

# **A participatory approach to improved infant nutrition and complimentary feeding practices in British Bangladeshi families: Lorna Benton**

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## **Background**

The UK Bangladeshi population is one of the fastest growing, yet socio-economically disadvantaged ethnic groups in the UK. Nutrition in infancy determines child development and adult health. Complimentary Feeding (CF) establishes early nutritional intake and self-regulatory behaviours. However, practices are complex and influenced by culture, environment and acculturation following migration. 12.5% of British-Bangladeshi children aged 4-5 years are obese, increasing to 23.7% by 10-11 years. In adulthood, South Asians are 2-4 more likely to develop type II diabetes in the UK.

## **Methods**

We are working in partnership with the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets to identify CF practices that affect the healthy nutrition of infant's aged 6 to 24 months. We conducted 5 systematic literature reviews of CF practices in South Asian communities. We are now conducting 10 Focus Group Discussions and 82 interviews with community members and professionals in Tower Hamlets under a socio-ecological framework. Results will inform the adaptation and acceptability of female facilitator-led women's groups with Participatory Learning and Action cycle (PLA), successful in Bangladeshi, Nepal and India.

## **Results**

A systematic review noted different CF practices between South Asian groups. Greater acculturation encouraged formula feeding in the UK; formula milk was seen as better for the child and sweetened food were preferred as the 'first food'. Energy dense rice-based dishes and hand feeding were common. Preliminary qualitative findings confirm these practices in the UK.

## **Conclusions**

We identified a need for more studies exploring CF practices in Bangladeshi communities and tailored advice for Bangladeshi families around diet and responsive feeding.

**Key messages:**

- Cultural practices influence infant nutrition, child development and long-term health
- Community mobilisation approaches help to inform culturally adapted support for healthy nutrition in minority populations