

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

**Paper for Information: Government Update on Nutrition
Related Activities - Department of
Health**

Agenda Item 11

Please see attached paper for information. Please also see enclosed summary of the Infant Feeding Survey.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Government Update on Nutrition related activities - Department of Health

The Department of Health is delivering a comprehensive range of programmes and activities in line with policy commitments. Nutrition activity within the Department of Health follows a life-course approach.

Nutrition of pregnant women, and children under five

1. Relevant activity is outlined below.

Local action:

- In addition to the specific initiatives and programmes delivered by the Department of Health's nutrition business area, a considerable amount of local activity and a number of national initiatives include diet and nutrition components, including:
 - Healthy Living Centres
 - Health Action Zones
 - Sure Start (with DfES)
 - Local action to deliver National Service Frameworks.

National programmes and initiatives

2. The **Welfare Foods Scheme** is currently under review, in line with an NHS Plan commitment to reform the scheme by 2004 to use the resources more effectively to ensure children in poverty have access to a healthy diet, and increased support for breastfeeding and parenting.
3. **Increased support for breastfeeding** which is accepted as the best form of nutrition for infants to ensure a good start in life. Specific initiatives include:
 - **The Infant Feeding Survey**, the results of which were published recently. Key findings were that 69% of babies were breastfed initially in 2000, an increase on the 66% of babies breastfed initially in 1995.
 - **National Breastfeeding Awareness Weeks** are held annually (this year, from 12-18th May), with the aim of normalising breastfeeding through the provision of materials for the NHS. This year's campaign is aimed at those least likely to choose to breastfeed, especially young mothers and mothers-to-be, their families and friends. The promotional materials for this year include posters, wall chart, post cards, book marks, diary covers and pens.
 - A **Local Infant Feeding Audit** has been piloted in 16 Trusts. This will enable trusts to take a 'snap shot' of information to find out whether local changes in practices are

effective. Final reports were received end March 2002. Will feed into Sure Start and eventually performance management.

- **National Service Framework for Children** will cover maternity services and we are considering how best to include breastfeeding within the framework.
- A **Global Strategy** on infant feeding recommending exclusive breastfeeding for six months has been put forward by the **WHO** for discussion at the World Health Assembly this week. The UK supported this recommendation.

Children

Activity includes:

4. The **Five a day Programme**, which includes the **National School Fruit Scheme**. Every child in nursery and aged four to six in infant schools will be entitled to a free piece of fruit each school day, as part of a national campaign to improve the diet of children. The Scheme has already been piloted, and expansion is taking place on a region by region basis, supported by £42m from the New Opportunities Fund. The first whole-region has recently begun in the West Midlands. By the end of Summer term 2002 around 250,000 children in nearly 2,000 schools in this region will be eligible to receive fruit. The next region to scale up from September 2002 will be London. Further regions will be brought on stream during subsequent terms. An information booklet, posters and video have been produced for schools joining the Scheme and curriculum materials are being developed. Following favourable early evaluation results the Department of Health is now looking to expand the range of produce on the Scheme, including the piloting of vegetables.
5. **Local Five a day initiatives** (see below) will also deliver effective interventions to increase fruit and vegetables consumption within the school settings.
6. The **Food in Schools Programme** was launched by DH with DfES in March 2001 to provide a co-ordinated approach to food and nutrition in schools, encompassing teaching, provision and management. This programme will support the National School Fruit Scheme and the **National Healthy School Standard**. The latter includes a standard on healthy eating, and schools are encouraged to provide, promote and monitor healthy food in schools, and to include education on healthier eating and basic food safety practices in the taught curriculum. Work in this area is taken forward through joint initiatives involving DfES with DH and FSA.

Adults

Action to improve nutrition within the adult population, and among older people, includes:

7. A **Five-a-day Programme** to improve access to and availability of fruit and vegetables. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is considered the second most effective strategy to reduce the risk of cancer, after reducing smoking, and it has major preventive benefits for heart disease too. The Five a day Programme includes
 - **Work with industry** (including producers and retailers) to increase provision and access to fruit and vegetables with local initiatives, where necessary. A Think Tank Event for key industry stakeholders was held earlier this year, and regular contact with industry is being maintained, with the support of the Institute of Grocery Distribution.

- **Local Five a day initiatives** to increase access to and availability of fruit and vegetables within disadvantaged communities. Five pilot initiatives have been completed and evaluated, and the approach has been found to be feasible and effective. The results of a national evaluation will be available shortly.
 - The New Opportunities Fund has made £10m available to support the establishment of 66 new initiatives, led by Primary Care Trusts. Guidance on delivering evidence-based interventions has been developed and is informed by lessons from five pilot initiatives.
 - **A communications programme** to ensure that consumers receive consistent messages and advice, supported by the production of information materials, and a Five a day logo and brand identity. The development of the logo and message has been carried out in close consultation with industry and health, education and consumer bodies. A technical group has been set up to support the development of a coherent five-a-day message.
 - **Evaluation and monitoring** to underpin programme development. This includes the testing and dissemination of a dietary assessment tool for fruit and vegetables among adults, as well as the development of an assessment tool which will measure the impact of the National School Fruit Scheme on children's diet.
8. **Initiatives with the food industry** (including manufacturers and caterers) to improve the overall balance of diet including salt, fat and sugar in food, working with the Food Standards Agency. The Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report in December endorsed the 1994 COMA recommended level of population average salt consumption of 6 grams a day. Discussions with the food industry and retailers are underway on reducing the level of salt in processed foods, which contribute 80% of salt in the diet. Following initial discussions with the Food and Drink Federation and the British Retail Consortium, the FSA and DH have arranged meetings with various food sectors to further discuss the scope for reductions in salt in processed foods. A wider stakeholders meeting is being planned.
9. Local action to tackle **obesity and physical inactivity**, informed by advice from the Health Development Agency on what works. The National Institute on Clinical Excellence (NICE) has provided guidance on the use of the anti-obesity drugs orlistat and sibutramine, treatment with which should be supported by advice, support and counselling on diet, physical activity and behavioural strategies. Physical inactivity is closely linked with obesity, and a new £2.5 million programme for PCT led community physical activity pilots was launched on 20 May. Sport England and the Countryside Agency are partners in the programme. There will be one pilot in each of the nine regions in England. All pilots will be within neighbourhood renewal areas and three will also involve Sport Action Zones. The aim of the pilots is to test out different community approaches to increasing levels of physical activity. The Public Accounts Committee report on obesity, following the 2001 National Audit Office report *Tackling Obesity in England*, was published in January 2002. The Government's official response to the PAC report was published on 21 March 2002.
10. A **hospital nutrition policy** to improve the outcome of care for patients. This will also reduce dependency on intravenous feeding regimes. Following the National Audit Office report on Hospital Catering, a Working Party on Nutritional Screening has been set up to develop a framework on nutritional screening for use within the NHS and Primary Care settings. The membership includes representatives from BAPEN, Malnutrition Advisory

Group, British Dietetic Association, Nursing, Dietetics, NHS Estates and DH. The aims of the framework are to explain the importance of nutritional screening across all health care sectors, to set out the principles of nutritional screening, to promote nutritional screening and to make recommendations on good practice.

Other work

11. The Department of Health also carries out **research and development** activity related to nutrition, including the Department of Health Policy Research Programme on diet, nutrition and obesity. The purpose of the Programme is to provide, through high quality research, a knowledge base for health services policy, social services policy and central policies directed at the health of the population as whole. The Health Development Agency also maintains the evidence base for diet and nutrition. The HDA is currently reviewing all systematic reviews, and meta-analyses on the prevention and treatment of obesity and weight maintenance.
12. The second meeting of the **Nutrition Forum** is to be held on the 14th June 2002. Papers to discuss include *Cross-government nutrition activities and Food-retailers nutrition activities*. The purpose of the Forum is to bring key stakeholders in nutrition together on a regular basis, to allow an exchange of information and to facilitate communication between stakeholders. More information about the Forum, the agenda and papers can be found at: <http://www.doh.gov.uk/nutritionforum/>
13. As primary prevention work impacts on a range of diseases, a new **Cross Task Force Prevention Group** has been established. The third meeting was held on the 16th May. The Group aims to:
 - foster an integrated approach to non-communicable disease 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.