

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
11th September 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. Its 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 School Food Trust (SFT) guide to the Food-based and Nutrient-based Standards for School Lunches was distributed to all Primary Schools in January 2007. Since then, three workshops have been held across the county (aimed at schools with in-house catering and those that employ small catering contractors) to fully update them on this new legislation and the likely challenges. These workshops also offered schools the opportunity to meet dietitians, nutritionists and specialist software companies that could help and support them. Out of 65 primary schools with in-house catering or meals provided by a small catering contractor, 31 sent a representative to one of the workshops.

Delegates attending the workshops, expressed concerns about these new standards. Their main concerns were:

- The costs to the school in having all their recipes and menus analysed;
- The time it would take to check menu compliance;
- The reliability/ accuracy of menu analysis;
- The loss of creativity in the kitchen, as once menus have been analysed, they have to be adhered to rigorously;
- The methods of monitoring compliance.

In June 2008 a quick survey was carried out with the 44 primary schools with in-house catering, aiming to establish the methods these schools were planning on using to meet these standards. 21 schools responded. 15 schools reported they were still undecided as to their approach, 2 schools indicated they would not be complying with the standards, 2 schools planned to use a dietitian and 1 school planned to use software.

A similar survey was also carried out in July 2008 with the 21 primary schools that employ small catering contractors to provide their school meals. 11 schools responded. 3 schools said their contractor was still undecided, 2 schools said their contractor planned to use a dietitian and 6 said their contractor planned to use software.

Secondary and Special schools will receive their version of the Nutrient-based Standards guidance in September 2008.

It is the intention of the School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator to establish a clearer picture of school compliance with these standards, as part of the annual School Food Audit, sent out in September 2008.

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 100% 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 has been met. As mentioned above currently 100% 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.

The 'Licence to Cook' programme will be rolled out from September 2008. One of the four Lead Practitioners for this project is a teacher based at Pewsey Vale School. 'Licence to Cook' is a web-based training programme combined with face-to-face lessons on four key themes:

- Food and Nutrition
- Wise Shopping
- Food Hygiene
- Practical Skills

At Primary level, the School Food Trust in partnership with the Big Lottery Fund has initiated a 5 year national project, 'Let's Get Cooking' that aims to set up

cooking clubs in Primary schools. The Regional Co-ordinator for 'Let's Get Cooking' will be writing to Wiltshire schools in June 2009 inviting their participation.

The School Food Strategy Co-ordinator will establish the numbers of Cookery Clubs being run in schools in the annual School Food Audit in September 2008.

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 were planned to run in 2007-8. Unfortunately, 2 of these courses did not run due to difficulties with recruitment. The interest level in these courses remains high, but it can be difficult to recruit primary teachers, as schools have to release staff from their teaching duties for two whole days. This is quite costly to schools in terms of supply cover.

Further courses are planned for 2008-9, however the Design and Technology Association (DATA) that fund this training, have reduced the number of courses that can be run annually, and now stipulate that each course must have 10 delegates (previously, a maximum of 6 delegates was recommended). This training offer has now been extended to include Teaching Assistants to maximise attendance levels.

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 'Cooking 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.

There are other food buses available for schools, including the 'Focus on Food' bus and the Big Lottery funded 'Food for Life' bus.

All schools that successfully achieve the Soil Association's 'Food for Life' flagship status will automatically receive a visit from the 'Food for Life' bus.

St. Andrew's CE Primary School in Laverstock has recently been awarded flagship status; the first in Wiltshire to achieve this standard.

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. Each delegate was awarded a Foundation Certificate in Cookery for School Caterers.

Many school cooks have completed a distance learning course, 'Level 2 Award in Nutrition and Health'. This was particularly successful, as the delegates could complete the course at their own pace at home.

Four Food Safety courses have been run for school caterers, with a total of 85 delegates all achieving a Level 2 Certificate in Food Safety. This training was particularly targeted at those schools that run their own catering service.

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* was distributed to all schools and Children's Centres in October 2007. This guide contained information for schools interested in growing their own fruit and vegetables. This directory will be reviewed in October 2008.

The School Food Strategy Co-ordinator will establish the impact this document has had as part of the annual School Food Audit in September 2008.

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 not be 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.

A Secondary School packed lunch leaflet promoting healthy eating choices has been designed by a group of students from South Wilts Grammar School for Girls in Salisbury. It has been designed by teenagers with teenager's tastes in mind. It is hoped that this can be re-produced and distributed to all Wiltshire schools.

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.

One scheme that has been promoted through the School Food Newsletter, is *Adopt a Chef*. This is a charitable scheme run by members of The Academy for Culinary Arts. Local restaurateur, Peter Vaughan from Devizes is the representative for the South West. Schools can book a visit from Peter, to come and spend the day with them teaching the children about healthy foods.

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.

In February 2008, the DCSF invited Local Authorities to bid for capital funding for school kitchens. £150 million was being offered for schools without kitchens to have them re-instated.

The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator in partnership with the School Buildings and Places Team, contacted schools to inform them of this opportunity. Unfortunately, the LA was unable to submit a bid, as not enough schools were willing to take part, as the criteria for the funding stated that each school would have to match fund the capital from the DCSF. Many schools that could have benefited felt they were not able to make this financial commitment due to budgetary constraints.

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. A 2-year extension to the existing contract was approved by Cabinet in February 2008. This will allow more time to establish school requirements before approaching the market in 2009. All meals provided under the extended corporate contract by Sodexo already fully comply with the nutritional standards effective from 2008 (primary), 2009 (secondary).

Specifications for future contracting arrangements will fully meet or exceed all nutritional requirements.

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

This objective is ongoing. As the contract extension has now been agreed monitoring services will continue as part of the extension, on the basis of individual requests from schools. 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 future discussions with stakeholders. New details will also have to take account of organisational changes through the introduction of the Business Management Programme and Shared Services. 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 extension of the current contract will delay this objective. All schools have the option to come into the extended contract with Sodexo.

The strategy will be developed once the outcome of future discussions with stakeholders is known. Schools, etc, currently outside of the Sodexo contract will be offered the opportunity to 'buy back' into the contract in due course.

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. The contract will however, allow for access to future arrangements for any centre that chooses to take advantage of a corporate 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) have been held quarterly to discuss the progress of the School Food Strategy. This group will continue to meet to oversee the updated Strategy for 2008-9. New members will also be encouraged to attend to reflect the new priorities therein.

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 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

Update for Sept 08

- Three centres have successfully completed the 'Healthy Pre-schools Award' pilot. Following amendments of the programme every children's centre (there are 20 centres in total) will take part in the award scheme from September 2008
- Each centre has a breastfeeding support group for new parents. The Bebe Café in Devizes is particularly successful in running their support group alongside the antenatal appointments for teenage parents.
- 47 parents have attended either the 2 hour or 12 hour Family Learning sessions on 'Fun with Food'.

Conclusion

6. The School Meals Strategy Co-ordinator will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure all the identified objectives of the School Food Strategy are implemented, and those objectives classified as 'ongoing' are carried forward into the updated Strategy for 2008-9.

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