

## INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS



### **The CANTEEN Study: Free School Meals, Diet Quality and Food Insecurity in Secondary School Pupils: a Mixed Methods Study**

The school that your child attends is one of several schools in Northern Ireland (NI) and England taking part in the CANTEEN study. The study is being conducted by researchers from Queen's University Belfast and the University of Birmingham and is funded by the National Institute for Health Research. Both you and your child will be invited to take part in the study. The following information is in relation to your child taking part. Please take time to read the following information carefully to decide whether or not you wish for your child to take part.

#### **What is the aim of the study?**

Not having enough money to buy food is known as food insecurity and is common in UK children. Free School Meals are offered to children based on household income. About 1 in 5 pupils do not take their Free School Meals. The CANTEEN study aims to find out what influences whether pupils in secondary schools in Northern Ireland and England take their Free School Meal, how Free School Meals are related to the quality of the food children eat and their food insecurity and whether changing who qualifies for Free School Meals would impact the food eaten and food insecurity. Understanding these things will help us to improve national Free School Meal policy. To understand this fully, however, we also need to understand the broader school food environment, how school meals are organised, the canteen setting, the school approach to food education and the culture of the school in relation to food, and healthy eating. All of these things are likely to influence school meal uptake in general, as well as uptake of Free School Meals. The findings of the CANTEEN study are intended directly to influence school food policy and practice for the future, with the ultimate aim of improving the nutritional intake of secondary school-aged children.

The study consists of several parts:

- Pupils will be asked to complete a questionnaire requesting information about their: Free School Meal eligibility and uptake, usual school lunch consumption, money spent on food outside of school, food insecurity, wellbeing, physical activity levels and general characteristics. They will also be asked to complete a survey about their diet on two occasions.
- Parents/ guardians will be asked to complete a questionnaire about food insecurity, Free School Meal eligibility, child's usual food choices, views on Free School Meals, usual home food practices and money spent on food.
- School staff, governors and caterers will be asked to complete a questionnaire to explore their views and experiences of Free School Meals
- Schools will be asked to provide some information on pupils that take part (their educational attainment, whether they are eligible to receive Free School Meals, whether English is an additional language for them, and if they are registered as having any special educational needs).
- Schools will also provide key information (on attendance, educational attainment and Free school Meals and documents and policies related to Free School Meals). This data will be aggregated data meaning that it is provided at the group level and your child will not be identifiable from this
- Researchers will carry out an observation of the school eating environment (i.e. the canteen)

**Why is my child being invited to take part in this study?**

This study is being carried out in 32 schools in Northern Ireland and the Midlands in England. The principal at your child's school has agreed for the school to take part in the study. Your child's year group has been selected to take part in the study. Every pupil in their year group (regardless of what they eat for lunch – e.g. school meal, Free School Meals or packed lunch), is invited to take part. School staff, governors, caterers and parents/ guardians will also be invited to take part separately.

**Does my child have to take part?**

No, it is up to you to decide whether your child takes part in this study.

**IF YOU ARE HAPPY FOR YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART:**

You do not need to do anything. Your child will take part in the study if they want to.

**IF YOU DO NOT WANT YOUR CHILD TO TAKE PART:**

Please complete the parent opt-out form (attached) and return it to your child's school.

If you agree for your child to take part, we will also ask your child if they want to take part in this study. They will not have to take part if they don't want to, even if you have said they can take part. If your child is not taking part, they will take part in all other school activities as usual, they will just not be asked questions by our research team.

**What happens if I change my mind about my child taking part?**

If you agree for your child to take part in the study, your child's participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw them at any time, without giving a reason. Your child's information can be withdrawn until August 2024 when the quantitative study data will be analysed.

**If my child takes part, what will my child be asked to do?**

If you agree for your child to take part in the study, they will be asked for their consent to take part. If they agree to take part, they will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will capture information about their characteristics. The questionnaire will ask your child's full name, date of birth and study ID (which will be provided to them by the research team) for the purposes of linking their questionnaire responses to those of their parent/ guardian only; once the linking is completed, this information will be removed. Your child will also be asked for some information for the purpose of capturing the demographics of pupils taking part in the study. This information will include your child's school year group, gender identity, home postcode and ethnicity. There will be questions about their Free School Meal eligibility and uptake, their school lunch arrangements, food offered in their school, their school canteen, food education at school, school interaction with pupils, the food situation in your home (questions about food insecurity i.e. not having enough money to buy food), their physical activity, their fruit and vegetable intake and knowledge and their well-being (quality of life).

We will also ask them to complete a dietary survey on two occasions to tell us everything they have had to eat or drink over the last 24 hours using an online dietary survey software. This information is needed to answer the research questions. Researchers will visit your child's class on two occasions to provide information about the study and collect the questionnaire and dietary survey data. There will be a number of research staff (with a background check) as well as at least one teacher who will support pupils filling in the online questionnaires and dietary survey. If your child can only attend one of the sessions, they can still take part. If your child does take part, they can skip any questions that they do not wish to answer. Your child will be given a £5 voucher as a thank you for their time spent taking part which will be distributed to them by the school after data collection is complete.

**Additional information collected about your child:** An administrator at your child's school will complete a form about all pupils in your child's class who are taking part in the study. They will be asked to provide information on your child's educational attainment, whether your child is eligible to Free School Meals, whether English is an additional language, and if they are registered as having any special educational needs. They will also be asked to provide information on school attendance for pupils in your child's year group on average. We are asking for this information in order to understand more about the relationship between different pupil characteristics and uptake of Free School Meals. If you do not want your child to participate in this study, we will not collect data from the administrator on your child.

### **What are the benefits and risks of my child taking part?**

We are collecting information on dietary intake, wellbeing (quality of life) and food insecurity (not having enough money to buy food). There is a small possibility that collection of this data may be a sensitive issue for some pupils. Any concerns identified by the research team through your child's responses to the questionnaires will be raised with your child's school who will deal with it in line with their established safeguarding procedures. Data for the study will be collected from your child during school hours but will be planned to cause the least possible disruption to classes.

By taking part in our research, you and your child can help further the development of UK policy relating to Free School Meals and help shape the health of future secondary school pupils.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you have any concerns about any aspects of the study, you can contact the Chief Investigator, Professor Jayne Woodside (Telephone 028 9097 8942; Email [j.woodside@qub.ac.uk](mailto:j.woodside@qub.ac.uk)). Should you remain unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, you can contact the Research Governance Team at Queen's University Belfast (Telephone: 028 9097 2529; Email: [researchgovernance@qub.ac.uk](mailto:researchgovernance@qub.ac.uk)).

### **Will my child's taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. Your child's information will be confidential, only the researchers will know what they have said. However, we will alert a teacher in your child's school if your child's answers to questionnaires indicate that they may benefit from support in relation to food security and wellbeing. Your child's school will follow their established safeguarding procedures in relation to this.

Study data from questionnaires will be collected via Qualtrics survey software and the dietary information will be collected via Intake 24 dietary survey software. Study data will be downloaded from these software by the research team and stored confidentially (anonymised using ID numbers) in a password protected database on a secure server at Queen's University Belfast. If questionnaires are completed using a paper copy, data will be entered onto Qualtrics survey software by the research team. All information will be removed from Qualtrics and Intake 24 survey software when study analysis has been completed and checked. Paper copies of the questionnaire collected in England will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office in a secure building at the Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham. Paper copy data collected in Northern Ireland will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office (the Chief Investigators office, room 01.028, Institute of Clinical Sciences A) in a secure building at the Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast. Identifiable information (consent forms) will be stored separately from other data (e.g. questionnaires). On completion of the study, paper copy data stored at the University of Birmingham temporarily during the study will be transferred securely and stored in the Chief Investigators office with the data from Northern Ireland.

Your child's school will be asked to provide "Personal data and Sensitive Personal data" about your child which will be your child's educational attainment, whether they are eligible to receive Free School Meals, whether English is an additional language for them, and if they are registered as having any special educational needs. Schools will provide this information to the research team via email in a password protected excel file. Alternatively, schools will provide this information to the research team face-to-face as a paper copy that will be temporarily stored in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office in a secure building at the Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast or the Institute of Applied Health Research, University of Birmingham. Paper copies of this information will be entered onto excel by the research team and then the paper copy destroyed. As part of the questionnaire, your child will be asked to provide their full name, date of birth, school year group, home postcode, Free School Meals eligibility and uptake, their usual school lunch consumption, money they spent on food outside of school, physical activity levels, dietary information and food insecurity. This information is known as "Personal data". As part of the questionnaire your child will also be asked to provide their gender identity, ethnicity and their wellbeing (quality of life). This information is known as "Sensitive Personal data". All personal data and Sensitive Personal data will be pseudonymised post collection and stored in a separate database to other study data.

Only authorised members of the research team at Queen's University Belfast and the University of Birmingham will have access to your child's Personal data and Sensitive Personal data. Your child's

information in anonymised form (using ID numbers) may be shared with collaborating researcher institutions. In some instances, inspectors from regulatory authorities may need to access data for checking the quality of the research. Study documentation will be kept for 10 years from when the study has been completed to allow for full and final publication of the research results and will be held securely by the Chief Investigator. At the end of this period data that are no longer required will be securely destroyed.

*This research will be conducted in compliance with data protection legislation. For more information about how we look after your information, how to access your rights and who to contact if you have any queries or concerns about data protection please visit the Queen's University Belfast website - [www.qub.ac.uk/privacynotice/Research/ListofResearchPrivacyNotices/PrivacyNoticeforResearchParticipants.html](http://www.qub.ac.uk/privacynotice/Research/ListofResearchPrivacyNotices/PrivacyNoticeforResearchParticipants.html)*

### **What will happen to the results of the study?**

A final report will be written at the end of the study and you will have the option of receiving a summary of this report. The results of the study will also be published in scientific journals and other reports for a variety of audiences and presented at scientific conferences and meetings. Neither you nor your child will be identifiable in any of these reports, publications and presentations. Other researchers may be given access to your child's data but only in anonymised form - they will not be able to link this data to your child.

### **Has this study been approved by an ethics committee?**

Yes, this study has been approved by the School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Queen's University Belfast.

### **What if I have more questions or do not understand something?**

You can contact the research team (contact details below) to discuss any questions or concerns you have.

#### **Contact for Further Information:**

CANTEEN Study, Centre for Public Health, School of Medicine Dentistry & Biomedical Sciences, Institute of Clinical Science Block A, Grosvenor Road, Belfast BT12 6BJ.

Email: [canteenstudy@qub.ac.uk](mailto:canteenstudy@qub.ac.uk)

#### Researcher contact for all schools in Northern Ireland:

Dr Sarah Moore, CANTEEN study Research Fellow, Centre for Public Health, School of Medicine Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, Queen's University Belfast, Institute of Clinical Science Block A, Grosvenor Road, Belfast BT12 6BJ.

Email: [sarah.moore@qub.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.moore@qub.ac.uk)

Tel: *Insert phone number*

#### Researcher contact for all schools in England:

Estera Sevel, CANTEEN study Research Associate, Institute of Applied Health Research, College of Medical and Dental Sciences, The University of Birmingham, Murray Learning Centre, Edgbaston B15 2TT.

Email: [e.sevel@bham.ac.uk](mailto:e.sevel@bham.ac.uk)

Tel: 0121 414 2851 or 07729725735

#### CANTEEN study Chief Investigator

Professor Jayne Woodside, Centre for Public Health, School of Medicine Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, Queen's University Belfast, Institute of Clinical Science Block B, Grosvenor Road, Belfast BT12 6BJ.

E-mail: [j.woodside@qub.ac.uk](mailto:j.woodside@qub.ac.uk)

Tel: 028 9097 8942

**THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING YOUR CHILDS PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.**

**PARENT OPT-OUT FORM**  
(1<sup>ST</sup> COPY FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL)

**Please only complete this if you DO NOT want your child to take part:**

The CANTEEN Study: Free School Meals, Diet Quality and Food Insecurity in Secondary School Pupils: a Mixed Methods Study

I have read the information about the study.

*Please initial the box below.*

**I am not willing** for my child to take part in the study.

☐

Name of child: .....

School: .....

Class: .....

Signature of parent/guardian: .....

Date: .....

**PLEASE RETURN THIS OPT-OUT FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL**

## PARENT OPT-OUT FORM

(2<sup>ND</sup> COPY FOR PARENT/CARER RECORDS)

**Please *only* complete this if you **DO NOT** want your child to take part:**

The CANTEEN Study: Free School Meals, Diet Quality and Food Insecurity in Secondary School Pupils: a Mixed Methods Study

I have read the information about the study.

*Please initial the box below.*

**I am not willing** for my child to take part in the study.

☐

Name of child: .....

School: .....

Class: .....

Signature of parent/guardian: .....

Date: .....

**PLEASE KEEP THIS SECOND COPY OF THE OPT-OUT FORM FOR YOUR OWN RECORD**