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RESEARCH TENDER CALL

TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 02-2016

Project Title:

“Why are adults giving food treats to children?”

1. Objective/Knowledge Gap

The objectives of this research is to:


- Determine why adults on the island of Ireland are giving food treats to children, what they consider as treats and their motivation for giving food treats, how often they give them, and in what quantity;
- identify any gaps in the international literature, both published and grey, on the topic of parents and other adults giving food treats and the effect this has on children and their diets;
- investigate the barriers and facilitators to giving food and non-food treats and gain an insight into the change over time of ‘treat’ habits relative to recent decades;
- identify the extent to which children receive food treats from others such as adult relatives, child care providers, teachers and those involved in sports activities;
- identify available literature on how to change behaviour in relation to giving children food ‘treats’ and
- identify any interventions under way in the UK or elsewhere that aims to change behaviour in relation to food ‘treats’.

2. Background

Intakes high fat, sugar or salt foods on the island of Ireland are above that recommended, for example in primary school children in ROI, top shelf foods are contributing over 350kcal daily which is equivalent to 19% of their daily recommended calorie intake¹. Foods high in fat and/or sugar currently account for one fifth of children’s calorie intake².

¹ Rhee K. Childhood overweight and the relationship between parent behaviors, parenting style, and family functioning. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. 2008;615(1):11-37.

² Irish Universities Nutrition Alliance. The National Children's Food Survey. 2005; Available from: <http://www.iuna.net/?p=27>.

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Parents play an important role in the growth, development, and socialization of children (Darling and Steinberg 1993 as cited in 3). They influence their children through the use of their specific parenting practices, modelling specific behaviours and attitudes, and more broadly through their interpersonal interactions within the family. Parents influence the development of eating and activity behaviours through the use of specific feeding techniques, which begin in the early months of life, and through the modelling of healthy dietary and leisure-time activity habits, but they also have direct control over the home environment and what foods or activities are available in the house which is obviously a huge factor in what the child ends up eating on a daily basis³.

Parents and other adults and friends often offer 'treats' or less healthy foods to children as a reward for good behaviour, a completed task/chore or as an incentive/bribe to get them to behave in a certain situation where they know the child is likely to be difficult e.g. during the food shop a parent may provide a 'treat' for the child under the agreement he/she will behave for the duration of the shop. 'Treats' can be used as a reward, as a bribe or as a pacifier in many daily situations such as after a child has eaten all her/his main meal, after cleaning his/her room, etc. However, while this feeding practice may yield results at the time and make life easier for the parent or adult, it may be having detrimental effects on the child's relationship with food, both with healthy essential foods such as vegetables and fruits and less healthy extra foods or 'treats'. Treats may also be given to children as a result of issues relating to pricing, availability and marketing.


A study by Pocock and Trivedi (2010) found that parents found being a good role model difficult when other adult family members undermined them. Mothers reported feeling a loss of control over their child's dietary habits when others, within and outside the family, sabotaged and undermined their decisions. Meals and classroom food snacks given out in schools were also seen as barriers to healthy weight-related behaviours. Mothers commented that schools undermined their efforts at providing a healthy diet.⁴

Those working in a child care setting may also use food treats as a reward for a certain behaviour. However in a study by Elford and Brown, which explored child feeding practices in child care settings, only 21% of nursery practitioners said they offer children sweets as a reward for good behaviours, 30% said if children do not eat their main meal, they would not give them a dessert and 21% said they use food treats as a bribe to get children to eat their main meal. This is a relatively small percentage which is encouraging for parents and professionals alike. Approximately half of participants agreed that they allowed children to decide whether they want to have a snack or not. The use of food as a reward provided split responses with participants either strongly agreeing or strongly disagreeing with this practice, although only a fifth typically agreed with this behaviour. This data is in fact in contrast to studies exploring maternal child-feeding style, where maternal use of controlling feeding practices is common (Ventura & Birch, 2008).⁵

³ Bates B., Lennox A., Bates C., Swan G. National Diet and Nutrition Survey Headline results from Years 1, 2 and 3 (combined) of the Rolling Programme (2008/2009 – 2010/11) [Online]. 2012; Available from: http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/978078/ndns-y3-report_all-text-docs-combined.pdf.

⁴ Pocock M, Trivedi D, Wills W, Bunn F, Magnusson J. Parental perceptions regarding healthy behaviours for preventing overweight and obesity in young children: a systematic review of qualitative studies. *Obesity Reviews*. 2010;11(5):338-53.

⁵ Elford L, Brown A. Exploring child-feeding style in childcare settings: How might nursery practitioners affect child eating style and weight? *Eating Behaviors*. 2014;15(2):314-7.

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Potential explanations for this include nursery practitioners are given training surrounding child diet and behaviour, which may affect interaction with children. Childcare workers are professionals trained in how to promote positive behaviour in young children including mealtime behaviour, which may lead to increased positive reactions during these times.

In a study by Kubik and Lytle (2002) on the food-related beliefs, eating behaviours, and classroom food practices of middle school teachers, the use of food as an incentive/reward for students was found to be a common classroom practice. Most of the food used as a reward did not support development of healthy eating patterns by young adolescents. Candy was the food item most often used as a reward (reported by 73% of teachers) followed by cookies/doughnuts (37%) sweetened drinks (35%) and pizza (28%).⁶

3. Approach

The approach taken should include a literature review and a mixed-methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies methods such as focus groups with parents within the community setting. 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. Scenarios that are used in this research need to reflect 'real life' scenarios that consumers on IOI are faced with when selecting and offering treats. The approach taken should address the key objective set out above and seek to provide practical outputs for **safefood**. The use of existing quantitative data sets such as the National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) and the National Children's Food Survey (NCFS) is encouraged.


4. Technical Specification

- (a) Scope of research
- (b) Literature review
- (c) Qualitative and quantitative work
- (d) Analysis
- (e) Data handling and Reporting
- (f) Quality assurance

(a) Scope of the research

1. The research will be focused on all adults who give children food treats but will record whether parent or other adult. The field work will be representative of adults from the following groups:
 - (a) Rural and urban;
 - (b) Men and women;
 - (c) The distribution of socio-economic groups with a particular focus on C2DE adults.
2. The research should be conducted among adults living in both NI and ROI.

⁶ Kubik MY, Lytle LA, Hannan PJ, Story M, Perry CL. Food-Related Beliefs, Eating Behavior, and Classroom Food Practices of Middle School Teachers. Journal of school health. 2002;72(8):339-45.

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(b) Literature review

The research should include a review of the literature in this area both published and unpublished or grey literature.

(c) Qualitative and quantitative research

A full justification and rationale for the proposed methodology (including recruitment strategies) and analytical approach will be required. It will be necessary to indicate for all aspects of the project how the proposed data will be collected, analysed and reported.

The research should be predominantly qualitative in nature. The use of validated questionnaires should be considered to collect some relevant quantitative data.

The contractor is responsible for developing and piloting any topic guide which will be used to facilitate the qualitative discussions. The contractor is encouraged to use tools such as vignettes or visual aids to facilitate a more relevant and open discussion for the participants.

(d) Analysis

The contractor will provide explicit details of all analytical methods. Quality control must be evident in the analysis and in the case of the qualitative research the results must be verified by a second qualitative researcher.


Triangulation of results from the literature review, qualitative and quantitative studies should be undertaken.

(e) Data Handling and Reporting

1. An interim report (electronic and hardcopy) containing a summary of the findings to date will be submitted to **safefood** at six monthly intervals of the research.
2. The contractor is responsible for collating all results and a final report will be submitted to **safefood** on completion of the study.
3. 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) Quality Assurance

1. Ethical approval will be an essential component to the approach where human interventions are involved.
2. The contractor will use validated methods where applicable and will apply best practice quality controls to approaches.
3. **safefood** can visit contractors during the course of the survey to assess how the work is being carried out.

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5. **Proposed Activities/Deliverables**

The proposed activities and deliverables will be dependent on the methodology proposed and will include:

- Submission on a 6 monthly basis of an Interim Report;
- submission of a Final Project Report to be submitted to **safefood** within the 12 month study period;
- detailed recommendations of potential strategies to (a) secure a reduction in the behaviour of parents and others using food-treats as a reward for children and (b) increase appropriate non-food treats. Also appropriate proposals on how these strategies could be implemented. All recommendations should be based on available evidence.

6. **Other requirements**

Total costings are to be included in the tender.

7. **Evaluation of Tenders**

The tenderers will be evaluated as follows:

(a) **Quality of the proposal:**

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

(b) **Quality of Applicants:**


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

8. **Duration of Project**

Estimated duration of the project: Total of 12 months max. A detailed timescale of research should be submitted by each applicant.

9. **Tender Application Forms and Guidelines**

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from www.safefood.eu. They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.eu, quoting the project reference number **02-2016**. Alternatively please contact **safefood** as per the details below.

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The closing date for receipt of applications by **safefood** is no later than **4pm on Friday 10th June 2016.**