

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Subgroup on Maternal and Child Nutrition (SMCN)

**Paper for information: DH Update on Activities related
to Maternal and Child Nutrition**

Agenda item: 5

Please see attached paper for information.

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DH Update on Activities related to Maternal and Child Nutrition

Targets for initiation of Breastfeeding

- 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.

National Breastfeeding Awareness Week:

- Since 1993, the Government has funded the National Breastfeeding Awareness Weeks (NBAW), as a key activity for promoting breastfeeding. NBAW is an annual public health campaign, which contributes to raising awareness about breastfeeding, and promotes issues that are known to influence breastfeeding rates. For the past three years, the campaign has focussed on those groups that are known to have the lowest breastfeeding rates e.g. the young, less well educated, poorly supported mothers and families living in disadvantaged areas. The campaign is delivered via print and promotional materials that are made widely available to professionals working in the NHS to support local initiatives. The material is mainly delivered in health care premises.
- The national campaign for 2003 will be held from 11 – 17 May with a focus on “supporting and encouraging breastfeeding mothers to continue breastfeeding for as long as they choose”. The main objectives are to:
 - “encourage more women to initiate breastfeeding and to continue for as long as possible”
 - “encourage the influencers of breastfeeding women – partners, family and friends to provide active support”.

Best Practice Projects on breastfeeding:

- Since 1999, the Department has funded a range of practice based and academic projects. So far 79 projects have been funded across all 8 health regions to identify and communicate “best practice” to increase breastfeeding rates amongst those least likely to choose to breastfeed. All the projects in year one and two were practice based and in year three 12 were academic and 12 were practice based. These included projects on peer support groups, ante-natal and post-natal support groups and education for mothers and health professionals. Twenty four projects each funded in year two and three have been completed and will be evaluated together with year one projects. Results of an independent evaluation of all the 79 projects will be published and disseminated early this year.

A Summary of all the three year projects can be obtained from the Secretariat.

Proposals for the reform of the Welfare Food Scheme

- Proposals for the reform of the Welfare Food Scheme (to be recast as 'Healthy Start') were published for consultation on 28 October 2002. Around 500 written responses were received and over 160 people attended consultation events aimed at health professionals, industry, the voluntary sector and users of the Scheme. The Department will report on the outcome of the consultation in the next few months.

National School Fruit Scheme

- The National School Fruit Scheme is part of the Five-a-day programme to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. It is an NHS Plan commitment to entitle all four to six year olds to a free piece of fruit each school day by 2004 (currently either an apple, banana, pear or clementine) in an attempt to improve child health and nutrition. This will eventually entail distributing around 400 million pieces of fruit to some 16,000 schools across England each year.
- A series of pilot schemes began in autumn 2000, to identify the most effective way to implement the scheme with the minimum burden and disruption to schools. The intention is to develop a robust, practical, national scheme, which has a positive impact on the whole school community.
- Following successful piloting of the Scheme, The National School Fruit Scheme 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, and will extend to the North West in spring 2003 and East Midlands in summer 2003. Subsequent regions will join at the approximate rate of one per school term. The Scheme currently reaches 425,000 children in 3,500 schools across the whole of the West Midlands and London.

Physical Activity

- Work on Local Exercise Action Pilots (LEAP) ongoing. LEAP aims to test out different community approaches to increasing access to physical activity. Partners in the Programme are Sport England, Countryside Agency and 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. These have now been received and are being assessed by regional panels. We will announce the nine pilot sites in March 2003.
- The Department is funding the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to develop a short physical activity questionnaire that can be used in routine general practice in order to identify patients who may benefit from advice / interventions to increase their levels of activity. The questionnaire has been piloted in three general practices. The

evaluation report will be discussed at the next steering group meeting, and will inform the next steps.

- Work on the CMO report setting out the health case for physical activity is ongoing. The report will bring together the latest research evidence on physical activity and health. It will be a high level document aimed at those concerned with formulating and implementing policies or programmes that could benefit from the promotion of physical activity, sport, exercise or active transport. The report will be published in Spring 2003.
- DH is funding second series of Travel Plan seminars for the NHS in January and February. The seminars are being run by Sustrans and support the milestone in the NSF CHD for green travel plans and the Environmental Strategy for the NHS.