

Diversity in the Determinants of Food Choice: The diversity of perceptions exhibited by Young People in the UK to healthy eating in school and at home

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The following abstract describes food related examples of the provisional results from the Young Peoples Health and Lifestyle Survey for the Every Child Matters programme that Foster and Brown Research has undertaken in Gloucestershire schools. This study has been funded and led by Gloucestershire NHS Primary Care Trusts and is in cooperation with Gloucestershire Healthy Schools Partnerships. The survey running until the end of June 2006, we therefore have only a provisional data set for this first abstract.

In March and April 2006 nearly 13000 children and young people from over 100 schools across Gloucestershire completed a novel on-line comprehensive Health and Lifestyle survey. The survey is continuing until June 2006 and we anticipate the final data set to be to contain data from approximately **13,000** young people. Year groups 4, 6 (primary schools), 8 and 10 (secondary schools) are being surveyed with children ranging from **8 to 16 years old**. Special needs schools have also been included allowing us to compare perceptions from diverse physical and cognitive abilities.

The survey consisted of 69 questions in the following areas:

- Healthy Eating including perceptions of school meals and comparisons with home meals
- Physical Activity
- Substances (drugs, alcohol & smoking)
- Safety
- Citizenship
- Relationships and mental well-being

The innovative on-line survey was conducted in school mainly during ICT classes and the data displayed by LodeSeeker™ a unique data on-line management tool developed in-house. We intend to explain this new methodological approach in the paper. Initial feedback from pupils and staff indicated that we have achieved significant advantages over the traditional paper based large scale survey methodologies. The pupils and staff reported it was a much more enjoyable and interesting experience. There are also significant budget, data accuracy and time advantages over a traditional paper based system.

A survey of this magnitude will give us the opportunity to look at a large range of perceptions and food-related behaviour that a diverse range of young people and how these change over the different age groups. We will also be examining inter-correlations and connections with physical activity and various cognitive states using

a diverse range of multivariate mapping techniques amongst various statistical approaches. In addition we have data from earlier in the year allowing us to look at seasonal behavioural trends.

Amongst a series of 29 food related questions the young people were asked how they rated the following on psychometric linear scales:

Do you usually eat breakfast?

How many portions of fruit and vegetables do you generally eat a day?*

How much do you usually drink a day?*

*(*quantities defined)*

Do you feel that the food on offer in your SCHOOL enables you to eat healthily?

Do you feel that the food on offer in your HOME enables you to eat healthily?

How often on average do you eat snacks such as sweets, chocolate and crisps?

*Are you allowed to bring the following in your lunch boxes? Crisps, Fizzy drinks
Chocolate, Sweets*

Is there any food you are encouraged to bring in your lunch boxes?

How would you rate the school meals service overall and in various categories?

What do you generally have for lunch when you're at school?

Why do you choose to have school lunches or packed lunches at school?

Unprompted qualitative comments about school meals were elicited. Our intention is that these may be analysed using a novel statistical approach.

Initial results indicate amongst other findings that there may be a perceived close relationship between such sensory aspects as the **appearance, the amount of choice** with **taste** and how **healthy** the children and young people consider school meals to be.