

*Sure Start*  
Southwark – Aylesbury Plus

**Evaluation  
Shopping Basket Survey**



Report July 2003

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# Shopping Basket Survey

## Overview of Sure Start Aylesbury Plus and evaluation

The Sure Start Aylesbury Plus programme is now in its third year of operation, and an ongoing process of monitoring, feedback and reviews has ensured that the services delivered to families with children under four have been refined, amended and adjusted so that they meet the stated and evolving needs of the community. The result is that the services provided are well used by a representative section of the Sure Start community.

Unlike a number of other Sure Start programmes, Sure Start Aylesbury Plus does not have the services of a dietician. However, the programme has a very popular and successful Oral Health Promotion project, which provides a range of workshops, advice and information on healthy eating, as well as on oral health in general.

In order to establish whether Sure Start families would like more specialist input about food and nutrition, it was decided that it would be useful to have information about the current shopping and cooking habits of parents/carers with small children and, in particular, what influence having small children has on shopping and cooking choices.

## **Sure Start Targets**

While there are no national Sure Start targets relating specifically to nutrition, there is a local target which aims to reduce the number of children who need dental treatment, eg fillings or extractions, by the time they start school.

## **Ability to respond to results of survey**

The Aylesbury Health Centre has recently (in 2003) been fitted out with a new kitchen, which can:

- Act as a base to provide cooking, food, nutrition and other workshops and sessions within the community (not just for Sure Start families)
- Provide the opportunity for social occasions, eg the celebration of various cultural festivals, sharing of different foods etc.

## **How did we evaluate?**

On-going research was conducted between March and June 2003. Sixteen local parents volunteered to act as community surveyors, conducting face-to-face interviews using a questionnaire of approximately 30 minutes duration.

The questionnaire was compiled through consultation with a number of key people, including the Oral Health Promotion team, the Sure Start team and parents and carers who undertook the survey training.

Training was provided by Cordis Bright to standardise the approach and techniques and to ensure that surveyors felt comfortable with the methodology.

## Summary of results

- The accessibility of shops (**77%**) and value for money (**63%**) are the two main determining factors in deciding where shopping is done.
- The two main factors determining what goes into shopping baskets are what the children/family will eat (**79%**) and value for money (**58%**). Advertising is also a significant factor (**44%**) in determining choices.
- A significant number (**49%**) are also influenced by health/nutrition awareness. Linked to this, food labels are read by **66%** of those questioned, mainly to discover the fat, sugar, salt and additive levels in food.
- The provision of free fruit to all Sure Start group childcare provision has influenced the shopping habits of **54%** of parents/carers questioned.
- Staple foods, such as potatoes (**92%**), rice (**85%**), pasta (**83%**) and bread (**66%**) rank highly amongst the top fifteen items bought. Cornflakes is the most popular breakfast cereal purchased (**53%**). There is a preference for sliced bread (**56%**), with **59%** buying white bread and **41%** buying brown, wholemeal or granary bread.
- Children's favourite meal choices show a wide range of options, with pasta based dishes coming out on top – **26%**. One-fifth (**20%**) of parents/carers also stated that their children's preferred accompaniment for their favourite meal is rice/noodles.
- Children's favourite snack is reported to be crisps - **40%**. However, there are significant cultural differences, with almost double this level of preference reported amongst the Bangladeshi, Black/Black British-African and Mixed White/Black African groups.
- When out shopping, children most frequently ask for sweets or chocolate - **72%**. The majority (**71%**) of parents/carers respond to this request 'sometimes'. Again, the majority (**65%**) say they do this because 'a treat is nice for them'. There are,

however, significant cultural differences, with **83%** of the Bangladeshi community saying that they respond to this request 'for a quiet life' and only **17%** stating that they do it for a 'treat'.

- An overwhelming majority of parents/carers – **97%** - report that they cook from scratch, using fresh ingredients, rather than using pre-prepared meals, with over half – **53%** reporting that they do so every day. Cultural differences show that the White British community have the lowest level of cooking from scratch – **89%**, though this is still a significant majority. Only **19%** of this community report that they cook from scratch every day.
- **75%** of parents/carers questioned stated that they would be interested in knowing more about food, food labels and cooking, while **78%** said they would be interested in attending free cooking/nutrition workshops if Sure Start provided them.

## Who took part in the survey?

A total of 143 parents/carers were surveyed about their shopping habits. The sample comprises a wide range of ethnic groups.

The full breakdown is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Ethnic profile of families who participated in the survey**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
White British	21%
Black/Black British - African	14%
Other White	12%
Mixed - White/Black Caribbean	9%
Black/Black British - Caribbean	8%
Other Black	5%
Mixed - White/ Black African	5%
Asian - Bangladeshi	5%
Other Asian	2%
Mixed - White/Asian	1%
Irish	1%
Chinese	1%

## Where do you do your shopping?

There is a range of food shopping options available in the Aylesbury Plus area, including supermarkets, individual shops and East Street Market. All the options are used to a significant extent.

Tescos supermarket is the most popular place for people to do their shopping, with **71%** of respondents saying that they shop there

This is a somewhat surprising result, as anecdotal evidence would suggest that East Street Market is the most popular shopping choice. However, a significant number - **55%** - of parents/carers said they also shop at **East Street market**, just slightly less than choose Safeway supermarket – **57%**. Of course, most people who participated do their shopping in more than one place.

The full breakdown of where people do their shopping shown in Table 2 below:

Where do you do your food shopping?	Percentage %
Tesco	71%
Safeway	57%
East Street Market	55%
Individual shops e.g. butchers, bakers	36%
Lidls	32%
Iceland	14%
Marks and Spencer	12%



## Why do you shop here?

Accessibility and value for money are the two main factors in determining where people do their shopping.

The key factor that determines choice of shop is **accessibility**, with **77%** saying they shop where they do because it is close by/easy to get to.

Iceland supermarket is rated as most accessible - **89%**  
followed by East Street Market - **87%**

The second most important factor in determining where people do their shopping is **value for money**, with **63%** stating it as the reason for their choice of where they do their shopping. Lidl's (a low-price supermarket) is rated as best value for money.

Unsurprisingly, individual shops are cited as the choice for buying cultural-specific foods.

The chart below shows the reasons given for choosing different shops:

(Red = 10% > average, Blue = 10% < average)

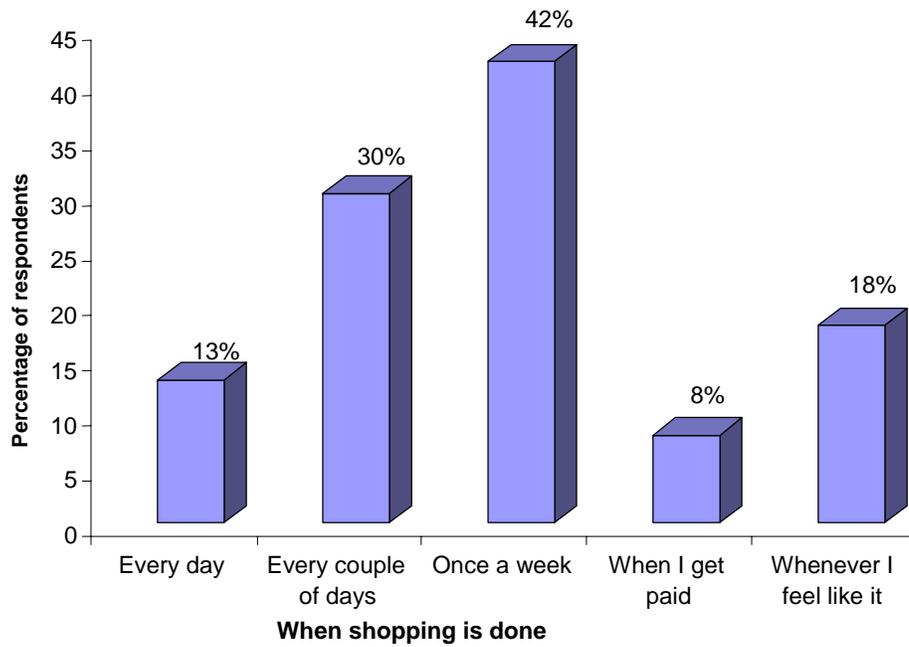
Reason	Average Percentage	Tesco	Safeway	East Street Market	Individual shops	Lidl's	Other	Iceland	Marks and Spencer
Close by/ easy to get to	<b>82%</b>	80%	86%	87%	80%	64%	86%	89%	82%
I can afford it/ value for money	<b>68%</b>	68%	65%	59%	65%	82%	59%	74%	71%
Fresh food	<b>54%</b>	45%	51%	56%	59%	44%	50%	58%	65%
Open at suitable times	<b>31%</b>	33%	30%	23%	25%	31%	27%	42%	35%
Culturally appropriate	<b>30%</b>	23%	26%	35%	41%	31%	36%	32%	18%
Other	<b>16%</b>	12%	13%	10%	12%	7%	18%	26%	29%

### When do you do your shopping?

The majority of parents/carers (**72%**) do their shopping once or twice a week.

A full breakdown of shopping frequency is shown in Chart 1 below.

**Chart 1: When shopping is done**



### What decides what you put in your shopping basket?

The main reason behind buying particular food is decided by what will be eaten by the children/ family -  
**79%**

The second most important factor is value for money - **58%**

Details of deciding factors are outlined below.

**Table 13: What decides what you put in your shopping basket?**

Determining factors	Percentage %
What the children/family will eat	79%
What I can afford/ Value for money	58%
Health/ nutrition awareness	49%
What the children ask for	28%
What's available	21%

### Health/Nutrition awareness

**49%** stated they try and buy foods because they think that they are healthier, or because they've had 'healthier' claims attached to them

The commonest aspects of looking for 'healthier' food are levels of cholesterol, salt, fat or sugar.

Other elements also mentioned were 'free of nuts/honey' or food that has to be cooked in the microwave.

The main products that were stated as being targeted because of claims to be 'healthier' were: butter, biscuits, cereal, cheese, chips, coleslaw, cooking oil and milk.

## **Influence of advertising**

Advertising also plays a role in deciding what goes in the shopping basket:

**44%** of parents/carers reported having bought foods on the basis of seeing them advertised

The main products brought due to advertising are:

- Cereal
- Biscuits
- Yoghurts
- Pizzas
- Cheese snacks
- Soft drinks
- 'Diet' products

## Food labels

The content/make-up of food also plays a part in deciding the choices made by parents and carers, with two-thirds (**66%**) saying that they read labels on food.

**66%** of respondents read labels on food

**65%** said they read labels in order to see how 'healthy' the food is, with the main concerns focusing around levels of fat, sugar, additives and salt. Overall calorie content is also a factor for **46%** of those questioned.

Details are outlined Table 14 below.

**Table 14: Why do you read food labels?**

Why food labels are read	%
See how healthy it is	65%
Fat content	47%
Calorie content	46%
Sugar content	45%
Additives (e.g. E-numbers)	32%
Salt content	26%

**93%** of those people who read food labels 'can understand them'

**Would like to know more** - however, **75%** also said that they would be interested to learn more about food, food labels and cooking if Sure Start could provide it

### Impact of Sure Start fruit provision

The provision of free fruit at all group childcare provision within the Sure Start area has also had an impact on parents' shopping choices.

**63%** of children and **32%** of parents eat the fruit provided by  
Sure Start at nursery/ playgroup/ crèche/ other group

Eating the fruit provided by Sure Start has made an impact on the shopping habits of **54%** of parents, as shown in the box below.



#### Impact on shopping

- He asks for fruit more/ eats more frequently x 9
- I tend to buy more fruits x 2
- Loves/ likes fruit x 2
- My children all like fruit. I always buy it each week instead of biscuits
- They ask for it but do not always eat it
- They do like fruit at all times
- They don't ask me to buy fruit
- They usually do anyway and don't ask for fruit
- When I go shopping my daughter does not ask for fruits and wants toys. She like ripe bananas and apples when I give them to her at home. When she is at Sure Start she just picks at them
- He waits for fruit at Tykes
- More confident he'll eat it

### **Further impact of Sure Start fruit provision**

A wide range of fruits were listed that parents had tried since attending the Sure Start groups. These are shown below:

Apple  
Apricot  
Banana  
Cherries  
Currants  
Grapes  
Kiwi  
Lychees  
Mango  
Melon  
Orange  
Papaya  
Peach  
Pear  
Pineapple  
Plum  
Prunes  
Sharon fruit  
Strawberries  
Tangerines



## Organic food

Less than one-third - **31%** - of respondents had ever bought organic food

## Why buy organic?

The main reasons stated for buying organic food were that it was healthier (**33%**) and that there were no additives or pesticides (**30%**).

**Table 16: Why buy organic food?**

Why buy organic food?	Percentage %
Healthier	33%
No additives/ pesticides	30%
Taste better	25%

## Or not?

As the majority of people – **69%** - had never bought organic food, it was interesting to explore why this was so. The main reasons were:

- It is too expensive - **59%**
- Do not see the benefits - **51%**

**Table 17: Why respondents do NOT buy organic food**

Why parents/carers do NOT buy organic food	Percentage %
Too expensive	59%
Don't see the point	51%
Not available	7%

## What kinds of organic food have you bought?

(There appears to be some confusion over what defines 'organic', as a number of respondents (11%) stated Walls Balls as an example of an organic purchase.)

Other examples are shown in the table below.

**Table 15: Examples of organic food purchased**

<b>Organic foods purchased</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Cereal	32%
Yoghurts	27%
Cheese	20%
Chocolate/ sweets/crisps/ biscuits	18%
Pizza	18%
Walls balls	11%
Slimming foods (e.g. slim-fast)	9%
Butter	7%
Cook in sauces	5%

### Most popular food items bought

Potatoes (**92%**) and sugar (**90%**) are the most commonly purchased food items

The top fifteen food items are shown in Table 6 below.

Staple foods, such as potatoes (**92%**), rice (**85%**), pasta (**83%**) and bread (**66%**) rank highly amongst these top fifteen items.

**Table 6: Top fifteen individual food items** (For a full ranking please see **Appendix 3**)

Ranking	Type of Food	% of respondents
1	Potatoes	92%
2	Sugar	90%
3	Yoghurt	87%
4	Rice	85%
5	Biscuits	85%
6	Pasta	83%
7	Tomato Ketchup	78%
8	Baked beans	73%
9	Butter	72%
10	Crisps	71%
11	Full Cream Milk	71%
12	Chicken	71%
13	Ice cream	69%
14	White Bread	66%
15	Tea (Caffeinated)	66%

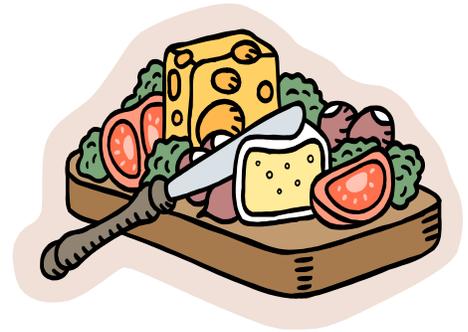
## Types of food bought

Milk, fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and bread are all bought by over **90%** of respondents.

The breakdown for the top ten types of food purchased is shown below.

**Table 4: Top ten types of food bought**

Type of Food	% of respondents who bought these foods
Milk	98%
Vegetables	98%
Fruit	97%
Meat	96%
Bread	93%
Hot Drinks	87%
Soft/ fizzy drinks	86%
Cereal	83%
Spreads	82%
Cheese	77%



There is a further breakdown of these types of food in the following pages.

### Fresh, Frozen, Tinned or Dried?

The main food categories - fruit, vegetables, meat and fish  
are all most commonly bought fresh

The second most common way to buy food is frozen, but this is half as popular as fresh purchases.

A more detailed breakdown is outlined below.

**Table 5: Fresh, Frozen, Tinned or Dried?**

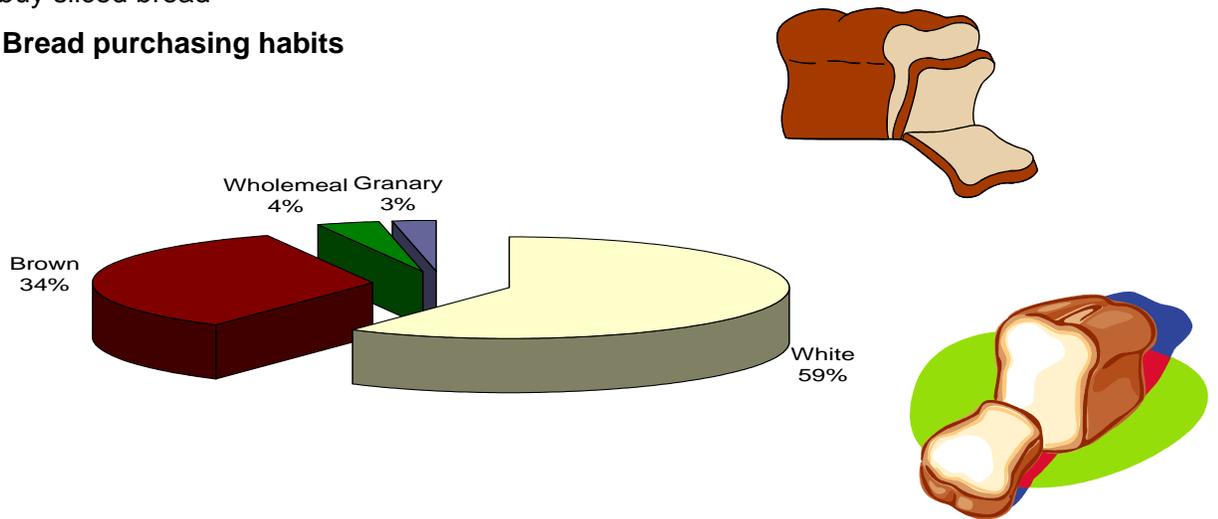
Type of Food	Fruit 	Vegetables 	Meat 	Fish 
<b>Fresh</b>	96%	94%	89%	68%
<b>Frozen</b>	n/a	48%	31%	43%
<b>Tinned</b>	17%	22%	n/a	31%
<b>Dried</b>	16%	n/a	n/a	n/a

### Brown or white bread?

Slightly more than half (**59%**) buy white bread, while just under half (**41%**) buy brown, wholemeal or granary breads. There is also a preference (**56%**) for sliced bread.

- **59%** buy white bread
- **41%** buy brown, wholemeal or granary breads
- **56%** buy sliced bread

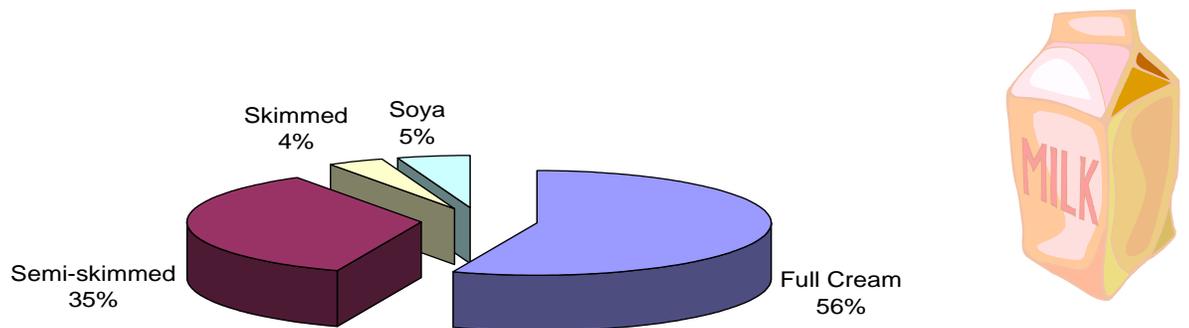
**Chart 2: Bread purchasing habits**



### What kind of milk?

**56%** of those questioned buy full cream milk, which is perfectly appropriate for families with young children, who need the full nutritional value of full cream milk.

**Chart 3: Milk purchasing habits**



## Breakfast cereals

The preferred breakfast cereal is cornflakes - **53%**  
However, almost one-third – **30%** - also buy Weetabix

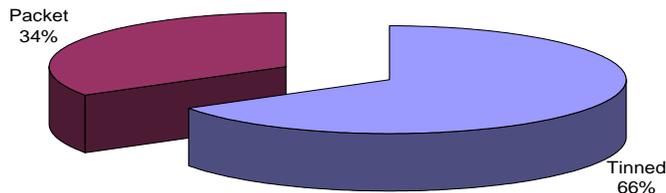
**Table 7: Cereal purchasing habits**

Type of Food	% of respondents
Cornflakes	53%
Weetabix	30%
Rice Krispies	15%
Coco pops	15%
Porridge oats	12%
Ready Brek	11%
Frosties	11%
Muesli	10%



**Chart 4: Soup purchasing habits**

Two-thirds (**66%**) of parents/carers questioned prefer to buy tinned soup, while one-third (**34%**) prefer packet soup.



## Children's eating preferences – meals and snacks

### Favourite meals

Pasta based dishes (such as Spaghetti Bolognese) come out on top, being preferred by over a quarter of children – **26%**.

While there is no clear preference, children's choices show a wide and relatively healthy range, with chips/fast food being cited as the preferred meal by only **6%** of parents/carers on behalf of their children.

We can surmise that the 1% who cited breast milk perhaps was not yet at a stage to display any other desire!

**Table 8a: What is your children's favourite meal?**

Children's favourite meals	Percentage of children %
Pasta/ pasta based dishes	26%
Chicken/ Chicken Nuggets	21%
Other meat based dishes	20%
Fish/ shell fish based dishes	14%
Soup	8%
Pizza	8%
Chips/ fast food	6%
Ethnic dishes	5%
Rice	4%
Bread based meal	3%
Vegetables	3%
Egg	3%
Cereal	3%
Fruit	2%
Breast Milk	1%



### What do your children like to eat with their favourite meals?

There is a preference for eating meals with rice or noodles – when it's not pasta!

Favourite meals - eaten with ....	Percentage of children %
Rice or noodles	20%
Chips	14%
Potatoes	7%
Vegetables	6%
Beans	3%

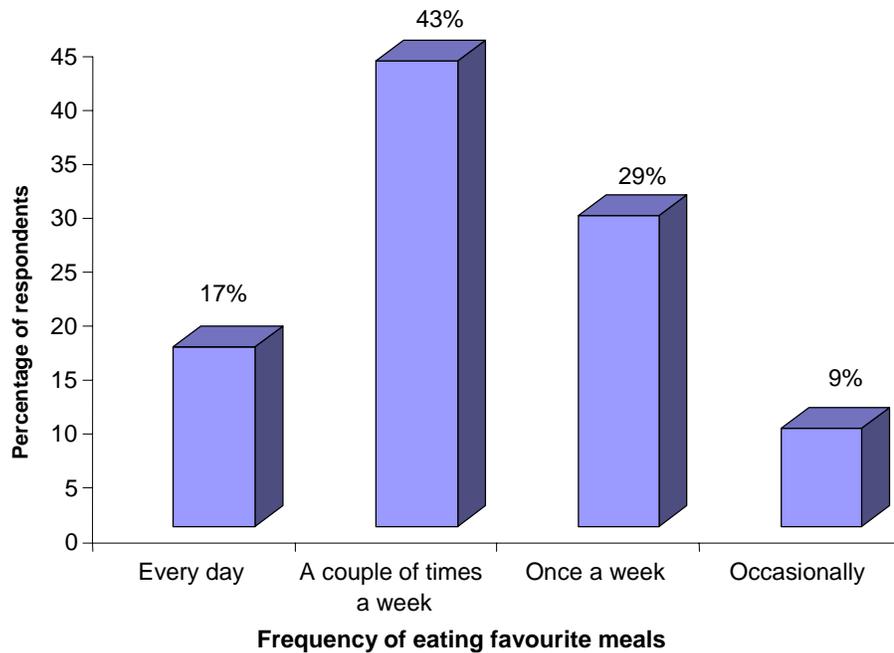


### How often do your children eat their favourite meal?

Most children – **72%** - eat their favourite meals once or twice a week.

Details are shown in Chart 5 below.

**Chart 5: Frequency of eating favorite meals**



### Children's favourite snacks

The top snack for children is crisps, stated by  
**40%** of parents carers

**Cultural differences** - the preference for crisps as a snack food is significantly higher among a number of ethnic cultural groups:

- Asian – Bangladeshi – **83%**
- Black/Black British – African – **78%**
- Mixed - White/ Black African – **75%**

These show almost double the average level of preference for crisps (**Appendix 1**). The breakdown for snack preference is shown in Table 9 below.

**Table 9: What is your children's favourite snack?**

Children's favourite snacks	Percentage of children %
Crisps	40%
Fruits	18%
Bread based (e.g. toast, sandwich, bread sticks)	15%
Chocolate or sweets	10%
Yoghurts	9%
Biscuits	8%
Cakes or biscuits	7%
Cheese based snack	5%
Chips	4%
Ice cream	4%
McDonald's/ KFC	4%
Sausages	4%
Pizza	3%
Drink/Juice	3%
Pasta	1%
Cereal bars	1%

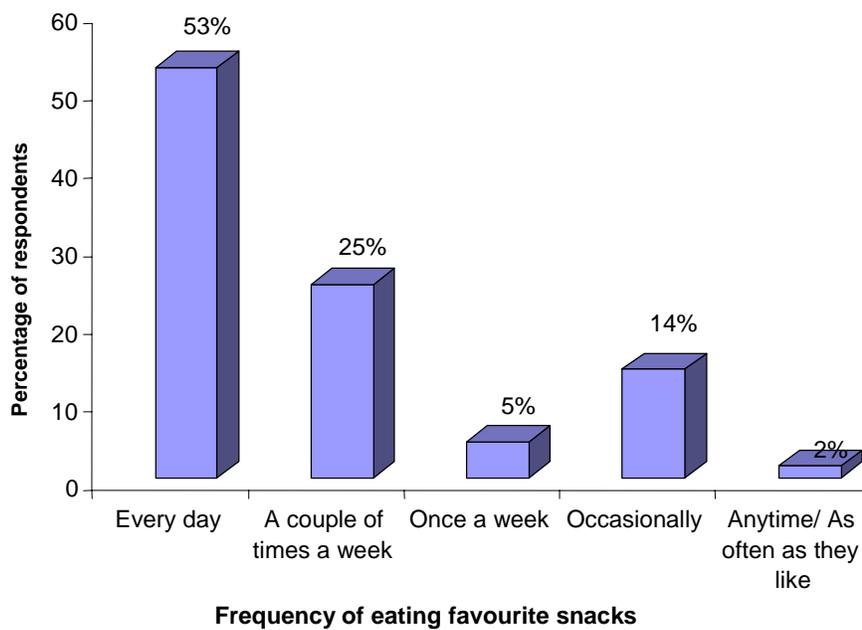
### How often do children eat their favourite snack?

Over half of children – **53%** - eat their favourite snack every day.

One quarter of children - **25%** - eat their favourite snack a couple of times a week.

The details are shown in Chart 6 below.

**Chart 6: How often do children eat their favourite snack?**



## What do children ask for when you're shopping?

Although children's favourite snack is crisps, what they most often ask for when out shopping are sweets or chocolate.

What children most frequently ask for when out shopping are  
sweets or chocolate – **72%**

**Cultural differences** - those within the Black/Black African and 'other Black' ethnic groups showed more than double the amount of requests for cakes or biscuits. The average level of requests for cakes or biscuits was **8%**. However, this rose to **29%** amongst the Black/Black British – African community and **20%** amongst 'other' black communities. (See Appendix 1)

**Table 10: When you are shopping with your children what do they usually ask for?**

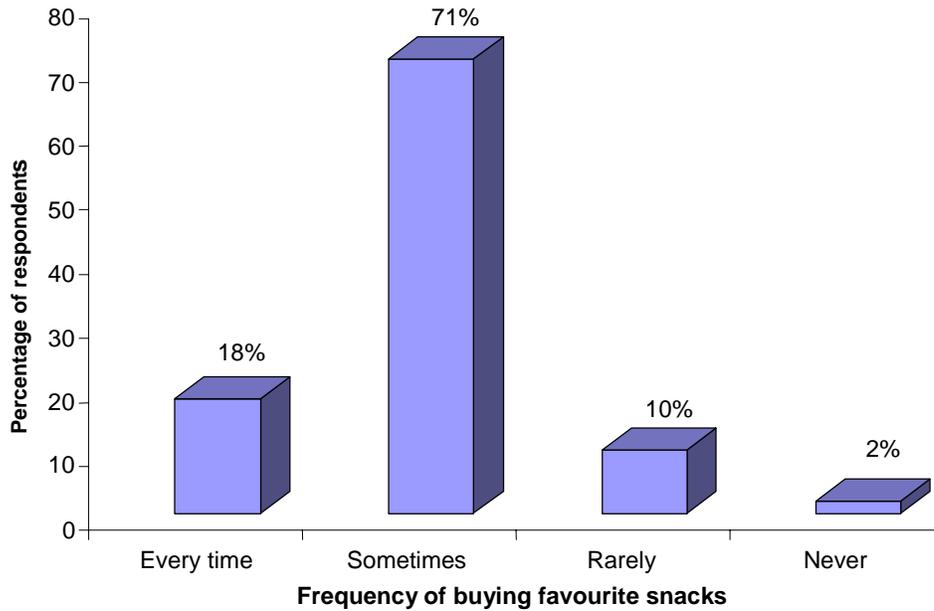
What children ask for when shopping	Percentage of children %
Sweets or chocolate	72%
Crisps	28%
Drinks	22%
Yoghurt	14%
Fruit	13%
Cakes or biscuits	10%
Ice cream/ lolly	9%
Cereal	7%
Anything	5%
Cheese based snacks	2%

## How often do you buy what your children ask for?

Only **18%** of parents/carers say they 'give in' every time their children ask for something while out shopping. The majority – **71%** - say they do so 'sometimes'.

Details are shown in Chart 7 below.

**Chart 7: How often parents/carers buy their children's favorite snack**



## Why do you buy what your children ask for?

In general, parents/carers buy what their children ask for 'as a treat', rather than for a quiet life:

- **65%** buy children their requested product as it is 'a nice treat for them'
- **25%** do it 'for a quiet life'
- **10%** do it 'to stop a tantrum'

**Cultural differences** - the exception to this was the Asian Bangladeshi ethnic group, where **83%** bought their children's requested product 'for a quiet life' compared to **17%** who brought it 'as a treat for them'. (See Appendix 1)

**Table 11: Why do you respond like this?**

Why parents/carers buy what their children as for	Percentage %
A treat is nice for them	65%
Anything for a quiet life	25%
To stop them having a tantrum in public	10%
Healthy	2%
Shopping routine/ normal purchasing	2%

### Why do children ask for what they ask for?

- Two-thirds of children – **69%** - tend to ask for food that they have had before
- Almost one-third - **31%** and **30%** respectively - ask for it because they've seen it on TV or because they've seen other children with it.

A detailed breakdown is shown in Table 12 below.

**Table 12: Why do your children normally request a certain product?**

Why children request a particular food	Percentage of children %
They've had it before	69%
They've seen it on TV	31%
They've seen other children eating/drinking it	30%
They want it/ feel like it	5%
It is near the till	3%
Packaging is attractive	3%

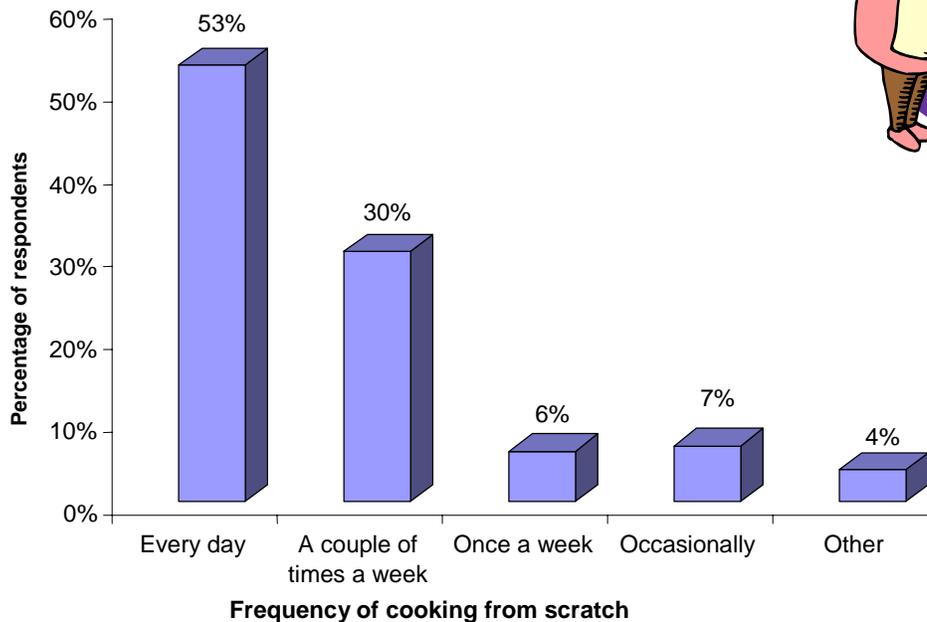
## Cooking from scratch

An overwhelming majority - **97%** - stated that they cook from scratch, using fresh ingredients, rather than using pre-prepared meals

A small majority – **53%** - report that they cook from scratch every day.

The frequency of cooking from scratch is shown in Chart 8 below.

**Chart 8: Frequency of cooking from scratch**



**Cultural differences** - across cultural groups the White British ethnic group showed the least percentage cooking from scratch at **89%**, although this is still a significant majority.

This ethnic group also tended to cook less frequently, with only **19%** cooking every day compared to an average of **53%** across ethnic groups. (See Appendix 1)

**Would like to know more** - **79%** stated that they would be 'interested in free cooking/ nutrition workshops/ sessions if Sure Start provided them'