

UPDATE ON NUTRITION INITIATIVES: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (ENGLAND)

National School Fruit Scheme

The *NHS Plan* stated commitment to providing a free piece of fruit each school day to every 4-6 year old by 2004. 80,000 children in 548 schools based in 27 areas (mostly Health Action Zones) currently receive a free piece of fruit. The New Opportunities Fund (NOF) is providing £42 million over the next two years to further expand the programme. Plans are underway to scale up coverage to the West Midlands region from Summer Term 2002, extending eligibility to over 250,000 children in 2300 schools. The scheme will be expanded to further regions in subsequent terms eventually reaching over 2 million children when full coverage begins from 2004.

Five-a-day

- Five pilot community intervention projects were completed at the end of July 2001.
- NOF is providing £10m to set up 50-60 more pilot initiatives in 2002 with a particular focus on deprived groups.
- A communications programme to increase awareness of fruit and vegetables among groups with the lowest intakes is also being developed. A conference to obtain stakeholders' support for the Five-a-day programme and to launch the Five-a-day guidance for local initiatives is planned for 26th March 2002.

Food in Schools

This is a joint DH and DfES initiative that brings together food-related initiatives in schools and after-school clubs to improve health and learning. An Advisory Forum of over 60 interested organisations met in July to kick start the process and it is planned that a series of Food in Schools pilot projects will be funded within this financial year. A Steering Group for the initiative is also being planned.

Welfare Foods Programme

The Programme has been reviewed. Options are being considered by Ministers, including the content and mechanisms of delivery through links with the NHS.

Infant Feeding initiative

- The DH initiative has a budget of £1 million a year to promote breastfeeding and support professionals in primary care - primarily midwives and health visitors. DH work to encourage breastfeeding focuses on mothers in lower-social groups where rates of breastfeeding are particularly low.

- New data show that breastfeeding has increased since 1995 – the overall rate is up from 66% to 69% in 2000. Sharpest increase in low-income households - increased from 50% to 62%.
- 79 best practice projects are funded to enable communication and evaluation of good practice and to address barriers to breastfeeding in public. An evaluation of the completed first year projects is available at www.doh.gov.uk.
- The National Breastfeeding Awareness Week 12th-18th May 2002 will focus on normalising breastfeeding in public.
- Two leaflets are currently being produced: *How to Breastfeed* and *How to Bottle feed safely*.

Obesity

- Local action to tackle obesity is informed by advice from the Health Development Agency.
- The Public Accounts Committee report on obesity, following the National Audit Office report published earlier this year is expected in December.
- An NAO Conference on obesity for policy makers, practitioners and researchers is being held in London on 21st and 22nd January 2002.
- In October, NICE issued guidelines for the use of orlistat and sibutramine for the treatment of obesity that includes appropriate advice on diet and exercise.

Physical Activity

- The HDA is producing a toolkit for local action on physical activity drawing on its review of local plans.
- Developing a high level publication that sets out the health case for physical activity to raise its profile among health professionals and policy makers.
- A National Quality Assurance Framework for Exercise Referral Schemes was published in April and promoted at two regional seminars. Working with the Fitness Industry Association to develop a register to ensure quality of advice.
- Working with the DTLR and NHS Estates to promote Green Travel Plans in the NHS. Sustrans is publishing a newsletter and running seminars.
- A national conference on physical activity will be held in the New Year to highlight the role of physical activity in delivering a range of NSFs. This will target primary care.
- The National Alliance for Physical Activity (NAPA) is an informal forum for the exchange of information on developments in physical activity across the UK.
- Working with other Government departments, principally DCMS, DTLR and DfES to promote physical activity and exercise.
- NOF round 3 funding includes £581 million to develop PE and sport in schools, the NHS will be a key partner.
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine developing indicators to monitor activity levels.

The Nutrition Forum

Plans are underway to set up a Nutrition Forum jointly by the FSA and DH whose stated purpose would be to *‘ provide a forum for those working towards improvements in diet and nutrition in England through sharing experiences and co-ordinating efforts and actions. The overall purpose will be to improve health.’*

The forum will include representatives from :

- **Government departments** – national and local
- **Consumers and voluntary bodies**
- **Industry** – including retailers, growers and manufacturers
- **Health** – the NHS and professional bodies.

The purpose of the Forum would be to bring key stakeholders in nutrition together on a regular basis, to allow an exchange of information and to facilitate communication between stakeholders. **To ensure cohesiveness with other established groups, SACN will be asked formally to nominate a representative to take part in the forum.**

Cross Task Force Prevention Group

As much primary prevention work has an impact on a range of diseases, a new Cross Task Force Prevention Group has been established. The first meeting was held on the 12th November. The Group aims to:

- foster an integrated approach to non-communicable diseases prevention across the Department
- provide advice to improve the quality and impact of Department of Health policies addressing the major risks for non-communicable disease
- improve the interaction between the relevant policy branches and task forces.

This Group, which comprises members of the Cancer, CHD, Inequalities, Children and Older People’s Task Forces, will advise the Department on policy areas including diet, physical activity and obesity. The Group, which is chaired by Mike Richards, chair of the Cancer Task Force, is designed to operate as an expert forum on prevention issues that cut across a number of disease areas, including cancer. We hope that it will also operate as a vehicle by which prevention issues can be fed back to the Task Forces.

Better Hospital Food

Better Hospital Food, an initiative led by NHS Estates, was launched in May 2000. The initiative includes the development of a new menu framework and provision of

24 hour access to food for patients and the provision of ward kitchens. Detailed information is available on the web - www.betterhospitalfood.com.

The implementation of this project will be monitored by NHS Estates and will be part of the performance assessment framework for hospital trusts in England. A Better Hospital Food Panel (led by Loyd Grossman) has recently been established to formalise the second stage of the programme and provide an independent aspect in setting new standards and targets for 2002 and onwards. Industry experts with restaurant/hotel and leisure backgrounds have been asked to be members of the Panel, along with patients representatives, and managers from the NHS. The panel will provide advice to the Secretary of State for Health, through the Chief Executive of NHS Estates.

National Service Frameworks (NSF)

- CHD Milestones: By April 2002 every local health community will:
 - have quantitative data no more than 12 months old about the implementation of the policies on: reducing the prevalence of smoking; promoting healthy eating; promoting physical activity; reducing overweight and obesity.
 - as employers, have developed ‘green’ transport plans and taken steps to implement employee-friendly policies. **Other milestones for primary care and cardiac rehabilitation also link with prevention aspects.**
- The NSF on Diabetes is due to be published by the end of the year.
- The Children’s and Renal NSF is currently being developed.
- Relevant aspects of nutrition are being included in all NSFs.