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## RESEARCH TENDER CALL



## TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

**Project Reference No.: 05-2024**

**Project Title: Validating a qualitative menu index for evaluating the healthiness of children's menus in the out of home setting on the island of Ireland.**

### **1. Objective/Knowledge Gap:**


There is currently a mixed/variable approach to assessing the healthiness of children's menus and there is a need for a valid tool to simplify and standardise the approach. The goal of this project is to assess whether a qualitative menu index (KIMEHS-Kids' Menu Healthy Score), tailored to children's menu evaluation could be used as a valid tool for evaluating the healthiness of children's menus on the island of Ireland. The project further aims to provide a benchmark of the healthiness of children's menus in out of home settings using this tool. The outcomes of this research will add to the evidence base to inform policy and programme measures to provide more supportive food environments for children and families.

### **2. Background**

Access to affordable, healthy, acceptable food is essential for health and it is imperative that all food environments support healthy eating including food eaten outside the home. Recent data from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey found that fifty per cent of food consumed by 2-10 year olds was from the out of home sector<sup>1</sup>. One aspect of the offering in these out of home outlets is 'Kids' Menus' which are designed to appeal to families.

<sup>1</sup> Tables for NDNS rolling programme: Diet, nutrition and physical activity in 2020 - a follow-up study during COVID-19. PHE publications gateway number GOV-9714 MS Excel Spreadsheet, 571 KB.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ndns-diet-and-physical-activity-a-follow-up-study-during-covid-19> Table 5.6.1 - Source of food; Percent of consumers by food source and age

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There are efforts in both jurisdictions to reformulate the food offered in out of home environments and to achieve a reduction in specific nutrients including fat, saturated fat, sugar, salt and energy vis a vis the ingredients in the food or the portion size<sup>2,3</sup>.

The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland are currently collecting data on children’s menus across the island in selected out of home settings including restaurants and hotels. This data will comprise an analysis of the nutritional composition of the foods sampled including sodium, fat, saturated fat and energy of the meals on offer to children.

This project requires that the data collected on children’s menus across the island of Ireland is evaluated using the qualitative menu index (KIMEHS-Kids' Menu Healthy Score), tailored to children's menu evaluation, and proposed by Rocha and Viegas (2020) (and used by Trapp et al (2022)). It is also a requirement that the menus be evaluated relative to the food-based dietary guidelines used in both jurisdictions (Department of Health 2016, Department of Health 2020, Public Health England 2016).


The findings from the project will enable the tool to be validated or adapted for use on the island of Ireland. The findings will also inform the development of guidance for food businesses to increase the healthiness of children’s menus and provide options that can be considered by both agencies in their work with food businesses and other stakeholders to increase the healthiness of foods for children in out of home settings.

### **3. Approach**

It is proposed that the aims of the project will be achieved through a mixed methods approach including a literature review, qualitative research and desk-based evaluation of existing data sets. It is expected that the researchers will intentionally integrate or combine these methods to draw on the strengths of each e.g., allow one method to inform the other and allow one method to provide deeper insights into the findings of another.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.fsai.ie/getmedia/74f55697-4643-41e4-b52a-7f991b625fab/food-reformulation-task-force-priority-food-categories-for-reformulation-in-ireland\\_1.pdf?ext=.pdf](https://www.fsai.ie/getmedia/74f55697-4643-41e4-b52a-7f991b625fab/food-reformulation-task-force-priority-food-categories-for-reformulation-in-ireland_1.pdf?ext=.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/healthier-food-reformulation#:~:text=Wave%208%202022-,Resource%20to%20support%20food%20businesses%20with%20reformulation,they%20produce%2C%20sell%20or%20serve.>

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#### 4. **Technical Specification**

(a) Scope of research

- This research will focus on children’s menus gathered from out of home settings on the island of Ireland. The out of home settings included will reflect those for which data has been gathered.
- Different approaches, programmes and policies to increasing the healthiness of children’s menus in out of home settings in other jurisdictions (such as the Eating Out Eating Well initiative in Scotland<sup>4</sup> and Healthier Catering Guide for Children’s Menus<sup>5</sup>) should be referenced so that insights, learnings and best practice can be promoted on the island of Ireland.
- The focus will be on the comparison of the different measures used for evaluation of children’s menus.
  - (a) nutritional analysis of foods sampled – using the analysis data provided by both agencies.
  - (b) qualitative menu index (KIMEHS-Kids' Menu Healthy Score), tailored to children's menu evaluation of qualitative tool from proposed by Rocha and Viegas (2020) and
  - (c) evaluation of the menus against the food based dietary guidelines in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.
  - (d) The literature review may propose other evaluation methods that could be considered on the island of Ireland.
- It is imperative that the research take into consideration the real-world programme of work whereby agencies are engaged with food business to improve the healthiness of children’s menus and other foods on offer in the out of home environment. Proposals therefore must consider how the results can be shared in such a way as to ensure optimal increase in the healthiness of the menus for children on offer including their profile, the portion size and the proportion of foods and drinks available and the way they are marketed or presented to children and families. The approach should therefore include consultation with food

<sup>4</sup> <https://eatingouteatingwell.publichealthscotland.scot/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/business-and-industry/industry-specific-advice/catering-and-retail/healthier-catering-guides/childrens-meals>

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businesses to ensure that the optimal approach to sharing guidance for improving the healthiness of children's menus be achieved.

- It is anticipated that existing datasets should form the basis of the data for analysis and that new data is not required.
- The research should be collaborative across a number of relevant disciplines including public health and nutrition and other relevant fields.

**It should be noted that safefood is not an active participant in the project and sole responsibility lies with the successful tenderer.**

(a) Literature review

The literature review should include peer reviewed publications and a search of the grey literature including government and other organisation reports, and conference proceedings etc. A strong emphasis on systematic reviews is encouraged. Detail must be provided in regard to how the literature review will be conducted. structured and completed along with quality assurance mechanisms e.g., review by more than one researcher, inclusion/exclusion criteria.

(b) Qualitative and quantitative work

A full justification and rationale for the proposed methodology and analytical approach will be required. It will be necessary to indicate for all aspects of the project how the proposed data will be managed, analysed and reported. The research should be mixed in nature.


(c) Proposed data sources

For this study, it is proposed that the data on children's menus will be provided by both the FSA NI and the FSAI. The researcher must enumerate any additional sources they intend to use and demonstrate access and experience in the use of the proposed data sources, as well as the relevant permissions to do so. In terms of existing research, it will be the responsibility of the applicant to ensure permission or that the data is open access.

(d) Analysis

A detailed methodology must be provided on how the data sources are going to be utilised, analysed and interpreted to meet the objectives of the project.

(e) Data handling and Reporting

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- The contractor will submit to **safefood**, on a six-monthly basis, an interim report containing details of the progress for each deliverable of the project.
- The contractor is responsible for collating all results and a final report will be submitted to **safefood** on completion of the study.
- All forms, documentation and electronic files must be retained by the contractor until further notice from **safefood** in case of issues arising after the completion of the research.

(f) Data Processing Agreement

The successful applicant must sign a data processing agreement that will govern the processing of personal data as part of this project. In addition to this **safefood** will require details of data protection and security measures in place.


(g) Quality assurance

- Ethical approval will be an essential component where data collection from participants is involved.
- The contractor will use validated methods where applicable and will apply best practice quality controls to approaches.
- To ensure transparency and reproducibility, all data sources used in the research must be specified, and all data used must be explicitly specified and justified.
- **safefood** may visit the contractors during the course of the research to assess how the work is being carried out.

## 5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

The outcomes from this research will include:

- Determinations of the healthiness of children’s menus as measured using a qualitative tool; nutritional analysis, where available and comparison with the food based dietary guidelines.
- Recommendations as to the validity of the qualitative tool to take account of the data sets on the island of Ireland.
- Evidence to inform future policies and initiatives that shape the out of home food environment for children’s menus and key implementation considerations relevant to guidance for service providers and other stakeholders.
- Report for publication to safefood website

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- Recommendations for dissemination of report and findings to with key stakeholders including policy makers, restaurant and café owners, the public, and researchers
- Submission, on a 6-monthly basis, of interim reports on progress.
- Analysis of the final dataset, collation of the results and a final report to be submitted to **safefood** at the end of the 8-month study period.

## 6. Evaluation of Tenders

Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables;
- ✓ Research method and facilities;
- ✓ Value for money;
- ✓ Potential for application;
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.

Quality of Applicants:

- ✓ Experience in subject area;
- ✓ Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.


## 7. Duration of Project

Estimated duration of the project: Total of 8 months. A detailed timescale of research should be submitted by the applicant.

## 8. Tender Application Forms and Guidelines

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from [www.safefood.net/research-tender](http://www.safefood.net/research-tender). They can also be obtained by emailing [research@safefood.net](mailto:research@safefood.net), quoting the project reference number **05-2024**. Alternatively, please contact **safefood** as per the details below.

Ms. Gillian Fox  
 Research Coordinator  
**safefood**  
 7 Eastgate Avenue  
 Little Island  
 Cork

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Tel: + 353212304100

The closing date for receipt of applications by **safefood** is no later than **4pm Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2024.**

## 9. References

Department of Health (2016) Healthy eating guidelines. Department of Health, Dublin.

Department of Health (2020) Healthy eating for 1 to 4 year olds. The Children's Food Pyramid Guidelines. Department of Health, Dublin.

Public Health England (2016) The Eatwell Guide. London. <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/the-eatwell-guide-and-resources>

Rocha A, Viegas C. KIMEHS-Proposal of an Index for Qualitative Evaluation of Children's Menus- A Pilot Study. Foods. 2020 Nov 6;9(11):1618. doi: 10.3390/foods9111618. PMID: 33172175; PMCID: PMC7694791.

Trapp GSA, Pulker CE, Hurworth M, Law KK, Brinkman S, Pollard CM, Harray AJ, Sambell R, Mandzufas J, Anzman-Frasca S, Hickling S. The Nutritional Quality of Kids' Menus from Cafés and Restaurants: An Australian Cross-Sectional Study. Nutrients. 2022 Jun 30;14(13):2741. doi: 10.3390/nu14132741. PMID: 35807919; PMCID: PMC9269398.