



Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for Information: Update on Activities
related to Maternal and Child
Nutrition**

Agenda Item: 5

Please see attached paper for information.

Update on Activities related to Maternal and Child Nutrition

Department of Health

Healthy Start

Reform of the Welfare Food Scheme (UK wide)

- Regulations for Phase 1 of Healthy Start came into effect on 28 November 2005, launching Healthy Start vouchers in Devon and Cornwall. Welfare Food Scheme milk tokens continue to be available elsewhere at the moment.
- Nearly 1000 individual retail outlets are participating in Healthy Start in Devon and Cornwall, achieving our target of doubling the number of suppliers previously participating in the Welfare Food Scheme.
- Training was provided to selected health professionals in Devon and Cornwall in advance of the launch of Phase 1 and is being independently evaluated.
- A rapid evaluation of the practical impact of Phase 1 as a whole is also underway, looking at impacts from the perspectives of beneficiaries, health professionals and retailers. A draft report covering both evaluations should be provided to the Department at the end of May 2006.
- In the meantime, preparations are being made for Phase 2 of Healthy Start which – subject to the evaluation findings – will roll the vouchers out across Great Britain in autumn 2006. We are expecting Northern Ireland to introduce Healthy Start to the same timetable though this has yet to be confirmed.
- We are aiming to invite Ministers to make regulations implementing Phase 2 before the summer recess and the process of recruiting retailers for national rollout can then begin.
- We anticipate at this stage that these regulations will contain broadly similar provisions to those for Phase 1, though the upper age limit for children to get vouchers is due to be reduced to the 4th birthday (as already been announced). The regulations are unlikely to include revised provisions for reimbursing daycare providers for milk given to children in their care – any changes to this aspect of the Welfare Food Scheme will be made separately.
- We are aiming to make SSL vitamin drops for children – rebranded as Healthy Start drops – available by the end of the year. We are also planning to invite tenders to produce an unlicensed Healthy Start vitamin product for pregnant and breastfeeding women, including vitamins C, D and folic acid.

Infant Feeding

- To support Healthy Start a communications and training programme for health professionals has been developed.
- A review of the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations (1995) is continuing alongside the work being undertaken by DoH and FSA to press for further restrictions in the EU directive on the advertising of formula milk.
- Following publication of European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) recommendations, guidance for parents on bottle-feeding through publications such as Birth to five and the Bottle feeding leaflet have been updated.

- DH and FSA are still considering developing guidance for health professionals on making up infant formula feeds in hospital.
- National Breastfeeding awareness week will be held from 14-20th May 2006. This year DH is not supplying centrally produced materials to support the week. However, PR activity will be undertaken by DH prior to and during the week.

Update from the Welsh Assembly

Action on Food & Fitness for Children and Young People

- The action plan takes forward the food and well-being and physical activity agendas for children and young people. It was issued for consultation between July and October 2005. Key dates for implementation over the next 5 years are given throughout the document. For further information:
<http://www.healthschool.org.uk/nutrition/pdfs/food-fitness-consultation-e.pdf>
- The action plan has been amended to take on board the responses to the consultation.
- A conference is being held at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff on the 29th June 2006 to launch the post consultation action plan on Food and Fitness for Children and Young People.
- In order to address the second action point a Food in Schools Working Group has been established.

Food In Schools Group

- A new group was set up in September 2005 to advise the Welsh Assembly Government on how to improve the quality of school meals. The Food in Schools Working Group brings together dietitians, head teachers, caterers and public health experts along with representatives from local authorities and the Food Standards Agency. Its main role is to advise the Assembly Government on the extent to which more stringent nutritional standards are introduced.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has a 'whole school' approach to providing school meals. The Food in Schools Working Group will help take forward the Assembly Government's intentions to:
 - Undertake a fact finding exercise to gather information on current practice in local authorities across Wales (by November 2005);
 - Fund a study jointly with the Food Standards Agency to examine what food choices pupils actually make and why;
 - Undertake a review of the Nutritional Standards for School Lunches (by April 2006);
 - Produce a Food in Schools Action Plan and identify funding implications (post April 2006).
- The group's report 'Appetite for Life' will be published for consultation at the conference on June 29th.

The Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative

- The incremental introduction of the Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative started on a pilot basis in Communities First areas of 9 local authorities in September 2004. Primary schools in Communities First areas in all remaining

local authority areas will be given the opportunity to participate in the second phase of this initiative from September 2005. New schools are being added each term until by January 2007, the policy will be rolled out to all maintained primary schools that want to participate. This initiative is intended to help improve the health and concentration of pupils, to assist in the raising of standards of learning and attainment. It will involve parents but is not intended to replace breakfast already provided. It will allow all those, that, for whatever reason, have not had breakfast, to have one in school. An evaluation has been commissioned. Draft guidance has been produced for the pilot:

<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/breakfast/guidance-e.htm>

- A contract for the evaluation of the pilot has been awarded to Cardiff Institute of Society, Health and Ethics, Cardiff University to undertake a study of the preliminary phase of the Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative. Baseline data collection has been completed and follow-up measurements will be taken 4 months and 12 months later. A preliminary report on the work carried out with the first phase schools has been received. Positive feedback was received on issues such as: flexibility within the pilot phase to experiment; provision of detailed guidelines and the approach of officials to consultation; support received at a national and a local level; schools are attracting at least some of the pupils that are really in need; free breakfast is seen to support other school based health promoting activities; and staff perceive benefits for children attending the free breakfast scheme, such as improved behaviour, ability to concentrate and healthier diet. Concerns were expressed by some individuals in schools and LEAs on funding and workload.

<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/breakfast/evaluation-e.htm>

Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes

- The Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes (WNHSS) is a network of local schemes, which are partnerships between health and education services. Co-ordinators help schools to identify what they need to do to become healthier and help them to implement relevant actions. Schools involved in the scheme look at a whole range of health issues including just food and health and physical activity. It is important that schools also address mental health issues, which are interlinked with actions on nutrition and physical activity.
- There are local healthy school schemes in every area of Wales, with all schemes accredited as part of WNHSS. Over 1100 schools are actively involved in local healthy school schemes.

Research and Evaluation

- Wales is participating in the UK wide infant feeding survey. This is the first year that Wales has been included in the survey and the questionnaire will be sent to all mothers of babies born in Wales during a five week period August/September. First wave: babies aged 4-10 weeks, then second wave 4/5 months and third wave at 9 months.

- The Welsh Assembly Government has funded a study jointly with the Food Standards Agency Wales to examine what food choices pupils actually make and why; what nutritious foods they would like to be provided and most importantly would eat; and what factors such as price, peer pressure etc influence their choice. A report will be published in May.
- The new Welsh Health Survey is a major source of information about the health of people living in Wales, the way they use the health service and the things that can affect their health. The survey started in October 2003 and will run continuously, initially collecting data on adults. A feasibility study is currently being carried out into the collection of additional children's data, including height and weight
- Audit tools are available to help schools identify current practice and appropriate actions related to nutrition and physical activity – *Food in School Assessment Tool* and *Physical Activity in School Assessment Tool*.
- In conjunction with Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, water coolers were provided to schools in Communities First areas in 2003-04. Guidance, Think Water, was made available to those schools, and has now been updated and will be sent to all schools in Wales.
- Schools which are part of WNHSS are encouraged to provide fruit tuck shops at breaktime. Following a study by Cardiff University, guidance has been produced on the implementation of fruit tuck shops in primary schools.
- A pilot healthy vending programme in Pembrokeshire has demonstrated the viability of caterer-led provision of items for vending. These include foods such as baguettes and salads, and drinks such as fruit juice and semi-skimmed milk. Guidance – Think Healthy Vending - has been sent to all secondary schools in Wales.

Update from the Scottish Executive Health Department

- A consultation paper, "Infant Feeding Strategy for Scotland - a consultation paper" was launched by the Minister for Health and Community Care, Mr Andy Kerr at the Scottish Parliament on Thursday 31 March. The consultation paper is available on the Executive's website at :

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/102851/0024984.pdf>

- The aims of the document are numerous, for example to provide optimal maternal nutrition, to increase both initiation and duration of breastfeeding, to minimise the risks of formula feeding and to support timely and appropriate weaning practices.
- The issue of maternal nutrition is covered by the Child & Maternal Health Unit, and is discussed in publications such as "Ready Steady Baby" (as well as the consultation document), but also links in to the work of other areas in the Health department, such as the Health Improvement Division which is helping in driving forward the aim of the Scottish Executive, to improve the health and wellbeing of the Scottish population, and to ensure that all Scotland's children get the best possible start in life.

Update from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Northern Ireland) Maternal and Child Nutrition

Fit Futures: Focus on Food, Activity and Young People

- The recommendations of the Fit Futures taskforce on obesity in children and young people have been presented to the Ministerial Group on Public Health and will be published within the next few weeks. The Fit Futures report contains over seventy recommendations and a cross-departmental response to the recommendations, including an implementation plan, will be produced by the Ministerial Group on Public Health before the summer. This response is likely to include proposals for the way forward in relation to food and nutrition and physical activity at the population level, as well as addressing the specific recommendations in relation to children and young people.
- Priorities for Action recommended in the Fit Futures report include a range of actions to deliver a much more joined up approach across government and its agencies to both food and nutrition and physical activity policy and measures to ensure that there is “real choice” in schools and early years settings.
- Research papers and consultation reports developed during the Fit Futures process are available at <http://www.investingforhealthni.gov.uk/fitfutures.asp>

Nutrition Matters

- In October 2005, the Health Promotion Agency, with the support of local community dietitians, published updated guidance on feeding children under 5 in childcare settings. The new guidance aims to assist childminders and childcare staff to support the children in their care to eat a healthy balanced diet and to encourage children to develop healthy eating habits. “Nutrition Matters” includes nutrition advice, meal ideas and suggestions to encourage “fussy eaters” to try healthy options. A training programme, based on the guidance in Nutrition Matters, will be delivered during 2006 to childminders and staff working in childcare and early years settings.

Food in Schools

- The implementation of nutritional guidelines for school meals, developed following a pilot scheme conducted in Northern Ireland during 2004/2005, is being rolled out across Northern Ireland. The implementation of the guidelines has been supported by the provision of additional funding to increase the minimum expenditure on the food content of meals. In addition, nutritional standards co-ordinators are being appointed in each of the Education Boards to support the implementation of the guidelines by the provision of training, guidance and support for the development of a whole school approach to food provision.
- In addition, in line with developments in other parts of the UK, the Department of Education will shortly be consulting on the development of nutrient based standards for school meals and on standards to be applied to other forms of food provision within schools, such as tuck-shops and vending machines.

Fresh Fruit in Schools

- As part of the implementation of *Investing for Health*, a Fresh Fruit in Schools pilot scheme was launched in October 2002. The scheme covers 101 primary schools across the 4 Health Action Zone (HAZ) areas. The scheme aims to give one piece of fresh fruit every day to 7,200 children in P1, P2 and some P3 classes. This year the scheme will also be testing the impact of introducing some degree of partial financing from parents. The scheme, which has just entered its fourth year, continues to be evaluated:
 - A final report covering all the evaluation findings from of first two years of the scheme years has been produced in early draft form and will be used to inform discussion about the future of the scheme.
 - A newsletter has been produced for distribution to parents to encourage them t provide more fresh produce at home to there children.
 - Analysis will also be carried out on the schools and P3 classes that the scheme has been extended to this year. New analysis will also look at the children who have now left the fresh fruit scheme.

Further information on the Fresh Fruit scheme is available at www.investingforhealthni.gov.uk/fruit.asp

- The pilot is coming to an end in June 2006, and consideration is being given to how the lessons learned can be developed into a much wider scheme.

Diet and Nutrition Information

- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety will shortly be commencing discussions with other government departments and agencies, including, in particular, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland, about options for satisfying the Department's information needs in relation to diet and nutrition from 2007 onwards.

