



TORBAY COUNCIL

**FOOD STRATEGY FOR
SCHOOL MEALS**

Introduction

In support of Torbay Council's and Torbay Strategic Partnership's vision of

“A healthy, prosperous community, living, learning and relaxing in a safe and beautiful bay”

the Council, in partnership with parents, schools and health services, will develop and implement, in conjunction with the Healthy Schools Programme, a local strategy to deliver a high quality and sustainable school meals service.

This strategy seeks to:

1. provide a fully supported school meal catering service which offers all pupils a good quality, healthy hot meal
2. support healthier eating theme of the national Healthy Schools Programme. This also links to other local and national policies and programmes, including:
 - the Five-a-day campaign, (encouraging the consumption of at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day),
 - the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme(entitling every child aged 4 to 6 in LEA-maintained schools to a free piece of fruit or vegetable every school day),
 - the supply of free milk to the under 5's and subsidised milk to school children in primary and primary middle schools,
 - Torbay Care Trust obesity strategy
3. avoid the use of processed foods
4. use local foods wherever this is practical.
5. target the transitional funding available from the Government at those areas of greatest deprivation with funding allocations to schools being determined by their level of free school meals
6. implement as far as practical the recommendations of the School Meals Review Panel as detailed in “Turning the Tables; Transforming School Food”

Additionally we aim to increase meal uptake through education, promotion and by the involvement of pupils, parents, schools and caterers”

Background

Torbay Council has introduced this Food Policy Strategy partly in response to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills announcement of a package of measures designed to significantly improve nationally the quality of school meals entitled **“Turning the Tables; Transforming School Food”**. This policy additionally outlines our strategy on the use of the funding that the Council will receive as our share of the Government's recent announced transitional funding for 2005-08.

Current arrangements

Primary and special schools

The authority currently operates a central catering contract with Devon Direct Services (DDS). This involves 29 primary and 3 special schools. Of the remaining primaries, one has an individual contract with DDS, one runs its own in-house catering service and one is involved in a service in conjunction with a neighbouring secondary school.

Secondary schools

Secondary schools have had delegated school meal budgets for a number of years and this has led to the development of individual contracts with outside caterers. Of the 8 schools, 6 continue to use DDS, one has a contract with Scolarest and one runs its own in-house service.

Transitional funding

Over the three years to 2008, Torbay's share of the Government's total of £220m is expected to be as follows:

Targeted school meals grant - £75,145 in 2005/06 increasing to £125,000 in 2006/7 and £125,000 in 2007/8.

It is proposed that 40% of the targeted school meals grant (£30,000 in 2005/6 and £50,000 a year in 2006/7 and 2007/8) will be targeted at schools with the highest level of entitlement to free school meals. Where these schools have production kitchens, this element will also support the schools supplied by these kitchens.

The balance of the grant will be allocated to schools, using the number of 5 – 16 year old pupils on roll, to enable them to undertake activities which support the aim of delivering a high quality and sustainable school meals service in Torbay.

School meals grant - £60,100 in each of the financial years 2005/6, 2006/7 and 2007/8.

Within this strategy the targeted school meals grant will be used to meet the following aims:

- 1) The recommendations within the consultation document, "**Turning the Tables; Transforming School Food**" will in its final form be endorsed by the authority and that we will work towards these extensive and far-reaching proposals and within the suggested timescales.
- 2) That we will control fully the intake of fat, salt and sugar in school meals; encourage an increase in the uptake of fruit and vegetables and ensure pupils are offered a balanced meal. As part of this we have already removed most processed protein and carbohydrate food items. As from 1st September 2005 the only pre-made items available are locally produced sausages and burgers, vegetarian items and a bought-in quality fish finger.

We will work towards removing other prepared items where in use and replace these with alternatives wherever this is possible. All other meals are kitchen-made using mostly raw ingredients and some pre-prepared, fresh and frozen fruit

and vegetables. We will be working with our caterer to offer other kitchen-made vegetarian options

- 3) That local produce will be used where possible taking into account the cost and availability. Devon Direct Services, our present contractor uses an average of 40 % of local produce within its menus and the intention will be to increase this percentage wherever possible.
- 4) That high quality, nutritionally balanced meals will be supplied to all schools throughout the year. Menus may be varied taking into account schools that do not have their own production facilities.
- 5) That encouragement will be given to schools, parents and other groups for their pupils to regularly take a meal. This maybe by way of open days in schools, talks to parents and pupils, tasting sessions, attending healthy schools action groups (such as a SNAG (School Nutrition Action Groups) or an equivalent group). Additionally promotional activities could be arranged through the caterer e.g. menus based on a theme to run alongside a curriculum-based activity and competition-based events.
- 6) That staff wherever possible will be equipped both in terms of training, realistic hours to produce meals and kitchen facilities to deliver the required level of service expected by the authority, school, parent and pupil. It is expected that Government funding targeted to local authorities and schools over the next three years will partly go towards some of these costs
- 7) Schools will be given full support and advice on how to apply their share of Government funding aimed at getting their meal service to a sustainable level. This could be spent in a number of ways but should be a planned approach to target those areas felt would have the biggest impact on school meal provision such as supporting additional hours, catering staff training, ingredients, to make the dining environment where meals are taken a pleasant and sociable experience .
- 8) In line with the consultation document, “**Turning the Tables; Transforming School Food**”, targets will be set when the content of the standards have been agreed. These will aim at monitoring our progress with these standards and are likely to include:
 - i) the application of the proposed nutrient and food standards,
 - ii) the standards applied to other school food services such as snacks, vending and tuck sales,
 - iii) the provision of drinking water,
 - iv) a needs analysis in terms of staff and equipment,
 - v) the representation of catering staff on all SNAG groups,
 - vi) school audits and the development of whole-school food and nutrition policies
 - vii) an increase in the take up in meal numbers by 10% and the full take-up for free meal entitlement by the end of the implementation period.
 - viii) the prioritising the building of kitchens and/or refurbishment of existing facilities where thought necessary
 - ix) a revision to the authorities asset management plan data
 - x) the annual reporting of specific data back to the DfES.

TURNING THE TABLES: TRANSFORMING SCHOOL FOOD

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

THE STANDARDS

Recommendation 1: The nutrient and food and drink standards proposed in this Report should be adopted and applied to the provision of school lunches.

Recommendation 2: Food provided at lunchtime in schools should meet the combination of nutrient and food-based standards over a period of five consecutive school days.

Recommendation 3: Schools should aspire to achieve the highest quality of provision, which is a hot meal, cooked on-site, from fresh and seasonal ingredients. Whilst we accept that this level of provision is not possible to achieve in all schools at present, we recommend that schools work towards this.

Recommendation 4: At present only the school lunch standards are statutory. The Panel recommends that pre-school and children in other settings, should be similarly protected. It recommends that the Government, as a priority, supplements these lunch standards with standards for other food and drink service provision: break-time snacks, breakfast and after school clubs.

Recommendation 5: The panel recommends to schools that, from September 2006, the food standards (Table 2) be applied to lunch time and that similar standards for 'processed foods'; 'confectionery and savoury snacks'; and 'drinks' be applied to tuck shops, vending and other similar food services. The panel recognises that meeting the voluntary Target Nutrient Specifications for processed foods will require some product development and therefore may take longer.

Recommendation 6: School caterers should ensure that choice is available for all children right through to the end of lunchtime service in order that children eating later in the food service are not disadvantaged.

Recommendation 7: There should be easy access to free, fresh, chilled drinking water throughout the school day.

Recommendation 8: The procurement of food served in schools should be consistent with sustainable development principles and schools and caterers should look to local farmers and suppliers for their produce where possible, tempered by a need for menus to meet the new nutritional standards and be acceptable in schools.

Recommendation 9: The standards should be reviewed in 2011. At this time the standards should be applied to food consumption as well as food provision.

Recommendation 10: The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) should encourage schools to adopt the voluntary target nutrient specifications circulated for consultation by the Food Standards Agency.

DELIVERING CHANGE

Catering:

Recommendation 11: Schools and caterers should conduct a needs analysis (skills, equipment, preparation time) and train all relevant staff (including catering staff and midday supervisors) to ensure they are able to support pupils in making healthy choices.

Recommendation 12: Catering staff need to be central to the whole school approach. Their practical skills should be valued and utilised to the full, and they should be represented on groups like School Nutrition Action Group.

SCHOOLS

Recommendation 13: All schools should audit their current food service and curriculum, and develop, implement and publish a whole-school food and nutrition policy. The Panel recommends that schools' whole-school food policies should be made available to parents and carers and be referred to in the school prospectus and school profile.

Recommendation 14: All children should be taught food preparation and practical cooking skills in school in the context of healthy eating. Far more emphasis should be placed on practical cooking skills within the curriculum space currently devoted to Food Technology, and the KS3 review should consider this.

Recommendation 15: Supply links between local producers and schools should be strengthened, with improvements to children's knowledge about growing and cooking food. Schools should be encouraged to visit farms, ideally where some of their food is produced.

Recommendation 16: Whole-school food policies, developed through partnerships, should include consideration of the impact of packed lunches and food brought into school. However, where parents and carers wish to continue with packed lunches, guidance is available from the Food Standards Agency.

GETTING STARTED

Recommendation 17: The introduction of the new standards should be phased in over a period of time to allow the necessary preparation. Implementation will be more difficult in some schools (e.g. where there is a cash-cafeteria food service). The new standards should be fully achieved as soon as possible, and at the latest, for all primary schools by September 2008 and for all secondary schools by September 2009.

Recommendation 18: Schools and local authorities should aim for complete take-up of free school meal entitlement; and schools should aim to have at least 10% increase in school meals take-up by the end of the implementation period.

Recommendation 19: Further tools and guidance need to be developed, tested, and made available as early in the implementation process as possible. The DfES should take the lead on this.

Recommendation 20: The Food Standards Agency (FSA) should make its food composition data, including any relating to non-milk extrinsic sugars, widely available

in an electronic format. This will provide information on foods and nutrients contained in the standards, expressed using analytical or calculation methods which reflect the needs of the standards.

FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

Recommendation 21: The Secretary of State should take note of our concerns that low income families may be adversely affected by price increases, and investigate options for mitigating possible nutritional and economic risks.

Recommendation 22: Schools and local authorities must improve transparency and accountability in relation to how much they spend on school meals, including food cost per meal; uptake; free school meal numbers; nature of service; level of any subsidy; and any surplus generated by the service and how it is spent. This information should be presented in the whole-school food policy.

Recommendation 23: There should be no further degradation of service or provision by individual schools or local authorities from the current position, and kitchens should be a priority under 'Building Schools for the Future'. The DfES should undertake further work to consider the options for schools which no longer have their own kitchens. Schools and local authorities should be encouraged to reach the highest standards of provision and kitchens should be a priority in all schools' capital investment programmes.

Recommendation 24: Guidance on formulaic funding delivered to local authorities and schools should prioritise the renovation and refurbishment of kitchens and dining facilities.

Recommendation 25: The Government needs to ensure that current Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts and 'Building Schools for the Future' (BSF) initiatives do not impose barriers to the improvement of school food and also ensure that in future all school PFIs incorporate building specifications which enable the main meal to be cooked on the premises and practical cooking skills to be taught to all pupils. The Government should require all partners in PFI deals to be bound by the new standards. The existence of long-term contracts cannot be allowed to adversely affect the health of pupils in PFI schools.

Recommendation 26: The Panel suggests that kitchens and dining areas should be given priority within primary capital investment.

Recommendation 27: The economic costs of the changes should be modelled against the economic benefits. For example the benefits include: sourcing more food from local suppliers will benefit local economies and cut down transport and infrastructure costs; using more fresh ingredients will require longer kitchen assistant hours and this will benefit catering staff; the possible link between better nutrition, educational attainment and associated life-time earnings gain.

Recommendation 28: DfES has asked all local authorities to revise their asset management plan data by the end of this year. This information should show-up deficiencies in kitchen and dining areas but will not, due to timing, reflect then standards and approach recommended in this report. We recommend that DfES should (i) consider what further work needs to be done to supplement the information gathered from current activity; (ii) use this information to ensure that kitchen and dining areas are a priority in capital spending programmes; and (iii) ensure that all

future asset planning takes the new SMRP standards and approach fully into account.

Recommendation 29: In line with the Government's expectation that the transformation of school meals should be led by local authorities, we recommend that local level discussions recognise the desirability of phased – as opposed to sudden - price increases.

Recommendation 30: The Government should make school meals a priority during the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Recommendation 31: At appropriate intervals (eg. of 4 years) a nationwide evaluation of school food provision should be commissioned by DfES, to assess the types of foods and drinks available, their uptake and nutrient contribution to the overall diet. The evaluation should pay particular attention to provision for children who are nutritionally at risk. This evaluation should be timed for completion before the review of the standards in 2011.

Recommendation 32: The main approach to external monitoring and evaluation should be through the regular inspections carried out by Ofsted. This should be supported by evidence gathered from the in-depth inspections of a sample of schools carried out by HM Inspectors, supported by nutritionists. The Panel recommends further work should be conducted by Ofsted and DfES to use the pilot inspections planned for November 2005 to develop the methodology and a rigorous set of tools to support those inspections.

Recommendation 33: A checklist should be developed, as part of the package of further tools and guidance. It should be piloted to ensure it is effective in bringing about change and supporting implementation of the nutrient and food standards.

Recommendation 34: Local authorities should be required to collect and report annually on progress in achieving healthy school standards, provision and uptake of all (including free) school lunches, and steps being taken to work towards the achievement of school lunch standards e.g. use of nutrition software, checklists, smartcards, incorporation of standards in contracts. The DfES should collect and collate this data to provide a national overview of progress.

Recommendation 35: The School Food Trust should hold a database of standards compliant menus for schools to use at their discretion; and standard analysis services which would support schools in providing and analysing their own meals service.

Appendix 2

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

- 1) "Delivering Choosing Health", is the delivery plan outlining the key steps to deliver the Governments White Paper " Choosing Health: making healthier choices easier". It highlights how the Department of Health and the NHS, within the framework of government policies will help more people make more healthy choices and reduce health inequalities. Six key priorities are highlighted: health inequalities, reduce the numbers of smokers, obesity, sexual health, mental health and well-being and reduce harm and encourage sensible drinking. Visit www.dh.gov.uk
- 2) National Healthy Schools Programme-a combined initiative from the Departments of Health, and Education and Skills aims to support children and young people in developing healthy behaviours, raise achievement, reduce health inequalities and promote social inclusion. Visit www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk
- 3) Foods in Schools Toolkit – to assist schools in the introduction of the above healthy school status by giving advice on the whole school approach to food throughout the school day including school lunches, packed lunches and vending sales. Also visit www.foodinschools.org
- 4) Government consultation document: "Turning the Tables: Transforming School Food" Visit www.dfes.gov.uk. To respond to this consultation document please visit www.dfes.gov.uk/consultation.
- 5) Jamie Oliver's website found at www.feedmebetter.com giving an exciting website for schools, caterers, parents and pupils to engage in.
- 6) Torbay Council's own website has updated information on school meals. Please visit www.torbay.gov.uk and enter school meals from the A-Z of services.