

# Exploring the impact of recipe-boxes on dietary quality and food agency: a pilot randomised controlled trial in households with school-aged children

## Participant Information Sheet

### Invitation

Thanks for your interest in our recipe-box study. We want to find out whether using recipe-boxes can help families prepare healthier meals at home.

We are researchers from SALIENT—a research programme funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, a government funding organisation. This study is led by Professor Martin White at the University of Cambridge, MRC Epidemiology Unit. You can read more about SALIENT here: <https://www.salientfoodtrials.uk>. We are partnering with **Gousto**, a recipe box company that delivers to people's homes – they will provide the recipe boxes for the research.

To help you decide whether to take part, here is some information about the study.

### What is the purpose of this study?

Our goal is to see if recipe-boxes can help families with children make healthier meals at home in a way that is convenient and enjoyable.

This is a “pilot” trial—a small study to test if our idea works well enough to try on a bigger scale in the future. Your feedback, through questionnaires, interviews and data on the meals you order, will help us to improve our plans.

### Why have I been chosen to take part?

You may have learned about the study on social media, or through a school, community organisation, or employer, one of Gousto's existing customers, or a friend.

We are looking for people who are the “main food provider” in their household to take part. This means someone who has at least half of the responsibility for buying or preparing food for their household.

We want to recruit households with one or more children who are still at school.

If you know someone who may wish to participate in our study, please share our flyers or videos with them—they may be eligible to participate.

## Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you. Even if you do start the study, you can withdraw anytime, without providing a reason. If you are interested in taking part but have questions, you can contact the study team using email ([recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk)) or phone number (01223 613420 - line open weekdays 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

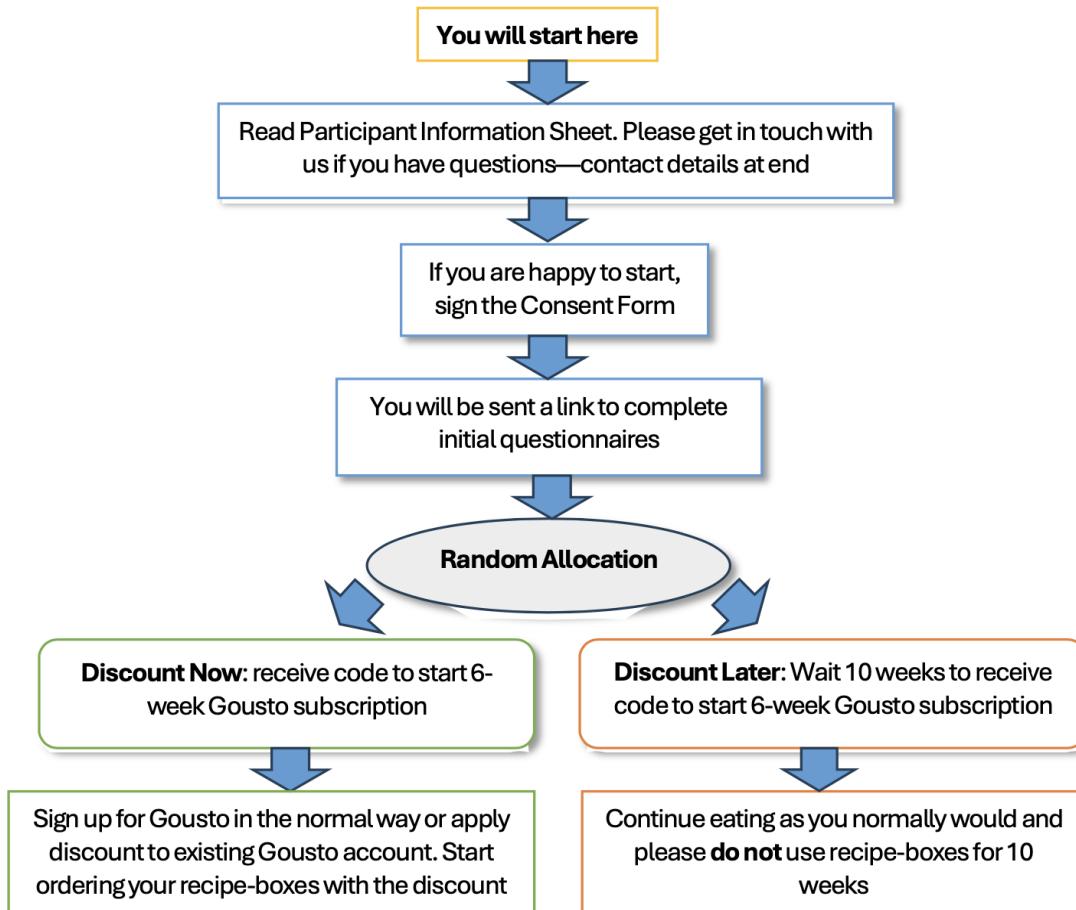
## What will participating in the study involve?

You will be taking part in a research study and, at the same time, you will be a customer of Gousto. We are offering a discount (see below). **However, you will still need to spend some money to buy the recipe-boxes.** Participants will sign up to be a Gousto customer in the usual way on their website. We will give participants a special link with a discount code embedded that means you will not pay full price once the discount code has been applied. If participants have a Gousto account that they last used more than 3 months ago, they may apply the discount code to their existing account.

We will assign you to one of two groups randomly – like flipping a coin. This allows us to compare the two groups and draw firm conclusions from the data we collect.

Some participants will be asked to sign up to take up a 6-week Gousto subscription straight away with their discount code (“**discount now group**”). Others will be asked to wait 10 weeks before ordering from Gousto and receiving the discount link if they wish (“**discount later group**”).

Here’s how it works:





## IMPORTANT DETAILS

- You can choose whichever recipes you wish each week from a menu of over 200
- We do not expect you to eat Gousto meals for your evening meal every day. The discount will mean you can order meals for the whole family on the days you want
- Each week, you can order 2 to 5 recipes (meals) with 2, 3, or 4 portions (one portion per person). If you order 5 portions per recipe, you can order a maximum of 3 recipes.
- You will receive one recipe-box per week from Gousto on the day you choose—the box will contain almost all ingredients to make your chosen recipes (meals), except a few basic ingredients (e.g. milk, butter, flour). These ingredients are listed with each recipe on Gousto's website.
- If you don't want a recipe-box one week, you can use the "skip" option in your Gousto account before the order deadline (3 days before delivery). If you don't skip, recipes will be delivered automatically, and you will be charged the discounted rate.
- If you skip a week, it still counts as one of the 6 weeks.

## This is how the discount works:

<p>Both will get the discounts, get them different. Note that delivery</p> <p><b>10 weeks of discount</b></p>	Week 1	<b>60% off</b>	<p><b>Main discount period</b></p>
	Week 2	<b>50% off</b>	
	Week 3	<b>50% off</b>	
	Week 4	<b>50% off</b>	
	Week 5	<b>50% off</b>	
	Week 6	<b>50% off</b>	
	Week 7	<b>20% off</b>	<p><b>Optional extra discount period</b> (For people who want to carry on with Gousto a bit longer)</p>
	Week 8	<b>20% off</b>	
	Week 9	<b>20% off</b>	
	Week 10	<b>20% off</b>	

(£3.99/week) is not included in the discount after the first week, so you will need to pay this after week 1.

## What are the recipes like? How much do they cost?

You can see Gousto's menu on their website [here](#). Below are examples of meals you will find on their website. Over the first 6 weeks, on average these would each cost £1.79 per portion including delivery if you ordered 4 recipes with 4 portions.



*South Indian-Style Chicken Cashew Curry (30 mins)*



*Plant-Based Mushroom Pad See Ew-Style Noodles Curry (25 mins)*



*Nutty Sweet Potato & Sugar Snap Curry (30 mins)*



*Comforting Cottage Pie (40 mins)*



*Fiery Chipotle Meat-Free Tacos with Coriander Slaw (10 mins)*



*Salmon With Spinach & Lemon Gnocchi (10 mins)*

To give you an idea what you will save per week, the average discount over the 6 weeks will mean that, including the delivery fee:

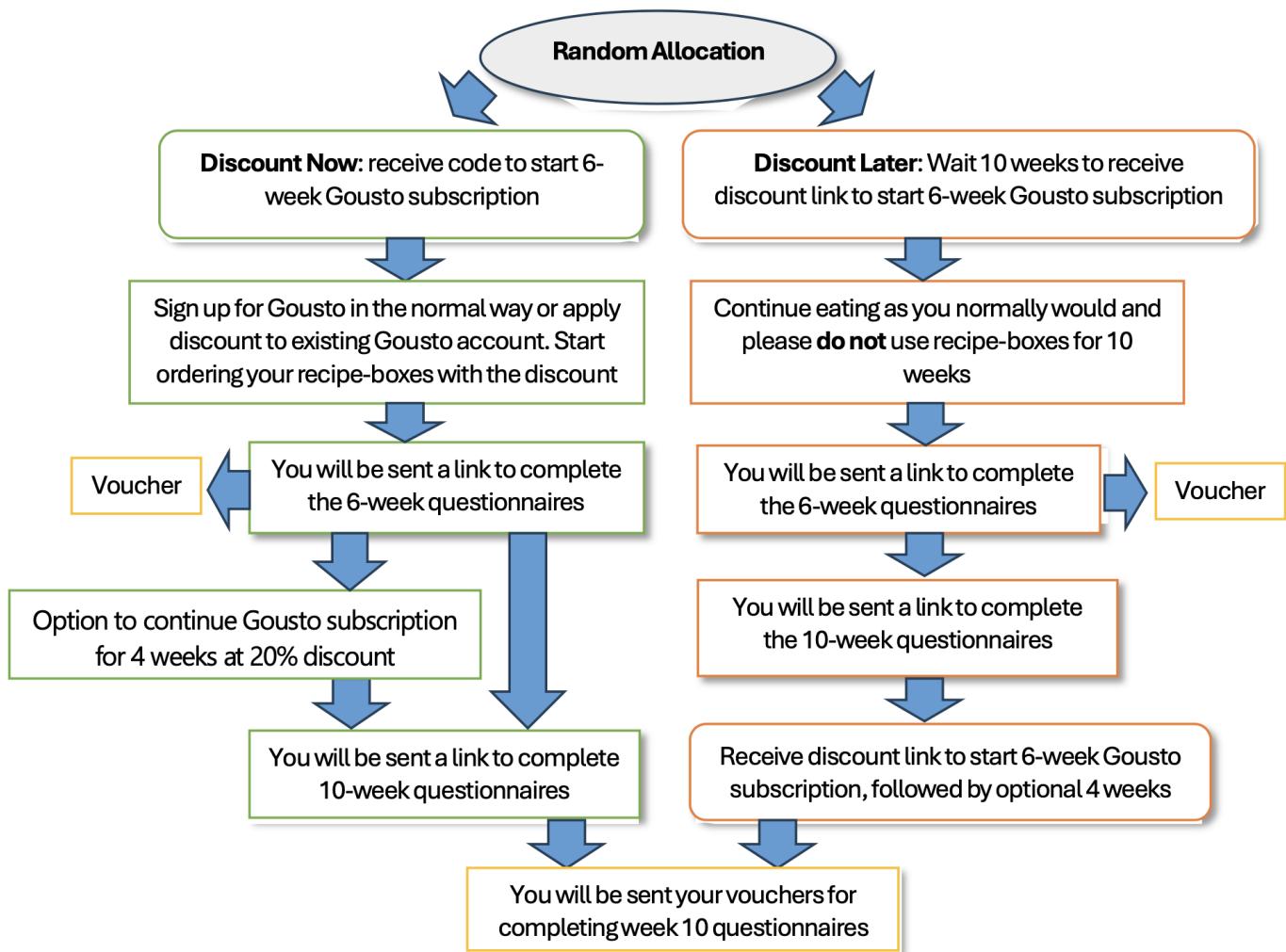
- 4 meals for a family of 4 will cost around £28.70 per week (£1.79 per portion)
- 4 meals for a family of 3 will cost around £27.49 per week (£2.29 per portion)
- 4 meals for a family of 2 will cost around £20.72 per week (£2.59 per portion)
- If you have a larger family, 3 meals for 5 people will cost around £30.75 per week (£2.05 per portion)

## What will happen when?

### How will we stay in touch and what will we ask?

If you take part in the study, all of the questionnaires will be online. We will share them via text and/or email. If, in addition, you agree to take part in an interview with one of the researchers, this will be online (via video call) or on the phone. We do not need you to travel anywhere.

**These are the main steps for taking part after you receive your group allocation:**



- You can call a member of our research team at any point in the study (see contact details below). A member of our research team may give you a brief call (3-5 minutes) at any point if we have any concerns.
- We will ask you to do three sets of questionnaires:
  - 1 questionnaire about you, plus 2 questionnaires about your diet at the start, before you are allocated to the “Discount Now” or “Discount Later” group.
  - 1 questionnaire about your experience in the trial, plus 2 questionnaires about your diet, 6 weeks after the study begins.
  - 1 questionnaire about your experience in the trial, plus 2 questionnaires about your diet, 10 weeks after the study begins.

The “**discount now**” group will receive these questionnaires while using their Gousto subscription. The “**discount later**” group will receive these questionnaires BEFORE they start using their optional Gousto subscription. But the two groups will receive the questionnaires at the same time points during the study (at 6 weeks and 10 weeks from entry to the study).

Whichever group you are allocated to, we will give you a £25 shopping voucher for each of the 3 sets of questionnaires you complete. **You will receive the voucher for the initial questionnaires only once you complete the questionnaires for week 6.** You may also be asked to take part in a telephone or video interview at around 7-9 weeks (only if you want to). In total, this means everyone who completes the study will receive at least £75. If you participate in an additional interview, you will receive an extra £25.

## What are the potential benefits of participating?

- A 6-week discounted Gousto recipe-box subscription, which is cheaper than the usual price.
- Other recipe-box users have said that recipe-boxes helped their families to eat healthier foods, made cooking easier and more enjoyable, and helped them to cook more confidently.
- Your contribution will help us understand whether recipe-boxes could help households eat healthier foods. Ultimately, it may help people live healthier lives and avoid developing diet-related diseases like diabetes or heart attacks.

## What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

- Taking part doesn’t mean that you will get free Gousto meals, only discounted ones.
- Filling in the questionnaires takes time (which is why we are giving vouchers to say thank you).
- Gousto provides allergen information at multiple points: on Gousto’s website during ordering, in the email confirming your order, within Gousto’s digital cookbook, and on the recipe cards in your box. All ingredients are clearly labelled with any allergens or may contain traces. Gousto also offers recipes suitable for dairy-free and gluten-free diets. While Gousto prioritises allergen management, its fulfilment centres handle 13 of the 14 recognised allergens, so trace amounts may be present. Allergen-free guarantees are not provided.
- Also, if you have a health condition, or take medication, that requires dietary restrictions, you should confirm that Gousto recipes are suitable for you with your health professionals.
- As for all Gousto customers, you will be exposed to the usual safety risks of cooking at home – we trust that you will take care in the kitchen.
- **If you no longer want to continue receiving recipe boxes, you will need to cancel your subscription with Gousto – we can’t do that for you.** Please also let us know that you are cancelling your subscription, or if you want to withdraw from the study.

## Ordering and sharing data with Gousto

We need to ask Gousto to share some of your ordering data about you with us – so that we can see what you are ordering. We need your permission to do that. We will be asking Gousto to tell us:

- The recipes you order (including any sides and premium recipes)
- How many portions you order
- Any other purchases made on the Gousto website (not discounted).
- How much you pay for each product
- Whether you have ordered, or what day you ordered, each week during the trial
- If you are in the “**discount later group**”, whether you used your discount code (after 10-weeks

We will NOT receive your financial details (e.g. credit card information).

To verify that the personal details you provide us match the details of the person ordering on Gousto's website, we will share your name, contact information, and home address with Gousto. You will also provide this information to Gousto when registering on their website. We will also share your consent form with Gousto for their records. We will NOT share any other personal data with Gousto.

### **Gousto Privacy Policy and Gousto Terms and Conditions**

What you have read in this information sheet, regarding how Gousto will receive your contact details and consent form from the researchers, and how Gousto will share with the researchers your ordering data, applies in addition to Gousto's terms and conditions and Gousto's privacy policy. You will need to agree to both of these to register as a Gousto customer and place an order for a recipe-box on Gousto's website. You continue to have all the rights given to you under those terms, including the right to withdraw your consent to the processing of your personal data. You can find more details on how to do this in Gousto's [privacy policy on the Gousto.co.uk website](#).

### **What will happen to information about me collected during the study?**

Your data will be stored confidentially by the MRC epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge and only used for research purposes. After the study, confidential records will be kept for up to 20 years and then destroyed. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited due to research requirements. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. Once the study is completed, we will publish results in research journals. Your identity and personal details will be kept confidential at all times.

This trial has been reviewed by an independent group of people, called the Research Ethics Committee, to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity. The study has been approved by the Cambridge School of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics committee. If you are unhappy and wish to complain formally, then please contact the University of Cambridge Clinical School Secretary (telephone: 01223 333543, email: [SchoolSec@medschl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:SchoolSec@medschl.cam.ac.uk)). If you wish to withdraw from the study, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. In this instance, please inform the study team by emailing [recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk) or by calling 01223 613420.

Please see the full Privacy Statement for the study: [epid.cam.ac.uk/images/recipe-box/appendix-4--rb-privacy\\_statement\\_v1.0\\_10.03.2025.pdf](https://epid.cam.ac.uk/images/recipe-box/appendix-4--rb-privacy_statement_v1.0_10.03.2025.pdf).

### **Contact for further information**

Email: [recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:recipebox.study@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk)

Phone: 01223 613420

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