



Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and Email Contacts (Scotland)

CC: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts (England, Northern Ireland and Wales)

The Scottish Executive's way ahead for schools

Key issues

This Bill seeks to improve child health in Scotland.

Requires schools to be 'health promoting'.

Enables local authorities to provide free snacks to children.

Enables Ministers to set statutory nutritional standards.

Ensures anonymity of children entitled to free school meals.

1. Introduction

The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Bill ('the nutrition Bill') was introduced on 8 September 2006 and received Royal Assent on 17 April 2007. The Bill seeks to improve children's health within Scottish schools.

The Nutrition Bill will apply to local authority schools, school hostels and to grant aided schools. It applies in part to local authority nurseries and requires schools to be health promoting and allows schools to provide free snacks and to set nutritional standards for food and drink in schools. The Bill gives local authorities a power to provide free snacks and also places on them the following duties:

- To ensure that food and drink provided meet nutritional standards
- To promote the uptake of school meals, particularly free school meals
- To take reasonable steps to ensure protection of identity of pupils taking free meals
- To ensure schools are health promoting environments and include an account of this in their annual statement of improvement objectives
- To have regard to guidance issued
- To have regard to extent to which independent schools meet nutritional standards

In addition to local authorities, managers of grant aided schools and Scottish Ministers also have a duty to ensure that schools are health promoting. Regulations will provide for:

- Nutritional standards
- When food which does not meet these standards can be provided
- Provision of water, free of charge

The Executive carried out a consultation from May to July 2006 which received 371 responses, mostly from the education sector (42%), individuals (23%), and health (15%). Of this, 96% were positive towards the proposals, the analysis also drew out recurring themes which were additional to the proposals in the Bill:

- Ban certain foods or drinks
- Limit mobile food vendors near schools
- Extend nutrition standards to food brought into schools by pupils
- Extend coverage to private sector schools
- Link provisions with other initiatives around health and fitness
- Extend free school meals to all
- Teach cookery skills and principles of good health to pupils, parents and carers
- Concern about additional funding

The Bill can be viewed in full at:

www.scottish-parliament.uk/businessbills/68-schoolsHN/index.htm

2. Hungry for Success

The expert panel on school meals was established in 2001 with a remit to establish nutritional standards, develop a strategy to improve uptake and eliminate the stigma attached to taking free school meals. The Executive accepted their recommendations, the key ones being:

- To adopt nutrient standards by December 2004 in primary and special schools, and to include secondary schools by December 2006
- HMIE to monitor implementation
- Local authorities to incorporate implementation strategies into mainstream planning

The key principles of Hungry for Success are:

- Positive school/whole child ethos
- Partnership working
- Pupil consultation
- Eliminating stigma
- Managing the process
- Influencing choice
- Incentives to improve uptake of school meals

APSE believes in the ability of local government and its public partners to drive forward change and improvement from within. It is perhaps worth noting that due to the continued dedication by those involved with the 'Hungry for Success' programme has resulted in the Bill being introduced to benefit the children within Scotland's society. HMIE produced their first monitoring report, covering primary and special schools in October 2005 and generally found good progress. In addition, a baseline study of implementation was published in January 2006. The findings from these publications found further action was required regarding:

- Extending good practice
- Work with parents
- Encouraging uptake and healthy choices
- Maximising anonymity
- Rigorous self-evaluation

And that good progress was being made in:

- Implementing the nutrient standards
- Links between the curriculum and school lunches
- Partnership between the local authority and school
- Consultation with pupils
- Links with tuck shops, free fruit and breakfast clubs
- Improving dining halls

3. Whole School Approach: Health Promoting Schools

The Bill would require every school to be 'health promoting'. This reflects one of the underlying principles of Hungry for Success which was the 'positive school/whole child ethos' and builds directly on the target to make every school a health promoting school by 2007 – a commitment originally made in 1999 in Towards a 'Healthier Scotland' (Scottish Executive 1999a). Being well – Doing Well (Scottish Health Promoting School Unit, 2004a) is the national framework for health promoting schools in Scotland which 'involves a whole school approach to promoting the physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being of all pupils and staff.'

The 'Health Promoting School' concept has been developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) since the 1990's and 37 countries have participated in the European Network of Health Promoting Schools since 1997. The 'WHO' described the health promoting schools as one which:

- Fosters health and learning with all the measures at its disposal
- Engages health and education officials, teachers, teachers' unions, students, parents, health providers and community leaders in efforts to make the school a healthy place
- Strives to provide a healthy environment, school health education, and school health services along with school/community projects and outreach, health promotion programmes for staff, nutrition and food safety programmes, opportunities for physical education and recreation, and programmes for counselling, social support and mental health promotion
- Implements policies and practices that respect an individual's well being and dignity, provide multiple opportunities for success, and acknowledge good efforts and intentions as well as personal achievements
- Strives to improve the health of school personnel, families and community members as well as pupils and works with community leaders to help them understand how the community contributes to, or undermines, health and education to include consideration of the school's ethos and physical environment. It also seeks to emphasise links with parents and communities. A review of evaluations found that health promoting schools approach could be effective although there was a lack of research which considered the complete approach.

The Executive believes that this approach goes beyond what is taught in the classroom to include consideration of the school's ethos and physical environment. It also seeks to emphasise links with parents and communities. A review of evaluations found that the health promoting schools approach could be effective although there was a lack of research which considered the complete approach. In order to achieve 'health promoting school' status in Scotland schools must have the following characteristics:

- Leadership and management should be committed to improving health of pupils, staff and community. An integrated approach should be taken to identifying and meeting health needs
- An ethos which promotes respect for self, others, the community and environment
- Partnership working
- Curriculum learning and teaching should have a positive effect on health and well-being
- Personal, social and health education programmes should take into account pupils' health needs and values
- Schools should be safe, well-resourced, supportive and accessible

The Health Promoting Schools Unit describes the whole school approach as being: "core to health promotion within a school. It requires full integration of health promotion into the life and functions of the school by working through the policies, management structures and curriculum planning processes that exist. It also involves connecting with the wider life of young people, their families and communities. It is essential that there is real partnership with the whole school population and its wider community. The success of a whole school approach depends very much on effective partnership working and a democratic participatory ethos. Strong links with all aspects of a child's life – family, community and peers – are vital.

4. Conclusion

In addition to healthy lunches, the Executive aims to improve the kinds of food children are snacking on. The Nutrition Bill proposes a power for local authorities to provide free, nutritious snacks which could be used to provide free breakfast clubs, free fruit and milk and schools must meet nutrition standards. The Executive have a target that half of all schools will be healthy schools by 2006 with the rest working towards healthy school status by 2009.

Promoting healthy living in school aims to improve current and longer term health and in doing so enable children to gain more from education. The links between the health and well-being of pupils and their capacity to benefit from educational opportunities and attain high standards of achievement have been well established for many years. The Executive believes that good health narrows the opportunity gap and has significant positive effects on personal, social and educational achievement.

HMIe has looked at primary and special schools and found that most already include aspects of nutrition in the curriculum. It is however worthy of note that now changes are being adopted by these schools. Now secondary schools are included W.E.F. December 2006, HMIe also started to include them in this practice of including nutrition in the curriculum. Schools are now helping to support the increasing good practice being found in school dining rooms. HMIe's benchmarks for self evaluation (HMIe 2006) suggest that examples of what would constitute 'very good progress' in integrating nutrition in the curriculum at all stages:

- Pupils are knowledgeable about basic nutrition concepts and healthy eating messages. There are clear cross-curricular links to school projects incorporating appropriate messages about food and nutrition and teachers are using suitable resources. Rewards of appropriate items such as fruit, stationery, sports equipment, are used which are consistent with health promotion messages
- Health promotion is well integrated into all aspects of the school's work.
- The use of fruit is regularly linked with curriculum activities and there is free fruit for all primary 1 and 2 pupils

APSE welcomes this Bill and accepts that the Executive have campaigned in the process to ensure that the lifestyles of children in Scotland are taken into account when reaching decisions which could have a long term impact on them. This report according to the Scottish Executive, gives a flavour of a Scotland which is working hard to change its image to one of positive health and wellbeing. APSE believes that clear leadership is being given by the Executive and its partners, but in which the people of Scotland are also increasingly recognising their role in making healthier choices which could change their lives for the better.

Placing the role of local government at the heart of activity in this area is important and should not be overlooked by councils. School vending operations can only be as 'healthful' as the products the machines vend, but school vending can complement and enhance a nutritionally sound catering provision. In order to achieve this, a whole school approach to food and health issues is absolutely essential. As there may be an impact on gross income generated due to the change in vending content, APSE would therefore propose that this impact should be addressed through transitional funding brought forward to facilitate its implementation.

The requirement on local authorities to consider sustainable development when they provide food or drink in school should be recognised as an area where school meals can make a significant difference to communities in social, economic and environmental terms. School food is a catalyst for cultural and cognitive change in communities. Health, diet and awareness of food issues, should be linked to both Public Health and Sustainable Development Objectives. A step change will be required at each stage the food chain to engage with food producers and reduce Food Miles through enlightened Public Sector Procurement Policies, trained and knowledgeable catering staff will also be Key. APSE believes that transitional funding will be necessary for local authorities to pursue these sustainable development objectives in a meaningful way.

APSE would welcome any comments on the Delivery for Health, which should be sent to ptaggart@apse.org.uk

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