

NHR 1293

**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.

Name: Prof Richard G Watt on behalf of the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry

Postal Address: Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, UCL, 1-19 Torrington Place, London WC1E 6BT

1. Are you responding: (please delete (a) or (b))

- (a) ~~as an individual?~~ go to Q2a/b and then Q4  
(b) **on behalf of a group/organisation?**  go to Q3 and then Q4

**INDIVIDUALS**

2a. Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in the Scottish Executive library and/or on the Scottish Executive website)?

Yes (go to 2b below)

No, not at all (We will treat your response as confidential)

2b. **Where confidentiality is not requested**, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (**please tick one** of the following)

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

**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?

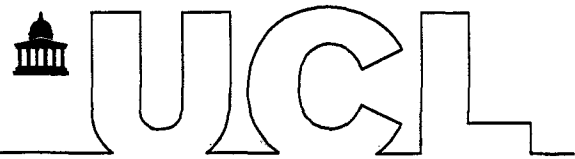
Yes

No (We will treat your response as confidential)

**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



Mr Ernie Brown  
Scottish Executive  
Bill Team  
Area 3A  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

Dear Mr Brown,

**Re: Consultation on the schools (nutrition and health promotion)  
(Scotland) bill.**

On behalf of the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this consultation document. BASCD is the main national organization representing Dental Public Health and Community Dentistry across the UK. One of the key aims of the organization is the promotion of oral health through effective public health policy. Dental caries although preventable, remains a significant public health problem in many parts of the UK, including Scotland, where disease levels are especially high. The frequent and excessive consumption of non-milk extrinsic sugars (NMES) is the main cause of caries. Currently a high proportion of the Scottish population consumes more than the recommended 10% of their energy from NMES. High levels of NMES consumption, particularly in soft drinks is also linked to the development of overweight and obesity. The main sources of NMES in the diet are soft drinks, confectionery, biscuits and other snack foods, all of which are popular food choices in Scotland.

BASCD therefore very much welcomes the innovative approach adopted by the Scottish Executive in tackling the poor quality of school food and drink in Scotland. A whole school approach which aims to promote healthier food and drink choices by creating a supportive environment is the only means of achieving sustainable improvements in diet related diseases. BASCD supports the Scottish Executive's endorsement and investment in health promoting schools (HPS). Internationally HPS have been shown to have a significant impact on a range of oral health outcomes within deprived communities. This approach should result in major improvements in the oral health status of Scottish schoolchildren.

Given the high levels of dental caries amongst Scottish schoolchildren, it is surprising that this disease is not highlighted in the background to this consultation. It is also disappointing that no dental organization features on the list of consultees. Across Scotland a range of dental professionals are actively involved in promoting oral health and nutrition in schools. These individuals have an important role to play in supporting and implementing the proposals outlined in this consultation.

**Consultation Questions**

***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?***

We most definitely support this recommendation. All food and drinks, including snacks provided by local authorities should meet defined nutrient standards. We welcome the inclusion of nurseries as many young children attend these care settings and they have a potentially very important role to play in promoting a healthy diet from an early age.

**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?***

Although diet related diseases, including dental caries are socially patterned with a higher prevalence in socially deprived populations, it is important that a whole population approach is adopted in health policy. It would be inappropriate and potentially stigmatizing to only include state schools in this Bill.

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

Improving the uptake and access of nutritious school meals and, in particular free school meals was a key recommendation of the *Acheson Report on Health Inequalities*. BASCD therefore supports any efforts to improve uptake of school meals across Scotland. Local authorities have a key role to play and models of good practice should be shared across the country. Investment in improving school canteens and kitchens will however also be required. In addition, school catering staff will need to be trained to update their knowledge and competencies in providing healthier food choices. Work may also be required with food outlets located near to schools which often sell unhealthy but affordable and appealing foods to schoolchildren.

**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?***

To avoid stigma in the school environment every effort should be made to provide free school meals in an anonymous manner. In many schools electronic swipe cards are already used as a means of paying for school meals. ~~Such a system can easily be used to cover free school entitlement in an anonymous fashion.~~ Examples of good practice should again be shared across the country.

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

The provision of free fresh fruit in Scottish schools has been a success and extending this to other items may have significant value, especially in areas of deprivation where food poverty is common. BASCD has some concerns however over the practical nature of implementing such a proposal. For example, many drinks and cereal based snacks contain high levels of sugars. Nutrient standards would need to include close consideration of sugars consumption.

**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.***

BASCD very much supports the recommendation that all Scottish local authority schools should become health promoting schools. This is a bold recommendation which if fully implemented could have a significant impact on child health in Scotland. However such a move requires a radical change in approach. Schools, and indeed all those agencies and sectors involved in child health would need support to implement this proposal. In addition, such an approach will only be

successful when students, parents and local communities actively support such a policy. It is also essential that an appropriate monitoring and evaluation system is established to measure relevant process and outcome data.

In summary BASCD very much supports the Scottish Executive's recommendations outlined in the Schools (Nutrition and Health Promotion) (Scotland) Bill. To effectively tackle diet related diseases such as dental caries and obesity requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach in schools.

BASCD looks forward to working with the Scottish Executive in their future efforts to improve school food across Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Richard G Watt (BASCD Council Member)  
Professor and Honorary Consultant in Dental Public Health