

Folic acid added to flour to prevent brain and spinal conditions in fetuses

- Defra launches UK-wide consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations on the amount of folic acid to be added to flour
- Under the government's proposals, pregnancies affected by neural tube defects could fall by more than a fifth

The number of pregnancies affected by life-threatening issues such as spina bifida could fall by more than a fifth as the government moves one step closer to actively adding folic acid to non-wholemeal flour.

Following a consultation with industry and stakeholders on whether to add folic acid to non-wholemeal flour, a public health policy which has already been successful in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, today the government is consulting on its proposal to add 250 micrograms of folic acid per 100 grams of flour.

The proposal on the amount of folic acid to be added to flour is part of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations, which aims to ensure the regulations are consistent with other food standards legislation.

Neural tube defects are a rare developmental condition which occurs very early in pregnancy and affects around 1,000 pregnancies each year in the UK. This occurs when the brain, spine, or spinal cord do not develop properly in the womb and can cause life-threatening health issues.

Women are advised to take a daily 400-microgram folic acid supplement before conceiving and up to the 12th week of pregnancy as it reduces the risk of neural tube defects affected pregnancies. However, as pregnancies may be unplanned or women in the first few weeks of pregnancy may not know they are pregnant, many women may be unaware of this recommendation.

Adding folic acid will mean foods made with flour, such as bread, will actively help avoid around 200 neural tube defects each year – around 20% of the annual UK total.

Defra Food Minister Victoria Prentis said:

It is vital that we consult on this issue to understand views on all of our proposed amendments to bread and flour regulations.

Folic acid fortification is an example of how we can ensure the public receive the nutrition we require through everyday food products.

The government's Bread and Flour Regulations consultation proposes adding 250 micrograms of folic acid per 100 grams of non-wholemeal flour.

Minister for Public Health Maggie Throup said:

Neural tube defects can have a devastating impact on life expectancy and quality of life.

This simple step will ensure more women who might be pregnant, or who are trying to conceive, will have increased intakes of folic acid, leading to a large reduction in the number of fetuses affected by NTDs each year.

I want to encourage anyone with an interest in this issue to participate in the consultation and help us deliver life-saving changes.

The proposal forms part of a UK-wide consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations which aims to support UK industry, help lead to improved public health outcomes, assist enforcement authorities and protect UK consumers. It will ensure the regulations are consistent with other food standards legislation, covering the specifications of vitamins and minerals added to foods.

The consultation opens on Thursday 1 September and closes on Wednesday 23 November. It is open to everyone and is available here:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/food-compositional-standards/bread-and-flour-consultation-2022>

Cefnogi recriwtio mwy diogel yn y sector blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg

News story

Mae ymgyrch 'Gwneud Recriwtio'n Fwy Diogel' Y Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd yn hyrwyddo'r cymorth sydd ar gael gan ein gwasanaeth Allgymorth Rhanbarthol.



Mae'r Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd (Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS) wedi lansio cam diweddaraf yr ymgyrch 'Gwneud Recriwtio'n Fwy Diogel'. Anelir y cam yma o'r ymgyrch at y sector blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg ac mae'n amlygu'r ystod o gyngor am ddim a hyfforddiant sydd ar gael i sefydliadau o bob maint. Mae cyngor a hyfforddiant yn amrywio o gynnwys gwiriadau Datgelu a Gwahardd a chymhwysedd, i'r ddyletswydd gyfreithiol i wneud atgyfeiriad i wahardd, a sut i wneud atgyfeiriad.

Mae'r Gwasanaeth wedi ymuno gyda sefydliadau partner yn y blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg sydd wedi elwa o gymorth y DBS yn flaenorol, i helpu hyrwyddo'r ymgyrch i gyflogwyr eraill yn y sector. Mae partneriaid yn cynnwys [Blynyddoedd Cynnar Cymru](#), [PACEY – y Gymdeithas Broffesiynol ar gyfer Gofal Plant a'r Blynyddoedd Cynnar](#), [Hyfforddiant Estio](#) ac [EPM](#).

Lansiwyd yr ymgyrch 'Gwneud Recriwtio'n Fwy Diogel' yn wreiddiol ym mis Mehefin 2022 ac mae wedi targedu'r sectorau elusennol a ffydd yn flaenorol.

Dywedodd Eric Robinson, Prif Weithredwr y Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd:

Mae'r Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd yn cyflawni rôl hanfodol wrth helpu i amddiffyn plant, pobl ifanc ac oedolion agored i niwed drwy gefnogi cyflogwyr i wneud penderfyniadau recriwtio mwy diogel. Mae'n bleser gennym lansio ein hymgyrch newydd gyda'r sector blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg i dynnu sylw at yr hyfforddiant a chynghor am ddim y gallwn eu darparu i sefydliadau drwy ein gwasanaeth Allgymorth Rhanbarthol.

Mae'r gwasanaeth hwn yn darparu un pwynt cyswllt i sefydliadau ar gyfer pob ymholiad a chwestiwn yn ymwneud â'r DBS, yn ogystal â'r cyfle i gael mynediad at hyfforddiant DBS sydd wedi'i deilwra ar gyfer eu staff a'u gwirfoddolwyr. Mae'r tîm hefyd yn coladu adborth er mwyn sicrhau y gellir gwneud gwelliannau yn y dyfodol i wasanaethau a phrosesau'r DBS.

Dysgwch fwy am yr ymgyrch ar gyfryngau cymdeithasol drwy chwilio am #DBSMakingRecruitmentSafer.

Gellir dod o hyd i fwy o wybodaeth am wasanaeth Allgymorth Rhanbarthol y DBS yn ein [canllawiau allgymorth](#).

Published 1 September 2022

Government extends Horizon Europe financial safety net

Press release

The government has announced an extension to the financial support provided to Horizon Europe applicants, originally launched in November 2021.



- Government extends Horizon Europe guarantee scheme, protecting funding for UK researchers, businesses, and innovators
- association to EU programmes remains the UK's preference, with the government's priority to maintain support for the UK's research and development sector during ongoing period of uncertainty
- guarantee will now be in place to cover all Horizon Europe calls that close on or before 31 December 2022

Today (1 September 2022), the government has announced an extension to the financial support provided to Horizon Europe applicants, originally launched in November 2021. The extension will ensure that eligible, successful UK applicants will continue to be guaranteed funding, supporting them to continue their important work in research and innovation.

The guarantee will now be in place to cover all Horizon Europe calls that close on or before 31 December 2022, with the majority of grant signature dates expected before the end of August 2023. This extension will protect and support the UK sector during the ongoing delays while we continue to encourage the EU to formalise UK association, including through the recently launched consultation process.

Eligible, successful applicants will receive the full value of their funding at their UK host institution for the lifetime of the grant. Successful awardees will be able to remain in the UK to receive this funding, which will provide reassurance for future collaborations, and support UK researchers whether association is confirmed, or otherwise.

The UK cannot wait indefinitely for association to EU Programmes, and in parallel to these measures, we continue to develop plans for a bold and ambitious package of alternatives. The government released [a publication](#) on 20 July setting out further detail on these plans.

Details regarding the scope and terms of the extension are available on the [UKRI website](#).

Published 1 September 2022

Civil news: early billing for asylum matters

News story

Changes are being made to the 2018 Standard Civil Contract effective from 1 September 2022 to allow early billing for asylum matters.



Providers will be able to claim the standard fee for asylum matters from 1 September 2022 before the case has concluded.

We are making this possible through changes to the immigration and asylum specification in the 2018 Standard Civil Contract.

The changes follow consultations with your representative bodies. This will only apply to work carried out under the asylum standard fee scheme and which meets the criteria set out in the specification.

Where can I find out more?

Full details of the contract amendments can be found on the Standard Civil Contract 2018 page on GOV.UK.

Further information

[Standard civil contract 2018](#) – for table of amendments and immigration and asylum category specific rules

[Guidance for reporting controlled work and controlled work matters](#) – for updated guidance on how to claim for work completed under the new clauses

[Legal aid guidance](#) – for practical guidance relating to early billing for asylum matters

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[Incoming OSCE Chair-in-Office presents priorities for 2023: UK statement to the OSCE](#)

Thank you, Mr Chair. On behalf of the UK, I warmly welcome you, Minister Osmani to the Permanent Council. Thank you for outlining the priorities for North Macedonia's time as OSCE Chair-in-Office during 2023. Please be assured of the UK's full support for your intention to focus on genuine dialogue and for the agenda you have set out today.

The UK remains a strong proponent of the OSCE. The OSCE's concept of comprehensive security must remain at the organisation's heart and form the basis of everything we do. We have met on an almost weekly basis for the last six months in the shadow of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. We fervently hope that the Russian Government will have seen sense and the war in Ukraine will have ended by the time you assume the role of Chair in Office. But whatever happens we believe that we need and will need the OSCE more than ever as we tackle the many challenges facing us all.

We welcome your intention to provide political leadership across all three dimensions. We note that protracted conflicts and progress towards peace will be topping your agenda. Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine, not only continues to pose the most serious threat to the OSCE area but also continues to blight the lives of Ukrainians caught up in the conflict. This must command our full attention and we should be giving our full support to the OSCE structures which contribute towards the peaceful resolution of this devastating conflict.

We note that women throughout the OSCE region have been and are disproportionately negatively affected by conflict and instability. We share your determination to harness effective multilateralism in response. It is

vital to ensure women's full, meaningful and effective participation across our work in all three dimensions and to understand the gender based impact of conflict.

We agree that conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures remain crucial for security in the OSCE area. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shown that the measures were not the issue, but that political will was. The UK remains committed to all confidence and security building measures, including the Vienna Document, provided that all participating States fully abide by their commitments under international law, including the Helsinki Final Act and UN Charter.

Mr Chair – transnational threats, including transnational organised crime and cyber security, will remain security challenges in the OSCE area to which we need comprehensive, holistic responses. We also remain committed to strengthening economic resilience, through improved governance and cracking down on corruption which undermines our societies.

In the economic and environmental dimension, Russia's invasion has shown the interconnectedness of energy, food, infrastructure and climate to our collective security, and how the deliberate actions by one country can cause devastating ripples across the world. The UK supports the OSCE's efforts to improve the region's energy security. Furthermore, we must not forget climate change and look forward to increased cooperation in meeting commitments under the [Stockholm Decision](#).

We welcome your intention to initiate a broad debate on the necessity of increased engagement on the respect for fundamental human rights not just because of the ongoing situation sparked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but also in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its legacy. Your commitment to providing political support to the autonomous institutions will be invaluable to ensure that all participating States implement, and uphold, our human dimension commitments. With democracy and human rights under attack in the OSCE region, we must continue to focus on the most egregious violations of our OSCE commitments using all available OSCE tools and mechanisms. The [Moscow Mechanism](#) has served us well in exposing abuses and violations.

We share your determination to support relevant policies to fight any kind of discrimination and intolerance. The UK was honoured to host the [International Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief](#) in London in July where participants shared practical lessons on how to protect the freedom of religion or belief. We look forward to continuing this work with you.

Your Excellency, dear Minister, in conclusion, the OSCE remains a critical multilateral institution for European and Euro-Atlantic security. At this vital time for our shared security, you can rely on the strong support of the UK in your search for solutions and progress and we wish you and your very capable team here in Vienna all the best as you prepare for your time as Chair-in-Office.

Thank you.