

This week is Right to Food Week, organised by the Labour MP for West Derby Ian Byrne and supported by organisations including Fans Supporting Foodbanks and many in our local network of food pantries, charities, service providers and campaigners including myself and our Labour group.

The Right to Food campaign began in 2020, with a demand that the right to food be enshrined in law. Ian Byrne and others have continued to fight for this and I'm proud to support the campaign.

It is a stark fact that many people in our borough are living in poverty, with costs for energy, food and other essentials rising significantly over the last couple of years. And of course, the cost of living crisis was on top of a pandemic and a decade of austerity, low growth, and stagnating wages.

The latest figures show that in 2021 more than a third of St Helens residents suffered food insecurity, unsure of where the next affordable meal was coming from for them and their family. In one of the world's most prosperous countries it's nothing less than a scandal.

Last winter, rising food and energy costs forced many people to choose between heating and eating, and with colder months ahead we're already starting to think about the extra support that might be needed.

Thankfully there are lots of kind and resourceful people in our communities, and working together I'm pleased to say that our faith and voluntary sector, the council, public sector partners and others have been able to put in place support for many.

Just this week I visited our newest food pantry which has opened at Lester Drive in Eccleston. As always, I was blown away by the dedication and compassion of the volunteers who have set it up, and delighted that as a Council we are able to work with them to make it happen.

There are people in every part of our borough who need support, and that's why we're supporting Right to Food Week and working all year round to help people who need us most.

Hunger is a political choice, and we need to do what we can to end it.

Find out more about the Right to Food campaign at [www.ianbyrne.org/righttofood](http://www.ianbyrne.org/righttofood) and find all the latest support and advice at [www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether).

Best wishes to all Star readers.