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RESEARCH TENDER CALL



TENDER INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Project Reference No.: 03-2026

Project Title: Food Safety That Works: Co-Designing Practical Tools for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

1. Objective/Knowledge Gap:

- a) To map and review publicly available food safety materials across the island of Ireland, and to assess their clarity, accessibility and usability for adults aged 18 years and over with intellectual disabilities who are involved in domestic food preparation.
- b) To explore the lived experiences, information needs and practical challenges of adults with intellectual disabilities, and their family members and support staff, in accessing and applying food safety information within supported living, day service and family home contexts.
- c) To work collaboratively with participating adults and support staff to co-design and refine a small number of accessible food safety resources, and, where appropriate, to explore the feasibility and acceptability of using existing digital accessibility features or Artificial Intelligence (AI) supported tools to enhance understanding. This project will not involve the development of new digital or AI tools.
- d) To carry out a small-scale evaluation of the co-designed resources within participating settings, focusing on feasibility, usability and short-term changes in food safety knowledge and self-reported practices.
- e) To develop practical, evidence informed recommendations for practice, including guidance and draft training materials produced in partnership with disability service providers, to

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support clearer communication and safer domestic food preparation among adults with intellectual disabilities.

2. Background

Adults with intellectual disabilities, also referred to as learning disabilities in some jurisdictions, experience well documented health inequalities compared with the general population (Emerson and Baines, 2011; World Health Organization, 2011). They may encounter barriers in accessing and understanding mainstream health information and services where materials are not adapted to their communication and support needs (World Health Organization, 2011).

Intellectual disabilities are characterised by differences in conceptual, social and practical functioning, which may affect the ability to understand and apply information relating to nutrition, meal planning and food safety (Ersfjord et al., 2026).

Safe food handling practices are essential in domestic and supported living environments to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. However, food safety guidance is generally developed for the wider population and may not take sufficient account of the communication and support requirements of adults with intellectual disabilities.

To date, there appears to have been limited systematic evaluation of food safety materials for adults with intellectual disabilities across the island of Ireland, and little published evidence of co-designed resources tailored to supported living, day service or family home contexts. This gap highlights the need to review existing materials and to develop accessible, evidence informed resources to support safer and more independent food preparation.

3. Approach

A mixed methods design appropriate to achieving the stated objectives is required. The approach should include:

- A focused rapid review and accessibility appraisal of publicly available food safety materials.
- Qualitative exploration of the lived experiences of adults with intellectual disabilities, and their family members and support staff.

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- A structured co-design process to develop and refine accessible food safety resources.
- A proportionate evaluative component examining short term changes in food safety knowledge and self-reported practices following implementation of the co-designed resources.

The evaluation is not intended to constitute a controlled trial or a long-term impact study. Methods should be clearly justified and proportionate to the 18-month project duration.

4. Technical Specification

(a) Scope of research

The Applicant shall:

- Outline existing links, or a practical plan to establish links, with disability service providers in both Ireland and Northern Ireland to support delivery of the project.
- Ensure recruitment and primary research activity are delivered on an approximately equal basis across Ireland and Northern Ireland.
- Focus on adults aged 18 years and over with intellectual disabilities who are actively involved in domestic food preparation within supported living, day service or family home contexts.
- Exclude high dependency residential settings where food preparation is entirely staff led.

(b) Literature review

The Applicant shall undertake a focused rapid review of relevant national and international literature relating to accessible food safety education, co-design methodologies, and digital and AI-enabled supports in disability contexts.

The review must be conducted in accordance with a transparent, structured and reproducible methodology, including clearly defined review questions, a documented search strategy and terms, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, and a recorded process for study selection, critical appraisal and synthesis. Relevant peer-reviewed and grey literature shall be included.

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The Applicant shall ensure that the scope, depth and quality of the review are proportionate to, and sufficient to support, the project objectives and deliverables within the agreed timeframe. Safefood reserves the right to request supporting documentation evidencing the methodology applied and to require clarification or revisions where the review does not meet these requirements.

(c) Qualitative and quantitative work

The Applicant shall propose appropriate methodologies to deliver the scope of work and shall provide a clear, detailed and evidence-based rationale for the proposed approach. The Applicant must demonstrate that the methodologies selected are suitable, proportionate and capable of achieving the stated objectives and deliverables within the agreed timeframe.

Safefood reserves the right to seek clarification and to reject proposals where the proposed methodology is insufficiently justified, inappropriate or unlikely to meet the project requirements.

(d) Analysis

The Applicant is required to employ rigorous methods for both quantitative and qualitative analysis to ensure comprehensive examination and interpretation of the data collected in the research project. The Applicant will provide explicit details of the methods for quantitative and qualitative analysis.

(e) Data handling and Reporting

The Applicant shall submit to Safefood an interim written progress report at six-month intervals, detailing progress against each project deliverable. Upon completion of the study, the Applicant shall submit a comprehensive final report collating all outcomes, findings and agreed outputs.

The Applicant shall maintain complete, accurate and secure records of all data, documentation, forms and electronic files generated in the course of the project and shall retain such records until otherwise directed in writing by Safefood. Safefood reserves the right to request access to or copies of such records where required.

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(f) Quality assurance

The Applicant shall apply appropriate and validated methodologies for all quantitative components of the work, where applicable, and shall clearly specify and justify the qualitative analytical methods to be used.

The Applicant must demonstrate that all methods proposed are robust, fit for purpose and capable of producing reliable and credible findings. Safefood reserves the right to seek clarification or require revisions where the proposed approach does not meet acceptable quality standards.

5. Proposed Activities/Deliverables

The Applicant shall deliver, at a minimum:

- A co-designed, accessible food safety resource suitable for use within supported living, day service and family home settings;
- Evidence-informed recommendations for practice, including clear guidance and associated training materials developed in collaboration with disability service providers;
- An accessible summary of the project findings in a format suitable for adults with intellectual disabilities; and
- A final integrated project report consolidating all outputs, findings and recommendations.

The final integrated project report must include, at a minimum:

- Findings from the focused rapid literature review;
- Results of the accessibility appraisal of existing materials;
- Qualitative findings;
- A detailed account of the co-design process and the resulting resources;
- Findings from the evaluative component; and
- Practical, evidence-based recommendations for implementation.

All deliverables must be of a professional standard, fit for purpose, and submitted in accordance with the agreed scope, timelines and any accessibility requirements specified by Safefood. Safefood reserves the right to require amendments where deliverables do not meet these requirements.

6. Evaluation of Tenders

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Quality of the proposal:

- ✓ Anticipated deliverables.
- ✓ Research method and facilities.
- ✓ Value for money.
- ✓ Potential for application.
- ✓ Work plan, including the overall timeframe.
- ✓ Environmental and social considerations.

Quality of Applicants:

- ✓ Experience in subject area.
- ✓ Quality Assurance and Quality Control measures in place.

7. **Duration of Project:** The project duration will be 18 months from contract award.

8. Tender Application Forms and Guidelines

The Tender Application Form and associated Guidelines can be downloaded from this link <https://www.safefood.net/professional/research/research-tenders>

They can also be obtained by emailing research@safefood.net quoting the project reference number 03-2026. Alternatively, please contact Safefood as per the details below.

Safefood
7 Eastgate Avenue
Little Island
Cork
T45 RXO1
Tel: + 353212304100

The closing date for receipt of applications by Safefood is no later than **4pm Friday 15 May 2026**.

9. References

- Emerson, E. and Baines, S. (2011) 'Health inequalities and people with learning disabilities in the UK', Tizard Learning Disability Review, 16(1), pp. 42–48.

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- Ersfjord, E.M.I., Røstad-Tollefsen, H.K., Kolset, S.O. and McGarty, A.M. (2026) 'Caught between vulnerability and neglect: Nutrition in people with intellectual disabilities', *Nutrients*, 18, 304.
- World Health Organization (2011) World report on disability. Geneva: World Health Organization.