

Help improve food in special schools

Who are we?

The project team includes researchers at the Universities of Hertfordshire and Essex, the charity [School Food Matters](#) and people with personal experience of special educational needs and disability (SEND).

What is this project about?

We have been given funding to carry out a project called '*Adapt-Ed*' which aims to understand and improve food and mealtimes in special schools.

We will do this by working with children and young people with SEND, their parents or carers, and people who work in and with special schools in the East of England to adapt an intervention called [Healthy Zones](#) which is being used in some mainstream schools to help children eat better. We will use what we learn to apply for funding to do a larger research project. This future research will test the adapted intervention in special schools and look at what difference it makes to children, families and schools.

Why are we contacting you?

We are looking for up to 8 children and young people with SEND aged 10-19, and up to 8 parents or carers of children and young people to get involved in the project.

*We are also recruiting for professional/policy stakeholder groups

What will taking part involve?

Our plans for involvement have been developed by researchers and people with personal experience of SEND. They have four stages:

1. June-early 2024: Meet organisations working with children and young people with SEND and/or their parents/carers to tell you more about the project, what you do and the children and young people and parents/carers you work with could be involved in ways that work for them. [This is all we're asking you to commit to for now](#)

2. June-early July: Children and young people with SEND and parents/carers interested in getting involved in the project let us know. If more than 8 are interested, we'll then select a range of people with different backgrounds and experience. Group members will then be given asked to sign a consent form.
3. July and September: online workshops with up to 8 CYP with SEND and up to 8 parents/carers to work with the research team on the project.
4. October: workshop at the University of Hertfordshire (with online option if needed) bringing together all public and stakeholder groups to finish the work we've been doing together and plan what happens next.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no direct benefit to individuals or organisations, but taking part is an opportunity to contribute to evidence on improving school food for children with SEND. As a thank you for adults who take part outside of work, we are able to offer vouchers for workshop attendance and preparation where relevant. For the final face-to-face workshop, we will also provide refreshments, including lunch, and cover travel costs.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

We have not identified any risks to taking part. The workshops will be facilitated by experienced researchers and a 'public co-applicant (person with personal experience of SEND). We will agree how we want to work together at the start, so that everybody feels comfortable to share their ideas and is supported to do in ways that work for them.

Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact: adapt-ed@herts.ac.uk