

# Newport Appetite for Life Group

## HES(3)-06-08(p3)

Proposed Healthy Eating in Schools (Wales) Measure 2008

A Consultation Response: Newport Appetite for Life Working Group

The Newport Appetite for Life Working Group represents the LEA (School Improvement, Children and Young People's Partnership, Local Caterers) and Gwent NHS Trust.

The Working Group (generally) supports the Proposed Measure, has considered the specified questions and drawn together the following response:

### **1. Is there a need for an Assembly Measure to promote healthy eating in schools in view of existing initiatives within this policy area?**

Generally, yes. This Measure will ensure that there is a coordinated and whole school approach to healthy eating.

### **2. Do you support the key provisions set out in the proposed Measure, i.e.**

#### **-the duty on Welsh Ministers, governing bodies, head teachers and local education authorities to promote healthy eating in schools;**

Yes, the positive aspects of this proposed Measure would:

Ensure that Food and Fitness Policies reflect practice.

Develop engagement with school councils (on food and drink issues)

Ensure Food and Fitness Policies have an ongoing action plan to improve healthy eating in the short, medium and long term (allowing for cultural change over a period of time).

Develop communication (with regard to healthy eating) between governors and parents

However;

There needs to be further clarification regarding food brought in to school for celebratory occasions and religious festivals (e.g. birthday cake).

Head teachers and Governing Bodies of Community Focused Schools cannot be expected to police food and drink provided by individuals or groups that hire the building.

Catering provision, fruit tuck shops, etc may be undermined by the food choice pupils bring from home.

It is imperative that the whole school food policy addresses education and guidance for parents and children regarding healthy choices for food brought from home.

It maybe appropriate to prohibit children bringing nuts to school due to the presence of children with severe nut allergy.

The timing of this measure needs to be considered. Regulations should be communicated early so schools and families are aware of forthcoming change.

#### **-healthy eating should be part of the inspection regime and includes reporting requirements on Welsh Ministers, the Chief Inspector of Education and training in Wales and governing bodies;**

We consider it is important that a dietician should be part of the inspection team if nutritional standards are scrutinized; however, this would not be helpful if the WAG Education budget or the Estyn Inspection cycle was compromised.

#### **-power of Welsh Ministers to specify nutritional standards, including the requirement to specify maximum levels of salt, sugar and artificial additives in food and drink provided for pupils on school premises;**

This is a necessary requirement and will help to improve school meals, although there will be direct financial implications (which should be supported by WAG). These will include:

Ongoing training for catering staff to use 'Saffron' nutritional analysis software

Grants for Schools Community Dieticians. This is an imperative role within Local Authorities, one which Newport has funded directly ( The staffing cost of a Dietician and a Food Worker for Newport provided through an SLA with the NHS is currently some £60K pa plus a working budget of some £40K to undertake projects and training ).

While administrative staff maybe able to input nutrition data, only registered dieticians can interpret nutritional information and advise on recipe modification to ensure healthy menu development.

Further funds to improve the 'meal on the plate'. Better quality ingredients are more costly. It is estimated that a rise of 10 pence per meal would be required to initially support this (costing Newport LEA a further £164K per year on current budgeted uptake - current food cost budgets are Primary 55p and Comps 82p).

The identification of fat, sugar, salt and additives seems to be focused primarily on obesity and the prevention of heart disease. It is important to meet the needs of those children who depend upon a meal at school to achieve their requirements for nutrients such as: calcium, iron, vitamins including A, C and Folate. Nutritional standards, therefore, should include recommendations for proportion of daily intake of these key nutrients to be achieved through the school meal.

There needs to be clarity regarding the permitting of artificial additives which may be used in meal preparation to reduce the sugar content. Within Appetite for Life, the additive guidelines relate solely to drinks and do not deal with those in foods.

**- encouraging take up of school meals and protection of identity of those who receive them;**

Whilst we agree with this in principle, there are a number of factors to consider:

UK wide research suggests that the introduction of 'Smart Card' systems could significantly improve the uptake of Free School Meals and protect individual identity. The estimated initial outlay cost of this, taking Newport as an example; would be some £370k ( placed in 55 units ) with a year on year maintenance and replacement cost of some £70K .

The same research also indicates that pupils in secondary schools would be more likely to access their Free School Meal if 'other' pupils were not allowed off site at lunchtime. This is a complex issue, which can only be put into practice with the support of Head teachers and Governing Bodies. Head teachers suggest that this measure can only be achieved with capital grants (to install adequate fencing around school buildings), staff who are willing to participate in lunchtime duties and parental cooperation.

School canteens would not be able to cope with the high volume of pupils accessing school meals (if this is successful). Head teachers would therefore need to consider lengthening or staggering the lunchtime period.

The ultimate aim should be for WAG to provide a free school lunch for all.

Improved dining facilities are a prerequisite to attract children and young people to use them.

The potential extending of lunchtimes "may "provide an opportunity to engage children and young people in a range of cultural and physical activities on school site.

**- the duty on local education authorities to ensure availability of drinking water for pupils.**

We agree in principle, although this has direct financial implications for the LEA and schools.

The estimated cost for the LEA to provide water cooling systems for each school is £256k.

Individual schools will be responsible for maintenance costs of approximately £200 per year.

When implemented, it should be clear that water should be accessible to pupils throughout the day.

**3. What are the practical implications of putting these provisions in place?**

In reference to local procurement:

There is not an infrastructure to purchase even the most basic products that are either manufactured or grown in Wales (to give caterers a sustainable option at a realistic price).

In reference to nutritional standards

Artificial additives are not included in the Appetite for Life standards. The Saffron software (chosen by WAG) does not have the ability to identify this.

The Measures should allow drinks with artificial sweeteners. Children and Young people who are overweight and obese often rely on sugar free drinks to reduce their calorie intake.

**4. Are there further provisions that you would like to see added to the proposed Assembly Measure?**

Given that Governing Bodies will need to report on the progress and impact of healthy eating, it would seem logical to make food and fitness policies statutory.

In order to promote the whole school approach to food and nutrition and link to the curriculum, it is important that all school (including midday supervisors) and catering staff receive ongoing training and support. Funding is required for appropriately qualified personnel to undertake this and to release staff to participate in training.

**5. Do you think the proposed Assembly Measure will achieve its overall purpose and aim, i.e. to enable a holistic,**

**comprehensive 'made in Wales' policy on nutrition in schools to be developed and implemented?**

It will only promote a holistic approach if the concerns are addressed and there is additional funding for school meals. If school meals are nutritionally balanced but do not appeal to the consumer (due to budgetary constraints), pupils will inevitably vote with their feet.