



Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for information: Government Updates on Nutrition  
Related Activities  
DH**

**Agenda Item: 6**

Please see attached paper for information.

## DH Update on Nutrition Initiatives

NB: Initiatives apply to England only unless otherwise stated

### Obesity

- 1) The Department organised a series of regional conferences, from February 2007, around the country to set out what action the Government is doing to achieve the PSA target and to support local areas to develop local strategies and action plans to tackle childhood obesity.
- 2) From April 2007, additional funding will also be provided to each Region to increase their capacity and capability to deliver the PSA target and work on obesity, physical activity and nutrition within their respective populations.
- 3) Work is also underway to establish a National Support Team for Obesity, which will be piloted from Summer 2007.

### National Child Measurement Programme

- 4) The programme to weigh and measure all reception year and year 6 pupils in English primary schools, is now referred to as the 'National Child Measurement Programme'.
- 5) We published a leaflet for parents, *Why your child's weight matters?*, in April 2007, which will raise parents' awareness of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP), to weigh and measure all primary school children in Reception and Year 6 in England, and also provides advice on making healthier choices with their diet and physical activity.
- 6) *The National Child Measurement Programme: Guidance for 2006–07* school year was published in April 2007. The guidance has been revised to improve clarity and address issues arising from last year's exercise. To view the guidance visit [www.dh.gov.uk/healthyliving](http://www.dh.gov.uk/healthyliving).
- 7) A cross-Government ministerial letter (DH, DfES) was sent to primary school head teachers, in April 2007, highlighting the importance of the NCMP.
- 8) An online BMI calculator is being developed that will allow parents to calculate their child's BMI and will provide appropriate information to help them to interpret the result and act on it if necessary. This online tool will be available at [www.dh.gov.uk/healthyliving](http://www.dh.gov.uk/healthyliving).

### Publications

- 9) The second edition of Obesity bulletin will be published in May/June 2007.
- 10) Publication of Foresight's report, *Tackling Obesity: Future Challenges*. The report is a compendium of the science and research of obesity, from all the work the Office of Science and Innovation's Foresight Obesity Project. It contains reviews

and recommendations for a long-term vision of how we can deliver a sustainable response to obesity in the UK over the next 40 years. The short science reviews commissioned by the Foresight Obesity Project are available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/toc/obr/8/s1>

- 11) The National Heart Forum updated its toolkit "*Lightening the Load: tackling overweight and obesity*", for developing local strategies to tackle overweight and obesity in children and adults, in March 2007, in association with the Faculty of Public Health. The toolkit is available to order from DH Publications Orderline ([dh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dh@prolog.uk.com) or 08701 555 455) and can be downloaded from ([http://www.heartforum.org.uk/Publications\\_NHFreports\\_Overweightandobesitytool.aspx](http://www.heartforum.org.uk/Publications_NHFreports_Overweightandobesitytool.aspx))

### **Food Promotion to Children**

- 12) In February, Ofcom announced restrictions to ensure no high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) products are **broadcast** advertised to pre-school children; programmes specifically made for children; or programmes of particular appeal to children up to 16 years old. Ofcom has used the Food Standards Agency's nutrient profiling model as a means of distinguishing HFSS foods, to which restrictions apply, and those products that can be freely advertised on television.
- 13) The Committee on Advertising Practice (CAP) has also announced content restrictions on food advertising aimed at children under 16 in **non-broadcast** media, with stricter rules for the content of adverts aimed at pre and primary school children. These new restrictions include an exemption for advertisements and promotions for fresh fruit and vegetables. CAP has not applied the nutrient profiling model, which was developed specifically for Ofcom and TV advertising.
- 14) The Government has stated a preference for consistent rules across all media. Although the basis of differentiation in non-broadcast rules diverges from the model used in broadcast restrictions, we expect industry to continue to respond to consumer concerns about the way food and drink is advertised to children and embrace both the letter and the spirit of the new rules. Through monitoring the advertising landscape, we should be able to see what effect these restrictions are having on changing the nature and balance of food and drink advertising to children in practice.
- 15) The Government is monitoring closely the impact of new restrictions in both broadcast and non-broadcast media. The Department of Health will publish an interim review in autumn 2007 and working with Ofcom, will undertake a more comprehensive review in 2008 to establish whether the new rules are in practice delivering the commitment to change the nature and balance of food and drink advertising to children. On that basis, the Government will decide whether future action, through new (for non-broadcast) or existing legislation, is required.

### **Healthy Start**

- 16) Healthy Start was implemented across Great Britain and Northern Ireland in November 2006 replacing the means-tested elements of the Welfare Food Scheme.

- 17) A multifaceted approach for dissemination of information to health professionals for phase 2 was taken, which included information packs for health care professionals, articles in professional journals, CPD training packages as well as a national launch conference in London.
- 18) Approximately 28,000 individual retail outlets across Great Britain are registered to accept Healthy Start vouchers to date.
- 19) New Healthy Start Children's Vitamin Drops have been available for Trusts to order and provide free to children getting Healthy Start vouchers since January 2007. An encouraging number of packs have been purchased by Trusts from NHS Supply Chain and further work is planned to promote uptake directly to beneficiaries through a flyer included with their Healthy Start vouchers at some point in the next few months.
- 20) Healthy Start Women's Vitamins became available in March 2007 and are for pregnant women and women with a child under 1 year old getting Healthy Start vouchers.
- 21) A longer term evaluation project to assess the impact of Healthy Start over time is being scoped. In the mean time, a short qualitative study has recently been done to look at why small number of families who are eligible for the scheme and have been directly invited to apply for it have not done so. Interim information on the study suggests there are no identifiable clear reasons for non-application that need to be addressed. However, when the final report is received we will explore whether there is anything more we could consider doing to improve communication about the scheme, and about the benefits it offers.

### **Infant Feeding**

- 22) National Breastfeeding awareness week was held from 13-19 May. This year DH provided a range of materials such as posters, leaflets, weight conversion chart, obstetric wheel, and post-its to support the week. For the first time, the Department has launched a TV and radio 'Filler' advertisement during the NBAW week, which will continue throughout the year.
- 23) In collaboration with UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative, the Department has published a new leaflet "Off to the best start" to assist health professionals in implementing best practices and informing parents about breastfeeding.
- 24) The Department has published results of the Infant Feeding Survey 2005 in mid-May. The results showed that 78% of mother's initiate breastfeeding in England. However, there are striking differences in breastfeeding rates, related to educational levels, geographical location and age. In the UK 89% of mothers classified to higher occupations start to breastfeed compared with only 67% of mothers who have never worked.
- 25) A review of the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations (1995) is continuing alongside the work being undertaken by Department of Health and

FSA to press for further restrictions in the EU directive on the advertising of formula milk.

### **Healthy Schools (Joint DH/DFES)**

#### ***New Food and Drink Standards***

26) New standards have two strands, 'food based' and 'nutrient based'. They are based on the recommendations by the School Meals Review Panel and School Food Trust, which advise restrictions as a means to encourage healthier eating.

27) From this September food-based standards will ensure that:

- school lunches are free from low quality meat products, fizzy drinks, crisps and chocolate or other confectionery;
- high quality meat, poultry or oily fish is available on a regular basis;
- pupils are served a minimum of two portions of fruit and vegetables with every meal; and
- any deep-fried items are restricted to no more than two portions in a week.

28) Schools will be required to raise the bar further with even more stringent nutrient-based standards-stipulating the essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals, for school meals-introduced in primary schools by September 2008, and secondary schools by September 2009.

29) The new 'food-based' standards will ban economy burgers from the school lunch table; deep fried products such as chips will be limited to twice a week; and chocolate, crisps and sweetened fizzy drinks will no longer be available as part of school lunches.

30) On 19 May, DfES also announced similar 'food-based' standards for all other school food outlets, e.g. tuck and vending. These standards will be introduced from September 2006, although Regulations will not come into force until September 2007. Government's expectations are that schools will work towards these standards from September 2006. The SFT will work with schools that have moved or are moving to providing healthier food in vending machines, tuck shops and with industry players, to identify effective ways of making changes to provision and educating pupils about making healthier choices

31) The Department is also taking forward a number of complementary initiatives all aimed at improving school meal provision and toughening up minimum school meal standards

32) A dedicated 'toolkit' to guide parents in the right direction has been published, which complements the 'Food in Schools' 'toolkit'. This will help parents make a start in working with their schools to change the food on offer. The primary purpose of the toolkit is to inform parents so that they are able to engage in local dialogue – talking to heads and governors – and take an active part in improving menus and developing healthy eating policies.

33) The development of new vocational qualifications for school caterers which will

create many more training opportunities. A Vocational Related Qualification (VRQ) has already been accredited by the QCA and is available through a number of examining bodies. The qualification will help schools promote healthy eating and ensure that catering staff are seen as integral to the whole-school team with the same high status as teachers and classroom assistants. We are reviewing and refining the VRQ to ensure that it meets the new standards.

- 34) We are aware that there are already well over a hundred qualifications related to food, nutrition and catering which are funded by the LSC. We are working with food and education experts to ascertain which of these qualifications, or units from them, are relevant to school caterers. Where we find there is a need for a specific skill, which does not form part of one of these qualifications, we will work with our external partners to develop a unit or qualification to cover that area.
- 35) We are looking at including such units in the Training and Development Agency for Schools' nationally accredited vocational qualification for school support staff. This will enable progression from Level 1 to Levels 2 and 3 and will also help school caterers to feel that they are part of the whole school team.
- 36) Guidance to help schools and local education authorities draw up catering contracts that source healthy school meals' services and healthy food in vending machines, tuck shops and breakfast clubs. This guidance will help those schools locked into long term contracts to vary those contracts.
- 37) From September 2005, as part of their routine evaluation of school performance, Ofsted make an assessment of school food. They comment on the school's success in promoting healthier eating and drinking and will report on any issues which arise out of the self assessment or as a result of their inspection visit.

### **5 A DAY Programme**

- 38) The "Top Tips for Top Mums" campaign was launched on 15 March. The aim of the campaign is to encourage families to think more about how they can improve their diet and increase fruit and vegetable consumption. "Top Tips for Top Mums" aims to help families overcome the barriers they face when getting their children to eat more fruit and vegetable – tackling issues such as cost, fussy eaters, limited time / cooking skills, and a lack of structured meal occasions, by recruiting parents to share their top fruit and vegetable tips with other families.

### **Physical Activity**

- 39) DH is jointly funding the National Step-O-Meter Programme along with Natural England. The programme is training health professionals across the country in motivational interviewing and the use of pedometers as a motivational tool, and is giving professionals pedometers to use with their patients. The national rollout was completed in April 2007. An evaluation team will assess the effectiveness of the programme at increasing patients' levels of physical activity.
- 40) The National School Pedometer Programme, launched at the end of January 2007, will see 250 schools in deprived areas be given around 40,000 pedometers, to

encourage children to become more active. In addition, all schools will have access to online resources that can be used inside and outside the classroom.

- 41) DH has commissioned a Schools Physical Activity Guide, part of a wider Healthy Schools toolkit, a user-friendly resource that guides schools toward meeting the criteria of the national healthy school physical activity theme and helps children achieve the 1 hour a day physical activity recommendation. The resource will be launched in May 2007, and training for relevant professionals (teachers, sports coordinators, healthy schools coordinators) by the Healthy Schools Programme is underway.