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<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Callaghan, Mary; Kelly, Colette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication Date</strong></td>
<td>2016-06-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to publisher's version</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://doi.org/10.13025/S8F59N">http://doi.org/10.13025/S8F59N</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item record</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/5905">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/5905</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DOI</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.13025/S8F59N">http://dx.doi.org/10.13025/S8F59N</a></td>
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Informing food policies in post-primary schools in Ireland: Knowledge to Action

Ms. Mary Callaghan & Dr. Colette Kelly
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Knowledge to Action: Using Research Evidence in health Promotion Policy and Practice
15th June 2016
• High prevalence of overweight and obesity in children in Ireland
  • 20-25% primary school children
  • 19% of teenagers
    IUNA, 2005, 2008

• Nutritional habits of Irish adolescents not optimal
  IUNA, 2005

• Eating out of home
  Mikkelsen et al, 2011

• Social, physical and individual factors

• School food environment
  • Children - time in this setting
  • External & Internal foodscape
The project aims to explore young people's perception of their food environment, to include:

- The number of food outlets ‘close’ to their school
- What type of food do they buy at the food premises
- Barriers to accessing food outlets of their choice
- Perception of a need for change or maintain status
- What food environments they use
- ‘Quality’ of food outlets within walking distance of schools
Methods

• Qualitative study to explore young people's perception of their school food environment

• Ethics granted by NUIG REC

• Schools contacted and recruited by phone

• Data collected April - October 2015

• One class period ~40 mins
  • Mapping exercise
  • Group discussion with topic guide
Methods

Mapping exercise

• Write in the names of the food outlets within walking distance of their school in their approximate location
• Highlight those they use
• Draw a boundary around your food environment

10 minutes Discussion

• Type of food premises around school
• Access to those premises
• Food premises frequented most
• What they bought there
• Why they buy there
• Why they don’t go to alternative premises
• Barriers to accessing alternative food premises
• If they are happy with what is available
Participants

- 6 post-primary schools recruited
  - 1 Male, 3 Female, 2 Mixed
  - Non DEIS
  - Large town/city

- 95 Students (63% girls, 37% boys)

- Aged 12 - 18 years

- Younger class (1st or 2nd Year) & older class (4th, 5th or TY)
Results - places

Local health food shop

Spar/Londis/Centra/Costcutter

Local supermarkets

Topaz

Subway

Apache/Papa Johns/Dominos

Supermacs/Mc Donalds/BK

Local fast food places

Local pubs

Lidl/ Aldi/Dunnes

Local restaurants

Local hotels

Supervalu

Sweet shops

Local cafes

Easons
Results - food

- Health bars
- Sesame sticks
- Water
- Yoghurt
- Milk
- Energy drinks – Edge, Lucozade sport
- Coffee
- 7up/Coke
- Flavoured water
- Biscuits
- Croissant
- Polo mints
- Chocolate
- Sweets
- Curried rice
- Wedges
- Sausage and chip
- Chicken rolls
- Milk
- Curry or stir fry or chips
Results – satisfied?

Happy with what’s available?

Male student 4th Year: “Not really.”

“Like, if you were getting food out there’s about….how many places ye could go that’s healthy like? It’s…more unhealthy than there is healthy.”

Female student 4th Year: “Not really.”

“There’s always such a long queue if you’re not down early as well everything’s usually gone coz the tech across the road as well like so.”

Female student TY: “Yeah.”

“….sometimes it would be actually nice to have a place that would be literally just for like students where they can pick up their lunch and kinda…at a good rate as well.”

Male student 2nd Year: “It’s grand. It’s fine.”

“It’s kind of expensive still though like because other schools have canteens and they’re really cheap compared to what you get up the town.”

Female student 2nd Year: “Sometimes.”

“Because sometimes I walk all the way there and they don’t have what I want.”
Barriers

- Location
- Price
- Time
- Other
Conclusion

• First time HBSC Ireland have collected qualitative data exploring students perceptions of their food environment

• Help inform future policy on how best to address the nutritional needs of young people

• Enabling the healthy choice to be the easier choice is difficult

• Legislation and awareness of creating healthy communities/healthy cities the way forward?
Acknowledgements

• Schools and parents who gave their consent
• Children for their participation and consent
• Miss Ursula Kenny & Miss Lorraine Burke who helped conduct the data collection
• Millennium Fund Project Call
Questions?