

**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 food in secondary schools. We looked at how this influences the food that pupils choose to eat. We are now conducting a new study to use these findings to improve national school food policy. We would like young people to be part of 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 young people the chance to shape policy that affects them.

**What we will ask young people to do:** We will invite your child to a workshop with other young people. If you agree for your child to take part in the study, we will also ask for their consent. The workshop will take place at your child’s school or youth group. This will take place between March and July 2023. We will choose a time that is convenient for most young people and the school or youth group. For schools, this will take place during or straight after the school day. The workshop will last 1 hour. We will ask for your child’s permission to audio-record the workshop so we can listen back to it. We will present the findings from our research about school food. We will ask your child and the other young people in the group to discuss the key issues about school food policy. We will ask them to share their own experiences of food and eating in school.

**What data will we collect?** During the workshop, we will ask your child to fill in a short survey. This will include questions about their age, gender, ethnicity, the area where they live and whether they receive free school meals. This is to make sure we include the views of a wide range of people in our research. If your child 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 young people 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. Your child will receive a £20 shopping voucher as a thank you for their time. There are no anticipated risks in taking part in this study

**What happens to my child’s information?** We will keep any information about your child confidential. We will store it on a secure database at the University of Birmingham. It will be destroyed after 10 years. We will store their personal details separate from the other information provided. Only members of the research team and professionals responsible for monitoring research will have access to their individual information. We will make a transcript of the audio-recording. We will store this securely and remove any information that could identify your child. 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. Your child will not be identifiable in any of these reports. We may also use their quotes in our research reports or in workshops with policy makers. We will not use their 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?** We have invited other young people at the school/youth group to take part in this workshop. The group will include young people of different ages and genders. Young people will be grouped into smaller groups in the workshops. We will also hold workshops with groups of young people at other schools/youth groups. We will also hold workshops with parents and school staff. 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?** If you are happy for your child to take part in this study, you do not have to do anything. We will also ask your child if they want to take part in this study. Your child has received an information sheet already. They will have a chance to ask questions before taking part. We encourage you to discuss this information sheet with your child. They will not have to take part if they don’t want to.

If you decide that you **do not** want your child to take part in this study, please complete the opt-out form online here: <https://redcap.link/epicopt-out>. Or, you can complete the form included alongside this leaflet. You should return this to your child’s school/youth group or email it to epicfoodstudy@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

**What if I change my mind:** If at any time during the study, you no longer wish for your child to take part, let us know by email or telephone (contact details are below). We will keep any information that your child has already contributed to the study. This is because it is not possible to remove your child’s data from audio files and anonymised transcripts. We will not name your child in any reports arising from the research.

**Thank you for taking time to read about our study**