

**Kingston Upon Hull**

**Sure Start Marfleet**

**Food and Health survey**  
January-March 2002

**Corrine Feuillatre**  
**Department of Nutrition and Dietetics**  
**Hull and East Riding Community Health NHS Trust**

This survey has been carried out as part of the “Food & Health” project organised by the department of Nutrition & Dietetics (HERCH Trust) in partnership with Preston Road New Deal for Community and Sure Start Marfleet.

The aim of the project is to enable better eating habits in the local population – particularly children – by improving the access to information on healthy eating and healthy choices. The project concentrates on helping people to develop basic skills such as cooking, shopping, meal planning, weaning, food budgeting and food hygiene.

This survey was carried out in order to find out from local people, their perceived needs surrounding nutrition issues, thus enabling us to shape our project.

The survey consisted of two parts – a food mapping exercise and the completion of questionnaires either on issues around food and health or food and family.

### **Result of the Food Mapping**

This exercise consisted of identifying all the local food outlets and locating them on a map. Each shop was visited to check the quality and variety of the food available.

The Marfleet Ward benefits from a number of “neighbourhood type” shopping parades and has 2 small supermarkets (Kwik Save and Aldi). Generally these shops are spread out and give a reasonable level of coverage for the whole ward. However, shops are not so easily accessible in the area of the ward which cover the flyover towards the industrialised dockland.

There is a good mixture of shops (ie butcher, green grocer, bakery). However the quality and availability of the goods was noted to be variable, particularly fruit and vegetables. The variety of fruit and vegetables tend to be also usually limited to the basic apples, bananas, oranges, carrots, mushrooms and cabbage.

There is an evident lack of shopping facilities in the Preston Road Estate. Altogether there are only 2 takeaways, 1 public house and a small corner shop. There is also a mobile shop for the area. However it was reported to have a limited stock, be very expensive and come at inconvenient times (late at night).

The nearest shopping facilities are a row of shops on Marfleet lane (approximately 20 minutes walking distance) and a row of shops along Southcoates Lane (about 15 minutes walk). There are also the 2 small supermarkets in the Marfleet ward and a large supermarket (Morrison) on Holderness road.

The bus services to and from the supermarkets are not very well developed around the estate, as it is limited to Preston road. Access to shops for non-car owners can therefore be difficult, particularly for disabled people, elderly and people with children.

## Questionnaires

Some questionnaires were distributed by the nutrition assistants within existing groups in the Surestart building and toddlers groups across the Preston Road Estate and the Marfleet Ward. Some questionnaires were also left at the Greatfield clinic. People were asked to fill out questionnaires, but were not required to provide any details of their identity.

The questionnaires consisted of two sections – “Food and Family” and “Food and Health”.

Unfortunately we were only able to recruit 38 people.

Responses to some of the questions in the survey have been omitted because of a poor response rate for those questions or because the information provided was too vague to be analysed.

### Results of the Food and Family Survey.

#### 2. Do your children like fruit and vegetables?

94.5% of respondents reported that their children liked fruit and vegetables. However, no information was provided as to the type of fruit and vegetables eaten.

#### 4. What problems/difficulties do you have when feeding your children?

61% reported that they had not had any problems when feeding their children. Only 10.5% of the children were reported as faddy eaters.

#### 5. When did you wean your children?

The recommendations by the department of health are to introduce solids between 4 and 6 months.

35% of the mothers reported introducing solids before or at 3 months of age. This is higher than the national average of 24% in 2000. It does however follow the declining trend, of earlier (by three months) introduction to solids – 68% in 1990 and 55% in 1995 (1).

61% reported that they had introduced solids between the recommended age of 4-6 months, when the national average is only 49% (2).

By six months 98% of the mothers had introduced solids.

There is still over 1/3 of the children being weaned before the recommended age of 4 months. Although the percentage has been declining nationally, this is still a cause for concern as early weaning is associated with an increased risk of food intolerance, reduced absorption of nutrients in breast or formula milk, obesity, potential reduction in breast or formula milk intake, persistent cough and poor neuromuscular co-ordination.

## **6. When did you stop the bottle?**

The recommendation is to wean children from the bottle by the age of one. Long-term health problems that can result from extended use of a bottle include bottle caries, poor feeding techniques, food refusal, iron deficiency anaemia, failure to thrive, speech problems and childhood obesity. In this survey, only 36% had stopped using the bottle by the recommended age of 12 months. By the ages of 18 months and 2 years, 11% and 7% respectively were still using a bottle.

## **7. What drinks did you give them in their bottle?**

It is recommended that only Formula milk or water be offered in a bottle. Because of its poor iron content, cows milk is not recommended as a main drink for children under one, after which age the bottle should be discarded. A large number of parents (73%) offered drinks other than milk or water in the bottle (they did not specify if it was formula or cow's milk). The alternatives were a mix of fruit juice and tea. 13% of parents gave their children tea. The sugar content and acidity of fruit juices can contribute to dental caries. It is recommended that fruit juices are well diluted, kept for mealtimes and offered in a cup. Tea is a stimulant and therefore has the potential to lead to hyperactivity. Tea also prevents iron absorption and may lead to iron deficiency anaemia, which is relatively common in toddlers. Tea should therefore be avoided.

## **8. When did your children start using a cup?**

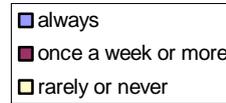
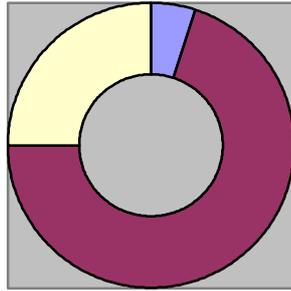
A cup should be introduced from the age of 4 to 6 months. The introduction of a cup at this early age prepares the infant to be weaned from the bottle at the age of 12 months. It also helps to prevent excessive fluid intake, which can result in a poor appetite. Only 22% had introduced a cup by the age of 6 months, 11% before six months and 11% at six months. 46% introduced the cup by 7- 12 months and a further 32% between 12 and 36 months.

## **11. How many times a day do you have a cooked meal?**

79% said they ate one cooked meal per day.  
21% " " more than one cooked meal per day.  
5% " " less than one cooked meal per day.

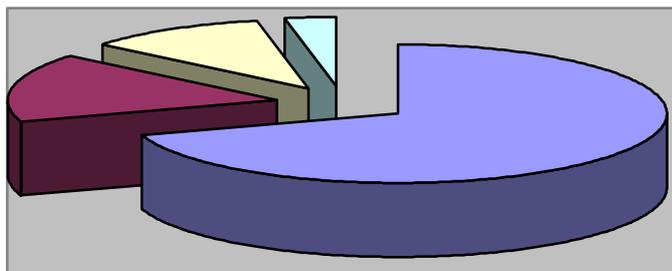
## **13. How often does your family eat ready prepared food, ie, frozen foods or lasagne?**

70% of respondents said their family ate ready prepared foods once a week or more. 5% said they always eat ready prepared foods and 25% said not often or never.



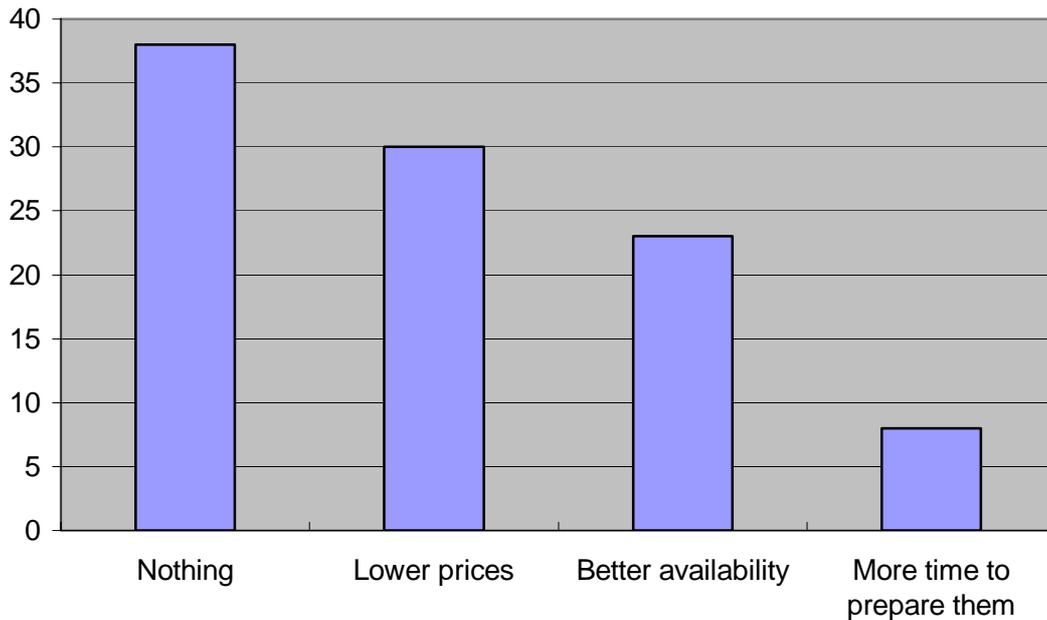
**15. How often do you eat fruit and vegetables?**

The recommendation is to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables everyday.



32% do not eat fruit and vegetables on a daily basis. Unfortunately, the 68% who eat fruit and vegetables daily, did not provide any information as to how portions they eat daily.

**16. What would encourage you to eat more fruit and vegetables?**

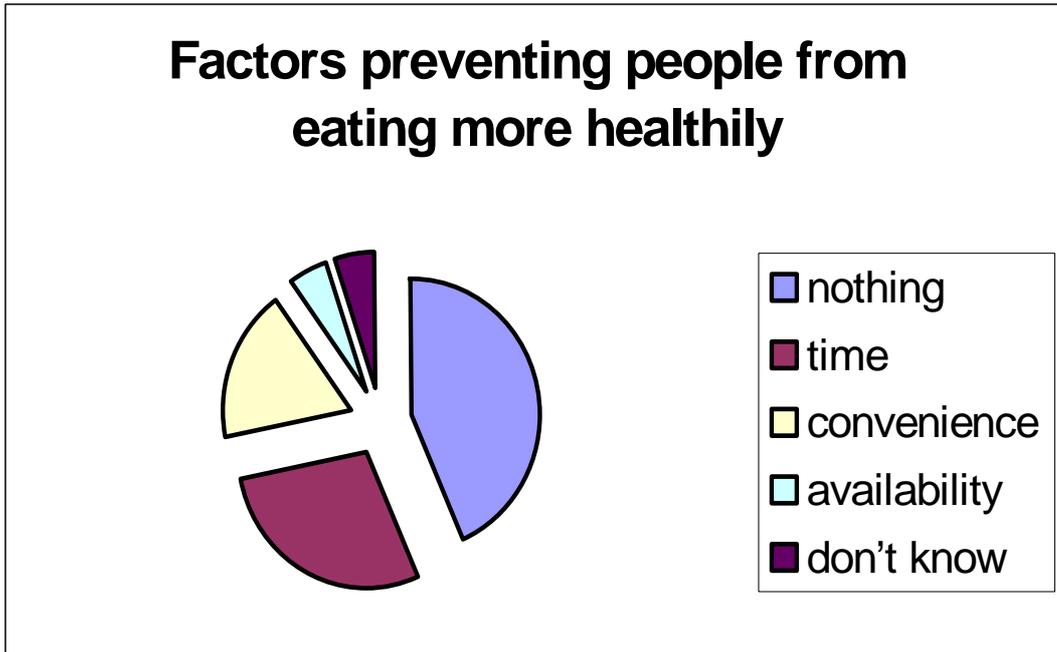


30% said lower cost, 23% said better availability and 8% said time. 38% of the respondents either felt they were already eating enough fruit and vegetables or were not interested in increasing their intake. Despite the fact that they feel that nothing would encourage them to eat more fruit and vegetables, it is known that repeated exposure to a message, can change attitudes. Feedback from some residents since the questionnaires had been distributed, revealed that they would like more ideas to cook vegetables in different ways.

### **18. Do you think you and your family eat healthily?**

Of the respondents 81% thought they were eating a healthy diet. This highlights the confusion about what healthy eating is. Indeed, 81% of the respondents think they eat a healthy diet, yet only 70% eat fruit and vegetables every day (unfortunately we did not obtain any data as to how many portions they eat). This confirms the finding from a research on “attitudes to food, nutrition and health” by Hull and Holderness Community Health NHS Trust and the Hull Business School, in 1999. More and better information on healthy eating need to be disseminated more widely in the community.

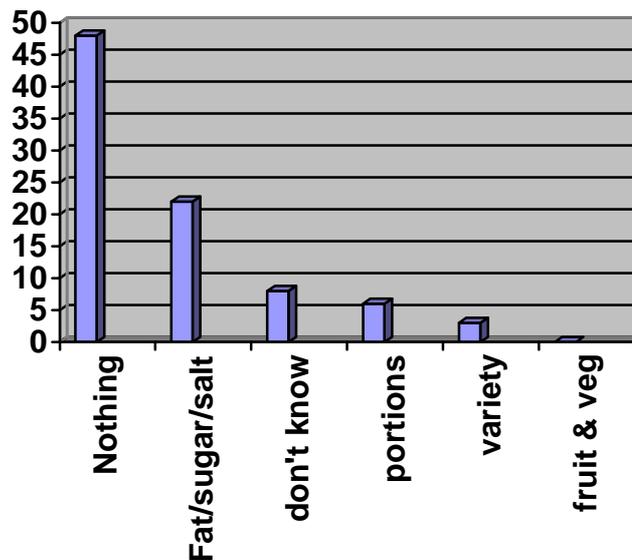
### 19. What prevents you eating more healthily?



35% felt that they were eating healthily and that therefore nothing was preventing them from eating a healthy diet. Time and convenience are the main factors that deter people from eating healthily. Promoting quick and easy meals might encourage people to improve their diet.

### 20. What could you change in your diet to make it healthier?

When asked what type of changes they could make to eat more healthily, the responses were:



49% felt that they were already eating a healthy diet and therefore did not need to make any changes. 8% did not know what changes they could make. 1/4 (22%) thought that they needed to cut down on sugary, fatty, salty foods, 6% that they need to eat smaller portions (confusion between healthy eating and dieting) and 3% that they need to eat a more varied diet. Interestingly none mentioned eating more fruit and vegetables. It looks as if the “Eat 5 a Day” message has not reach the residents of Marfleet and Preston road.

#### **24. Has anybody in your household had food poisoning in the last year?**

Only 5% reported having suffered from food poisoning in the last year. Interestingly, another 6% did not know if they had suffered from food poisoning.

#### **25. What support, services or activities might help you when trying to feed the family?**

The following suggestions were given.

- Advice
- A van selling Fruit and vegetable
- Cooking and food hygiene course
- Creche
- More local shops/choice
- Budgeting advice
- Don't know/none.

### **Results from the Food and Health Questionnaires**

#### **1. Where do you shop for food?**

60% of the respondents shop mainly in the larger supermarkets, outside of the estate – Asda and Morrisons. 22% shop at a mix of large and small local supermarkets and 17.5% shop mainly locally. 5% buy food mainly from the city center.

#### **2. Is there a local food shop within a 5-minute walk that you can use for shopping?**

35% do not have a local shop that is within 5 minutes walk.

### 3 How often do you go shopping?

52.5% shop for food on a weekly basis, 20% shop twice a week, while 10% shop more than twice a week and again 10% on a daily basis. 5% shopped every 2 weeks and 2.5% shopped once a month.

### 4 Do you shop on the same day every week?

67.5% of respondents shopped on the same day every week.

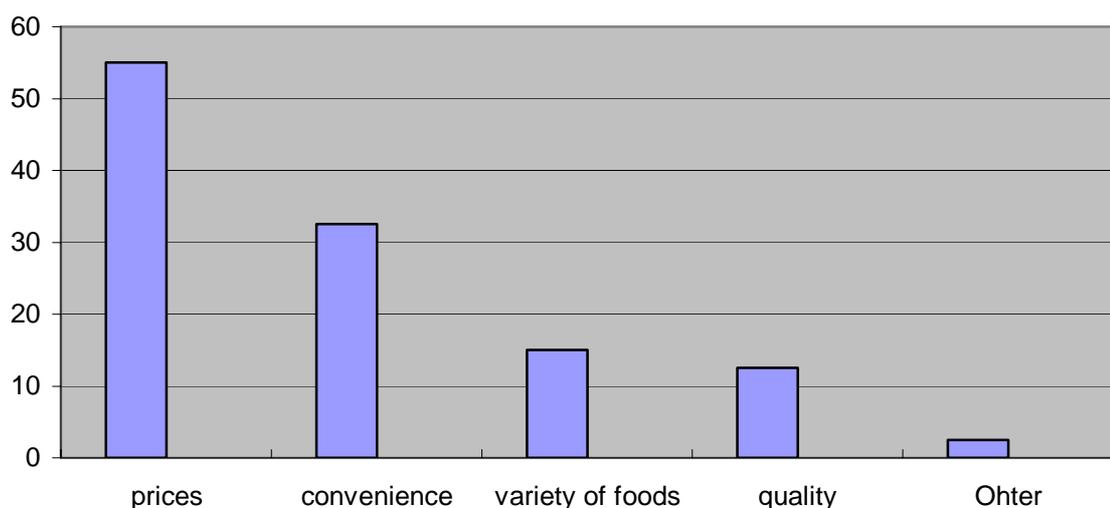
### 5 Do you share shopping trips to save on transport costs?

77% of respondents did not share costs; those that did – 22.5% - did so with their mothers.

### 6 Why did you decide to shop where you do?

Over half (55%) choose a shop according to prices - the shop is cheap. 58% of people who choose a shop according to prices, shop mainly in larger supermarkets and another 20% use a mixed of local and larger supermarket. For 32.5% of the respondents convenience is an important factor when choosing a shop (For 38% specified the location is convenient, ie it is nearer, and 23% the fact that everything is under one roof).

15% of respondents shop where they do because of the availability of a wider variety of goods. 12.5% cite quality and 2.5% because of service such as child care.

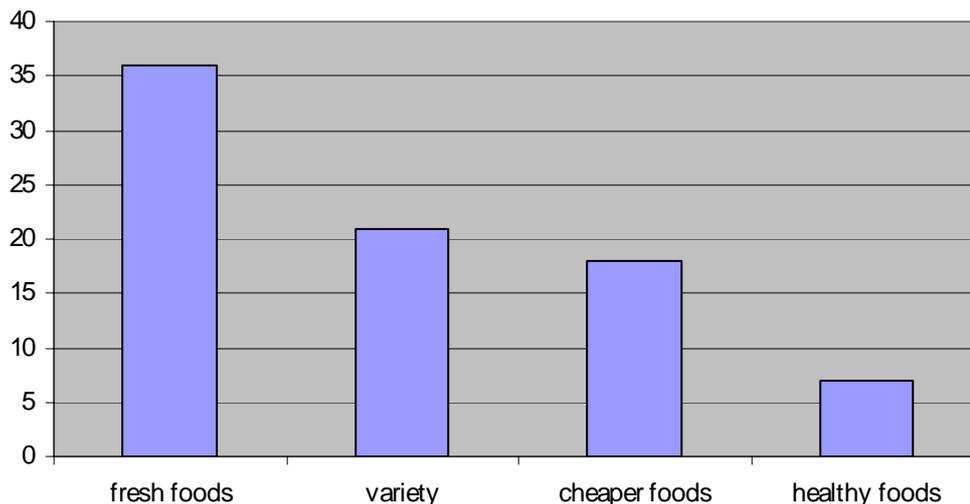


## 7 Do you get food from any other sources?

80% of respondents did not receive food from any other source. 5% did receive food sometimes, but did not specify where. 10% said they received food from their mothers. 5% get some of their food from either a green house or an allotment.

## 8 What foods would you like to see in your local shop?

Fresh food was cited by 36% (30% of them specified fruits and vegetables), while 21% said variety, 18% said cheaper foods and 7% said healthy/low fat foods. 7% did not know and 18% said none (all of those respondents shop mainly in the larger supermarkets). NR = 12



## 9 What would make you shop at your local shop more?

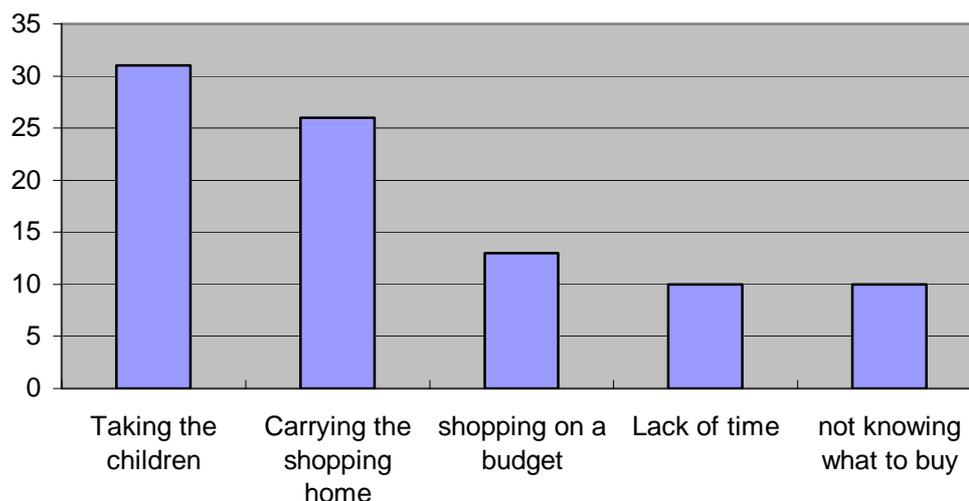
68% said if the food was cheaper. 21% said if there was more variety. Equal numbers 4% said if it had a better access, 4% better quality goods. NR = 12

## 10 What do you think of the quality and variety of the food in the local shop?

56% thought that the quality or variety of food was not good (31% specified that the main problem is the lack of variety. 22% are happy with the quality and range of food available and another 22% said it is OK. NR = 6

## 11 What do you find difficult about shopping?

31% said taking the children with them or handling the pram/pushchair around the shop. Another 26% said carrying the shopping back home is difficult, (30% specified that it was walking with bulky, heavy bags; another 20% said that they did not have enough space in the car with the children). 13% said shopping on a budget and 10% lack of time. 23% said nothing 10% said not knowing what to buy 2.5% lack of availability of the food they need (they shop locally). NR = 1



## 12 Do you own a freezer?

97.5% of respondents owned a freezer. 7.5% specified that they only have a small freezer.

## 13 Do you own a microwave?

97.5% of respondents owned a microwave.

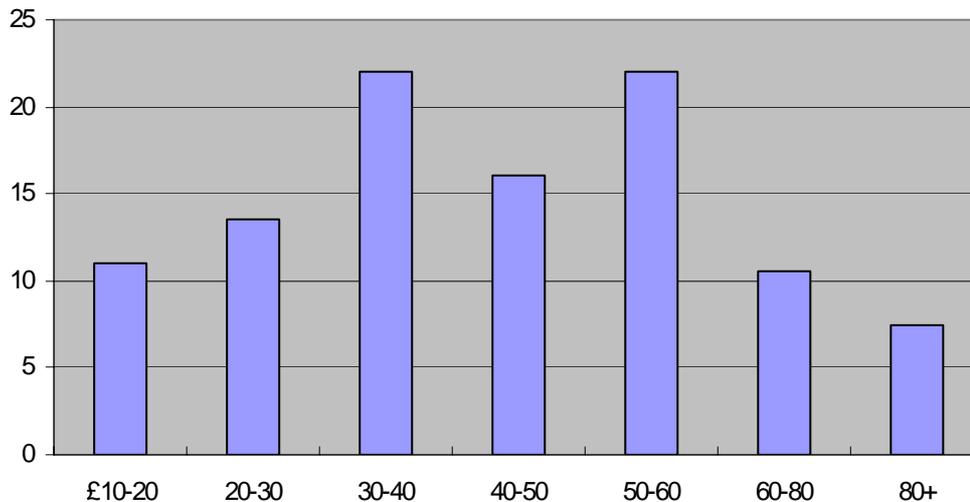
## 14 What is the most common way that you cook your food?

50.7% used a cooker. 12.8% used the microwave. Equally 2.5% steamed and 2.5% boiled. NR = 1

## 15 Do you make a shopping list and stick to it?

55% did not make or stick to a shopping list. 27.5% made and stuck to one and 17.5% said sometimes.

## 16 How much money does one weeks-shopping cost?



## 17 What influences the types of food you eat?

40% said taste, 21% said healthy balance/ diet, 18% said the children or family, 14% said price and 3.5%, convenience. NR 12

## 18 What are the types of food bought between main shopping trips?

55% said necessities such as bread, milk, sugar, and butter. Equally 10.5% said Veg and Fruit and anything. Again, equally 7.8% said takeaways and treats such as crisps, sweets. And 2.6% said biscuits.

## Conclusion

The first part of the survey has highlighted some areas where some work needs to be organised:

- To encourage parents to wean their children after 4 months.
- To offer appropriate drinks for toddlers.
- To introduce a cup and stop the bottle at an earlier age.

A few other issues have been identify by the food mapping and the second part of the survey:

- The lack of food outlets in the Preston road estate. This means that people who do not own a car have to walk further to do their food shopping, which has its own problems such as carrying the food back home.
- The poor availability of fresh foods such as fruit and vegetables has been noted both with the food mapping and the questionnaires. As a consequence, people tend to do their food shopping in the larger

supermarkets, when possible. Increasing the knowledge and practical skills around food and health is essential to help people change their eating habits. However, because of the lack of fresh foods of quality but at affordable price and the lack of variety of those foods, people might not be able to carry out those changes if they are unable to access the larger supermarkets.

Improving the availability of fresh foods such as fruit and vegetables locally, is a priority.

- A third of the people surveyed find that taking the children when food shopping is difficult. The main issues are around keeping the children entertained while shopping, going home with the children and the shopping and their influence on what goes in the shopping basket.

Some support such as creche facilities for the families is needed.

- Confusion about what is healthy eating has also become apparent. Indeed, 81% of the respondents think they eat a healthy diet, yet only 70% eat fruit and vegetables every day (unfortunately we did not obtain any data as to how many portions they eat). This confirms the finding from a research on “attitudes to food, nutrition and health” by Hull and Holderness Community Health NHS Trust and the Hull Business School, in 1999.

More and better information on healthy eating need to be disseminated in the community.

In considering repeating the survey the questions that are asked should serve to give answers that are easy to interpret and provide solid answers that recommendations can be based on. It appears that the respondents were confused by the questions or that they were not as clear as they originally seemed. Therefore a more structured questionnaire is required. It would be necessary to ask the ages of the children in the surveys. Also proposed some answers to the questions to help them think

### **References.**

1. Infant feeding 1995. London: The Stationery office 1997
2. Department of health (2000)