

Exploring the impact of recipe-boxes on dietary quality and food agency: a pilot RCT in households with school-aged children in Birmingham

Participant Information Sheet

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Invitation

Hello! Thanks for your interest in our recipe-box study. We are interested in exploring whether using recipe-boxes can help households eat healthier.

We are researchers from SALIENT—a research programme funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, one of the government’s main research funding organisations. This study is led by Professor Martin White and his team at the University of Cambridge, MRC Epidemiology Unit. You can read more about the SALIENT programme here: <https://www.salientfoodtrials.uk/>

To help you decide whether you wish to take part, here is some information about the project. If you are interested in participating, the recruiters from MEL-Research will refer you to our team in Cambridge. We will then provide more information about how we manage the study for you to decide whether to participate.

To provide recipe-boxes for the study, we are partnering with Gousto, a home delivery recipe-box company. Gousto will make the recipe-boxes and have them delivered.

What is the purpose of this study?

Our goal is to see if recipe-boxes can help households with children make healthy meals at home in a more convenient and enjoyable way. We are also interested in whether recipe-boxes can:

- Help people prepare more of their meals from scratch
- Encourage children to participate in cooking
- Improve wellbeing, for example, by lowering stress

This is a “pilot” a small trial to test whether we have a workable design that can be used in a larger trial. Your feedback, through surveys and interviews, will be especially valuable, and help us improve the idea.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

We are aiming to recruit 150 participants for our pilot. MEL-Research, a professional market research company, is recruiting participants on our behalf.

We are looking for people who are the “main food provider” in their household. This means someone who has at least equal responsibility for purchasing and preparing food in their household.

We are aiming to recruit households in Birmingham that have one or more children in primary or secondary school. We are recruiting a representative sample of these households in Birmingham, so we can see whether recipe-boxes are helpful for many different types of households.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to participate. If you start the study, you are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without providing a reason.

If you are interested in taking part but have some questions you can contact the study team, using the information at the end of this document.

What will participating in the study involve?

All participants will receive a 40% discount on Gousto recipe-boxes for 8 weeks, followed by another optional 12 week 15% discount, if they choose to continue. Half of the participants will receive this package soon after joining the study. The other half will receive the package after approximately 20 weeks (about 5 months).

Participating will involve **6 steps**:

1. We will ask you some questions in our screening questionnaire which will check whether you are able to take part. This will include questions relating to our inclusion and exclusion criteria as follows:

Inclusion:

- Having one or more children at primary/ secondary school.
- Having access to cooking rings, an oven and a fridge in the home.
- Happy to be randomised to either of the groups.

Exclusion:

- More than 5 household members.
- Have used recipe-boxes in the previous 3 months.
- Not having access to the internet and a digital device (eg. Smartphone).
- Recently or within the last 3 months having taken part in a diet related study.
- A planned trip away from your home address for more than one week over the next two months.

2. You will receive more information about the trial and have an opportunity to speak with a researcher from the University of Cambridge by email or phone to have any questions answered. If you are happy to proceed, you will then be asked to sign a consent form
3. You will then **complete some initial online surveys** to assess in detail what you ate on 4 different days in a week. We will also ask you about your food budgeting, food and cooking skills, how you feel about your food choices, other questions like time spent with household members, whether you did/did not order recipe-boxes, and your wellbeing. We will also ask some questions about you and your household. In total these surveys will take about 60 minutes to complete.
4. You will then be **allocated to one of two groups** for the rest of the trial: the **“intervention group”** or the **“control group.”** Allocation will be random (like tossing a coin). What will happen if you are in either group is shown in the chart below. You should only agree to participate if you are willing to be allocated to either group. The control group is very important for us to see whether the recipe-box intervention is successful.

- **Intervention group**

If you are in the intervention group, you will receive a discount code (40% off a full priced box) straight away to order Gousto recipe-boxes containing ingredients and instructions every week for 8 weeks.

First steps

- You will register as a customer on Gousto’s website, choose recipes for your first recipe-box, and enter your discount code
- You will be able to order between 2, 3 or 4 portions for up to 5 days each week for 8 weeks. You can also order 5 portions per day, but only for 3 days per week.

Menu

- Gousto offers over 100 recipes per week, and these recipes change every week, offering wide variety. Gousto’s recipe-boxes cater to a range of:
 - **Tastes and cuisines** – dishes from the UK and around the world
 - **Dietary preferences** – including vegan and vegetarian. Unfortunately, Halal or Kosher options are not available, though Gousto has a large plant-based menu.
 - **Preparation time** – each meal may take from 10 to about 60 minutes to prepare.
- All the above details are given on the Gousto web site, where you can explore recipes: <https://www.gousto.co.uk/>
- Note that Gousto cannot remove ingredients from a recipe-box and no guarantees are provided on allergens

- If you require a special diet due to a health condition or medication, please ask your GP whether Gousto's recipes are suitable for you
- The discount would provide 40% off the recipe box listed price for 8 weeks, followed by 15% off for another 12 weeks if you choose to continue.

Cost

- With your 40% discount, each recipe will cost on average between about £1.90 and £2.70 per portion
- Cost per portion is lower the more recipes and portions that you order
- We expect the average cost for 4 people ordering 4 recipes to be £32.70 per week (£2.04/portion), for 3 people with 4 recipes to be £33.98 (£2.83/portion), for 2 people with 4 recipes to be £25.58 (£3.20/portion), or 5 people with 3 recipes to be £36.98 (£2.47/portion)
- All of your meals ordered for a week are delivered together in one recipe box. After your first recipe-box, delivery costs £3.99 per recipe-box (when you order). The delivery fee will not be discounted.

Subscription

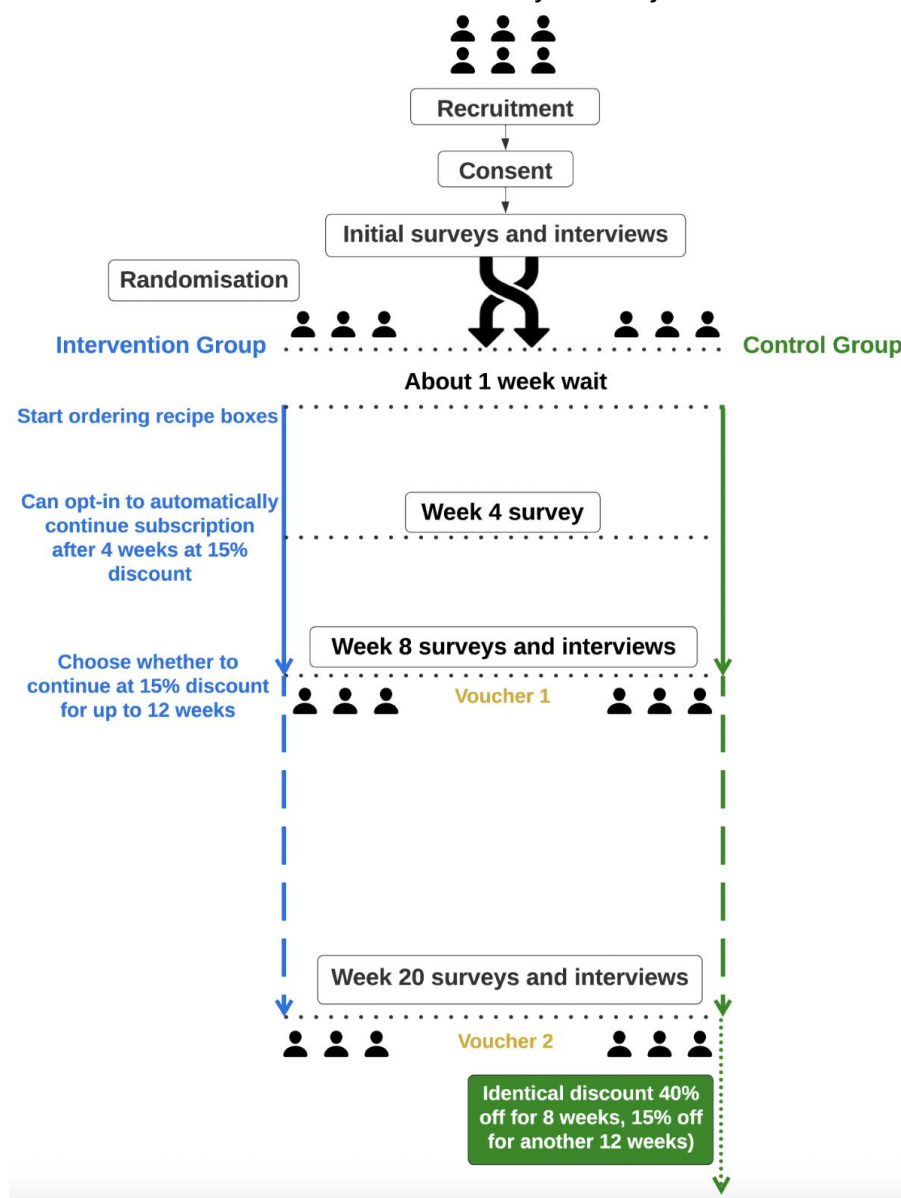
- After the 8-week discount, your subscription will not continue automatically. If you wish to continue ordering at the special discount of 15% for a further 12 weeks, you can opt-in when prompted
- If you do not wish to place an order for a specific week, you must select the "skip" option in your account that week before the ordering deadline (3 days before delivery date). Your ordering deadline would be the day of the week and time you placed your first Gousto recipe-box order. Otherwise, Gousto's system automatically selects and delivers recipes for you and you will be charged (at the discounted rate). You can change your delivery date before your ordering deadline.
- Gousto can deliver 7 days a week to anywhere in Birmingham.

- **Control group**

If you are in the control group, we will ask that you continue to eat as you usually do and wait for about five months (until you have completed all the questionnaires) to receive your discount code to order recipe-boxes from Gousto.

5. In *both* groups, you will complete the same set of questionnaires and dietary recalls at the **8-week and 20-week (~ 5 month) timepoint**.
6. **OPTIONAL:** Some participants will be given the option to take part in online interviews, either at baseline, or 8 weeks, or 20 weeks later, with researchers from the University of Cambridge.

- The initial interviews will help us to understand how you feel about the study.
- The interviews 8-weeks and 20-weeks later will help us understand benefits or challenges you experienced, and how feasible and meaningful the study was for you. If you are in the intervention group, we will also ask how you and your household used the recipe-boxes.



If you are interested in participating...

The recruiter from MEL-Research can answer any questions you have. Then, if you still wish to participate, they will open a form on their tablet where you can record your name, contact information (phone and email address), and home address. MEL-Research will then securely transfer this information to us at the University of Cambridge. We will then contact you by text and email.

We will then provide more information about how we manage the study, so that you can make an informed decision on whether to participate. If you decide to participate and consent, then we will send you the initial surveys.

What are the potential benefits of participating?

- You will receive a discounted Gousto recipe-box subscription (40% off) for 2 to 5 recipes per week for 8 weeks. This discount is about 15% more than Gousto's standard discount rate for the first 8 weeks.
- The recipe-boxes may help your household to eat healthier, make cooking easier and more enjoyable, and help household members to cook more confidently.
- Your valuable contribution will help us understand whether recipe-boxes could help households eat more healthily, and how the intervention could be expanded to others. Ultimately, it may help people live healthier lives and avoid developing diet-related diseases like type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease.
- As a thank you for taking part, you will receive a £25 voucher for completing each set of the initial questionnaires, week 8 questionnaires, and week 20 questionnaires (up to a total of £75). If you are randomised to the intervention group and complete an additional survey at 4 weeks, you will receive an extra £5 voucher. Note that you will only receive the vouchers for questionnaires at the start if you also complete the questionnaires at 8 weeks.

If you are invited and take part in the interviews initially, at 8 weeks, or 20 weeks, you will receive also additional vouchers of £25 per ~1 hour interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Taking part in this study means:

- You will need to pay for 60% of the cost of the recipe-boxes as well as the full delivery costs after the first order. However, these meals will replace food you will likely otherwise pay for.
- You will have to give up some time to participate (surveys, interviews, ordering, cooking).
- You may feel some stress preparing the recipes for the first time, depending on your experience, schedule, and cooking arrangements. However, recipes come with simple instructions and we hope you enjoy preparing the meals.
- Gousto cannot remove ingredients from a recipe-box and no guarantees are provided on allergens. Also, if you have a health condition, or take a medication, that requires certain dietary restrictions, you should confirm that Gousto recipes are suitable for you with your health professional.
- You will be exposed to usual safety risks of cooking at home – we trust that you will take care in the kitchen!
- If you no longer want to continue, you will need to cancel your subscription with Gousto

Ordering data from Gousto

MEL-Research will ask for your consent for Gousto to share your ordering data with us, such as :

- The recipes that you order (including any sides and upgrades)
- The portions that you order
- Any purchases in the “Gousto Marketplace”. This contains other food items, like ready-to-eat meals, that are not discounted
- How much you pay for each product
- Whether you have ordered yet for any week during the trial
- What time you ordered
- Your name, contact information (phone number and email), and home address
- If you are in the control group, whether you used your discount code (after 5-months)

This data will NOT include your financial details (e.g. credit card information).

Gousto will share this data with the University of Cambridge via a Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP).

Sharing personal data with Gousto

In order to verify that the personal details you provide us match the details of the person ordering through Gousto’s website, we will share your name, contact information, and home address with Gousto. You will also provide this information to Gousto when registering on the Gousto website. We will NOT share any other personal data we collect with Gousto. In order to receive the discount and not be charged the regular price, it is important that you give Gousto the SAME personal details (e.g. email, address, phone number) when registering that you gave us.

Gousto Privacy Policy and Gousto Terms and Conditions

What you have read in the information sheet, regarding how Gousto will receive your contact details from the researchers, and how Gousto will share with the researchers your ordering data, applies in addition to Gousto’s terms and conditions and Gousto’s privacy policy. You will need to agree to both of these to register as a Gousto customer and place an order for a recipe-box on Gousto’s website. You continue to have all the rights given to you under those terms, including the right to withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data. You can find more details on how to do this in our [privacy policy on the Gousto.co.uk website](#).

What will happen to information about me collected during the study?

Please see the separate Privacy Statement for the study.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by the MRC Epidemiology Unit, part of the University of Cambridge. The study is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ERSC).

Contact for further information

If you have any questions regarding the research or wish to withdraw your data after participating, the study team can be contacted via recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this research.

If you have any questions regarding the study or how you might be involved further contact information can be found below.

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