

Nutrient-based Standards for School Lunches - The Challenges



Background

- The School Food Trust (SFT) published the Interim Food-based Standards for School Lunches in September 2006;
- In September 2007, the Food-based Standards for Food Other than Lunch came into force;
- From September 2008, all Primary schools in England had to comply with the Nutrient-based Standards for School Lunches;
- All Secondary and Special schools in England will have to comply with the Nutrient-based Standards for School Lunches from September 2009.

Guide to the nutrient-based standards

A guide to introducing the Government's food-based and nutrient-based standards for school lunches



The School Food Strategy and Beyond

- The *Wiltshire School Food Strategy* has included strategic objectives regarding their implementation (Section 1, Policy: 1.2,1.3,1.4)
- Schools have been supported and advised of these Regulations in the following ways:
 - Regular letters sent to all schools, published on *Wisenet*;
 - Articles in termly School Food Newsletter;
 - Termly *Wiltshire School Cook Network Meetings*;
 - *3 Nutrient-based Standards Workshops** (held in Summer 2008 in Salisbury, Devizes and Chippenham).

(* *These workshops were designed to help those schools with in-house catering arrangements or those that employ small catering companies*)

The Nutrient-based Standards (NBS)

- The NBS Workshops covered the following key areas...
- The NBS...
- What are they?
- When will they come into force?
- How do schools comply?
- The Challenges
- Issues with Menu Analysis
- Changes to working practices
- The Benefits
- Non-compliance—the consequences
- Healthy Schools
- Sources of further information

Other Support

- The SFT has issued several publications to assist 'opted-out' schools:
- Independent review of Nutrient Analysis Software (June 2007)
- The Guide to NBS (January 2008, with updated inserts for Secondary and Special schools September 2008)
- The Step-by-step guide to Calculating the Nutrient Content of School Lunches (February 2008)
- The Caterer's Guide (June 2008)
- An Independent Review: Nutritional analysis support packages for school lunches (December 2008)
- To name but a few!
- (All can be accessed on the SFT website:
www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk)

The Challenges

- A) Cost
 - Cost of the dietitian/consultant to analyse menus
 - Cost of Nutrient Analysis Software (incl. subscription fees, training, IT...)
 - Cost of additional menu cycle analysis to accommodate changes etc
 - If a school has bought in software, staffing costs will be incurred as it takes time to input recipes and analyse menus accurately
 - The School Lunch Grant (2008-11) can be used to fund menu analysis!
- B) Time
 - It can take 15-20 minutes to input a single recipe into software
 - All recipes will need to be analysed in a menu cycle. A menu cycle can last between 1-4 weeks
 - Research may be needed to find certain nutritional values
 - All food and drink provided must be included in the analysis (except daily bread portion)

- C) Who? (The software route)
 - Cooks? Admin/finance staff?
 - Employ a consultancy / catering contractor to do this?
 - If cooks are to input information into software, will they have access to IT and the training (and time) to use it?
 - If a contractor is employed, it is the contractors responsibility to ensure compliance (issue with smaller companies)
 - Schools will need to check their contractor has done this
- D) Other factors
 - Issues regarding lack of control/creativity
 - Supplier problems
 - Non-compliance – who will monitor?
 - Possible inaccuracies - sales mix (especially in Secondary schools)
 - Not exact science – can use nutritional values of similar products if the information is not available
 - The results indicate the nutritional value of a ‘typical school lunch’, not related to what pupils actually eat
 - Potential risk of ‘in-house’ school stopping meals, or changing to use of contractor to take the strain

The NBS Effect

- Preliminary results of the School Food Audit (October 2008) indicate:
- Out of 46 'opted-out' schools* which responded:
 - 16 plan to purchase software to analyse their menus
 - 3 plan to use a dietitian to analyse their menus
 - 1 plans to work in a 'consortium arrangement' with other schools
 - 2 schools are undecided in their approach
 - 7 schools do not intend to analyse their menus
 - 8 contractors will use software to analyse their menus
 - 3 contractors will use a dietitian to analyse their menus
 - 4 contractors are undecided and unsure of their approach
 - 2 contractors do not intend to analyse their menus

*There are a total of 45 schools with in-house arrangements and 21 schools which employ small companies (66 'opted-out' schools)

So this means....

- Just over 50% of the schools and contractors are planning on using software to analyse their menus
- About 13% of schools and contractors plan to employ a dietitian
- About 20% do not intend to comply (9 schools)
- About 13% are still undecided as to what to do

The Way Forwards

- Establish exact Ofsted monitoring arrangements for NBS compliance
- Include NBS as objective in revised *School Food Strategy*
- Survey 'opted-out' schools to establish:
 - Levels of compliance
 - Methodology used by schools
 - Lessons learned/issues arising (esp. with regard to Secondary and Special)
 - Impact? (+ve and –ve)
 - Organise county-wide NBS workshops for 2009, where good practice can be shared

