

# Participant Information Sheet- Local Authority Group model building to assess dietary health inequalities in English Local Authorities- The GLADIOLI study

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## Summary

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Your Local Authority is invited to take part in the GLADIOLI study, a research project led by the Universities of Cambridge and Hertfordshire. The study aims to understand how English Local Authorities can be better supported to reduce dietary health inequalities — unfair differences in diet and diet-related health between more and less disadvantaged communities.

People living in more deprived areas are more likely to experience barriers to accessing healthy food and to develop diet-related conditions such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and poor dental health. These inequalities are shaped by wider social, economic, and environmental factors, not just individual choice alone.

Local Authorities play a key role through policy and partnership working, but the complexity of dietary health inequalities can make effective action challenging. Many people find that approaches based on ‘systems thinking’ can help address these complex challenges. Systems thinking emphasises complex inter-relationships between factors, rather than simple cause and effect. In this study we are testing whether a systems thinking workshop can help address dietary inequalities.

- Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Discuss with your colleagues if you wish to do so.
- Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.
- If you or your organisation would no longer like to take part you can tell us by email or telephone.
- Thank you for your support with our research so far.

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## How to contact us

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If you have any questions about this study please talk to:

GLADIOLI study team  
[gladioli.study@ims.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gladioli.study@ims.cam.ac.uk)  
[GLADIOLI study webpage](#)

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## Why we are doing this study

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People living in more disadvantaged circumstances tend to have poorer diets and higher rates of diet-related disease. These dietary health inequalities are influenced by many interacting social, economic and environmental factors.

Local Authorities play a key role in shaping local food environments through policy, planning, public health and partnerships. However, there is limited robust evidence on which local-level approaches are most effective in supporting action on dietary health inequalities.

This study aims to evaluate whether a systems-thinking approach can help Local Authorities to increase policy action with the potential to reduce dietary health inequalities.

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## 2 Why is your organisation being asked to take part?

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All Local Authorities in England are eligible to take part. Your organisation has been invited because it operates within the English policy context and has responsibilities relevant to food, health or related policy areas.

We are hoping that 60 Local Authorities across England to take part in total.

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## 3 What will happen to my organisation if we take part?

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If your Local Authority agrees to take part:

- You will be asked to nominate a Local Authority Key Informant who will act as the main contact with the research team

- Your Local Authority will be randomly allocated to either:
  - an **intervention group**, which will take part in a workshop and follow-up activities using systems thinking approaches, or
  - a **control group**, which will continue with usual practice

In all Local Authorities, we will ask the Key Informant to:

- Participate in two, virtual, data collection interviews - one relatively soon and one in around 12 months

In all Local Authorities randomised to the intervention group, we will also ask the Key Informant to:

- Work with us to plan a one-day workshop including
  - deciding on a focus topic for the workshop and present an introduction for this topic (approx. 5 minutes)
  - identifying and inviting around 15 external stakeholders to attend the workshop
  - identify and secure space and catering for the workshop
- Attend the workshop
- Debrief with us on outcomes and actions resulting from the workshop across 3x post workshop phone calls and 1x 12 month follow up interview.

In some Local Authorities randomised to the control group, we will also ask the Key Informant to:

- Help us identify local meetings that we can observe to understand how stakeholders interact
- Help us identify local stakeholders to take part in interviews telling us their thoughts about dietary inequalities

The study will follow participating Local Authorities for 12 months.

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## 4 Possible benefits and disadvantages of taking part

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What are the possible benefits of taking part?

- Dedicated time and structured support to reflect on dietary health inequalities with key local stakeholders
- Opportunities to strengthen cross-sector collaboration
- Contribution to national evidence to support more effective policymaking
- All Local Authorities will receive the systems thinking workshop materials that can then be replicated within your Local Authority

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We don't think there are any serious risks. Participation will require staff time and involvement in meetings and workshops.

Due to limited research funds, we will ask the Local Authority to arrange and cover any costs associated with room booking and catering for the workshops. However, we will always work with you to keep costs minimal or find alternative arrangements.

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## 5 More information about taking part

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Do we have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. Your Local Authority may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study you should ask to speak to the research team who will do their best to answer your questions on [gladioli.study@ims.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gladioli.study@ims.cam.ac.uk).

If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, the normal University of Cambridge complaints process is available to you through the University of Cambridge Clinical School Secretary: telephone: 01223 333543 or email: [SchoolSec@medschl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:SchoolSec@medschl.cam.ac.uk).

What will happen to information collected during the study?

The University of Cambridge is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will need to use information from your Local Authority in order to undertake this study. We will act as the data controller for this study – this means that we are responsible for looking after the information and using it properly.

This information will include the Local Authority name and information about policies. People will use this information to do the research or to check your records to make sure that the research is being done properly.

People who do not need to know about your Local Authority involvement won't be able to see your name or contact details. Your Local Authority data will have a code number instead.

Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that your Local Authority took part in the study.

We will keep your identifiable study data for the minimum period of time required to undertake the research and whilst we may need to contact you. The study data will then be fully anonymized and securely archived or destroyed.

## How we keep the information collected secure

Electronic identifiable data will be stored in the IMS Epidemiology Secure Research Drive (SRD) which has additional security measures in place to protect your data.

We have procedures in place to deal with any suspected personal data breach. We will tell you and applicable regulators when there has been a breach of your personal data when we legally have to. For further details about UK breach reporting rules [visit the Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\) website](#).

## What are your choices about how your information is used?

- You can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason, but we will keep information about you that we already have
- You have the right to ask us to remove, change or delete data we hold about you for the purposes of the study. We might not always be able to do this if it means we cannot use your data to do the research. If so, we will tell you why we cannot do this (e.g. because we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate).
- If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible.
- If you agree to take part in this study, you will have the option to take part in future research using your data saved from this study.

## How will we use information about you after the study ends?

Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that your Local Authority took part in the study.

We will keep your study data for a maximum of 10 of years. The study data will then be fully anonymised and securely archived or destroyed.

You can find out more about how we use your information at: <https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/medical-research-participant-data>

## What will happen to the results of the study?

When the study is completed, we will share with you a summary of results. The results will also be published in an academic journal, presented at scientific meetings and to interested stakeholders and policy makers. No information that could identify your Local Authority will be published in any report or presentation about this study.

## Who is organising and funding the study?

This study is organised by IMS Epidemiology, part of the University of Cambridge. A team from the University of Hertfordshire will be conducting the qualitative data collection for the process evaluation part of the study. The funder is UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

## Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by an independent group of people, called the Research Ethics Committee, to protect your safety, rights, well-being and dignity. The study has been given a favourable opinion by The Humanities and social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (University of Cambridge).

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## 6 Contact for further information

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

**GLADIOLI study team**

[gladioli.study@ims.cam.ac.uk](mailto:gladioli.study@ims.cam.ac.uk)

[GLADIOLI study webpage](#)

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