



# Sam

*aged 14, Year 9 Student*



*I decided to stop eating meat last year. It was my own choice – nobody made me do it. I did it because I care about animals. In the UK, we are allowed to make choices like this. We call this a freedom, or a liberty. My mum was surprised at first, but she said it was my right to choose. Now I cook my own food sometimes. I feel like it is one small way I can do something that matches what I believe.*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

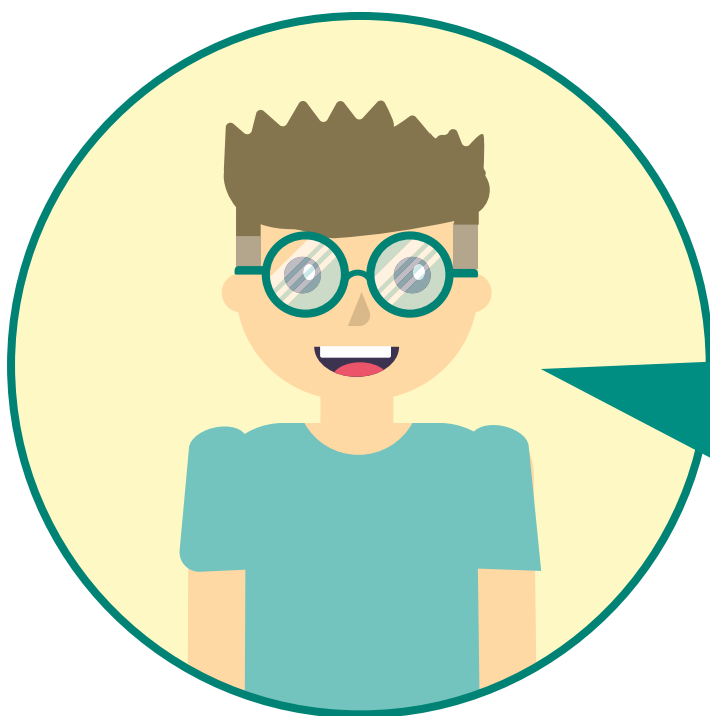
In the UK, everyone has the right to freedom of thought and conscience. This means you can hold your own beliefs about right and wrong.

Sam made a choice that matched their beliefs. What does the word 'liberty' mean? Can you think of another choice you make that shows a freedom you have?



# Terry

*aged 54, Dairy Farmer*



*My family has farmed cattle for three generations. We care deeply about our animals – they live outdoors, they are well fed, and we know each one by name. When people choose veganism without understanding where food comes from, it feels like a rejection of everything we have built: my livelihood, my community, my way of life. I support people's right to make their own choices, but I worry that if everyone went vegan, thousands of farming families would lose everything.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

In the UK, livestock farming results in the slaughter of **tens of millions of animals every year**, including around **11 million sheep and lambs** and over **11 million pigs**.

Is Terry's right to earn a living in tension with a vegan's right to freedom of conscience? Can both be precious liberties at the same time?



# Priya

*aged 15, Year 10 Student and Climate Activist*



*I went vegan two years ago after learning about the environmental impact of meat and dairy. Livestock farming produces around 14.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. I know one person's choice will not fix the climate, but I believe that when citizens make decisions together it sends a signal to businesses and governments. My diet is one of the most powerful tools I have as a young person who cannot yet vote. It is the most active citizenship I can do right now.*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

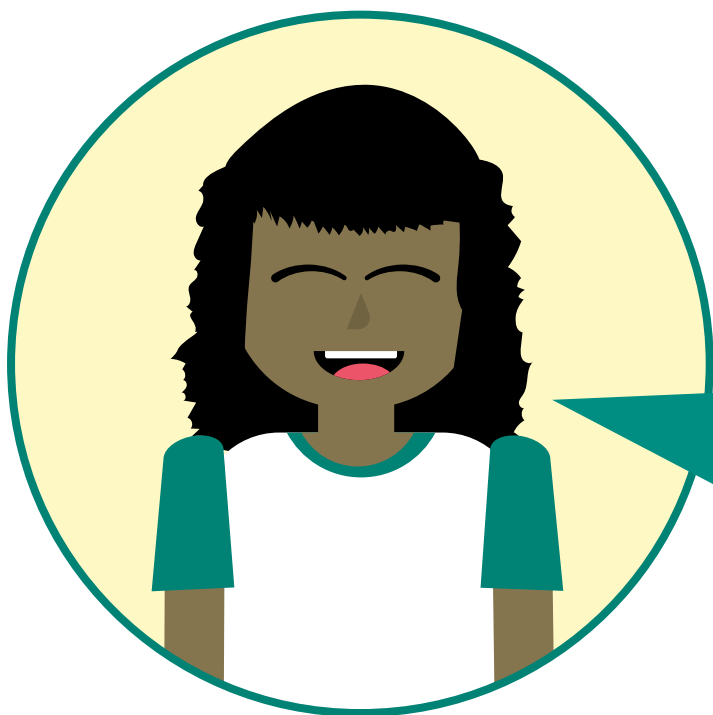
The number of vegans in the UK grew from around 150,000 in 2014 to over 600,000 by 2019 — a 400% increase in five years.

**Priya sees consumer choice as a form of political participation. Is it as powerful as voting? What can consumer choice do that voting cannot, and vice versa?**



# Dr Amara

*aged 41, NHS GP*



*As a doctor, I see patients across a wide range of backgrounds. A well-planned vegan diet can be healthy – it is associated with lower rates of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. But I am cautious about one-size-fits-all advice. Some patients have conditions that make veganism difficult. Others come from cultures where food carries deep significance. Every citizen has the right to make informed choices about their own body, but 'informed' requires good education and access to healthcare, which not everyone has equally.*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

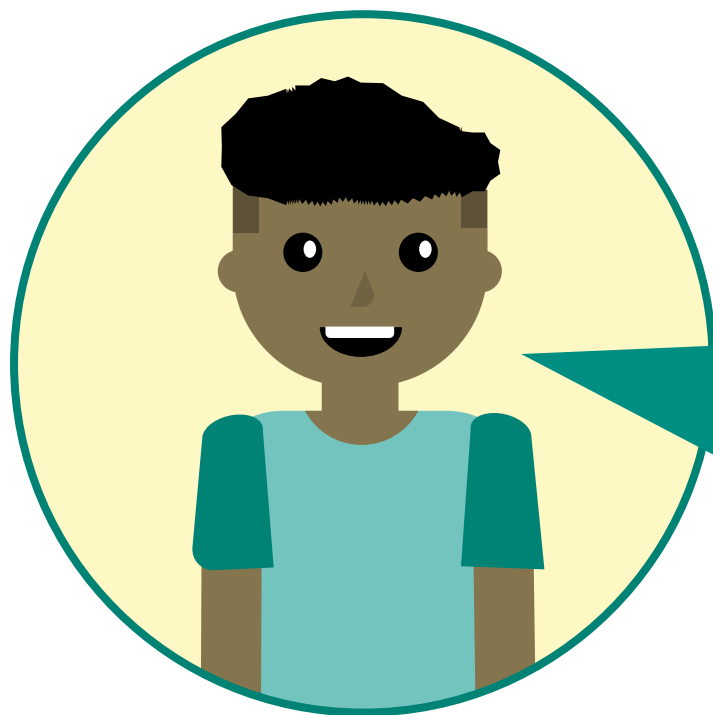
A 2023 NHS report found that plant-based diets, when well-planned, can support healthy living at all life stages.

Dr Amara says 'informed' choice is key. Is consumer choice truly free if not everyone has the same knowledge or access to healthy food?



# Joe

*aged 38, Secondary School Teacher*



*I grew up working in my uncle's butcher shop on Saturdays. I eat meat, but I also teach citizenship and I think veganism is a brilliant case study for this subject. It shows how personal values become public choices, how individual actions can scale into social movements, and how rights can sometimes conflict. What I tell my students is this: whatever you eat, be able to explain why. A citizen who acts without thinking is not really exercising their liberty – they are just following habits.*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

The UK national curriculum for citizenship requires pupils to 'present reasoned arguments' and 'evaluate viewpoints' — skills that apply to everyday choices as well as politics.

**Should we be able to explain our food choices? Does thinking carefully about why you do something change whether it counts as an act of citizenship?**



# Zara

*aged 44, Administrator*



*People sometimes think being vegan just means not eating meat. For me it is much more than that. I check every label, including cosmetics and clothing, to see if it was tested on animals or contains animal products. If it does, I won't use it. I think carefully about which companies I give my money to. I even looked into my pension fund and moved it when I found out it was investing in companies that carry out animal testing. My veganism shapes every financial decision I make, every product I buy, every part of how I live. It isn't a diet. It is a deeply held moral belief – as serious to me as a religious conviction that guides my everything.*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

In the UK, freedom of thought, conscience and religion is protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The UK has the Equality Act (2010) which brought numerous old laws under one new law which protects people from discrimination in education, employment and in the provision of goods and services. In 2020, a UK tribunal confirmed that ethical veganism can be protected as a philosophical belief.

**Zara**  
says veganism affects every part of her life. Does that surprise you? What does it tell us about the difference between a diet choice and a legally protected philosophical belief? Do you think a belief that affects every part of your life deserves legal protection? If so, what kind?





# Dr Martina

*aged 44, Animal Behaviour Scientist*



*I study pig cognition. What I can tell you, based on the scientific evidence, is this: pigs are amongst the most intelligent non-human animals on the planet. They demonstrate self-awareness, solve problems, feel fear and anticipate future events. In welfare terms, a pig in a standard UK farm experiences confinement, social stress and slaughter — none of which they can consent to or escape. A pig has no voice in UK law, no rights as a citizen, and no liberty whatsoever. Whose freedom gets to count?*

## DID YOU KNOW?

Pigs have been shown in scientific research to pass a version of the mirror self-recognition test, play videos games and comfort other distressed pigs. The Animal Welfare Act 2006 requires that their needs are met, but does not grant them legal rights.

UK law gives humans rights that animals do not have. Is this morally justified? If so, on what grounds? Could this change? What would it mean for citizenship, law and consumer choice if it did?



# James

*aged 62, Church Leader and Community Worker*



*In my faith tradition, food is connected to community, celebration and identity. Many of our most important gatherings centre on shared meals that include meat. I completely respect the right of anyone to be vegan – freedom of conscience is a value I hold deeply too – but I sometimes feel that vegan campaigning is dismissive of religious and cultural food traditions. Citizenship means respecting diversity, including the diversity of how different communities eat and what food means to them.*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Veganism is protected under the European Convention on Human Rights and is a protected characteristic for the purposes of British equality law.

**James raises cultural and religious food traditions as a liberty. How should citizens balance different liberties when they come into conflict with one another?**