

Janice Shah lives with three of her children Bartek, Zara, and Steven in a home they rent from a Housing Association in South London. Janice's fourth and eldest child lives in a nearby flat with her four year old son.

Janice has been out of work for over a decade and has really noticed the cost of food rise dramatically over the past few years, particularly as her Council Tax benefit is being reduced yet her rent has increased.



Janice buys much of her food from Iceland, which is cheaper than other supermarkets and, because it's frozen, the food lasts longer than fresh produce.

The Iceland she uses is close to the children's school, and so she fits her shopping in around the school run.

Janice has shopped there for a number of years now. While she'd rather shop somewhere which sells fresh and better quality food, she feels that Iceland is the only available option for her given her financial situation.



Janice eldest son, Bartek, is autistic and has strong attachments to particular types of food. At present, the only meal he'll eat is rice, chicken and black bean sauce.

Bartek's food habits mean that much of Janice's budget is spent on him, ensuring he had food that he likes and is able to eat.

While this can be costly, Janice has found ways around this. She buys large bags of rice from a local market and stocks up on frozen chicken in Iceland.



Janice 's eldest daughter, Tamsin, has a car and takes Janice shopping fortnightly which allows her buy special offers in bulk. Typically they'll go to Sainsbury's where Janice is able to buy value range noodles at 11p a packet. The two youngest children will often eat one packet of noodles each as their evening meal, and then snack on crisps and sweets.

Janice worries that if her daughter is no longer able to drive her to the supermarket her food bill will rise, as she won't be able to purchase special offers and certain products she relies on in her local Iceland.



There isn't a breakfast club available at Zara and Steven's school, and this is a service that Janice would really appreciate.

Janice noted that breakfast food, such as cereal, milk and fruit, is expensive and often unaffordable to her. This means that Zara and Steven often eat biscuits or crisps for breakfast which have been bought whilst on special offer in Iceland, Sainsbury's or the local pound shop.



In Zara and Steven's school, children who receive Free School Meals have to sit on a separate lunch table. Zara doesn't mind this as many of her friends also receive FSMs, but Steven isn't happy with this arrangement as it means he doesn't get to spend lunch time with his friends.

Steven is currently in his final year of primary school, and asked Janice if he could take packed lunches in for his final year so that he could eat with his friends. Janice doesn't make Steven a sandwich as he's told he doesn't like them, and instead takes crisps, a fruit bar and some sweets. Steven then trades these in the playground, usually swapping for a blue slush puppy, which he claims gives him energy.

Janice finds this expensive and, in order for Steven to have a packed lunch, has had to restrict the amount of snacks her children eat at home.



With Janice already struggling to cope with the cost of food, there is a worry that this will worsen in the future as prices rise and her Council Tax Benefit is cut. Further, with two of her children nearing secondary school age, she worries that they will be stigmatised for receiving FSM.

If the method for receiving FSM is identifiable, Janice has already decided that she will make her children a packed lunch each, even though this will come at significant extra cost.

While Janice is concerned about her children starting secondary school, Zara is really excited as she'll then be able to take food technology classes and practice the recipes she reads about in the cook books she collects.

