



# All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food



**Health and Wellbeing Statement Paper**

## Health and Wellbeing Statement Paper

This paper is the collective thoughts from a range of experts who advise the APPG on School Food. It is a statement of where the group feel School Food should be prioritised within the structures of the new Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) that came into place in England, April 2013.



### Structure and purpose of HWBs

Health and Wellbeing Boards took effect in all top tier and unitary authorities in April 2013. Their members include, at a minimum: one local elected representative; a representative of local Healthwatch organisation; a representative of each local clinical commissioning group; the local authority director for adult social services; the local authority director for children's services; the director of public health for the local authority. The HWBs can also co-opt members to add expertise – for example, from the charity sector. The main roles of the board will be to identify local needs, devise a strategy for addressing these, and to coordinate effective working across health, public health and social care. The boards will strategically drive commissioning in these sectors to positively impact upon health, wellbeing, and inequalities. The HWBs can address areas such as housing and education provision as these will impact upon health, wellbeing and health inequalities.

### School Food and HWBs

Although the groups should and will have influence over school food (in their roles of promoting health and wellbeing, tackling inequalities, ability to address education provision) it is not clear that each will necessarily have a member that clearly understands children's diets, the role of school food in terms of nutritional health, or the wider role of food education in schools in terms of its potential to impact positively upon public health. Neither is it clear just how each HWB will be required to strategically address school food / food education. There is also little clarity over what the routes of involvement will be for local stakeholders. The provision of a minimum of one local Healthwatch representative is not reassuring, considering the wide remit under which this single representative will be required to offer input. Neither is it clear how access to representatives will be enabled in an open, accessible way that ensures commissioning decisions are fully accountable.



## Current position of School Food and Wellbeing in Local Authorities

In June 2011 Natcen\* published a two year evaluation on the impact of the National Healthy Schools programme it stated - '77 per cent said that the NHSP had an impact on schools' provisions for healthy eating. There was an improvement to the physical environment in canteens, healthier menus,' The National Healthy Schools scheme was widely supported by school food providers, working with schools and PCT's on the food aspect of the award. Many continue to do so for locally devised schemes set up since the cancellation of this national programme. Both Local Authority caterers and private sector companies have worked alongside health professional colleagues to deliver food and nutrition awareness sessions, healthy eating activities, cookery classes, revised school menus and food offers and special activities in schools. They would be encouraged to continue to build on this integrated approach to health and wellbeing if there was clarity, uniformity and clear guidance from Health and Wellbeing Boards.

Several local authorities are well advanced in reconfiguring existing services around social care to enable them to deliver commissioned outcomes for the new Health and Well-being boards. With school budgets devolved, school catering now operates as a traded and increasingly commercially focussed service. Local authority caterers have happily augmented their service to emphasise healthy eating and to work with health professionals where this added value.

Several local authorities have recognised the value of school meals with additional funding for specific initiatives such as cooking skills, breakfast provision and promotion events but the increasing commercialisation of the service means unfunded interventions cannot be accommodated.



## Recommendations for prioritising School Food in public health for consideration and response by government office including Department of Education and Department of Health

1. HWBs should be required to have a member with particular interest in children's diets and wellbeing from a public health perspective
2. All HWBs should consider a ring fenced budget to support joint agency working in the promotion and provision of healthy food and healthy eating activities and programmes in Schools such as school nursing services, leisure and recreation, early year's providers, third sector and voluntary programmes etc. With a specific focus on training and sharing best practice that is linked to national public health campaigns such as Change4Life.
3. The Department of Health / Public Health England should produce guidance about HWBs and their role in regard to school food / food education. This guidance should first be the subject of national consultation.
4. The HWBs should be required to include a clear commitment to promote school meals in the joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, underpinned by Free School Meal take-up as a local key performance indicator to monitor progress
5. All HWBs should be required to highlight school meals as a priority area for all contracts commissioned and the tender specifications targeting all services that support Families, children and young people. Underpinned by an agreed set of targets using outcome based accountability performances that help towards increasing School Meal take up to deliver on local priorities such as – Financial Inclusion, Prevention of Childhood Obesity, Reduction in child Dental Caries, Improving Attendance, Improving education attainment.
6. The DH should ensure more clarity over other routes for input and involvement for the wider charitable and voluntary sectors.







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