

Legal challenge forces schools to put vegan meals on menu

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Courtesy The Scotsman

A three-week vegan menu is available on request throughout the Glasgow area in schools and nurseries. Picture: Contributed

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A vegan menu is now available in schools run by two local authorities in Scotland after human rights challenges by campaigners. The move follows a request from a parent in East Renfrewshire which was initially refused.

However campaign group Go Vegan World worked with the parents to challenge the decision citing human rights laws, and the council performed a U-turn. The local authority has now produced a range of choices that cater for vegans and confirmed it is available on request to pupils throughout the region.

This follows a similar case in Glasgow City Council when a couple challenged their failure to provide a full vegan menu for their daughter in nursery.

The council then produced a three-week vegan menu and confirmed that this is now available on request throughout the Glasgow area, in schools and nurseries.

At present most of Scotland's schools do not offer any clearly labelled vegan options for pupils on their standard menus.

Go Vegan World's legal representative, Barbara Bolton, said: "Vegans have the same protections as those who hold religious beliefs. They have the right to live according to their moral conviction that it is wrong to use and kill other animals and they must not be discriminated against."

“We are working to raise awareness among vegans so they have the information they need to challenge rights breaches, whether that be a failure to provide suitable food in school, hospital or prison, difficulties at work, or challenging indoctrination in school through teaching in a way that conflicts with the vegan philosophy. We are assisting vegans with rights-based challenges whenever we can.”

Go Vegan World said it is helping another parent with a child in a school in the Scottish Borders who is challenging the council’s refusal to provide vegan options.

The group says in that case the council has said it cannot provide vegan meals, claiming it is not possible to provide food that complies with the nutritional requirements for school meals.

Ms Bolton added: “That is quite clearly inaccurate. They do not appear to be aware the British Dietetics Association has long confirmed that we can get all the nutrients we need on a fully plant-based diet at every stage of life. If Glasgow and East Renfrewshire can create a vegan menu that complies with the current nutritional requirements for schools, the Borders can too.”

A spokesperson for East Renfrewshire Council confirmed they had “worked closely” with parents to ensure a suitable solution was reached.

They added: “We provide more than 11,000 meals every day across all our schools and cater for a wide range of dietary requirements, including allergen-free, kosher, halal, celiac and gluten-free options.

“Any parent or carer who requests a meal to meet the needs of a special diet, which includes vegan meals, will be catered for to ensure we continue to offer a wide-ranging menu which is inclusive for all.”

A Scottish Government spokesman said: “It is for councils to consider the food on offer and we expect them to make reasonable efforts to accommodate dietary requirements so it is welcome to see these options being made available to pupils.”

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