

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

Consultation on arrangements for Scotland to continue participating in the EU School Milk scheme

Children in Scotland is the collective voice for children, young people and families in Scotland as well as the organisations and businesses that have a significant impact on children's lives throughout the country. It is a membership organisation comprising individuals and organisations from the voluntary, public and private sectors.

We aim to identify and promote the interests of children and their families, influencing the development of policy and services in order to ensure that they are of the best possible quality, capable of meeting the needs of children and young people living in Scotland.

We are glad to be able to respond to the Consultation on arrangements for Scotland to continue participating in the EU School Milk scheme. Evidence shows that tackling issues of diet and nutrition are vital to ensuring better outcomes in health and wellbeing for children and young people, and are also associated with improving attainment and limiting the impact of socio-economic factors on the life chances of children and young people across Scotland¹².

Food and Poverty

There is clear link between access to food and poverty. In 2014/15 around one in eight children in Scotland were considered to be living in households that were materially deprived, one of the key indicators of which is food insecurity/food poverty³. Information published by the Trussell Trust indicates that they provided 47995 3 day food parcels for households with children over a 12 month period⁴.

These figures show that in Scotland we have a great many children living in poverty who are not receiving the nourishment they need due to economic factors that are outwith their control.

¹ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/association-between-breakfast-consumption-and-educational-outcomes-in-911yearold-children/8174B87D235C67D22C0913F66E1ED6B4>

² https://orca-mwe.cf.ac.uk/3147/1/MOORE_Orca3147.pdf

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/06/5456/1>

⁴ <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>

The health consequences of food poverty and poor diet are considerable⁵. Evidence from the Scottish Government and the RCPCH state of child health report shows that children and young people from poorer backgrounds are more likely to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, obesity and to have a healthy life expectancy of 23 years less than their most affluent counterparts^{6,7}. Obesity In Scotland's statistics suggest that around 15% of Scottish children are at risk of obesity with a further 13% on top of this being at risk of being overweight⁸.

Evidence also shows poor diet and nutrition can have a negative impact on children and young people's ability to learn and achieve in the school setting⁹. We feel that the Scottish Government has a key role to play in tackling both the economic factors that cause poverty but also the issues that stem from this and see the EU milk scheme as one mechanism for doing so.

With this in mind Children in Scotland are glad to see that the Scottish Government will continue to participate in the EU milk scheme. We believe this can provide a valuable contribution to the dietary and nutritional needs of Scotland's children and young people and ultimately support their learning and attainment.

However we are disappointed that Scotland will not extend its participation to include the fruit and vegetable scheme, which provides children and young people the opportunity for a more balanced and nutritious diet. We believe that this scheme could play an important role in preventing some of the dietary issues that our children and young people face in relation to poverty as it could increase their fruit and vegetable consumption and reduce the likelihood of health issues like obesity¹⁰.

Previous projects of this nature have been prone to certain issues where it has impacted on fruit and vegetable consumption outside school and as such the scheme would have to be coupled with work to embed an understanding of healthy eating and promote this outside the school setting¹¹. Initial feedback from our Food, Families, Futures project has shown that parents have taken away healthy recipes and continued to make these at home. This shows that with effective support children, young people and their families can benefit from greater access to a healthy diet if shown how to utilise then produce. This could be linked in to the educational aspects of the scheme.

While we accept that the Scottish Government is under budgetary pressures, we believe that investing in the health and wellbeing of children and young people across the country is a sensible and effective use of public resources. A 2010 Scottish Government SPice briefing identified that the provision of fruit and

⁵ <http://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2016/02/08/archdischild-2014-306746>

⁶ 'Long-Term Monitoring of Health Inequalities' (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, October 2015)

⁷ <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/state-of-child-health/school-age-and-adolescence>

⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Health/TrendObesity>

⁹ http://www.nourishscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Living_more_important_than_surviving.pdf

¹⁰ www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_schoolfruits_final_report_uk.pdf

¹¹ www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_eval_schoolfruits_final_report_uk.pdf

vegetables in schools could be seen as a public health intervention with an element of preventative spend¹². We support this assessment.

Healthy Products

We recognise the subsidy is only eligible for the milk component of any flavoured milk drink and are pleased to see the commitment towards healthier options, with an aim that products are free from sweeteners and artificial flavour enhancers, and have no added sugar, salt or fat.

However we feel that the Scottish Government should commit to a firmer stance in this regard and move to phase out flavoured milk products from the scheme to ensure that children and young people are gaining access to products that are likely to have a nutritional benefit.

While we appreciate that encouraging some children to drink unflavoured milk can have challenges and accept that some organisations may want to continue ordering some flavoured milk products, we are strongly of the view that the Scottish Government and schools across the country have a key role in informing the choices of our children and young people through what they offer and as such should endeavour to provide the healthiest options possible.

We also welcome the fact that products will be expected to meet the standards set out in the 'Nutritional requirements for food and drink in schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008'. However we have queries about how the term 'expected' will be applied and recommend that a strict regulatory line is enforced to ensure that only products that are not going to have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people are provided through the scheme.

We welcome the sign-posting to '[Catering for Change - buying food sustainably in the public sector](#)' from the Scottish Food And Drink Industry division when considering how to purchase the milk for distribution under this scheme. We support an approach which aims to have a positive impact on children's lives now and in the future: "generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment."

As we raised previously in this response Children In Scotland is disappointed that Scotland does not participate in the fruit and vegetable scheme. We feel this would give many children and young people access to fruit and vegetables that they may otherwise not have with the health benefits that we have outlined above.

The scheme also allows for member states to prioritise local produce and Children In Scotland feels that this could have been used to bring more pupils into contact with both the key environmental considerations that relate to food and also the produce that is available through local or regional purchasing.

¹² <http://www.parliament.scot/Research%20briefings%20and%20fact%20sheets/SB10-57.pdf>

This would give them a clearer understanding of the food they access and ultimately contribute to them making better choices about their own diet. We feel this could be of particular benefit as it would bolster Curriculum for Excellence in line with the Food And Health experiences and outcomes, especially related to the journey of food.

Educational Measures

It is interesting to note the introduction of the thematic educational measures. We recognise this is an area of strength within Curriculum For Excellence under Health And Wellbeing Food And Health, especially around the journey of food.

However, we cannot assume all children are experiencing the same educational input and believe the Scottish Government are right to develop an extra educational aspect. We urge that this is easily accessible for all children, including those with additional support needs. To support this the Scottish Government must conduct consultation work with children and young people to ensure that they achieve an outcome that is understandable and useable for its target audience.

If this is to be a poster, it would be good practice for children to experience a supportive and inclusive 'educational' input when the posters go on display in schools and other educational establishments. We do not wish to see teachers' workloads being added to; we believe the poster should be more of a piece of support material that could tie in with planned work around Food And Health. We suggest that when the Scottish Government distributes the posters to schools this is with a briefing and perhaps direction as to how this can support Food And Health experiences, outcomes and benchmarks.

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