

Exploring the implementation, impact, and acceptability of Planet Friendly menus in Newcastle primary schools

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School dinners and greenhouse gas emissions

- There are ~ 4.7 million primary school pupils in England.
- England primary school meals produce ~ 578.1 million kgCO₂ equivalent a year; meat dishes contribute 52% of these emissions.
- Studies have shown that changes to the national primary school food sector have the potential to significantly impact UK greenhouse gas emissions.
- Previous studies have discussed barriers to delivering these meat reduced menus in schools, but none have actually explored menu implementation or what people think of the menu.

Planet Friendly menus

Newcastle City Council provides school meals for almost all of the 90 primary schools in the area. In the 2024-25 school year, the Council is delivering Planet Friendly menus whereby one day each week all menu items will be vegetarian or vegan.

What are we doing in this study?

- We have identified three Newcastle schools to take part in this study. The schools vary by proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals.
- We will speak to 8-10 pupils, 8-10 parents, and 3-5 teachers at each school to understand what they think of Planet Friendly menus.
- We will count how many pupils choose Planet Friendly meals at three timepoints.
- We will speak with Newcastle Council's school food suppliers and caterers, and chefs to understand the barriers to delivering Planet Friendly menus and how these can be managed.

Potential impact

Our study can help promote Planet Friendly menus in other schools and Councils and help them be delivered in a way that avoids unintended consequences and is sensitive to socioeconomic issues around food. If the Planet Friendly menus are rolled-out nationally (e.g., embedded into the national School Food Standards), this has the potential to influence millions of children's diets and, therefore, UK food-related emissions.

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