

Rana Fellowship Int Final

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My name is Dr. Ron Conway. And I work in the department of behavioural science and health. And my background is in nutrition. So I qualified as a nutritionist quite some time ago. And I've worked on various different projects. And at the moment, I work in the obesity Policy Research Unit. So we do lots of projects that are directly related to policies that are being discussed or you know, thought about at the moment. But we work directly with the Department of Health and Social Care. So most of the projects I'm actually working on, are to do with feeding babies. So some of them had to do with choices between formula feeding and breastfeeding right at the beginning of life. And then looking at when parents decide to start introducing solids to their babies, and all those different decisions that parents have to make about feeding their babies, whether it is food that they buy in the supermarket, or food they make at home, and those kinds of things. So particularly interested in the commercial determinants of health. And the way people use the labels on formula milk, when they're making decisions about feeding, you know, what type of milk feeding to you to do, and also how they use the labels on baby food, when they're making decisions about when to when to start feeding and choosing different choosing different foods, I work with the Department of Health and Social Care, and our results go to them. And then they generally get put into academic papers as well. But really, we were just wanted to, you know, I was interested really in just raising awareness about the research we're doing, and about the policy implications with other audiences. So with people who are key stakeholders, and having an impact on policy, and on the public as well, just so that other people know about what you know, what we're doing, and really, really the sort of making having having a wider reach for for our research and making sure it's not, you know, forgotten. The original project I really wanted to work on was some research we were doing looking at the labels on baby foods, and how they there was a mismatch between what pet parents were seeing on baby foods, and the government advice. So for example, the government advice is start feeding your baby solids when they're about six months old. Parents then look on baby foods on the shelf and it says this boat this food is suitable for babies from four months old. So there are a few things like that we were I really wanted to we were doing research, they're seeing if you change labels, how would that impact the way parents are fed. And just to get some, it's a backing and just raise awareness, really about the issues there. So that was the original project I was thinking about. But then just doing the fellowship and the various sessions we've had, I could see that really, we need to take a kind of a more opportunistic approach. And then so then the first place, the repeats of research we just had just recently came out this year was actually about infant formula. And shirt and showing that the labelling on input form there in the UK didn't align with the government guidelines about how infant formula should be messaged. So there's potential there for parents to be misled

about, what about about, you know, choosing formula feeding and about the type and choosing more expensive formulas and things thinking these are, these are somehow better when actually they're all basically the same. So when that when that we had that research out, I think get involved with the UCL policy press office who have not worked with beforehand. And then we got a lot of publicity for it really for that, for that read piece of research that went in the newspaper. And then it was tweeted quite a bit. So one of the people who retweeted it, when we were tweeting about it was Chris Van Tulika. And who's got a big a big following. It's kind of a celebrity doctor as well it works at at UCLH. And so we got quite a lot of the sent more than 70 tweets about that from quite big organisations as well. So that was really, really good. Then worked, also got involved with the infant feeding and inequalities. A PPG. And rose put me in contact with Vernon Hunt, who has been involved in lots of political lobbying, and we're just saying go along to these events and in person and so on. And so that's something I did and went along and actually spoke to the MP Alison Thewlis, who, Chet who chairs the APG, because she was the only person in the room as I walked in. So I think it was it really wasn't, you know, good to actually go along in person and get involved there and spoke to her about our research. And she wants me to go along when we got our next piece of research out and talk to the talk to the group there. We then came into some some challenges because of timing. So we haven't published that work yet. So then we were debating as a research group, whether we wanted to publicise that, or not. So the idea was to work with third sector organisations, who were already involved in political lobbying and getting people together to political around policy change. So the Food Foundation is someone who I've worked with vaguely before. And they were interested in our labelling work, and they're doing lots of lots of work around feeding young, young children, and especially making sure that they're not forgotten when we're talking about, about food and food labelling and food policy. Because often the very youngest consumers, you know, babies are forgotten in that on that agenda. So they have an annual report called The broken plate report, which always gets a lot of publicity. And I was keen to work with them, and they were interested in our research. But the timing for that wasn't working out well. But then there was some other research we've been doing looking at Ultra processed food intake. Among in, in a cohort of children called the Gemini cohort, which is that that cohort of children is housed within the within my department behavioural science and tells with Dr. Claire Llewellyn is the is the coordinator for that project. This worked with the Gemini cohort study. And just looking at children who were 21 months old, so only toddlers, not even two years old. And looking at the really high intake of ultra processed foods among that group, so they were getting 40 more than 40% of their calories from ultra processed foods. And then they're not even two years old yet. And in June 20% of children with highest intakes of ultra processed foods, they're getting more than double the maximum amount of free sugar that's recommended for older children at four year old children that get one and a half times more salt than is recommended for their age group. So that was really that was an interesting research that we found. And at the moment, there's a lot of interest in Ultra processed food. And this is something that the Food Foundation picked up on. And they're actually, they've actually just said last week that they're going to include this in their broken plate report. So that's that's worked out quite well. But it wasn't exactly what you know, the project was initially aiming to do. But it's all within the same general area of looking at the commercial determinants of health, and the amount of processed food that children very young children are eating. Yeah, I think that was something that I did learn about the bad just taking these opportunities. And that was something when I spoke to burn and Hunter was he was talking about building the network, letting people know you're there is really important, and letting them know what your views are on, you know, in my case on baby food labelling, formula feeding, and, you know, the policy changes that are needed. And even if that's not on anyone's agenda at the moment, if people know who you are, and you know what you're thinking, then when the time is right, then take that off, you know, people will come to you or you're ready

then to take those opportunities when they arise. And I think for the for the project that I'd really thought about with the, you know, the labelling and the big experiment we did, which was an online experiment, looking at the labelling of baby food, and what happens if you make certain changes, the timing for that, in terms of working with the Food Foundation was it wasn't wasn't right. But it seemed like, you know, ultra processed foods are really hot topic at the moment. They're in the newspapers, you know, literally at least weekly. And that when that opportunity arose, I thought, you know, we're just, you know, centigrate ideas, you're just, you know, to jump on board and, and take that opportunity really. So the Food Foundation, as well as doing this big annual report their broken plate report, they're actually doing a series of reports at the moment about the different life stages starting from pregnancy. And then that's the one they've already they've just had out already. Then they're doing one about milk feeding at the moment. So I spoke to them about that. And they're going to include some of our research in that in that one. And then their next one that they haven't started working on next is when babies actually move on to solids. And so hopefully the timing will be really good for that one. And our research should be published by then so we can happily share it.



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And hopefully that research though, about the actual labelling of baby food saying, you know, feed from four months or six months, and age of giving snacks and so on that we were working on, hopefully that will then go into that, that new reports which will be just about that life stage for the children. I think just just being brave and just reaching out to people, I think that because it's I think it's very easy to become involved with these organisations who are, you know, lobbying for change, and just to listen and use it in an academic way, you know, what they're working on and so on. But actually reaching out and building those relationships really to say, this is what we're doing, you know, I'm going back to them again, because obviously people are busy and things fall off people's to do lists and things and just following up and just, you know, saying this, we're still here and still interested