

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
31st January 2008

**UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE
SCHOOL FOOD STRATEGY**

Purpose of the Report

1. To report on progress made in fulfilling the strategic objectives of the School Food Strategy.

Action Required of the Committee

2. The committee is asked to note the report.

Background

3. The School Food Strategy was completed in June 2007.
4. It was distributed to all Wiltshire Primary, Secondary and Special Schools. Additionally, it was distributed to Children's Centres and Young People's Support Service Centres.
5. The Strategy put forward objectives under the following key headings:
 - Policy
 - Education and Training
 - Partnerships
 - Links with Local Providers
 - Resources
 - Contract
 - Monitoring and Evaluation

The Strategic Objectives and Progress Made

Strategic Objectives

1. Policy

1.1 The School Food Strategy will be implemented as a partnership between the LA, head teachers, pupils, parents, carers, governors, catering staff/managers, local and main food suppliers, contractors, the PCT and the media

This objective has been achieved. Drafts of the School Food Strategy (SFS) had been widely consulted upon prior to its final publication. The School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) has acted as a Steering Group for the Strategy. It's membership comprises representatives from the LA, schools, the PCT, local farmers, school caterers, The Wiltshire Gardens Trust and the Wiltshire Healthy Schools Team.

1.2 Interim Food-based Standards for school lunches to be in place from September 2006.

This objective has been met. All schools that provide meals comply with these standards.

1.3 Food-based standards for food other than lunch to be in place by September 2007.

This objective has been met. The Food-based standards were broadly the same as the Interim Food-based Standards, with a few notable exceptions (eg. the prohibition of the sale of cakes and biscuits at break times). This caused some concern initially, due to fears of loss of revenue, but schools have been supported and advised of ways in which to comply with this requirement.

1.4 Nutrient-based Standards for school lunches to be in place from September 2008 (Primary) or September 2009 (Secondary and Special Schools)

This objective is ongoing. The Nutrient-based Standards for School Lunches have recently been published and distributed to all schools. In September 2008, it will be a legal requirement for Primary Schools to comply with these. The School Food Trust has advised that schools with In-house Catering Provision access the support of a Nutritional expert or utilise menu planning software to ensure their meals are compliant. Contractors providing meals are responsible for ensuring these Standards are met. (N.B. Sodexo meals do comply with the Nutrient-based Standards).

1.5 All schools to develop a whole school food policy

This objective is ongoing. All schools taking part in the Healthy Schools Programme (currently 92% of Wiltshire Schools) have to produce a Food Policy.

1.6 All schools in Wiltshire (and the Wiltshire Young People's Support Service) to be engaged with Healthy School Programme by 2009

This objective is ongoing. As mentioned above currently 92% of Wiltshire schools are engaged in this programme.

1.7 In support of the Wiltshire Local Public Service Agreement encourage increased consumption of fruit and vegetables as part of the 5 a day campaign

This objective has been met. All Primary Schools are taking part in the Free Fruit and Vegetable Scheme for Key Stage 1 pupils. Several have extended this offer to older pupils. All pupils having a school meal are offered at least two portions of fruit and vegetables daily as per the Food-based and Nutrient – based Standards for School Lunches.

2. Education and Training

2.1 Schools will ensure that all young people are able to understand what constitutes healthy eating at each Key Stage and are able to prepare a healthy meal safely by the time they leave Secondary School

This objective is ongoing. Healthy Eating is taught through Design and Technology and Science. An announcement was made by the Education Secretary that from September 2008 all young people (from the ages of 11-18) will have an entitlement to learn to cook through the 'Licence to Cook' programme. This will be in addition to changes in the Food Technology curriculum making lessons more practical.

At Primary level, the School Food Trust has started a national campaign, 'Let's Get Cooking' that aims to set up cookery clubs in every Primary school.

2.2 The LA will set up Food Learning Partnerships in Wiltshire, as a model intended to improve the teaching of Food Technology classes and cookery skills in all schools, and actively involve both catering staff and mid-day supervisory assistants

This objective has been met. A number of training courses have been run for Primary School teachers to increase confidence and competence to teach Food Skills. The programme has recently been widened with the training of 5 new Secondary Food Technology teachers to deliver these courses. 5 courses have been planned to run in 2007-8.

This training has not been offered to catering staff or mid-day supervisors, as it has been designed specifically for teaching professionals.

2.3 The LA will encourage schools to make applications to the Food Standards Agency's Cooking Bus, targeting those in most need of assistance in the teaching of Food Technology

The use of the Food Standards Agency's 'Food Bus' has been flagged up to schools. Currently there is a two year waiting list for a visit from the Food Bus. No Wiltshire school has secured a visit as yet.

2.4 The partners will develop innovative solutions to meet the requirement for improved training and skills for catering staff to meet the New Nutritional Standards

This objective has been met. Courses for Catering staff have been developed and run with Ashlyns Organics Limited at Wiltshire College, Chippenham and at the Food Centre at The Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester.

2.5 The LA will encourage and support schools to grow their own fruit and vegetables

This objective has been met. A *Food and Farm Directory for Schools* has been compiled containing information and guidance for schools interested in growing their own fruit and vegetables. A Food and Farm Fayre was held on Friday 9th

November 2007, at The Corn Exchange in Devizes, where schools were invited to meet representatives from The Wiltshire Gardens Trust (amongst others) to find out about the support they can receive with growing projects.

2.6 The LA will develop a wider programme of education on healthy eating and nutrition, linking the work that is taking place to promote the Healthy Schools Programme with the Children and Young People's Trust Board's desire to improve the emotional well-being of all children

This objective is ongoing. The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator and the Healthy Eating Advisor from the Healthy Schools team are drafting a resource for schools to signpost schools to the varied range of educational packages that are available.

3. Partnerships

3.1 The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator will work with the Healthy Schools Team and the Healthier Wiltshire Project to ensure that priority is given to individual schools and communities manifesting the most socio-economic need, thereby contributing to a reduction in health inequalities within Wiltshire

This objective has been met. An invitation was extended to schools to bid for funding from the Targeted School Meals Grant. Criteria were set for these bids, prioritising schools from areas of social deprivation.

3.2 To work in partnership with other neighbouring Local Authorities in the South West to come up with innovative solutions to meet training needs. For example, to work with Gloucestershire County Council to explore the viability of leasing a School Food Bus for the region

This objective is ongoing. The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator in partnership with colleagues from neighbouring authorities, has been involved in the development of a designated regional training centre for School Cooks based at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

The idea of leasing a School Food Bus for the region has also been explored with these colleagues, but unfortunately proved to be not financially viable.

3.3 To ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to be fully involved in the Strategy

This objective is ongoing. All schools engaged with the Healthy Schools programme are encouraged to use a whole school approach. In this way, children and young people can be involved in developing aspects of the Healthy Eating agenda through School Councils and/or School Nutrition Action Groups.

4. Links with Local Providers

4.1 To establish a link with local providers and procurement agencies to assist wherever possible with the procurement of food from within Wiltshire and the region for school meals

This objective has been met. Local providers are regularly invited to the meetings of the School Nutrition Action Group. Two Food Fayres for Schools have been successfully run where local producers/suppliers have had the opportunity to make links with school caterers.

4.2 To reconnect school aged children and young people in Wiltshire schools to the food chain by arranging visits to local farms

This objective has been met. The Year of Food and Farming was launched in September 2007. One of the objectives of this national campaign was to increase the numbers of school children visiting farms. The *Food and Farm Directory* contained information and guidance for schools regarding school trips to farms. Some of the farmers featured in the Directory came along to the Food and Farm Fayre in November 2007.

4.3 To establish links between local restaurants and their surrounding communities

This objective is ongoing. Some local restaurateurs have forged good links with local schools. It is hoped that a campaign can be started to extend and promote this kind of project across the county.

5. Resources

5.1 The LA will work with the School Buildings and Places Team to identify appropriate practical solutions for schools which do not at present have kitchen facilities. This might include the use of mobile kitchens to provide a hot, cooked meal

This objective is ongoing. The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator first investigated the option of the use of mobile kitchens in 2006. At that time, mobile kitchens did not seem a viable option for schools due to the costs involved. At present, the School Buildings and Places Team do not have any plans to use mobile kitchens. All new-build schools are constructed with a fully equipped kitchen.

5.2 The LA will gather evidence, drawing upon the good practice of a number of Wiltshire schools that have already adopted effective healthy eating policies, with regard to the view that the cost of improving the diets of school aged children leads to savings in other areas of public spending (eg behaviour support and health spending in later life)

This objective is ongoing. A project is planned using data from a local Primary School, which has introduced school meals for the first time.

There has been anecdotal evidence provided from schools about the perceived benefits of healthier school meals, such as; children are more able to concentrate, pupils appear calmer in the afternoon learning sessions, one school even reported a reduction in the number of children with colds and sniffles.

However, in December 2007, The School Food Trust published a report entitled 'School Lunch and Behaviour: systematic observation of classroom behaviour following a school dining room intervention'.

This set out to determine whether a) improvements in school food provision at lunch time to meet the new food-based standards and b) changes to the school lunch time dining room environment to meet best practice, improved pupils' concentration and made them more alert and calm in the classroom in the learning period after lunch.

They concluded that:

'a combined nutrition-environment intervention in primary schools had a beneficial impact on pupils' behaviour in the teacher pupil setting, but was associated with increased off-task behaviours when pupils were asked to work together without direct teacher supervision. The nutrition-first intervention was more powerfully associated with this effect than the environment-first intervention. The findings are consistent with the more subjective anecdotal evidence from teachers that pupils are more on-task following a healthier lunch in school.'

6. Contract

6.1 Extensive consultation with all relevant partners will be carried out before agreeing the terms and conditions of any new school catering contract (due to commence 1st April 2008)

This objective is ongoing. Discussions are continuing with Sodexho regarding a possible extension to the existing contract. A decision will be known in February.

Work to develop an outline specification to meet the requirements of the Food Standards in September 2008 has continued and will be offered to schools requiring an alternative to the Sodexho contract. Most schools leaving Sodexho seem to be developing their own arrangements.

6.2 The monitoring and contract management arrangements will be developed once the stakeholder discussions commence

This objective is ongoing. If an extension is agreed monitoring services will be offered as part of the extension, subject to adequate resources being provided. Schools choosing to make their own requirements will be offered an opportunity to purchase technical monitoring support.

6.3 Robust and effective systems will be in place before any new contract begins, which include payment systems, ordering, change control, performance management, knowledge management and accurate assessment of the outcomes expected (Eg. Delivery to remote/rural schools)

This objective is ongoing. These have yet to be developed pending the outcome of discussions with stakeholders regarding a possible extension to the current contract. Schools choosing to make their own arrangements will be responsible for developing systems associated with new service delivery method.

6.4 If a new contract is agreed, the catering service will be actively marketed to all schools and other appropriate settings, building on earlier stakeholder consultations to achieve maximum take-up and smooth transition from existing arrangements to the new

The strategy will be developed once the outcome of current discussions with Sodexo is known. Schools, etc, currently outside of the Sodexo contract have been offered the opportunity to 'buy back' into the contract.

6.5 Where applicable the terms and conditions of any new School Catering Contract will include that the contractor provide services to the County's Children's Centres, in addition to its schools, both in terms of providing healthy food

Not all children's centres are on school premises, some children may only attend for a short half day session (no lunch). Some of the centres are being run by voluntary and private providers who will provide their own catering staff and we cannot insist that they use whoever is awarded any new contract.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Rigorous and regular monitoring arrangements will be put in place to track and influence the progress of the School Meals Strategy and its effectiveness in transforming school meals in Wiltshire

This objective has been met. Meetings of the School Nutrition Group (SNAG) are held quarterly to discuss the progress of the School Food Strategy.

7.2 Where applicable, to monitor the effectiveness of services provided by Children's Centres to ensure that parents and children are engaged in adopting a healthy lifestyles.

This objective has been met. These settings are monitored quarterly. In July 2007, the Children's Centres had achieved the following:

- All had Healthy Eating policies
- Two are piloting the 'Healthy Pre-School Award'
- Workshops on creating healthy lunch boxes had been held
- 'Ready, Steady, Cook' sessions with health visitors and cooking with toddlers

- Diet and weigh in group for adults with advice on healthy eating
- Family Learning 12 hour course “Fun with Food” in Marlborough

Conclusion

50. The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator will work with all stakeholders to ensure all the identified objectives of the School Food Strategy are implemented by Summer 2008.

Carolyn Godfrey
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