

Chartwells partner with the Natasha Allergy Research Foundation

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Chartwells has partnered with The Natasha Allergy Research Foundation (NARF) to launch the charity's new educational programme, Allergy School.

With recent research revealing that the number of people in England with a food allergy more than doubled between 2008 and 2018, the free educational resources include films, lesson plans, and first aid advice for teachers and educators to empower and raise awareness of allergies among young people.

Aimed at children aged 3 to 11, Allergy School stars a puppet named Arlo, an armadillo who is allergic to milk, eggs, and sesame, raising awareness amongst children about allergies. The programme aims to make food education fun and engaging while destigmatising food allergies in the classroom.

Natasha's Foundation, the UK's food allergy charity, was co-founded by Tanya and Nadim Ednan-Laperouse in 2019, following the tragic death of their daughter Natasha aged 15 in 2016. The charity aims to improve the lives of people living with food allergies and to keep them safe, by bringing about positive change through campaigning, medical research, and raising awareness of allergies. Natasha's Foundation was the driving force behind the introduction of Natasha's Law, which requires food businesses to label pre-packaged foods with full ingredient lists.

Chartwells is working closely with Natasha's Foundation to promote Allergy School and encourage implementation across almost 1,300 partner primary and preparatory schools across the UK. They already have a robust approach to managing allergens within schools, with a team of 11 medical diet nutritionists responsible for auditing, compliance checks, training, and development of bespoke menus. They serve over 6,500 medical diet meals a week across the UK, catering to the 14 EU allergens as well as bespoke

allergies such as lentils, tomatoes, pea protein, and more.

Every year Chartwells also educates over 100,000 children on nutrition, allergies, and sustainability through their [Beyond the Chartwells Kitchen programme](#), utilising their [Spotlight Session](#) digital learning resources. They will be incorporating Allergy School into these sessions going forward as part of their ongoing commitment to making food education accessible.

Additionally, Chartwells is leading a Food Allergy Safety in Education working group, bringing together other caterers in the sector to share best practices and develop a standardised approach to managing food allergies in schools.

Meg Hughes, Director of Nutrition and Sustainability at Chartwells, said: “At Chartwells we’re passionate about making sure every pupil has access to delicious, nutritious food to fuel their learning. We already have robust policies in place to support children with allergies within our partner schools, but early education is key to building understanding, reducing stigma, and saving lives.

“This belief is at the heart of NARF’s mission, so we’re proud to be working with them to support the launch of Allergy School. This is such a fantastic, accessible resource for teaching children the importance of allergies and normalising medical diets, ensuring every child feels safe, included, and empowered.”

Jan Parnell, Director of Education at NARF, said: “We recognise that nurseries, schools and out-of-school settings are seeing more children with food allergies come through their doors than ever before. Unfortunately, there is a lack of understanding about the seriousness of food allergies and how to manage them.

“We want to end the challenges that children with food allergies face so that they can be fully involved in all activities in and out of school. We would urge all schools to use our free resources.”

Tanya Ednan-Laperouse OBE, said: “It can be really hard to keep a child with food allergies safe in school. Finding a nursery where Natasha would be safe was extremely difficult. Natasha at times was bullied at school because of her food allergies and this was incredibly stressful and isolating for both her and our family. Government, schools, teachers, parents and pupils need to come together to support children with food allergies in this country.

“Today we are kickstarting that process. Our new Allergy School will transform levels of awareness and understanding of food allergies to ensure all children are safe and able to participate fully at school.”

Allergy School’s resources, which consist of films, lesson plans, first aid advice, self-assessment checklists, assembly packs, top tips, and online awareness training; along with FAQs, advice and support, can be downloaded for free at www.allergyschool.org.uk.