

YOUR NAME  
ADDRESS  
EMAIL  
PHONE NUMBER

FIRST NAME SURNAME  
STREET ADDRESS

DATE

Dear MR/MS [SURNAME]

**Re: access to gluten free food on prescription**

I am writing to highlight the challenges facing people with coeliac disease and ask you as my prospective MP to commit to ensuring people with coeliac disease are supported to access the food they need to treat their condition.

**Coeliac disease is a serious autoimmune condition, affecting around 1 in every 100 people.** Symptoms are wide ranging but can include bloating, stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhoea and tiredness. There is no cure for the condition and the only treatment is a strict gluten free diet for life, to prevent ongoing health issues and complications such as malnutrition, osteoporosis, a rare type of bowel cancer, and neurological conditions. In children, non-adherence can have additional consequences including faltering growth and delayed puberty. Complete replacement of gluten containing foods with gluten free is not easy. Gluten free staple substitute foods are important for both practical reasons and for their nutritional contribution to the diet. It is therefore critical that people with coeliac disease can access the gluten free food they need.

Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. Gluten free staple foods are significantly more expensive than gluten containing equivalents. In the case of bread, someone purchasing the cheapest gluten containing loaf of bread would have to pay more than 6 times as much for a gluten free loaf weight for weight. A weekly shop can cost as much as 35% more for someone on a medically prescribed gluten free diet. 7 in 10 respondents to a recent Coeliac UK survey, said shopping gluten free 'adversely affects their quality of life'. And most worryingly of all, because of the substantial cost of gluten free food, people with coeliac disease are opting to risk consuming gluten, potentially jeopardising their health as a result. 4% are actively eating gluten despite health risks due to cost concerns and nearly a third (27%) are opting to eat products with 'may contain' statements for the same reason.

**Read the full report:** [www.coeliac.org.uk/cost-gf-food](http://www.coeliac.org.uk/cost-gf-food).

We are still facing the challenges of a cost-of-living crisis, and with the election upon us; many people are struggling. This is particularly true for people with coeliac disease who depend on access to gluten free staple products in order to treat their condition. It is critical that this is acknowledged, and the coeliac community is supported.

While those living in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland can still access gluten free staple products on prescription, in England it has become a postcode lottery. As of June 2024, roughly 50% people in England live in an area that prescribes gluten free compared to 80% less a decade ago. This has left far too many people cut adrift from this support at the very

time they need it most. Untreated coeliac disease is bad news for the NHS that has to pick up the tab for treating resultant health complications and devastating for the individuals impacted. It is critical that policy makers recognise the need for change.

**That is why I'm asking you as my local candidate to commit to:**

- **Meet with Coeliac UK and local patient representatives to understand the concerns and learn about our experiences**
- **Support new guidance for Integrated Care Boards in England that re-iterates the critical role of the gluten free diet and the importance of staple gluten free substitute products in treating the condition**
- **Support the continued provision of gluten free prescriptions support in those areas where support remains.**

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

[MY NAME]

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**Further info on cost and importance of the gluten free diet:**

- Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Complete replacement of gluten containing staple foods is not easy as these cereals are the main ingredients of many staple foods which constitute a significant proportion of the average UK diet.
- A gluten free loaf of bread is on average 4.3 times more expensive per 100g than a standard gluten containing loaf
- The cheapest gluten free loaf of bread is 7.2 times more expensive than the cheapest gluten containing loaf, weight for weight.
- You will pay on average double for gluten free staple substitutes like pasta, flour, bread rolls, cereals.
- A gluten free shopping basket can be as much as 20% more expensive than a standard food basket
- There are limited variety and budget options for all gluten free products which puts a disproportionate burden on those with the lowest incomes.
- To read Coeliac UK's full report 'The gluten free diet, what does it cost and why does it matter?' please visit: [www.coeliac.org.uk/cost-gf-food](http://www.coeliac.org.uk/cost-gf-food)

