



**Paper for information: Government Updates on Nutrition
Related Activities
Department of Health**

Agenda Item: 8

Please see attached paper for information.

DH Update on Nutrition Initiatives

NB: Initiatives apply to England only unless otherwise stated

Food and Health Action Plan

1. On 6 May, the Government launched "Choosing Health? Choosing a Better Diet - a consultation on priorities for a food and health action plan" (copies available at www.dh.gov.uk).
2. This consultation presents an opportunity to identify priorities for action and to clarify roles and responsibilities for improving diet and nutrition in England.
3. "Choosing a Better Diet", and the parallel "Choosing Activity" consultation, are important strands of "Choosing Health? a consultation on action to improve people's health."
4. The wider "Choosing Health?" consultation is a chance to discuss issues that really matter to individuals, families and communities and to think about what can be done to make healthy choices easier.
5. Responses to all three consultations - which end on 30 June - will inform the development of a White Paper on improving health, to be published later this year.
6. The White Paper will set out what the Government will do to achieve change right across the public sector and in partnership with other organisations.
7. A food and health action plan remains a key deliverable of the Consumer Health Needs workstream of the Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food.

Reform of the Welfare Food Scheme (UK wide)

8. The Government's response to the Healthy Start consultation was published on 16 February 2004 – see DH website for details.
9. The new scheme will offer qualifying pregnant women and families fixed face value vouchers worth at least £2.80 per week, and £5.60 for children under 1 year old (or within 12 months of EDD if later than first birthday).
10. Vouchers will be exchanged for fresh fruit and vegetables, liquid milk and infant formula through retail. Health professionals will advise on breastfeeding and nutrition.
11. Nurseries will be funded to provide either milk or fruit to children under 5.
12. Draft regulations will be published for consultation during summer 2004.
13. Regulations are expected to provide for Healthy Start to be phased in from early 2005, beginning with the introduction of the voucher scheme in one region only. The voucher scheme, and new arrangements for nursery milk/fruit provision, will then be rolled out across GB.

Infant Feeding

14. A resource package has been produced by DH to help health professionals deliver the Priorities and Planning Framework target to increase breastfeeding initiation

by 2 percentage points between 2003-06, focussing particularly on women from disadvantaged groups.

15. The resource package will be disseminated during the autumn through regional seminars.

Schools

16. The Department for Education and Skills is working closely with the Department of Health, DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency to develop a Healthy Living Blueprint. The Blueprint, aimed at headteachers and governors will bring together all the elements that contribute to a whole setting approach to food and nutrition: the culture and environment; the curriculum; the food/meals available; pupil views; support services; the role of heads, governors and other staff; and partnership working.
17. It will encompass existing and ongoing work across the departments, such as food in schools, and the monitoring and evaluation of school meals. Crucially, it will be giving a clear message to schools and early years settings about how they can improve their approach to food and drink, and show how it is often small changes that improve the diet and nutritional knowledge of their pupils.
18. The DH led strand of the joint DfES – DH Food in Schools Programme is progressing well. Approximately 300 primary and secondary schools across England are involved in the eight pilot projects - 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. The scoping phase for each project is now complete. This involved scoping best practice examples regionally, nationally and internationally to ensure that the pilots could build on the various approaches that have been used to date. The second part of the scoping activity involved work with a large range of stakeholders (pupils, teachers, head teachers, caterers, parents etc) in the pilot schools to investigate the school's needs and determine the best approach for each school. These approaches are now being piloted and evaluated. The results will contribute to the Healthy Living Blueprint and be disseminated in early 2005 to enable schools to develop and implement sustainable in-house strategies for improving the nutrition and diet of children using a whole school approach. See DH website for further information.

5 A DAY Programme

19. The 5 A DAY programme aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, by improving access to and availability of fruit and vegetables, and improving attitudes and awareness.
20. For more information about all aspects of the 5 A DAY programme, see DH website www.dh.gov.uk/healthtopics

School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme

21. In January 2004 DH announced funding of £77 million over the next two years to enable the National School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme to be offered to all LEA schools in England with children aged 4-6 by the end of 2004. Since April 2002 £42m from the New Opportunities Fund has been supporting the expansion of the scheme region by region. It now covers over a million children in the London, East & West Midlands, North West and North East regions.
22. In June 2004, following extensive piloting, the Department of Health announced the inclusion of vegetables (carrots) and cherry tomatoes in the scheme and the renaming of the scheme to reflect this and fruits already provided as part of the scheme include apples, pears, bananas, easy-peel citrus. The scheme will continue to pilot additional fruit and vegetables in order to extend the range and variety of products offered.
23. NOP survey (Oct 2003) - over a quarter of parents report that, after joining the scheme, their children and their families as a whole had increased their fruit consumption at home as well as at school.
24. A full evaluation has been commissioned by the New Opportunities Fund, using a new Consumption and Dietary Evaluation Tool (CADET) commissioned by DH to assess the impact of the National School Fruit Scheme on children's diet at and out of school, which will report in early 2005. Baseline measurements are currently being collected.
25. A range of materials is being developed to support the rollout of the scheme, including guidance on how to run the scheme, an introductory video and resources to help teachers integrate learning about fruit and vegetables into the whole school day.

Community initiatives

26. Following successful piloting of a range of initiatives by DH in five areas, the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) is funding for two years a further 66 PCT-led local 5 A DAY initiatives. Details of the 66 PCTs are available on the NOF website (www.nof.org.uk).
27. A full evaluation has been commissioned by NOF, using a new Five-a-day Community Evaluation Tool (FACET) in accordance with DH requirements.

Communications programme

28. Work on a communication strategy for the next three years has been developed with the Central Office for Information.
29. Resources have been developed to help promote the 5 A DAY message, including booklets, posters, postcards, leaflets, fold-out 'Z cards', coasters and carrier bags. They are distributed via GP surgeries and other health locations, through the NOF-funded projects and via partner organisations.
30. In line with the communications strategy the focus for Jan – June 2004 has been mothers in lower socio-economic groups with children under 16. Communications activity has included the production of '5 A DAY Made Easy', a booklet containing tips on how to incorporate more fruit and veg into the family's diet, with associated press coverage.

31. The focus for July – Dec 2004 will be teenagers. Planned activity includes TV and radio fillers and advertorials in teenage magazines, and the 5 A DAY website is being redeveloped to include a teenage section.
32. Over 350 organisations have now been licensed to use the 5 A DAY logo and/or the portion indicator on promotional materials and/or food packets. The 5 A DAY logo has been developed to help people recognise the 5 A DAY message and introduce consistency in the message in all settings. Nutritional and technical criteria for using the logo and portion indicator, and information on how to apply are on the DH website.
33. The logo can currently only be used to promote products without any sugar, fat and salt. Draft criteria for use of the logo on products with added sugar, fat and salt were shared with wider stakeholders on the What Counts group and will be finalised later this year.

Obesity

34. An Obesity Conference “*Choosing Health? Achieving a Balance between Diet and Exercise*” was held on 6 May as part of the White Paper consultation process.
35. The Parliamentary Health Select Committee report on obesity was published on 27 May 2004 (see agenda item 7). <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmhealth/23/2302.htm>

Salt

36. DH and the FSA held a joint salt stakeholders meeting on the 11th November 2003. At the meeting the Minister for Public Health, Melanie Johnson, called on participants to submit by the end of February their plans to reduce salt levels in their products. The Minister highlighted that if companies do not show a real commitment to reducing salt levels they could face the threat of having to carry labels.
37. To date 44 plans have been received and are under consideration.

Physical Activity

38. In December 2002, the Strategy Unit report ‘Game Plan’ proposed a new target of 70% of the population to be active (30 minutes of moderate activity on at least 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) to provide a strategic overview and the planning and co-ordination of sport and physical activities at a national level. Chaired by DH and DCMS ministers, ACT met in July, October and November 2003, February and March 2004.
39. The Choosing Activity consultation document was launched in May alongside Choosing a Better Diet. These consultation documents provide important strands that will contribute to the wider Choosing Health? consultation process, stimulating discussion on prioritise for future action on increasing activity levels. The closing date for responses is June 30th.
40. The two year Local Exercise Action Pilots (LEAP) commenced in January 2004 and be fully evaluated by a national team.

41. 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. The evaluation report will make recommendations for the potential to main stream this concept.
42. DH and DCMS have worked with the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to secure a NOF funded Regional Physical Activity Co-ordinator pilot post which is now in place.