

**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 improve national school food policy. We would like parents to be involved in this process.**

**Who we are:** We are a team of researchers at the University of Birmingham. We have an interest in improving children’s diets. The National Institute for Health and Care Research has funded this research.

**What we’re doing:** We have recently carried out research into the food on offer at secondary schools ([FUEL study](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/applied-health/research/chronic-disease-epidemiology-and-management/FUEL-study.aspx)). We looked at how schools followed the national policies for healthy eating. 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, and school staff. We will encourage these groups to think about their own experiences of school food. We will also ask what they think are the main problems with school food policy. We will ask them to think about possible solutions. We will then work with policy makers to identify ways to improve national school food policy. This study will give parents the chance to shape policy that affects their children.

**What we will ask you to do:** If you agree to take part, we will invite you to a workshop with other parents and a team of researchers. This will take place between March and July 2023. We will share our research findings with the group. We will ask you to talk about your own experiences of your child’s school food. We will ask for your views on how to improve school food policy. The workshop will take place at your child’s school. We will choose a time that suits most parents. 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. There may also be an option to join an online meeting.

**What data will we collect?** During the workshop, we will ask you to fill in a short survey. This will include questions about your age, gender, ethnicity and the area where you live. We will also ask questions about the age of your child and whether they are eligible for free school meals. This is to make sure we include 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 parents 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 travel costs for attending the workshops. We will also reimburse any childcare costs required for you to attend.

**What will we do with your information?** We will keep any information about you confidential. We will store it on a secure database at the University of Birmingham. It will be destroyed after 10 years. We will store your personal details separate from the other information you provide. Only members of the research team and professionals responsible for monitoring research will have access to your individual information. We will make a transcript of the audio-recording. We will store this securely and remove any information that could identify you. We will use an external company for transcription. We will transfer the audio-recording and transcripts securely. We will use the information from the study in several reports. 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. We will not use your name alongside any quotes. We must provide you with a legal justification for processing your personal data. The justification is that it is necessary for our research. This is a task we carry out in the public interest. For information, see our privacy notice here: [www.birmingham.ac.uk/epic-study](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/epic-study).

**Who else is taking part?** Other parents at the school have been invited to take part in this workshop. We will also hold another workshop with a group of parents at another school. We will also hold workshops with school students and school staff members. We will also invite people from Local Authorities and other people connected to schools to take part in a workshop. We will meet with government policy makers to discuss this research. This includes people from the Department for Health and Social Care and the Department for Education.

**What happens at the end of the study?** We will write a report at the end of the study. This will include a list of changes to improve national school food policy. We hope these changes will be put in place by the government. We will also publish the results of the study in scientific journals and reports. We will present the results 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 are below). We can discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

**What happens now if I decide to take part?** Please complete the consent form here: <https://redcap.link/epicparent>. Or, you can complete the paper consent form at the end of this sheet. You should return this to the school reception. There will also be an option to complete the form when you are at the workshop. Please get in touch if you have any questions.

**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 below). We will keep any information that you have already contributed to the study. This is because it is not possible to remove your data from audio files and anonymised transcripts. We will not name you in any reports arising from the research.

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