



Paper for Discussion: Food-based and Nutrient-based Standard in Schools

Agenda Item: 5

At the last meeting, members requested a comparison of nutrition standards for school lunches in the UK. Please find attached a short paper comparing the food and nutrition-based standards in England, Wales Scotland and Northern Ireland for your information.

Food-based and nutrient-based standards for primary and secondary school lunches in the UK

At the previous meeting, due to concern that levels of provision stipulated in existing nutrition standards have been lowered, members requested a paper to be drafted comparing the nutrition standards for school lunches in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to assess the risks associated with these changes. The following paper outlines the food and nutrition based standards for school lunches in the four countries.

Food-based standards – define the types of food that children and young people should be offered in a school lunch and their frequency

Nutrient-based standards – define the proportion of nutrients that children and young people should receive from a school lunch

England

In May 2006, the English Government announced new standards for school food with three parts to be phased in by September 2009. *The Education (Nutritional Standards and Requirements for School Food) (England) Regulations 2007* outlines these stages and also standards for school food other than lunches (see link below). The interim food-based standards currently in place will be replaced by new food requirements applying to school lunches from September 2008 (primary schools) and September 2009 (secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units), where some of the interim standards will no longer apply. The new food requirements will be introduced in conjunction with new nutrition requirements. Tables 1 and 2 outline the food and nutrition requirements for school lunches that will apply from September 2008 (primary schools) or September 2009 (secondary and special schools. See link below for details of the interim food-based standards that apply from September 2007.

See http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/uksi_20072359_en.pdf for more information.

Wales

Currently, the *Education (Nutritional Standards for School Lunches) (Wales) Regulations 2001* define the different food groups and sets out the daily minimum nutritional standards for primary and secondary school pupils. However, in July 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government established the Food In Schools Working Group to

examine how to improve the quality and nutritional standards of school meals. The Working Group have proposed new food and nutrient based standards for children aged 5-18 to come into effect from August 2008, outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation document *Appetite for Life* (2006). Tables 1 and 3 outline these proposals for school lunches in Wales.

See

<http://wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/403829/Consultations/2006/appetite-for-life-final-e.pdf?lang=en> for more information.

Scotland

The current nutritional standards for school lunches in Scottish schools are those set out in *Hungry for Success*, the Scottish Executive's whole school approach to healthy eating. From August 2008, the *Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act* will introduce new nutritional regulations for all food and drinks in schools. These standards have not yet been set by Scottish Ministers and will not come into effect until August 2008. Although schools and local authorities are preparing for the changes that this will bring, they are currently continuing to implement the minimum standards of *Hungry for Success* during 2007/08. Tables 1 and 3 outline the current nutritional standards for school lunches in Scotland.

See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/02/16273/17566> for more information.

Northern Ireland

The Department of Education (DE), in conjunction with others, have been working to implement new nutritional standards for school meals since 2002. Following a successful pilot in 2004/05, the roll-out of the 2002 food-based standards began in the autumn 2005 term and were implemented in virtually all Northern Ireland schools. However, last year the Department consulted on the issue of new, updated, nutritional standards for school meals and other food in schools. The Department has since worked with health and catering professionals to finalise new updated standards, which come into effect from September 2007. Table 1 outlines these new food-based standards for school lunches in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland also plan to introduce nutrient-based standards in September 2008 in primary schools/September 2009 in secondary and special schools, and these standards will be similar to those being implemented in England.

See http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/5-schools_meals/5-nutritional_standards_background.htm for more information

Table 1 - Food-based standards for primary and secondary school lunches in the United Kingdom

Food Group	Country			
	England ^a	Wales ^b	Scotland ^c	Northern Ireland ^d
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
Meat, fish and other non-dairy sources of protein (including meat, fish, eggs, nuts, pulses and beans)	Oily fish must be available at least once every 3 weeks A meat product from	Oily fish must be available at least once every 2 weeks Meat products should not	Every school lunch should contain a portion or portions of food from this group	Every school lunch must contain a portion or portions of food from this group

^a Food requirements for school lunches from September 2008 (primary schools) or September 2009 (secondary and special schools) taken from *The Education (Nutritional Standards and Requirements for School Food) (England) Regulations 2007*

^b Proposed food standards for school lunches in Wales from August 2008, as outlined in the Welsh Assembly Government's 'Appetite for Life' consultation document (2006)

^c Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland (in place until August 2008)

^d New Nutritional Standards for School Lunches and Other Food in Schools from September 2007 (Northern Ireland)

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
Meat, fish and other non-dairy sources of protein (continued)	each of four groups may be provided no more than once a fortnight, providing the meat product meets certain criteria	be reformed/reconstituted foods made from "meat slurry"	<p>Red meat based meals should be served a minimum of twice a week</p> <p>Processed meat products and pastry products should be served a maximum of once a week</p> <p>Fish should appear on the menu at least once a week (oil rich fish should be served once a week)</p>	<p>Meals containing red meat must be served: a minimum of twice a week and maximum of 3 times a week in primary schools; and a minimum of 3 times a week and a maximum of 4 times a week in post-primary schools</p> <p>Fish should be available at least once a week in primary schools and at least twice a week in</p>

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
				<p>post-primary schools (oily fish should be available at least once every 3 weeks)</p> <p>Meat products (burgers, sausages etc) may be served a maximum of once a week in primary schools. In post-primary schools there should be at least 3 days on which these products are not available</p>
Starchy foods	A type of bread with no	Bread should be available	Every school lunch should	Every school lunch must

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
<p>(including bread, pasta, noodles, rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes etc)</p> <p>Starchy foods (continued)</p>	<p>added fat or oil must be provided every day</p> <p>A starchy food cooked in fat or oil must not be provided more than 3 days in any week</p>	unrestricted throughout lunch. A variety of breads should be encouraged including wholemeal bread	<p>contain a portion or portions of food from this group</p> <p>A variety of extra bread, including brown and wholemeal should be available daily as a meal accompaniment for all pupils at no additional charge.</p> <p>Rice and pasta should each be offered a minimum of once a week.</p>	<p>contain a portion or portions of food from this group</p> <p>Rice and pasta must be offered at least once a week</p> <p>Bread should be available on a daily basis</p>

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
			<p>Roast potatoes, smiley faces, chips and other shaped potato products should be served a maximum of twice a week in primary (and ideally in secondary) schools</p> <p>Non-fried alternatives such as mash, boiled and baked potatoes should be available daily in secondary schools</p>	

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
			When a fried item is offered, an alternative non-fried item should be offered	
Milk and dairy foods (including milk, cheese, yoghurt etc)	-	-	Most school lunches should contain a portion or portions of food from this group	Every school lunch must contain a portion or portions of food from this group
Milk and dairy foods (continued)			Plain or flavoured drinking milk should be available as an option every day	<p>Drinking milk must be available as an option every day</p> <p>Cheese must not be</p>

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
			<p>Cheese should be served as the main protein item instead of meat or fish a maximum of twice per week</p> <p>Vegetarian alternatives to cheese should be made available a minimum of 3 times a week</p>	served as the only vegetarian option more than twice a week (but may be used as a topping more frequently)
Deep-fried foods	Meals should not contain more than 2 deep-fried items in a single week (including products which are deep-fried in the	Meals should not contain more than two deep-fried products in a single week	-	Deep-fried foods or other high fat products must not be offered, in total, more than twice a week

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
	manufacturing process)			There should be at least 2 days each week without any fried foods, or foods cooked in batter or with pastry Low fat desserts must be available when high fat foods are offered
Drinks	The only drinks available should be: plain water (still or carbonated), milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed), plain soya, oat	The only drinks available should be water (still or carbonated), pure fruit juices, diluted pure fruit juices, semi-skimmed	Fizzy, sugary soft drinks should not be served as part of a school lunch in primary schools and should not be encourage	The only drinks available should be: plain water (still or fizzy), milk, pure fruit juices, yoghurt or milk drinks (<5% added

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
Drinks (continued)	or rice drinks enriched with calcium, fruit or vegetable juices, plain fermented milk drinks (this includes yoghurt), combinations of these drinks, flavoured milk containing not less than 90% milk by volume, low calorie hot chocolate, tea and coffee	milk, milk drinks with less than 5% added sugar, or combinations of these (e.g. smoothies)	in secondary schools. In secondary schools, such drinks should not be served as part of a combination meal or meal deal or packed lunch	sugar), smoothies, low calorie hot chocolate, tea and coffee Artificial sweeteners should be used only in yoghurt and milk drinks; or combinations containing yoghurt or milk
Water	There should be easy access at all times to free, fresh drinking water	Easy access to free, fresh, potable, preferably chilled drinking water should be available	Drinking water, which is free, fresh and chilled should be provided with drinking cups in the	

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
			dining room	
Salt and condiments	<p>No salt shall be available to add to food after the cooking process is complete</p> <p>Condiments should only be made available in sachets or individual portions of no more than 10g or one teaspoonful</p>	<p>Salt should not be added to vegetables during cooking</p> <p>Salt should be restricted or removed salt from recipes and replace with appropriate and acceptable herbs and spices</p> <p>Not available at lunch tables or at the service counter</p>	-	<p>Table salt should not be available in primary schools. It should not be on view in post-primary schools but may be available on request from the service counter</p> <p>Condiments should only be provided from the service counter and should be controlled by kitchen staff</p>

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
Confectionery and savoury snacks Confectionery and savoury snacks (continued)	<p>The only savoury snacks available should consist of nuts, seeds, fruit and vegetables with no added salt, sugar, honey or fat(except that dried fruit may contain 0.5% vegetable oil as a glazing agent)</p> <p>Savoury crackers or breadsticks can only be served with fruit or vegetables or dairy food</p>	Not available	<p>Confectionery should be set away from the food service points</p> <p>Where there is no choice, all desserts on offer should fruit and/or milk-based</p> <p>Crisps should be offered as part of a combination meal option/meal deal or packed lunch a maximum of twice a week</p>	<p>Confectionery, chocolate and chocolate-coated products should not be available</p> <p>Cakes and biscuits can only be provided at lunchtime and as part of a meal. Cakes biscuits and puddings made with cocoa powder should only be available a maximum of 2 days per week</p>

Food Group	Country			
	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Fruit and Vegetables (including all forms whether fresh, frozen, canned, dried or in the form of juice)	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least 1 should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit	Not less than 2 portions per day per child. This should provide a variety of fruits, vegetables and salads over the 5 day period	<p>Every school lunch should contain 2 portions of fruit/vegetables</p> <p>The menu should provide a choice of at least 2 vegetables and 2 fruits in addition to fruit juice every day. At least 1 of these should be served free of added fat</p> <p>Where there is a choice, a dessert providing at least 1 portion should be available. Where there is no choice, a fruit-based dessert should be available at least 3 times a week</p>	Not less than 2 portions a day per child, at least one should be vegetables or salad and at least one should be fruit
	<p>as part of a school lunch</p> <p>Cakes and biscuits must not contain any confectionary</p>			The only savoury snacks that should be available are nuts and seeds with no added salt or sugar

Table 2 – Nutritional Standards applying to school lunches in maintained schools from 1st September 2008 (primary schools) and 1st September 2009 (secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units) (England)

<i>Energy or Nutrient and amount of measurement</i>	<i>Maximum or minimum of value</i>	<i>Primary Schools</i>	<i>Secondary Schools</i>
Energy in kilojoules (kilocalories)	-	2215 (530)	2700 (646)
Fat (grams)	Max	20.6	25.1
Saturated fat (grams)	Max	6.5	7.9
Non-milk extrinsic sugars (grams)	Max	15.5	18.9
Sodium (milligrams)	Max	499	714
Total carbohydrate (grams)	Min	70.6	86.1
Fibre (grams)	Min	4.2	5.2
Protein (grams)	Min	7.5	13.3
Iron (milligrams)	Min	3	5.2
Zinc (milligrams)	Min	2.5	3.3
Calcium (milligrams)	Min	193	350
Vitamin A (micrograms)	Min	175	245
Vitamin C (milligrams)	Min	10.5	14
Folate (micrograms)	Min	53	70

Source: Nutritional standards for school lunches from September 2008 (primary schools) or September 2009 (secondary and special schools) (England) taken from *The Education (Nutritional Standards and Requirements for School Food) (England) Regulations 2007*

The average school lunch must provide

- (a) an amount of energy which shall be either the figure shown in the table above or within 5% of that figure;
- (b) no more than the amounts of fat, saturated fat, non-milk extrinsic sugars and sodium shown in the table above; and
- (c) at least the amounts of other nutrients shown in the table above.

Table 3 - The proportion of the daily estimated requirement for energy and recommended nutrient intake and the minimum/maximum nutrient requirement for an average school lunch in primary and secondary school pupils in Scotland and Wales

	Max. or Min. value	Primary Pupils				Secondary Pupils			
		Wales		Scotland		Wales		Scotland	
Energy (kilocalories)	EAR	30%	557 ^b	30%	557 ^b	30%	646 ^c	30%	664 ^d
Macronutrients									
Fat (g)	Max	35%*	21.6 ^b	35%*	21.7 ^b	35%*	25.2 ^c	35%*	25.8 ^d
Saturated fat (g)	Max	11%*	6.8 ^b	11%*	6.8 ^b	11%*	7.9 ^c	11%*	8.1 ^d
Total carbohydrate (g)	Min	50%*	74.2 ^b	50%*	74.3 ^b	50%*	86.1 ^c	50%*	88.5 ^d
Non-milk extrinsic sugars (g)	Max	11%*	16.3 ^b	11%*	16.3 ^b	11%*	18.9 ^c	11%*	19.5 ^d
Fibre (g)	Min	30%	4.5 ^b	30%	4.5 ^b	30%	5.2 ^c	30%	5.3 ^d
Protein (g)	Min	30%	8.5 ^b	30%	8.5 ^b	30%	13.3 ^c	30%	13.6 ^d
Micronutrients									
Iron (mg)	Min	40%	3.5 ^b	40%	3.5 ^b	40%	5.9 ^e	40%	5.9 ^e
Zinc (mg)	Min	40%	2.8 ^b	-	-	40%	3.7 ^f	-	-
Calcium (mg)	Min	40%	220 ^b	35%	192.5 ^b	40%	400 ^g	35%	350 ^g
Vitamin A (µg)	Min	40%	200 ^b	30%	150 ^b	40%	250 ^h	30%	187 ^h
Vitamin C (mg)	Min	40%	12 ^b	35%	10.5 ^b	40%	14.6 ⁱ	35%	14 ⁱ
Folate (µg)	Min	40%	60 ^b	40%	60 ^b	40%	80 ^j	40%	80 ^j
Sodium (mg)	Max	30% [±]	588 ^k	30% [±]	588 ^k	30% [±]	705 ^l	30% [±]	705 ^l

Sources: Proposed nutrient standards for school lunches in Wales from August 2008 from the *Appetite for Life* consultation document 2006 (Wales); *Hungry for Success: A Whole School Approach to School Meals in Scotland* (Scotland)

*: % of energy provided in an average school lunch; nutrient values expressed as grams

[±]: not more than 30% of the SACN recommendation for sodium (SACN (2003) *Salt and Health*. London: The Stationary Office)

b: reflects the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for boys and girls aged 7-10 years

c: reflects the average requirement for boys and girls based on 2006 English secondary school population age distribution: 70% aged 11-14 years and 30% aged 15-18 years

d: reflects the average requirement for boys and girls based on Scottish secondary school population age distribution: 55% aged 11-14 years and 45% aged 15-18 years

e: reflects the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for iron for girls 11-18 years

f: reflects the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for zinc boys 11-18 years

g: reflect the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for calcium boys 11-18 years

h: reflects the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for vitamin A for boys 15-18 years

i: reflects the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for vitamin C for boys and girls 15-18 years

j: reflects the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for boys and girls aged 11-18 years

k: reflects the target average intake for boys and girls aged 4-10 years according to the SACN *Salt and Health* report (2006)

l: reflects the target average intake for boys and girls aged 11-18 years according to the SACN *Salt and Health* report (2006)

Sir Liam Donaldson, CMO
Department of Health
Room 114
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS



28 June 2007

Dear Sir Liam,

Re: SACN response to the *Health is Global: Proposals for a UK government-wide strategy consultation*.

The Committee thanks you for an opportunity to comment on the UK government strategy proposals launched in the *Health is Global* report and congratulates you for highlighting the role of UK government in addressing global health issues.

SACN welcomes your recognition of the importance of global health promotion but believes that the prevention and treatment of malnutrition requires much greater emphasis. It will be central to the achievement of several UN Millennium Development Goals, most obviously the eradication of poverty and hunger and reduction in child mortality, but others too.

As paragraph 2.2.3 of the report points out, malnutrition is directly or indirectly responsible for approximately 50% of deaths in young children and is a major contributor to the burden of disease in the developing world. However poor nutrition is not confined to developing countries, nor just a feature of conflict as implied elsewhere. It is a global problem, which co-exists with population movement and migration. Countries in economic transition are at particular risk. Even in the UK, as the National Diet and Nutrition Surveys illustrate, micronutrient deficiencies affect young children and women of child bearing age.

Nutrition is key to the achievement of a child's developmental potential. Malnutrition exerts its most damaging effects during pregnancy and in the first two years of a child's life. This adversely affects physical growth, brain development and, ultimately, human capital formation. It affects a child's chances of performing well at school and has intergenerational consequences. Girls chronically malnourished through childhood and adolescence will be less well equipped to enter pregnancy thus perpetuating the cycle of low birth weight and stunting.

Improved nutrition drives stronger economic growth. Whilst this is briefly acknowledged in chapter 4 of your report we think, again, that more emphasis is justified. The World Bank report¹ states

¹ The World Bank (2006) *Repositioning Nutrition as Central to Development – A Strategy for large-scale action. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development*

“Malnutrition slows economic growth and perpetuates poverty through three routes - direct losses in productivity from poor physical status; indirect losses from poor cognitive function and deficits in schooling; and losses owing to increased health care costs”.

Nutrition programmes in the past have been low priority for government. Invariably, there are multiple stakeholders and problems may be addressed in a piece-meal fashion. Thus there is a need for a holistic approach and strategic leadership with engagement of development partners. Gross malnutrition is visible and reactive action is taken but the marginal nutrient deficiencies usually remain invisible to malnourished families and communities and this can impact on morbidity and population health as a whole.

Strong evidence indicates that nutritional interventions need to be delivered in the earliest years of a child’s life². The window of greatest opportunity for addressing malnutrition extends from before conception until two years of age. Despite the common perception that food production and availability are the only limiting factors in countries where malnutrition is widespread, other contributing factors include inadequate knowledge about the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices, and the lack of time women have available for appropriate infant care practices and their own care during pregnancy. Interventions, which include regular personal contact with health care workers supporting and advising families seem most effective though may be less attractive to some funding agencies than more technological solutions. A clear governmental strategy for such interventions is thus required, committing resources to adequate education and training alongside delivery.

Nutrition needs to take a central place in the development strategy of governments so that the full range of economic and social improvements can be realised. Whilst direct relief in the form of food aid may in some instances be important, access to food is often not the only issue. The food needs of children age 0 to 18 months are relatively small and yet child undernutrition seems to coexist with obesity in many households and communities, a phenomenon which has been termed the “double burden” of malnutrition³.

The UK has many important contributions to make to the global endeavour for promoting child health and reducing child mortality through effective strategies and support to countries where malnutrition is common. These include both direct measures (such as the provision of food and personal support) and indirect ones, particularly those relating to trade, agricultural productivity and gender equality. In relation to the former we would like to emphasise the appropriate training of professionals in prevention and management of severe malnutrition as vital. Whilst it is an area in which particular expertise has evolved within UK academic centres there is an urgent need to disseminate knowledge and build skills much more widely both at home and abroad.


As you are aware, the Committee provides scientific advice on all aspects of Nutrition to the UK government and will be pleased to contribute its expertise in International Nutrition and support UK’s efforts in promoting global health.

² Engle PL *et al.* (2007) Child development in developing countries 3: Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world. *The Lancet* 369, 229-242

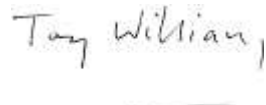
³

Davidson F (2002) Nutrition and Health. In *Nutrition: A Foundation for Development*, Geneva: ACC/SCN

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Alan A. Jackson in black ink, with a horizontal line underneath.

Professor Alan A Jackson
Chair of the Scientific Advisory
Committee on Nutrition (SACN)

Handwritten signature of Tony Williams in black ink, with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Anthony F Williams
Chair of the Subgroup on Maternal
and Child Nutrition (SMCN)