

# **Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition**

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## **Paper for discussion: Agenda Item 5**

### **Proposed Working Group to consider the Influence of Maternal Nutrition and Nutrition in Early Childhood on Development of Later Disease and Ongoing Issues on Maternal and Early Child Nutrition**

Please see attached paper for consideration.

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## **Proposed Working Group to consider the Influence of Maternal Nutrition and Nutrition in Early Childhood on Development of Later Disease and Ongoing Issues on Maternal and Early Child Nutrition**

### **Issue**

1. To consider the issue of setting up an expert group:
  - to review the scientific evidence on the influence of maternal and early child nutrition on later development of disease.
  - to advise SACN , the Department of Health and the Food Standards Agency on ongoing and particular issues relating to maternal and early child nutrition

### **Background**

2. Members agreed that as part of their work programme SACN should undertake a review of the evidence on the influence of maternal and early child nutrition on later development of disease. Also, members had previously recognised the need for an appropriate group to address ongoing particular issues on maternal and early child nutrition. It was noted that there could be some overlap between the two subject areas and therefore the question arose whether one group would be able to deal with the review of the Influence of Maternal and Early Child Nutrition and other issues that arise in the short-term. This paper sets out a proposal for the committee's consideration.

### **Discussion**

3. As part of its work programme, SACN decided to undertake a review of the evidence on the Influence of Early Nutrition on Development of Disease in Later Life. The members agreed the focus could be the public health implications of the findings and evidence to date and whether

the evidence justifies a public health approach to the problem. This is a major piece of work that we estimate could take about 12-18 months to complete.

4. It was also recognised that Health departments and the FSA need regular scientific and specific advice on a constant flow of short- term issues often to inform regulatory matters, which at present are being addressed by some members of the committee with the relevant expertise. Issues that need to be dealt with at short notice include advice to inform the UK position in international forums such as the European Commission, CODEX *Alimentarius* and the World Health Organisation. Recent examples of issues on which SACN members' advice was sought include Compositional Standards for Infant Formula and the addition of oligosaccharides to infant formula. A sub-group of SACN with relevant expertise is required to respond and advise often within a short time scale, which for some issues could be obtained by correspondence. It is envisaged that such a group may only need to meet once a year as the need for meetings is usually demand-driven depending on the complexity of the issue under consideration.

5. It is proposed that a group of experts be appointed to a Working Group on Maternal and Early Child Nutrition (WGMCN), so that they undertake the review of the influence of maternal and early child nutrition on later development of disease and also respond to on-going issues as they arise. The following Terms of Reference are suggested:

*i). To review the evidence on the influence of maternal and early nutrition including growth and development in utero and early childhood on the development of disease in later life and to identify factors in early life that could influence the risk of disease in later life.*

*ii). To consider scientific aspects of nutrition of pregnant and lactating women, infants and young children as are referred to it by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, Health Departments or the Food Standards Agency.*

6. The group should be chaired by a SACN member and report to the main committee, which will be responsible for issuing any formal advice. The membership of the group should be in accordance with SACN's remit to advise on scientific aspects of nutrition.

7. The suggested expertise for this group could include:

- practising paediatricians
- experts in growth monitoring and development
- epidemiologist
- physiologist
- expertise in metabolism
- endocrinologist
- reproductive biologist
- obstetrician and gynaecologist
- chemical pathologist
- paediatric dietitian
- health visitor
- midwife with research background
- general practitioner
- lay member.

**Members are requested to:**

- **Consider the proposal to set up a Working Group on Maternal and Early Child Nutrition (WGMCN)**
- **Agree to the Terms of Reference**
- **Consider the expertise required in the working group.**