

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

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

Agenda item: 10

Please see attached.

DH Update on Nutrition Initiatives

NB: Initiatives apply to England only unless otherwise stated

Targets for initiation of Breastfeeding

1. As part of the Government's commitment to reduce health inequalities and increase breastfeeding rates, particularly amongst disadvantaged groups, a target has been set to increase breastfeeding initiation rates by 2 percentage every year for three years through the NHS Priorities and Planning Framework.
2. A data set change notice has been prepared to send to PCTs informing them of the requirement to collect baseline data on breastfeeding initiation and how to collect it. Resources to help PCTs increase initiation rates will be issued before the end of the year. These will be based in part on the evaluation of the breastfeeding pilots undertaken during the breastfeeding initiative.

Proposals for the reform of the Welfare Food Scheme (UK wide)

3. Proposals for the reform of the Welfare Food Scheme (to be recast as 'Healthy Start') were published for consultation towards the end of 2002. Around 500 written responses were received and over 160 people attended consultation events. There was a high level of agreement for change and reform of the present scheme. A summary of responses was published in March 2003.
4. There are two clauses to reform the scheme in the Health & Social Care Bill currently in Parliament. Final plans for the scheme are expected to be published by the end of 2003.
5. Draft regulations will be published for consultation early in 2004.

Food in schools

6. The joint DH and DfES *Food in Schools Programme* aims to bring together all food-related initiatives in schools with the aim of developing sustainable programmes to promote healthy eating in children. It enhances and compliments other initiatives being progressed in relation to the diet and nutrition of children.
7. The DH-led strand comprises eight projects which follow the child through out the school day - healthier cookery clubs, breakfast clubs, tuck shops, vending machines, lunch boxes as well as work in water provision, growing clubs and the dining room environment.
8. A range of specialist organisations have been appointed to manage the projects at a regional level and will engage with a cross-section of schools and key stakeholders. Building on previous work and best practice, each project aims to determine a range of effective approaches within the particular project area, establish how best to embed such interventions into schools to gain maximum

benefit, overcome barriers, address sustainability and funding/resource issues and most importantly ensure ease of implementation.

9. The initial scoping phase of the project is now under way and this will be followed by implementation starting in January 2004. Results will be available for wider circulation from the end of 2004. The aim is to use this information to disseminate best practice in a 'whole school approach' which will enable schools to develop and implement sustainable in-house strategies for improving the nutrition and diet of children.
10. Evaluation and communication around the Programme is key. An Evaluation Advisor has been appointed to advise the DH and each project manager to ensure evaluation is appropriate and robust. This Evaluation Advisor will also provide an overview of evaluation for the whole Programme. A communication strategy is under development to guide all communication activities.

5 A DAY Programme

11. The 5 A DAY programme aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, by addressing the main barriers to increased consumption, through improving access to and availability of fruit and vegetables, and improving attitudes and awareness.
12. The programme includes the National School Fruit Scheme, local 5 A DAY community initiatives, and a communication programme, all of which are underpinned by a programme of evaluation. Recent developments on each of these elements is summarised below.
13. For more information about all aspects of the 5 A DAY programme, see www.doh.gov.uk/fiveaday.

National School Fruit Scheme

14. Following successful piloting of the Scheme, the NSFS is now being extended throughout England on a region by region basis funded by £42m from the New Opportunities Fund. This roll-out started with the West Midlands in summer term 2002, London in autumn term 2002, the North West in spring 2003 and East Midlands in summer 2003. The North East will join the scheme in February 2004 and the remaining 4 regions later that year.
15. We are looking to expand the range of fruit and vegetables following favourable evaluation results of piloting carrots and tomatoes. Other vegetables and fruits being piloted in schools include cauliflower, celery, strawberries, kiwis, cucumber, swede and celeriac.

Community initiatives

16. Following successful piloting of a range of initiatives by DoH in five areas, the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) is funding for two years a further 66 new PCT-led local 5 A DAY initiatives. 54 had been announced by March 2003, and 11 more in August with the final 1 expected next month. Details of the 66 PCTs are available on the NOF website (www.nof.org.uk).

Communications programme

17. Work on a communication strategy for the next three years is currently being developed with the Central Office for Information.
18. A 5 A DAY logo has been developed as part of the communications programme, to help people recognise the 5 A DAY message and introduce consistency in the message in all settings. The logo, which was developed following extensive consumer research, was launched to the public on 25th March 2003.
19. The Department has developed detailed nutritional and technical criteria for using the logo and portion indicator – for more information see www.doh.gov.uk/fiveaday. The website also has information about how to apply for a licence to use the logo or portion indicator. To date 247 organisations have been licensed to use the logo and/or the portion indicator on promotional materials and/or food packets.
20. While the recommendation to eat more fruit and vegetables is an important one, this needs to be considered in the context of NHS Plan commitment to address the overall balance of the diet, including levels of fat, salt and sugar. Further consideration is therefore being given to the development of nutritional criteria for the use of the logo on products containing added fat, salt and/or sugars, such as ready meals, soups, sauces and pre-prepared deserts. A small technical group has been set up to aid the development of nutritional criteria for use of the logo on products with added sugar fat and salt. Criteria drawn up by the technical group will be shared with wider stakeholders on the What Counts group at its next meeting, on 26 November.

Evaluation and monitoring

21. Each element of the programme will be evaluated and monitored, so that key lessons are learned. National and local evaluation is being carried out measuring access, awareness and consumption.
22. Following the evaluation of the 5 A DAY pilot initiatives, DH has developed a **Five-a-day Community Evaluation Tool (FACET)** to support the evaluation of local 5 A DAY initiatives. This is available for use, accompanied by a guidance document, and aims to evaluate the impact of the local initiative in terms of change in consumption, awareness and access. NOF have commissioned NFER /University of Leeds to use this tool to evaluate the 66 new NOF funded initiatives over the next two years.
23. Tools have also been developed to evaluate the impact of the National School Fruit Scheme on children's overall fruit and vegetable intake. NOF have commissioned TNS to evaluate the impact of the scheme on children's diets in the next region to join the scheme, the North East, and in a non-NSFS control region. TNS will provide an interim report in July 2004 and a full report in January 2005. Routine monitoring includes pesticide residues, quality and reliability of deliveries and consumer satisfaction.
24. At a national level, trends in consumption and awareness of the 5 A DAY message will be monitored by the Health Survey for England.

Food and Health Action Plan

25. The Food and Health Action Plan (FAHAP) is a key commitment in the Government's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food. It will shape, co-ordinate and drive action to improve public health in England through better nutrition. DH is leading the development and implementation of the FAHAP working with key central Government partners. DH has just completed discussions with key stakeholders on a "Problem Analysis" which considered the issues on which Government and other stakeholders should focus action. DH and its Government partners are now engaging stakeholders on thinking about the solutions to the problems. The intention is to be in a position to go to consultation on a draft FAHAP document in Spring 2004.

Nutrition Forum (UK wide)

26. 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. The terms of reference of this group is 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.*' DH and FSA provide joint secretariat for the Forum.
27. The minutes of the meetings are at www.doh.gov.uk/nutritionforum/. At the next meeting (4th November) issues to be discussed include the Food and Health Action Plan and the results from the National Diet and Nutrition Survey.

Obesity

28. The Parliamentary Health Select Committee assessment on obesity is on-going. The Committee have held 4 evidence hearings to date, the transcripts of which are at <http://www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/hlthhome.htm>. Ministers are likely to be called to give evidence December 2003 or January 2004.
29. Lifelong Learning is a scheme for professional skills development. For the spending review period 2003- 2006 £3.6 million has been allocated over the 3 years to provide training on obesity for primary care staff – enabling 5,900 existing staff to develop their skills and boosting the capacity of the NHS in this area.

Physical Activity

30. Nine Local Exercise Action Pilots (LEAP) were announced in April. LEAP aims to test out different PCT led community approaches to increasing access to and levels of physical activity. Partners in the programme are Sport England, Countryside Agency and the Local Government Association. Primary Care Trusts in neighbourhood renewal fund areas were invited to submit expressions of interest and short-listed PCTs were asked to work up full applications. From these nine pilot sites in each of the nine regional government regions were selected to test out a range of interventions that will target specific and key population groups such as those at high risk of disease and older people. The two year interventions will commence in January 2004 and be fully evaluated by a national team.

31. In December 2002, the Strategy Unit report 'Game Plan' set out a new target of 70% of the population to be active (half an hour's exercise 5 days a week) by 2020. The DH and DCMS, identified as having a joint lead on taking this recommendation forward, have established a cross-government Activity Co-ordination Team (ACT). ACT will be responsible for establishing a strategic overview and the planning and co-ordination of sport and physical activities at a national level. To be chaired by DH and DCMS ministers, ACT has already met twice in July and October of this year. ACT is supported by a team of officials from DH, DCMS, DfT and Sport England, whose first task will be to draft a delivery strategy and set targets for the three years April 2004 - March 2007. DH is starting work on the development of a new communications message for the recommended amount of physical activity which will stress the accumulation of 'portions' of activity across the day. This work will form part of a wider communications strategy for physical activity which will be co-ordinated through ACT.
32. DH is working in partnership with the Countryside Agency and the British Heart Foundation to part fund a targeted pilot project which will distribute pedometers to PCTs in areas of high deprivation as a motivational tool to encourage increased walking. An evaluation will track a sample of loan packs in use and gather information about the volume of use of the step-o-meters including changes in levels of physical activity (including where the extra walking takes place), how the loan pack system worked in practice, levels of patient awareness about the step-o-meter, ease of setting up and using the step-o-meter, comments from health staff and users, future intentions and potential. The evaluation report will make recommendations for the potential to main stream this concept.
33. DH and DCMS have worked with the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to secure a NOF funded Regional Physical Activity Co-ordinator pilot post. The pilot will test out the contribution of a Regional Co-ordinator in encouraging partnership working at a regional and local level. For example, between local authorities, the fitness industry, Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on the integration of policies and programmes which can improve public health and reduce inequalities through increased physical activity and sport.