

**A consultation on the Schools
(Nutrition and Health
Promotion) (Scotland) Bill**



Barnardo's

SCOTLAND

GIVING CHILDREN BACK THEIR FUTURE

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM:
A CONSULTATION ON THE SCHOOLS (NUTRITION AND HEALTH
PROMOTION) (SCOTLAND) BILL

Please complete the details below and return it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately. Thank you for your help.

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1. Are you responding: (please tick one box)
(b) **on behalf of** a group/organisation

ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

3. The name and address of your organisation *will be* made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website). Are you also content for your **response** to be made available?

Yes

SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

4. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Executive policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation response?

Yes

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CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Barnardo's Scotland manages 62 children's services throughout Scotland, assisting nearly 10,000 children, young people and families. The services provided are diverse covering all age groups from early years through to young adults. Services include working with children's behavioural difficulties, providing educational support, providing family support, assisting families affected by disabilities, HIV, youth offending and homelessness and working with looked after children and those leaving care. In addition Barnardo's Scotland runs two schools, Blackford Brae and Lecropt. In these, we run breakfast clubs and are implementing healthy eating programmes including the provision of high quality school meals.

Our 2004 report "Burger Boy, Sporty Girl: children and young people's attitudes towards food in schools" interviewed nursery, primary and secondary school children across the UK in order that the voices of children themselves could be heard in the school meals debate and to determine what social and environmental factors influenced their food choices.

1. Do you agree that local authorities should be under a duty to ensure that food and drinks which they provide in their schools, including nurseries, meet defined nutrient standards?

Yes

Comment: The HMIE evaluation report in October 2005 indicated that much progress had been made in the nutritional standards of school meals. However not all schools were performing well. This new duty should help to ensure that provision in all schools measures up to the standards.

The proposals do not cover private schools and nurseries. While private schools represent only a tiny proportion of the population, a significant and growing proportion of pre-school children are served by private provision. We suggest that consideration needs to be given to extending nutritional standards to cover all education provision covered by HMIE inspections.

2. Where children are attending independent schools, and where the provision of food and drinks are arranged or funded, by a local authority, should the food and drinks meet defined nutrient standards?

Yes

Comment: It is accepted that food provided for children needs to be of the highest standards and this argument surely applies whatever the funding status of the education institute they attend. Local authorities should therefore aspire to the highest standards for all pupils. Nevertheless this proposal may lead to an anomalous situation whereby local authority funded pupils at private schools and nurseries are entitled to certain standards while the rest are not. We would appreciate clarification of how this could be expected to work in practice.

3. Should local authorities be under a duty to promote uptake of school meals in their schools, including free school meals?

Yes

Comment: The wide variation in take-up rates between local authorities suggest that practical considerations are influencing the delivery of the Hungry for Success recommendations. We are aware of no valid reason why the registration rate amongst those eligible for free school meals



should be as low as 56% in some areas when 100% is achieved elsewhere. There is a need to research the factors that are influencing registration rates, identify good practice and ensure that it spreads. The new duty should help to drive this.

4. Should local authorities be under a duty to ensure that those taking free school meals can do so anonymously, as far as is practicable?

Yes

Comment: Although there is no definitive research in the area, we accept that stigma exists as a real issue for many families. We note from the annual statistics on school meals in Scotland that in addition to variable rates of registration for school meals, there are also variable rates of take-up amongst those both eligible and registered (from 76% to 98%) and stigma may be a contributory factor in this. Hungry for Success adopted the principle of eliminating stigma yet still only 33% of schools have anonymised systems for claiming free school meals. Again progress has been made but this duty will help to ensure standards across the board.

5. Should local authorities have the power to provide children in local authority schools with free drinks, fruit, vegetables, bread or cereal based snacks, which meet defined nutrient standards?

Yes

Comment: Barnardo's Scotland believes that it is right to give local authorities this additional flexibility in determining local provision, yet given the free lunch programmes introduced by local authorities such as Glasgow or Hull we would ask why this general power is limited to snacks and not full lunches. Obviously movement will be limited by local authorities having to find their own funding.

A recent Barnardo's report "Going Anywhere Nice this Summer?" (2003) reported on interviews with Scottish families living in poverty and found that they experience additional financial pressures when children are out of school. The lack of free school meals was one contributing factor in this. Consequently we would like clarification as to whether this new power will extend to childcare settings outwith school grounds and outwith the school calendar, which would allow for new provision to support families when free school meals are not available.

6. Should there be a duty on Scottish Ministers and local authorities to endeavour to ensure that all local authority schools are health promoting schools?

Yes

Comment: The consultation document highlights the WHO standard of an hour of cumulative activity in a day. It is clear that this cannot be met through formal PE provision and instead schools will have to provide opportunities for children to play. This should be done as part of a wider commitment to encouraging play opportunities and could involve a review of policy on form and use of school grounds, ensuring all school staff understand the importance of children's play and ensuring that outdoor play receives sufficient time and space within a crowded school day.

7. Any other comments? (add separately if required)

The document assumes that the new duties should largely be met from within existing funds. While we accept that Hungry for Success has been supported by a substantial funding package, meeting these new duties will involve increased financial pressure, not least through increased take-up of free school meals, and education authorities need to be adequately prepared for this. In addition an increase in the overall take-up of school meals will place increased pressure on school kitchens and dining rooms, and there will be capital costs associated with any required upgrading.

Media coverage has claimed that the new Bill will result in the banning of junk food from vending machines. However the document itself merely states "place a duty on local authorities to ensure that food and drinks *provided by them* in local authority schools meet defined nutrient standards" (our italics). We would appreciate specific assurance that all food and drink provided in schools, from whatever source, will be subject to the nutritional standards.

The document proposes setting up a short-term expert working group to devise appropriate nutritional standards. To date the Caroline Walker Trust standards have been accepted as the appropriate benchmark and it would be useful to know why it is felt that these are no longer sufficient and that additional work is required.

Finally we note the reference in the consultation document to increasing entitlement to free school meals. We accept that the legislative power to vary entitlement already exists, and hence is not a matter for this Bill, and are also in agreement that the limited funds available are best targeted where they are most needed. However there is an urgent case for extension from the current 19% eligibility for free school meals, with an obvious benchmark being the quarter of children deemed to live in poverty. As this is a separate matter to the passage of the Bill, the decision on entitlement need not be delayed any further and we look forward to an early announcement of the proposed extension.

