

Policy to Restore Food Dignity through Essential Price Controls and Customer Monitoring

1. Introduction: Why Food Poverty Is a Matter of Dignity

Food poverty is not just about hunger — it's about dignity. Families across the UK are being forced to skip meals, serve nutritionally poor food, or go without basic hygiene items. This creates deep shame, stress, and lasting harm to mental and physical wellbeing. This policy addresses that harm directly by making essential goods universally affordable, clearly accessible, and never a source of stigma.

2. Policy Summary

All supermarkets over 50m² in sales area and licensed to sell alcohol must:

- Sell 30 essential items at capped prices
- Fix prices annually on January 1st, based on discount store benchmarks
- Limit price rises to no more than one-fifth of the annual food inflation rate
- Ensure essential items are always in stock or substituted without penalty
- Empower customers to report missing essentials and receive instant rewards
- Respond to complaints via an independent ombudsman process

This is a practical, customer-driven model to restore dignity and affordability.

3. Participation Criteria

Mandatory for:

- Supermarkets with more than 50m² of sales area
- Licensed to sell alcohol (in-store or online)

Anti-avoidance Clause:

- Alcohol sales **may not be separated** into co-located shops or online domains to avoid compliance
 - Participating shops must not share a **roof, website, brand name, or promotional materials** with a non-compliant alcohol outlet
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4. The 30 Essential Items

1. Bread
2. Rice
3. Pasta
4. Potatoes
5. Tinned tomatoes
6. Carrots
7. Onions
8. Bananas
9. Apples
10. Milk (UHT or fresh)
11. Eggs
12. Plain porridge oats
13. Tinned beans
14. Tinned sardines
15. Lentils
16. Vegetable oil
17. Flour
18. Frozen mixed vegetables
19. Tea bags
20. Instant or ground coffee
21. Strawberry jam
22. Peanut butter
23. Bacon
24. Soft cheese
25. Biscuits
26. Shampoo
27. Toothbrush
28. Toothpaste

29. Sanitary towels

30. Soap (for face and body)

5. Price Fixing and Inflation Control

- Prices for these items are **set on 1st January each year**, using baseline pricing from Aldi, Lidl, or equivalent
- Price increases are capped at **annual food basket inflation ÷ 5**
- If an item is temporarily unavailable, it must be replaced by a **higher-quality substitute at no extra cost**, unless there's a national shortage

6. Customer Monitoring and Reward System

Customers help ensure fairness by reporting missing essential items.

How It Works:

- If an essential item is out of stock, a customer can:
 - Take a **selfie with the empty shelf**
 - Go to the **reception desk** for a **£5 shop voucher**

If Store Refuses to Comply:

- The customer submits the **selfie and reference number** to the Ombudsman
- The store then has **7 days to respond**
 - If the claim is **upheld**, the customer receives a **£10 voucher**
 - If the store **fails to respond or reimburse**, an **unannounced inspection** will be triggered (e.g., on food hygiene, labour conditions, or environmental compliance)

Abuse Prevention:

- One report per person per 30 minutes
- One report per product per store per 30 minutes
- This allows stores reasonable time to restock while preventing reward abuse

8. Signposting and In-Store Visibility

- All 30 essential items must be:
 - Clearly **signposted** with a national “Essential Item” label
 - Easily accessible, **ideally in an essential items area**.
 - Highlighted in search and filter features on websites and apps
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9. Purpose and Impact

This policy:

- Helps ensure no family has to choose between **food, hygiene, and dignity**
 - Keeps essential goods affordable and consistently available
 - Restores pride and fairness in food access
 - Builds a culture of shared responsibility between retailers and the public
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10. Why Supermarkets Can Afford This

This policy is affordable and achievable for large supermarkets for several key reasons:

- **Existing low-cost ranges:** Most major supermarkets already offer **own-brand essentials** at very low prices. This policy simply ensures those items remain affordable and accessible — not that new products must be created.
- **Minimal impact on profits:** The **largest markups** in supermarkets are not on basic food or hygiene items, but on **alcohol, premium branded goods, convenience foods, and non-essentials**. Those products remain untouched by this policy.
- **Volume and reputation benefit:** Clear pricing and accountability can **build trust** with value-conscious shoppers, increasing footfall. Participation may also improve **brand reputation**, especially among lower-income and family households.

This is not a punishment or a tax. It’s a **small, targeted safeguard** to ensure the public’s basic needs are met — using tools and products supermarkets already manage efficiently.