

The Highland Council

Education Children and Adults Service Committee 11 February 2015

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ECAS 27/15

School Meal Working Group Update

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

The School Meals Stakeholder Group was established at the Adult and Children's Services Committee in November 2012. The Group has broadened its scope to cover all food in schools. This report provides Members with the third update on progress.

1. Background

- 1.1 This report contributes towards the following outcomes in Working together for the Highlands:
- The Council will work to alleviate poverty by encouraging benefit uptake and supporting a range of advice services;
 - The Council will promote and support local food production and continue our support for Fairtrade
 - The Council will work with NHS Highland to achieve public health targets for healthy weight
- 1.2 Poor diet is a significant contributor to Scotland's poor health record. Improving children's diet can make a major impact on the health of children with beneficial outcomes for learning, educational attainment and improved health throughout the life cycle.
- 1.3 The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 required local authorities to promote the uptake and benefits of school meals and, in particular, free school meals and reduce the stigma associated with free school meals by requiring local authorities to protect the identity of these eligible.
- 1.4 [Better Eating, Better Learning](#) was introduced in March 2014 to build on and replace the Hungry for Success guidance. It aims to support schools, local authorities, caterers, procurement departments, parents, children and young people to work in partnership to make further improvements in school food and food education. [Beyond the School Gate](#) was published in June 2014. It provides guidance for local authorities, schools, retailers, caterers and other partners on what they can do to influence the food environment around schools and support children and young people to make healthier choices. The work of the School Meals/Food in Schools Stakeholder Group is compatible with both documents.
- 1.5 Previous reports have emphasised that School meal uptake is not just a Catering Services issue; that Input is essential from school management teams to explore ways to improve school meal uptake. It emerged through the work of the Group that a focus on school meal uptake in isolation from other food in and around schools, including curricular activity and local communities and businesses, was unlikely to be effective. Therefore the Group's focus changed to improving

children's diets through improvements to food and access to food across the whole school environment.

- 1.6 Progress was reported to this Committee in January and September 2013. In addition to this, the work of the Group is overseen by the Public Health and Wellbeing Improvement Group which is part of the implementation structure for the delivery of ['For Highland's Children 4'](#).

2. Progress

2.1 This section provides an update on a selection of work taken forward by the Group. Previous work identified that:

- What works in one school will not necessarily work in another;
- The involvement of school management is crucial for success – it is not just a catering service issue;
- Targets for increase in uptake would need to be set on an individual school basis.

2.2 Introduction of Free School Meals (FSM) P1 -3

2.2.1 The introduction of free school meals for P1 – 3, commencing January 2015, has had an impact on the work of the Group. This Project is reported separately to this meeting of the Committee. There is a need to monitor the impact on families during the transition from P3 to P4, although this year's cohort will have only had 6 months of automatic free school meals, so impact should be less than for future years.

2.3 Mobile Vendors

2.3.1 In addition to local shops and garages, some secondary schools in Highland also have mobile vendors selling products including unhealthy foods to school pupils at lunchtime, which brings additional challenge to improving pupil diets.

2.3.2 ['Beyond the School Gate'](#) highlights that 14 authorities have placed a condition/restriction on trader's licences to restrict their operation in the vicinity of schools under section 39 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. Restrictions have been introduced in respect of the area and/or times that street traders can operate and, in effect, mean there can be an exclusion zone in place around schools within which street traders are not allowed to trade (usually during certain times/days). The document states that the degree of any condition/restriction is determined by local circumstances and varies between local authorities.

2.3.3 The Highland Council does not currently use licensing powers in this manner. The two legitimate licensing purposes of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 are the protection of the public and their safety and the protection of the environment. This is in contrast to the objectives of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 (which regulates alcohol sales) and specifically allows the Licensing Board to have regard to five objectives including protecting and improving public health and protecting children from harm.

2.3.4 Accordingly, the legal advice that the Council (and other authorities) has received is that imposition of exclusion zones around schools for street traders requires to be supported by changes in primary legislation which would broaden the scope of

the current licensing purposes. Until such time as the Act is amended, such conditions are ultra vires and thus challengeable. The issue has been considered on occasion at Council Committees since January 2010.

2.3.5 The 'Beyond the School Gate' document does explicitly acknowledge that there may be vires implications in pursuing exclusion zones by means of licensing.

2.3.6 With the agreement of the Chair of this Committee, the Group prepared and submitted a Care and Learning submission to the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill call for evidence in September 2014 to highlight this issue.

2.4 School Pilots/Work with local businesses

2.4.1 Head teachers were contacted at the end of the 2012/13 academic year and asked if they would undertake a pilot over the 2013/14 school year or longer if required, that might increase school meal uptake. A range of potential pilots to select from was circulated to prompt ideas. Despite eleven schools responding positively, progress has proved to be slower than anticipated due to other pressures on individual schools. This work will be progressed as appropriate, taking school needs into account.

2.4.2 Consultation work identified that most Dingwall Academy S1s are likely to purchase their lunch in a local supermarket in Dingwall. A project has been developed that included the development of lesson plans, with the involvement of the supermarket to highlight healthy options, and a pupil audit of the lunch area at the front of the store is also planned.

2.4.3 Initial discussions have taken place with the Head Teacher at the Inverness Royal Academy regarding concerns that have arisen regarding the cafeteria at another supermarket, and work will progress to explore appropriate solutions early in 2015.

2.4.4 *Children in Scotland Pilots*

Children in Scotland were awarded a grant to work with a number of schools to take forward key themes from Better Eating, Better Learning, to form the basis of a school's Better Eating, Better Learning [self-evaluation tool](#) and enable children and young people to lead the improvement agenda. The work will culminate in an event celebrating what the participating schools have done on 5th March in Glasgow.

2.4.5 The pilots in Highland have been supported by the Children in Scotland Participation Office, and have involved one primary and one secondary school: Hilton Primary and Kilchuimen Academy.

2.4.6 Pupils at Hilton Primary have been reviewing the various settings where they can learn about food and health, such as the classroom, garden and canteen. This has been very illuminating for staff, helping them to think about how they can make more of these settings.

2.4.7 Kilchuimen Academy has begun work on a pupil audit of the lunchtime food environment and developing critical consumer skills. This will involve:

- An evening event involving parents and local businesses;
- Workshop activity with pupils followed by staff training on food & mood and participative methods;

- Pupil feedback on an initial lunchtime food options village mapping exercise.

2.4.8 **Food for Life:** Food for Life Scotland have received funding from the Scottish Government to build a framework for learning centred around the Food for Life Catering Mark and the key message of 'good food for all'. This will include the provision of a wider 'Food for Life' programme, which aims to bring people together – teachers, pupils, families, cooks, caterers, food producers, and the wider community – to enjoy and celebrate good, wholesome food and change food culture in Scottish schools and the communities around them: The pilot programme intends to use food as a way to improve the whole school experience – by putting healthy and sustainable food at the heart of the school day. Key features include:

- Promoting school meals as an opportunity for schools to link learning about food with making healthy food choices in school, at home and when eating out, and the need to balance diet and nutrition with environmental and social sustainability.
- The opportunity to enrich classroom learning by embedding food education across the day-to-day curriculum in a holistic, experiential, meaningful, inclusive, and inter-disciplinary way.
- The provision of a framework which empowers schools and the communities around them to develop meaningful partnerships which link food and health education with positive family and community experiences.
- Serving freshly- prepared, locally- sourced, sustainably- produced school meals that meet the rigorous ethical, environmental, and health-related standards of the Food for Life Catering Mark.

2.4.9 The Catering Service and teaching staff are working with the Food for Life Education Co-ordinator with their Food for Life Education Framework for schools.

2.4.10 **'Connecting Culture Catering Curriculum And Community'**

All Highland schools have achieved Bronze Food for life status. With a recent pilot, six schools are developing to Silver status. Rosebank and Millbank Primary Schools in Nairn are progressing as pathfinder schools.

2.5 Lesson Plans

2.5.1 Lesson Plans based on the 2013 Highland Lifestyle Survey results have been developed and introduced. One focuses on school meals and covers the following Curriculum for Excellence 'Experiences and Outcomes':

- **HWB 4-28a:** "I have investigated factors which can influence participation in physical activity and food choices, and the impact of activity on population health in the Scottish and wider contexts. I can use this information to discuss policies and inform my own health choices."
- **HWB 3-34a/HWB 4-34a:** "Having explored a range of issues which may affect food choice, I can discuss how this could impact on the individual's health."

2.6 High 5 Health and Wellbeing Programme

2.6.1 Around 10,000 primary school children participated in the High 5 Health and Wellbeing Programme which focused on food, physical and emotional literacy. This enabled Highland to achieve 796 Child Healthy Weight Interventions (target

641) that met the HEAT Target that ended in March 2014. In an effort to maintain the momentum created by the introduction of the Programme, Scottish Government funding via NHS Highland has been secured for short term, part time administration to boost primary school involvement. New HEAT targets will be introduced in 2015–16, but it is not yet clear what the focus will be. Work is ongoing to develop secondary High 5 resources.

2.7 On site policies

2.7.1 Schools that operate on site policies are Alness Academy S1; Golspie High School S1 and S2; Fortrose and Tain Academies S1 from August until October; and Dingwall Academy S1 from August until Christmas. Gairloch, Kinlochbervie and Ullapool High Schools and Dornoch Academy all have a whole school onsite policy.

2.8 Catering Staff involvement in Parent Evenings

2.8.1 This has proved to be a very successful intervention. Catering staff can give information about the nutritional content of school meals, availability of special diets if required and the free school meals eligibility and application processes. Schools are encouraged to include their cook at meetings. This has been built into *For Highland's Children 4* measurement of family involvement in service delivery (see 3.2.2).

2.9. A review of the Catering Service Marketing and Communication Plan is scheduled as part of the 2015/16 Service Plan. It is planned to increase encouragement for more family involvement with families.

2.10 Children's Food Festival

2.10.1 This June event is being organised by the Wick based North Highland Initiative and they have liaised with Highland Council staff. The event will run on Friday and Saturday and target families, with free places offered to 500 pupils aged 10–14 on the Friday, and funding for transport confirmed by the organisers. There will be a charge for family attendance on both days. It will take place at the Black Isle Showground and will provide an opportunity to promote Highland school meals and involve pupils in delivering some topics. The Council's Specialist Dietitian is developing a Food Charter for the event.

3. Self-Evaluation and Measurement

3.1 Self-Evaluation

3.1.1 The national '*Beyond the School Gate Self-Evaluation: Tool for Recording Current and Planned Activities*' was designed to support the review of current approaches and consideration of what further action can be taken. The Group co-ordinated the development and submission of a Highland Council response to the Scottish Government Public Health Division in August 2014 (see appendix 1). The submission provides a summary of current activity; notes planned activity; identifies key partners and stakeholders; identifies opportunities and possible gaps; and has been a useful planning tool.

3.1.2 As noted at 2.4.4 Better Eating, Better Learning has also produced a [self-evaluation tool](#) which is more suited to individual school use. The Group plans to

pilot its use with one further secondary and one primary school during this academic year.

3.2 **Measures**

3.2.1 School meals uptake was 54.9% for the period August 2012 to August 2013 (54.5% primary and 55.3% secondary). The figures for 2013/2014 are almost identical to the previous year: 54.9% (54.5% primary and 55.6% secondary).

3.2.2 The following measures, by academic year, are now embedded in the *For Highland's Children 4* Performance Framework:

1. Increase in uptake of school meals beyond P3
2. Increase in the volume of oily fish, vegetables, fruit and salad used in school meals per pupil.
3. Increase in the number of parents/carers who participate in the parent/carer food and health in schools participation programme.

3.2.3 The Highland Lifestyle Survey was completed by P7, S2 and S4 pupils in 2009, 2011 and 2013. It asked where pupils mostly ate their lunch during the previous week. Responses indicated an upward trend in the proportion of S2 and S4 pupils having their lunch in school. The survey also asked about consumption of fruit and vegetables.

3.2.4 The next Survey is to be carried out during the spring/summer 2015. The draft survey contains the following revised questions to explore lunchtime food habits in more depth:

- How many portions of fruit and vegetables did you eat yesterday?
- On the last day you were in school did you: have a school lunch; take a packed lunch; go home for lunch; buy your lunch from a Supermarket/shop/van/garage/hot food takeaway/other?
- On the last day you were in school what did you eat at lunchtime?
- On the last day you were in school what did you drink at lunchtime?
- Do you usually have breakfast on weekdays?

4. **Financial Inclusion**

4.1 Families in receipt of Universal Credit are eligible for free school meals. However, some families who previously received a "passporting benefit" may fall below new criteria for Universal Credit, and inequalities may widen as those families will still be on a low income and are likely to find school meals expensive. These households will have to find around £400 per child per year if they are to begin paying for school meals. If they are not willing or able to pay for a school meal, it could have an impact on school meal uptake. More importantly, this group are likely to include many families at high risk of poor health outcomes.

4.2 The introduction of free school meals in P1-P3 will go some way to alleviating difficulties for families with children in this age group. Implications of transition to P4 will be monitored. The most effective way to increase uptake of free school meals is to increase uptake of school meals as peer pressure seems to be a key factor.

4.3 An increase school meal prices over the next 4 years by 10p per meal per annum in addition to the inflationary increase, was agreed at Council in December 2014. It is unlikely to have a negative impact on financially excluded families as they

should be able to access free school meals. The estimated prices to 2018/19 are set out below:

School meal pricing	Primary	Secondary
Current	1.95	2.15
15/16	2.10	2.30
16/17	2.25	2.45
17/18	2.40	2.60
18/19	2.50	2.75

5. Implications

- 5.1 **Resources:** The pilot work described in this report has been funded from within existing resources. Significant resource implications of future proposals will be identified prior to submission to Committee for approval. Members should also note that the average cost to produce a school meal is in excess of £3.51, so increases in uptake and rising food costs present a budget pressure for the service.
- 5.2 **Legal;** The actions of the Group are in keeping with the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007.
- 5.3 There are no **Equalities, Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk, Rural or Gaelic** implications currently identified as arising from the contents of this report.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 Members are asked to note and comment on the progress of the School Meals/Food in Schools Stakeholder Group.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning Service

Date: 3 February 2015

Author: Cath King, Health Improvement Policy Manager

Appendix 1 Highland Council Beyond the School Gate Self Evaluation

PARTNER	CURRENT ACTIVITY	NEXT STEPS & FUTURE ACTIVITY
	Use this column to record current activity, with associated timescales if possible.	Use this column to record planned activity, with associated timescales if possible. This may or may not be in response to the 'Beyond the School Gates' guidance.
LOCAL AUTHORITY		
How are health improvement and support for healthier food choices near schools taken into account by your Community Planning Partnership?	<p>The Highland Council has a Member/Officer School Meals/Food in Schools Stakeholder Group that explores issues relating to food choices near schools.</p> <p>There is close working between health improvement staff in the NHS and the Council.</p>	The Stakeholder Group has actions relating to food in and in the vicinity of schools.
How does the local authority use licensing powers to limit the operation of mobile food vans near schools?	<p>The authority does not currently use licensing powers in this manner. The Council's legal advice is that in order to be competent any move to introduce exclusion zones around schools for street traders requires to be supported by changes in primary legislation.</p> <p>This issue has been considered at Council Committees since January 2010 following which representations were made to Scottish Government requesting the</p>	Continued lobbying activity

	<p>introduction of such changes. There have been opportunities to do so – indeed there may be one at present with the current Air Weapons and Licensing Bill which is before the Parliament- but to date no changes have been introduced.</p> <p>The ‘Beyond the School Gate’ document does suggest that there may be vires implications in pursuing exclusion zones by means of licensing – the legal advice remains that such a move would be ultra vires and accordingly challengeable.</p>	
<p>How do you involve local schools, businesses and the wider community in the review of the local development plan?</p>	<p>National and local planning policies guide whether a development proposal is acceptable or not and this includes the Council’s Development Plan. The Highland-wide Local Development Plan sets out general policies which steer development to appropriate places and help to determine the suitability of planning applications. Of particular relevance to public health are policies 28: Sustainable Design, 37 – Accommodation for an Ageing Population, 56 – Travel, 73 – Air Quality, 75 – Open Space, 76 Playing Fields and Sports Pitches and 77 – Public Access.</p>	<p>The Highland-wide Local Development Plan is currently being reviewed in order to maintain an up-to-date and relevant planning framework for decision to be made against. The review is at a very early stage and will be completed over the next couple of years.</p>
<p>How do you take account of public health during the planning application</p>		

process?		
<p>How is action to support healthy food provision reflected in your Single Outcome Agreement?</p>	<p>The provision of 4 NHS/Council funded Community Dieticians to work with community organisations to enhance access to affordable good food, physical activity opportunities and other weight management interventions. Phase 2 - to support enhanced capacity to deliver group sessions to the wider community. To include High Life Highland, voluntary and social organisations, volunteers, health, social and education professionals, community coordinators.</p> <p>Implementation of sector route maps for the key sectors including food and drink intended to maximise growth opportunities across the economy and region.</p> <p>The SOA makes links to other strategies including Keep Well implementation plan; Maternal and infant nutrition strategy; and For Highlands Children 4 (specific outcome measures relate to increasing the volume of oily fish, vegetables, fruit and salad used in school meals per pupil increases and increasing the number of parents/carers who participate in the parent/carer food and health in schools participation programme.</p>	

<p>What role does environmental health play to support healthy food provision near schools? This includes signposting to training and guidance available to support healthier food provision.</p>	<p>Environmental Health supports the Healthy Living Awards by confirming the standards of food hygiene. They support Council Catering services in maintaining hygiene standards and signpost to appropriate food hygiene training.</p>	<p>If the Council were to impose restrictions on mobile food vendors Environmental Health Officers would enforce these, as is already the case with restrictions placed upon vendors trading in the vicinity of local businesses.</p> <p>The Service is exploring how they can support Council Catering Services with procurement, for example by testing products and is interested in exploring how to support lunchtime off-site food by monitoring the quality of takeaway food, for example, testing levels of salt etc.</p>
<p>How does the local authority promote or raise awareness of initiatives which support healthier food provision amongst businesses, e.g. Healthy Living Award, Healthy Living Programme?</p>		
<p>What other health promoting activity do you undertake which supports the promotion of a healthier food environment around schools?</p>	<p>Individual schools have met with local shops, for example Dingwall Academy has met with the local Tesco store.</p>	
<p>How do you work with partners (e.g. NHS,</p>	<p>With NHS colleagues the High 5 Health and Wellbeing Programme has been</p>	

<p>schools, local businesses, parents) to encourage children and young people to make healthier food choices?</p>	<p>developed and is now delivered in primary schools. The Programme covers nutritional, emotional and physical literacy and aims to increase the critical consumer skills of young people to equip them to make healthier choices. The programme encourages family, community and local business involvement.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to develop a secondary High 5 Programme.</p>	
<p>Do you undertake any local assessment or evaluation of initiatives to establish what works well and not so well? If so, please provide details</p>		

Name: Cath King

Position: Health Improvement Policy Manager

Department: Care and Learning Service

Local Authority: The Highland Council

Date of completion: 27th August 2014

PARTNER	CURRENT ACTIVITY	NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE ACTIVITY
	Use this column to record current activity, with associated timescales if possible.	Use this column to record planned activity, with associated timescales if possible. This may or may not be in response to the 'Beyond the School Gates' guidance.
Local Authority CATERERS		
Has your business signed up to the Healthyliving Award, and to which level – normal or Gold Standard?	Yes. For external non-school catering, as schools are now not eligible for this due to act now in place we did have these awards in several establishment prior to this . Council snack bar/café has the healthy living award • Standard	We continue to seek additional business and if the healthy living award is appropriate and considered by the client then we will pursue the award.
If, yes, what are you currently doing or planning to do to maintain the normal standard or move to Gold Standard?		We are currently working on a 'healthy living meal deal' and a 'healthy living recipe competition'. Unfortunately we feel we cannot go for the Gold Award as the balance between healthy food percentages on our menu and the income lost to employees walking into town for unhealthier options is too much.
If you have not signed up the Healthyliving Award, are you interested in this? And, if not, what are you reasons for this?	N/A	
Describe any support you get from your franchise		The Healthy Living Award Assessor is very helpful. We also have someone at the

<p>company, catering supplier, local authority, trade association or Healthy Living Award team.</p>		<p>end of the phone or email who can always help.</p>
<p>Do you engage with local schools and what form does this engagement take?</p>	<p>We are the school catering provider. Involved in: parents nights ; school nutrition action groups; eco events; pupils councils; providing catering; assisting in training -food hygiene; assist relevant curricular events; tasting sessions; growing and learning , cooking produce grown on site and serving as part lunch or classroom activity; assisting ordering food stuffs; advice and assistance where required , theme days and competitions.</p>	<p>Continue working together to achieve joint aims; reap the benefits of free school meals for primary 1-3's; maximising the lunch time experience and potential links with teaching and learning including Better Eating Better Learning: to improve the health and wellbeing of our youngsters, giving them the best start in life, what they eat and what they learn from that.</p>
<p>What healthier options do you provide as part of any meal deals aimed at pupils?</p>	<p>We comply with the Schools Health Promotion and Nutrition (Scotland) Act 2007. We also have the bronze award for all primary schools in Highland as part of Soil Association Food For Life. Our secondary schools also have the same suppliers and standards however do not have the award due to the strict complexity of the evaluation regime. Albeit the main meals comply our snacks are not all freshly prepared or meet the specific criteria. We provide healthy meals deals, meals, snacks and</p>	<p>Piloting the silver award</p>

	drinks in compliance with the Act.	
How do you promote the purchase of healthier foods to children? Do you have specific children's menus?	Yes we have a 4 week menu, changed twice a year a spring/ summer and autumn /winter menu. Advertised on web, distributed to pupils/parents, in different languages. Leaflet contains information about local suppliers /provenance. Welcome pack to primary 1's. Posters in school /dining room. Theme days and promotional activities linked to curricular events or learning themes. Breakfast clubs morning break and provision of nursery snacks and lunches	Looking at creating video, more info on web .look at twitter and other sources of information sharing.
Where do get information and advice on diet to help inform practice?	Regular contact and discussions with health promotions and dieticians Personal development of staff, specific courses, seminars and conferences. Working with service colleagues in Care and Learning, special needs / diets and NHS health promotions team. Updates via websites and internal internet	Ongoing dialogue and information sharing with dieticians, NHS health promotions and environmental health services. Keeping up to date with change /recommendations and legislation

Name: NORMA MURRAY

Position: FACILITIES SERVICES MANAGER

Name of establishment: CATERING, CLEANING and FACILITIES MANAGEMENT SERVICES (CCFM)

Local authority: HIGHLAND COUNCIL

- **Date of completion: 27/08/2014**