

Redditch MP Pushes for Stricter School Allergy Safety Measures

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As the Member of Parliament for Redditch and the Villages, I am privileged to represent our community's concerns at Westminster. Among the many issues raised by constituents, one stands out as both urgent and overlooked: the safety of children with allergies in schools. Parents, teachers, and pupils have shared alarming stories about the lack of consistent protections, highlighting a system that leaves vulnerable children exposed to serious risks. The absence of clear, enforceable rules is a failure that demands immediate action.

Currently, schools are not legally required to have an allergy policy, nor must they train staff in recognising or responding to allergic reactions. There is also no statutory requirement for schools to keep spare adrenaline auto-injectors on site. This creates a patchwork of protection, where a child's safety hinges on the goodwill or resources of their school. Data from the Anaphylaxis Campaign indicates that around half of schools hold spare adrenaline auto-injectors, and approximately a quarter do not have any staff trained to manage allergic emergencies.

The stakes are high. Studies show that 16-18% of food allergy reactions occur in schools, and around 25% of first-time anaphylactic episodes take place there. Many children with undiagnosed allergies or without prescribed AAls are left vulnerable, as schools rely entirely on pupils bringing their injectors. This is simply not good enough. Food allergies affect approximately two children per classroom, and hospital admissions for severe allergic reactions have more than doubled, rising over 100% in the past 20 years. Between 2008 and 2018, food-induced hospital admissions in children almost quadrupled, but legislative protections in schools remain unchanged.

To address this, I have introduced the Schools (Allergy Safety) Bill, a practical and overdue step to protect our children. The Bill mandates that every school must have a clear allergy policy, including individual allergy plans for pupils with known conditions. It also requires all staff to undergo mandatory allergy training and ensures schools are equipped with spare AAls, with staff trained to use them effectively. These measures are not bureaucratic red tape; they are common-sense steps that could save lives.

In a recent interview with *The Times*, allergy campaigner Sarah Thompson, whose daughter experienced a severe reaction at school, said: "No parent should fear that their child's school is not equipped to keep them safe; it is a basic duty of care." Her words echo the concerns of many in Redditch and beyond.

The current Labour Government has yet to signal support for such reforms, leaving families to navigate a system that feels indifferent to their children's safety. This cannot continue. By implementing these changes, we can provide parents with peace of mind and ensure schools are prepared to act swiftly in an emergency. Our children deserve nothing less.