



**Department for Education
Further Education Teacher in England
Initial Teacher Training and Development:
Call for Evidence
The Vegan Society Response**

Section 1- Respondent information

About you

1. What is your name?

Claire Ogle

2. Do you consent to the Department for Education contacting you via email about your response? If yes, please provide your email address.

policy@vegansociety.com

3. Would you like us to keep your response confidential?

No

Information provided in response to calls for evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want all, or any part, of a response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained.

An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department for Education will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Evidence submitted will be shared with the EAG, but personal information will not.

4. If you would like us to keep your response confidential, please explain your reason for confidentiality:

N/A

5. What is your role?



Head of Campaigns, Policy and Research

6. What is the name of the organisation that you work for? (if applicable)

The Vegan Society

7. What type of organisation is this?

A third sector organisation

8. If you answered 'other', please specify your organisation type.

N/A

9. Are you answering on behalf of your organisation or in a personal capacity?

on behalf of organisation

10. What kind of teacher training and development are you involved in? (option to choose more than one)

- University delivered qualification(s)
- Qualification(s) franchised from a university and delivered by my organisation
- Qualification(s) validated by a university and delivered by my organisation
- An Ofqual regulated qualification, e.g. The Diploma in Teaching (FE and Skills)
- Learning and Skills Teacher (LST) apprenticeship
- Early career PD for new teachers in the FE sector
- Continuing Professional Development programmes for FE teachers

Other

If other please give details

The Vegan Society is an educational Charity, registered in England, providing support in formal as well as informal education settings to educators, learners and others who provide services to them.

Our work involves, “Elements of universal foundational knowledge, pedagogy and theory that can be utilised by all teachers regardless of their subject area.” As “practitioners in different roles” relative to Further Education Initial Teacher Education (FE ITE) and early career Professional Development (PD) (as mentioned this Call for Evidence).

We design and deliver specialist training in vegan-inclusive practice in further education settings, under the umbrella of Human Rights and Equality.



The Vegan Society believes that diversity and inclusion training for all teachers, including those undertaking FE ITE & PD, must explicitly include recognition for veganism as a protected philosophical belief. Protected philosophical beliefs are legally recognised under the Equality Act (2010), on a par with protected religious beliefs.

Most Further Education providers are also subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This means that FE providers must have 'due regard' to people's protected characteristics – including, towards all people who have the protected philosophical belief of veganism – to the need to "eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have particular protected characteristics and those who do not" (EHRC 2014). Not doing so could leave providers open to claims of direct or indirect discrimination.

Thus, all education needs to be vegan-inclusive. We have legal, dietetic and education experts working within and with The Vegan Society. Our student training and continuing professional development (CPD) includes

- equality duties;
- curriculum development;
- whole-setting ethos;
- plant-based vegan-suitable catering, nutrition and dietetics;
- the rights of learners who hold protected beliefs;
- the practical application of vegan-inclusive approaches in educational environments;

and related issues. The training can be delivered online, hybrid and in person through structured workshops and presentations that enable trainees and practitioners to embed vegan-inclusive practice across their own context.

We provide guidance on equality and inclusion for vegans within all education settings as well as advice on plant-based nutrition subject matter. We regularly provide this specialist support to trainee Registered Dietitians who will go on to teach in FE settings, as well as to teachers working in all settings.

Embedding the Equality Act 2010 principles within teacher training and curriculum will help educators understand their responsibilities and foster fully inclusive learning environments. We recommend that all trainee and practicing teachers are required to undertake training and continuing professional development (CPD) on vegan-inclusive education.

Word Count: c. 400

References

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11. Please provide detail of the pedagogical evidence that you use in the universal foundational elements of your ITE or early career PD programme. Please provide full references and, where applicable, links to the relevant publication(s).

The Vegan Society, as a Charity Registered in England, offer training in vegan-inclusive education including evidence, planning, delivery, legal considerations as well as nutrition and dietetics. We work with legal, dietetic, education and other experts in developing this training. Under the Equality Act 2010, all education in England must give due regard to philosophical beliefs including veganism (Equality Act 2010) of all the people involved.

We design, deliver, monitor and evaluate specialist training that supports educators in any specialism to develop vegan-inclusive practice.

This continuing professional development (CPD) can cover:

- equality duties;
- curriculum development;
- whole-setting ethos;
- plant-based vegan-suitable catering, nutrition and dietetics;
- the rights of learners who hold protected beliefs;
- the practical application of vegan-inclusive approaches in educational environments;

and related issues.

We can deliver the training online, hybrid and in person through structured workshops and presentations that enable FE education trainees and practitioners to embed inclusive practice across their own context.

Our pedagogy relates to the legal and philosophical basis of the protected status of veganism as a philosophical belief. This is rooted in turn in human rights and equality law pedagogy on the one hand, and humane education, critical animal studies and veganism pedagogy on the other (Pederson 2010, Twine and Taylor 2014, Corman & Vasileva 2017, Acampora 2021, Weil 2021, Twine 2024). Learners are encouraged to think about the non-human as well as human world, and their places within. They then evaluate through both ethical and legal frames, how their attitudes and behaviours impact other humans, non-human animals and their lives and habitats, and our shared biosphere.

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Twine & Taylor 2014, The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre, 2014, Twine R & Taylor N (eds), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203797631> (accessed 2025-12-08)

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12. Please provide detail of context-specific pedagogical theories and knowledge that you use in your ITE or early career PD programme. Please state which context(s) they are suitable for. Please provide full references and, where applicable, links to relevant publication(s). You may wish answer with reference to multiple contexts.

The Vegan Society, as a Charity Registered in England, offer training in vegan-inclusive education including evidence, planning, delivery, legal considerations as well as nutrition and dietetics. We work with legal, dietetic, education and other experts in developing this training. Under the Equality Act 2010, all education in England must give due regard to philosophical beliefs including veganism (Equality Act 2010) of all the people involved.

We design, deliver, monitor and evaluate specialist training that supports educators in any specialism to develop vegan-inclusive practice.

This continuing professional development (CPD) can cover:

- equality duties;
- curriculum development;
- whole-setting ethos;
- plant-based vegan-suitable catering, nutrition and dietetics;
- the rights of learners who hold protected beliefs;
- the practical application of vegan-inclusive approaches in educational environments;

and related issues.

We can deliver the training online, hybrid and in person through structured workshops and presentations that enable FE education trainees and practitioners to embed inclusive practice across their own context.

Specific pedagogical techniques which we may employ include:

Regarding overarching legal themes:

We present case studies of people who have approached our Know Your Rights service, including in FE settings. Learners compare Human Rights and Equality requirements including, where relevant, the Public Sector Equality Duty, as they apply to vegans in the specific circumstances, with the organisational policies, guidance and practices relevant organisations have in place.

This requires learners to use their knowledge and develop their skills in a number of key domains, including:

1. The details of the meaning of veganism (The Vegan Society 2016);



2. The protections which people with philosophical beliefs recognised under the Equality Act 2010, such as veganism, enjoy in direct analogy with protected religious beliefs, including under the Public Sector Equality Duty where relevant;
3. The areas which organisational policies, guidelines and practices must explicitly address, “to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who have particular protected characteristics and those who do not” (EHRC 2014).

Regarding the core knowledge of nutritious food for vegans:

We present recipes which are not suitable for vegans. Learners are set the task of making these recipes suitable for vegans whilst maintaining the nutritional content to meet the applicable nutritional standards, and meeting any cost per portion restrictions.

This requires learners to use their learning in a number of domains, including:

1. The details of the meaning of veganism (The Vegan Society 2016);
2. What ingredients, processing aids, techniques etc. are suitable or not suitable for vegans, due to the relevant use or avoidance of use of non-human animals;
3. The sources of key nutrients for plant-based and vegan-suitable diets.

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13. Please provide any insights into the needs of the FE sector in terms of professional development. What are the barriers to, and what are the opportunities for, ensuring that all FE teachers have access to high-quality professional development? Please provide specific examples of effective practice where known, along with references to any relevant publication(s).

The Vegan Society believes that all FE practitioners need career-long learning in humane education (Weil 2021), human rights and equality (EHRC 2014). This is necessary to ensure that they properly support all learners and others in the FE sector, including regarding protected characteristics and, where relevant, upholding the Public Sector Equality Duty. This includes inclusion of vegans, given that veganism is a philosophical belief protected under the Equality Act 2010 on a par with protected religious beliefs.

As an example of failure to pay due regard during FE teaching, one vegan Dietitian reported to The Vegan Society that, during training, they were sent to a catering lecturer on meal preparation without any consideration of the beliefs of students. Each of over 50 students was given a whole dead chicken including head and internal organs. Despite claiming from the lecturer their right to philosophical belief exemption, the vegan student Dietitian was not excused, and had to sit in the class until the first break. They reported serious distress, saying, "I was absolutely besides myself, worst day of my life!!!".

Other examples known to The Vegan Society in the past 5 years include:

1. Vegan students in HE/FE unable to access suitable food (2020–2024)

Sector relevance: Applies directly to FE colleges with canteens run by the same contract caterers used by universities.

Why it counts: It evidences institutional failures to accommodate vegan students aged 16+.

University of Warwick, University of Leicester, and University of East Anglia publicly acknowledged the issue and expanded vegan provision between 2020 and 2023, which demonstrates institutional recognition of an equality gap.

These campuses have FE pathways: foundation years, access courses, and 16–18 BTEC learners).

The Vegan Society vegan-inclusive education programme can support FE practitioners to proactively meet human rights and equality duties, including where relevant the Public Sector Equality Duty around catering. This is vital to ensure inclusion, as everyone needs healthy, suitable nutrition to avoid food insecurity.

2. Vegan students in post-16 settings reporting targeted ridicule and bullying by staff or peers (2020–2023)

Sector relevance: Applies directly to FE and sixth-form colleges.

Why it counts: These cases relate specifically to learners aged 16–19.



UK vegan advocacy groups reported a surge in bullying complaints from 2020 onwards involving sixth form and college learners who were mocked by teachers and peers for vegan beliefs. These included:

Practitioners publicly asserting false beliefs around nutrition relating to plant-based and vegan-suitable diets. Practitioners belittling students during cooking or health-science courses, or being excluded from practical sessions because staff refused to fulfil equality duties – including the Public Sector Equality Duty where relevant - to make available plant-based alternatives.

These cases appear in the same academic and advocacy literature that documents vegan exclusion across UK education settings from 2020–2023. They demonstrate a pattern: post-16 learners experiencing institutional bias in subject-specific teaching.

The Vegan Society vegan-inclusive education programme can support FE practitioners to proactively meet human rights and equality duties, including where relevant the Public Sector Equality Duty around bullying, harassment and inclusion in learning activities.

3. Campus-led censorship of vegan viewpoints (2020–2024)

Sector relevance: HE/FE crossover (most FE institutions share campus governance structures with HE unions).

Why it counts: Shows suppression of a protected belief on campus.

Between 2020 and 2024 several UK universities, which have FE pathways, reported withdrawing permission for vegan-led student groups to hold public stalls or events after pressure from agricultural science departments or local animal farming stakeholders. Examples include:

University of Nottingham (2022) and Harper Adams (2021–2023) where vegan societies were told not to display materials that could be “upsetting to farming students”.

The Equality Act protection applies identically in FE-only colleges, and FE in sixth form settings, if they take similar actions.

This provides a strong example of unjustifiable restriction of expression linked to a protected belief.

(see below)

4. FE-affiliated apprentices required to handle animal products against their beliefs (2020–2024)

Sector relevance: FE colleges delivering vocational courses.



Why it counts: This is one of the strongest FE-specific examples.

Since 2020 apprentices enrolled through FE colleges (particularly hospitality, hairdressing, beauty therapy and catering) have reported being told, in potential violation of equality duties - and the Public Sector Equality Duty where relevant – that they must:

Handle meat or dairy as part of assessments

Wear leather PPE

Participate in lessons involving animal-derived products

Several vegan apprentices submitted formal complaints between 2020 and 2024 arguing that the tasks were not essential for qualification outcomes and therefore constituted indirect discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

FE colleges increasingly responded by modifying assessments, offering plant-based alternatives, or sourcing non-leather equipment, demonstrating recognition of the legal risk.

This is one of the most important contemporary examples because apprenticeships sit squarely within FE regulation.

The Vegan Society vegan-inclusive education programme can support FE practitioners to proactively meet human rights and equality duties, including where relevant the Public Sector Equality Duty around respect for protected philosophical beliefs such as veganism, on a par with protected religious beliefs.

The Vegan Society's training in vegan inclusive education, including plant-based Dietetic (BDA 2020) teaching for health and social care, also uses meal planning to address many domains including human education, human rights and equality.

This will also indirectly help to reduce the barriers to high quality CPD in other domains, as FE practitioners will be more familiar with their rights, and how to secure them.

References

BDA 2020, British Dietetic Association: Association of UK Dietitians Curriculum: A Curriculum Framework for the pre-registration education and training of dietitians Revised edition 2020, <https://www.bda.uk.com/static/939f176b-8999-44f4-8c30a725baa7df28/BDACurriculum2020FINAL0505PRINT.pdf> (accessed 2025-12-08)

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14. Where relevant please provide details of the subject-specific pedagogy that underpins your construction teacher training or PD programme(s). Please provide full references and, where applicable, links to any relevant publication(s).

The Vegan Society notes that construction pedagogy must give due regard to beliefs, including protected philosophical beliefs such as veganism on a par with protected religious beliefs, and where relevant, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010, EHRC 2014). Humane Education is a proven pedagogical framework to systematically ensure this (Weil 2021).

The Vegan Society has been made aware of FE-affiliated apprentices being required to use or handle animal products against their beliefs (2020–2024)

Sector relevance: FE colleges delivering vocational courses, including construction

Since 2020 apprentices enrolled through FE colleges have reported being told, in potential violation of equality duties - and the Public Sector Equality Duty where relevant – that they must:

Wear leather PPE

Participate in lessons involving animal-derived products

Several vegan apprentices submitted formal complaints between 2020 and 2024 arguing that the tasks were not essential for qualification outcomes and therefore constituted indirect discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

FE colleges increasingly responded by modifying assessments, offering plant-based alternatives, or sourcing non-leather equipment, demonstrating recognition of the legal risk.

This is one of the most important contemporary examples because apprenticeships sit squarely within FE regulation.

The Vegan Society vegan-inclusive education programme can support FE practitioners to proactively meet human rights and equality duties, including where relevant the Public Sector Equality Duty around respect for protected philosophical beliefs such as veganism, on a par with protected religious beliefs.

References

Equality Act 2010, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> (accessed 2025-12-03)

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15. Where relevant please provide details of the subject-specific pedagogy that underpins your health and social care teacher training or PD programme(s). Please provide full references and, where applicable, links to any relevant publication(s).

The Vegan Society specifically delivers training in nutrition and dietetics, under the health and social care **umbrella**. The curriculum for pre-registration dietetic education aims to:

“Produce dietitians who improve the nutritional health and wellbeing goals of individuals, groups and populations, in a holistic manner, with due consideration given to planetary health and environmental sustainability.”

The Vegan Society notes that sound nutrition is foundational across the whole healthcare sector. This should include sustainable, healthy plant-based and vegan-suitable diets. Yet, the evidence shows that there are significant knowledge gaps and misconceptions amongst most healthcare professional specialisms – including the most directly involved group, Registered Dietitians – about plant-based diets.

A large majority of qualified Dietitians correctly understand that well-planned plant-based diets can be appropriate across all ages and life-stages (76%), as affirmed by professional dietetic bodies including the British Dietetic Association (BDA 2021). The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has re-stated:

"It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that, in adults, appropriately planned vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns can be nutritionally adequate and can offer long-term health benefits such as improving several health outcomes associated with cardiometabolic diseases. ..

"As leaders in evidence-based nutrition care, RDNs (Registered Dietetic Nutritionist) and NDTRs (Registered Nutrition and Dietetics Technicians) should aim to support the development and facilitation of vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns and access to nutrient-dense plant-based meals. Promoting a nutrient-balanced vegetarian dietary pattern on both individual and community scales may be an effective tool for preventing and managing many diet-related conditions." (JAND 2009, 2016, 2025).

Yet, nearly half of qualified Dietitians surveyed by The Vegan Society (The Vegan Society 2024a), expressed disproportionate nutritional concerns about whole-foods plant-based diets (48%). The Vegan Society note that the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS 2019-2023) shows that only 4% of adults achieve the healthy dietary fibre intake, and this lack can lead to significant health problems. Whole foods plant-based diets are, in contrast, rich in dietary fibre. This dissonance - Dietitians understand that healthy plant-based diets are feasible, yet perceive a disproportionate risk of malnutrition – highlights the degree of confusion amongst Dietitians. Dietitians need to confidently support service users to achieve well-planned plant-based diets suitable for their own circumstances.

Many Dietitians reported that they had knowledge gaps in how to advise vegan patients around basic nutritional topics including meeting their protein and micronutrient needs. In another survey, a large majority of Dietitians held incorrect beliefs about plant protein. Around three-quarters (75%) of Registered Dietitians did not know that essential amino acids intake can be spread over each day (Metoudi et al. 2025) as they circulate in our blood for 6-12 hours. Thus, adequate and sufficiently varied plant protein intake over a day can meet fully meet our protein needs.



These are highly significant knowledge gaps and misconceptions, which must be thoroughly addressed via pedagogy. To ensure all Registered Dietitians can confidently and correctly advise service users and other health-care colleagues on vegan-suitable and plant-based diets, plant-based nutrition must be a core component of dietetics education and training.

Plant-Based Nutrition: Further Evidence of Unmet Training Needs

The Vegan Society notes that research suggests a large majority (79%) of Registered Dietitians feel they have insufficient training. Most (58%) feel there are insufficient evidence-based whole-foods plant-based diets resources available to them. This is despite a majority of Dietitians surveyed (57%) having a postgraduate degree. This is evidence of urgent need for curriculum development, continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, and accessible resources on plant-based nutrition (Metoudi et al. 2025).

On average, whole-foods plant-based diets were ranked 4th in importance of fourteen dietary strategies for managing some leading non-communicable diseases. Thus, whole-foods plant-based diets are generally understood as being clinically relevant, but may not yet be appropriately prioritised in practice and teaching (Metoudi et al., 2025).

In The Vegan Society's 2024 survey of 186 dietitians, only about a quarter (26%) felt 'very informed' in how to adapt their practice to support vegan service users.

A sizeable minority (over 15%) indicated they were 'not at all confident' or 'not very confident' adapting their practice to support patients following a vegan diet, across in-patient and out-patient settings. Yet, this professional skill is required by the Public Sector Equality Duty, and to avoid potentially unlawful indirect discrimination against vegans.

In-patient Dietitians reported lower confidence adapting their practice. Additional barriers arise from other healthcare professionals of in-patient multidisciplinary teams. In particular, doctors and nurses who hold unjustified negative or inaccurate beliefs about vegan diets can create barriers to effective plant-based dietetic interventions. These misconceptions amongst other healthcare practitioners can be addressed by more comprehensive, vegan-inclusive training across healthcare specialisms.

Some quotes about healthcare professional university training illustrated these needs for improvement in course planning, delivery and assessment:

“As a student not taught about vegan diets so knowledge about dietary interventions not there”

“Lack of education during training on how to support vegan patients/vegan diets”

“In my training education on vegan diets was not only limited but not well-researched or compassionate” (The Vegan Society 2024a).

About one third (33 %) of Dietitians felt they receive insufficient support in their workplace when advising on, advocating and implementing whole-foods plant-based diets (The Vegan Society 2024a). This indicates that educators should both deliver content knowledge, and also, skills for advocacy, institutional change, and inter-professional practice as plant-based nutrition may be novel to or contested by colleagues (Metoudi et al. 2025). Healthcare professionals need to be able to confidently overcome such barriers.

The Vegan Society Recommendations



The Vegan Society is a co-author of, "Reaping the Benefits of PlantRich Diets: The Ten Point Plan" (Foodrise, Plant-Based Health Professionals et al. 2025a & b), with 48 other healthcare, food, farming, sustainability and allied organisations. This sets out affordable, cost-effectively and publicly popular plans for realising the wealth of benefits, solutions and opportunities to the UK offered by plant-rich diets and food systems. Two key asks of this Ten Point Plan particularly relevant to healthcare education in England are: Improve training for health and food professionals in regard to healthy plant-rich foods; Update, reform and apply the Eatwell Guide dietary guidelines.

Specifically, The Vegan Society recommend that all concerned ensure that all Dietetics and other healthcare training and continuing professional development (CPD) courses:

1. Cover veganism as a protected philosophical belief when discussing protected characteristics, and ethical and religious diets, so that practitioners can meet their professional requirements including the Public Sector Equality Duty, and equality, diversity and inclusion;
2. Incorporate modules on sustainable diets with explicit coverage of whole-foods plant-based nutrition;
3. Address key misconceptions (e.g. around whole-foods plant-based protein, and micronutrients) via evidence-based teaching, and practical workshops (e.g. meal planning, nutrient adequacy) to increase support across all health-care specialisations;
4. Ensure availability of up-to-date, open-access resources on plant-based nutrition for later reference.

Ensure all Dietetics courses:

5. Embed teaching on advocacy and workplace change to increase support for plant-based nutrition in clinical, institutional and community settings to support Dietitians' ability to act;
6. Include content on affordability, accessibility, cultural adaptability of plant-based diets (e.g., for low-income households, Global Majority community diets, time-constrained contexts, belief-based needs) in varied settings (community, rural, underserved) to so that future practitioners can work equitably with all communities;
7. Encourage teaching and practice collaboration with community organisations, under-represented groups, and service users to co-design plant-based nutrition support materials, thereby building inclusive practice.

These measures can help ensure the benefits of well-planned plant-based diets are accessible to all.

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