

# 'Ask the children what they want'

Involving children and young people in the development and implementation of improvements to enhance school food provision

**Children  
inScotland**  
every child - every childhood



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scotland**  
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

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Princes House  
5 Shandwick Place  
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EH2 4RG  
www.childreninscotland.org.uk

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This is a report on the findings of consultations with children and young people throughout Scotland to find out their views on food, healthy eating and School food provision. The consultations were undertaken by Children in Scotland for the Scottish Government.

### REPORT AUTHORS

Linda Young, Participation and Development Officer, Children in Scotland

Ross Gilligan, Policy Officer, Children in Scotland

Jeni Bainbridge, Policy and Research Assistant, Children in Scotland

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# INTRODUCTION

Children in Scotland consulted with children and young people on the work of the **Better Eating; Better Learning** Working Group to shape the recommendations and ensure that their **views** inform the agreed way forward for providing an excellent and well-respected school food service in Scotland.

The Working Group is currently producing guidance to assist schools and their partners in delivering further improvements to school food provision and education, and key messages from children and young people will form an influential part of this guidance and follow-up actions.

Our work was carried out with a view to laying the groundwork for a longer-term approach to involving children and young people in all aspects of food and nutrition policy and practice.

We consulted with school-age children ranging from five to 17-years-old in a range of primary and secondary schools drawn from seven different local authority areas across Scotland. We endeavoured to access a broad demographic of schools including those with both low and high socio-economic catchments and from both rural and urban areas. In total, we consulted with 335 children and young people from four secondary schools and six primary schools across the City of Edinburgh, Aberdeenshire, the Scottish Borders, Highland, Glasgow, Dundee and Fife.

## WE WANTED TO KNOW:

- ⊗ What pupils eat typically before, during and after school
- ⊗ Their views on which aspects of their diet are healthy and unhealthy and if they would swap anything they considered unhealthy for something more nutritious
- ⊗ Where they usually eat lunch
- ⊗ What might encourage them to opt for school meals
- ⊗ How they thought more healthy eating choices could be encouraged in and out of school and at home
- ⊗ What children and young people need from food at break times, at lunch time and after school.

We devised a programme of engagement incorporating both games and activities, some of which produced an artistic response to the questions posed. We were struck by the quality and variety of the rich responses. The children and young people we consulted offered us their time and innovative ideas and displayed a high level of engagement in the process as well as generating many ideas on how best to share this information and with whom.



IDEAL DINING HALL



WE WOULD LIKE: 'MORE APPEALING, COLOURFUL AND SOCIABLE CANTEENS'

The consultation work, carried out over three weeks, provided an informative body of qualitative data and also has significant potential for further in-depth analyses.

This report looks at the profile of the schools consulted, the methodology and our findings with a particular focus on the next steps in the journey towards achieving our ambition - an enhanced role of school food provision and wider food and nutrition issues in the lives of children and young people within both the school and community context.



# CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

## HOW WE ASKED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHAT THEY THINK

As the consultation involved children and young people aged between five and 17-years-old, we devised a series of different approaches to address key questions. These were all activity-based and gave the children and young people the opportunity to work individually, with a partner or in groups.

### PRIMARY

#### Treasure Hunt (P1 only)

Picture cards showing different types of food and drink were hidden around the classroom. In pairs, the children had to find the cards and put them on one of two plates - one for foods and drinks they thought were good for them and the other for foods and drinks they did not think were so good for them.

Our team encouraged the children to discuss and decide together.

#### Arty Mural (P1-3)

The children were asked to draw pictures showing "The Best Dinner Hall Ever!". Our team and the teacher chatted to the children about what they were putting in their drawings and noted down what they said on the back of their pictures.

#### Talking Stick (P1-3)

The children sat in a circle and used a large, squashy carrot as the 'talking stick'. When holding the carrot, the children could talk about what they do at lunchtime. For example, whether they had school dinners, packed lunch, or lunch at home, and what they liked or didn't like about this.

#### Food Circles (P3 - 7)

The children were given 'Food Circles' and drew or wrote what food and drinks they normally had during a typical school day, from breakfast to bedtime. They used green and red highlighter pens to show what foods and drinks they thought were good for them and those they did not think were so good for them.

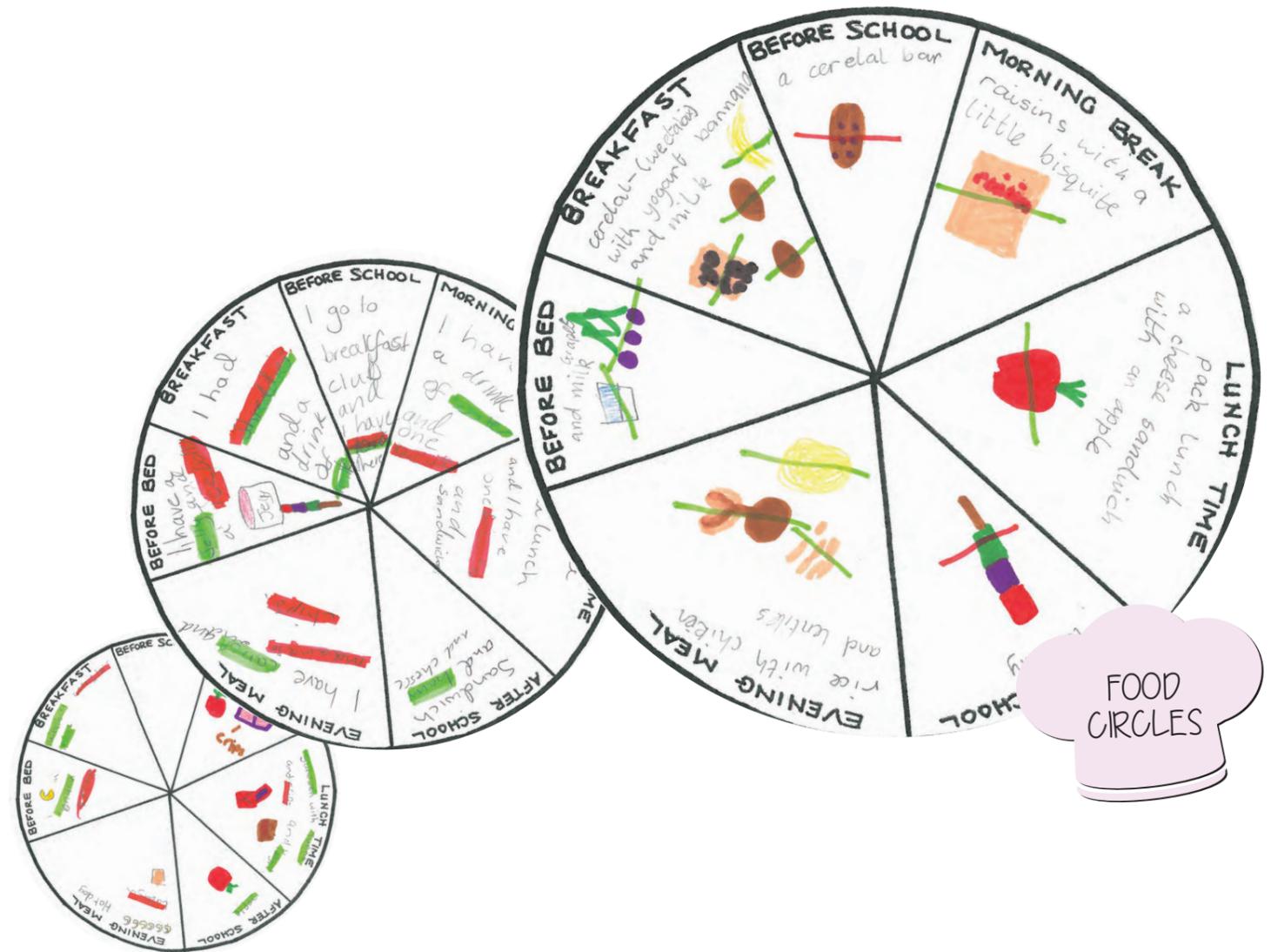
Our team chatted with the children about what they were doing, but encouraged them to make their own decisions.

Appendix 2 provides more information about Food Circles.

#### Paper Carousel (P4-7)

The children were divided into five groups, each given a large poster showing a different question about food.

The children were asked to discuss the question in their groups and record their ideas and answers anywhere on their poster.



On a signal, the groups exchanged posters and were asked to read and evaluate what the previous group had written. They were asked to tick anything they agreed with, and add their own ideas.

This process continued until every group had made a contribution to every poster.

#### Food Swap (P4-7)

Our team created cards each showing a food or drink that the children had written down and highlighted in red (see 'Food Circles'). The children were also shown a poster displaying a range of healthy foods and snacks.

They were asked, if they had the chance, would they consider swapping any item of

food noted on the cards with one of the healthier options on the poster.

#### Ideas Avalanche (P4-7)

Our team worked with the children to identify their views on:

- 🍇 How they would like their ideas shared
- 🍇 Who they would like to share their ideas with
- 🍇 What their main messages are
- 🍇 What BIG changes they would like to see happen to:
  - 🍇 The food on offer in school
  - 🍇 Where they eat the food.



WE WOULD LIKE:  
'PROPER PLATES'

## SECONDARY

### Food Circles

The children and young people were given 'food circles' and used these to record what food and drinks they normally had during a typical school day, from breakfast to bedtime. They used green and red highlighter pens to show what foods and drinks they thought were good for them and those they did not think were so good for them.

Our team chatted with the children and young people about what they were doing, but encouraged them to make their own decisions.

Appendix 1 provides more information about Food Circles.

### Post-it Storm

After completing their Food Circle, the children and young people were asked to choose some of the food and drinks they had highlighted in red and record on a Post-it note: what the food is; why they chose it; and whether they would swap it for anything they think is more healthy or nutritious.

### Walkabout/Talkabout

Four posters were placed in different parts of the room, each with a different question about food. The children and young people were asked to walk about and discuss the questions on each poster, recording their views and ideas. They were asked to tick any ideas they agreed with and add on their own ideas.

### POST-IT STORM



### Dot Voting

On the poster with the question, 'What would help you make healthier choices in the food you eat?' the young people were given 2/3 coloured, sticky dots and asked to vote for their top 2/3 reasons from the list they created.

### Ideas Avalanche

Our team worked with the children to identify their views on:

- 🍇 How they would like their ideas shared
- 🍇 Who they would like to share their ideas with
- 🍇 What their main messages are
- 🍇 What BIG changes they would like to see happen to:
  - 🍇 The food on offer in school
  - 🍇 Where they eat the food.

Due to the time available for the consultations, the geographical diversity of the schools and recognition that this time of the school year is particularly full and demanding, we limited each consultation to an hour in primary schools and a single period in secondary schools. We worked with whole classes in their own classrooms. This allowed us to consult with all pupils within that class, including children with a range of additional support needs, who were supported by learning assistants, the class teacher or the facilitators in the consultation.

Liaison with teachers and senior managers before the consultations took place ensured the process ran smoothly.



# WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

## ABOUT THEIR TYPICAL FOOD IN A DAY

### Breakfast

Toast and cereal emerged as the most popular choices for breakfast among all the children and young people who took part.

For primary school children, their breakfasts also included milk, fruit juice and porridge. Children at secondary school also opted for a 'cuppa', fruit, yoghurt, milk and fruit juice.

### Lunch

Primary children tended to eat hot dogs, pasta, fruit and sandwiches. Children at secondary school tended to eat fruit, crisps, fizzy juice and sandwiches as well as choosing, from time to time, cereal bars, water, fruit juice, chocolate and chips.

### Dinner

Pasta was a popular choice for both primary and secondary school children. Primary children also tended to eat vegetables, chicken and chips, whereas children at secondary school said they often had pizza, water, meat, vegetables, chilli and fizzy juice.

### Snack time

Break time (mid-morning) and after school emerged as the most popular times for having 'snacks' among both primary and secondary school children. This highlights an opportunity for providing and/or promoting healthy energy intake at those times.

A significant number of children said they enjoyed a snack before they went to bed, and a few said they took a snack between breakfast and starting school.

For primary children, the most popular snacks were crisps and cereal, followed closely by biscuits and chocolate. Other less popular choices included toast, a sandwich, a lolly, milk and fruit juice.

For those in secondary school, the most popular snack was, overwhelmingly, crisps. Other popular choices included fruit, fizzy juice, biscuits, toast and a 'cuppa'. Less popular options included sweets, juice, water, muffins and cereal bars.



WE WOULD LIKE: 'MORE SAY ON THE MENUS'

# WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

## ABOUT SCHOOL FOOD

### What would encourage more children and young people to choose school meals?

#### Primary

Ranked in order of the frequency of the response, primary pupils said:

- More variety
- Healthier options
- Happier canteen staff
- A lunch club where they could cook their own lunch
- Tastier food
- Cheaper dinners
- More vegetarian choices
- A bigger juice selection.

In addition, they showed great concerns about the organisation of lunch rotas and the time this took away from their free social time to play, talk to friends, relax and have fun, which they identified as the most important parts of lunch and break times. Examples were:

- Length of lines
- Order of the rota for classes
- Having to wait in the playground for your class to be called
- Insufficient food or choice if your class was last in the rota
- Having to wait for a member of staff to check you had eaten enough before you are allowed to leave the hall.

They also did not like the mess that was created in the lunch hall, especially if their class was last on the rota. They wished that canteen staff could clean the tables between 'sittings'. One pupil said about the mess: "It makes me shiver".

The children did not like being separated from their friends in the lunch hall, as frequently children having school dinners sat separately from those taking a packed lunch.



LUNCH HALL

WE WOULD LIKE:  
'PROPER PLATES'

## Secondary

Children and young people at secondary school said that, in order to improve the uptake of school lunches, they would need to (ranked in order of the frequency of a response):

- 🍊 Have a better appearance
- 🍊 Be cheaper
- 🍊 Be tastier
- 🍊 Be better quality
- 🍊 Be able to pay with cash
- 🍊 Have more options
- 🍊 Have shorter lines/more till points
- 🍊 Have more varied choices from day-to-day/week-to-week.

In addition, some said the eating environment deterred them from choosing school meals.

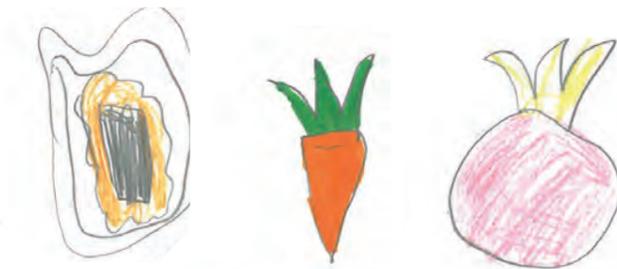
Examples given were:

- 🍊 Lack of space
- 🍊 Cleanliness/hygiene
- 🍊 Drab or windowless canteen space
- 🍊 Smells
- 🍊 Less opportunity to socialise with your friends.

## Why do you think some young people choose to eat out of school at lunchtime?

Ranked in order of frequency of a response, children and young people at secondary school said:

- 🍊 They do not like school food
- 🍊 It is a time for getting outside in the fresh air/having some exercise
- 🍊 Being with friends
- 🍊 The food tastes better
- 🍊 It is cheaper than school food
- 🍊 There's more choice
- 🍊 Freedom
- 🍊 Tradition
- 🍊 Better value.



HAVING THEIR SAY

In addition, they highlighted that they could access food and drinks that would not be so readily available in school canteens. Examples were:

- 🍊 Sweet foods
- 🍊 Fatty foods
- 🍊 More salty foods
- 🍊 Fizzy drinks.

They said that going to local shops was more convenient and when they were hungry it was quicker to go out than wait in long queues at school. They also thought the outlets were more hygienic and they trusted the food from local businesses more than school canteens. They thought local businesses had more to lose from providing unacceptable food than school canteens.

# WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

## ABOUT HEALTHY CHOICES

The children and young people who took part showed they had a very good sense of what foods are healthy and what foods are less healthy. One pupil revealed that he considers 'whatever mum cooks' to be healthy, showing an understanding of the benefits of home cooked food. Some shared their understanding that even healthy foods are 'only healthy in moderation'.

Primary school children thought the following foods are healthy:

- Chicken wrap
- Eggs
- Fruit
- Fruit lollies
- Lentils
- Porridge
- Vegetables
- Vegetable sticks and dips
- Yoghurt

And the following foods are not healthy:

- Burgers
- Cakes
- Cereal bars
- Chocolate
- Crisps
- Fizzy Juice
- Hot dogs
- Ice cream
- Muffins
- Pizzas

\* Some children thought toast was healthy, and others thought it was unhealthy, depending on what time of the day they ate it.



WE WOULD LIKE: 'AN AWARD FOR THE HEALTHIEST CANTEEN'

Children and young people at secondary school thought the following foods are healthy:

- Baked potatoes
- Chicken
- Fish
- Home-cooked food
- Milk
- Mince
- Pork
- Sandwiches
- Soup
- Paninis
- Vegetables
- Yoghurt

And the following foods are not healthy:

- Bacon rolls
- Burgers
- A 'Chippy'
- Cookies
- Pizza
- Sweets
- Slushes
- Fizzy drinks (in particular 'energy' drinks)

\*Sausages, noodles and cups of tea were considered healthy by some, and unhealthy by others. A 'cuppa' was considered healthy or unhealthy depending on whether the young person took sugar with it.

## HOW DO YOU THINK HEALTHY EATING CHOICES CAN BE ENCOURAGED?

### Secondary

The most common responses from children and young people at secondary school, ranked in order of frequency of response, were:

- If schools only sold healthy foods
- Make healthy foods cheaper by comparison
- Spread the word/advertise
- If the healthy foods were tastier and more edible
- If fruit was better quality
- If there were more after school activities
- If there was a salad bar and fruit stall.

Other suggestions offered, included:

- Make healthy foods more appealing
- Offer cheaper or free fruit
- Sell healthy snacks at break
- Offer more exotic foods
- Put healthy foods on offers/deals
- Give incentives/rewards
- Encourage local shops to offer more healthy options
- Campaigns targeted at parents/guardians to provide more healthy food at home.

After this initial activity, the children and young people were asked: 'What would help you make healthier choices? The clear first choice was:

- If healthy food was cheaper.

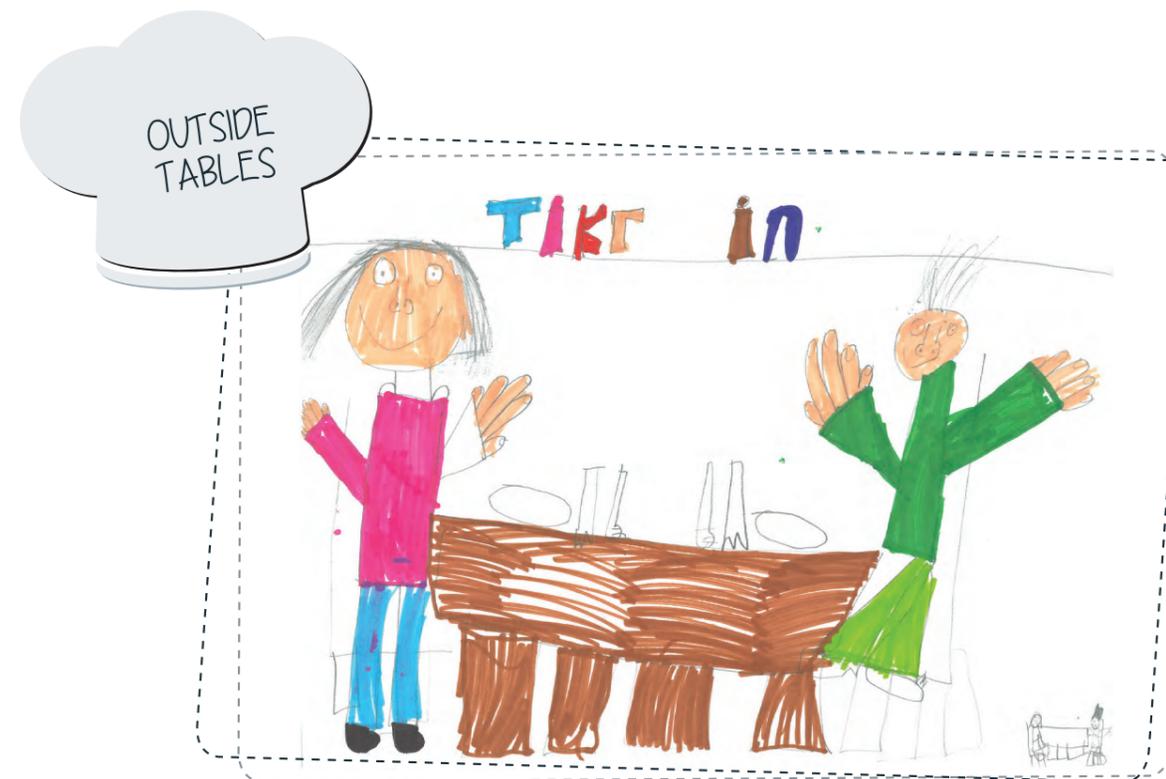
Other popular choices, in no particular order, included:

- Having more healthier options
- Making healthy food more edible and tastier
- Making foods young people like more healthy e.g lower fat burgers
- Being involved in sport or fitness activities
- Providing foods that are interesting and different
- If you started to put on weight
- If they were shown the consequences of their eating habits
- If the food was fresher
- If the food was more visible.

Interestingly, another indicator was: "If they didn't force you as much".

In both primary and secondary schools there was lively debate around the promotion of healthy eating. Many expressed their view that promoting health eating too much can have the opposite of its intended effect by making children and young people switch off from it. They talked about "having a rebellious streak" and wanted to be allowed to make their own choices. One senior pupil said: "I wish they didn't keep banging on about it!".

Children from Primary 6 upwards said they thought there were no 'bad' foods. The important factor, in their opinion, was having a balance and "everything in moderation".



### Primary (Heading 4)

When primary aged children were asked to think about how healthy eating choices could be encouraged, they suggested the following ideas (listed in no particular order):

- Advertise
- Provide free fruit
- Have a mascot to encourage children to eat healthily
- Show how to have a healthy diet
- Have bright and colourful packaging for healthy foods
- Provide better meals
- Encourage children to keep fitness diaries, including what they eat
- Grow your own food
- Have older pupils acting as role models for younger ones
- Ban bad foods.

They also suggested:

- It should be fun
- Show us what is in junk food
- Tell parents not to have unhealthy foods at home
- Promote the effects of eating a healthy diet e.g. you'll look good and be fit and strong.

## DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO EAT HEALTHY FOODS? IF SO, WHY?

Primary children thought the positive effects of a healthy diet would be:

- You would have more energy
- You would be strong
- It would help your bones
- You would have healthy hair
- You would be fit
- It helps you grow.

They thought the negative effects of not eating enough healthy foods were:

- You would get fat
- You could become ill
- You could lose your teeth or have bad teeth.

However, messages emerged again of their understanding that a balanced diet should be their goal. They thought treats were acceptable. They also thought you needed some fatty foods to live and grow.

## FOOD SWAPS

Both primary and secondary pupils took part in activities that invited them to consider whether they would change any foods they now eat. Although some children and young people at secondary school were willing to consider a swap, the majority indicated they would prefer to continue eating what they consider to be foods lacking in nutrition at certain times of the day.

### Secondary

Examples of the foods some young people said they would swap were:

- "Crisps for crackers because they are crunchy too."
- "A mini roll for a fruit pot because I like fruit."
- "I'd swap NOT eating anything for breakfast for eating something."
- "Diet coke is not healthy but it tastes nice. I'd change it if something was healthy and cheaper."
- "A biscuit. Tasty and sweet. (There to be eaten) I'd swap for an orange. Maybe."
- "Sausage rolls. Convenient. Cheap. Taste good. Would swap for fruit salad."

Examples of the foods most young people said they would not swap were:

- "Slush. Sugary. Cold. Tastes nice. Only drink I like at school."
- "Sweets and biscuits because I have a sweet tooth."
- "A chippy because it's convenient."
- "A hot dog because it's tasty."
- "A hot dog because it's filling. My favourite food."
- "Traybake-comfort, for energy. I wouldn't change it cause I do need that energy and they taste amazing. Also isn't much of a different option."
- "Crisps. Too good to resist."
- "Chips and cheese baguette. Taste good and friends eat them at the same time."

The main reasons given, in no particular order, for making a choice they consider unhealthy were:

- Taste
- Habit/routine
- Cost/offers
- Convenience/easy to grab for a snack
- Easy to make/ can eat without cooking
- Energy boost
- Filling
- Treats
- Cravings
- Availability.

### Primary

In the Food Swap activity for primary children, pupils had the chance to consider whether they would swap a food that had been highlighted in red in their Food Circles for something on a poster of healthy foods, snacks and drinks.

Foods that they commonly said they would swap included:

- Crisps
- Biscuits
- Chips
- Hot dogs
- Sweets
- Burgers
- Pizza
- Ice cream
- Fizzy drinks.

Examples of the foods they would swap these for were:

- Various fruits
- Cereal bars
- Tomato soup
- Food presented in a 'fun' way
- Smoothies
- Ice lollies made from yoghurt and pure juice
- Ice lollies made from juice, filled with fruit
- Fajitas
- Mixed salads
- Vegetarian noodles.

In one school the class was very vehement that a balanced diet was most important, which meant not having to exclude any foods. They were unwilling to consider swapping foods such as a 'chippy', pizza, sweets, crisps, fizzy drinks or biscuits as they regarded them as treats that they had occasionally.





# WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US

## DURING THE 'IDEAS AVALANCHE'

In the final part of each workshop with children from Primary 4 to S6, we had an open discussion in response to four key questions.

### Who do you think we should pass your views and ideas on to, apart from the Scottish Government?

Children and young people at secondary school said:

- 🍏 Whole school
- 🍏 Senior Managers
- 🍏 Parents/families
- 🍏 Councils
- 🍏 Canteen staff
- 🍏 Local shops
- 🍏 Businesses that might open or offer nicer food
- 🍏 NHS
- 🍏 General public.

Children at primary school said:

- 🍏 Parents/families
- 🍏 School dinner staff
- 🍏 Headteachers
- 🍏 Councils
- 🍏 Newspapers.

### How do you think we should share this information?

Children and young people at secondary school said:

- 🍏 Through the media
- 🍏 Use social media
- 🍏 Glow meet
- 🍏 Visual methods e.g. graphs, photographs, films of young people
- 🍏 Letters from young people
- 🍏 Direct contact with Scottish Government
- 🍏 Surveys to reach a wider number of young people
- 🍏 Posters
- 🍏 Focus groups
- 🍏 Case studies
- 🍏 Presentations by young people.

Children at primary school said:

- 🍏 Through the news
- 🍏 Films
- 🍏 Powerpoint presentations
- 🍏 Speak face-to-face
- 🍏 Scottish Government come and chat to us
- 🍏 Write a song
- 🍏 Use persuasive language and convince them.

### What do you think the main messages are to pass on?

Children and young people at secondary school said:

- 🍏 Inconsistency in promotions and offers on healthy food
- 🍏 The need for better quality of produce, particularly fruit
- 🍏 The need for better hygiene and cleanliness in school canteens
- 🍏 The need for greater choice
- 🍏 Canteens should be inviting and not cramped
- 🍏 Water should always be available and be free
- 🍏 There should be more locally produced food used but not more expensive
- 🍏 Young Scot cards should be reviewed
- 🍏 There should be more outside spaces to eat in
- 🍏 Food should be labelled more clearly.

Children at primary school said:

- 🍏 The need for better menus
- 🍏 Bigger portions for older pupils
- 🍏 Eating lunch should be more social
- 🍏 Pupils should have more say about what is offered
- 🍏 Some things should be free e.g. muffins
- 🍏 There should be more homemade food like macaroni cheese
- 🍏 There should be less waiting to have lunch or lunch time should be longer.

WE WOULD LIKE: 'TO BE TOLD WHERE THE FOOD COMES FROM'

### What changes do you want to see happening?

Children and young people at secondary school said they want:

- 🍏 Better quality for better price
- 🍏 The problem of long lines tackled
- 🍏 More choice
- 🍏 Alternative places to eat in and around the school
- 🍏 A look at the problems with the Young Scot card (lack of top-up machines, machines being out of order, not being able to top-up using notes, not getting the advantage of change, and "having to queue twice")
- 🍏 Improvements in the presentation of canteen food
- 🍏 More till points and be able to use cash
- 🍏 More appealing, colourful and sociable canteens
- 🍏 The problem of mess in lunch halls tackled.

Children at primary school said they want:

- 🍏 More choice
- 🍏 More say on the menus
- 🍏 'Party' or theme days
- 🍏 More places to eat e.g. classroom or outside
- 🍏 Food tastings
- 🍏 Proper plates
- 🍏 Music playing
- 🍏 To be able to eat with friends
- 🍏 More vegetarian options
- 🍏 More colour in lunch halls
- 🍏 More comfortable seating
- 🍏 An award for the Healthiest Canteen
- 🍏 To be told where they bought the food from.



## KEY MESSAGES AND CONCLUSIONS

WE WOULD LIKE: ' BETTER QUALITY OF PRODUCE, PARTICULARLY FRUIT'

During this consultation, children and young people have shown us that they would like to see a number of improvements made to school meals.

The majority thought the quality and range of choice in both primary and secondary schools should be enhanced if more children and young people were to be encouraged to take school meals.

They referred to 'quality' in terms of the freshness of the ingredients, the standards of cooking and the ingredients used.

Recent media coverage of food 'scares' has increased children and young people's awareness of the need to know more about the food they are eating and where it comes from. Many wanted more information about the food they are being offered, ranging from labels showing the calories and fat content of food to information about its source. "Tell us where they bought the food from".

Some young people said it would encourage them to eat school meals if more local and seasonal produce was used.

Choice was considered extremely important. Children in primary school were particularly keen to be more involved in decision-making about the food that was offered. One pupil suggested: "They could give us a list of possible healthy meals and let the pupils choose the menu".

They were enthusiastic about having opportunities to taste new food, experience food from different countries, to have 'party' or theme days, to grow their own food and to cook themselves. The suggestion from one school to have a lunch club where you learnt to cook and ate the meals you produced was very popular. In primary schools pupils criticised limited choice and several children wanted more vegetarian options.

Portion sizes were also criticised by older pupils. Children and young people at secondary school in particular, wanted food that would fill them and that they viewed as value for money. Many said they thought they got that, not from the school meals service, but from the food outlets outside of their schools. They gave examples of meal deals that were markedly cheaper than those the school canteen offered. Some of these young people were making healthy choices in the food outlets but many enjoyed the freedom to choose what they wanted and that could mean high fat meals such as chips and curry sauce, sausage rolls and pies. They indicated that they tended to eat the same foods regularly from the same outlets. Another factor influencing young people seemed to be the ban in schools on fizzy drinks, sweets and chocolate. We found that some young people were drinking more than one bottle of fizzy juice at lunchtime. Certain brands were mentioned and some contain high levels of caffeine. However, probably the most common reasons given by young people for

choosing to eat outside of school at lunchtime was freedom and the wish to socialise.

Two secondary schools had more limited food outlets around their schools. In one, pupils highlighted a 'Grab and Go' option that allowed them to order their food at breaktime and enabled them to bypass queues at lunchtime. This option was popular with the many pupils who attended lunchtime activities and clubs. Also, pupils in this school said the distance from the outlets in the town deterred them from eating out of school. This was the only secondary school where young people spoke of bringing food in for lunch. Generally, a 'packed lunch' was not a common option amongst the pupils who participated in the consultation. In the other secondary school where pupils discussed a lack of food outlets in the vicinity of their school, they said they would welcome more healthy eating choices in these shops. They were also interested in the idea of 'pop-up' stalls or mobile units around the school and were not negative about the school having an influence on the type of food sold. This was not reflected in another secondary school that had a choice of food outlets out of school, where the young people were adamant about wanting to retain their freedom of choice and did not want limitations set by the school.

The environment for eating was another important factor in the choices made about what and where to eat. Many criticised their

canteens or lunch halls, describing them as cramped, dull, messy and uninviting. Some newer schools had larger, more open spaces for eating inside and in one secondary school the design incorporated innovative outdoor space, although the use of this was weather dependent. In older buildings there was a challenge to make an inadequate indoor space appealing. Young people asked for more outdoor space to compensate for this. Eating from outlets usually meant eating in parks, while walking along the street or sitting on walls. Some schools provided a social space to bring back food to eat but these spaces were crowded and there were no seats. Young people could not see how it would be possible for a large school to cater for all the pupils and felt schools were dependent on many of the young people going out.

Understandably, as primary pupils do not generally have the choice to eat out of school at lunchtime unless they are having a 'home lunch', they are more aware and more critical of their lunch environment and the organisation of lunchtime. They are keen to have a lunch hall that is bright, colourful, fun and sociable. Rotas that involve classes waiting lengthy times for their slot, often having to stand in queues in the playground, and resulting in less or limited choices of food if your class is last in the rota are not popular. Children want to eat, talk to their friends and then get on with the main business of playing and having fun. This

may explain why a 'packed lunch' is a very popular option in primary schools. Some schools, due to lack of space, are resorting to using the classrooms for packed lunches.

Children are very positive about this as it allows them to eat immediately, there are no queues and it is a relaxed and social atmosphere. It may prove a challenge in some schools due to the amount of supervision this would require. One class teacher was thinking creatively about how she could change the classroom environment into a dining one by the simple addition of some tablecloths. Older primary pupils also spoke about being role models for the younger ones. This would involve a more flexible approach as the most common arrangement at present is in separate year groups.

Pricing was another issue that was commonly discussed. Secondary pupils are very aware of what they can afford to spend and they want to access the best deals. The systems to administer cashless cards such as the Young Scot card were unpopular. They criticised lack of top-up machines, machines being out of order, not being able to top-up using notes and not getting the advantage of change. They described it as: "having to queue twice" and saw it as a real waste of their time. They wanted more cash tills in canteens and more information about how prices were decided. Many were unhappy about significant price rises for the food they were being offered. One pupil said: "The food tastes cheap but the prices are not".

Socio-economic factors emerged in some schools. In both primary and secondary schools, children and young people commented on issues linked to poverty,

suggesting that, for some, the school lunch is their main source of nutrition for the day. These comments reinforced the importance of school meals and Breakfast Clubs.

In conclusion, this series of consultations has provided a snapshot of children and young people's views and experiences of food and the choices they make. A wider and more in-depth study would give us vital information about their needs and wishes to inform policy decisions about food and school meals. The evidence gathered could provide more useful data for further analysis. As this is something that matters to children and young people, their voices need to be heard and their views solicited if future changes are going to be effective and meaningful.

The children and young people who took part in this consultation suggested several interesting approaches:

-  Groups of children and young people could research and report on case studies, highlighting eating trends and innovative approaches that are being used in their school
-  Advertising or "spreading the word" could be through campaigns, films, music and media
-  Children and young people could be involved in developing "A Healthy Eating Canteen Award" and be part of the monitoring and decision-making process
-  Programmes designed to be incorporated into the 'Health and Wellbeing' curriculum could be developed, responding to their requests to find out more about where their food comes from and what is actually in junk food.

In the short-term, we would like to prepare a feedback report on the consultations for the children and young people who participated. In addition, children and young people were keen to share the information from the consultations with a wider audience, including the school meals service and families. We would like to share this through school websites, in a format that can be accessed on a mobile phone. We would also like to share and display some of the materials produced in the consultations. However, if any events to share creative resources that express children and young people's views were considered (such as art, photographs, films, drama), we would also like to have more time with children and young people to produce these. It may be useful to consider producing information and invite comments on the 'BeXcellent' website. We would also recommend an Easyread version of any documents and some information offered in other languages e.g. Polish.

In response to the children and young people's views, we would like to recommend that they are consulted on any changes schools or local authorities may be considering and involve them in discussions about their implementation. As service recipients they are best placed to say what will work and to help find possible solutions to challenges that arise.

We would also recommend that the Scottish Government consider directly involving children and young people in future stages of the development of school food policy. In both primary and secondary schools, children and young people indicated that they

were keen to enter into a dialogue with the Scottish Government to ensure their voices are heard and opinions taken into account when decisions are made about the services that affect them. Although presentations and video-conferencing were suggested as a means of facilitating this, they were also eager to have the opportunity to welcome representatives from the Scottish Government into their schools. Young people themselves would be powerful advocates for the BIG changes they said they wanted and are in the best position to show what they think would work to enhance school food provision.

This consultation is a first step in a 'journey' or process to support local authorities and schools in improving school meals and to involve children and young people in looking at the bigger picture of food and nutrition in Scotland. If their participation is to be effective we need to look for ways to keep them informed, show them clearly what steps are being taken and ask them to monitor the effects and impact, making use of popular social media approaches. Only by doing this will children and young people get the message that their input on the issue of school food is welcomed and needed.

We hope the results of these consultations will provide a useful and informative starting point for involving children and young people in a meaningful way in the plans and decisions of the Working Group.



# APPENDIX 1

## SCHOOL PROFILES

### Trinity Academy, Edinburgh

Trinity Academy is a comprehensive, non-denominational secondary school in the Trinity/ Newhaven area of North Edinburgh drawing the majority of its pupils from the adjacent Trinity Primary and nearby Victoria and Wardie Primary Schools. It has a roll of around 900 pupils and 120 staff with the original Victorian building extended in 1965 where the current canteen is located. A further extension and refurbishment was completed in 1995 though the main dining area was not altered significantly.

Despite its mainly residential location in a residential district on the western fringes of Leith, there are a number of (corner) shops and take-away outlets within a five minute walk on surrounding streets, including Ferry Road while an Asda supermarket is located within around 10-15 minutes walking distance across a busy multi-lane road at Newhaven.

In the 2012/13 school year, 11.6% of pupils were registered for free school meals - below both the Scottish secondary average of 15.5% and the Edinburgh secondary average of 14.5%.

### Trinity Primary, Edinburgh

Trinity Primary School is situated on Edinburgh's Newhaven Road, close to Trinity Academy. It is non-denominational and co-educational. The current school building was

opened in 1968 and currently has 15 classes. There is also a multipurpose teaching area with cooking facilities. The dining hall is on the ground floor of the building but lunchtime queues can extend into the main foyer. The school meals three-week rolling menu can be found on the Edinburgh City Council website at: <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/primaryschoolmenus>.

Trinity After-school Club is also accommodated in the school dining hall while Trinity Breakfast Club is accommodated in neighbouring scout hut. Following the closure of Fort Primary, our catchment area has been extended and a new extension is currently being built in the former car park.

In the 2012/13 school year 13.1% of pupils were registered for free school meals - considerably below both the Edinburgh primary average of 19.9% and Scottish primary average of 22%.

### Bervie (Primary) School, Inverbervie

Bervie School is the only school in the Aberdeenshire coastal burgh of Inverbervie. Located 25 miles south of Aberdeen with a school roll of 190 pupils and eight primary classes. It also incorporates a nursery with a roll of 60.

The school has been a non-denominational and coeducational primary school since 1969 and its catchment area includes the surrounding rural community. The school

was built in 1937, originally as a secondary modern school. Various extensions to the building have been made, one including a nursery class in 1996 and one in 2000, which provided an additional primary classroom.

In the 2012/13 school year, 12.1% of pupils were registered for free school meals - above the Aberdeenshire primary average of 9% but still around half the Scottish primary average of 22%.

### Park Primary, Invergordon

One of four primary schools in the Easter Ross town, Park Primary serves central Invergordon, and the area to the east. Non-denominational and coeducational, the current roll is 224 pupils in P1-7 with a further 60 pupils in the incorporated nursery. The school occupies a traditional Victorian building and also hosts a breakfast club.

In the 2012/13 school year, 20.3% of pupils were registered for free school meals - slightly below the Scottish primary average of 22% but above the Highland Council primary average of 16.4%.

### South Lodge Primary, Invergordon

South Lodge Primary, a sister school to Park Primary under Highland's Cluster Primary School Management Model, occupies a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century building on the north western fringe of the town. The school comprises seven mainstream classes, nursery unit and a 'Rainbow Rooms' where pupils with special needs are supported by Learning Support staff. The total primary roll stands at around 137 pupils.

The dining area is pictured on the school's website at: [www.southlodge.highland.sch.uk/schoollunches.html](http://www.southlodge.highland.sch.uk/schoollunches.html) Like Park Primary, it also hosts a breakfast club.

A high percentage of pupils (53.7%) were registered for free school meals in the

2012/13 school year - more than double the Scottish primary average of 22% and more than three times the Highland Council primary school average of 16.4%.

### Earlston High School

Earlston High School is a comprehensive, non-denominational and coeducational, secondary school with a current role of 972 pupils from S1 to S6. Earlston itself is a rural Scottish Borders town of just under 2000 people about 35 miles south of Edinburgh. The other towns in the school's catchment area are Melrose, St.Boswells, Newtown St.Boswells, Lauder and Gordon. The catchment area also includes the villages of Bowden, Oxton, Darnick, Gattonside and Westruther. Consequently a large proportion of pupils are bused in from elsewhere.

Since August 2009 the school occupies a new PPP building on the outskirts of the town with a multipurpose area used for lunchtime dining on two levels. It also provides a 'grab and go' facility where pre-ordered food can be collected avoiding normal queuing arrangements. There are a number of local shops including take-away outlets within a 15-minute walk from the school but less convenient than the previous school building, which adjoined Earlston Primary School.

In the 2012/13 school year, 7.8% of pupils were registered for free school meals - lower than the Scottish Borders secondary school average of 11.5% and around half the Scottish secondary average of 15.5%.

### Knightswood Primary School, Glasgow

Knightswood Primary School is a non-denominational, coeducational, state primary school with a roll of more than 480 pupils serving an area in the north-western suburbs of the city close to Anniesland Cross.

The school occupies a new PPP building with a large dining hall that is a multipurpose space – it is also used as a gym hall. The school website advertises a healthy eating policy including school meals which can be viewed at: [http://www.knightswood-pri.glasgow.sch.uk/p\\_Knightswood\\_Primary\\_SchoolHealth\\_Promotion\\_School.ikml](http://www.knightswood-pri.glasgow.sch.uk/p_Knightswood_Primary_SchoolHealth_Promotion_School.ikml)

There is also a breakfast club available for pupils.

At 40.8%, the uptake for free school meals in 2012/13 was considerably above the Scottish primary average of 22% and in one year went from being just below to above the Glasgow city primary average of 35%. This fluctuation may be explained by a relatively large number of pupils from refugee families.

### Dunfermline High School

Dunfermline High School is a non-denominational, coeducational secondary school serving the area to the south of Dunfermline's High Street all the way to the River Forth at Rosyth's Dockyard as well as the village of Kincardine to the West.

It has a current roll of around 1600 having moved into new premises in 2012 built as part of the Fife Council's "Building Fife's Future" programme of "new old schools". The main dining area occupies a light and airy multipurpose central area. There is also a smaller area upstairs used by senior pupils. There is a convenience shop immediately outside the school grounds and a range of take-away and other outlets within a walk of around 10 minutes.

In the 2012/13 school year, 15.4% of pupils were registered for free school meals - below the Fife secondary average of 19% but almost identical to the Scottish secondary average of 15.5%.

### Morgan Academy, Dundee

Morgan Academy is non-denominational, coeducational and comprehensive secondary

school situated in the Stobswell area of Dundee. It serves a mixed catchment area with its main feeder primaries the nearby Clepington, Dens Road and Glebelands Primaries though it also receives a number of placing requests across the city. Its current roll is around 950 pupils.

The school is housed in a restored Victorian building, which reopened in 2004 after the original was destroyed by fire in 2001. The school is therefore a mixture of traditional and modern. The school handbook advertises that a three-course school meal can be purchased for £2.05. The school building is located within a few minutes-walk of a wide range of shops including take-away and convenience shops as cafes. A number of pupils also go home at lunchtime.

In the 2012/13 school year 23.3% of pupils were registered for free school meals. Above both the Dundee City Council secondary average of 20% and Scottish secondary average of 15.5%.

### Castleview Primary, Edinburgh

Castleview is a non-denominational, coeducational primary school in the heart of Craigmillar in Edinburgh. The school serves the Craigmillar area as well as Greendykes and parts of Niddrie. The school is an amalgamation of the former Peffermill and Greendykes primary schools and was built and opened in 2003.

The total primary roll is 165. As with Trinity Primary, the school meal menu is available on the City of Edinburgh Council website and is given to each child at the beginning of term. Unlike Trinity Primary however, there is no breakfast club at Castleview.

The school had a very high uptake for free school meals in 2012/13 (60.7%), which is around three times the average for Edinburgh primaries of 19.9% and Scottish primary average of 22%.

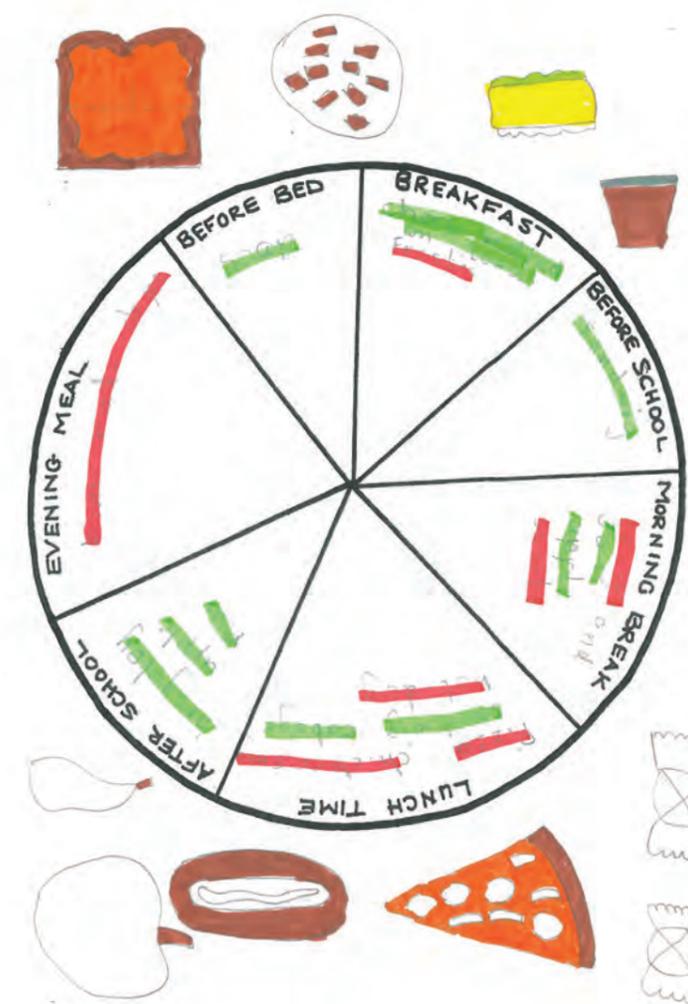


## APPENDIX 2

### FOOD CIRCLE

Both primary and secondary pupils were invited to complete a 'Food Circle'. This activity identified trends in what children and young people consider to be healthy or less healthy food, as well as the times of the day at which they are most likely to want

a snack and what they typically enjoy as a snack. 'Food Circles' also gave indicators of the foods and drinks children and young people are having regularly within their diet and what constitutes, for them, a typical breakfast, lunch and dinner.



Children in Scotland  
Princes House  
5 Shandwick Place  
Edinburgh  
EH2 4RG  
[www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk)

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