

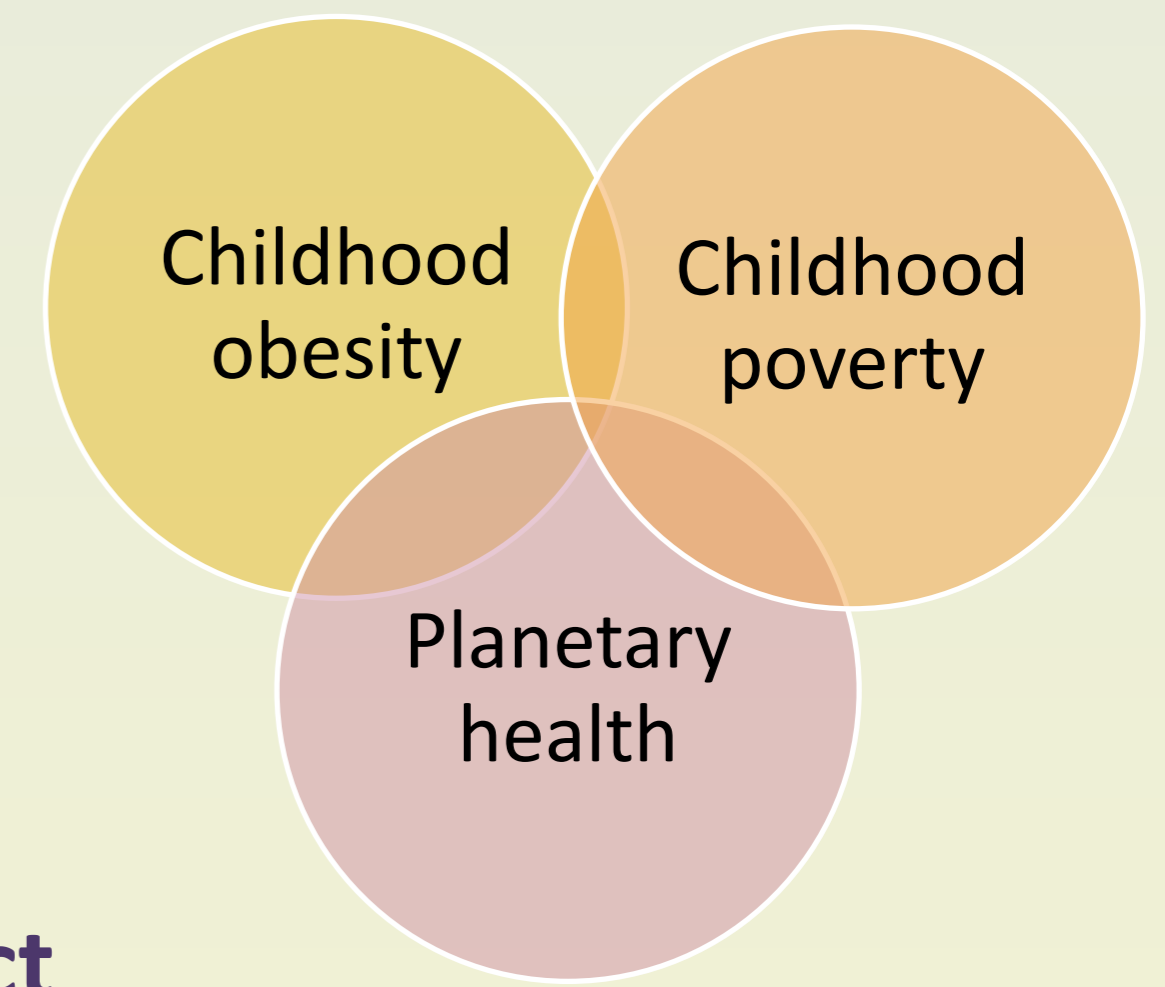
How can a school-caterer partnership mobilise healthy and sustainable school food culture?

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Context and reasons to conduct this research

1. **Childhood obesity** is the number one threat to children's health in Britain today.
2. School catering has the largest share of **public procurement** in the UK and can contribute to minimizing the impacts of **climate change** through environmentally sensitive food systems.
3. School meals are the **largest and most widespread social safety net in the world** with over 420.000 pupils eligible for **FSM** in the UK in March 2020.



Research questions and design: A two-stage doctoral research project

Stage 1: Defining a healthy and sustainable school food culture

Q1: What is a healthy and sustainable school food culture?

Method 1: Lunch and food education (FE) observations in three schools.
Method 2: Interviews with key informants.
Method 3: Survey to 8 schools (435 responses) with different catering models.



The Planetary Health Diet
EAT-Lancet Report, 2019)

Stage 2a: Design, implementation & evaluation of healthy & sustainable school menu trial enhanced by a FE content in 3 schools

Q2. What is the outcome of school-caterer partnerships on meals and food education (FE) practices in three school case studies in England?

Evaluation data before & during the menu trial:

1. Sustainability life cycle analysis (LCA)
2. Financial analysis
3. Pupils satisfaction online survey
4. Number of meals uptake
5. Weight of plate waste



Salad served for each table at one of the school case studies, 2021

Stage 2b: Evaluation of healthy & sustainable school food partnership between schools as educational institutions and caterers as food providers

Q3. What characterises a school-caterer partnership which is likely to mobilise healthy and sustainable school food culture in three school case studies in England?

Method 1: Observations
Method 2: Focus groups
Each case adapted their menu and food education content differently depending on context, skills and resources available. All cases used the framework to guide the changes



Catering in three school case studies during the menu trial, 2021

Findings to date: Core principles of a healthy & sustainable school food framework



Reversion to more scratch cooking



Prioritising food provenance



Reducing meat & increasing plant based foods

- All three cases rolled the menu changes out into September 2022.
- There was no increase in costs or plate waste weight during the trial.
- Meat reduction led to huge reduction of CO2 in menus across cases.
- On-going school-kitchen collaboration was key in transforming the menus, planning and delivery of the FE content.



Thanks to the food activist Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall for his endorsement to this research project through an interview & video messages to all stakeholders in the three school case studies.