



Local Decision-Making Practices on Multi-Cultural Diets for British Muslim School Children (BMSC) and Implications for Social Justice

Speaker

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Research Team

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Background

- Limited understanding from school meal providers relating to the provision of religious diets, such as halal (Twiner et al., 2009).
- BMSC are often limited to consuming a vegetarian diet whilst at school despite this not being their chosen diet or preference (Evans, 2007).
- DfE School Food Standards



Research Aims

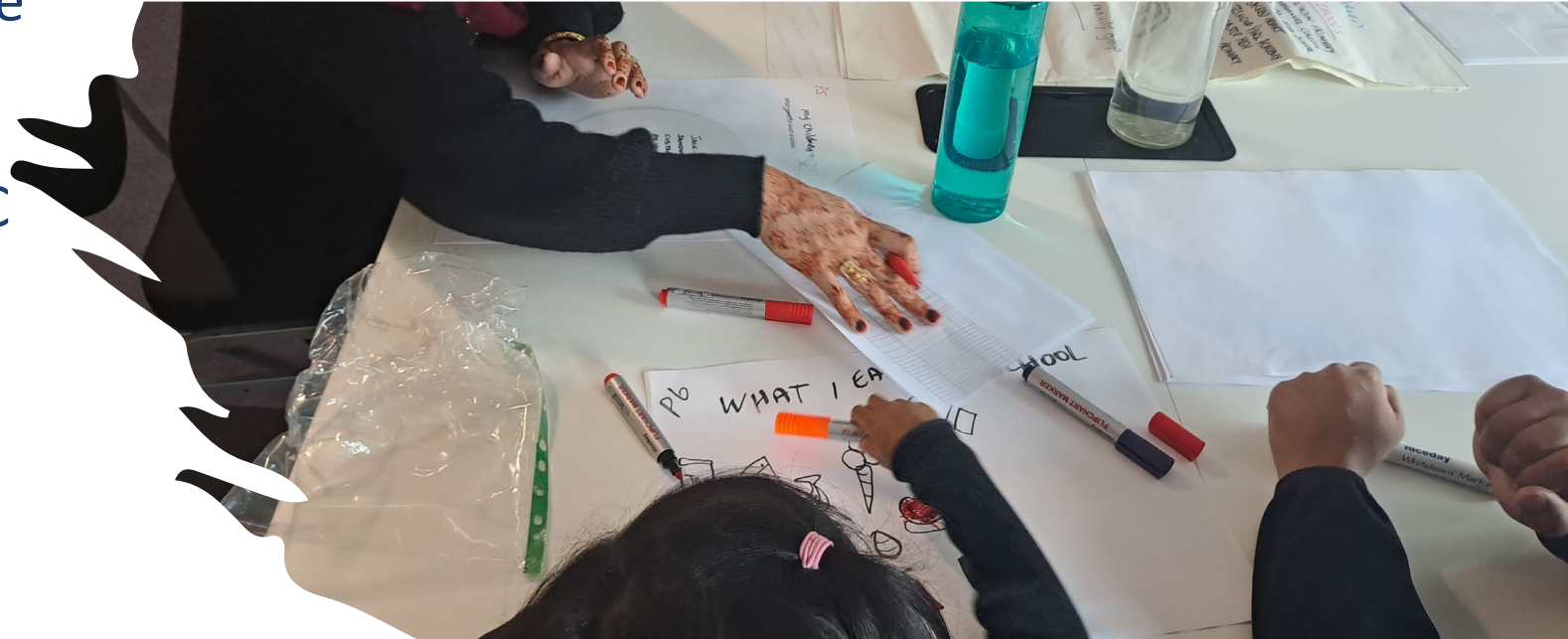
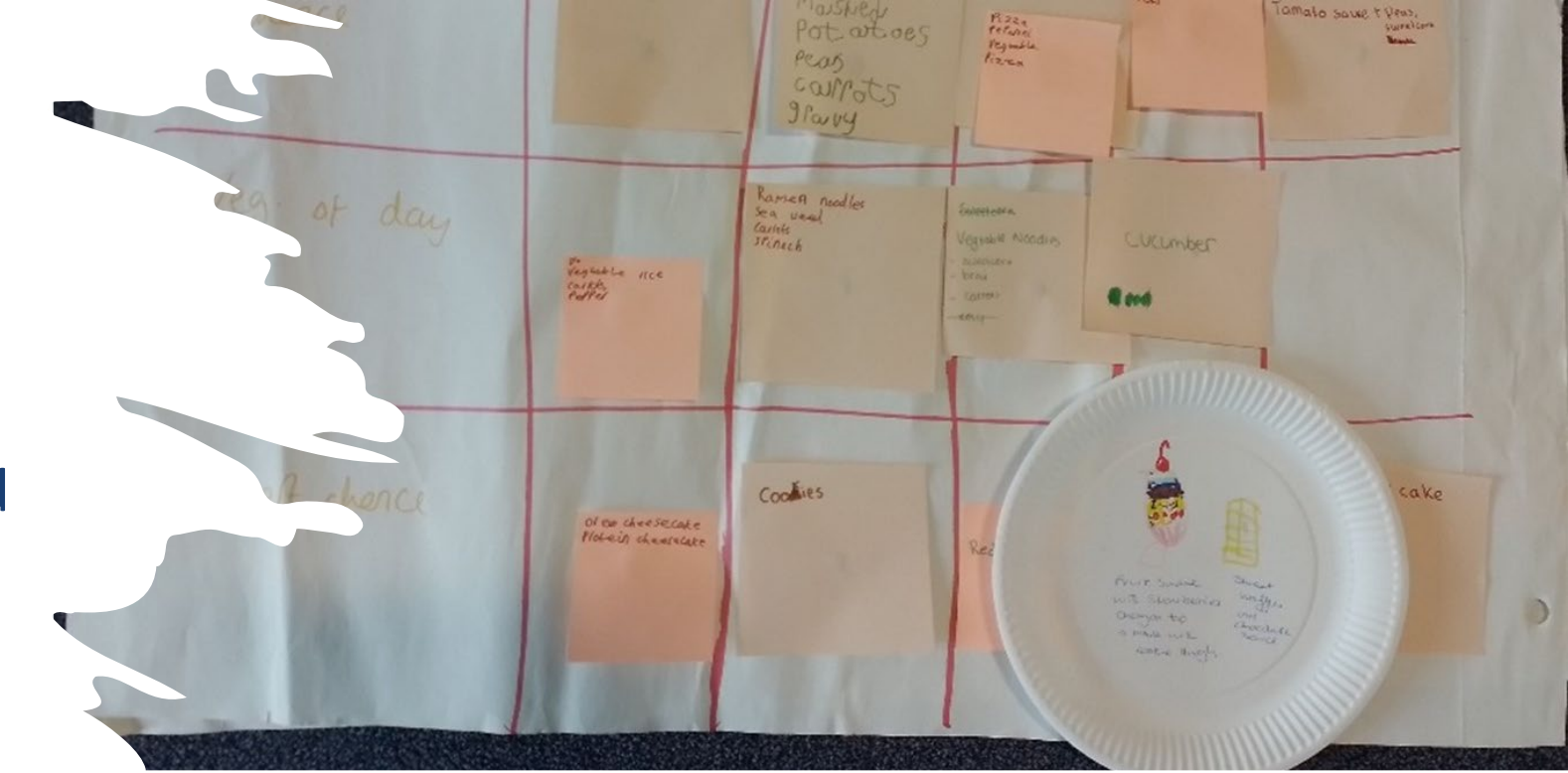
- The project aimed to explore food availability and choice for BMSC in a selection of schools in Newcastle-upon Tyne, to better understand the decision-making process in terms of equity of provision.

The objectives were:

1. To collect information on school food provision for BMSC.
2. To explore the perceptions of BMSC, parents and staff (school staff and school food caterers) about halal food provision in schools.
3. To share information and exchange knowledge on feasible cultural dietary options for BMSC in schools and allow progress to understand multicultural nutritional needs of BMSC.

Co-Production

- As part of the community engagement process, BMSC and parents engaged in developing and informing the study design.
- Information sharing and knowledge exchange sessions were educational and valuable for all stakeholders involved where BMSC and parents offered both recipes and three-week menus.



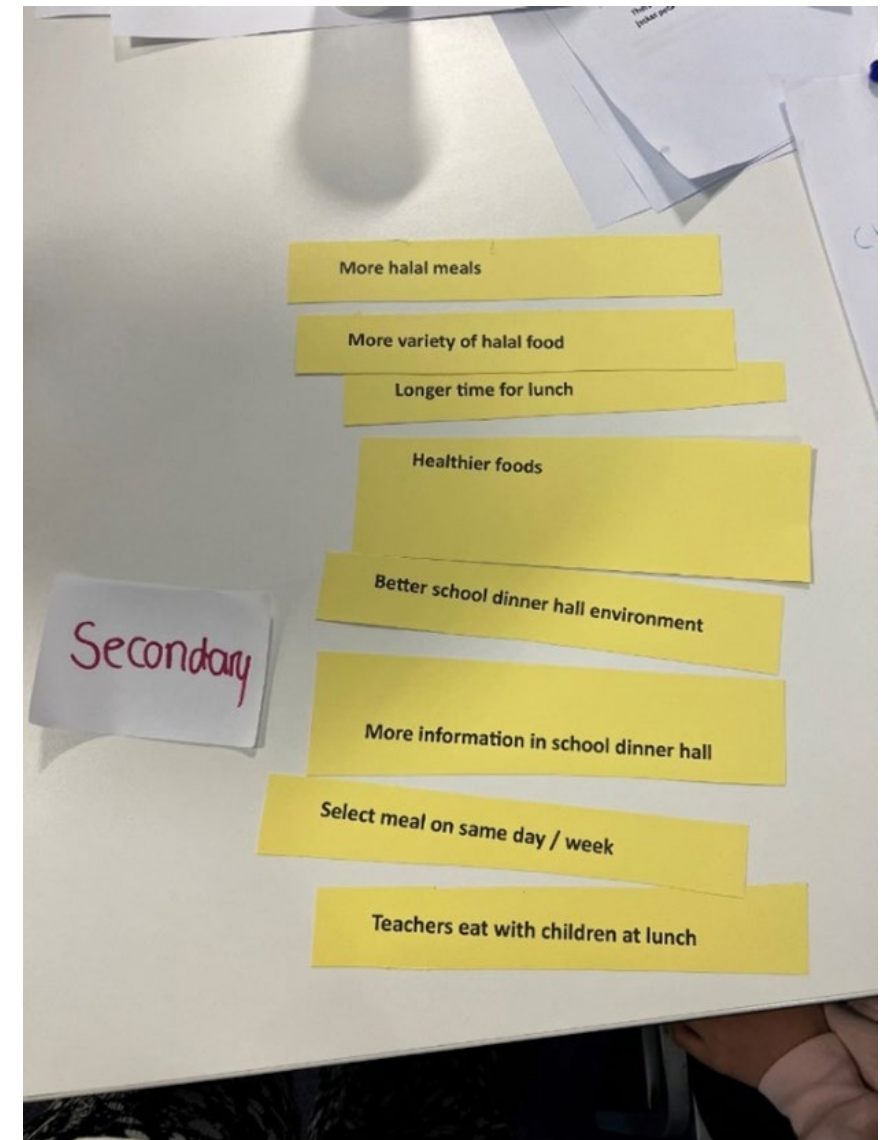
Qualitative Interviews

- The school selection process for research participation was determined by the percentage of BMSC in attendance at two-tier system schools (calculated as high; medium; or low).
- Six schools were selected for recruitment.
- There were 62 participants.
 - 39 BMSC
 - 15 Parents
 - 8 teaching and catering staff
- All participants were associated with primary and secondary schools in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.



Key Findings

- Schools catered for diverse pupil food requirements including BMSC dietary needs, however food choices were limited.
- The provision of English menus using halal meat was a good cultural option e.g., lasagne and shepherd's pie.
- It was perceived that there was a lack of choice and/or insufficient food.
- In some cases, it was reported that the BMSC would not eat at school and wait until they were home.

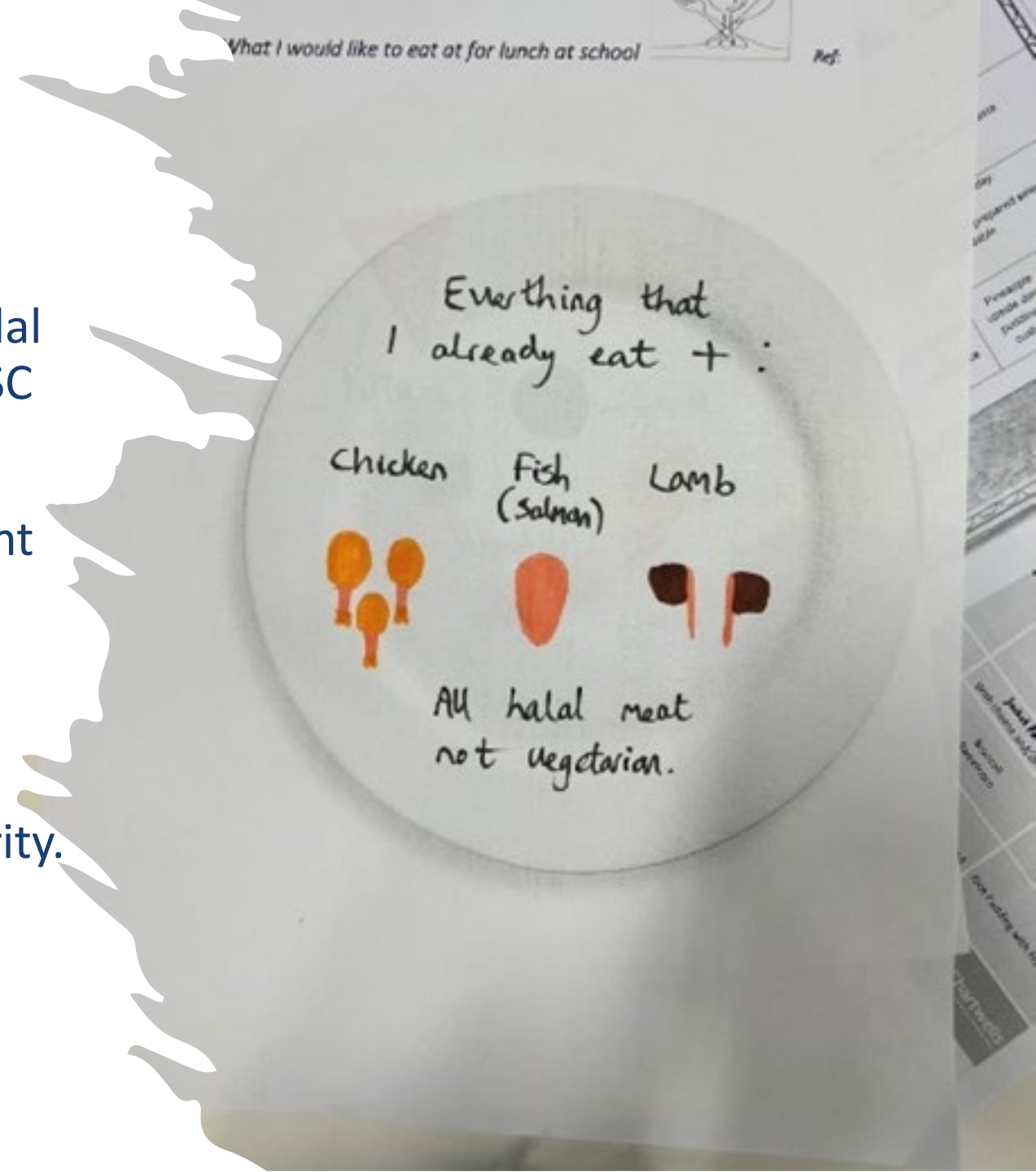


Key Findings

- Halal food signage or better ways for BMSC to choose their school meal at the point of catering staff serving in the school dining hall area was suggested to reduce pupils feeling intimidated in asking for halal options.
- BMSC and parents would like to be more involved in the decision-making process, although some were involved but the impact of this involvement is not clear.
- Staff - both catering and school staff - felt that cost implications contributed to their menu development process, but they do attempt to make food to meet the pupils' taste preferences, and there was a willingness to learn about the cultural food recipes.

Implications and Next Steps

- Caterers to explore the feasibility of using halal meat to increase variety and options for BMSC
- Improve signage for halal food
- Further work required on menu development to incorporate culturally appropriate diets, whilst adhering to SFS
- Introduce knowledge exchange sessions to enhance knowledge about cultural food diversity within schools and the local authority.
- Present findings at the APPG School Food



Any Questions?

