

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**

12<sup>th</sup> March 2009

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>ECS 12/09</b>

**School Meals Uptake**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport**

**Summary**

This report summarises the reasons affecting the overall drop in school meal uptake in the current financial year specifically in the Secondary school sector and what actions are proposed.

An update on the progress to form a short term working group looking at mobile vendors in the vicinity of school campuses is provided.

**1. The Programme of the Highland Council**

- 1.1 The Schools (Health Promotion & Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 (hereafter referred to as The Act) contributes to supporting the following programme outcome:

*“We will give a high priority to Highland’s children being healthy and active and implement the Highland Play Strategy”.*

**2. Background**

- 2.1 At the Education, Culture and Sport Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 the service reported trends of school meal uptake over the last 8 years as detailed in Annex 1. This increase occurred despite a national decrease in uptake due to the implementation of Hungry for Success (H4S) and falling schools rolls.
- 2.2 During this period the Scottish Executive invested £63m to revitalise the school meals service by setting strict nutritional standards - H4S the whole school approach. H4S provided the basis on which the Act was subsequently implemented.

**3. Challenges**

- 3.1 The following issues have impacted upon the school meal uptake in Highland 2008/09:
- April 2008 – increase in school meal prices from £1.55 to £1.65 in Primary schools and £1.75 to £1.85 in Secondary schools.
  - August 2008 – working towards full compliance of The Act by changing food and drink products.
  - January 09 – full compliance with The Act in Highland. The national implementation date is August 2009.

#### 4. Uptake of school meals in Highland

- 4.1 School meal daily uptake in 2007/08 averaged 16,292 peaking at 17,044.
- 4.2 Whilst it was always anticipated that the implementation of The Act would have an adverse effect on Secondary school meal uptake there seems to have been more impact than first expected.
- 4.3 The unexpected impact on the Secondary Sector can be summarised thus:
- April 2008 to December 2008 – average drop of 1,000 meals per day, compared to the same period the previous year. This is an annual impact of approx 200,000 meals and in financial terms a loss of £463,600 to the Catering Trading Account.
  - January 2008 – January 2009 loss increasing to an average of 1,400 meals per day, equivalent to a 16.6% reduction.

#### 5. Factors affecting uptake

- 5.1 Other than the Secondary school meal price increase from £1.75 to £1.85 and the implementation of The Act a number of other factors have impacted on school meal uptake during the current financial year, including:-
- School closures due to adverse weather
  - Falling school rolls
  - Industrial action
  - PPP 2 openings
  - The credit crunch

The impact of the above is outlined within **Annex 2**.

#### 6. Choices and the impact on Health and Wellbeing

- 6.1 On average 50% of Secondary school pupils choose not to eat on the school campus. A survey was undertaken with a cross-section of pupils focussing on two different groups – those that took a school meal and those who chose to eat elsewhere.
- 6.2 These groups were selected from 13 of the 29 Secondary schools in Highland. (A list of those schools is contained in **Annex 3**). For those that chose to eat outwith the school campus, 144 pupils were interviewed and the results of this are contained within **Annex 3**.
- 6.3 For those that chose to eat in school, 112 pupils were interviewed at the same schools as detailed in Annex 3. The main reasons were convenience, cost, choice and the cashless Card System. The card system albeit had a varied success – *where the new NEC (National Entitlement Card) system is in place comments were more positive with speed of service.*
- 6.4 The impact of school meals on pupil's Health and Wellbeing both now and for the future is becoming more explicit. A school meal provides a nutritious balanced meal for an active and alert mind and body. Meals and snacks bought outwith the school

are predominantly high in saturated fat, sugar and salt which are the key factors in obesity and can be associated with low self-esteem and attainment.

- 6.5 Research carried by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER)<sup>1</sup> has shown that the campaign led by TV Chef Jamie Oliver didn't just help pupils it has also resulted in them doing better at school in English, Science and helped schools cut rates of absenteeism.
- 6.6 The study carried out by ISER associate Michèle Belot and Jonathan James from the Department for Economics showed substantial positive effects on Key Stage 2 scores in both English and Sciences. The performance of 11 year olds eating Oliver's meals improved by to 8% in science and as much as 6% in English while absenteeism due to ill health fell by 15%.
- 6.7 It is well documented that there are number of core principles that need to be applied for successfully improving the Health and Wellbeing of children and young people.
- 6.8 In Highland, through the 'Your Choice to Healthy Living' initiative, school communities and key partners have encouraged an approach based on these key principles which includes a healthy break time and lunch, with opportunities for physical activity and consistent messages throughout the day facilitated by strong leadership and school management. Therefore healthy eating is not only promoted by the choices but also by education within the curriculum, advertising in the school and work with parents and carers.

## **7. Actions to date**

- 7.1 To date the following actions have been taken to comply with legislation, contribute to continuous improvements in service delivery and meet the requirements of the HMle inspection process.
  - The quality of food products and choice of meals have been increased
  - Consultation has taken place with pupils in School Nutrition Action Groups (SNAG) and pupil councils
  - Investment in dining room – new furniture, decoration, branding, and installation of plasma screens
  - Introduction of NEC cards /cashless catering – quicker service
  - More points of sale
  - Pre-order services
  - Grab 'n' Go sections
- 7.2 The culture of Health and Wellbeing and eating wisely is created in Nursery units and Primary schools. This is continued in Secondary schools, however this competes against the freedom to leave the premises. Factors include:
  - The ethos of the school
  - Diversity of the school environment - some schools will encourage pupils to stay in at lunchtime - some have lunchtime activities with access to nutritional snacks – others do not allow food from outside to be brought into school premises and our working towards 100% uptake in schools. A holistic approach has to be encouraged across the whole secondary sector with head teachers and management taking responsibility for Health and Wellbeing.

## 8. Planned further actions

- 8.1 The following actions are planned to increase the uptake of school meals within the Secondary and by implication encourage a more nutritious diet:
- New marketing campaign to pupils, parents and especially to school management, to assist and support the catering service.
  - Encourage increased SNAG and pupil council participation; ensure schools are set up where presently not active.
  - Survey to support SNAGs.
  - HPS Officers to work with selected groups in schools especially SNAGs
  - Schools to work positively with caterers to encourage cross-curriculum links and strategic implementation for 09/10 (focus on Health and Wellbeing).
  - Continue to roll out NEC systems, improve kitchen dining areas and ambience within schools as part of the rolling programme within the capital plan.
  - Marketing, training and support to catering staff.
  - Continued guaranteed commitment from Head Teachers and school management.
- 8.2 The Health Promoting School's ethic and The Act will take time to become embedded as it is part of a changing culture to food and health. However a collaborative approach between the school meal providers, the nutritional and health practitioners and Head Teachers working towards common objectives will ensure that progress can be achieved.

## 9. Local Mobile Food and Drink Retailers

- 9.1 A report to ECS Committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> September requested that further investigation take place to establish local circumstances with regards to local food and drink retailers operating in the vicinity of schools in Highland.
- 9.2 A short life working group has been convened to provide guidance to schools and the possible development of a policy.
- 9.3 The short life working group will meet initially in March 2009. Members of the group who have agreed to attend include representatives from Northern Constabulary, NHS Highland, Ward Managers, Head Teachers, Area Education Officers, The Highland Council Licensing, Legal Services, Road Safety and Education, Culture and Sport. The group will be chaired by the Head of Community, Learning and Leisure.
- 9.4 In preparation for the initial meeting, a poll of Secondary schools was taken to assess the scale of issue. The results of the poll suggest that 7 out of 29 secondary schools in Highland are directly affected by mobile food and drink retailers operating within the vicinity of the school as outlined in **Annex 4**.
- 9.5 A further report on the issue of mobile food and drink retailers will be presented to Education, Culture and Sport Committee when the working group has completed its investigation and produced recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATION

10.1 Members are asked to:-

- (i) note the reasons affecting the drop in uptake in school meals and background information supporting the findings;
- (ii) note the actions contained within in Section 8;
- (iii) approve the proposals in Section 9 in regard to local mobile food and drink retailers; and
- (iv) note that a future report will be presented to Committee in autumn 2009.

**Signature:**



**Designation:**

Director of Education, Culture and Sport

**Date:**

26 February 2009

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**References:-**

1. Healthy School Meals & Education Outcomes No 2009-01 January  
Institute For Social & Economic Research

[www.iser.essex.ac.uk/news/2009/02/02/jamies-dinners-add-up-to-better-results-for-pupils](http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/news/2009/02/02/jamies-dinners-add-up-to-better-results-for-pupils)

## Annex 1 - Pro Rata Increase in School Meals from 2000 to 2008

Period	Total Meals pro rata	Annual Increase	Cumulative Increase
2000 - 01	2,180,125		
2001 - 02	2,420,475	240,350	240,350
2002 - 03	2,536,356	115,881	356,231
2003 - 04	2,563,550	27,194	383,425
2004 - 05	2,745,082	181,532	564,957
2005 - 06	2,690,236	-54,846	510,111
2006 - 07	2,968,780	278,544	788,655
2007 - 08	3,069,305	100,525	889,180

## Annex 2 - Impact of Drop in School Lunches

	Annual reduction
Impact of school closures	47,700
Impact of falling school rolls	19,000
Impact of strikes (2 days)	5,500
Impact of PPP 2 openings	4,800
Impact of The Act	123,000
Credit Crunch	Not Known
Increase in prices	Not Known
	<b>Estimated total loss</b>
	<b>200,000</b>

### **Annex 3 – Participating schools in school meal survey**

#### **Inverness & Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey**

Inverness Royal Academy, Charleston, Millburn & Nairn Academies

#### **Ross, Skye & Lochaber**

Kinlochleven High, Portree High, Dingwall Academy & Ainess Academy

#### **Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross**

Dornoch Academy, Thurso High, Wick High School, Farr Secondary

#### **144 Pupils interviews – results below:**

- Supermarket coming top for choice, many having multi packs to share and others with lunch time specials.
- Top dislikes of school being cost, choice, queue then environment and card system
- Looking for value for money – quality and standards not important.

***'I can get 2 Lorne sausages, fried egg in roll and bottle juice for £1'***

▪ Supermarket	30
▪ Local Shop	29
▪ Home	21
▪ Bakery	11
▪ Packed Lunch	9
▪ Vans	8
▪ School Tuck Shop	7
▪ Sandwich Bar/takeaways /KFC	7
▪ Garage	6
▪ Chip Shop	5
▪ Chinese	4
▪ Bowling Alley	3
▪ Turkish	2
▪ Café	2

### **Annex 4 - Schools Currently Frequented By Mobile Vendors**

#### **Inverness & Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey**

Inverness Royal Academy, Culloden, Millburn & Nairn Academies

#### **Ross, Skye & Lochaber**

Tain Royal Academy & Lochaber High School

#### **Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross**

Golspie High School