

**E**nhancing **P**olicy **I**n S**C**hool Food (EPIC) study

**We all want children to eat well, including when they are at school. We have recently carried out research about the food that is served in secondary schools and how this influences the food that pupils choose to eat** **at school. We are now conducting a new study to use these findings to enhance and adapt national school food policy. We would like schools and catering teams to be involved in this process.**

Who we are: We are a team of researchers at the University of Birmingham interested in improving children’s diets. This research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

What we’re doing: We have recently carried out research examining how well secondary schools follow the national policies for supporting healthy eating ([the FUEL study](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/applied-health/research/chronic-disease-epidemiology-and-management/FUEL-study.aspx)). The aim of the EPIC study is to share our findings from this study with different groups of people connected to schools. This will include school students, parents, school senior leaders, business managers and catering representatives. We will encourage these groups to think about how these findings relate to their own experiences of school food. We will also ask what they think are the main problems with school food policy and possible solutions. We will then work with policy makers responsible for school food to identify changes that could be made to national school food policy. We will ask them to think about which changes are most likely to be successful in supporting secondary school students to eat a healthier diet. This study will give schools and catering teams the chance to shape policy that affects them.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to take part in the study, you will be invited to attend a workshop between March and July 2023 with others working in schools and a team of researchers. We will share our research findings with the group and ask you to talk about how these relate to your own experiences of school food. We will ask your views on how school food policy could be enhanced or adapted. The workshop will take place online. We will choose a time that is convenient for those attending. The workshop will last 1.5 hours. We will ask for your permission to audio-record the workshop so we can listen back to it.

What data will we collect? During the workshop, we will ask you to fill in a short survey to provide information about your age, gender, ethnicity, your job role and how long you have been in your role. This is to make sure we are including the views of a wide range of people in our research. If you would prefer not to answer these questions, there will be an option to say so in the survey.

What are the benefits and risks of taking part in the study? The views of school and catering staff taking part in this study will directly inform the development of national policy on school food. In turn, this may help to shape the health of future secondary school pupils. You will also receive a £25 shopping voucher as a thank you for your time. We will reimburse any childcare costs required for you to attend.

There are no anticipated risks in taking part in this study

What will we do with your information? Any information you provide and the recordings of the workshop will be kept confidentially on a secure database at the University of Birmingham for 10 years. Your personal details will be stored in a separate database from the other information you provide. Only members of the research team or representatives from relevant regulatory authorities will have access to your individual information. A transcript will be made of the audio-recording, which will be kept securely and have any information that could identify you removed from it. An external company may be used for transcription. In this case, your audio-recording and transcripts will be transferred securely. The information from the study will be used in several reports but you will not be identifiable in any of these reports. We may also use your quotes in our research reports or in workshops with policy makers, but we will not use your name alongside any quotes. The legal justification we have under data protection law for processing your personal data is that it is necessary for our research, which is a task we carry out in the public interest. For information about your rights and what we do with personal data see our privacy notice: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/epic-study](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/epic-study).

Who else is taking part? Other senior school leaders and catering representatives from other schools have been invited to take part in this workshop. Other groups will also take part in separate workshops within the study to gain their thoughts and experiences on school food and policy. These groups include secondary school students, parents, and senior school leaders and catering staff. We will also invite people from Local Authorities and other organisations connected to schools. Policy makers from the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education will be invited to take part in a series of meetings.

What happens at the end of the study? We will write a report at the end of the study including a list of changes that the government could make to national school food policy. It is hoped these changes will be put in place by the government. The results of the study will also be published in scientific journals and reports for a variety of audiences and presented at scientific conferences and meetings.

What if I have more questions or do not understand something? You can contact the research team at the University of Birmingham (contact details at the foot of the page) to discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

What happens now if I decide to take part? Please complete the consent form online at <https://redcap.link/catering>.

What if I change my mind: If at any time during the study, you no longer want to take part, let us know by email or telephone (contact details at the foot of the page). Any information that you have already contributed to the study through participation in meetings will be retained and used in the study analysis, as it will not be possible to separate this information from the information provided by other study participants. You will not be identified in any reports arising from the research.

**Thank you for considering taking part in our study**