

# Give children money to eat their greens

**Mary O'Connor**

PARENTS should give their children financial inducements to eat their greens in order to help turn around the nation's health, according to a leading obesity charity.

Tam Fry, of the National Obesity Forum, believes that agreeing to put small amounts of money into a designated bank account, in exchange for eating vegetables such as broccoli and brussels sprouts, could prove an effective solution to a perennial problem.

His intervention came after a YouGov survey last week found that 29% of parents in Scotland have given up putting greens on their children's plates at some point.

A further 37% of parents

with children aged six months to 18 years voiced frustration when trying to get their children to eat vegetables at mealtimes, and some have encountered "tantrums at the dinner table".

Fry said: "Green vegetables have a bitter taste to children but they must understand from an early age that not everything is sweet. Any reward you might offer them to eat their vegetables must be something of value.

"Money is always a good incentive. It is a tangible reward for children eating their vegetables but allows them to understand the value of money and how to save it for later in life.

"It is also a way of introducing them to another aspect

of growing up and becoming responsible."

Under Fry's proposals, children would be taught to keep their own account books to manage and save their money. If children manage to eat their vegetables and accumulate enough money, they could buy themselves a small gift, he said.

Just 12% of Scottish children ate their five-a-day in 2015, a figure Obesity Action Scotland condemned as "worryingly low".

Miles Briggs, mental health spokesman for the Scottish Conservatives, said: "It is clear for all to see that obesity is a public health crisis and drastic action may be needed to firmly address this issue. Therefore, all ideas ought to be

considered." Fry's comments follow the launch of Eat Better, Feel Better, a Scottish government campaign to help parents encourage children to eat more vegetables.

The initiative aims to support parents in making healthier changes to the way they shop, cook and eat, and ministers hope this will have a positive impact on children.

The government-led survey found that broccoli and cauliflower were the least desirable vegetables for children.

Dr Anna Strachan, policy officer for Obesity Action Scotland, said that parents need to change their eating habits to encourage their children to copy them and eat healthier food. She recommended that mothers incor-



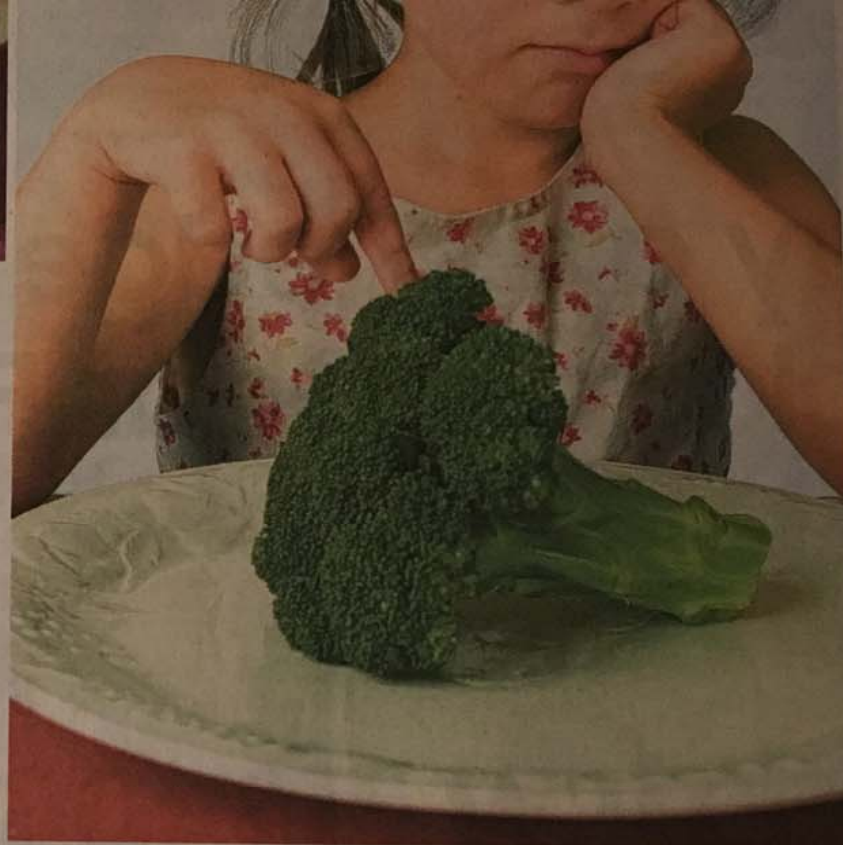
porate vegetable flavours into their diets during pregnancy and while breastfeeding to help young children get used

to the taste. "Repeated exposure to new and rejected vegetables is the best way to improve acceptance. This is why the role of parents, carers, schools and anyone who feeds children is crucial," said Strachan.

"We should not only serve vegetables but most importantly eat and enjoy them ourselves. And we can do better – only 21% of Scottish adults had five a day in 2015."

A Scottish government spokesman said: "We are committed to addressing Scotland's excess weight and will be consulting on the development of our new diet and obesity strategy this year – and how we can support people to make healthy choices."

Fry, far left, says money is a 'tangible reward for children eating their vegetables'; left, just 12% of Scottish kids ate their five-a-day in 2015



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