From Plate to Guide: What, why and how for the eatwell model

Annexe 1: qualitative research phase 1

PHE externally commissioned two phases of qualitative research. This document provides the findings from the first phase.
Eatwell plate design development research

Qualitative research findings (phase one): May 2015

Define research & insight

PHE externally commissioned two phases of qualitative research in conjunction with Define Research and Insight. This document provides the findings from the first phase of research.
Overall, the research needs to inform the development of the eatwell plate so that it best meets consumer needs (for accessibility and understanding) while delivering nutritional guidance in line with updated government policy.

**Understanding**

How do consumers understand the current plate and alternative approaches in terms of content and messages?

**Design alternatives**

To what extent do design alternatives affect:

- overall appeal
- accessibility and understanding
- perceived relevance to own diet

**Further directions**

What else might be required to optimise the plate or support it to ensure that consumer take out is as intended?
Phase one research approach and sample: overview

152 individual depth interviews across four nations, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience criteria/splits per nation</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifestage</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Independent</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger family only</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger family + older family</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Independent</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Min 25 (27)</td>
<td>Min 8 (10)</td>
<td>Min 8 (8)</td>
<td>Min 8 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Min 45 (53)</td>
<td>Min 12 (14)</td>
<td>Min 12 (16)</td>
<td>Min 12 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet accessibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet-enabled</td>
<td>Min 60 (74)</td>
<td>Min 12 (22)</td>
<td>Min 12</td>
<td>Min 12 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not internet-enabled</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>As falls out</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEG</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Min 8 (10)</td>
<td>Min 8 (11)</td>
<td>Min 8 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2DE</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Min 12 (14)</td>
<td>Min 12 (13)</td>
<td>Min 12 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total by nation (overall n = 152)</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All fieldwork: 23 February to 30 March 2015
Overview findings
Overall, there was a high level of consistency across nations (and ethnicity) in terms of perceived accessibility and value

Across the whole sample, the plate (current and new designs) was recognised as having educational value to consumers and is generally seen as easy to use.

All understood the overall plate mechanic (current and new designs) relatively easily. Irrespective of whether seen as a plate or plate-styled pie-chart, it was generally understood to describe the overall proportions of different food types and drinks that comprise a healthy diet.

For most respondents, the overall content (current and new designs) highlighted some discrepancies with their own current diets, which indicates that it fulfils its role in providing a point of comparison in an accessible/assessable way.

However, the core plate content raises some questions about media/market-delivered information on healthy eating being at odds with Government guidance. This is likely to need resolving in supporting information.
There was also consistency in terms of requirements for overall content and approach of the new design.

No significant differences between nations or ethnicity in terms of:

- General themes on consumer needs
- Response to different approaches across the key information areas of:
  - water
  - dealing with the purple segment
  - labelling and additional messaging
  - other information support

Requirements from overall design style (range of core foods shown*, photographic vs drawn, raw vs cooked etc)

A split does exist within the audience in terms of ideals for design style and breadth of range of foods based on current engagement with healthy eating. However, when considering purpose and efficiency, views for design approach are consistent.
Initial recommendations based on best performing elements

However, further testing is required to understand if elements can work together, how they are best placed in relation to each other and refine detail.
While there was a split in terms of stylistic preference/appeal, drawn was felt to perform best. Photographic had some specific positive attributes:

Overall considered:
- more ‘naturalistic’
- more inspiring: real food, lots of choice, makes you think about eating/cooking
- Raw food works better overall
  - easier to recognise types
  - cooked loses appetite appeal because cuts become unclear

New photography considered significant improvement on current plate
New food cards ‘liked’ best
- stimulus at advantage vs full execution on plate?

I like the photographs because the food stands out better. It looks more appetizing because it looks like real food.
[Female, 66, C1, Older independent, Birmingham]
... but also some disadvantages

Harder to identify individual food items
Relies on existing knowledge
Can be off-putting when unclear (real food that I don’t recognise/eat = not me)
• need to really study in some cases
More packaging required?
As real foods, less effective as emblems of food types than drawn items
Specificity of example means it shows particular type rather than category (eg bagel rather than ‘bread’)
In light of this, audience more likely to feel that items are missing and therefore requirement for number of examples increases

Not that I think people are stupid but that pasta could be a pile of chips. On the drawn [version] the porridge says porridge, porridge, low fat yoghurt, cottage cheese wouldn’t be able to identify on new photography so well.

[Female, young family, 22, C2, Cardiff]
Drawn style worked better for the ‘less engaged’ but was also acknowledged by others as likely more effective for an educational tool due to clarity:

- Generally clearer than photography
  - Although some specific items need tweaking
- Labelling of items helps specifically
  - Very clear what item is when written
- Bright colours and colour contrast generally work well for stand out and initial visual appeal
- Those familiar with C4L made associations with style
  - Tends to be positive
- Raw items work better than cooked – easier to identify at a glance
- Need for variety is reduced as items work in more emblematic way (eg bread, leafy greens)

I would get the meaning straight away with the drawings one
[Female, Younger/Older Family, 48, C2, Glasgow]
Importantly, the criticisms of **drawn** approach related to style rather than usability (c.f. photography)

- Drawn style = ‘slightly childish’
- Especially for men
- Linked to:
  - primary colours (note: not necessarily an issue in own right/potentially compounded by combining with other factors below)
  - heavy black line
  - choice of font
- Less inspiring than photography when thinking about what to buy or cook

It looks more juvenile but it makes it clearer, you can identify with the text on individual items. Small logos and things are good for younger generation, on the drawn one you can see everything straight away where the lentils are, does no harm to label them all, better definition.

[Male, Older Independent, 71, BC1, Belfast]
Across the sample, there was a general preference for more (rather than fewer) food items

While a few did prefer the fewer items plate as ‘cleaner in design’, including more items met the needs of the respondents in different ways:

For the more engaged, it helped address their desire for both inspiration and choice

For the less engaged, who were more inclined to take the example foods as recommended products:
• it helped show/communicate *variety* and *lots to choose from*
• increased potential for them to identify *foods they like*

Recommendation at this stage is to show many foods rather than fewer foods
Cutlery adds to clarity of takeout of the overall visual as a plate but this gives an additional message that may not be ideal?

Knife and fork position circular device very clearly as a plate
- clarified further by title
- can contribute to engagement by giving ‘eating’ cues

However, when seen as a plate, it delivers a message that the proportions shown are relevant to every meal

Therefore, while overall proportions guidance is understood, there is additional implicit messaging to include all segments in every meal

Potentially better to just use title and other devices (see water and separated treats) to add engagement and exclude cutlery to encourage take out as plate-styled pie chart (rather than literal suggestion ‘for each meal’)?
Water message: Of four approaches tested, one was consistently preferred and felt to deliver the water message most clearly.

Recommendation is to develop single glass with optimised message. Size could be adjusted as required to design.
Two approaches for additional messaging explored
Delivers messages at two levels:
- **primary level** - aim for this ideal balance of these food groups every day
- **secondary level** - within each food group, aim to make healthier choices

Gives plate more educational value → user learns more than if not there

Qualifies/answers a few questions and raises a few others (e.g., portion size), encouraging engagement overall

On the whole, the wordier option (messaging on the outside of each segment) was felt to work best for stand alone communication than the shorter, integral option (leaner, lower, less) but some adjustments required by segment
Route is not impossible to use but would need supporting with clearly accessible body copy. Outer labels seem to provide a better option by drawing information together by segment at point of reading.
Purple segment: Of five approaches tested, one worked to deliver clearer and more consistent messaging.

Recommendation is to develop the approach which separates treats and ingredient foods – the purple segment is about high fat ingredients and high fat/sugar treats (food and drink) are set aside from the plate.

Overall preference to leave treat foods within plate

- Legitimises consumption

But separated treats seems to fit better with ‘healthy’ without denying consumption.
Summary: Initial recommendations based on best performing elements
Test placement of components to maximise take out of balanced overall diet and fluids message while retaining engagement
Test heading and qualifying line in combination with new plate design to check all works together
- develop and test any feasible alternatives (e.g. eatwell guide)

Develop and test:
- alternative segment labels (removed word ‘food(s)’ and ‘drink(s)’)
- tweaked segment messages
- new style of drawing and/or font to improve engagement and clarity

Test comprehension of food items taken forward for inclusion
Possibly develop and test:
- alternative way of displaying larger ‘treats’/‘eat in moderation’ category on side (in box?)
- additional box with alcohol guidelines?

Develop supporting copy addressing key questions (e.g. overall diet not by meal, coffee and tea)
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