food in schools
conference report

report of the national conference held in Stirling Management Centre, University of Stirling, on 14 May 2001

Scottish Consumer Council
Making all consumers matter

Supported by

Scottish Executive
Food Standards Agency Scotland
Health Education Board for Scotland
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Consumers benefit from efficient and effective services in the public and private sectors. Service-providers benefit from discriminating consumers. A balanced partnership between the two is essential and the SCC seeks to develop this partnership by:

- carrying out research into consumer issues and concerns;
- informing key policy and decision-makers about consumer concerns and issues;
- influencing key policy and decision-making processes;
- informing and raising awareness among consumers.

The SCC is part of the National Consumer Council (NCC) and is sponsored by the Department of Trade and Industry. The SCC’s Chairman and Council members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in consultation with the Secretary of State for Scotland. Future appointments will be in consultation with the First Minister. Martyn Evans, the SCC’s Director, leads the staff team.

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Notetakers

Bill Gray / Scottish Community Diet Project; Catriona MacFarlane / Scottish Healthy Choices Award Scheme; Joanne Crone / Scottish Executive, Health Department; Linda Miller / Scottish Executive, Education Department; Claire Moni / FSA; John Williamson / Scottish Executive, Health department; Malcolm Pentland / Scottish Executive, Health department; Kirsty Aird / SCC; Mandy Edwards / SHCAS; Debbie Cameron / SCDP.

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food in schools conference report
Overview

In response to a range of policy considerations and local concerns, the Scottish Consumer Council (SCC) supported by the Scottish Executive, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) organised a national conference to identify barriers to the promotion of healthy eating in schools, describe current action and explore further practical steps to change.

In 1996 the Scottish Diet Action Plan recognised the influence that schools can have on diet, stating schools are in a unique position to encourage and facilitate healthy eating.

Following devolution, the dietary targets and recommendations of the Action Plan were endorsed in the White Paper Towards a Healthier Scotland and by the Scottish Parliament in 1999. This further reinforced the role of schools by extolling the concept of health promoting schools in ensuring that health education is integral to the curriculum; emphasising that the school ethos, policies, services and extra curricular activities foster mental, physical and social well-being and healthy development.

In recent months three government documents, the Social Justice Annual Report 2000, Our National Health: A plan for action, a plan for change and Programme for Government 2001 have each reiterated the role that schools can play in improving children’s diet. The focus for action has been identified as being through the development of a holistic approach in schools, linking dietary education, the wider curriculum and catering provision both in schools and in the wider community. A recent intervention to support this work is the resource provided through the Health Improvement Fund for the provision of fruit for infants and breakfast clubs and fruit/salad bars in school settings.

To help further develop mechanisms for addressing these issues, the Scottish Consumer Council supported by the Scottish Executive, the Food Standards Agency and the Health Education Board for Scotland organised a conference on food in schools. This was held on 14 May 2001 at the Management Centre in the University of Stirling.

**Aims of the conference**

- To identify the barriers, real and perceived, that prevent progress in promoting healthy eating in schools in Scotland;
- To explore the current action that schools and others are taking to overcome barriers in order to promote healthy eating in schools; and
- To consider the further practical steps that can be taken to overcome these barriers.

**Shape of the conference**

The conference was welcomed by its chair Graeme Millar, chair of SCC and of the CSA in Scotland. It was then opened by Susan Deacon MSP Minister for Health and Community Care and the topic was placed in the context of policy and action by Joan Fraser of the Scottish Executive. This was followed by four presentations:

**Phil Hanlon - Setting the scene**

Phil’s presentation outlined the macro issues to consider in the provision of food in schools including: the links to public health policy and the contribution that food in school can make; and the influence of unresolved personal ideological perspectives. Phil concluded by suggesting that the model of the Health Promoting School (HPS) has strengths for considering it as a way forward. HPS look at the whole school environment from a child-centred perspective. He suggests the desire is to enhance the whole life and learning of the child and to create an ethos, environment and curriculum that promotes this. The active development of this ideal will go a long way to bringing healthy eating patterns and provision to schools.

**Ian Young - Whole School Approach**

Ian explored the special responsibility that schools have for health promotion and explored the need for supportive
health promotion policy framework using the example of current adverts aimed at children. He described the HPS with examples of what a whole school approach can achieve; and ended with questions to consider in moving forward in policy and practice.

Ian spent some time teasing out the situation with schools at the moment. He identified a number of problems which need to be addressed as part of the process of developing the HPS approach.

Ian noted that schools are not all the same and schools cannot be effective on their own nor operate in isolation. However, Ian felt that there are reasons to be positive; these include a climate of innovation and ministerial interest.

Grace Irvine - View from caterers
Grace described the responsibilities that caterers have for food in schools including looking at the constraints facing school caterers in Scotland to encourage healthy eating in schools. She explored how to move forward and overcome the barriers between the delivery of a quality and profitable service in order to provide and encourage the uptake of a healthy balanced diet in Scotland’s schools.

Grace felt that there had been positive moves in the right direction with School Meal Providers. However, there needs to be work in schools in supporting caterers by taking a holistic approach, actively promoting healthy options in tuck shops and using a single vending provider. She also made a plea to the Scottish Executive on the need for a single policy agenda - on the provision of food in schools and the need for a consistent approach throughout Scotland.

Ian Robertson - View from education
In this presentation Ian covered education departments’ responsibilities for food in schools in relation to both food provision and integration with the curriculum. The barriers to the provision and uptake of a healthy balanced diet in Scotland’s schools were explored and ways of moving forward to overcome these barriers were proposed.

Ian’s conclusions were that it is necessary to recognise the good work currently going on in schools, develop a single policy framework and look carefully at funding. However, he asked, with current spending priorities, is it possible to achieve the needed outcomes? He suggested that we also need to look at commercial versus social objectives and new ways of working.

Following the presentations delegates divided into five concurrent, one hour workshops offering the choice of: Breakfast Clubs, School Lunch provision (two workshops), the Snack Attack Initiative and Healthy Vending Machines in Schools.

Workshops
Each workshop consisted of a presentation describing the initiative and its development followed by discussion about issues raised in the presentation. The workshops proved to be lively and interesting events with much reference in the discussions to both the presentations from the morning speakers and to policy and practice issues from the participants.

The final session in the programme invited delegates to join one of ten small group discussions.

Small Group Discussions
All ten groups had the same task to address - to think about good practice and real and practical actions that could be taken.
Conclusions
Each stage of the conference fed into the final reporting of the event and three key themes for further work emerged:

1. The need for a single policy framework.
2. The need for partnership working.
3. The need to share good practice more extensively throughout Scotland.

Need for a single policy framework
There was much support for a single policy framework to direct food in schools. There was a desire for a framework that was enabling and flexible to reflect and accommodate diversity at all levels. This should be complemented by the introduction of minimal nutritional standards. Three levels were identified: the need for a policy framework from the Scottish Executive which would ensure a consistent approach throughout Scotland; for this to be transferred to Local Authority/Health Board level; and at individual schools.

Need for partnership working
To achieve this required the full involvement and inclusion of all relevant bodies and groups.

Need to share good practice more extensively throughout Scotland
It is necessary to share good practice throughout Scotland to identify what worked and why, and to learn lessons from those projects that failed.

In addition to the three main issues identified from the conference, a number of practical steps were mentioned in the small group discussions.

In conclusion, the conference provided a strong foundation to develop action. The level of participation and debate was very high and the conference identified clear recommendations for action. There were obvious tensions where further dialogue is needed. The wide range of attendance from key agencies suggests willingness to act on the conference’s recommendations.

The Scottish Consumer Council looks forward to continued involvement in the debate and action to achieve these very important goals for Scotland’s health.
In welcoming everyone to the conference the Minister pointed out that the conference had already been a success as it had been substantially oversubscribed. She said this did not surprise her as her two years in post had shown that there is a will to develop health promotion in schools. The Minister said the need to improve health across all of Scottish society is one of the biggest challenges facing Scotland, and the importance of childhood nutrition to the development of a healthy society is recognised by the Scottish Executive.

The Minister said that while she did not wish to make a litany of policy, initiatives and investments she felt it was important to highlight the historic opportunity now to make an impact on health behaviours and outcomes. If this can be achieved with youngsters it would be the biggest legacy that this administration could give to the country.

At the beginning of her post as Minister she realised that the biggest challenge would be to improve the health of people. She went on to highlight that there are good examples of the level of change possible, for example North Karelia in Finland. While accepting that this is Scotland and not Finland, the Minister felt change in health is possible through collaborative working. However this takes years, not months, and the role of the Scottish Executive in this is to lead, to bring together and facilitate, to make a difference. However the difference cannot be made by Government alone, or by simply spending more money or through regulation.

The Minister pointed out that to achieve change in the health of society at this level needs widespread collaboration. All of the relevant groups were here at the conference, and could work on further developing the role of the school in encouraging and supporting healthy eating. The Minister pointed out that we cannot force-feed our youngsters, make them eat cucumber instead of Crunchies, mandarins instead of Mars Bars or chain them to their school dining room table to stop them going to the chip shop. What we can do is work with them to enable them to make healthy choices. She felt that teachers and pupils are taking ownership of the issue and working together to improve the situation, but what was needed was to further develop this practical action and to roll out the excellent progress that is occurring already throughout the country.

The Minister concluded that the success of this conference in bringing together a wide range of concerned and committed people to explore issues and learn from each other will provide a springboard to real practical action that can only be good for young people and society as a whole.
View from the Scottish Executive: Joan Fraser

Joan Fraser is a senior civil servant in the Scottish Executive with responsibility for a range of education policies. She gave an overview of the current picture of nutrition and health education in schools and looked to the future.

In summary, health education should be integrated into all aspects of the school curriculum including in food provision. School staff must work in partnership with other key agencies as well as with parents and pupils to ensure the very best in development of good learning and good health. New Community Schools are building on the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) concept which will be supported by a Health Promoting Schools Unit.

Joan Fraser gave a description of the structures supporting health education in schools which currently work through the two main routes of the curriculum and the whole school approach.

**Curriculum**

Joan said that within the curriculum health education, including nutrition education, is delivered as part of a comprehensive programme of personal and social education—therefore information is not given in isolation but as part of a programme of learning about lifestyle choices and health improvement.

**Whole School Approach**

She then outlined the whole school approach which she suggested gives a comprehensive view to health education which supports and reinforces the messages in the curriculum. In practical terms this means that, for nutrition, schools and education authorities should support the curriculum by reviewing school meals provision and developing healthy eating policies.

**Clear link between health and education**

Joan noted that the health and wellbeing of children and young people affects their ability to learn and achieve. Poor health is a barrier to attainment and to each child achieving their full potential. The approach of supporting the whole child is a cornerstone of the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Act 2000. This places a duty on education authorities to develop the personality, talents, and mental and physical well being of the children and young people to their fullest potential. This must include giving good, consistent, advice about healthy eating supported by practical approaches.

Joan suggested that health education is not just about teachers and schools, rather it is about a multi agency approach drawing together key disciplines. For example, schools should involve caterers and catering staff in developing healthy choices and also involve health professionals in delivering key messages.

**Health Promoting Schools**

Joan acknowledged that a partnership approach is fundamental to the development of good learning and good health. She went on to outline the HPS concept. This embodies a well planned curriculum, good school ethos and partnership approaches involving not just other agencies but also pupils and parents.

**Role of New Community Schools**

Joan added that partnership and multi agency working are very much a feature of New Community Schools. All New Community Schools are required to become HPS.

Pointing out that the final stage of the New Community Schools pilot programme was announced earlier this year, she said that from 1st April 2001 the Scottish Executive is funding 62 pilot projects covering every education authority in Scotland and involving over 400 schools. Many are already doing excellent work.

**Health Promoting Schools Unit**

Joan ended by reminding the conference that the Scottish Executive has committed to establishing a Health Promoting Schools Unit and work is already under way on setting this up. It will be a partnership between HEBS, LTS and COSLA and both the Education and Health Departments of the Scottish Executive will be closely involved.

Joan pointed out that the Unit’s task will be to help every school become a HPS and in doing so, it will be able to build on some of the excellent work already going on in New Community and other schools.
Setting the Scene: Professor Phil Hanlon

Professor Phil Hanlon, Director of the Public Health Institute of Scotland, provided a lively introduction to the macro issues that need to be considered in the provision of school meals.

Summary: there are spectrums of opinion around food. For example, there is the conflict between food being an enjoyable social activity, but at the same time being a major public health issue in Scotland. Also there are ideological conflicts between large multi-national companies or state influences versus individuals’ food choices. While these conflicts are not easy to resolve, initiatives such as the Health Promoting School concept go some way towards addressing these problems by taking a whole life approach from a child-centred perspective.

Phil began by pointing out that for most purposes in life, food is a joy! We enjoy eating, we gain pleasure from the act of eating itself and for the social context in which it takes place. Nonetheless, food is also a problem because diet is seen to be a major public health issue within Scotland and other industrialised countries. Food can also be a battlefield between professional interests and between parents and children.

Phil pointed out that the contention of this presentation was that the conflicts that occur over food reflect major differences in ideological issues affecting our attitude towards food in schools which have never been fully debated and resolved.

Phil suggested the main currency of debate tends to be around the scientific evidence for the harm that poor diets can cause and that there is considerable evidence to back this up. He suggested that perhaps of greatest importance is the evidence that rates of obesity and overweight among children in Scotland have been rising since the mid 1980s. However, levels of obesity in Scotland are higher than those of the UK as a whole and even in these data there are complexities, as the number of calories consumed by children has not (on average) been increasing in this period rather, energy expenditure through activity and exercise has been declining.

Phil argued that it is also possible to point to high fat diets, dental caries, issues of osteoporosis in later life, micronutrient deficiencies and eating disorders as further issues that are influenced by childhood diets.

Mobilisation and the Anti Capitalist Movement

Scientific discourse is, of course, not the only critique of nutrition in schools. Phil used the example of Naomi Klein and her recent book No Logo which illustrates how large multinational companies have been using brand power to influence young people. Many in our society, pointed out Phil, find this influence objectionable, so that when Coca-Cola or Irn-Bru amongst others place their brands and sponsorship within a school context many are reacting not just to the harmful effects that they perceive soft drinks may have on their children, but to the whole principle of resisting brand-power in this way.

The Libertarian Perspective

Phil went on to discuss other ideological perspectives including those who take a much more libertarian approach. These people argue that the individual should not be constrained in their freedom by the state which, they argue, is often counterproductive in its exercise of power. Phil suggested that from this perspective, all in society (including children) should be let free to make their own decisions in life. Thus, Phil claimed, the more libertarian approaches would question whether it is appropriate for the state to become overly prescriptive about school meals and nutrition in schools.

Phil suggested that the average individual usually has an unresolved amalgam of ideas and views derived from this spectrum of opinion. He observed that some of it is concern derived from scientific analyses, some of it anxiety created by the power manufacturers have in
influencing our opinions, and some of it the yearning for individual freedom from what sometimes seems like an interfering “nanny state”. Phil suggested that until some of these ideological issues have been resolved in our minds it will be difficult for us to make simple decisions about school meals provision.

**Health Promoting School/ Whole School Approach**

Phil suggested that a solution is the adoption of the Health Promoting School concept which seeks to look at the whole school environment from a child-centred perspective. Thus, the desire is to enhance the whole life and learning of the child and to create an ethos, environment and curriculum that promotes this. Phil believes that this model appears to be the most appropriate way of coping with the ideological conflicts outlined above.
Whole School Approach: Ian Young

Ian Young, Schools Programme Manager at HEBS, gave a comprehensive presentation moving from the history of school meals through the rationale for the Whole School Approach and the problems and successes relating to food in schools.

Summary: School meals have always been seen as part of schoolchildren's social education. Some problems have arisen including meeting the different needs of different schools, conflicts arising over advertising and sponsorship in relation to children’s food and the need to take into account pupils’ concerns, such as queues. However the current innovative climate and Whole School Approach has opened up enormous potential for schools to promote good and healthy eating.

Using images of school dinners over the past 100 years Ian looked at the changing roles for school meals. In the early days they were an inducement to attend school. At the time of the Boer War, with the realisation of the poor health and stature of the population, school meals were seen as a means of addressing the need for a strong and healthy fighting force.

They have also been seen as a way of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, a means of teaching good manners and a prerequisite for children to take full advantage of the education being provided. During the Second World War they were a means of reducing the effects of privations on children and after the war a free service was seen to provide food to the “most needy” children.

Ian explained that while elements of the historical roles of school meals still exist, school meals now need to be considered within the framework of a Whole School Approach to health promotion.

The Whole School Approach

Ian explained that the Whole School Approach was not just about teaching and learning in the classroom but covered the complete social, emotional and community experience that children are exposed to. This approach is recognised both nationally and internationally for example, Towards a Healthier Scotland states that:

*The Government recognise the concept of the Health Promoting School as important in ensuring not only that health education is integral to the curriculum, but also that school ethos, policies, services and extra curricular activities foster mental, physical and social wellbeing and healthy development.*

In addition, the World Health Organization (Euro) decreed:

*Every child and young person in Europe has the right, and should have the opportunity, to be educated in a health promoting school.*

**Schools cannot be effective on their own**

Another issue that raises concern for many is that of advertising. Research shows a plethora of advertising targeted at young children promoting high fat, high sugar and high salt snacks. This potentially undermines school health promotion.

In addition there are a growing number of sponsorship schemes from commercial companies relating to food provision in schools. Ian questioned whether their full extent and impact is known. Do schools with a sponsored meal service provide fewer healthy options?

**Perceived disadvantages of sponsorship**

Parents, teachers and to some extent pupils highlight the following:

- high visibility of branded food and drinks in the school
• branded foods which are promoted are often high in sugar and/or high in fat
• possible conflicts with learning and teaching.

Pupils’ views on food provision
In terms of food provision in schools, eating should be considered within the context of pupils’ mood, mental and social health. Pupils make decisions based on a complex set of issues. Some issues that arose from research were:

• quality of the environment
• queues - often the No 1 complaint!
• year rotas
• information on menu and pricing too close to point of sale
• lunchtime clubs activities
• noise
• supervision (lack of)
• décor and furnishings.

Reasons to be positive
However, there are a number of initiatives and factors supporting schools in working with others to support healthy eating in schools, including:

• curriculum contribution- a whole range of curricular areas cover health education and healthy eating
• innovative climate (fruit in schools and sponsorship innovation)
• ministerial interest
• the policy framework
• the SNAGS movement

• Health Education Trust report *The Chips are Down*
• breakfast clubs report *A Head Start*
• fruit in school schemes
• water provision is now being recognised as an issue
• healthy vending machines.

Ian concluded that schools offer enormous potential to promote healthy eating to all our young people.
View from Caterers: Grace Irvine
Grace Irvine is the Commercial Manager for Catering And Leisure Services at East Dunbartonshire Council.

Summary: caterers have a key role to play in ensuring that school meals can respond to pupils’ expectations as well as to promote good diets. This can best be achieved if they can work in partnership with others, particularly pupils, parents, teachers and health professionals. However, work still needs to be done in reducing the stigma of free school meals and in promoting a consistent approach to provision across Scotland.

Evolution Of School Meals
Grace started her presentation with a short history of changes in perception about school meals over the last 30 years, from 1970s lumpy pink custard through 1980s cash cafeterias to the branded fast food outlets of today.

She suggested that these changes were underpinned by trends in the public’s eating habits. From chip shops, Chinese and Indian takeaways to McDonalds, tapas bars, Japanese sushi and Thai food.

Grace pointed out that children’s tastes have also changed and caterers have to respond to this. Children have high expectations of food, valuing the branded product and having definite opinions on food. She suggested that there has also been a move towards much more snacking.

Grace presented the results of a recent survey in East Dunbartonshire which showed that the top five favourite foods of schoolchildren were:

- hot dogs
- burgers
- chips
- McFlurries
- Marks and Spencer sandwiches.

She felt that this showed that the days of meat and two veg have gone. Grace suggested that nutritional needs have also changed with the combination of poor diet and sedentary lifestyle known to contribute to major problems with obesity and cardiovascular illnesses.

Grace went on to outline caterers’ responsibilities. She suggested that these can be summarised as:

- providing food
- helping pupils stay in school
- providing food that is as nutritious as possible
- giving clients an enjoyable experience
- being cost effective.

Grace said that these are caterers responsibilities but that there are constraints which affect how caterers can promote healthy eating. She outlined these:

Time is limited - only 30 minutes to serve 200-600 pupils. This gives little opportunity to get any healthy eating message through.

School tuck shops - often promote unhealthy items and give conflicting messages to children.

Cost issues - fresh cooking takes more labour and time and fresh ingredients can be expensive.

Eating environments - in many schools these are not attractive. Competition is increasing - from many directions such as corner shops.

Grace argued that caterers or schools can either dictate food choice to pupils and end up with lower take-up, or can offer a choice which involves retaining some unhealthy products but also actively promotes healthy items.

Grace suggested the key commercial objectives for caterers are to increase volume and reduce subsidy - this means that the children must be given what they want. She referred to recent market research in East Dunbartonshire which showed that pupils had the following concerns about school meals:

- queuing
- street cred
- environment
- food not modern
- institutionalised.

Grace noted that queuing was identified as the biggest problem, but she suggested that East Dunbartonshire and many other authorities have begun to turn the tide. Swipcards in secondary schools have dramatically improved service time, the image of the service has been improved...
through branding and investing in refurbishment of the environment. Pupils have been involved in designing new menus and staff training introduced in order to change the way in which they view school meals.

**The burger and chips myth**
Grace felt that fast food meant “grab and go” not necessarily burger and chips. The fastest food in the world must be fruit because it comes pre-portioned, packed in its own skin and is available in a wide variety. She noted in East Dunbartonshire a huge variety of fast food is served including wraps, pastas, baked potatoes - that is not only burgers. Grace said that no Local Authority caterer in Scotland is actively promoting unhealthy food in schools.

**Key solution in primary schools is partnership**
Grace went on to say that caterers are not the only players in promoting the healthy eating message - they are only part of the solution. Suppliers also play a role in developing healthier products and supporting promotional activities, HEBS play a role with their Healthy Choices Award Scheme, (although Grace felt that they might be less judgemental in their approach to branding).

Grace also felt the teachers must be involved, since the dining room is also a classroom and what is taught in one should be reflected in the other. Parents, she said, also need to be involved and informed and school boards can be extremely influential. She argued that most of all, pupils need to buy into the concepts introduced.

She felt that so far, school meal providers have achieved a great deal and we should be celebrating these achievements. There has been major investment in refurbishing dining rooms, a new culture introduced where the pupil is the customer, a modern style environment created for having lunch. She also pointed to the fact that communities have benefited by the reduction in litter in the neighbourhoods, which comes from keeping the pupils in school at lunchtime and from educational benefits achieved - an enjoyable lunchbreak resulting in improved attitudes to learning.

**The Future**
Grace emphasised that caterers are committed to continue to make improvements, for example the ongoing modernisation of menus such as introduction of noodles, wraps and pastas and by making healthy food fun and educating through choice. However, caterers always have to remember commercial realities and make sure improvements are successful.

Grace suggested that schools need to support caterers by taking a holistic approach - this means the same message in the classroom about healthy eating as that in the dining room, in home economics departments and in the tuck shop.

Grace refered to recent research which suggested that, in terms of free meal uptake, over 350,000 of the pupils entitled to a free meal do not take it. Twenty per cent of eligible pupils do not take up their entitlement because of the stigma attached. She felt that in the year 2001 it was astonishing that we still had pupils having to hand over a ticket for their free meal in front of all their classmates. This stigma could be easily reduced by investing in technology to eradicate the need for a ticket.

**Plea To Scottish Executive**
Giving the caterers’ point of view Grace said that the Scottish Executive can help in making the changes towards developing a single agenda to the provision of food in schools with a consistent approach throughout Scotland.
View from Education: Ian Robertson

Ian Robertson is Head of Planning Resources for Children’s Services at Stirling Council and his presentation explored the role of food in schools, the barriers to inclusive practice, solutions and successes.

Summary: some barriers for schools in meeting new expectations for changing practice were identified. Some initiatives and processes that schools in Stirling have adopted in order to meet standards for pupils’ achievement for of health and personal and social development were highlighted.

Ian Robertson began his presentation by looking at the two key aims of an education service - those of raising achievement and promoting social inclusion. He pointed out that these were common aims in service plans across Scotland and also embedded within the Standard in Scotland Schools etc Act 2000. This provides a clarity of expectations and standards for attainment, health, personal and social development. He suggests there is particular emphasis on working with children and young people as active citizens helping them make informed life choices.

Barriers to action

Ian explored a range of barriers to action, including attitudes, expectations, funding, time, environment, service delivery and attempting to put theory into practice.

Attitudes/expectations

He suggested that there are a range of attitudes and expectations that need to be explored in relation to food and schools. Ian gave a flavour of some of these; for staff - is lunch an integral part of school life or “the bit in the middle of the day to get through”? Parents may have expectations but what about responsibilities? He asked was it too simple to say that children don’t like healthy food? Ian said the commercial reality of working with caterers is that they are contractors rather than partners.

These are all issues that have to be addressed.

Funding

Ian considered whether the two key aims can be achieved given current levels of investment. Given existing funding constraints and the limited investment in kitchens and eating environments he asked how new agendas and action can be developed?

Time

Ian went on to look at the constraints on time in the curriculum. For example, he referred to the current trend in some secondary schools to reduce lunch break from 1 hour to 45 minutes to increase timetable efficiency.

Environment/Service delivery

He suggested that school buildings at the moment are not designed to promote food and can cause problems for staff, children and service providers. Ian also raised concerns that the need for commercial returns was a current reality that had to be recognised.

Theory into practice

Ian argued the substantial content in personal and social development programmes that relates to food and wellbeing raise problems for the school in putting them into practice. Within the system as it stands he argued there is insufficient opportunity to “walk the talk”. This will have to be addressed within a Whole School Approach.

Overcoming the barriers

He suggested a range of approaches to overcoming these barriers are being tried, including:

- incentive Schemes to influence pupils to make healthier choices - “Points means prizes” - is this a good or bad approach to adopt?
- New Community Schools - multi agency/professional response to working with children and parents
- children educating parents - don’t underestimate the influence children can have on their parents
- theory into practice - need to work harder at the linkages - but where is the time?
- environment - social space is a priority - new build and refurbishment must prioritise social and eating space
• single policy framework - such as in Stirling - “Children First” and all partners must sign up
• pupil and parent participation - in the design of service and continuing review
• diversity - no single solution - rural/urban - primary/secondary - one size doesn’t fit all.

**Some practical examples**
Ian gave a brief overview of some practical examples of working to overcome barriers to inclusive practice in the Stirling area:

• consultation and performance review - consultation with children, staff, parents and health professionals on menu planning, environment etc. - very time consuming - don’t always get it right - constant reflection and review
• joint initiatives - link with local environmental centre - “grow your own food initiative”
• beyond lunchtime - breakfast clubs - study support class - evidence of improved attendance, behaviour, attention span and attitudes to food leading to improved achievement.

***Conclusions***
Ian concluded that there is a need to recognise the good work currently going on in schools. He suggests that we are not particularly good at recognising current best practice and even worse at sharing it. He suggested that a single policy framework must be the starting point for this work and this needs to support the pooling of available funding and value outcomes not process.

He suggested that there are questions around current spending priorities and whether they help us achieve outcomes.

The tension between commercial versus social objectives needs to be dealt with, but Ian is concerned that Best Value may not be the way to reconcile this tension.

Ian suggested that while New Community Schools are beginning to have an impact, particularly in engaging parents, there is also a range of other school-based issues. For example he asked whether the McCrone Agreement provided opportunities for the future?

In developing solutions to the problems, Ian highlights the creativity and diversity that must be encouraged as there will be no single solution to these problems. He suggested that if there is a local solution that works it is important to use it and share it with others.
Workshops

The conference offered a choice of five concurrent, one hour workshop sessions from: Breakfast Clubs, School Lunch provision (two workshops), the Fruit in Schools Initiative and Healthy Vending Machines.

The workshop sessions consisted of a short presentation describing the initiative, identifying barriers to progress and action to overcome them, followed by a discussion on how to move forward. The workshops proved to be lively and interesting with much reference in the discussions to both the presentations from the keynote speakers and to policy and practice issues from the participants.

The main points from the workshop presentations are outlined with issues arising from the subsequent discussion.
Breakfast clubs: Getting off to a good start? Anna Baxendale

In this workshop Anna Baxendale, Senior Health Promotion Officer in Greater Glasgow Health Board, looked at the development of a breakfast club “...from needs assessment to dirty dishes”.

Setting the goal posts
Anna started by looking at some key points for consideration in running a breakfast club and to consider before you get started, or for reflection when you are up and running.

What makes a club a ‘club’?
Anna stated that it is important to know what is meant by a breakfast club. One understanding is:

Although breakfast clubs incorporate breakfast provision, they also have a health and social dimension. These dimensions are of equal importance to the provision of food.

She went on to suggest that the health and social dimensions are largely driven by the following principles:

• a breakfast club should be child-centred.

• a breakfast club should have a club-ethos.

Who are your local drivers?
In establishing a breakfast club Anna suggested finding out who the key players in the area are and getting them on your side. These people, she said, will be able to help make your breakfast club happen more quickly and operate more successfully. Some of the key players include staff from local agencies such as Health Promotion, Education, Catering Services, Social Work, Roads and Transport, Health Services (for example community dietitian, community dental services, school nurse, health visitor) and last, but not least, local Community Health Projects.

What are your motivations for having a breakfast club?
Anna suggested that people start breakfast clubs for many different reasons. She recommended consulting with those who wish to be involved in the club to help determine the need and shared desire for a club and help decide what the club wants to achieve in the short-term. Who would the club want to target and why would the club want to do this?

What limitations are facing your club?
Anna pointed out that breakfast clubs may seem like a good idea but it is important to think about the practicalities. Most clubs will need to think about funding and resources in the short-term and in the long-term. Anna said that it is important to ask who will be accountable for the breakfast club’s organisation and planning on a daily basis and in the long-term.

Background to existing breakfast clubs
Anna outlined examples of differing agendas and purposes of breakfast clubs, for example food provision, social services for vulnerable children, childcare, supervision, educational support and catering service developments. She pointed out that both community and school settings are being successfully used for clubs.

Anna went on to suggest that research supports the benefits offered by a club rather than just food provision. Breakfast clubs are identified as key initiatives within national and local political arenas and Anna believes they demonstrate many aspects of the social inclusion agenda. In terms of education she suggested breakfast clubs demonstrate the principles of the Health Promoting School. Most breakfast clubs work to create community links and promote parental involvement. This can create opportunities for capacity building within the local community through training etc.

Research project in Glasgow
Anna went on to outline the research project in Glasgow. The purpose of this was to:
• identify key strengths and weaknesses from existing breakfast clubs and develop organisational models building on the existing strengths
• assess the impact of the different breakfast clubs on individuals, schools and services
• make recommendations for the support and subsequent development of breakfast clubs.

Anna reported the following elements of good practice identified by the research:

• a steering group of key partners was a useful structure to manage the breakfast club; this should include volunteers
• the development of links with local community and parents were seen to be beneficial
• the provision of healthy food with a set pricing policy
• Breakfast clubs were able to incorporate activity programmes to develop tooth-brushing skills
• links with City Council Services enabled standardised catering practices and complied with health and safety policies
• commitment from school staff ensured that the breakfast club was seen as part of the school day and enabled the development of associated work within primary school
• children (and parents) travelling to school early were encouraged to adopt a Safe Routes to School programme
• the promotion of volunteering and community involvement as part of the breakfast club provide ‘added value’ to the club and training and development opportunities were identified for volunteers.

Evaluation
Anna suggested that it is useful to take stock once in a while, even if your breakfast club is up and running. It is useful to map the local picture - who, when, where etc to make sure you link in with other clubs in your area and don’t miss out on new opportunities. She highlighted the importance of making sure your breakfast club is safe and legal.

Anna recommended thinking about the club’s strengths and weaknesses, what’s working well what’s not, making sure the management structure for your club enables you to raise any problems or concerns from the day to day operation. Build on the goals and motivations of the club to try and identify new opportunities to provide a better service.

Where do we go from here?
Anna reported that breakfast clubs have gained popularity in recent years, funding and support are being identified and statutory agencies are working in partnership with local communities to deliver these services. The initial impetus for the development of breakfast clubs was based on a need identified at a community/school level. She felt that breakfast clubs were more than just service provision and it was important that we retain the community links when responding to this identified need.

Breakfast clubs should strive to develop new activities and strengthen their role within the Health Promoting School. The opportunity to network and contribute to evaluation within this field will support their ongoing development.

Issues arising from the Breakfast Clubs workshop
• the experience and interests of people in the workshop group ranged from people fact-finding on how to set up clubs, to those already involved in New Community Schools
• some people had a number of years experience of breakfast clubs while others had no experience at all
• people were looking for ideas on how to refresh an existing club, looking for ideas on how to start a breakfast club in very isolated areas, looking for research and models of best service provision
• a variety of support mechanisms exist, ranging from education service and volunteers through to social services. Some clubs are based in community, some in school and there is a huge diversity of provision. There are links from breakfast clubs to wider social inclusion agendas for example involvement of the community
• the evaluation of breakfast clubs is patchy, no one has yet looked at the process. There was agreement that this needed to be done
• safe routes to school were relevant. This was important because crossing patrols were not there. Suggestions were made for groups of children, younger and older going together.
June Dudley, Area Catering Manager - Tayside Contracts, outlined the way in which a large school meals contractor addressed issues around healthy eating.

In setting the background to her presentation, June pointed out that youngsters of today are bombarded with a tremendous range of tasty foods, some of them healthy, some of them not so, and they are all too aware of the many choices available to them. June suggested this is why today’s school catering service provider has not only to satisfy essential factors such as nutrition, quality and value but also variety and an understanding of what young people will eat and enjoy.

**Barriers to promoting healthy eating within schools**
June suggested there were a number of barriers to promoting healthy eating in schools including:

- the school meals customer range is of varying ages and is an extremely large audience to target solely by the school caterer
- lunchtime is such a small window within the pupils’ educational day and choosing food is not high on the priority list when playtime / lunchtime looms ahead
- promotions and dining room activities encroach on teacher’s lunchtime which can create a barrier with any future projects
- marketing materials are very costly with very little effect unless the power of the school is behind the message as well
- the volume of meals required is often in excess of available equipment for oven baking, steaming and grilling. This can hinder cooking methods for the production of healthy recipes
- competition from corner shops, McDonalds, chip vans etc
- peer pressure from fellow pupils “healthy eating is not cool”
- parents’ / guardians perception of school meals is still “when I was at school...”.

**Approach in the Angus area**
June said that initially extensive market research was conducted in schools throughout the region. The result was the formation of a customer-led menu development plan, to address the requirements of each individual school.

She pointed out that to ensure that menus remain balanced, but also lively and inspiring, the service is continually reviewed and developed through menu groups.

June emphasised that all menus adhere to and surpass the required model nutritional guidelines. She said that staff, through the Angus customer care policy, actively encourage the children to eat a selection of food, which reflects a balance towards a healthier diet, especially offering the salad accompaniment, fresh fruit and yoghurt which are available on a daily basis in primary schools and the free salad / vegetables in secondary schools. The service is being continually marketed by issuing parents with menus in advance to inform them of the quality service.

**Whole School Approach**
June highlighted that the need had been recognised for the more sophisticated development of a Whole School Approach between kitchen staff, the classroom and parents in the evolution of a locally focused marketing strategy.

In this, good communication is an integral part of the service. The head teacher, pupils and parents are key players in developing the service and all parties have to take ownership, which in turn will ensure success in actively encouraging healthy eating.
June pointed out that in Angus an element of fun has been introduced during lunchtimes with the development of the “Taycat mascot”. Taycat has a huge following in Angus primary schools and where possible Taycat is used to promote positive messages through health awareness weeks / days or class projects.

She observed that the giant leap from primary school to secondary school finds the child with the freedom to choose from a variety of traditional meals, vegetarian choices, snacks and healthy options. The introduction of the pre-order “Snappy Snack Service” and “Tattie Express”, available to pupils who have a limited time for lunch has eliminated the empty gap for pupils involved in lunchtime activities. June said that this has significantly increased the uptake of fresh fruit, yoghurt and mineral waters.

June then went on to explain that healthy eating is featured in secondary schools through a bonus point system, which was introduced with the “cashless catering” system. In this, points are allocated to a swipe card user for selecting healthier options. These are accrued over a term-time basis and prizes such as swimming and sport and leisure vouchers are awarded to the pupils with the most points, encouraging them to choose wisely.

June believes that home economic departments are another link between school food courts and cafeterias, enabling the healthy eating message to be focused on menus and recipe design.

**Moving forward**

June believes that the way forward for caterers is to embark on the whole educational approach. She suggested a range of examples:

- market research to establish customer likes and dislikes by liaising with pupil councils or pupil focus groups
- linking into the school curriculum will provide an excellent working relationship between the kitchen and the school to assist in promoting food policy initiatives
- establish funding through sponsorship from interested parties and local businesses affiliated to the schools
- continual review of menus, making them attractive to the children and giving confidence to parents that their children are being provided with balanced meals
- staff training on health initiatives, nutritional standards, cooking methods and the best use of ingredients will provide them with the confidence to promote healthy eating.

**Conclusion**

June concluded that the continual encouragement of a Whole School Approach towards healthy eating within schools will ensure children are getting the balance right for a healthy lifestyle.

**In our experience we have found it is essential to introduce FUN during lunchtimes**

**Issues arising from the discussion in the School Meals in Angus workshop**

- during playtime food is not a priority
- meals promotions can encroach on teaching so must be planned, need co-operation from teachers and catering staff
- marketing is costly so must be carefully planned to be effective
- need to understand what children eat and enjoy
- review menus through pupil councils which are linked to the caterer
- competition from local shops who have no responsibility for health
- labour costs involved in packaging fruit for example to portion
- reduce queuing by setting up a pre-order service. The meal is paid for at registration and the lunch is picked up at a service station
- speak with Primary 7 children about the meal service and introduce them to the service in secondary school as a visit
- discussion about merits of commercial packed lunches including safety and storage and ‘branded boxes’
- employ pupils to help during the lunch hour
- benefits of training staff on healthy eating so that they are confident in what they are selling
- for some out of hours meetings eg SNAG meetings - caterers are paid to attend
- Angus subsidise the service. Some local authority services are not.
Lexie explained that back in 1998, economics dictated that changes had to be made within Midlothian primary schools to make the service more cost effective. At the same time the council became aware of the Scottish Healthy Choices Award and sent in its application. In response the three-tray colour-zones scheme was introduced, providing one tray with a hot traditional meal, the second tray with a hot snack meal and the third with a packed lunch type meal.

**Whole Public Sector approach adopted**
Lexie explained that a working group was set up and led by Contract Services. The other partners were: the Scottish Consumer Council, the Health Education Board for Scotland, Lothian Health Education Division, Environmental Health Services, Property Services, Communications and food suppliers - who sponsored the promotions and the development of the resources. The school boards, head teachers, parents, guardians and pupils were informed throughout the process through focus meetings.

Lexie highlighted that the key aspects of this operation were menus and the products. As part of this the food suppliers were asked to source new food products which offered more fibre and contained less than ten per cent fat, low sugar and low salt to comply with the award’s strict criteria. A four-weekly menu was introduced and on a daily basis one of the trays was designed as the healthy choice.

Lexie said that the menus were tried and tested by the pupils before being agreed with the local assessor from Lothian Health Promotion. These new menus were put in place for a month and at the end of this period a promotion scheme was implemented to encourage the uptake of healthy meals.

Environmental Health Services provided the food safety, hygiene and management scores for the award. Lexie explained that where kitchens did not meet the required standards, the education department allocated a sum of money and Property Services prioritised the main faults that were found by the Environmental Health Officer and these were rectified to meet the schemes standards.

“Nibbles” the squirrel was used to promote the meals throughout the primary schools and proved to be popular in themes and promotions. A promotional scheme was implemented to encourage the uptake of healthy meals. This was done through issuing passports where the pupils had to collect stickers to win prizes. All 7,500 Midlothian primary school children received a passport and each time a healthy choice meal was selected the child received a sticker.

Lexie pointed out that this could only be done with support from headteachers and their staff. The support from the majority of schools was good but there were a few who thought it was a waste of time, and this problem had to be overcome by re-visiting these schools.

The promotion to encourage the pupils to pick the Healthy Choice ran from Easter 1999 to Easter 2000. Lexie felt that on reflection this was far too long but the numbers did rise and peaked at twelve per cent. At the end of the promotion an analysis was undertaken by SCC and HEBS. With the introduction of the three-tray colour-zones system the uptake in main meals has been quite significant. Lexie stated that the dining centre numbers increased dramatically as
children were able to order their preferences in advance knowing that on the day they would get the meal that they liked and therefore the food waste was reduced. The support by teaching staff was good although more help could have been given in the classroom to encourage the pupils to choose the healthy option.

Menu planners were given to all teachers in every primary school to put up in their classrooms to encourage them to spend a few minutes each day talking about the range of food on offer to help pupils make the correct choice.

**Working in partnership**

Lexie emphasised that it is vital that the various departments within the Local Authority are brought on board. She said that Midlothian Catering Services are always looking for ways to improve the service to pupils and staff and to involve the customers. To this end a focus group has been formed within the primary schools. This group looks at the school meals, based on the menu and food content. Through this, group participants are asked to try the food and comment on it. The group consists of parents, teachers, pupils, school board chairs as well as a representative from Education and the catering service. There is also a High School Cluster Group which looks at healthy lifestyles and school food.

In further developing the service Lexie explained that “Mini Bite” Sites have recently trialed at two schools with a fifty per cent increase in numbers which has been maintained since last September. A rollout programme has now been started for all the primary schools in the area.

Recently a presentation was delivered to all the School Board Chairs on the future of school meals and the changes proposed that will give the children in Midlothian a better, healthier service. New initiatives include the introduction of Bite Sites, Mini Bite Sites, Hearty Bars, Round the World Counters and water coolers. In addition, all dishes are garnished with either fruit, vegetables or salad and as a consequence the consumption of fruit has increased.

All the primary schools in Midlothian have attained the Scottish Healthy Choices Award. This is the first Local Authority in Scotland to achieve this.

**Issues arising from the discussion in the School Meals in Midlothian workshop**

- the use of local supplies where possible was an important issue, as was the retention and upgrading of kitchens where they exist
- pupils, teachers and caterers need to be involved in development work
- a willingness to review practice and provision was seen as crucial. Examples were given of pupils taking ownership/involvement. Market research at a local level was useful. Consultation and listening are required behaviours and participation by parents, teachers and others is essential
- water provision is very important
- concern was raised about the need to reduce perceived stigma around free meals throughout Scotland
- *I know a school where the fruit is cut up and nicely presented in little bowls.*
Snack Attack: Marjorie Shepherd

Marjorie Shepherd, of the Edinburgh Community Food Initiative, outlines the development of an innovative Fruit in Schools scheme.

Background to Snack Attack

Marjorie explained that the goal behind Snack Attack is to encourage children to adopt a fruit-eating habit that will last them a life time.

In June 1999 Edinburgh Council’s Education Department and the Edinburgh Community Food Initiative introduced Snack Attack as a joint venture, to improve and encourage the uptake of fruit at morning break by providing a variety of high quality fruit at minimum or no cost throughout the school year, to over 30,000 of Edinburgh’s primary children.

Under the programme, she said, children who qualify for prepaid school meals are entitled to two free pieces of fruit a week while all other pupils can buy two pieces a week for the subsidised price of 10p each. At present, over 70 schools are participating in the programme, which is on offer to all of Edinburgh’s primary children.

Support Structures

Financial support from the Education Department has been fundamental to the success of the programme claimed Marjorie, in that there is very little financial risk for the individual schools.

Providing as wide a variety of produce throughout the year while at the same time keeping within the allocated budget can be tricky explained Marjorie, who said there are times in the year when certain items such as grapes, melon or plums are just too expensive. However, she explained, good working relationships with suppliers, who will pass on information on good buys, special promotions etc means that this is minimised. Wastage can be kept to a minimum by being very specific in ordering the fruit.

For this project pupils’ preferences have not really been an issue said Marjorie. This may be because, prior to starting, many schools have carried out a survey giving them enough information on which to base their order. However, one barrier to progress is that several schools share the perception that their pupils eat fruit at home and therefore do not require it in school.

Marjorie stressed that the success of the programme is very much down to how the project is taken on by management. Schools who have adopted a holistic approach and incorporated the theme into many aspects of the curriculum (maths, language, people and society, healthy living etc) are the most successful at keeping the programme highlighted, and their fruit order consistently high.

How barriers to progress have been overcome

Part of the role for the development worker is to offer guidance and ongoing support to schools in setting up and running the programme. Marjorie said this has been vital in ensuring the best possible start and subsequent success.

Ongoing support from the project includes going into the school and working with staff and pupils on pre-launch promotion, organising fruit-tasting sessions, organising posters and publicity, as well as putting them in touch with other similar sized schools who are already participating. This support is especially useful as schools can then discuss the nitty gritty of administration, the pros and cons of different methods of distribution and generally benefit from other schools’ experience.
Marjorie said that as more and more schools have come on board the participation of the local community dietitians has been invaluable. They have been happy to go in and work with teachers and pupils on developing and expanding the service. The School Nurse Service has also become involved, working with the initiative on promotions within individual schools.

**Making it work**

Marjorie explained the principles that she believed led to the success of the project:

- always ensure the produce is attractive - the correct stage of ripeness, unblemished and attractive to the eye. Vital to this is a good relationship with suppliers
- whenever possible, try to ensure that eating the fruit does not conflict with precious playtime. Rates of consumption within Snack Attack are highest in schools where fruit is consumed in the social setting of the classroom, before or after playtime
- encourage schools to involve older pupils in all aspects of the programme, from ordering, preparing, displaying, distributing and selling. Their “ownership” of the project will have a very positive influence on the rest of the school community
- supply schools with regular fresh supplies of posters and promotional materials
- supply, or encourage schools to buy, accessories to make consumption and preparation easier - the introduction of kiwi spoons saw a big rise in the popularity of kiwis, a sharp knife for halving apples and pears, a catering size colander for facilitating washing fruit, a pineapple peeler for maximising the number of portions and minimising messiness, wicker baskets for an attractive display, etc.
- provide a reliable service which responds quickly to problems and snags, and make good friends with the school secretary and the janitor!

**Issues arising from the discussion in the Snack Attack workshop**

- overall, this discussion was not about the barriers people are coming up against, but was about basic information on how to set up these initiatives.
- packaging of fruit depends on the school. Some take easily divided fruits such as apple and banana, others take bunches of grapes and split them up as a pupil activity. Some provide things like kiwi spoons to make access to fruit easier
- voucher system used by some schools so no stigma for kids receiving free fruit
- participation is very important eg. children eat more veg if they are involved in growing it
- Edinburgh Education Department have got message of healthy eating, scheme depends on outside funding, perhaps pressure is needed on other Local Authorities
- if funding is available - Shetland is going down this route and will negotiate and part-fund initiatives in conjunction with Councils and Local Authorities
- Glasgow’s fruit plus scheme evaluation taking place and the scheme will be rolled out in September and in all schools by December
- some schools taking it upon themselves to provide fruit for sports days
- evaluation and monitoring - schools monitor own uptake
- Queen Margaret University College students working on evaluation indicates fruit not necessarily replacing crisps, but adding to this. Fruit should look attractive, be easy to eat and not replace playtime
- mixed messages through sponsorship for example, Walkers crisps and schoolbooks.
The provision of healthy vending machines in secondary schools in West Dunbartonshire is an initiative which aims to increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables in line with the dietary targets set out in *The Scottish Diet* (1993) and more recently in *Eating For Health: A Diet Action Plan for Scotland* (1996). Joanne suggested that the initiative had the potential to benefit all secondary school pupils in West Dunbartonshire, many of whom live in areas of multiple deprivation. Joanne believes that it is a unique and innovative project in Scotland, where school food provision is increasingly including vending for confectionery and soft drinks.

Joanne began by reminding participants that the diet of many Scottish children is high in sugar and fat and low in dietary fibre. She said *The Scottish Diet* (1993) attributed this to a relatively high consumption of foods such as chips, biscuits, confectionery, high-sugar fizzy drinks and highly processed foods and a relatively low consumption of fruit and vegetables. Joanne pointed out that there is considerable evidence of the protective effect that fruit and vegetable consumption has for a range of cancers.

A healthy vending machine was first introduced to Our Lady and St Patrick’s High School in Dumbarton because it was identified that pupils there had limited access to convenient healthy food options. Importantly, said Joanne, the food in the vending machine was agreed in partnership with pupils and teachers of the school.

Joanne added that the enthusiasm for the new healthy vending facility in Our Lady and St Patrick’s High School led to the installation of healthy vending machines in five other secondary schools, a process which was co-ordinated by the Food Action Network (FAN) in West Dunbartonshire. Joanne explained that this group has also helped develop a set of guidelines for healthy vending which have been used as the basis for a training event for caterers.

The benefits of healthy vending
Joanne went on to suggest that young people are increasingly seeking convenient, quick and easy access to food in a way that fits in with other commitments in their lives. Vending machines provide food and snacks in a way which suits their life style. However, said Joanne, the majority of vending machines currently available provide snacks and drinks that are high in fat and sugar and low in other nutrients. Healthy vending by contrast, provides healthy food items in a convenient, appealing and popular way and can have a big impact on the overall nutritional intake of young people.

Aims and Objectives
The aim of this project was to provide greater opportunities for young people in West Dunbartonshire to access and consume healthy food, and particularly to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Joanne outlined the related objectives to this aim:

• to provide healthy vending machines in all of the schools in West Dunbartonshire
• to provide catering staff with guidelines and training in healthy eating and ongoing maintenance for the machines
• to share experience and good practice in healthy vending with all relevant local authority units
• to audit and evaluate the use of healthy vending.

Healthy vending criteria
Joanne explained that the criteria applied to the products in the
machines was adapted from the Scottish Healthy Choices Award Criteria (HEBS 1997). These include, for example, that where breads are used, a choice in breads including wholemeal should be used; fats should be used sparingly and low fat spread should be used where possible; any meat used should be lean, with any visible fat trimmed off; and confectionery should not be sold in isolation.

**Funding**
Joanne explained the funding structure for the project. The running costs for the machines are taken from the catering manager’s budget in each individual school. Commercial and Technical Services hire the Cool Centre machines from a company which provides maintenance as part of the contract. Originally the machines were covering their costs but after various promotions, all six machines are now making profit and in one school the initiative has been so popular that a second machine has been installed in order to meet the demand of pupils.

**Evaluation**
Greater Glasgow Health Board and Argyll and Clyde Health Board have recently commissioned a researcher to carry out an external evaluation of the healthy vending initiative. The evaluation process began in April 2001 and will be carried out in two phases with the first phase consisting of qualitative interviews in five schools involving pupils from all year groups and catering and teaching staff. The second phase will focus on quantitative evaluation in all six schools.

**Issues from the discussion in the Healthy Vending Machines workshop**
- the need for partnership working was raised. Healthy vending machines were installed in West Dunbartonshire schools after dialogue and partnership between the head teachers and pupils of the schools and the catering managers. The siting in the school was agreed by discussion
- who managed the machine and received the profit was discussed. This varies between schools. The catering staff fill the machines and a percentage of the profit is returned to education
- pupils are actively involved including through the development of food items and promotional items for the machines, and through key subjects such as Home Economics and Art
- choice is key in the debate about food in schools. The same applies with healthy vending machines, and they are operated in parallel with vending machines selling, for example, carbonated drinks. The healthier option is normally given an optimal position, and caterers are constantly sourcing new products to attract pupils. Drink sales have moved away from the carbonated options and more pupils are taking water and milk.
Moving Forward

This final section of the report presents the proposals on how to move forward based on the conference. It has been informed by the speakers at the event, from the workshop presentations and debate and, importantly, from the dialogue and report back from the small group discussions.

How to move forward

The conference generated a broad debate, and a wide range of issues were raised. This diversity reflects the range of good work going on across Scotland and the willingness and ability of delegates to participate in the conference and make their views known. There were three key conclusions that emerged from the conference:

1. The need for a single policy framework.
2. The need for partnership working.
3. The need to share good practice more extensively throughout Scotland.

Need for a single policy framework

There was much support for a single policy framework to direct food in schools. There was a desire for a framework that was enabling and flexible to reflect and accommodate diversity at all levels. To complement this, the need for the introduction of nutritional standards for food in schools was emphasised.

Three levels of action were particularly identified. Firstly, there is a need for a policy framework from the Scottish Executive as an over-arching strategy which would ensure a consistent approach throughout Scotland. Secondly, the need for action on this to be transferred to Local Authority/Health Board level, possibly using Local Health Plans. This would need to be supported by an implementation group. The third level is with individual schools through, for example, School Development Plans to ensure the Whole School ethos accords with the policy.

Need for partnership working

It was felt that partnership working was another key factor in progressing and improving the provision of food in schools. It was suggested that to achieve this required the full involvement and inclusion of all relevant bodies and groups, including suppliers, parents, pupils and teachers. It had to be underpinned by a willingness to work together, with a positive “can do attitude” and it had to be conducted in a spirit of openness in discussion and relationship.

Need to share good practice more extensively throughout Scotland

It was felt that the conference provided a first step to dialogue, but this had to be taken further. It is necessary to share good practice throughout Scotland to identify what worked, and why and to learn lessons from those projects that failed. It was suggested that there was a role for the Health Promoting Schools Unit to facilitate this at national level. There is also a need for support at the local level and this could form part of the remit of Local Health Plans. This can be used to tackle (or avoid re-introducing) stigma associated with free school meals.

In addition to the three key conclusions identified from the conference, a number of practical steps were mentioned in the small group discussions.

Small group discussions

After the workshop sessions, participants were allocated to one of 10 simultaneous small group discussions, based on a mix of interests represented at the conference. They were asked to focus on three questions:

* What are the practical steps that can be taken to improve the promotion of healthy eating in schools in Scotland? * Who needs to do what to move the issues forward? * What timescales are appropriate?

Each small group was allocated with a notetaker who confirmed the principal points that arose with the group, before meeting with the other notetakers and Morag MacKellar towards the end of the session. The principal points were relayed back to Morag MacKellar who was instrumental in drawing this together.
group discussions. These have been arranged and summarised below:

At national level
• there should be recognition of the benefits of healthy food in schools in terms of preventative health benefits. Profit maximisation should not be the objective of provision of food in schools. For example, the use of vending machines as a method of raising income for schools should be consistent with the single policy framework of providing healthy food to schools.
• long-term funding support is needed in order to both maintain initiatives, for example, Fruit in Schools and to reinvest in premises, facilities and systems. Some of this can be achieved by a more flexible approach to funding Best Value by Departments of Education. However, there is also a need to consider ring-fencing money to sustain improved quality of catering provision. Input from the Scottish Executive is needed here.
• there are issues around advertising of food to children - both in school and on television. Guidelines may assist in these issues.
• the issue of catering outlets outside schools attracting pupils away from school food was raised, especially those selling “unhealthy” foods such as chip vans.
• catering colleges need to examine their curricula to ensure coverage of healthy eating.

Local action
• Directors of Education must take responsibility for the healthy provision of food in schools. The Director of Education should lead change. This could be through a multi-sector partnership group.
• the problem of healthy food provision (or lack of it) was recognised in other Local Authority-run facilities as well as schools. There is a need for a shared vision in the food provision services of Local Authorities.

In school
• head teachers are key to the success of new approaches and a cultural change may be needed. A first step could be a needs assessment of individual schools to support an attitude change. The catering staff will need to be involved from the beginning and the school board and parents and pupils will have an important role to play.
• it is necessary to examine whether the current provision in each school is adequately meeting the needs of the pupils, for example, the change in food culture and school day with the consequent recognition of the need for flexible food provision. It is important to explore novel methods of food delivery to meet the food needs of pupils, for example, flexible timetables, staggered lunch breaks, after school provision for homework groups etc.

For pupils
• there is a need to explore the eating habits of pupils. It is important not to assume their response, but to involve pupils through active and meaningful consultation. The need to give pupils choices including both full menus and snacks, this means recognition that food has a wider significance than just fuel.
• improve cooking skills of individual pupils; inform pupils about what food is considered “healthy”.

For parents
• need for meaningful consultation with parents and guardians and involvement of parents about planned changes to the service.

The way forward
This report will be circulated to all participants who attended the conference as well as those people who expressed an interest in attending, but were not allocated a place. The key agencies in Scotland will also receive a copy. It is hoped that the conclusions and the practical steps identified here will be an impetus to further action.

Although the conference covered many issues and brought together a wide range of interested parties who suggested practical ways in which to move forward, it became apparent that there is scope for further discussion and debate and there remain areas where obvious tensions exist and where further dialogue is needed.

Finally, the conference participants who provided the ideas in this report are key individuals in using this information to make positive change in the provision of food and learning about food in Scotland’s schools.
## Appendix 1: Glossary of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Common Services Agency</td>
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<td>Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities</td>
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<td>Food Action Network</td>
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