

Introduction

- The SMS (Rural Payments Agency, 2022) and NMS (Department for Health and Social Care, 2022) provide milk for all children up to the 5 years old.
- Cows' milk only
- Lactose free cows' milk is the only alternative
- Subsidises the cost of milk for schools and nurseries

Literature Review

Poverty

21 children out of 100 live in poverty within Staffordshire (Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board, 2021)

Poverty in the UK is anyone living below the 60% median income for that financial year (Child Poverty Action Group, 2022)

1.1 million children are affected by benefit cap (Child Poverty Action Group, 2021)

2300 food banks in the UK due to people struggling with food insecurity (Francis-Devine et al, 2021)

Referrals from the GP, Social workers or the job centre make it hard for those needing a food bank Bankuet (2021)

There are a few food banks that take no referrals such as the House of Bread Stafford (2022)

Veganism

Veganism is growing in popularity with the ideology of stopping the exploitation of animals by not consuming food and drink products, or wearing or using anything made from animals (North et al, 2021)

8% of children ages 5 – 16 live the vegan way (The Vegan Society, 2022)

NHS (2022A) states that all nutrients needed can be sourced from a vegan diet.

The Equality Act 2010 states philosophical beliefs are protected, and veganism is listed within this.

It is unlawful within the UK to discriminate against a person for their religion or belief (FCSA, 2021)

The animal rights charity, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (2022) have a list of food that are appropriate to donate to food banks to help those who live the vegan lifestyle.

Public Health Agency (2010) states children with alternative diets must be catered for.

Cow's Milk Protein Allergy

Auto-immune conditions are considered a disability under the Equality Act 2010

Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2011): Food allergies have reactions known as immune-mediated, which is from the antibody known as Immunoglobulin E (IgE)

Strzepa et al (2018): The auto-immune system is made of T Lymphocytes which react automatically to self-antigens. Over the decades this type of immune reaction has increased. This is due to environmental changes.

Ashtari et al., (2013): CMPA is the most common allergy. The immune system identifies proteins within dairy milk and products and triggers the immune system to make IgE antibodies to attack it.

Phenylketonuria (PKU)

Phenylketonuria (PKU) is a rare genetic disorder.

Amino acid phenylalanine cannot be broken down, leading to a build up on the brain and within the blood system (NHS, 2022b).

Inherited by genetics from both parents (National Library of Medicine, 2021).

Nutricia (2020): People with PKU should avoid foods that are high in protein, which includes dairy products such as milk.

The Equality Act 2010: PKU is protected under disability.

Summary of Literature Review

Inequalities are evident.

Outdated Milk Schemes.

Many reasons why people need alternative milk.

Protected characteristics within Equality Act 2010 have not been considered.

Scotland have introduced alternative milk for those who require it (Children's and Families Directorate, 2022)

Mixed Methods Approach

Applies an ontological and Epistemological approach

Balances out limitations on different methods of research (UK Health Security Agency, 2020)

More than one approach can produce a more confident picture (Heale and Forbes, 2013)

Triangulation produces a comprehensive picture (Tisdall et al, 2009)

All identities of participants and interviewees were kept anonymous for their protection and data destroyed once the data had been used to ensure all regulations are kept in line with the Data Protection Act (2018)

Quantitative

- Questionnaire's from parents
- This method eliminates personal bias towards the current SMS/NMS (Bell and waters, 2014)
- A great way to gain individual understanding on specific topics (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013)
- Limitations of this method it is opinion based not factual (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013)
- Professionals cannot take part within the questionnaires
- Observations is not appropriate from of collecting data due to bias opinions from the observer (Opie and brown, 2019)

Qualitative

- Interviews to professionals within the Early years education
- Best way to gain a deeper understanding within a topic (Opie and Brown, 2019)
- Gives an insight on how professionals work with the current SMS/NSM.
- Limitations of this approach can be personal bias from the person being interviewed (Atieno, 2009)
- The data collected is not widely collected compared to Quantitative (Atieno, 2009)

Data Analysis

Data analysis approach was to sort into themes, look at percentage of how many answered the question. The next step was to look for not so common themes, and transcript the interviews and look for common opinions and differing opinions. Finally produce charts and report on findings.

Findings

Questionnaire results for: Do you feel the Subsidised Milk and Nursery Milk Scheme is Inclusive?



This chart reflects the study question of whether SMS and NMS is inclusive the results in this question demonstrates a strong opinion that SMS and NMS are not inclusive.

When interviewees were asked: Do you feel the Subsidised milk and Nursery Milk Scheme is inclusive they all stated they felt it was not inclusive and the schemes were outdated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings demonstrated both parent and practitioners lacked understanding on the Equality Act (2010) and its protected characteristic's. The ontological approach was taken to understand perceptions from parents and professionals on the social reality of the inequalities of the milk schemes provided within early education (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). This approach highlighted themes around the study topic (Katz, 2022). Epistemology was also applied within the data collection as it is a constructive argument within social reality (Eric Ryen, 2020).

Therefore, based upon the research and data collection recommendations have been suggested below:

1. For the government to conduct a country wide study on the topics based within this dissertation piece to reveal if there is a need for the current SMS and NMS to change to become more inclusive.
2. For the government to look at Scotland's Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme (Minister for Children and Young People, 2021). As this is inclusive to those who require alternative milks.
3. For the government to conduct research into the professional perspective of those who work in early education, that have to support children with CMPA, PKU to establish the facts on why alternative milk is important to their diets.
4. For the government to consider the cost of alternative milk for those living in poverty and whether the Healthy Start Voucher scheme (NHS, 2022B) could be amended to include alternative milks.