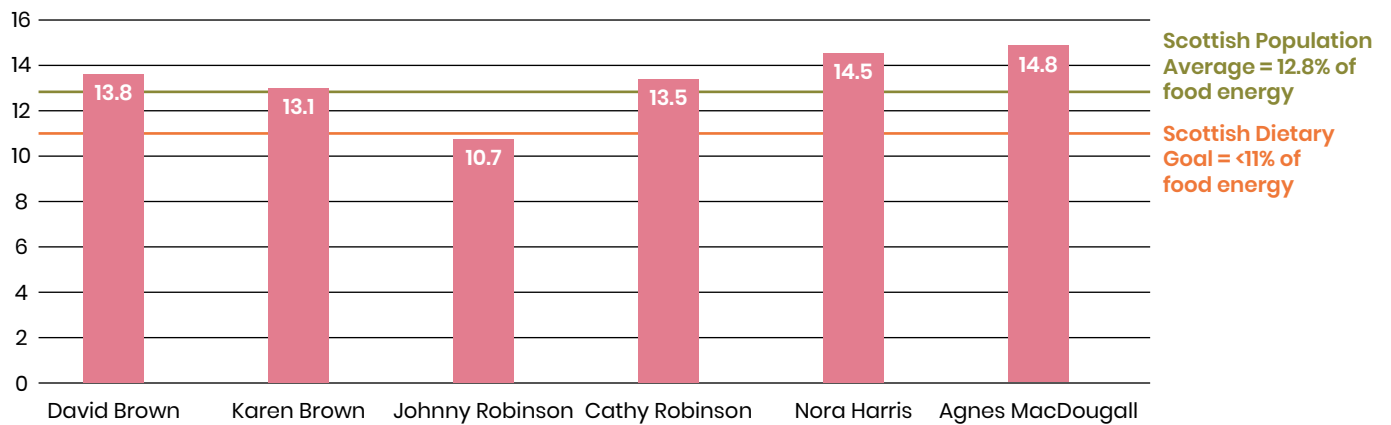
### Red and processed meat (grams/day)



### Free sugars (% total energy)



### Saturated fat (% of food energy)



# Affording to eat well in Scotland



The cost of the shopping lists increased 16.5% for the small families and 13.5% for the large families between December 2021 and December 2022. While discretionary items like sweets and crisps increased by 9% during this time, fruits and vegetables had gone up an average of 20% and dairy items like milk, cheese and yogurt by 29%.

We monitored the shopping lists quarterly from December 2021 to December 2022, and the price of food and drink increased significantly during that time. Our monitoring revealed that the small case study families would need to spend an additional £3.87 per week on fruits and vegetables and £3.33 per week on proteins like meat, eggs and beans compared to last year. The large case study families would have needed an extra £106.71 per month to afford the same items at Tesco online as they had the previous year.

We know that many families are making compromises to the quality and quantity of the food that they purchase due to these financial pressures. This makes support from local and national governments even more important and time sensitive.

## Cost of main shopping list categories in December 2022 compared to December 2021 (% change)

	Browns	Robinsons	Harris-McGregors	MacDougalls
Fruit and vegetables	↑ 14%	↑ 22%	↑ 17%	↑ 28%
Pasta, bread, cereal, rice, potatoes	↑ 12%	↑ 25%	↑ 26%	↑ 15%
Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins	↑ 22%	↑ 22%	↑ 26%	↑ 20%
Dairy	↑ 26%	↑ 21%	↑ 39%	↑ 29%
Sweets, chocolate, crisps, pastries, biscuits and sugary drinks	↑ 3%	↑ 14%	0%	↑ 20%
	Large Families		Small Families	
<b>TOTAL % change for items priced at Tesco online<sup>8</sup></b>	↑ 15%	↑ 18%	↑ 16%	↑ 21%

<sup>8</sup> Excludes out of home, takeaway and celebrations.





The shopping lists would currently cost between 25% and 37% of the case study families’ household income after housing costs.

Unlike in the case of fuel, there is no agreed benchmark for how much income is ‘too much’ to have to spend on food to eat well enough.

Based on the types of employment and number of hours the community advisors imagined the parents in the case study families would work, the tables below show how each family’s income after housing costs (‘disposable income’) compares to the total cost of their shopping list.



**Cost of the shopping list in December 2022 compared to disposable income of the case study family<sup>9</sup> and typical household in Scotland<sup>10</sup>**

	Browns	Robinsons	Couple with three children
Overall cost of the shopping list	£247.55	£223.91	£235.73 <sup>11</sup>
% of disposable income	37%	33%	32%

	Harris-McGregors	MacDougalls	Single parent with two children
Overall cost of the shopping list	£114.11	£103.85	£108.98 <sup>12</sup>
% of disposable income	32%	25%	30%

<sup>9</sup> Calculated by total household income from earnings and benefits minus housing costs.

<sup>10</sup> See “Weekly household income of single and couple parents”, available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-poverty-analysis-2022/>. Based on Scottish figures from the Family Resources Survey 2017-2020, income adjusted to 2021/22.

<sup>11</sup> Average of Browns and Robinsons’ total food and drink costs.

<sup>12</sup> Average of Harris-McGregors’ and MacDougalls’ total food and drink costs.

# Affording dignity and choice



There is a significant difference between the cost of selecting only the cheapest food and drink available and the items the groups thought the case study families would find acceptable – this ‘dignity gap’ for the cost of a weekly shop was 34%.

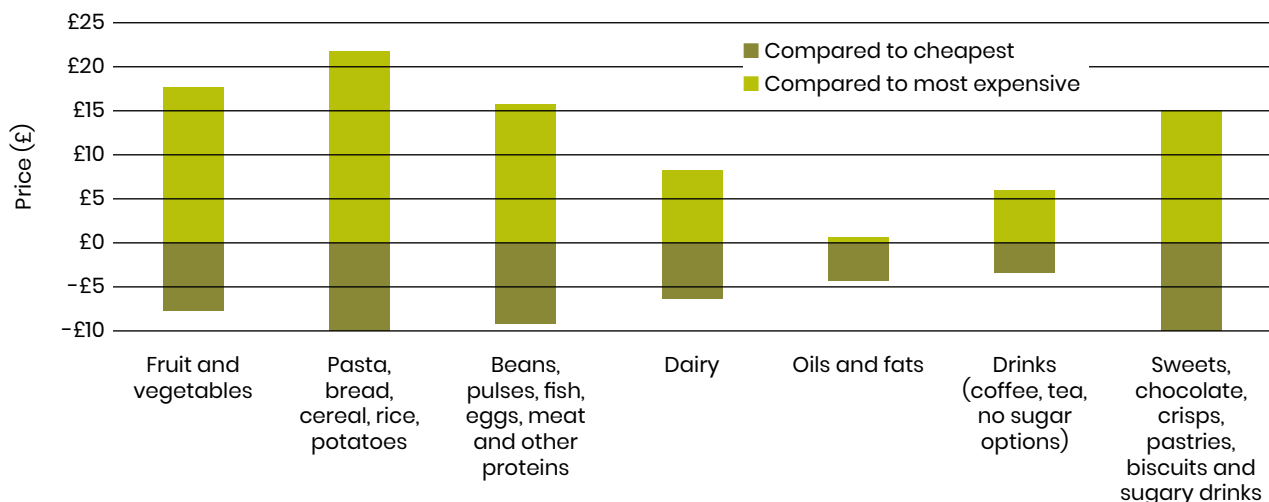
A measure of choice is built into the cost of the shopping lists because having no option but to buy the cheapest item on the shelf is not considered culturally appropriate or acceptable in a society where everyone’s right to food is realised. Community advisors spent time discussing and negotiating what a family living in Scotland today would think about branded versus unbranded cereals and baked beans, for example. The shopping lists include an overall balance of items that reflect specific group preferences and what they believed would be acceptable to families living in Scotland today.

*“... if it’s going to go instant it has to be a reasonable brand of instant. Otherwise, it’s just foul.”*

*“Exactly, yeah. That’s where I draw the line at the cheap brands. That and beans.”*

There is a clear ‘dignity gap’ of being able to afford a choice of brand and quality when shopping for food and drink. Buying only the cheapest option for each item would have reduced the cost of the Brown Family’s weekly shop<sup>13</sup> by 34%, while choosing the most expensive items would have increased it by 68%. The lists include a balance of mid-range options to account for the cost of affording food with dignity and choice.

**‘Dignity Gap’ by category: Brown Family December 2022**



<sup>13</sup> Includes all items that would be purchased at the shop, priced at Tesco online in December 2022. This excludes the food and drink costs for out of home, takeaway, holidays and birthdays.

## Access to healthy foods

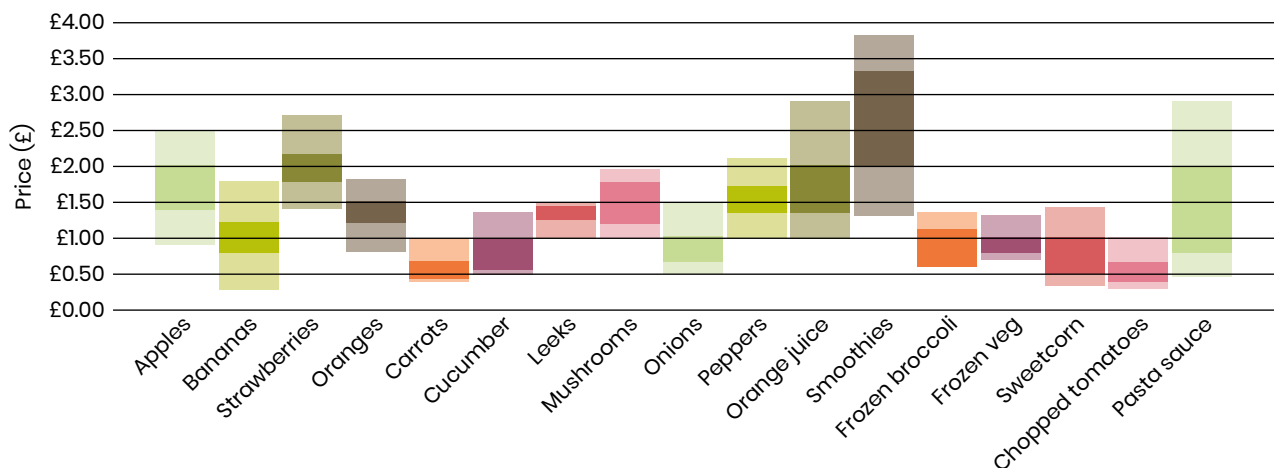
There are significant differences in the price of some fruits and vegetables across Scotland. These were exaggerated in rural areas where lack of affordable transport can present additional challenges to accessing a variety of high-quality healthy foods.

The shopping lists can be used as tools for local action as well as national action. If the foods that people would choose to eat are either not physically available in the shops or the price of them is so high that they are out of reach for most people, then families will struggle to access food with dignity and choice. Local decision makers and key stakeholders can use information about the availability and comparative price of healthy foods in their areas to reflect on specific challenges and consider the steps needed in each area to address geographic and financial barriers.



In 2022, we worked with volunteer community researchers and staff at the Healthy Living Programme team to search for all 17 fruit and vegetable items from the Robinson Family's shopping list in different parts of Scotland.<sup>14</sup> We found that most of the items were available in more than 75% of the shops visited, but that the price of these fruits and vegetables varied considerably between shop type and when comparing rural shops to the national average.

**Price ranges for all items**



<sup>14</sup> See for more detail: <https://www.nourishscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ORTF-Local-availability-and-price-Scotland-2022.pdf>

# Support for families



Scottish Government policies to provide direct financial support to low-income parents are important levers for fulfilling the right to food for eligible families, and the extension of universal free school meals and promotion of the living wage will provide protection to even more families.

The **Scottish Child Payment** was introduced in February 2021 and helps with the costs of supporting a family. Payments are made every four weeks, and the money can be used however the person chooses. In November 2022, the Scottish Child Payment was extended to include children up to age 16 and increased to £25 per week per eligible child.<sup>15</sup>

If the case study families were eligible for the Scottish Child Payment,<sup>16</sup> the recent increase in value and extension to more children would have the following positive effect on their food and drink budget:



December 2021	Browns	Robinsons	Harris-McGregors	MacDougalls
Number of eligible children	0	0	2	2
Amount per week	£0	£0	£20	£20
Proportion of total weekly food and drink costs	-	-	20%	22.9%

December 2022	Browns	Robinsons	Harris-McGregors	MacDougalls
Number of eligible children	3	3	2	2
Amount per week	£75	£75	£50	£50
Proportion of total weekly food and drink costs	30.3%	33.5%	43.8%	48.2%

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/news/scottish-child-payment-increased/>

<sup>16</sup> To be eligible you must live in Scotland and you or your partner must be getting certain benefits or payments and be the main person looking after a child who's under 16 years old: <https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-child-payment/who-should-apply>.

The Harris-McGregor and MacDougall families have a child aged 2. If they met the criteria for **Best Start Foods**, they would be eligible for £18 every four weeks.<sup>17</sup> In December 2022, this would have covered an average of 21% of their weekly fruit and vegetable costs or 55% of their spending on dairy each week.

In 2021, when the community advisors were co-developing the shopping lists, **universal free school meals** were provided to all P1-3 pupils and expanded to P4s and P5s during the 2021/22 school year. The older child (aged 5) in the Harris-McGregor and MacDougall families would have benefited from this support, as would the youngest child (aged 7) in the Brown and Robinson families. The following shows the value to each family based on an average cost of £2.24 per day per child<sup>18</sup> and the number of school meals community advisors believed each child would choose, rather than bringing a packed lunch.

December 2022	Browns	Robinsons	Harris-McGregors	MacDougalls
Number of eligible children	1	1	1	1
Value per week	£6.71	£6.71	£6.71	£8.95

The delay in the planned extension of universal free school meal provision to P6s and P7s in summer 2022 would have affected the two large case study families, who have children aged 7, 10 and 15. Extending universal provision to reach all primary pupils in the 2022/23 school year would have provided an additional savings of nearly £30 per month for the Brown Family and nearly £20 per month for the Robinsons.

Importantly, community advisors suggested that having children with different eligibility within the household can make it difficult for families to receive the full benefit from the offer. For example, if an older child is not eligible for free lunch, and a parent is making a packed lunch for them as a result, some community advisors thought that the parent might just make a packed lunch for both children that day. In reverse, if the school meal was something both children liked, it might be difficult for a parent to say the older child could not take a school lunch, even if they had to pay for that child's meal. Extending universal provision – and ensuring this aligns with Scotland's wider ambitions to become a Good Food Nation<sup>19</sup> – is therefore an important part of realising the right to food for children and their families.



<sup>17</sup> <https://www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods>

<sup>18</sup> Cost calculated by averaging primary school meal price to parents from 28 local authority areas.

<sup>19</sup> The 'Good Food' Case for the provision of Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) in Scotland: <https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/news/articles/2021/the-e28098good-foode28099-case-for-the-provision-of-universal-free-school-meals-ufsm-in-scotland/>

## Value of Co-Production



Involving community advisors in the co-production of weekly shopping lists for case study households is a useful and replicable approach to understand the content of the right to food and measure its realisation over time.

Co-production is at the core of this project. Community advisors – women who know what it is like to shop for, prepare and eat food in families living in Scotland today – were involved in extensive discussions and negotiation with each other and the project team through a series of online meetings in 2021, where they worked together to co-develop weekly shopping lists for each case study family.

Information, data and advice from external sources and experts were brought into these discussions at multiple stages. In turn, the project team brought updates and questions from the groups to quarterly steering group meetings.

*“It has to be about more of that, more about community involvement, and not just people sitting behind closed doors deciding how I get to live my life and how much money I need to live on. It has to be about community involvement and people like you leading groups like this.... I like to be part of the conversation. And that’s difficult to do.”*

**Community Advisor**

*“I think there’s an element where the government need to recognise what real people’s lives are and that they may want us to achieve this, but, you know, people have to do what’s right by their life.”*

**Community Advisor**

Using co-production methods meant that rights-holders were central to shaping the contents of the shopping list by advising on the realities of each case study family’s patterns, preferences, challenges and opportunities for accessing the foods that ‘would keep them healthy and well’. The final shopping lists are grounded in lived experience, informed by expert guidance and provide an example of what families would be proud to eat in Scotland.

## Recommendations

Policymakers can use this way of thinking about and co-defining the right to food as we develop both our national and local food plans and the implementation strategy for our human rights commitments.

We recommend a working group of relevant partners in civil society, Food Standards Scotland and the Scottish Government is established to build on the learning of the Our Right to Food project and:

- ▶ Continue to monitor the cost and affordability of the shopping lists for the large and small family household types.
- ▶ Establish and monitor the cost and affordability of 'Right to Food shopping lists' for additional household types.<sup>20</sup>
- ▶ Regularly review the priorities and aspirations people have for what is considered 'adequate' within the context of healthy and sustainable foods, and update the shopping lists accordingly.
- ▶ Evaluate the effect that changes in direct support from new and existing mechanisms, such as the Scottish Child Payment, Best Start Foods, universal free school meals and school clothing grants, have on the affordability of the shopping lists for different household types.

<sup>20</sup> Suggestions from the Our Right to Food roundtable November 2022 include: Older person living alone, Migrant Muslim family in the asylum process (with no recourse to public funds), Pregnant woman and / or parent with infant under one. These case study households would provide scope to explore wider barriers people face to accessing an adequate diet.



[www.nourishscotland.org/projects/our-right-to-food](http://www.nourishscotland.org/projects/our-right-to-food)