

What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2016?



What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2016?

Suggested citation

When referencing this document, please use the following citation:

MacMahon, B and Moloney, N (2016) what is the cost of a healthy food basket in in Northern Ireland in 2016. Dublin: **safefood**.

This publication has been jointly funded by:

safefood, The Consumer Council and The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

For more information:

www.safefood.eu

www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/

www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland

ISBN: 978-1-905767-65-6

Publication date: September 2016

Table of contents

1	Key findings.....	1
2	Introduction	3
3	Methodology	5
4	Feedback from focus groups	8
5	The cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types	14
6	Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types (2014-2016)	23

List of tables

Table 1: Cost of minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (primary-schools and secondary-school age) household by sub-category (2016).....	14
Table 2 Income for two-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016)	16
Table 3 Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household dependent on state benefits (2016)..	17
Table 4 Income for two-parent, two-child household – One adult employed and earning the national minimum wage (2016).....	17
Table 5 Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household – one adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016).....	18
Table 6 Cost of minimum essential food basket for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household by sub-category (2016)	18
Table 7 Income for one-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016).....	20
Table 8 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for one-parent, two child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (2016)	21
Table 9 Income for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)	21
Table 10 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household Income for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016).....	22
Table 11 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (November 2014-March 2016)	24
Table 12 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income dependent on state benefits (2016)	24
Table 13 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income where one adult is employed and earning national minimum wage (2016).....	25

Table 14 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for pensioner living alone household: November 2014-March 2016	25
Table 15 Income for a pensioner living alone household – receiving the state pension (2016)	26
Table 16 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for a pensioner living alone household receiving the state pension (2016)	26
Table 17 Seven-day menu for the two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household	39
Table 18 Seven-day menu for the one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household	44
Table 19 Shopping list for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household	48
Table 20 Shopping basket for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household	52

Acknowledgements

The assistance and cooperation of a number of people is gratefully acknowledged:

- Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, who completed the research
- The consumers who took part in the focus groups, without whom this research would not have been possible
- Ruth Price and the nutritionists from Ulster University, who reviewed the menus
- Paulino Garcia of the Consumer Council Northern Ireland, who provided the income data used in the research

1 Key findings

The cost of a minimum essential food basket

- The total weekly cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child household type (primary-school and secondary-school age) is £153.01 (approximately £22 per day).
- The total weekly cost of a minimum essential food basket for a one-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary-school age) is £99.00 (approximately £14 per day).
- A two-parent, two-child household (primary-school and secondary-school age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend 44% of weekly income to buy a minimum essential food basket.
- A one-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend 32% of total weekly income to buy a minimum essential food basket.
- The cost of a minimum essential food basket depends on the age and number of people in the household. In particular, the cost of providing food for an adolescent is similar to that for an adult.
- The sub-category 'meat' accounts for the largest share of the food basket for both household types – one-quarter of the basket in each case.
- There was a consensus among the focus groups that spending on takeaways and extra food for visitors and for Christmas was an important part of the food basket for both households.
- This research highlights the challenge facing low-income households to balance the cost of a minimum nutritious diet in the context of meeting the range of other weekly household expenses.
- The focus-group participants reported that food is often a flexible component of household spending, in that the amount of household expenditure spent on food can vary if the money is needed elsewhere.

Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket (2014–2016)

The total weekly cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age) is £115.00 in 2016. This is a reduction of £4.17 from 2014.

The total weekly cost of the food basket for a pensioner living alone household is £57.05. This is a decrease of £2.08 from 2014.

A two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend 33% of weekly income to buy a minimum essential food basket. This is down two percentage points from 35% in 2014.

- A pensioner living alone dependent on the state pension would need to spend 34% of their household income to buy a minimum essential food basket. This is down two percentage points, from 36% in 2014.
- The price of food, non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages decreased from 2014 to 2016. Nevertheless, the two households are still required to spend a considerable portion of their weekly income on food.

2 Introduction

A balanced, nutritious diet is essential for health and well-being but may be unobtainable for those who live in poverty. For low-income households, food is often a flexible component of their budget as they can satisfy their hunger with cheaper, less nutritious food – putting themselves at risk of disease and obesity. Food poverty is multi-dimensional and includes the lack of access to a nutritionally adequate diet and the resulting impact on health and social participation. The cost of food and the amount of available income are also key determinants of access to a healthy diet. Among the barriers to a healthy diet is the unavailability of shops which stock an adequate range of healthy foods (as can be the case in rural areas and in smaller towns which do not have accessible transport to larger shops). Lack of access to education and to information on healthy eating as well as limited cooking skills are also contributing factors to an inadequate and unhealthy diet.

Objectives

1. To establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket that meets the physical, psychological and social needs of two household types in Northern Ireland:
 - a. A two-parent, two-child household type (primary-school and secondary-school age)
 - b. A one-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary-school age)
2. To provide an updated (March 2016) cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types in Northern Ireland previously established (1):
 - a. A two-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary-school age)
 - b. A pensioner living alone household type

Research context

This study is the second to establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket for household types in Northern Ireland. The 2016 study is set against the backdrop of the continued growth of deprivation and poverty in Northern Ireland.

This is reflected by a greater reliance on food banks, which is a visible indicator of growing food poverty. From January to April 2016, 25,755 three-day emergency food supplies were given to people in

crisis by the Trussell Trust food banks (2). This is a considerable increase from the 254 food supplies provided in the year to April 2012 (25,501 more supplies)^a.

Data published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency show that the number of individuals in absolute poverty (before housing costs) increased from 20% in 2012/13 to 23% in 2013/14 (approximately 409,000 people), suggesting that income growth was lower than that of inflation^b. The level of absolute poverty in 2013/14 once again reached the highest point in 12 years, equalling the level seen previously in 2011/12^c.

The percentage of working-age adults in absolute poverty (before housing costs) increased slightly by 1% from the previous year to 21% in 2013/14 (230,000 working-age adults). Nonetheless, this was the second highest number recorded over a 12-year period (22% in 2011/12 is the highest). Just over one-quarter of children (26%) were in absolute poverty in 2013/14, which is an increase from 22% on the previous year. Levels of absolute poverty among children once again peaked in 2013/14, reaching the same point as the highest levels recorded in 2003/04. In 2013/14, 23% of pensioners (approximately 67,000 pensioners) were living in absolute poverty, before housing costs. This is an increase of two percentage points from the previous year (3).

As well as increased deprivation and poverty, rising food prices have made it more difficult for low-income households to afford a healthy diet. According to the UK Consumer Price Index, food prices in the UK increased by 11.5% in real terms between 2007 and their peak in 2012 (4). Households that are already struggling to make ends meet suffer the most when food prices rise, as low-income households tend to spend a larger portion of their income on food (4). Since 2013, there have been gradual reductions in food prices. From February 2016 to March 2016, the cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages decreased by 0.6% (5), although prices still remain considerably higher than in 2007

a The supplies are not necessarily provided to unique users. The financial year is measured from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

b Absolute poverty is defined by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency as the proportion of individuals who have incomes below 60% of the UK (inflation-adjusted) median income in 2010/11 (Department of Social Development, 2015, p.10).

c The absolute poverty threshold in 2013/14 was £280 before housing costs based on the 2010/11 inflation-adjusted UK median. The median household income in Northern Ireland was £404 per week before housing costs in 2013/14. Over the time series, average income in 2013/14 remains comparatively low, with 2011/12 being the only year where average incomes were lower.

3 Methodology

Two methods were used: one to establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types, and a second to update the cost of minimum essential food basket for two household types. A full description of the method used to establish the cost of minimum essential food basket for a particular household type is detailed in Appendix 1.

Establishing the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types

The research aimed to establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types:

- Two-parent, two-child household (primary-school and secondary-school age)
- One-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)

Focus groups representing each of the two household types were established in three different areas of Northern Ireland:

- Derry/Londonderry – a city
- Enniskillen – a rural town
- Belfast – the capital city

The members of the focus groups represented these households and were from a range of different socio-economic backgrounds.

There were three rounds of focus-group work. During the first two rounds, seven-day menus and corresponding shopping lists were constructed using the Consensual Budget Standards methodology (Appendix 1). The food items on the shopping lists were priced online in Tesco and in local shops and the total food budget was calculated. At the same time, the menus for the household types under consideration were given to nutritionists at the Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health at Ulster University to be tested for nutritional adequacy. Once the pricing and nutritional analysis was complete, the Belfast focus groups met a final time to examine the changes made by the nutritionist and to determine whether the final composition of the food basket was realistic. For more information on the focus-group process, please see Appendix 1.

Two income scenarios were examined for each household type:

- Dependent on state benefits
- Earning the national minimum wage

The income scenarios presented for the households are hypothetical and are an example of a sum of money that a household would 'take home' (i.e. the net earned income and any additional benefits that the household may be entitled to receive). It should be noted that not all entitlements were taken into consideration due to the difficulty in identifying a common scenario. The scenarios are only examples to illustrate the food basket in relation to typical low-income households and should not be interpreted as real cases. The online calculator, www.entitledto.co.uk, was used to help generate the income scenarios.

Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types

This study updates, with 2016 data, the cost of the minimum essential food baskets and income scenarios for the two household types that were determined in 2014:

- A two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)
- A pensioner living alone household

The cost of the 2016 food baskets was produced by updating the food prices from November 2014, when they were originally priced in Tesco online, to March 2016^d. The cost of the minimum essential food baskets was updated using the United Kingdom (UK) Consumer Price Index (CPI) monthly inflation rates (5, 6) from December 2014 to March 2016. Two corresponding rates of inflation were applied to the food baskets: the inflation rate for food and non-alcoholic beverages, and the inflation rate for alcohol. The updated cost of the two categories were added together to produce the updated weekly total of the minimum essential food baskets for both household types in 2016.

^d The application of an inflation rate to update the cost of the basket is in line with other minimum income standard of living studies. This approach is also pragmatic in the context of a low inflation rate when it would not be a useful exercise to spend time re-pricing a large number of items. Regarding the content of the food basket, best practice would include a review of the food items after a period of time although the UK work showed little variation in the choice of items over time. This is understandable when the criteria is based on a minimum but nutritious standard.

The hypothetical income scenarios were also updated to 2016. The income scenarios presented for the households are an example of a sum of money that a household would take home in each scenario. It should be noted that not all entitlements were taken into consideration due to the difficulty in identifying a common scenario. The scenarios are only examples of typical household types within the category. The online calculator, www.entitledto.co.uk, was used to help generate the income scenarios.

4 Feedback from focus groups

A seven-day menu (Appendix 2) and an associated food basket (Appendix 3) were agreed by focus groups for two household types:

- Two-parent, two-child household (primary-school and secondary-school age)
- One-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)

The menus were analysed by nutritionists to ensure that they provided a balanced and nutritious diet that is based on real-life experiences.

The focus groups for both household types agreed that the menus were realistic and varied, and provided a balanced diet – with some participants even hoping to incorporate some of the menu themselves. The groups responded well to the use of the Consensual Budget Standards methodology as they were able to input their own lived experiences and include food that they would ordinarily eat. They appreciated the analysis of the nutritionist and hoped the baskets would provide a useful reference point for policy makers.

Feedback from focus groups on the cost of a minimum essential food basket

The two-parent household type focus groups were surprised at the final cost of what they described as a 'basic menu' which included no luxuries, apart from alcohol at home. The same surprise had been expressed by the focus-group participants in the previous study. The group emphasised that the food basket agreed was reflective of only a minimum standard of living:

“Definitely, you could not go any lower, not if you wanted it to be healthy.”^e




^e Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent focus group.

The one-parent household type focus group agreed that the final price was reasonable and not far removed from what some participants spend themselves on food each week. However, they reached a consensus that many low-income households would not be able to spend this much money on food each week, including some members of the group that were employed. They explained that the basket was unaffordable for many one-parent households where the adult is not employed and that other bills would take priority:

“Clothes, gas and electricity are quite high for somebody who is a single parent.”^f




“You would be living on stuff that you wouldn’t necessarily want to give the kids but it’s the only way you can do it until you are stable again.”^g



The findings from the focus groups reflect those in a report by Save the Children in which one quarter of low-income parents acknowledged that they buy the cheapest food possible, compared to 14% of high-income parents (7).

“You’d go anywhere to feed your children, if the price is right you would go.”^h



^f Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent focus group.


^g Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent household type focus group.

^h Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent household type focus group.

The participants of both groups raised the point that households, including themselves, tend to shop around to keep food costs down and to buy items that are on special offer and items purchased in the local shop. However, they acknowledged that not every household has the time to shop around, especially if the adults are employed. Special offers were not included in the basket as they are temporary and follow certain terms and conditions. Special offers were discussed with the groups and they agreed that they were a realistic shopping habit of households and helped to cut costs.

The one-parent focus group explained that they had to be conscious of packet sizes when buying food such as cartons of orange juice, which deteriorate quickly once opened. One participant described that buying smaller packets to avoid waste tended to be more expensive.

“It is cheaper to buy the full carton and let it go to waste rather than buy the individual ones.”ⁱ



However, the one-parent focus group agreed to select packet sizes that represented the best value and agreed that the extra could be stored away or given to visitors.

The two-parent household type group raised concerns over the extra cost of an adolescent, which they described as like having another adult in the household.

The two different household groups also raised the issue of the cost of cooking itself such as energy use, fridge freezers, storage containers, and lunch boxes which often get lost and have to be replaced. In addition, the participants agreed that these items were vital for keeping food costs low and for preventing unnecessary waste by storing open packets and leftovers. In previous wider studies (8), these items are included in the ‘Household Goods’ category. As this study focuses only on the cost of food, they are not included but it is important to note this as another example of how the cost of a minimum essential food basket extends beyond the price of food alone.

ⁱ Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

Feedback from focus groups on holidays and special occasions

Both household groups raised concerns over the extra food costs they would incur outside of a typical school and work week. They agreed that the summer holidays were a particularly expensive time for families with extra food costs such as hosting or attending barbeques, and small treats on days out, such as ice-cream at the beach. The participants explained that there was no routine in the summer holidays and having the children at home would result in more costs overall (such as entertainment and childcare), which would add further strains to a tight food budget. The household focus groups agreed that a one-parent household type was not able to spend less than an extra £15.00 a week during the summer holidays, to cover the extra food costs. The two-parent household type was not able to spend less than £25.00 extra per week. The difference in costs accounts for the higher expense of having an adolescent in the household who may want to socialise with friends. These costs were not included in the overall weekly food baskets but the focus groups for both households agreed it was important that the extra costs were noted:


“No extra for any luxury at any time of the year.”^j



This feedback supports the findings of a UK report that poverty in the school holidays affects many families in the UK, especially those who are entitled to free school meals (9). This report specifically noted that one-third of parents skipped a meal so that their children could eat during the school holidays (9). Three-quarters of families in the households surveyed with incomes of less than £15,000 said they were not always able to buy food during school holidays. It also found that 41% of parents on low incomes sometimes feel isolated in the school holidays because they cannot afford to go out and entertain their children or have people over to visit.

^j Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent household type focus group.

“The first thing you do when someone comes to your house is offer them tea or coffee.”^k



The extra costs of social occasions such as school holidays are not included in this study (although they are usually included in the ‘Social Inclusion’ section in the wider MESL research). Although the food cost at Christmas is the only extra occasion that is included in this study, it is important to note the impact that the school holidays can have on a household’s budget and the capacity of low-income households to cope during these periods.

Feedback from focus groups on cost of healthy food

The focus groups for both household types agreed that it was difficult for households to afford a healthy diet in general. The participants explained that fresh food does not last long and tends to cost more than less nutritious food they may purchase:

“some parents may turn to using crisps and sugar to fill their children up.”^l



“It is cheaper to buy biscuits and rubbish than it is to buy fruit and vegetables.”^m



^k Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

^l Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

^m Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

This feedback echoes the findings of a study conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (10), which found that the cost of eating healthily has increased over the past 30 years while the cost of processed food has fallen. In the UK, from 1980 to 2012, the price of an ice-cream halved while the price of fresh green vegetables tripled (10). The ODI report also highlights the link between the rising cost of healthy food compared to processed food and the increase in obesity globally (Wiggins &Keats, 2015, p.14). This is an important consideration in Northern Ireland, where the Health Survey 2014/15 found that 25% of adults were obese, with a further 35% classed as overweight (11). The same survey found 21% of children were classed as overweight and 7% were classed as obese.

In order to combat growing health problems such as obesity, the focus groups emphasised that households should be able to purchase fresh, healthy food as a minimum. The trend towards fresh food over frozen food is not confined to the focus groups in this study. The UK CPI Basket of Goods and Services has been updated to include more chilled fresh food over frozen versions, reflecting consumer habits (12). Healthy eating trends are also reflected in the fact that the groups agreed orange juice should not be available for breakfast every day, due to the risk of erosion to teeth from fruit juice (13).

The participants in the focus groups for both household type also reached a consensus that the food baskets offer little room for experimentation with food tastes or for children who are fussy or for people who have special dietary requirements. The participants emphasised this as a realistic, everyday concern that households with children face. In the *safefood* report regarding food on a low income, it was found that 'plate spinning' (i.e. making several meals at once to cater to different tastes) was a regular occurrence in households with children (14). Despite this, focus-group participants made the assumption that everyone in the household eats the same meals and does not have special dietary requirements.

Overview of feedback from focus groups

Overall, the focus-group discussions highlighted important points for consideration when creating a weekly menu for a household which may be overlooked by policy makers but can impact significantly on a small food budget in a low-income household. It is clear that the costs of food stretch beyond a basic shopping list and impact on a household's social, psychological and physical well-being.

5 The cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types

The cost of a minimum essential food basket for each household is based on the agreed menus (Table 17, Table 18) and is the average weekly price of the shopping list (Table 19, Table 20) including expenses such as Christmas, which the household does not pay for every week. The cost of the food basket is broken down by sub-category for each household (16 categories based on the UK CPI and four additional categories: 'takeaways', 'treats', 'school lunch, snacks and milk', and 'extra food for Christmas'). The cost of the basket is also presented as a percentage of household income.

Cost of minimum essential food basket for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household type

The weekly cost of the basket for this household is £153.01 (£21.86 per day) (Table 1). In addition to the food and non-alcoholic drink, the focus groups agreed that alcohol to be consumed at home should be included. The cost of school milk, snacks and lunch is also incorporated for the primary-school and secondary-school age children. The amount agreed by the focus groups was £25.00 for a takeaway once a month and £70.00 to cover the extra food costs at Christmas, which are included the basket.

Table 1: Cost of minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (primary-schools and secondary-school age) household by sub-category (2016)

Sub-category	Cost per week ⁿ	Proportion of the basket
Bread and cereals	£15.69	10%
Meat	£40.06	26%
Fish	£4.05	3%
Milk, cheese and eggs	£9.59	6%

ⁿ Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

Sub-category	Cost per week ^o	Proportion of the basket
Oils and fats	£3.05	2%
Fruit	£12.93	8%
Vegetables including potatoes and tubers	£17.05	11%
Sugar, jam and syrups	£0.90	1%
Food products nec ^p	£3.08	2%
Coffee, tea and cocoa	£3.75	2%
Mineral waters, soft drinks and juices	£2.70	2%
Alcoholic beverages	£10.00	7%
Takeaway	£6.25	4%
Treats	£3.00	2%
School lunch, snacks and milk	£19.57	13%
Extra food for Christmas	£1.35	1%
Total	£153.01	100%

The most expensive sub-category in the weekly basket is 'meat' (£40.06), which accounts for just over one-quarter of the basket. The least expensive sub-category is 'sugar, jam and syrups' costing £0.90 per week (1% of the overall basket). The total weekly cost of 'school lunch, snacks and milk' for both children is £19.57 (13% of the weekly basket). The limited number of 'treats' costs £3.00 per week (2% of the overall cost of the food basket) while a monthly 'takeaway' (£25.00) amounts to £6.25 (4% of the weekly basket).

The cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

For this household type, two income scenarios were examined:

- The household is dependent on state benefits

^o Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

^p 'nec' means not elsewhere classified.

- One adult in the household is working and earning the minimum wage and one adult is a stay-at-home parent

Two-parent, two-child household – dependent on state benefits

In this scenario, the household is living in social housing and is in receipt of state benefits. The Housing Benefit for the household is based on the average weekly rent charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 2015/16, which is £66.60 per week (15).

It is assumed that this household is not paying for childcare, does not have savings over £6,000 and does not have any other source of income. Additionally, it is assumed that the adults in the household were employed for less than 26 weeks between 6th April 2015 and 5th April 2016 or were unemployed during this period. The total weekly income for this household in this hypothetical scenario is £350.20 (Table 2). This household would be required to spend 44% of its total weekly income on the food basket (Table 3).

Table 2 Income for two-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016)

Entitlements	Yearly	Weekly
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credits	£ 6, 110.10	£ 117.50
Jobseeker's Allowance	£ 5, 988.61	£ 114.85
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£ 878.61	£ 16.85
Housing Benefit	£ 3, 463.20	£ 66.60
Other Income Entitlements		
Child Benefit	£ 1, 788.80	£ 34.40
Total	£ 18, 229.32	£ 350.20

Table 3 Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household dependent on state benefits (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of Income
£ 350.20	£ 153.01 ⁹	44%

Two-parent, two-child household – one adult employed and earning the national minimum wage

In this scenario, one parent is employed full-time (37.5 hours per week) earning the national minimum wage of £7.20 per hour, while the other parent stays at home. It is assumed that the household incurs no childcare costs and they live in social housing, paying the Northern Ireland Housing Executive average rent for 2015/16.

The total weekly income for the household type in this scenario is £488.25 (Table 4). This household would be required to spend 31% of its total weekly income on the food basket (Table 5), which is a lower percentage than the same household dependent on state benefits (44%) (Table 3).

Table 4 Income for two-parent, two-child household – One adult employed and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Entitlements	Yearly	Weekly
Net Earned Income	£ 12, 708.80	£ 244.40
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credit	£ 10, 891.60	£ 209.45
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Housing Benefit	£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Other Income Entitlements		
Child Benefit	£ 1, 788.80	£ 34.40
Total Entitlements	£ 12, 650.56	£ 243.85
Total	£25, 359.36	£ 488.25

⁹ This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Table 5: Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household – one adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of income
£488.25	£ 153.01 ^r	31%

Cost of minimum essential food basket for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household type

The weekly total of the minimum essential food basket for this household is £99.00, which breaks down as £14.14 for the household per day (Table 6). Like the two-parent household type, alcohol to be consumed at home was included in the basket and in the overall nutritional assessment of the menu. The cost of school milk, snacks and lunch is also incorporated for the pre-school and primary-school child. The amount agreed by the groups was £15 for a takeaway once a month and £50 to cover the extra food costs at Christmas. These amounts were lower than those agreed by the two-parent household type groups, reflecting the impact that different household composition can have on food costs.

Table 6: Cost of minimum essential food basket for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household by sub-category (2016)

Sub-category	Cost per week ^s	Proportion of the Basket
Bread and cereals	£ 11.21	11%
Meat	£ 23.96	24%
Fish	£ 2.37	2%
Milk, cheese and eggs	£ 9.06	9%
Oils and fats	£ 2.17	2%

^r This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

^s Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

Sub-category	Cost per week [†]	Proportion of the Basket
Fruit	£ 9.53	10%
Vegetables including potatoes and tubers	£ 11.71	12%
Sugar, jam and syrups	£ 1.12	1%
Food products nec	£ 3.37	3%
Coffee, tea and cocoa	£ 1.49	2%
Mineral waters, soft drinks and juices	£ 1.37	1%
Alcoholic beverages	£ 6.00	6%
Takeaway	£ 3.75	4%
Treats	£ 3.09	3%
School lunch, snacks and milk	£ 7.83	8%
Extra food for Christmas	£ 0.96	1%
Total	£ 99.00	100%

The most expensive sub-category is 'meat' (£23.96), which accounts for almost one-quarter (24%) of the overall basket. The least expensive sub-category is 'sugars, jams and syrups' costing £1.12 per week (1% of the total). The total weekly cost of 'school lunch, snacks and milk' for both children is £7.83 (8% of the total basket). The extra cost of food at Christmas (£50.00) equates to £0.96 per week (1% of the total basket) while £6.00 per week covers the cost of a bottle of wine to facilitate the single parent the opportunity to drink at home or to offer a guest a drink if they cannot afford to go out to socialise. The 'treats' category costs £3.09 per week (3% of the total basket) while £15.00 a month for a 'takeaway' costs £3.75 per week (4% of the overall basket). This was less than the cost of a takeaway in the two-parent household as there are fewer adults in the house and a pre-school child would eat less than an adolescent. The minimum essential food basket agreed for the one-parent household by the focus groups is similar to the two-parent household basket based on the items that money is allocated towards (e.g. takeaways). However, the difference in the composition of the household, one

[†] Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

less adult and a younger child (pre-school vs. adolescent) results in lower quantities of food items purchased, lower school lunch prices and a less expensive basket overall.

The cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

Two income scenarios are examined for the one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household:

- Dependent on state benefits
- The adult is employed part-time (16 hours per week)

One-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household dependent on state benefits

In this scenario, the household is living in social housing, is in receipt of state benefits and the adult is unemployed. The Housing Benefit for the household is based on the average weekly rent charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 2015/16, which is £66.60 per week (15). It is assumed that this household is not paying for childcare, does not have savings over £6,000 and does not have any other source of income. It is assumed the adult in the household was employed for less than 26 weeks between 6th April 2015 and 5th April 2016 or was unemployed during this period. The total weekly income for this household type in this scenario is £308.45 (Table 7) and the cost of the weekly food basket is just under one-third (32%) of the weekly household income (Table 8).

Table 7 Income for one-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016)

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credits	£6110.10	£117.50
Jobseekers Allowance	£3811.64	£73.10
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£878.61	£16.85
Housing Benefit	£3463.20	£66.60
Other Income Entitlements		

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Child Benefit	£1788.80	£34.40
Total	£16052.35	£308.45

Table 8 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for one-parent, two child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of Income
£308.45	£99.00 ^u	32%

One-parent, two-child household – adult employed part-time and earning the national minimum wage

In this scenario, the adult in the household is employed part-time (16 hours per week), earning the national minimum wage of £7.20 per hour. It is assumed the household incurs no childcare costs and they live in social housing, paying the Northern Ireland Housing Executive average rent for 2015/16 (£66.60). The total weekly income for the household in this scenario, including any additional benefits that the household may be entitled to, is £359.05 (Table 9). This household would be required to spend nearly one-third (28%) of their weekly total income on the weekly food basket (Table 10).

Table 9 Income for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Earned Income	£5990.40	£115.20
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credit	£10861.76	£209.45
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£0.00	£0.00
Housing Benefit	£0.00	£0.00
Other Income Entitlements		

^u This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Child Benefit	£1788.80	£34.40
Total Entitlements	£12650.56	£243.85
Total	£18640.96	£359.05

Table 10: Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household Income for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of income
£359.05	£99.00 ^v	28%

^v This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

6 Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types (2014-2016)

This section presents the updated cost of a minimum essential food basket and income scenarios for two household types in Northern Ireland previously determined (1):

- A two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)
- A pensioner living alone household

The food prices were updated from November 2014, when they were originally priced, to March 2016. This aligns with the date of the pricing for the two additional household types presented in section 4.

Changes in inflation: November 2014 and March 2016

The overall UK CPI rate remained fairly constant during the period from November 2014 to March 2016 and the largest monthly change was a decrease in prices of 0.9% from December 2015 to January 2016. From January 2016 to March 2016, the prices of all items went up as inflation increased by 0.5% (Office for National Statistics, 2016).

Overall, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages decreased from November 2014 to March 2016. This is the same for the price of alcohol, despite larger fluctuations in prices over the same period. From January 2016 to March 2016, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages decreased by 2.7% and alcoholic beverages prices saw a larger decrease of 3.8%.

Cost of minimum essential food basket for two-parent, two-child (pre - school and primary-school age) household type

The total cost of the minimum essential food basket in March 2016 was £115.00 (Table 11), a decrease of £ 4.17 (3.5%) relative to the cost of the same basket in November 2014.

Table 11 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (November 2014-March 2016)

Basket Items	Nov 2014	March 2016
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	£ 110.68	£ 106.76
Alcohol	£ 8.49	£ 8.24
Total cost	£ 119.17	£ 115.00

Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

Two income scenarios are examined for the two-parent, two-child household:

- Dependent on state benefits
- One adult in the household employed and earning the minimum wage, and one adult stay-at-home parent

Two-parent, two-child household – dependent on state benefits

In this scenario, the household is living in social housing and is in receipt of state benefits. The Housing Benefit for the household is based on the average weekly rent charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 2015/16, which is £66.60 per week (15). It is assumed that this household is not paying for childcare, does not have savings over £6,000 and does not have any other source of income. Additionally, it is assumed the adults in the household were employed for less than 26 weeks between 6th April 2015 and 5th April 2016 or were unemployed during this period.

The total weekly income for this household in this scenario is £350.20 (Table 2). This household would be required to spend 33% of its total weekly income on the food basket (Table 12).

Table 12 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income dependent on state benefits (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of Income
£ 350.20	£ 115.00 ^w	33%

^w This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week for the primary-school child. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Two parent, two-child household – one adult employed and earning national minimum wage

In this scenario, one parent is employed full-time (37.5 hours per week), earning the national minimum wage of £7.20 per hour, while the other parent stays at home. It is assumed the household incurs no childcare costs and they live in social housing, paying the Northern Ireland Housing Executive average rent for 2015/16 (£66.60).

The total weekly income for the household in this scenario is £488.25 (Table 4). This household would have to spend a significant amount (24%) of total weekly income on the food basket (Table 13), although less than the proportion spent by the same household dependent on state benefits (33%) (Table 12).

Table 13 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income where one adult is employed and earning national minimum wage (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of income
£488.25	£ 115.00 ^x	24%

Cost of minimum essential food basket for pensioner living alone

The total cost of the weekly minimum essential food basket for the pensioner household in March 2016 was £57.05, which is approximately £8.00 per day (Table 14). The overall total cost of the food basket increased marginally (0.2%) between November 2014 and December 2014. However, the total cost of the food basket decreased by 41p from November 2014 to March 2015 when it cost £58.72. From January 2016 to March 2016, the total cost of the weekly food basket decreased by 2.8% to £57.05.

Table 14 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for pensioner living alone household: November 2014-March 2016

Basket Items	Nov-14	Mar-16
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	£ 55.14	£ 53.18
Alcohol to be consumed at home	£ 3.99	£ 3.87
Total cost of the basket	£ 59.13	£ 57.05

^x This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week for the primary-school child. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

One income scenario was examined for the pensioner living alone household:

- Receiving the state pension

In this scenario, it is assumed that the pensioner owns their home and is entitled to the full basic pension rate of £119.30 per week, as well as a pension credit and domestic rates benefit. The total weekly income for this household is £169.08 per week (Table 15). The pensioner living alone would be required to spend just over one-third (34%) of their weekly income on the food basket (Table 16).

Table 15 Income for a pensioner living alone household – receiving the state pension (2016)

Income	Annual	Weekly
Pension	£ 6, 203.60	£ 119.30
Means-Tested Entitlements		
Pension Credit	£ 1, 887.60	£ 36.30
Means-tested Bill Reduction		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£ 702.89	£ 13.48
Total Income	£ 8, 794.09	£ 169.08

Table 16 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for a pensioner living alone household receiving the state pension (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of the Food Basket	Food Spending as a % of Income
£ 169.08	£ 57.05	34%

7 References

1. MacMahon B, Weld G. The cost of a minimum essential food basket in Northern Ireland. Pilot study for two household types. Dublin: safefood, 2015.
2. Trussell Trust. Foodbank Statistics. 2016; Available from: www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/.
3. Department of Social Development. Northern Ireland poverty Bulletin 2013/14. Northern Ireland 2015; Available from: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/health-survey-northern-ireland.
4. Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Food Statistics Pocket Book 2015. United Kingdom 2016; Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512112/foodpocketbook-2015report-31mar16.pdf.
5. Office for National Statistics. CPI Statistical Bulletin March 2016. UK 2016; Available from: www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/mar2016.
6. Office for National Statistics UK. Consumer Price Inflation Detailed Briefing Note, December 2014. UK 2015; Available from: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_390934.pdf.
7. Kothari P, Whitham G, Quinn T. A Fair Start for Every Child why we must act not to tackle child poverty in the UK. London: Save the Children, 2014.
8. Parker H. Low Cost but Acceptable: A minimum income standard for the UK: Families with young children. Bristol: Policy Press, 1998.
9. Kellogg's. Isolation and Hunger: the reality of the school holidays for struggling families. 2015; Available from: <http://pressooffice.kelloggs.co.uk/download/HOLIDAY+HUNGER+REPORT.pdf>.
10. Wiggins S, Keats S. The Rising Cost of a Healthy Diet: changing relative prices of foods in high income and emerging economies. London: ODI, 2015.
11. Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety. Northern Ireland Health Survey 2014/15. Northern Ireland 2015; Available from: www.dsdni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ni-poverty-bulletin-201314.pdf.
12. Office for National Statistics. CPI Basket Update Consumer Price Inflation: The 2015 Basket of Goods and Services. UK 2015; Available from: www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/consumerpriceinflationbasketofgoodsandservices/2015.
13. NHS Livewell. Water, Drinks and Your Health. 2015; Available from: www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/water-drinks.aspx.
14. **safefood**. Food on a low income - four households tell their story. Cork: 2011.
15. Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Housing Executive Rents Set for 2015/16. 2015; Available from: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/news/content-news_archive_2015/february_2015/news-housing_executive_rents_set_for_2015_16.html.

16. Bradshaw J, Middleton S, Kellard K. Proposal: A Minimum Income Standard for Britain. London: Universities of York and Loughborough, 2006.
17. Middleton S. Agreeing Poverty Line: The Diversity of Consensual Budget Standards Methodology in Bradshaw, J. and Sainsbury, R. (eds). Researching Poverty. Aldershot: Abigail, 2000.
18. Bradshaw J, Middleton S, Davis A, Oldfield N, Smith N, Cosworth L, et al. A Minimum Income Standard for Britain: What people think. York: York Publishing Services, 2008.
19. Smith N, Viet-Hai., Davis A, Donald D. A Minimum Income Standard for Northern Ireland. London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009.
20. Department of Energy and Climate Change. Average Domestic Electricity Bills 2015. Northern Ireland 2016; Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511468/table_223.xls.
21. Public Health England. The Eatwell Guide What's Changed and Why 2016. UK 2016; Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508183/Eatwell_guide_what_s_changed_and_why_2016.pdf.
22. Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice. One Long Struggle: A Study of Low Income Families. Dublin: Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, 2001.
23. Stinson J. 'Lidl's Share of the Grocery Market Up in the Last Year'. Belfast: Belfast Telegraph; 2015; Available from: www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/news/lidls-share-of-grocery-market-up-in-the-last-year-31356404.html.

Appendix 1 Methodology

Background and development of consensual budget standards research

The Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) data generated in this study are based on the Consensual Budget Standards (CBS) that was originally developed by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at the University of Loughborough in collaboration with the Family Budget Unit, University of York (16). The development of the approach is detailed below.

The cost of a minimum essential standard of living with the primary focus on experts

The Family Budget Unit (FBU), University of York, developed the Low Cost but Acceptable (LCA) budget standards approach in 1998 to determine the minimum level of expenditure needed for a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (8). This methodology uses empirical data from national surveys of poverty and exclusion to determine prevailing patterns of consumption in society and to arrive at a consensus on what are the essential necessities of modern living. Input from focus groups is also used to:

- Gain information on the shopping patterns of low-income households
- Draw up a framework for the food menus and shopping lists
- Assist in the validation process of the budgets
- Learn about the realities of life on a low income

The cost of a minimum essential standard of living with the primary focus on people

The Centre for Research on Social Policy at the University of Loughborough, in collaboration with the Family Budget Unit at the University of York, developed the Consensual Budget Standards Methodology in 2006. This methodology puts the emphasis on the expenditure choices and judgements made by people in real life as they manage their money to contribute to a final consensus, “ultimately the people are the experts” (17).

When necessary, this methodology also draws on expert knowledge about basic living requirements and expenditure patterns (e.g. in relation to nutrition and household energy).

The Consensual Budget Standards approach

The CBS approach has been applied in the development of the cost of a MESL for six household types in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) since 2006. The MESL data generated is being used extensively by various NGOs, trade unions, community and voluntary organisations, and statutory agencies, particularly in the periods preceding and following the publication of the national budget. The CBS approach is being increasingly adopted internationally. Variations on the methodology have been used in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Consensual Budget Standards are currently being developed in France, Austria and Japan. The strength of the data is that it is robust and consumer led. The Centre for Research and Social Policy (CRSP) at the University of Loughborough used Consensual Budget Standards methodology to launch the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) for Britain in 2008 (18). In 2009, a study was undertaken to investigate the extent to which the MIS Great Britain data were applicable to Northern Ireland (Smith et al, 2009). The study consisted of desk-based research, work with focus groups in Belfast and Omagh, and expert advice on fuel and housing costs and on the local pricing of goods. In light of their findings, the research team concluded that “given the overall similarities between the Great Britain and Northern Ireland budgets the minimum income standard for Britain can fairly be described as representing a minimum standard for the whole UK” (19).

In Northern Ireland, costs were greater for fuel (20), personal goods and services, and transport. Costs were lower for council/domestic rates, household services, household insurance, and social and cultural participation. Costs were similar for food, alcohol, clothes and household goods. For the most part, the differences were relatively small and cancelled out each other. Of the seven household types tested, two of the households, the single working-age adult household and pensioner households, were within 2% of the Great Britain MIS totals, and five were within 5% of the GB MIS totals (19).

The Consensual Budget Standards process

Consensual Budget Standards “aims to develop a standard which will be rooted in social consensus about goods and services that everyone ‘should be able to afford” (18). The approach requires the establishment of focus groups for each of the different household types. Three focus groups are held per household type.

Each focus group includes people from different socio-economic backgrounds. The groups act as their own budget standard committees, where “the actual expenditure choices and judgments that are made by people in real life on the ground, as they manage their money contributes to the final consensus” on minimum essential living standard requirements (17). Experts are consulted when necessary (e.g. nutritionists). There are four stages to the CBS methodology:

Stage 1 – Orientation

The initial stage explores the language, concepts and priorities that people use in thinking about spending and consumption. During this stage, the group develops a working definition of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) and identifies the difference between needs and wants.

Stage 2 – Focus groups

At this stage, focus groups study each budget component in turn (i.e. food, clothing, household goods, fuel, etc.). Together, the participants produce an agreed list of minimum essential items and reach a negotiated consensus about the goods and services that are necessary for an MESL.

Stage 3 – Costing

The items agreed by the focus groups are priced by the researchers and a minimum essential standard budget is developed. In the course of developing a household budget, over 2,000 items are priced, which are then categorised into 16 areas of expenditure.

Stage 4 – Check back

This final stage, which involves the focus groups, is particularly important as it requires the re-checking of items and costs in order to reach the final negotiated consensus. Participants in the focus groups are asked to once again evaluate the content of the budgets to ensure that only minimum essential items are included. In this phase, focus-group participants are asked to study the budget cost of each of the areas of expenditure. The group is also required to consider a “request from the Minister of Finance” to reduce costs and to explain the rationale for their response (17).

2016 study

The 2016 study, like that of 2015, while using the CBS methodology is confined to one budget area: food. The methodology approach in this study is similar to that used in the 2015 study and is applied to the following household types:

- A two-parent and two-child household; primary-school and secondary-school age
- A one-parent and two-child household; pre-school and primary-school age

Focus groups

The focus groups were established in the same locations used in the 2015 study, in three different areas of Northern Ireland: Derry/Londonderry, a city in the north-east of Northern Ireland; Enniskillen, a town in a rural area and Belfast, the capital city. Dallas Fieldwork, a market research agency, was contracted to establish the focus groups in each area for the two household types in this study. The members of the focus groups represented these households and were from a range of different socio-economic backgrounds.

As a result of the experience acquired during the course of the 2015 study, it was decided that focus groups in all three areas would participate in the first two phases of the focus-group work but that only the Belfast focus groups would participate in the final Check Back stage. In this study, both of the household focus groups in Belfast reached a strong consensus on the menus and final food baskets during the Check Back stage. Previous experience in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland indicated that where the food budget was concerned, a strong social consensus emerged regarding the content and cost of the food budget at the end of the second phase of focus-group work. For this reason, it was decided that only the two Belfast groups would initially participate in the third phase of the focus-group work. Should the outcome of this phase with the Belfast groups fail to achieve a consensus, it was agreed that Derry/Londonderry and Enniskillen focus groups would be reassembled to engage in phase three of the focus groups.

Stage 1 – Focus-group work Phase 1: Orientation and constructing the menus

This is a very important stage in the research process. Time is spent arriving at a shared understanding of what constitutes a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) and a healthy diet. Posters were used to illustrate the Eatwell Plate (21) (known as the Eatwell Guide since March 2016)^y and also to represent the family type under consideration. The Eatwell Plate is a visual representation of how different foods contribute towards a healthy balanced diet and is consistent with UK government recommendations for a healthy diet.

During the Orientation stage, time was provided to discuss the importance of concentrating on the household depicted in the poster and what is required for that particular household to have a nutritionally adequate diet which, at a minimum essential level, meets the requirements of the Eatwell Plate. While participants were reminded of the value of their own experiences, it was emphasised that individual experiences should not be used to determine adequacy. The collective

^y The Eatwell Plate was updated to the Eatwell Guide in March 2016 (Public Health England, 2016)

wisdom of the group and the requirements of the Eatwell Plate were seen as key elements in arriving at a negotiated consensus.

The Derry/Londonderry focus groups were the first to participate in the study. The focus group for each household type developed seven-day menus. The menus devised by the Derry/Londonderry focus groups were based on a negotiated consensus on what constituted a minimum essential healthy diet. The focus groups also identified outlets in which food items should be bought. The menus developed by the Derry/Londonderry focus group for each household type were then studied by the focus groups based in Enniskillen. The Enniskillen focus groups discussed in detail the menus and made amendments, which were decided by arriving at a negotiated consensus. The third wave of focus groups was based in Belfast. The Belfast focus groups amended the data that resulted from the work of the Enniskillen focus group and reached a consensus on the seven-day menus.

Between phase 1 and phase 2, the menus developed by the focus groups for each household type were converted into a shopping list of food items, and the outlets identified in the course of phase 1 of the focus groups were listed for the consideration of the focus groups in phase 2.

Stage 2 – Focus-group work Phase 2: Amending the menu

The amended version of the menus, which was the outcome of the work of the three focus groups at Phase 1, was studied by each group in the three locations. A number of minor changes were made and a negotiated consensus regarding this second version of the menus was reached. The second version was sent to the nutritionists at the Northern Ireland Centre for Diet and Health, Ulster University, for in-depth analysis, and adjustments were made to the menus developed by the focus groups. These adjustments were found to be minor in detail. The role of the nutritionists is detailed under the heading Nutritional Analysis.

Stage 3 – Costing

The food items were priced and the total cost of the food budget was calculated. A more detailed description of the pricing process is outlined in the section on Pricing. Special offers were not taken into consideration as these are temporary and often have associated terms and conditions.

Stage 4 – Focus-group work Phase 3 – Check back

The previous experience of the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) in establishing budget standards in the Republic of Ireland (22) showed that focus groups had little difficulty in reaching a socially negotiated consensus regarding a food budget based on a minimum essential standard of living which was nutritionally adequate and which allowed for variation in menus. Other areas of

expenditure, such as savings, and social inclusion and participation, require more prolonged consideration and time before a socially negotiated consensus is achieved. Based on the success of the first study, it was concluded that it might be sufficient to involve only one focus group – the Belfast group - in this stage of the process. The experience of the earlier work with the three Northern Ireland groups at Stages 1 and 2 showed that groups had little difficulty in resolving differences and arriving at a consensus when there was a shared understanding of a clearly defined task.

The actual work with the Belfast group during this Check back phase confirmed that there was a high level of consensus about the cost of the food items and the total cost of the food budget. There was also a general acceptance of the changes proposed by the nutritionists, which were seen to be understandable and appropriate. For these reasons, it was considered unnecessary to engage the Derry/Londonderry and Enniskillen focus groups in this stage of the process. As already stated, if the Belfast focus group had faced any difficulty in reaching a consensus, the researchers would not have hesitated to involve the other two groups.

Nutritional analysis

The menus that had been created by the first two phases of the focus groups were sent to nutritionists at the Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health (NICHE) at Ulster University to be tested for nutritional adequacy and to ensure that they were broadly in line with the Eatwell Plate. The Eatwell Plate shows the proportions of different types of food that should be eaten to maintain a well-balanced and healthy diet, not just for one specific meal.

The nutritionists analysed the seven-day menus using the Nutritics v4.101 programme to ensure they provided the correct nutrition for each member of the household. The nutritionists assigned the appropriate food weights for each individual, which were used to determine the lifespan and quantity of food purchased in the shopping lists.

In order to ensure the shopping lists were realistic, the lifespan of some items was determined by the focus groups (e.g. the everyday use of items such as jam and low-fat spread is difficult to determine by grams). This was to ensure the shopping lists are practical as well as cost-effective.

Milk intake during the pre-school/school-day was based on the amount provided by the government-funded milk programme in NI schools, and school-meal selections were taken from menus provided by schools within NI. Cooking methods that are in line with healthy eating recommendations were followed where possible (i.e. grilling or baking, not adding salt and using good-quality meat).

The final menus meet the majority of the UK Department of Health (DoH) nutritional requirements (Dietary Reference Values (DRV) and Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) updated energy requirements). The changes made by the nutritionists ensured that the menus and food baskets included the requirements of a healthy and balanced diet. These changes did not substantially alter the menus drawn up by the focus groups. For the most part, they were concerned with portion sizes and nutritional adequacy. When members of the focus groups studied and understood the reason for the changes, they had no difficulty in accepting them. After the menu was finally completed and agreed, a detailed shopping list was prepared and priced in stores identified by the focus groups.

Changes to the two-parent household type menu:

- The main change to the two-parent household menu was the increase in portion size for the male adult and the adolescent. An extra piece of bread was added with the stew on a Thursday for the male adult and adolescent; they were allocated more biscuits on a Sunday evening and extra peanuts for a snack on a Thursday. They are also designated a larger portion of Weetabix (always for the secondary-school child and on occasion for the male adult) in order to increase their fibre intake over the seven days.
- The higher calorie intake and subsequent extra food costs for an adolescent compared to a younger child is evident in allocation of adult portions of some foods on the menu such as porridge and larger portions of foods such as pancakes and Weetabix than the rest of the household.
- The nutritionists restricted the choice of drinks, as milk and water alongside coffee and tea are no longer interchangeable on the menu due to concerns over caffeine and saturated-fat intake.
- In order to ensure that sugar intake was not too high on certain days, the nutritionists removed jam from the Sunday breakfast and altered the days which orange juice was available.
- Rice cakes were introduced for the adults as a morning snack instead of scones, which were too high in saturated fat and salt.
- The light version of mayonnaise, cheese and yoghurts were used, and low-fat spread was introduced to replace butter.
- In order to reduce the salt intake for the primary-school child, bacon was removed from the fry/grill on a Saturday.

- Fruit and vegetables were also increased for all members of the household to ensure that they met the five-a-day recommended intake.
- The number of treats for the household was reduced and healthier alternatives were introduced, such as baked crisps.

Changes to the one-parent household type menu:

- The main changes to the one-parent menu were adjusting the portion sizes for the individuals in the household.
- Meals were made larger for the household, to increase calorie intake by adding in a garlic-bread slice with the spaghetti bolognese and a poppadum with the curry. Rice cakes and cheese low-fat spread were introduced as a Sunday-morning snack where previously there was no food.
- The higher calorie intake and different nutritional requirements for the adult compared to the children in the household was reflected in the additional slice of bread with the stew, the extra peanuts in the Monday-morning snack and the introduction of peanut butter for the adult at breakfast.
- Portion sizes for the pre-school child were reduced (e.g. half a sandwich instead of a full sandwich).
- Weetabix and cornflakes replaced pancakes and Rich Tea biscuits as evening snacks, in order to increase calories and certain nutrient intake such as iron.
- The number of rashers and sausages in the fry/grill on a Saturday for the adult were reduced to lower the salt intake.
- The days the household had orange juice were changed and marmalade was taken out of the menu in order to balance and reduce sugar intake over the week.
- The nutritionists incorporated the practicalities of shopping for a one-parent household (e.g. dividing the haddock fillets into two-thirds for the primary-school child and one-third for the pre-school child instead of wasting a portion of a third fillet). In addition, the primary-school child had fromage frais like the pre-school child in this household instead of low-fat yoghurt.

After the menus, which reflect the social, cultural and practical aspects of creating a healthy food basket, were agreed and completed, a detailed shopping list was prepared and priced in stores identified by the focus groups.

Pricing

The weekly cost of all items is the final price of the minimum essential food basket for each household. Some food items are purchased every week and their full price is added to the total. However, other foods such as oils and sugar last more than a week. In this case, the cost of the item is divided by the number of weeks it is expected to last. The focus groups agreed the lifespan of items such as condiments based on their own experiences as people tend not to measure precise portions of these items in everyday use. The weekly cost of other items that had a shelf-life of more than a week was determined by packet sizes used in relation to portion sizes recommended by the nutritionists. The focus groups also agreed that in order to reduce waste, it was essential that households had a fridge freezer and that storage containers would be used to prolong the life of items such as biscuits once opened.

The pricing of food items was completed online on the Tesco website (www.tesco.co.uk) and took place over a two-week period at the beginning of March 2016^z. In the previous study, the items were priced in Tesco as it had the largest share of the Northern Irish grocery market. Tesco was chosen again for this study as it retained the largest share of the market in 2015 at 35%, despite tough competition from cheaper retailers such as Lidl (23)^{aa}.

Adhering to the pricing method of the previous study, the majority of items priced are Tesco's own brand; Tesco's Everyday Value range was not included. A Minimum Essential Standard of Living is based on needs and not wants but in order to allow for choice, people should not have to buy the cheapest item possible and so the 'Everyday Value' brand was not selected. However, some brand name products are included at the request of the focus groups for quality reasons. The full price of the items was recorded and no special offers or discounts were taken into consideration as they are temporary and are subject to terms and conditions.

In the previous study, the focus groups reached a strong consensus that meat should be priced in local butchers. In this study, the participants were asked where they typically purchase meat and once again a strong consensus emerged across the focus groups that it is important to be able to purchase good quality meat in a butchers. Across all the locations, the groups also explained that butchers tended to offer better value for the quality of their products and they often availed of weekly 'meat packages' which would cover their meals for the week. Although the existence of the weekly butcher's packages was acknowledged in all three locations, only individual meat items were priced as it is not

^z The pricing was completed using a Tesco online account registered to a Belfast address to ensure accurate pricing and combat any UK regional price differences.

^{aa} Tesco's share of the market fell from 35.8% in 2014 to 35% in July 2015 according to Kantar Worldpanel (Stinson, 2015)

certain the package would be available in all butchers. The price of meat included in the food baskets is the average price of the meat items in the menus priced across three butcher shops in the three locations: Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen and Belfast.

In a similar way, the focus groups were also asked if they used their local shops, in keeping with the shopping habits of households identified in the pilot study. The focus groups again explained that they tended to buy a few items in their local shop to 'top up' during the week and reached a consensus that as a minimum a household should be able to purchase bread and milk in their local shops. As a result, bread and milk were priced in Spar (an outlet identified by the focus groups) and the price included in the basket is the average of the cost of bread and milk in Spar in the three locations. There is a difference in the amounts of these items purchased between the households as agreed by the focus groups, dependent on the needs of the different households.

The cost of school lunches and snacks for the children were based on a consensus reached in the focus groups. During the discussions with the groups, it emerged that there was considerable variation in the services available in schools in terms of morning snacks and the price of school lunches. Therefore, the focus groups decided to reach an agreement on a minimum amount of money allocated for school snacks and lunches that took account of all the different school pricing in their areas. School milk prices included in the basket were based on the average price in schools in Northern Ireland according to Western Region Education Authority (20p for one-third of a pint), and the Belfast Education Authority (19p for one-third of a pint) keeping in line with the school milk prices used in the previous study^{bb}. The EU School Milk Scheme provides subsidies to schools which are supplemented by funds from the UK government, resulting in the reduced cost of milk provided to children at school. Pre-school children are eligible for free milk under the Day Care Food Scheme administered by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

The costs of the takeaway, extra food for Christmas and alcohol included in the weekly baskets were decided by the focus groups after reaching a consensus on the minimum amount of money that the households under consideration could spend on these items. The items in the 'treats' category were identified by the participants as treats for the weekends, separate from main meals. As a result, there are some sweet items included in the main shopping list that were agreed by the focus groups to be part of the main menu as part of a meal rather than a treat, such as the cake on a Sunday.

bb Western Region Education Authority, Belfast Education Authority responses to query April 2016.

Appendix 2 – Menus

Table 17: Seven-day menu for the two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household

Day	Breakfast	Morning snack	Lunch/Afternoon snack	Dinner	Evening Snack
Sunday	<p>All: omelette (7 eggs), wholemeal toast (2 slices each) & banana</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea & water</p> <p>Children: milk & water</p>	<p>All: peanuts</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Sunday dinner</p> <p>All: roast pork (joint), gravy, potatoes, carrots, broccoli & ice-cream with fresh-fruit salad</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: diluted cordial</p>	<p>Sunday evening meal</p> <p>All: toastie (ham (1 slice), cheese & tomato on 2 slices wholemeal bread) & small cake (carrot cake)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee</p> <p>Secondary-school child: milk</p> <p>Primary-school child: water</p>	<p>All: Rich Tea biscuits (Male adult & secondary-school child: 2; female adult & primary-school child: 1)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea</p> <p>Children: milk</p>

<p>Monday</p>	<p>All: Weetabix (Adults & Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Secondary-school child: 3 biscuits) & banana <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>	<p>Primary-school child: grapes (Child's portion) Secondary-school child: school snack (apple) Adults: 2 rice cakes <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Secondary-school child: water Primary-school child: school milk</p>	<p>Children: school lunch (Primary-school child: fish fingers, potatoes, peas & yoghurt; Secondary-school child: wedges, chicken burger, salad & yoghurt) Adults: Adult's portion of homemade vegetable soup (onions, potato, carrots, celery, leeks, 1 chicken stock cube, soup mix), bap with a sandwich filling (ham & cheese) & yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>	<p>Children: leftover homemade soup (1 Child's portion, 1 Adolescent's portion) with a bap <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water</p>	<p>All: spaghetti bolognese (1½ lb mincemeat, garlic, onions, tinned tomatoes, tomato puree, 1 stock cube, spaghetti) & 1 garlic bread baguette <u>Drinks</u> All: milk & water</p>	<p>All: 1 slice wholemeal toast with low-fat spread (LFS) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>
<p>Tuesday</p>	<p>All: 3 Adult's portions and 1 Child's portion of porridge with raisins <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & orange juice Children: orange juice</p>	<p>Adults: banana Primary-school child: banana Secondary-school child: school snack (2 mandarin oranges) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Secondary-school child:</p>	<p>Children: school lunch (Primary-school child: sausages, sweetcorn, potatoes, & custard with cake; Secondary-school child: baked potato, beans, cheese, coleslaw, salad & frozen yoghurt) Adults: baked potato with</p>	<p>Primary-school child: cheese & 2 crackers Secondary-school child: cheese on toast (1 slice) & grapes Adults: grapes <u>Drinks</u></p>	<p>All: stew (1½ lb stew steak, potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, 1 stock cube) Male adult & secondary-school child: 1 slice wholemeal bread All: yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adults & primary-school</p>	<p>All: cornflakes <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Children: water</p>

		water Primary-school child: school milk	cheese & beans, & apple <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water	Adults: coffee & water Children: water	child: water Secondary-school child: milk	
Wednesday	All: pancakes (Adults & Primary-school child: 2; Secondary-school child: 3) with marmalade & LFS, & banana <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Children: water	Adults: cheese & 4 crackers Secondary-school child: school snack (apple) Primary-school child: pear <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Secondary-school child: water Primary-school child: school milk	All: tuna salad sandwich (2 tins of tuna, lettuce, onion, mayo on 2 slices wholemeal bread) & yoghurt Children: clementine <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water	Primary-school child: 1 Rich Tea biscuit Secondary-school child: 4 crackers & cheese <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water	All: pasta bake (pasta, 4 chicken fillets, ham (4 slices), corn, peas, broccoli, peppers, onions, homemade white sauce (plain flour, milk), salad (lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber) & cheese on top) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: milk Children: water	All: Weetabix (Female adult & primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Male adult & secondary- school child: 3 biscuits) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water

Thursday	<p>All: bagel with LFS & jam, 3 Adult's portions & 1 Child's portion of grapes</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea</p> <p>Secondary-school child: milk</p> <p>Primary-school child: water</p>	<p>Adults: yoghurt</p> <p>Secondary-school child: school snack (banana)</p> <p>Primary-school child: banana</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee & water</p> <p>Secondary-school child: water</p> <p>Primary-school child: school milk</p>	<p>All: chicken salad wrap (lettuce, tomato, onion, light mayo, pre packed chicken chunks x 1 packet) & pear</p> <p>Children: yoghurt</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Primary-school child: clementine</p> <p>Secondary-school child: cornflakes & peanuts</p> <p>Adults: peanuts</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: shepherd's pie (onions, carrots, peas, gravy, 1½ lb of diced lamb, potatoes, grated cheese) & salad (lettuce, tomatoes, onion)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: milk</p>	<p>All: toast with LFS (Adults & primary- school child: 1 slice; Secondary-school child: 2 slices)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea & water</p> <p>Children: hot chocolate (made with milk)</p>
-----------------	---	--	--	--	--	--

<p>Friday</p>	<p>All: 3 Adult's portions & 1 Child's portion of porridge & pear <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Children: water</p>	<p>Adults: scone (jam & LFS) Primary-school child: apple Secondary-school child: school snack (sausage roll) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee Secondary-school child: water Primary-school child: school milk</p>	<p>Children: school lunch (Secondary-school child: chicken goujons, salad, mashed potato & yoghurt; Primary-school child: beef burger, salad, potato wedges & frozen yoghurt) Adults: ham sandwich (LFS, ham (2 slices), cheese & tomato, on 2 slices of wholemeal bread) & yoghurt <u>Drink</u> Adults: tea Children: water</p>	<p>Adults: apple, biscuit (Male Kitkat, Female chocolate digestive) Secondary-school child: banana, Kitkat Primary-school child: Kitkat <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water</p>	<p>All: cod (4 fillets), chips, mushy peas, vinegar <u>Drinks</u> Adults & secondary-school child: milk Primary-school child: water</p>	<p>All: chocolate digestives 2 each <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Female Adult: half a bottle of white wine Male Adult: 3 bottles of lager Children: water</p>
<p>Saturday</p>	<p>Brunch (Breakfast, snack and lunch) All: fry/grill (toast (Adults & Sec: 2 slices; Pri: 1 slice), bacon rasher grilled, sausage grilled (Adult and Sec: 2; Pri: 1 sausage, no bacon rasher), 1 egg fried, beans, tomato grilled, mushrooms fried) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee, water & orange juice Children: water & orange juice</p>			<p>All: apple & clementine <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>	<p>All: chicken curry (rice, chicken (4 fillets), mushrooms, peppers, peas, curry powder) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: water Children: milk</p>	<p>All: baked crisps & Milky Way (funsize) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Female Adult: half a bottle of white wine Male Adult: 3 lagers Children: diluted cordial</p>

Table 18: Seven-day menu for the one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household

Day	Breakfast	Mid-morning snack	Lunch/Afternoon snack		Dinner	Evening Snack
Sunday	All: scrambled eggs (4) & beans, wholemeal toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices; Pre-school child: 1 slice) with low-fat spread (LFS) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water	All: rice cake (Adult & Primary-school child: 2; Pre-school child: 1) with cheese low-fat spread <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: milk	Sunday dinner All: roast chicken (fillet), homemade stuffing (sausages (2), 1 egg, breadcrumbs (3 slices), mixed herbs, onion) gravy, potatoes, carrots, broccoli & ice cream with jelly <u>Drinks</u> All: diluted cordial		Sunday evening meal Adult & Primary-school child: toastie (ham (1 slice), cheese & tomato on 2 slices wholemeal bread) Pre-school child: half toastie All: small cake & fruit salad <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & milk Children: water	All: 1 Rich Tea biscuit <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea Children: milk
Monday	All: porridge (1 Adult's & 2 Children's portions) & banana <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water	Adult & Primary-school child: grapes (1 Adult's & 1 Child's portion) Adult: peanuts Pre-school child: school snack (grapes) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: school milk	Primary-school child: school lunch (fish fingers, peas, potato & yoghurt) Adult: ham sandwich (ham (1 slice) & tomato, 2 slices wholemeal bread, LFS) & yoghurt Pre-school child: half sandwich & yoghurt	Children: pineapple slice (2 Children's portions), 1 slice wholemeal toast, LFS Adult: apple <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Primary-school child: water Pre-school child: milk	All: spaghetti bolognese (1lb mincemeat, garlic, onions, tinned tomatoes, tomato puree, 1 stock cube, spaghetti) & 1 garlic bread slice each <u>Drinks</u> All: water	All: cornflakes <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water

			<u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water			
Tuesday	All: Weetabix (Adult and Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Pre-school child: 1 biscuit) with pineapple slice (2 Children's portion and 1 Adult's portion) <u>Drinks</u> All: water Adult: tea	Adult & Primary-school child: pear Pre-school child: school snack (pear) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee Children: school milk	Adult & Primary-school child: sandwich (2 slices wholemeal bread, ham (1 slice), cheese, tomato, LFS) & yoghurt, banana Pre-school child: half sandwich & yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water	All: unsalted peanuts <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: water	All: stew (1lb stewing steak, potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, brown sauce, 1 stock cube) Adult: 2 slices wholemeal bread <u>Drinks</u> All: water	All: 1 Rich Tea biscuit <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: hot chocolate (made with milk)
Wednesday	All: toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices with peanut butter; Pre-school child: 1 slice with jam) & grapes <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Primary-school child: water Pre-school child: milk	Adult & Primary-school child: banana Pre-school child: school snack (banana) <u>Drinks</u> Children: school milk Adult: coffee	Primary-school child: school lunch (sausages, sweetcorn, potatoes & fruit salad) Adult & Pre-school child: tuna pasta salad (1 tin tuna, peppers, pasta, mushroom, light mayo)	All: yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: water	All: pork stir fry (pork pieces, 1 stir fry vegetable pack, fresh egg noodles, 1 pack of stir fry sauce) <u>Drinks</u> All: water	All: Weetabix (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Pre: 1 biscuit) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water

			<p>Adult: Go-Ahead bar & pear</p> <p>Pre-school child: rice cake</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>			
Thursday	<p>Children: pancakes, LFS (Pre-school child: 1; Primary-school child: 2)</p> <p>Adult: bagel, LFS</p> <p>All: melon (1 Adult's portion, 2 Children's portions)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: orange juice</p> <p>Adult: tea</p>	<p>Adult & Primary-school child: grapes (1 Adult's & 1 Child's portion)</p> <p>Pre-school child: school snack (grapes)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: school milk</p>	<p>Adult & Primary-school child: chicken salad sandwich (pre-packed chicken chunks, lettuce, tomato, onion, light mayo on 2 slices wholemeal bread) & yoghurt</p> <p>Pre-school child: half sandwich & yoghurt</p> <p>Primary-school child: apple</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Children: cream crackers (2 each) & cheese</p> <p>Adult: 1 Adult's portion melon and peanuts</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: chicken curry (rice, chicken (3 fillets), mushrooms, peppers, peas, curry powder, onions) & 1 poppadum each</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: water</p>	<p>All: Weetabix (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Pre-school child: 1 biscuit)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>

Friday	<p>All: porridge with raisins (1 Adult's, 2 Children's portions)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea & orange juice</p> <p>Children: orange juice</p>	<p>Adult & Primary-school child: banana</p> <p>Pre-school child: school snack (banana)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee</p> <p>Children: school milk</p>	<p>Primary-school child: school lunch (burger, wedges, salad & custard with cake)</p> <p>Adult & Pre-school child: egg salad sandwich (2 eggs, mayo, lettuce, cucumber, onion, 2 slices wholemeal bread, LFS) (Pre-school child: half sandwich) & yoghurt</p> <p><u>Drink</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: 2 muffins (Adult: 1; Pre-school child: half; Primary-school child: half)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: milk</p>	<p>All: haddock (2 fillets), boiled potatoes, peas, cauliflower, white sauce (homemade)</p> <p>All: ice-cream</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: white wine & milk</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: popcorn (microwave) x 1 sachet</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea & water</p> <p>Children: diluted cordial</p>
Saturday	<p>All: 1 boiled egg, wholemeal toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices; Pre-school child: 1 slice), LFS & banana</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Children: yoghurt</p> <p>Adult: apple & yoghurt</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee</p> <p>All: water</p>	<p>All: homemade vegetable soup (onions, potato, carrots, celery, leeks, chicken stock cube, soup mix), bread roll</p> <p>Primary-school child: pear</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: diluted cordial & water</p>	<p>All: fry/grill (bacon & sausages (1 each), tomatoes, beans, 1 egg (Adult only), mushrooms, toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices; Pre-school child: 1 slice)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult & Primary-school child: milk & water</p> <p>Pre-school child: water</p>	<p>All: baked crisps & Milky Way (fun-size)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: white wine</p> <p>Children: water</p>	

Appendix 3: Shopping Lists

Using the shopping lists

The shopping lists contain the food items needed to prepare the meals included in the menus. Each item is presented by size, the unit they are sold in and its price, the brand and retailer, the quantity, the lifespan of the item and the cost per week. Although the total cost of the basket is the weekly price of all the items included on the shopping list, the lifespan of all the items is not necessarily one week. The lifespan column details how long one unit of the food item will last during the week, dependent on the portion size the household requires. If the packet size is smaller than the portion needed, its lifespan will be less than one week. If the packet size is larger than the portion, its lifespan will be more than one week. Consequently, the weekly price of the item will be larger or smaller than the unit price, depending on the lifespan.

Example

The weekly cost of clementines for the household is £1.46 although a packet of clementines costs £1.25 (unit price). This is because clementines are sold in packs of six on the Tesco website but the household requires seven clementines for one week. This means the lifespan of one packet of clementines is 0.9 weeks and not a full week. The remainder of the second packet of clementines bought during the week will account for the 0.1 weeks left over and carry over into the next week.

Table 19 Shopping list for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Clementine	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.25	7	6	1.46
Banana	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	0.12	17	1	2.04
Pear	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	0.4	3.38
Apple	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	0.8	2
Grapes	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	1	2
Monkey nuts	400	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	0.9	1.69
Raisins	500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.54	1	4.2	0.37
Mushrooms	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	1	0.9
Carrots	1	1kg bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.6	1	1	0.6
Broccoli	900	gram	Tesco	Tesco	1.1	1	2.1	0.53
Lettuce	1	head	Tesco	Tesco	0.49	1	1	0.49

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Celery	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	1	0.8
Potatoes	2,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	0.7	2.56
Tomatoes	360	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	0.2	2.87
Sweetcorn (tinned)	1	tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.45	1	1	0.45
Leeks	1	stick	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Peppers	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.99	1	1	0.99
Cucumber	1	whole	Tesco	Tesco	0.42	1	1	0.42
Onions	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	1.1	0.63
Turnip	1	whole	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	1	0.7
Frozen chips	1,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	2.7	0.55
Frozen peas	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.35	1	1.7	0.81
Soup mix	500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.15	1	2.1	0.54
Tinned tomatoes	1	tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.35	1	0.5	0.7
Garlic	1	bulb	Tesco	Tesco	0.3	1	1	0.3
Baked beans	1	tin	Heinz	Tesco	0.75	1	0.5	1.5
Mushy peas	1	gram tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.3	1	1	0.3
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Kingsmill	Tesco	0.89	1	1	0.89
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Local shop	Spar	1.45	2	1	2.9
Porridge	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.2	1	3.3	0.36
Crackers	25	packet	Jacobs	Tesco	0.97	1	1.8	0.54
Spaghetti	500	gram packet	Tesco	Tesco	0.59	1	0.8	0.74
Baps	1	packet	Tesco	Tesco	0.65	1	1	0.65
Pancakes	8	packet	Tesco	Tesco	1.19	1	1	1.19
Weetabix	24	packet	Weetabix	Tesco	2.39	1	1.3	1.89
Rich Tea biscuits	1	packet	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Cornflakes	500	gram box	Cornflakes	Tesco	1.75	1	2.9	0.61
Pasta	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.99	1	4	0.25
Bagel	5	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1.3	0.8
Wraps	8	pack	Mission Deli	Tesco	1.7	1	2	0.85
Rice	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.29	1	2.1	0.63
Garlic bread	1	baguette	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	1	0.8
Scone	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Rice cakes	18	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	4.5	0.2

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life spam (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Small cake	1	cake	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Milk	1	bottle	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	1	0.9
Milk	1	bottle	Spar	Spar	1.21	2	1	2.42
Yoghurts	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	0.5	2.17
Cheese	1	block	Tesco	Tesco	2.5	1	1	2.5
Eggs	12	box	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1.1	1.6
Cod	5	packet	Tesco	Tesco	3.5	1	1.3	2.8
Tuna	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.49	1	2	1.25
Mincemeat	1.5	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	5.54	1	1	5.54
Stewing steak	1.5	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	5.69	1	1	5.69
Pork joint	2	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	5.36	1	1	5.36
Ham	15	pack	Tesco	Tesco	3	1	1.3	2.4
Chicken fillets	4	fillets	local butcher	local butcher	5.33	1	0.6	9.14
Pre-packed chicken chunks	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	3	1	1	3
Sausage	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	1.1	1.31
Bacon	10	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	1.7	1.2
Diced lamb	1.5	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	6.42	1	1	6.42
Tea	80	pack	Punjana	Tesco	2.29	1	1.8	1.26
Coffee	1	jar	Nescafe	Tesco	4.98	1	3	1.66
Hot chocolate	1	jar	Tesco	Tesco	2.48	1	3	0.83
Orange juice	4	1 litre pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.8	1	4	0.7
Mi Wadi	1	litre bottle	Mi Wadi	Tesco	2	1	1	2
Olive oil	1	litre bottle	Tesco	Tesco	3.45	1	3	1.15
Sunflower oil	1	bottle	Tesco	Tesco	1.2	1	3	0.4
Flora	500	gram tub	Flora	Tesco	1.5	1	1	1.5
Gravy granules	500	gram jar	Bisto	Tesco	2.99	1	3	1
Mayonnaise	240	ml jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	4	0.13
Tomato ketchup	570	gram bottle	Heinz	Tesco	2	1	4	0.5
Brown sauce	255	gram bottle	HP	Tesco	0.95	1	12	0.08
Beef stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	4	0.31
Chicken stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	6	0.21
Salt	750	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	0.29	1	24	0.01
Pepper	25	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	52	0.01

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Tomato puree	200	gram tube	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	2.6	0.19
Vinegar	568	ml bottle	Tesco	Tesco	0.39	1	3	0.13
Mixed herbs	14	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	3	0.23
Curry powder	80	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	4	0.25
Plain flour	1,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	24	0.03
Jam	454	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.75	1	2	0.38
Ice-cream	2,000	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	8	0.19
Marmalade	454	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.55	1	2	0.28
Sugar	1,000	gram bag	Tayte Lyle	Tesco	0.59	1	12	0.05
Crisps	6	pack	Walkers	Tesco	1.65	1	1.5	1.1
Milk Way	14	pack	Milky Way	Tesco	2.79	1	3.5	0.8
Chocolate digestives	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.6	1	1	0.6
Kitkat	16	pack	Nestle	Tesco	2.69	1	5.3	0.5
Takeaway	1	month			25	1	1	6.25
Christmas	1				70	1	1	1.35
Primary milk	1	week			1	1	1.4	0.71
Primary-school lunch	1	day			2.5	3	1.4	5.34
Secondary snack	1	day			2	2	1.4	2.85
Secondary lunch & snack	1	day			5	3	1.4	10.67
Total Food								£143.01
Alcohol at home								
Box of beer	15	bottles	Fosters	Tesco	10		2.5	4
Bottle of wine	1	Bottle	Tesco	Tesco	6		1	6
Total Alcohol								£10
Total Food & Alcohol								£153.01

Table 20: Shopping basket for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household

Item	Size	Unit	Bran	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Grapes	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	1	2
Banana	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	0.5	1.8
Pear	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.29	1	1	1.29
Apple	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	2	0.75
Melon	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1	1.75
Pineapple	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Raisins	1,000	gram pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.99	1	14.3	0.21
Monkey nuts	400	gram	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	2.1	0.73
Mushrooms	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	1	0.9
Stir-fry pack	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Lettuce	1	head	Tesco	Tesco	0.49	1	1	0.49
Onions	1,000	gram pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	1.2	0.56
Cucumber	1	whole	Tesco	Tesco	0.42	1	1	0.42
Cauliflower	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	0.95	1	1	0.95
Celery	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	1	0.8
Leeks	1	stick	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Potatoes	2,500	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1.7	1.02
Carrots	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	1.1	0.47
Broccoli	1	head	Tesco	Tesco	0.39	1	1	0.39
Tomatoes	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	0.5	1.38
Garlic	1	bulb	Tesco	Tesco	0.3	1	1	0.3
Soup mix	500	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.15	1	2.8	0.41
Frozen peas	1,000	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.35	1	3.8	0.36
Tinned tomatoes	1	tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.35	1	1	0.35
Baked beans	1	Tin	Heinz	Tesco	0.75	1	0.5	1.5
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Kingsmill	Tesco	0.75	1	1	0.75
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Spar	Local Shop	1.45	1	1	1.45
Porridge	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.2	1	5.6	0.22
Crackers	25	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.27	1	6.3	0.04
Spaghetti	500	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.59	1	1.2	0.48
Bread rolls	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.65	1	2	0.33
Pancakes	1	pack	Sunblest	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Weetabix	24	pack	Weetabix	Tesco	2.39	1	1.6	1.49
Cornflakes	500	gram box	Kellogg's	Tesco	1.75	1	4.9	0.36
Pasta	1,000	Gm/bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.99	1	3.2	0.31

Item	Size	Unit	Bran	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
GoAhead bars	5	pack	Go Ahead	Tesco	1.69	1	5	0.34
Rice	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.29	1	2.8	0.46
Egg noodles	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.25	1	1	1.25
Rice cakes	18	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	3	0.3
Bagels	5	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	5	0.2
Garlic bread slices	10	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	3.3	0.3
Tesco plain poppadum	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.4	1	2.7	0.53
Rich Tea biscuits	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Cake	1	cake	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Milk	1	2L bottle	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Milk	1	2L bottle	Local shop	Spar	1.21	1	1	1.21
Yoghurts	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Fromage frais	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Fromage frais	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Cheese	1	block	Tesco	Tesco	2.5	1	2	1.25
Cheese low-fat spread	1	tub	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Eggs	12	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1.1	1.6
Tuna (tinned)	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.49	1	4	0.62
Haddock	4	fillets	Tesco	Tesco	3.5	1	2	1.75
Chicken fillets	4	fillets	local butcher	local butcher	5.33	1	0.7	8
Pre-packed chicken	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	3	1	1	3
Bacon	10	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	4.4	0.45
Ham	5	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.8	1	0.8	2.34
Sausages (fry/grill)	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	3.6	0.42
Sausages (stuffing)	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	4	0.38
Pork pieces	454	grams	local butcher	local butcher	2.88	1	1.5	1.9
Stew steak	1	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	3.79	1	1	3.79
Mince meat	1	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	3.69	1	1	3.69
Tea	80	box	Punjana	Tesco	2.29	1	3.5	0.66
Coffee	200g	jar	Nescafe	Tesco	4.98	1	8	0.62
Hot chocolate	500g	jar	Tesco	Tesco	2.48	1	12	0.21
Mi Wadi	1	litre bottle	Mi Wadi	Tesco	2	1	3	0.67
Orange juice	4	1 litre pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.8	1	4	0.7

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Lifespan (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Olive oil	1	litre bottle	Tesco	Tesco	3.45	1	7	0.49
Flora low-fat spread	500	gram tub	Flora	Tesco	1.5	1	1	1.5
Sunflower oil	1	litre bottle	Tesco	Tesco	1.25	1	7	0.18
Gravy	500	gram jar	Bisto	Tesco	2.99	1	10	0.3
Mayonnaise	240	ml jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	4	0.13
Tomato ketchup	570	gram bottle	Heinz	Tesco	2	1	6	0.33
Brown sauce	255	gram bottle	HP	Tesco	0.95	1	16	0.06
Beef stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	6	0.21
Chicken stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	6	0.21
Salt	750	gram bottle	Tesco	Tesco	0.29	1	24	0.01
Pepper	25	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	28	0.03
Mixed herbs	14	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	16	0.04
Tomato puree	200	gram tube	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	4	0.13
Stir-fry sauce	180	gram pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Plain flour	1,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	24	0.03
Curry powder	80	gram pot	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	4	0.25
Peanut butter	340	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	1.3	1	2	0.65
Jam	454	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.75	1	2	0.38
Sugar	1,000	gram bag	Tayte Lyle	Tesco	0.59	1	12	0.05
Jelly	1	pack	Hartleys	Tesco	0.54	1	1	0.54
Ice-cream	2,000	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	9.5	0.16
Muffin blueberry	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Popcorn (microwave)	3	pack	Butterkist	Tesco	1.99	1	3	0.66
Milky Way	14	pack	Milky Way	Tesco	2.79	1	4.6	0.61
Crisps	6	pack	Walkers	Tesco	1.65	1	2	0.83
Takeaway	1				15	1	4	3.75
Christmas	1				50	1	52	0.96
Pre-school snack	1				2.5	1	1.4	1.78
Primary school milk	1				1	1	1.4	0.71
Primary school lunch	1	day			2.5	3	1.4	5.34
Total Food								£93

Alcohol at home

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Lifespan (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
One bottle of wine	1	bottle	Tesco	Tesco	6		1	6
Total Alcohol								£6
Total Alcohol and Food								£99

safefood:

7 Eastgate Avenue, Eastgate, Little Island, Co. Cork

7 Ascaill an Gheata Thoir, An tOiléan Beag, Co. Chorcaí

7 Aistiyett Avenue, Aistiyett, Wee Isle, Co. Cork

Tel: +353 (0)21 230 4100

Fax: +353 (0)21 230 4111

Email: info@safefood.eu

Web: www.safefood.eu

www.safefood.eu

HELPLINE

NI 0800 085 1683

ROI 1850 40 4567

What is the cost of a healthy food basket in Northern Ireland in 2016?

Suggested citation

When referencing this document, please use the following citation:

MacMahon, B and Moloney, N (2016) what is the cost of a healthy food basket in in Northern Ireland in 2016. Dublin: **safefood**.

This publication has been jointly funded by:

safefood, The Consumer Council and The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

For more information:

www.safefood.eu

www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/

www.food.gov.uk/northern-ireland

ISBN: 978-1-905767-65-6

Publication date: September 2016

Table of contents

1	Key findings.....	1
2	Introduction	3
3	Methodology	5
4	Feedback from focus groups	8
5	The cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types	14
6	Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types (2014-2016)	23

List of tables

Table 1: Cost of minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (primary-schools and secondary-school age) household by sub-category (2016).....	14
Table 2 Income for two-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016)	16
Table 3 Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household dependent on state benefits (2016)..	17
Table 4 Income for two-parent, two-child household – One adult employed and earning the national minimum wage (2016).....	17
Table 5 Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household – one adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016).....	18
Table 6 Cost of minimum essential food basket for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household by sub-category (2016)	18
Table 7 Income for one-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016).....	20
Table 8 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for one-parent, two child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (2016)	21
Table 9 Income for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)	21
Table 10 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household Income for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016).....	22
Table 11 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (November 2014-March 2016)	24
Table 12 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income dependent on state benefits (2016)	24
Table 13 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income where one adult is employed and earning national minimum wage (2016).....	25

Table 14 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for pensioner living alone household: November 2014-March 2016	25
Table 15 Income for a pensioner living alone household – receiving the state pension (2016)	26
Table 16 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for a pensioner living alone household receiving the state pension (2016)	26
Table 17 Seven-day menu for the two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household	39
Table 18 Seven-day menu for the one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household	44
Table 19 Shopping list for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household	48
Table 20 Shopping basket for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household	52

Acknowledgements

The assistance and cooperation of a number of people is gratefully acknowledged:

- Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, who completed the research
- The consumers who took part in the focus groups, without whom this research would not have been possible
- Ruth Price and the nutritionists from Ulster University, who reviewed the menus
- Paulino Garcia of the Consumer Council Northern Ireland, who provided the income data used in the research

1 Key findings

The cost of a minimum essential food basket

- The total weekly cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child household type (primary-school and secondary-school age) is £153.01 (approximately £22 per day).
- The total weekly cost of a minimum essential food basket for a one-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary-school age) is £99.00 (approximately £14 per day).
- A two-parent, two-child household (primary-school and secondary-school age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend 44% of weekly income to buy a minimum essential food basket.
- A one-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend 32% of total weekly income to buy a minimum essential food basket.
- The cost of a minimum essential food basket depends on the age and number of people in the household. In particular, the cost of providing food for an adolescent is similar to that for an adult.
- The sub-category 'meat' accounts for the largest share of the food basket for both household types – one-quarter of the basket in each case.
- There was a consensus among the focus groups that spending on takeaways and extra food for visitors and for Christmas was an important part of the food basket for both households.
- This research highlights the challenge facing low-income households to balance the cost of a minimum nutritious diet in the context of meeting the range of other weekly household expenses.
- The focus-group participants reported that food is often a flexible component of household spending, in that the amount of household expenditure spent on food can vary if the money is needed elsewhere.

Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket (2014–2016)

The total weekly cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age) is £115.00 in 2016. This is a reduction of £4.17 from 2014.

The total weekly cost of the food basket for a pensioner living alone household is £57.05. This is a decrease of £2.08 from 2014.

A two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend 33% of weekly income to buy a minimum essential food basket. This is down two percentage points from 35% in 2014.

- A pensioner living alone dependent on the state pension would need to spend 34% of their household income to buy a minimum essential food basket. This is down two percentage points, from 36% in 2014.
- The price of food, non-alcoholic and alcoholic beverages decreased from 2014 to 2016. Nevertheless, the two households are still required to spend a considerable portion of their weekly income on food.

2 Introduction

A balanced, nutritious diet is essential for health and well-being but may be unobtainable for those who live in poverty. For low-income households, food is often a flexible component of their budget as they can satisfy their hunger with cheaper, less nutritious food – putting themselves at risk of disease and obesity. Food poverty is multi-dimensional and includes the lack of access to a nutritionally adequate diet and the resulting impact on health and social participation. The cost of food and the amount of available income are also key determinants of access to a healthy diet. Among the barriers to a healthy diet is the unavailability of shops which stock an adequate range of healthy foods (as can be the case in rural areas and in smaller towns which do not have accessible transport to larger shops). Lack of access to education and to information on healthy eating as well as limited cooking skills are also contributing factors to an inadequate and unhealthy diet.

Objectives

1. To establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket that meets the physical, psychological and social needs of two household types in Northern Ireland:
 - a. A two-parent, two-child household type (primary-school and secondary-school age)
 - b. A one-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary-school age)
2. To provide an updated (March 2016) cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types in Northern Ireland previously established (1):
 - a. A two-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary-school age)
 - b. A pensioner living alone household type

Research context

This study is the second to establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket for household types in Northern Ireland. The 2016 study is set against the backdrop of the continued growth of deprivation and poverty in Northern Ireland.

This is reflected by a greater reliance on food banks, which is a visible indicator of growing food poverty. From January to April 2016, 25,755 three-day emergency food supplies were given to people in

crisis by the Trussell Trust food banks (2). This is a considerable increase from the 254 food supplies provided in the year to April 2012 (25,501 more supplies)^a.

Data published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency show that the number of individuals in absolute poverty (before housing costs) increased from 20% in 2012/13 to 23% in 2013/14 (approximately 409,000 people), suggesting that income growth was lower than that of inflation^b. The level of absolute poverty in 2013/14 once again reached the highest point in 12 years, equalling the level seen previously in 2011/12^c.

The percentage of working-age adults in absolute poverty (before housing costs) increased slightly by 1% from the previous year to 21% in 2013/14 (230,000 working-age adults). Nonetheless, this was the second highest number recorded over a 12-year period (22% in 2011/12 is the highest). Just over one-quarter of children (26%) were in absolute poverty in 2013/14, which is an increase from 22% on the previous year. Levels of absolute poverty among children once again peaked in 2013/14, reaching the same point as the highest levels recorded in 2003/04. In 2013/14, 23% of pensioners (approximately 67,000 pensioners) were living in absolute poverty, before housing costs. This is an increase of two percentage points from the previous year (3).

As well as increased deprivation and poverty, rising food prices have made it more difficult for low-income households to afford a healthy diet. According to the UK Consumer Price Index, food prices in the UK increased by 11.5% in real terms between 2007 and their peak in 2012 (4). Households that are already struggling to make ends meet suffer the most when food prices rise, as low-income households tend to spend a larger portion of their income on food (4). Since 2013, there have been gradual reductions in food prices. From February 2016 to March 2016, the cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages decreased by 0.6% (5), although prices still remain considerably higher than in 2007

a The supplies are not necessarily provided to unique users. The financial year is measured from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016.

b Absolute poverty is defined by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency as the proportion of individuals who have incomes below 60% of the UK (inflation-adjusted) median income in 2010/11 (Department of Social Development, 2015, p.10).

c The absolute poverty threshold in 2013/14 was £280 before housing costs based on the 2010/11 inflation-adjusted UK median. The median household income in Northern Ireland was £404 per week before housing costs in 2013/14. Over the time series, average income in 2013/14 remains comparatively low, with 2011/12 being the only year where average incomes were lower.

3 Methodology

Two methods were used: one to establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types, and a second to update the cost of minimum essential food basket for two household types. A full description of the method used to establish the cost of minimum essential food basket for a particular household type is detailed in Appendix 1.

Establishing the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types

The research aimed to establish the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types:

- Two-parent, two-child household (primary-school and secondary-school age)
- One-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)

Focus groups representing each of the two household types were established in three different areas of Northern Ireland:

- Derry/Londonderry – a city
- Enniskillen – a rural town
- Belfast – the capital city

The members of the focus groups represented these households and were from a range of different socio-economic backgrounds.

There were three rounds of focus-group work. During the first two rounds, seven-day menus and corresponding shopping lists were constructed using the Consensual Budget Standards methodology (Appendix 1). The food items on the shopping lists were priced online in Tesco and in local shops and the total food budget was calculated. At the same time, the menus for the household types under consideration were given to nutritionists at the Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health at Ulster University to be tested for nutritional adequacy. Once the pricing and nutritional analysis was complete, the Belfast focus groups met a final time to examine the changes made by the nutritionist and to determine whether the final composition of the food basket was realistic. For more information on the focus-group process, please see Appendix 1.

Two income scenarios were examined for each household type:

- Dependent on state benefits
- Earning the national minimum wage

The income scenarios presented for the households are hypothetical and are an example of a sum of money that a household would 'take home' (i.e. the net earned income and any additional benefits that the household may be entitled to receive). It should be noted that not all entitlements were taken into consideration due to the difficulty in identifying a common scenario. The scenarios are only examples to illustrate the food basket in relation to typical low-income households and should not be interpreted as real cases. The online calculator, www.entitledto.co.uk, was used to help generate the income scenarios.

Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types

This study updates, with 2016 data, the cost of the minimum essential food baskets and income scenarios for the two household types that were determined in 2014:

- A two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)
- A pensioner living alone household

The cost of the 2016 food baskets was produced by updating the food prices from November 2014, when they were originally priced in Tesco online, to March 2016^d. The cost of the minimum essential food baskets was updated using the United Kingdom (UK) Consumer Price Index (CPI) monthly inflation rates (5, 6) from December 2014 to March 2016. Two corresponding rates of inflation were applied to the food baskets: the inflation rate for food and non-alcoholic beverages, and the inflation rate for alcohol. The updated cost of the two categories were added together to produce the updated weekly total of the minimum essential food baskets for both household types in 2016.

^d The application of an inflation rate to update the cost of the basket is in line with other minimum income standard of living studies. This approach is also pragmatic in the context of a low inflation rate when it would not be a useful exercise to spend time re-pricing a large number of items. Regarding the content of the food basket, best practice would include a review of the food items after a period of time although the UK work showed little variation in the choice of items over time. This is understandable when the criteria is based on a minimum but nutritious standard.

The hypothetical income scenarios were also updated to 2016. The income scenarios presented for the households are an example of a sum of money that a household would take home in each scenario. It should be noted that not all entitlements were taken into consideration due to the difficulty in identifying a common scenario. The scenarios are only examples of typical household types within the category. The online calculator, www.entitledto.co.uk, was used to help generate the income scenarios.

4 Feedback from focus groups

A seven-day menu (Appendix 2) and an associated food basket (Appendix 3) were agreed by focus groups for two household types:

- Two-parent, two-child household (primary-school and secondary-school age)
- One-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)


The menus were analysed by nutritionists to ensure that they provided a balanced and nutritious diet that is based on real-life experiences.

The focus groups for both household types agreed that the menus were realistic and varied, and provided a balanced diet – with some participants even hoping to incorporate some of the menu themselves. The groups responded well to the use of the Consensual Budget Standards methodology as they were able to input their own lived experiences and include food that they would ordinarily eat. They appreciated the analysis of the nutritionist and hoped the baskets would provide a useful reference point for policy makers.

Feedback from focus groups on the cost of a minimum essential food basket

The two-parent household type focus groups were surprised at the final cost of what they described as a 'basic menu' which included no luxuries, apart from alcohol at home. The same surprise had been expressed by the focus-group participants in the previous study. The group emphasised that the food basket agreed was reflective of only a minimum standard of living:

“Definitely, you could not go any lower, not if you wanted it to be healthy.”^e




^e Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent focus group.

The one-parent household type focus group agreed that the final price was reasonable and not far removed from what some participants spend themselves on food each week. However, they reached a consensus that many low-income households would not be able to spend this much money on food each week, including some members of the group that were employed. They explained that the basket was unaffordable for many one-parent households where the adult is not employed and that other bills would take priority:

“Clothes, gas and electricity are quite high for somebody who is a single parent.”^f




“You would be living on stuff that you wouldn’t necessarily want to give the kids but it’s the only way you can do it until you are stable again.”^g



The findings from the focus groups reflect those in a report by Save the Children in which one quarter of low-income parents acknowledged that they buy the cheapest food possible, compared to 14% of high-income parents (7).

“You’d go anywhere to feed your children, if the price is right you would go.”^h



^f Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent focus group.


^g Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent household type focus group.

^h Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent household type focus group.

The participants of both groups raised the point that households, including themselves, tend to shop around to keep food costs down and to buy items that are on special offer and items purchased in the local shop. However, they acknowledged that not every household has the time to shop around, especially if the adults are employed. Special offers were not included in the basket as they are temporary and follow certain terms and conditions. Special offers were discussed with the groups and they agreed that they were a realistic shopping habit of households and helped to cut costs.

The one-parent focus group explained that they had to be conscious of packet sizes when buying food such as cartons of orange juice, which deteriorate quickly once opened. One participant described that buying smaller packets to avoid waste tended to be more expensive.

“It is cheaper to buy the full carton and let it go to waste rather than buy the individual ones.”ⁱ



However, the one-parent focus group agreed to select packet sizes that represented the best value and agreed that the extra could be stored away or given to visitors.

The two-parent household type group raised concerns over the extra cost of an adolescent, which they described as like having another adult in the household.

The two different household groups also raised the issue of the cost of cooking itself such as energy use, fridge freezers, storage containers, and lunch boxes which often get lost and have to be replaced. In addition, the participants agreed that these items were vital for keeping food costs low and for preventing unnecessary waste by storing open packets and leftovers. In previous wider studies (8), these items are included in the ‘Household Goods’ category. As this study focuses only on the cost of food, they are not included but it is important to note this as another example of how the cost of a minimum essential food basket extends beyond the price of food alone.

ⁱ Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

Feedback from focus groups on holidays and special occasions

Both household groups raised concerns over the extra food costs they would incur outside of a typical school and work week. They agreed that the summer holidays were a particularly expensive time for families with extra food costs such as hosting or attending barbeques, and small treats on days out, such as ice-cream at the beach. The participants explained that there was no routine in the summer holidays and having the children at home would result in more costs overall (such as entertainment and childcare), which would add further strains to a tight food budget. The household focus groups agreed that a one-parent household type was not able to spend less than an extra £15.00 a week during the summer holidays, to cover the extra food costs. The two-parent household type was not able to spend less than £25.00 extra per week. The difference in costs accounts for the higher expense of having an adolescent in the household who may want to socialise with friends. These costs were not included in the overall weekly food baskets but the focus groups for both households agreed it was important that the extra costs were noted:


“No extra for any luxury at any time of the year.”^j



This feedback supports the findings of a UK report that poverty in the school holidays affects many families in the UK, especially those who are entitled to free school meals (9). This report specifically noted that one-third of parents skipped a meal so that their children could eat during the school holidays (9). Three-quarters of families in the households surveyed with incomes of less than £15,000 said they were not always able to buy food during school holidays. It also found that 41% of parents on low incomes sometimes feel isolated in the school holidays because they cannot afford to go out and entertain their children or have people over to visit.

^j Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast two-parent household type focus group.

“The first thing you do when someone comes to your house is offer them tea or coffee.”^k



The extra costs of social occasions such as school holidays are not included in this study (although they are usually included in the ‘Social Inclusion’ section in the wider MESL research). Although the food cost at Christmas is the only extra occasion that is included in this study, it is important to note the impact that the school holidays can have on a household’s budget and the capacity of low-income households to cope during these periods.

Feedback from focus groups on cost of healthy food

The focus groups for both household types agreed that it was difficult for households to afford a healthy diet in general. The participants explained that fresh food does not last long and tends to cost more than less nutritious food they may purchase:

“some parents may turn to using crisps and sugar to fill their children up.”^l



“It is cheaper to buy biscuits and rubbish than it is to buy fruit and vegetables.”^m



^k Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

^l Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

^m Quote from a participant in phase 3 of the Belfast one-parent household type focus group.

This feedback echoes the findings of a study conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (10), which found that the cost of eating healthily has increased over the past 30 years while the cost of processed food has fallen. In the UK, from 1980 to 2012, the price of an ice-cream halved while the price of fresh green vegetables tripled (10). The ODI report also highlights the link between the rising cost of healthy food compared to processed food and the increase in obesity globally (Wiggins &Keats, 2015, p.14). This is an important consideration in Northern Ireland, where the Health Survey 2014/15 found that 25% of adults were obese, with a further 35% classed as overweight (11). The same survey found 21% of children were classed as overweight and 7% were classed as obese.

In order to combat growing health problems such as obesity, the focus groups emphasised that households should be able to purchase fresh, healthy food as a minimum. The trend towards fresh food over frozen food is not confined to the focus groups in this study. The UK CPI Basket of Goods and Services has been updated to include more chilled fresh food over frozen versions, reflecting consumer habits (12). Healthy eating trends are also reflected in the fact that the groups agreed orange juice should not be available for breakfast every day, due to the risk of erosion to teeth from fruit juice (13).

The participants in the focus groups for both household type also reached a consensus that the food baskets offer little room for experimentation with food tastes or for children who are fussy or for people who have special dietary requirements. The participants emphasised this as a realistic, everyday concern that households with children face. In the *safefood* report regarding food on a low income, it was found that 'plate spinning' (i.e. making several meals at once to cater to different tastes) was a regular occurrence in households with children (14). Despite this, focus-group participants made the assumption that everyone in the household eats the same meals and does not have special dietary requirements.

Overview of feedback from focus groups

Overall, the focus-group discussions highlighted important points for consideration when creating a weekly menu for a household which may be overlooked by policy makers but can impact significantly on a small food budget in a low-income household. It is clear that the costs of food stretch beyond a basic shopping list and impact on a household's social, psychological and physical well-being.

5 The cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types

The cost of a minimum essential food basket for each household is based on the agreed menus (Table 17, Table 18) and is the average weekly price of the shopping list (Table 19, Table 20) including expenses such as Christmas, which the household does not pay for every week. The cost of the food basket is broken down by sub-category for each household (16 categories based on the UK CPI and four additional categories: 'takeaways', 'treats', 'school lunch, snacks and milk', and 'extra food for Christmas'). The cost of the basket is also presented as a percentage of household income.

Cost of minimum essential food basket for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household type

The weekly cost of the basket for this household is £153.01 (£21.86 per day) (Table 1). In addition to the food and non-alcoholic drink, the focus groups agreed that alcohol to be consumed at home should be included. The cost of school milk, snacks and lunch is also incorporated for the primary-school and secondary-school age children. The amount agreed by the focus groups was £25.00 for a takeaway once a month and £70.00 to cover the extra food costs at Christmas, which are included the basket.

Table 1: Cost of minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (primary-schools and secondary-school age) household by sub-category (2016)

Sub-category	Cost per week ⁿ	Proportion of the basket
Bread and cereals	£15.69	10%
Meat	£40.06	26%
Fish	£4.05	3%
Milk, cheese and eggs	£9.59	6%

ⁿ Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

Sub-category	Cost per week ^o	Proportion of the basket
Oils and fats	£3.05	2%
Fruit	£12.93	8%
Vegetables including potatoes and tubers	£17.05	11%
Sugar, jam and syrups	£0.90	1%
Food products nec ^p	£3.08	2%
Coffee, tea and cocoa	£3.75	2%
Mineral waters, soft drinks and juices	£2.70	2%
Alcoholic beverages	£10.00	7%
Takeaway	£6.25	4%
Treats	£3.00	2%
School lunch, snacks and milk	£19.57	13%
Extra food for Christmas	£1.35	1%
Total	£153.01	100%

The most expensive sub-category in the weekly basket is 'meat' (£40.06), which accounts for just over one-quarter of the basket. The least expensive sub-category is 'sugar, jam and syrups' costing £0.90 per week (1% of the overall basket). The total weekly cost of 'school lunch, snacks and milk' for both children is £19.57 (13% of the weekly basket). The limited number of 'treats' costs £3.00 per week (2% of the overall cost of the food basket) while a monthly 'takeaway' (£25.00) amounts to £6.25 (4% of the weekly basket).

The cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

For this household type, two income scenarios were examined:

- The household is dependent on state benefits

^o Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

^p 'nec' means not elsewhere classified.

- One adult in the household is working and earning the minimum wage and one adult is a stay-at-home parent

Two-parent, two-child household – dependent on state benefits

In this scenario, the household is living in social housing and is in receipt of state benefits. The Housing Benefit for the household is based on the average weekly rent charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 2015/16, which is £66.60 per week (15).

It is assumed that this household is not paying for childcare, does not have savings over £6,000 and does not have any other source of income. Additionally, it is assumed that the adults in the household were employed for less than 26 weeks between 6th April 2015 and 5th April 2016 or were unemployed during this period. The total weekly income for this household in this hypothetical scenario is £350.20 (Table 2). This household would be required to spend 44% of its total weekly income on the food basket (Table 3).

Table 2 Income for two-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016)

Entitlements	Yearly	Weekly
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credits	£ 6, 110.10	£ 117.50
Jobseeker's Allowance	£ 5, 988.61	£ 114.85
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£ 878.61	£ 16.85
Housing Benefit	£ 3, 463.20	£ 66.60
Other Income Entitlements		
Child Benefit	£ 1, 788.80	£ 34.40
Total	£ 18, 229.32	£ 350.20

Table 3 Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household dependent on state benefits (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of Income
£ 350.20	£ 153.01 ⁹	44%

Two-parent, two-child household – one adult employed and earning the national minimum wage

In this scenario, one parent is employed full-time (37.5 hours per week) earning the national minimum wage of £7.20 per hour, while the other parent stays at home. It is assumed that the household incurs no childcare costs and they live in social housing, paying the Northern Ireland Housing Executive average rent for 2015/16.

The total weekly income for the household type in this scenario is £488.25 (Table 4). This household would be required to spend 31% of its total weekly income on the food basket (Table 5), which is a lower percentage than the same household dependent on state benefits (44%) (Table 3).

Table 4 Income for two-parent, two-child household – One adult employed and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Entitlements	Yearly	Weekly
Net Earned Income	£ 12, 708.80	£ 244.40
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credit	£ 10, 891.60	£ 209.45
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Housing Benefit	£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Other Income Entitlements		
Child Benefit	£ 1, 788.80	£ 34.40
Total Entitlements	£ 12, 650.56	£ 243.85
Total	£25, 359.36	£ 488.25

⁹ This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Table 5: Cost of minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household – one adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of income
£488.25	£ 153.01 ^r	31%

Cost of minimum essential food basket for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household type

The weekly total of the minimum essential food basket for this household is £99.00, which breaks down as £14.14 for the household per day (Table 6). Like the two-parent household type, alcohol to be consumed at home was included in the basket and in the overall nutritional assessment of the menu. The cost of school milk, snacks and lunch is also incorporated for the pre-school and primary-school child. The amount agreed by the groups was £15 for a takeaway once a month and £50 to cover the extra food costs at Christmas. These amounts were lower than those agreed by the two-parent household type groups, reflecting the impact that different household composition can have on food costs.

Table 6: Cost of minimum essential food basket for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household by sub-category (2016)

Sub-category	Cost per week ^s	Proportion of the Basket
Bread and cereals	£ 11.21	11%
Meat	£ 23.96	24%
Fish	£ 2.37	2%
Milk, cheese and eggs	£ 9.06	9%
Oils and fats	£ 2.17	2%

^r This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

^s Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

Sub-category	Cost per week [†]	Proportion of the Basket
Fruit	£ 9.53	10%
Vegetables including potatoes and tubers	£ 11.71	12%
Sugar, jam and syrups	£ 1.12	1%
Food products nec	£ 3.37	3%
Coffee, tea and cocoa	£ 1.49	2%
Mineral waters, soft drinks and juices	£ 1.37	1%
Alcoholic beverages	£ 6.00	6%
Takeaway	£ 3.75	4%
Treats	£ 3.09	3%
School lunch, snacks and milk	£ 7.83	8%
Extra food for Christmas	£ 0.96	1%
Total	£ 99.00	100%

The most expensive sub-category is 'meat' (£23.96), which accounts for almost one-quarter (24%) of the overall basket. The least expensive sub-category is 'sugars, jams and syrups' costing £1.12 per week (1% of the total). The total weekly cost of 'school lunch, snacks and milk' for both children is £7.83 (8% of the total basket). The extra cost of food at Christmas (£50.00) equates to £0.96 per week (1% of the total basket) while £6.00 per week covers the cost of a bottle of wine to facilitate the single parent the opportunity to drink at home or to offer a guest a drink if they cannot afford to go out to socialise. The 'treats' category costs £3.09 per week (3% of the total basket) while £15.00 a month for a 'takeaway' costs £3.75 per week (4% of the overall basket). This was less than the cost of a takeaway in the two-parent household as there are fewer adults in the house and a pre-school child would eat less than an adolescent. The minimum essential food basket agreed for the one-parent household by the focus groups is similar to the two-parent household basket based on the items that money is allocated towards (e.g. takeaways). However, the difference in the composition of the household, one

[†] Sub-category totals are rounded to the nearest pence.

less adult and a younger child (pre-school vs. adolescent) results in lower quantities of food items purchased, lower school lunch prices and a less expensive basket overall.

The cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

Two income scenarios are examined for the one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household:

- Dependent on state benefits
- The adult is employed part-time (16 hours per week)

One-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household dependent on state benefits

In this scenario, the household is living in social housing, is in receipt of state benefits and the adult is unemployed. The Housing Benefit for the household is based on the average weekly rent charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 2015/16, which is £66.60 per week (15). It is assumed that this household is not paying for childcare, does not have savings over £6,000 and does not have any other source of income. It is assumed the adult in the household was employed for less than 26 weeks between 6th April 2015 and 5th April 2016 or was unemployed during this period. The total weekly income for this household type in this scenario is £308.45 (Table 7) and the cost of the weekly food basket is just under one-third (32%) of the weekly household income (Table 8).

Table 7 Income for one-parent, two-child household dependent on state benefits (2016)

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credits	£6110.10	£117.50
Jobseekers Allowance	£3811.64	£73.10
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£878.61	£16.85
Housing Benefit	£3463.20	£66.60
Other Income Entitlements		

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Child Benefit	£1788.80	£34.40
Total	£16052.35	£308.45

Table 8 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for one-parent, two child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of Income
£308.45	£99.00 ^u	32%

One-parent, two-child household – adult employed part-time and earning the national minimum wage

In this scenario, the adult in the household is employed part-time (16 hours per week), earning the national minimum wage of £7.20 per hour. It is assumed the household incurs no childcare costs and they live in social housing, paying the Northern Ireland Housing Executive average rent for 2015/16 (£66.60). The total weekly income for the household in this scenario, including any additional benefits that the household may be entitled to, is £359.05 (Table 9). This household would be required to spend nearly one-third (28%) of their weekly total income on the weekly food basket (Table 10).

Table 9 Income for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Earned Income	£5990.40	£115.20
Means-tested Income Entitlements		
Tax Credit	£10861.76	£209.45
Means-tested Bill Reductions		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£0.00	£0.00
Housing Benefit	£0.00	£0.00
Other Income Entitlements		

^u This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Entitlement	Yearly	Weekly
Child Benefit	£1788.80	£34.40
Total Entitlements	£12650.56	£243.85
Total	£18640.96	£359.05

Table 10: Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household Income for a one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household – adult working and earning the national minimum wage (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of income
£359.05	£99.00 ^v	28%

^v This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

6 Updating the cost of a minimum essential food basket for two household types (2014-2016)

This section presents the updated cost of a minimum essential food basket and income scenarios for two household types in Northern Ireland previously determined (1):

- A two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary-school age)
- A pensioner living alone household

The food prices were updated from November 2014, when they were originally priced, to March 2016. This aligns with the date of the pricing for the two additional household types presented in section 4.

Changes in inflation: November 2014 and March 2016

The overall UK CPI rate remained fairly constant during the period from November 2014 to March 2016 and the largest monthly change was a decrease in prices of 0.9% from December 2015 to January 2016. From January 2016 to March 2016, the prices of all items went up as inflation increased by 0.5% (Office for National Statistics, 2016).

Overall, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages decreased from November 2014 to March 2016. This is the same for the price of alcohol, despite larger fluctuations in prices over the same period. From January 2016 to March 2016, the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages decreased by 2.7% and alcoholic beverages prices saw a larger decrease of 3.8%.

Cost of minimum essential food basket for two-parent, two-child (pre - school and primary-school age) household type

The total cost of the minimum essential food basket in March 2016 was £115.00 (Table 11), a decrease of £ 4.17 (3.5%) relative to the cost of the same basket in November 2014.

Table 11 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household (November 2014-March 2016)

Basket Items	Nov 2014	March 2016
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	£ 110.68	£ 106.76
Alcohol	£ 8.49	£ 8.24
Total cost	£ 119.17	£ 115.00

Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

Two income scenarios are examined for the two-parent, two-child household:

- Dependent on state benefits
- One adult in the household employed and earning the minimum wage, and one adult stay-at-home parent

Two-parent, two-child household – dependent on state benefits

In this scenario, the household is living in social housing and is in receipt of state benefits. The Housing Benefit for the household is based on the average weekly rent charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for 2015/16, which is £66.60 per week (15). It is assumed that this household is not paying for childcare, does not have savings over £6,000 and does not have any other source of income. Additionally, it is assumed the adults in the household were employed for less than 26 weeks between 6th April 2015 and 5th April 2016 or were unemployed during this period.

The total weekly income for this household in this scenario is £350.20 (Table 2). This household would be required to spend 33% of its total weekly income on the food basket (Table 12).

Table 12 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income dependent on state benefits (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of Income
£ 350.20	£ 115.00 ^w	33%

^w This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week for the primary-school child. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Two parent, two-child household – one adult employed and earning national minimum wage

In this scenario, one parent is employed full-time (37.5 hours per week), earning the national minimum wage of £7.20 per hour, while the other parent stays at home. It is assumed the household incurs no childcare costs and they live in social housing, paying the Northern Ireland Housing Executive average rent for 2015/16 (£66.60).

The total weekly income for the household in this scenario is £488.25 (Table 4). This household would have to spend a significant amount (24%) of total weekly income on the food basket (Table 13), although less than the proportion spent by the same household dependent on state benefits (33%) (Table 12).

Table 13 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for a two-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household as a proportion of household income where one adult is employed and earning national minimum wage (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of Food Basket	Spending as a % of income
£488.25	£ 115.00 ^x	24%

Cost of minimum essential food basket for pensioner living alone

The total cost of the weekly minimum essential food basket for the pensioner household in March 2016 was £57.05, which is approximately £8.00 per day (Table 14). The overall total cost of the food basket increased marginally (0.2%) between November 2014 and December 2014. However, the total cost of the food basket decreased by 41p from November 2014 to March 2015 when it cost £58.72. From January 2016 to March 2016, the total cost of the weekly food basket decreased by 2.8% to £57.05.

Table 14 Cost of a minimum essential food basket for pensioner living alone household: November 2014-March 2016

Basket Items	Nov-14	Mar-16
Food and non-alcoholic beverages	£ 55.14	£ 53.18
Alcohol to be consumed at home	£ 3.99	£ 3.87
Total cost of the basket	£ 59.13	£ 57.05

^x This figure includes the cost of school milk and three school lunches per school-week for the primary-school child. However, in this scenario, this household may be entitled to free school meals, and this would reduce the cost of their food basket.

Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of income

One income scenario was examined for the pensioner living alone household:

- Receiving the state pension

In this scenario, it is assumed that the pensioner owns their home and is entitled to the full basic pension rate of £119.30 per week, as well as a pension credit and domestic rates benefit. The total weekly income for this household is £169.08 per week (Table 15). The pensioner living alone would be required to spend just over one-third (34%) of their weekly income on the food basket (Table 16).

Table 15 Income for a pensioner living alone household – receiving the state pension (2016)

Income	Annual	Weekly
Pension	£ 6, 203.60	£ 119.30
Means-Tested Entitlements		
Pension Credit	£ 1, 887.60	£ 36.30
Means-tested Bill Reduction		
Housing Benefit (rates)	£ 702.89	£ 13.48
Total Income	£ 8, 794.09	£ 169.08

Table 16 Cost of a minimum essential food basket as a proportion of household income for a pensioner living alone household receiving the state pension (2016)

Income	Weekly Cost of the Food Basket	Food Spending as a % of Income
£ 169.08	£ 57.05	34%

7 References

1. MacMahon B, Weld G. The cost of a minimum essential food basket in Northern Ireland. Pilot study for two household types. Dublin: safefood, 2015.
2. Trussell Trust. Foodbank Statistics. 2016; Available from: www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/.
3. Department of Social Development. Northern Ireland poverty Bulletin 2013/14. Northern Ireland 2015; Available from: www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/health-survey-northern-ireland.
4. Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs. Food Statistics Pocket Book 2015. United Kingdom 2016; Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/512112/foodpocketbook-2015report-31mar16.pdf.
5. Office for National Statistics. CPI Statistical Bulletin March 2016. UK 2016; Available from: www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/mar2016.
6. Office for National Statistics UK. Consumer Price Inflation Detailed Briefing Note, December 2014. UK 2015; Available from: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_390934.pdf.
7. Kothari P, Whitham G, Quinn T. A Fair Start for Every Child why we must act not to tackle child poverty in the UK. London: Save the Children, 2014.
8. Parker H. Low Cost but Acceptable: A minimum income standard for the UK: Families with young children. Bristol: Policy Press, 1998.
9. Kellogg's. Isolation and Hunger: the reality of the school holidays for struggling families. 2015; Available from: <http://pressoffice.kelloggs.co.uk/download/HOLIDAY+HUNGER+REPORT.pdf>.
10. Wiggins S, Keats S. The Rising Cost of a Healthy Diet: changing relative prices of foods in high income and emerging economies. London: ODI, 2015.
11. Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety. Northern Ireland Health Survey 2014/15. Northern Ireland 2015; Available from: www.dsdni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ni-poverty-bulletin-201314.pdf.
12. Office for National Statistics. CPI Basket Update Consumer Price Inflation: The 2015 Basket of Goods and Services. UK 2015; Available from: www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/articles/consumerpriceinflationbasketofgoodsandservices/2015.
13. NHS Livewell. Water, Drinks and Your Health. 2015; Available from: www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/water-drinks.aspx.
14. **safefood**. Food on a low income - four households tell their story. Cork: 2011.
15. Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Housing Executive Rents Set for 2015/16. 2015; Available from: http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/news/content-news_archive_2015/february_2015/news-housing_executive_rents_set_for_2015_16.html.

16. Bradshaw J, Middleton S, Kellard K. Proposal: A Minimum Income Standard for Britain. London: Universities of York and Loughborough, 2006.
17. Middleton S. Agreeing Poverty Line: The Diversity of Consensual Budget Standards Methodology in Bradshaw, J. and Sainsbury, R. (eds). Researching Poverty. Aldershot: Abigail, 2000.
18. Bradshaw J, Middleton S, Davis A, Oldfield N, Smith N, Cosworth L, et al. A Minimum Income Standard for Britain: What people think. York: York Publishing Services, 2008.
19. Smith N, Viet-Hai., Davis A, Donald D. A Minimum Income Standard for Northern Ireland. London: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009.
20. Department of Energy and Climate Change. Average Domestic Electricity Bills 2015. Northern Ireland 2016; Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/511468/table_223.xls.
21. Public Health England. The Eatwell Guide What's Changed and Why 2016. UK 2016; Available from: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508183/Eatwell_guide_what_s_changed_and_why_2016.pdf.
22. Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice. One Long Struggle: A Study of Low Income Families. Dublin: Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, 2001.
23. Stinson J. 'Lidl's Share of the Grocery Market Up in the Last Year'. Belfast: Belfast Telegraph; 2015; Available from: www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/news/lidls-share-of-grocery-market-up-in-the-last-year-31356404.html.

Appendix 1 Methodology

Background and development of consensual budget standards research

The Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) data generated in this study are based on the Consensual Budget Standards (CBS) that was originally developed by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at the University of Loughborough in collaboration with the Family Budget Unit, University of York (16). The development of the approach is detailed below.

The cost of a minimum essential standard of living with the primary focus on experts

The Family Budget Unit (FBU), University of York, developed the Low Cost but Acceptable (LCA) budget standards approach in 1998 to determine the minimum level of expenditure needed for a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (8). This methodology uses empirical data from national surveys of poverty and exclusion to determine prevailing patterns of consumption in society and to arrive at a consensus on what are the essential necessities of modern living. Input from focus groups is also used to:

- Gain information on the shopping patterns of low-income households
- Draw up a framework for the food menus and shopping lists
- Assist in the validation process of the budgets
- Learn about the realities of life on a low income

The cost of a minimum essential standard of living with the primary focus on people

The Centre for Research on Social Policy at the University of Loughborough, in collaboration with the Family Budget Unit at the University of York, developed the Consensual Budget Standards Methodology in 2006. This methodology puts the emphasis on the expenditure choices and judgements made by people in real life as they manage their money to contribute to a final consensus, “ultimately the people are the experts” (17).

When necessary, this methodology also draws on expert knowledge about basic living requirements and expenditure patterns (e.g. in relation to nutrition and household energy).

The Consensual Budget Standards approach

The CBS approach has been applied in the development of the cost of a MESL for six household types in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) since 2006. The MESL data generated is being used extensively by various NGOs, trade unions, community and voluntary organisations, and statutory agencies, particularly in the periods preceding and following the publication of the national budget. The CBS approach is being increasingly adopted internationally. Variations on the methodology have been used in New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Consensual Budget Standards are currently being developed in France, Austria and Japan. The strength of the data is that it is robust and consumer led. The Centre for Research and Social Policy (CRSP) at the University of Loughborough used Consensual Budget Standards methodology to launch the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) for Britain in 2008 (18). In 2009, a study was undertaken to investigate the extent to which the MIS Great Britain data were applicable to Northern Ireland (Smith et al, 2009). The study consisted of desk-based research, work with focus groups in Belfast and Omagh, and expert advice on fuel and housing costs and on the local pricing of goods. In light of their findings, the research team concluded that “given the overall similarities between the Great Britain and Northern Ireland budgets the minimum income standard for Britain can fairly be described as representing a minimum standard for the whole UK” (19).

In Northern Ireland, costs were greater for fuel (20), personal goods and services, and transport. Costs were lower for council/domestic rates, household services, household insurance, and social and cultural participation. Costs were similar for food, alcohol, clothes and household goods. For the most part, the differences were relatively small and cancelled out each other. Of the seven household types tested, two of the households, the single working-age adult household and pensioner households, were within 2% of the Great Britain MIS totals, and five were within 5% of the GB MIS totals (19).

The Consensual Budget Standards process

Consensual Budget Standards “aims to develop a standard which will be rooted in social consensus about goods and services that everyone ‘should be able to afford’” (18). The approach requires the establishment of focus groups for each of the different household types. Three focus groups are held per household type.

Each focus group includes people from different socio-economic backgrounds. The groups act as their own budget standard committees, where “the actual expenditure choices and judgments that are made by people in real life on the ground, as they manage their money contributes to the final consensus” on minimum essential living standard requirements (17). Experts are consulted when necessary (e.g. nutritionists). There are four stages to the CBS methodology:

Stage 1 – Orientation

The initial stage explores the language, concepts and priorities that people use in thinking about spending and consumption. During this stage, the group develops a working definition of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) and identifies the difference between needs and wants.

Stage 2 – Focus groups

At this stage, focus groups study each budget component in turn (i.e. food, clothing, household goods, fuel, etc.). Together, the participants produce an agreed list of minimum essential items and reach a negotiated consensus about the goods and services that are necessary for an MESL.

Stage 3 – Costing

The items agreed by the focus groups are priced by the researchers and a minimum essential standard budget is developed. In the course of developing a household budget, over 2,000 items are priced, which are then categorised into 16 areas of expenditure.

Stage 4 – Check back

This final stage, which involves the focus groups, is particularly important as it requires the re-checking of items and costs in order to reach the final negotiated consensus. Participants in the focus groups are asked to once again evaluate the content of the budgets to ensure that only minimum essential items are included. In this phase, focus-group participants are asked to study the budget cost of each of the areas of expenditure. The group is also required to consider a “request from the Minister of Finance” to reduce costs and to explain the rationale for their response (17).

2016 study

The 2016 study, like that of 2015, while using the CBS methodology is confined to one budget area: food. The methodology approach in this study is similar to that used in the 2015 study and is applied to the following household types:

- A two-parent and two-child household; primary-school and secondary-school age
- A one-parent and two-child household; pre-school and primary-school age

Focus groups

The focus groups were established in the same locations used in the 2015 study, in three different areas of Northern Ireland: Derry/Londonderry, a city in the north-east of Northern Ireland; Enniskillen, a town in a rural area and Belfast, the capital city. Dallas Fieldwork, a market research agency, was contracted to establish the focus groups in each area for the two household types in this study. The members of the focus groups represented these households and were from a range of different socio-economic backgrounds.

As a result of the experience acquired during the course of the 2015 study, it was decided that focus groups in all three areas would participate in the first two phases of the focus-group work but that only the Belfast focus groups would participate in the final Check Back stage. In this study, both of the household focus groups in Belfast reached a strong consensus on the menus and final food baskets during the Check Back stage. Previous experience in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland indicated that where the food budget was concerned, a strong social consensus emerged regarding the content and cost of the food budget at the end of the second phase of focus-group work. For this reason, it was decided that only the two Belfast groups would initially participate in the third phase of the focus-group work. Should the outcome of this phase with the Belfast groups fail to achieve a consensus, it was agreed that Derry/Londonderry and Enniskillen focus groups would be reassembled to engage in phase three of the focus groups.

Stage 1 – Focus-group work Phase 1: Orientation and constructing the menus

This is a very important stage in the research process. Time is spent arriving at a shared understanding of what constitutes a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) and a healthy diet. Posters were used to illustrate the Eatwell Plate (21) (known as the Eatwell Guide since March 2016)^y and also to represent the family type under consideration. The Eatwell Plate is a visual representation of how different foods contribute towards a healthy balanced diet and is consistent with UK government recommendations for a healthy diet.

During the Orientation stage, time was provided to discuss the importance of concentrating on the household depicted in the poster and what is required for that particular household to have a nutritionally adequate diet which, at a minimum essential level, meets the requirements of the Eatwell Plate. While participants were reminded of the value of their own experiences, it was emphasised that individual experiences should not be used to determine adequacy. The collective

^y The Eatwell Plate was updated to the Eatwell Guide in March 2016 (Public Health England, 2016)

wisdom of the group and the requirements of the Eatwell Plate were seen as key elements in arriving at a negotiated consensus.

The Derry/Londonderry focus groups were the first to participate in the study. The focus group for each household type developed seven-day menus. The menus devised by the Derry/Londonderry focus groups were based on a negotiated consensus on what constituted a minimum essential healthy diet. The focus groups also identified outlets in which food items should be bought. The menus developed by the Derry/Londonderry focus group for each household type were then studied by the focus groups based in Enniskillen. The Enniskillen focus groups discussed in detail the menus and made amendments, which were decided by arriving at a negotiated consensus. The third wave of focus groups was based in Belfast. The Belfast focus groups amended the data that resulted from the work of the Enniskillen focus group and reached a consensus on the seven-day menus.

Between phase 1 and phase 2, the menus developed by the focus groups for each household type were converted into a shopping list of food items, and the outlets identified in the course of phase 1 of the focus groups were listed for the consideration of the focus groups in phase 2.

Stage 2 – Focus-group work Phase 2: Amending the menu

The amended version of the menus, which was the outcome of the work of the three focus groups at Phase 1, was studied by each group in the three locations. A number of minor changes were made and a negotiated consensus regarding this second version of the menus was reached. The second version was sent to the nutritionists at the Northern Ireland Centre for Diet and Health, Ulster University, for in-depth analysis, and adjustments were made to the menus developed by the focus groups. These adjustments were found to be minor in detail. The role of the nutritionists is detailed under the heading Nutritional Analysis.

Stage 3 – Costing

The food items were priced and the total cost of the food budget was calculated. A more detailed description of the pricing process is outlined in the section on Pricing. Special offers were not taken into consideration as these are temporary and often have associated terms and conditions.

Stage 4 – Focus-group work Phase 3 – Check back

The previous experience of the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) in establishing budget standards in the Republic of Ireland (22) showed that focus groups had little difficulty in reaching a socially negotiated consensus regarding a food budget based on a minimum essential standard of living which was nutritionally adequate and which allowed for variation in menus. Other areas of

expenditure, such as savings, and social inclusion and participation, require more prolonged consideration and time before a socially negotiated consensus is achieved. Based on the success of the first study, it was concluded that it might be sufficient to involve only one focus group – the Belfast group - in this stage of the process. The experience of the earlier work with the three Northern Ireland groups at Stages 1 and 2 showed that groups had little difficulty in resolving differences and arriving at a consensus when there was a shared understanding of a clearly defined task.

The actual work with the Belfast group during this Check back phase confirmed that there was a high level of consensus about the cost of the food items and the total cost of the food budget. There was also a general acceptance of the changes proposed by the nutritionists, which were seen to be understandable and appropriate. For these reasons, it was considered unnecessary to engage the Derry/Londonderry and Enniskillen focus groups in this stage of the process. As already stated, if the Belfast focus group had faced any difficulty in reaching a consensus, the researchers would not have hesitated to involve the other two groups.

Nutritional analysis

The menus that had been created by the first two phases of the focus groups were sent to nutritionists at the Northern Ireland Centre for Food and Health (NICHE) at Ulster University to be tested for nutritional adequacy and to ensure that they were broadly in line with the Eatwell Plate. The Eatwell Plate shows the proportions of different types of food that should be eaten to maintain a well-balanced and healthy diet, not just for one specific meal.

The nutritionists analysed the seven-day menus using the Nutritics v4.101 programme to ensure they provided the correct nutrition for each member of the household. The nutritionists assigned the appropriate food weights for each individual, which were used to determine the lifespan and quantity of food purchased in the shopping lists.

In order to ensure the shopping lists were realistic, the lifespan of some items was determined by the focus groups (e.g. the everyday use of items such as jam and low-fat spread is difficult to determine by grams). This was to ensure the shopping lists are practical as well as cost-effective.

Milk intake during the pre-school/school-day was based on the amount provided by the government-funded milk programme in NI schools, and school-meal selections were taken from menus provided by schools within NI. Cooking methods that are in line with healthy eating recommendations were followed where possible (i.e. grilling or baking, not adding salt and using good-quality meat).

The final menus meet the majority of the UK Department of Health (DoH) nutritional requirements (Dietary Reference Values (DRV) and Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) updated energy requirements). The changes made by the nutritionists ensured that the menus and food baskets included the requirements of a healthy and balanced diet. These changes did not substantially alter the menus drawn up by the focus groups. For the most part, they were concerned with portion sizes and nutritional adequacy. When members of the focus groups studied and understood the reason for the changes, they had no difficulty in accepting them. After the menu was finally completed and agreed, a detailed shopping list was prepared and priced in stores identified by the focus groups.

Changes to the two-parent household type menu:

- The main change to the two-parent household menu was the increase in portion size for the male adult and the adolescent. An extra piece of bread was added with the stew on a Thursday for the male adult and adolescent; they were allocated more biscuits on a Sunday evening and extra peanuts for a snack on a Thursday. They are also designated a larger portion of Weetabix (always for the secondary-school child and on occasion for the male adult) in order to increase their fibre intake over the seven days.
- The higher calorie intake and subsequent extra food costs for an adolescent compared to a younger child is evident in allocation of adult portions of some foods on the menu such as porridge and larger portions of foods such as pancakes and Weetabix than the rest of the household.
- The nutritionists restricted the choice of drinks, as milk and water alongside coffee and tea are no longer interchangeable on the menu due to concerns over caffeine and saturated-fat intake.
- In order to ensure that sugar intake was not too high on certain days, the nutritionists removed jam from the Sunday breakfast and altered the days which orange juice was available.
- Rice cakes were introduced for the adults as a morning snack instead of scones, which were too high in saturated fat and salt.
- The light version of mayonnaise, cheese and yoghurts were used, and low-fat spread was introduced to replace butter.
- In order to reduce the salt intake for the primary-school child, bacon was removed from the fry/grill on a Saturday.

- Fruit and vegetables were also increased for all members of the household to ensure that they met the five-a-day recommended intake.
- The number of treats for the household was reduced and healthier alternatives were introduced, such as baked crisps.

Changes to the one-parent household type menu:

- The main changes to the one-parent menu were adjusting the portion sizes for the individuals in the household.
- Meals were made larger for the household, to increase calorie intake by adding in a garlic-bread slice with the spaghetti bolognese and a poppadum with the curry. Rice cakes and cheese low-fat spread were introduced as a Sunday-morning snack where previously there was no food.
- The higher calorie intake and different nutritional requirements for the adult compared to the children in the household was reflected in the additional slice of bread with the stew, the extra peanuts in the Monday-morning snack and the introduction of peanut butter for the adult at breakfast.
- Portion sizes for the pre-school child were reduced (e.g. half a sandwich instead of a full sandwich).
- Weetabix and cornflakes replaced pancakes and Rich Tea biscuits as evening snacks, in order to increase calories and certain nutrient intake such as iron.
- The number of rashers and sausages in the fry/grill on a Saturday for the adult were reduced to lower the salt intake.
- The days the household had orange juice were changed and marmalade was taken out of the menu in order to balance and reduce sugar intake over the week.
- The nutritionists incorporated the practicalities of shopping for a one-parent household (e.g. dividing the haddock fillets into two-thirds for the primary-school child and one-third for the pre-school child instead of wasting a portion of a third fillet). In addition, the primary-school child had fromage frais like the pre-school child in this household instead of low-fat yoghurt.

After the menus, which reflect the social, cultural and practical aspects of creating a healthy food basket, were agreed and completed, a detailed shopping list was prepared and priced in stores identified by the focus groups.

Pricing

The weekly cost of all items is the final price of the minimum essential food basket for each household. Some food items are purchased every week and their full price is added to the total. However, other foods such as oils and sugar last more than a week. In this case, the cost of the item is divided by the number of weeks it is expected to last. The focus groups agreed the lifespan of items such as condiments based on their own experiences as people tend not to measure precise portions of these items in everyday use. The weekly cost of other items that had a shelf-life of more than a week was determined by packet sizes used in relation to portion sizes recommended by the nutritionists. The focus groups also agreed that in order to reduce waste, it was essential that households had a fridge freezer and that storage containers would be used to prolong the life of items such as biscuits once opened.

The pricing of food items was completed online on the Tesco website (www.tesco.co.uk) and took place over a two-week period at the beginning of March 2016^z. In the previous study, the items were priced in Tesco as it had the largest share of the Northern Irish grocery market. Tesco was chosen again for this study as it retained the largest share of the market in 2015 at 35%, despite tough competition from cheaper retailers such as Lidl (23)^{aa}.

Adhering to the pricing method of the previous study, the majority of items priced are Tesco's own brand; Tesco's Everyday Value range was not included. A Minimum Essential Standard of Living is based on needs and not wants but in order to allow for choice, people should not have to buy the cheapest item possible and so the 'Everyday Value' brand was not selected. However, some brand name products are included at the request of the focus groups for quality reasons. The full price of the items was recorded and no special offers or discounts were taken into consideration as they are temporary and are subject to terms and conditions.

In the previous study, the focus groups reached a strong consensus that meat should be priced in local butchers. In this study, the participants were asked where they typically purchase meat and once again a strong consensus emerged across the focus groups that it is important to be able to purchase good quality meat in a butchers. Across all the locations, the groups also explained that butchers tended to offer better value for the quality of their products and they often availed of weekly 'meat packages' which would cover their meals for the week. Although the existence of the weekly butcher's packages was acknowledged in all three locations, only individual meat items were priced as it is not

^z The pricing was completed using a Tesco online account registered to a Belfast address to ensure accurate pricing and combat any UK regional price differences.

^{aa} Tesco's share of the market fell from 35.8% in 2014 to 35% in July 2015 according to Kantar Worldpanel (Stinson, 2015)

certain the package would be available in all butchers. The price of meat included in the food baskets is the average price of the meat items in the menus priced across three butcher shops in the three locations: Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen and Belfast.

In a similar way, the focus groups were also asked if they used their local shops, in keeping with the shopping habits of households identified in the pilot study. The focus groups again explained that they tended to buy a few items in their local shop to 'top up' during the week and reached a consensus that as a minimum a household should be able to purchase bread and milk in their local shops. As a result, bread and milk were priced in Spar (an outlet identified by the focus groups) and the price included in the basket is the average of the cost of bread and milk in Spar in the three locations. There is a difference in the amounts of these items purchased between the households as agreed by the focus groups, dependent on the needs of the different households.

The cost of school lunches and snacks for the children were based on a consensus reached in the focus groups. During the discussions with the groups, it emerged that there was considerable variation in the services available in schools in terms of morning snacks and the price of school lunches. Therefore, the focus groups decided to reach an agreement on a minimum amount of money allocated for school snacks and lunches that took account of all the different school pricing in their areas. School milk prices included in the basket were based on the average price in schools in Northern Ireland according to Western Region Education Authority (20p for one-third of a pint), and the Belfast Education Authority (19p for one-third of a pint) keeping in line with the school milk prices used in the previous study^{bb}. The EU School Milk Scheme provides subsidies to schools which are supplemented by funds from the UK government, resulting in the reduced cost of milk provided to children at school. Pre-school children are eligible for free milk under the Day Care Food Scheme administered by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

The costs of the takeaway, extra food for Christmas and alcohol included in the weekly baskets were decided by the focus groups after reaching a consensus on the minimum amount of money that the households under consideration could spend on these items. The items in the 'treats' category were identified by the participants as treats for the weekends, separate from main meals. As a result, there are some sweet items included in the main shopping list that were agreed by the focus groups to be part of the main menu as part of a meal rather than a treat, such as the cake on a Sunday.

bb Western Region Education Authority, Belfast Education Authority responses to query April 2016.

Appendix 2 – Menus

Table 17: Seven-day menu for the two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household

Day	Breakfast	Morning snack	Lunch/Afternoon snack	Dinner	Evening Snack
Sunday	<p>All: omelette (7 eggs), wholemeal toast (2 slices each) & banana</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea & water</p> <p>Children: milk & water</p>	<p>All: peanuts</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Sunday dinner</p> <p>All: roast pork (joint), gravy, potatoes, carrots, broccoli & ice-cream with fresh-fruit salad</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: diluted cordial</p>	<p>Sunday evening meal</p> <p>All: toastie (ham (1 slice), cheese & tomato on 2 slices wholemeal bread) & small cake (carrot cake)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee</p> <p>Secondary-school child: milk</p> <p>Primary-school child: water</p>	<p>All: Rich Tea biscuits (Male adult & secondary-school child: 2; female adult & primary-school child: 1)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea</p> <p>Children: milk</p>

<p>Monday</p>	<p>All: Weetabix (Adults & Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Secondary-school child: 3 biscuits) & banana <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>	<p>Primary-school child: grapes (Child's portion) Secondary-school child: school snack (apple) Adults: 2 rice cakes <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Secondary-school child: water Primary-school child: school milk</p>	<p>Children: school lunch (Primary-school child: fish fingers, potatoes, peas & yoghurt; Secondary-school child: wedges, chicken burger, salad & yoghurt) Adults: Adult's portion of homemade vegetable soup (onions, potato, carrots, celery, leeks, 1 chicken stock cube, soup mix), bap with a sandwich filling (ham & cheese) & yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>	<p>Children: leftover homemade soup (1 Child's portion, 1 Adolescent's portion) with a bap <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water</p>	<p>All: spaghetti bolognese (1½ lb mincemeat, garlic, onions, tinned tomatoes, tomato puree, 1 stock cube, spaghetti) & 1 garlic bread baguette <u>Drinks</u> All: milk & water</p>	<p>All: 1 slice wholemeal toast with low-fat spread (LFS) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>
<p>Tuesday</p>	<p>All: 3 Adult's portions and 1 Child's portion of porridge with raisins <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & orange juice Children: orange juice</p>	<p>Adults: banana Primary-school child: banana Secondary-school child: school snack (2 mandarin oranges) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Secondary-school child:</p>	<p>Children: school lunch (Primary-school child: sausages, sweetcorn, potatoes, & custard with cake; Secondary-school child: baked potato, beans, cheese, coleslaw, salad & frozen yoghurt) Adults: baked potato with</p>	<p>Primary-school child: cheese & 2 crackers Secondary-school child: cheese on toast (1 slice) & grapes Adults: grapes <u>Drinks</u></p>	<p>All: stew (1½ lb stew steak, potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, 1 stock cube) Male adult & secondary-school child: 1 slice wholemeal bread All: yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adults & primary-school</p>	<p>All: cornflakes <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Children: water</p>

		water Primary-school child: school milk	cheese & beans, & apple <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water	Adults: coffee & water Children: water	child: water Secondary-school child: milk	
Wednesday	All: pancakes (Adults & Primary-school child: 2; Secondary-school child: 3) with marmalade & LFS, & banana <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Children: water	Adults: cheese & 4 crackers Secondary-school child: school snack (apple) Primary-school child: pear <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Secondary-school child: water Primary-school child: school milk	All: tuna salad sandwich (2 tins of tuna, lettuce, onion, mayo on 2 slices wholemeal bread) & yoghurt Children: clementine <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water	Primary-school child: 1 Rich Tea biscuit Secondary-school child: 4 crackers & cheese <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water	All: pasta bake (pasta, 4 chicken fillets, ham (4 slices), corn, peas, broccoli, peppers, onions, homemade white sauce (plain flour, milk), salad (lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber) & cheese on top) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: milk Children: water	All: Weetabix (Female adult & primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Male adult & secondary- school child: 3 biscuits) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water

Thursday	<p>All: bagel with LFS & jam, 3 Adult's portions & 1 Child's portion of grapes</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea</p> <p>Secondary-school child: milk</p> <p>Primary-school child: water</p>	<p>Adults: yoghurt</p> <p>Secondary-school child: school snack (banana)</p> <p>Primary-school child: banana</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee & water</p> <p>Secondary-school child: water</p> <p>Primary-school child: school milk</p>	<p>All: chicken salad wrap (lettuce, tomato, onion, light mayo, pre packed chicken chunks x 1 packet) & pear</p> <p>Children: yoghurt</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Primary-school child: clementine</p> <p>Secondary-school child: cornflakes & peanuts</p> <p>Adults: peanuts</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: shepherd's pie (onions, carrots, peas, gravy, 1½ lb of diced lamb, potatoes, grated cheese) & salad (lettuce, tomatoes, onion)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: milk</p>	<p>All: toast with LFS (Adults & primary-school child: 1 slice; Secondary-school child: 2 slices)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adults: tea & water</p> <p>Children: hot chocolate (made with milk)</p>
-----------------	---	--	--	--	--	---

<p>Friday</p>	<p>All: 3 Adult's portions & 1 Child's portion of porridge & pear <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Children: water</p>	<p>Adults: scone (jam & LFS) Primary-school child: apple Secondary-school child: school snack (sausage roll) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee Secondary-school child: water Primary-school child: school milk</p>	<p>Children: school lunch (Secondary-school child: chicken goujons, salad, mashed potato & yoghurt; Primary-school child: beef burger, salad, potato wedges & frozen yoghurt) Adults: ham sandwich (LFS, ham (2 slices), cheese & tomato, on 2 slices of wholemeal bread) & yoghurt <u>Drink</u> Adults: tea Children: water</p>	<p>Adults: apple, biscuit (Male Kitkat, Female chocolate digestive) Secondary-school child: banana, Kitkat Primary-school child: Kitkat <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee & water Children: water</p>	<p>All: cod (4 fillets), chips, mushy peas, vinegar <u>Drinks</u> Adults & secondary-school child: milk Primary-school child: water</p>	<p>All: chocolate digestives 2 each <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Female Adult: half a bottle of white wine Male Adult: 3 bottles of lager Children: water</p>
<p>Saturday</p>	<p>Brunch (Breakfast, snack and lunch) All: fry/grill (toast (Adults & Sec: 2 slices; Pri: 1 slice), bacon rasher grilled, sausage grilled (Adult and Sec: 2; Pri: 1 sausage, no bacon rasher), 1 egg fried, beans, tomato grilled, mushrooms fried) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: coffee, water & orange juice Children: water & orange juice</p>			<p>All: apple & clementine <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea & water Children: water</p>	<p>All: chicken curry (rice, chicken (4 fillets), mushrooms, peppers, peas, curry powder) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: water Children: milk</p>	<p>All: baked crisps & Milky Way (funsize) <u>Drinks</u> Adults: tea Female Adult: half a bottle of white wine Male Adult: 3 lagers Children: diluted cordial</p>

Table 18: Seven-day menu for the one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household

Day	Breakfast	Mid-morning snack	Lunch/Afternoon snack		Dinner	Evening Snack
Sunday	All: scrambled eggs (4) & beans, wholemeal toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices; Pre-school child: 1 slice) with low-fat spread (LFS) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water	All: rice cake (Adult & Primary-school child: 2; Pre-school child: 1) with cheese low-fat spread <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: milk	Sunday dinner All: roast chicken (fillet), homemade stuffing (sausages (2), 1 egg, breadcrumbs (3 slices), mixed herbs, onion) gravy, potatoes, carrots, broccoli & ice cream with jelly <u>Drinks</u> All: diluted cordial		Sunday evening meal Adult & Primary-school child: toastie (ham (1 slice), cheese & tomato on 2 slices wholemeal bread) Pre-school child: half toastie All: small cake & fruit salad <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & milk Children: water	All: 1 Rich Tea biscuit <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea Children: milk
Monday	All: porridge (1 Adult's & 2 Children's portions) & banana <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water	Adult & Primary-school child: grapes (1 Adult's & 1 Child's portion) Adult: peanuts Pre-school child: school snack (grapes) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: school milk	Primary-school child: school lunch (fish fingers, peas, potato & yoghurt) Adult: ham sandwich (ham (1 slice) & tomato, 2 slices wholemeal bread, LFS) & yoghurt Pre-school child: half sandwich & yoghurt	Children: pineapple slice (2 Children's portions), 1 slice wholemeal toast, LFS Adult: apple <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Primary-school child: water Pre-school child: milk	All: spaghetti bolognese (1lb mincemeat, garlic, onions, tinned tomatoes, tomato puree, 1 stock cube, spaghetti) & 1 garlic bread slice each <u>Drinks</u> All: water	All: cornflakes <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water

			<u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water			
Tuesday	All: Weetabix (Adult and Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Pre-school child: 1 biscuit) with pineapple slice (2 Children's portion and 1 Adult's portion) <u>Drinks</u> All: water Adult: tea	Adult & Primary-school child: pear Pre-school child: school snack (pear) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee Children: school milk	Adult & Primary-school child: sandwich (2 slices wholemeal bread, ham (1 slice), cheese, tomato, LFS) & yoghurt, banana Pre-school child: half sandwich & yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water	All: unsalted peanuts <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: water	All: stew (1lb stewing steak, potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, brown sauce, 1 stock cube) Adult: 2 slices wholemeal bread <u>Drinks</u> All: water	All: 1 Rich Tea biscuit <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: hot chocolate (made with milk)
Wednesday	All: toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices with peanut butter; Pre-school child: 1 slice with jam) & grapes <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Primary-school child: water Pre-school child: milk	Adult & Primary-school child: banana Pre-school child: school snack (banana) <u>Drinks</u> Children: school milk Adult: coffee	Primary-school child: school lunch (sausages, sweetcorn, potatoes & fruit salad) Adult & Pre-school child: tuna pasta salad (1 tin tuna, peppers, pasta, mushroom, light mayo)	All: yoghurt <u>Drinks</u> Adult: coffee & water Children: water	All: pork stir fry (pork pieces, 1 stir fry vegetable pack, fresh egg noodles, 1 pack of stir fry sauce) <u>Drinks</u> All: water	All: Weetabix (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Pre: 1 biscuit) <u>Drinks</u> Adult: tea & water Children: water

			<p>Adult: Go-Ahead bar & pear</p> <p>Pre-school child: rice cake</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>			
Thursday	<p>Children: pancakes, LFS (Pre-school child: 1; Primary-school child: 2)</p> <p>Adult: bagel, LFS</p> <p>All: melon (1 Adult's portion, 2 Children's portions)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: orange juice</p> <p>Adult: tea</p>	<p>Adult & Primary-school child: grapes (1 Adult's & 1 Child's portion)</p> <p>Pre-school child: school snack (grapes)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: school milk</p>	<p>Adult & Primary-school child: chicken salad sandwich (pre-packed chicken chunks, lettuce, tomato, onion, light mayo on 2 slices wholemeal bread) & yoghurt</p> <p>Pre-school child: half sandwich & yoghurt</p> <p>Primary-school child: apple</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Children: cream crackers (2 each) & cheese</p> <p>Adult: 1 Adult's portion melon and peanuts</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: chicken curry (rice, chicken (3 fillets), mushrooms, peppers, peas, curry powder, onions) & 1 poppadum each</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: water</p>	<p>All: Weetabix (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 biscuits; Pre-school child: 1 biscuit)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea & water</p> <p>Children: water</p>

Friday	<p>All: porridge with raisins (1 Adult's, 2 Children's portions)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea & orange juice</p> <p>Children: orange juice</p>	<p>Adult & Primary-school child: banana</p> <p>Pre-school child: school snack (banana)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee</p> <p>Children: school milk</p>	<p>Primary-school child: school lunch (burger, wedges, salad & custard with cake)</p> <p>Adult & Pre-school child: egg salad sandwich (2 eggs, mayo, lettuce, cucumber, onion, 2 slices wholemeal bread, LFS) (Pre-school child: half sandwich) & yoghurt</p> <p><u>Drink</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: 2 muffins (Adult: 1; Pre-school child: half; Primary-school child: half)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee & water</p> <p>Children: milk</p>	<p>All: haddock (2 fillets), boiled potatoes, peas, cauliflower, white sauce (homemade)</p> <p>All: ice-cream</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: white wine & milk</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>All: popcorn (microwave) x 1 sachet</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea & water</p> <p>Children: diluted cordial</p>
Saturday	<p>All: 1 boiled egg, wholemeal toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices; Pre-school child: 1 slice), LFS & banana</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: tea</p> <p>Children: water</p>	<p>Children: yoghurt</p> <p>Adult: apple & yoghurt</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: coffee</p> <p>All: water</p>	<p>All: homemade vegetable soup (onions, potato, carrots, celery, leeks, chicken stock cube, soup mix), bread roll</p> <p>Primary-school child: pear</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>All: diluted cordial & water</p>	<p>All: fry/grill (bacon & sausages (1 each), tomatoes, beans, 1 egg (Adult only), mushrooms, toast (Adult & Primary-school child: 2 slices; Pre-school child: 1 slice)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult & Primary-school child: milk & water</p> <p>Pre-school child: water</p>	<p>All: baked crisps & Milky Way (fun-size)</p> <p><u>Drinks</u></p> <p>Adult: white wine</p> <p>Children: water</p>	

Appendix 3: Shopping Lists

Using the shopping lists

The shopping lists contain the food items needed to prepare the meals included in the menus. Each item is presented by size, the unit they are sold in and its price, the brand and retailer, the quantity, the lifespan of the item and the cost per week. Although the total cost of the basket is the weekly price of all the items included on the shopping list, the lifespan of all the items is not necessarily one week. The lifespan column details how long one unit of the food item will last during the week, dependent on the portion size the household requires. If the packet size is smaller than the portion needed, its lifespan will be less than one week. If the packet size is larger than the portion, its lifespan will be more than one week. Consequently, the weekly price of the item will be larger or smaller than the unit price, depending on the lifespan.

Example

The weekly cost of clementines for the household is £1.46 although a packet of clementines costs £1.25 (unit price). This is because clementines are sold in packs of six on the Tesco website but the household requires seven clementines for one week. This means the lifespan of one packet of clementines is 0.9 weeks and not a full week. The remainder of the second packet of clementines bought during the week will account for the 0.1 weeks left over and carry over into the next week.

Table 19 Shopping list for two-parent, two-child (primary-school and secondary-school age) household

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Clementine	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.25	7	6	1.46
Banana	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	0.12	17	1	2.04
Pear	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	0.4	3.38
Apple	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	0.8	2
Grapes	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	1	2
Monkey nuts	400	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	0.9	1.69
Raisins	500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.54	1	4.2	0.37
Mushrooms	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	1	0.9
Carrots	1	1kg bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.6	1	1	0.6
Broccoli	900	gram	Tesco	Tesco	1.1	1	2.1	0.53
Lettuce	1	head	Tesco	Tesco	0.49	1	1	0.49

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Celery	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	1	0.8
Potatoes	2,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	0.7	2.56
Tomatoes	360	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	0.2	2.87
Sweetcorn (tinned)	1	tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.45	1	1	0.45
Leeks	1	stick	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Peppers	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.99	1	1	0.99
Cucumber	1	whole	Tesco	Tesco	0.42	1	1	0.42
Onions	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	1.1	0.63
Turnip	1	whole	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	1	0.7
Frozen chips	1,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	2.7	0.55
Frozen peas	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.35	1	1.7	0.81
Soup mix	500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.15	1	2.1	0.54
Tinned tomatoes	1	tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.35	1	0.5	0.7
Garlic	1	bulb	Tesco	Tesco	0.3	1	1	0.3
Baked beans	1	tin	Heinz	Tesco	0.75	1	0.5	1.5
Mushy peas	1	gram tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.3	1	1	0.3
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Kingsmill	Tesco	0.89	1	1	0.89
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Local shop	Spar	1.45	2	1	2.9
Porridge	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.2	1	3.3	0.36
Crackers	25	packet	Jacobs	Tesco	0.97	1	1.8	0.54
Spaghetti	500	gram packet	Tesco	Tesco	0.59	1	0.8	0.74
Baps	1	packet	Tesco	Tesco	0.65	1	1	0.65
Pancakes	8	packet	Tesco	Tesco	1.19	1	1	1.19
Weetabix	24	packet	Weetabix	Tesco	2.39	1	1.3	1.89
Rich Tea biscuits	1	packet	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Cornflakes	500	gram box	Cornflakes	Tesco	1.75	1	2.9	0.61
Pasta	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.99	1	4	0.25
Bagel	5	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1.3	0.8
Wraps	8	pack	Mission Deli	Tesco	1.7	1	2	0.85
Rice	1,000	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.29	1	2.1	0.63
Garlic bread	1	baguette	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	1	0.8
Scone	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Rice cakes	18	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	4.5	0.2

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Small cake	1	cake	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Milk	1	bottle	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	1	0.9
Milk	1	bottle	Spar	Spar	1.21	2	1	2.42
Yoghurts	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	0.5	2.17
Cheese	1	block	Tesco	Tesco	2.5	1	1	2.5
Eggs	12	box	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1.1	1.6
Cod	5	packet	Tesco	Tesco	3.5	1	1.3	2.8
Tuna	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.49	1	2	1.25
Mincemeat	1.5	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	5.54	1	1	5.54
Stewing steak	1.5	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	5.69	1	1	5.69
Pork joint	2	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	5.36	1	1	5.36
Ham	15	pack	Tesco	Tesco	3	1	1.3	2.4
Chicken fillets	4	fillets	local butcher	local butcher	5.33	1	0.6	9.14
Pre-packed chicken chunks	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	3	1	1	3
Sausage	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	1.1	1.31
Bacon	10	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	1.7	1.2
Diced lamb	1.5	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	6.42	1	1	6.42
Tea	80	pack	Punjana	Tesco	2.29	1	1.8	1.26
Coffee	1	jar	Nescafe	Tesco	4.98	1	3	1.66
Hot chocolate	1	jar	Tesco	Tesco	2.48	1	3	0.83
Orange juice	4	1 litre pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.8	1	4	0.7
Mi Wadi	1	litre bottle	Mi Wadi	Tesco	2	1	1	2
Olive oil	1	litre bottle	Tesco	Tesco	3.45	1	3	1.15
Sunflower oil	1	bottle	Tesco	Tesco	1.2	1	3	0.4
Flora	500	gram tub	Flora	Tesco	1.5	1	1	1.5
Gravy granules	500	gram jar	Bisto	Tesco	2.99	1	3	1
Mayonnaise	240	ml jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	4	0.13
Tomato ketchup	570	gram bottle	Heinz	Tesco	2	1	4	0.5
Brown sauce	255	gram bottle	HP	Tesco	0.95	1	12	0.08
Beef stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	4	0.31
Chicken stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	6	0.21
Salt	750	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	0.29	1	24	0.01
Pepper	25	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	52	0.01

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Tomato puree	200	gram tube	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	2.6	0.19
Vinegar	568	ml bottle	Tesco	Tesco	0.39	1	3	0.13
Mixed herbs	14	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	3	0.23
Curry powder	80	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	4	0.25
Plain flour	1,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	24	0.03
Jam	454	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.75	1	2	0.38
Ice-cream	2,000	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	8	0.19
Marmalade	454	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.55	1	2	0.28
Sugar	1,000	gram bag	Tayte Lyle	Tesco	0.59	1	12	0.05
Crisps	6	pack	Walkers	Tesco	1.65	1	1.5	1.1
Milk Way	14	pack	Milky Way	Tesco	2.79	1	3.5	0.8
Chocolate digestives	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.6	1	1	0.6
Kitkat	16	pack	Nestle	Tesco	2.69	1	5.3	0.5
Takeaway	1	month			25	1	1	6.25
Christmas	1				70	1	1	1.35
Primary milk	1	week			1	1	1.4	0.71
Primary-school lunch	1	day			2.5	3	1.4	5.34
Secondary snack	1	day			2	2	1.4	2.85
Secondary lunch & snack	1	day			5	3	1.4	10.67
Total Food								£143.01
Alcohol at home								
Box of beer	15	bottles	Fosters	Tesco	10		2.5	4
Bottle of wine	1	Bottle	Tesco	Tesco	6		1	6
Total Alcohol								£10
Total Food & Alcohol								£153.01

Table 20: Shopping basket for one-parent, two-child (pre-school and primary-school age) household

Item	Size	Unit	Bran	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Grapes	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	1	2
Banana	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	0.5	1.8
Pear	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.29	1	1	1.29
Apple	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	2	0.75
Melon	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1	1.75
Pineapple	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Raisins	1,000	gram pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.99	1	14.3	0.21
Monkey nuts	400	gram	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	2.1	0.73
Mushrooms	1	punnet	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	1	0.9
Stir-fry pack	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Lettuce	1	head	Tesco	Tesco	0.49	1	1	0.49
Onions	1,000	gram pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	1.2	0.56
Cucumber	1	whole	Tesco	Tesco	0.42	1	1	0.42
Cauliflower	1	loose	Tesco	Tesco	0.95	1	1	0.95
Celery	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	1	0.8
Leeks	1	stick	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Potatoes	2,500	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1.7	1.02
Carrots	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	1.1	0.47
Broccoli	1	head	Tesco	Tesco	0.39	1	1	0.39
Tomatoes	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.69	1	0.5	1.38
Garlic	1	bulb	Tesco	Tesco	0.3	1	1	0.3
Soup mix	500	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.15	1	2.8	0.41
Frozen peas	1,000	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.35	1	3.8	0.36
Tinned tomatoes	1	tin	Tesco	Tesco	0.35	1	1	0.35
Baked beans	1	Tin	Heinz	Tesco	0.75	1	0.5	1.5
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Kingsmill	Tesco	0.75	1	1	0.75
Wholemeal bread	1	loaf	Spar	Local Shop	1.45	1	1	1.45
Porridge	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.2	1	5.6	0.22
Crackers	25	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.27	1	6.3	0.04
Spaghetti	500	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.59	1	1.2	0.48
Bread rolls	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.65	1	2	0.33
Pancakes	1	pack	Sunblest	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Weetabix	24	pack	Weetabix	Tesco	2.39	1	1.6	1.49
Cornflakes	500	gram box	Kellogg's	Tesco	1.75	1	4.9	0.36
Pasta	1,000	Gm/bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.99	1	3.2	0.31

Item	Size	Unit	Bran	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Life span (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
GoAhead bars	5	pack	Go Ahead	Tesco	1.69	1	5	0.34
Rice	1,000	bag	Tesco	Tesco	1.29	1	2.8	0.46
Egg noodles	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.25	1	1	1.25
Rice cakes	18	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.9	1	3	0.3
Bagels	5	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	5	0.2
Garlic bread slices	10	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	3.3	0.3
Tesco plain poppadum	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.4	1	2.7	0.53
Rich Tea biscuits	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	0.4	1	1	0.4
Cake	1	cake	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Milk	1	2L bottle	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Milk	1	2L bottle	Local shop	Spar	1.21	1	1	1.21
Yoghurts	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Fromage frais	6	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Fromage frais	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Cheese	1	block	Tesco	Tesco	2.5	1	2	1.25
Cheese low-fat spread	1	tub	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Eggs	12	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.75	1	1.1	1.6
Tuna (tinned)	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.49	1	4	0.62
Haddock	4	fillets	Tesco	Tesco	3.5	1	2	1.75
Chicken fillets	4	fillets	local butcher	local butcher	5.33	1	0.7	8
Pre-packed chicken	1	pack	Tesco	Tesco	3	1	1	3
Bacon	10	pack	Tesco	Tesco	2	1	4.4	0.45
Ham	5	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.8	1	0.8	2.34
Sausages (fry/grill)	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	3.6	0.42
Sausages (stuffing)	8	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	4	0.38
Pork pieces	454	grams	local butcher	local butcher	2.88	1	1.5	1.9
Stew steak	1	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	3.79	1	1	3.79
Mince meat	1	Lb	local butcher	local butcher	3.69	1	1	3.69
Tea	80	box	Punjana	Tesco	2.29	1	3.5	0.66
Coffee	200g	jar	Nescafe	Tesco	4.98	1	8	0.62
Hot chocolate	500g	jar	Tesco	Tesco	2.48	1	12	0.21
Mi Wadi	1	litre bottle	Mi Wadi	Tesco	2	1	3	0.67
Orange juice	4	1 litre pack	Tesco	Tesco	2.8	1	4	0.7

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Lifespan (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
Olive oil	1	litre bottle	Tesco	Tesco	3.45	1	7	0.49
Flora low-fat spread	500	gram tub	Flora	Tesco	1.5	1	1	1.5
Sunflower oil	1	litre bottle	Tesco	Tesco	1.25	1	7	0.18
Gravy	500	gram jar	Bisto	Tesco	2.99	1	10	0.3
Mayonnaise	240	ml jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	4	0.13
Tomato ketchup	570	gram bottle	Heinz	Tesco	2	1	6	0.33
Brown sauce	255	gram bottle	HP	Tesco	0.95	1	16	0.06
Beef stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	6	0.21
Chicken stock cubes	12	pack	OXO	Tesco	1.25	1	6	0.21
Salt	750	gram bottle	Tesco	Tesco	0.29	1	24	0.01
Pepper	25	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	28	0.03
Mixed herbs	14	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.7	1	16	0.04
Tomato puree	200	gram tube	Tesco	Tesco	0.5	1	4	0.13
Stir-fry sauce	180	gram pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Plain flour	1,500	gram bag	Tesco	Tesco	0.8	1	24	0.03
Curry powder	80	gram pot	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	4	0.25
Peanut butter	340	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	1.3	1	2	0.65
Jam	454	gram jar	Tesco	Tesco	0.75	1	2	0.38
Sugar	1,000	gram bag	Tayte Lyle	Tesco	0.59	1	12	0.05
Jelly	1	pack	Hartleys	Tesco	0.54	1	1	0.54
Ice-cream	2,000	gram tub	Tesco	Tesco	1.5	1	9.5	0.16
Muffin blueberry	4	pack	Tesco	Tesco	1	1	1	1
Popcorn (microwave)	3	pack	Butterkist	Tesco	1.99	1	3	0.66
Milky Way	14	pack	Milky Way	Tesco	2.79	1	4.6	0.61
Crisps	6	pack	Walkers	Tesco	1.65	1	2	0.83
Takeaway	1				15	1	4	3.75
Christmas	1				50	1	52	0.96
Pre-school snack	1				2.5	1	1.4	1.78
Primary school milk	1				1	1	1.4	0.71
Primary school lunch	1	day			2.5	3	1.4	5.34
Total Food								£93

Alcohol at home

Item	Size	Unit	Brand	Retailer	Unit price (£)	Quantity	Lifespan (weeks)	Cost per week (£)
One bottle of wine	1	bottle	Tesco	Tesco	6		1	6
Total Alcohol								£6
Total Alcohol and Food								£99

safefood:

7 Eastgate Avenue, Eastgate, Little Island, Co. Cork

7 Ascaill an Gheata Thoir, An tOiléan Beag, Co. Chorcaí

7 Aistiyett Avenue, Aistiyett, Wee Isle, Co. Cork

Tel: +353 (0)21 230 4100

Fax: +353 (0)21 230 4111

Email: info@safefood.eu

Web: www.safefood.eu

www.safefood.eu

HELPLINE

NI 0800 085 1683

ROI 1850 40 4567