

# PART 1 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**Title of policy: *Healthy Start and Welfare Food Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2011***

**Short description of policy:**

Amendment of Regulations to allow women and families supported by the scheme to spend their vouchers on plain frozen fruit and vegetables as well as foods already allowed (plain fresh fruit and vegetables, milk, infant formula milk). This will increase choice and flexibility, and could give greater encouragement to buy and consume fruit and vegetables in line with Government recommendations.

**Negative impact**

How could the policy have a **significant** negative impact on equality in relation to each area?

**Age**

No negative impact. This change has no impact on the age range of children who may legally benefit from the scheme (birth to 4<sup>th</sup> birthday) or on the ability of pregnant women, parents and carers of all ages to access it.

**Disability**

No negative impact. Healthy Start does not specifically support women and families on grounds of disability. The change does not alter this.

**Ethnicity**

No negative impact. The change does not reduce the ability of families from specific ethnic groups to access or fully use the scheme.

**Gender (including transgendered people)**

No negative impact. The change does not impact on the ability of families to access or fully use the scheme whatever the gender of parents, carers, or children.

**Religion or belief**

No negative impact. The change does not make it more difficult for families with specific religions or beliefs to access or fully use the scheme.

**Sexual orientation**

No negative impact. The change would not make it more difficult for families to access or fully use the scheme on grounds of sexual orientation.

**Socio-economic groups**

No negative impact. The change does not alter the existing, largely means tested, qualifying criteria for the scheme.

## Positive impact

Could the policy have a **significant** positive impact on equality by reducing inequalities that already exist?

Explain how will it meet our duty to:

### 1. Promote **equal opportunities**

The change will allow more women and families supported by Healthy Start to use their Healthy Start vouchers to purchase fruit and vegetables if they wish. This will have a positive impact on those who cannot access retailers selling economically priced and good quality fresh fruit and vegetables close to home. As Healthy Start vouchers make only a small contribution to the weekly food costs of beneficiaries, however, the overall impact on any individual or family is not significant.

### 2. Get rid of **discrimination**

The change cannot positively impact on discrimination.

### 3. Get rid of **harassment**

The change cannot positively impact on harassment.

### 4. Promote **good community relations**

The change cannot positively impact on community relations.

### 5. Promote **positive attitudes** towards disabled people

The change cannot positively impact attitudes towards disabled people.

### 6. Encourage **participation** by disabled people

The change may have a positive impact on disabled parents and carers, or parents and carers of disabled children who are supported by Healthy Start if it increases their opportunities to spend Healthy Start vouchers with retailers closer to home. The overall impact on their quality of life is, however, not significant.

### 7. Consider **more favourable treatment** of disabled people

The change cannot be weighted to specifically allow disabled people to benefit more than other groups qualifying for Healthy Start as the scheme is designed to provide support on grounds of nutritional vulnerability (by virtue of low income) rather than disability.

### 8. Promote and protect **human rights**

The change cannot positively promote or protect human rights.

## Evidence

### What is the evidence for your answers to the above questions?

- Responses to public consultation (8 October – 31 December 2010).
- Government's evidence-based recommendations on the nutritional needs of pregnant women, new mothers, and young children.
- Published research on trends in consumption of fruit and vegetables, and the potential impact on health of increasing consumption
- Comparative retail prices of fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables.

### What does available research say?

- Those on very low incomes are the least likely to consume 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily.
- Low consumption of fruit and vegetables is associated with a variety of longer term health risks.
- Frozen fruit and vegetables are generally cheaper than fresh, particularly where specific varieties are out of season.
- Responses to public consultation indicated no significant levels of concern that allowing vouchers to be spent on plain frozen fruit and vegetables would have a negative impact on any of the equality characteristics. Many responses supported our views on the very small potential positive impacts.

### What further research or data do you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the policy?

None.

### Have you thought about commissioning new data or research?

We have commissioned an assessment of Healthy Start's overall nutritional impact through the Diet and Nutrition Survey of Infants and Young Children, as well as two broader research projects on the impact of Healthy Start. Findings are expected in late 2012.

## Screening assessment

Now that you have looked at the evidence, do you think that the policy needs a **Full EqIA**?

**NO.**

**Next steps**

If you do **not** need to do a **Full EqIA**:

What else might you need to do to make sure the policy **promotes equality** and **gets rid of discrimination**?

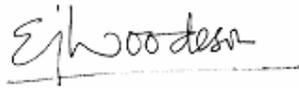
We will ensure that all Healthy Start retailers, Healthy Start beneficiaries and health professionals working with them are informed about the change in advance, and provide updated scheme information and guidance materials. The information we provide will be explicit about what is meant by “plain” frozen fruit and vegetables and what is not. We will also consider the scope for targeted recruitment to the scheme of any retailers specialising in frozen produce that do not already accept Healthy Start vouchers.

How will you **monitor** the situation as the policy develops and takes effect?

We will continue to monitor all aspects of scheme delivery – including take up, numbers of vouchers used, and number of retail outlets accepting vouchers at least quarterly.

What **further research** do you need?

There is no immediate need to commission further research. However, research on the broader impact of Healthy Start has already been commissioned and findings are due in late 2012. We will consider the need for further research, or further changes to the scheme, in light of this.



Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

Director of Health and Wellbeing

Date: 14/02/11