

Minister Launches Good Practice Guide for School Food Projects

Provision of good food and nutrition early in life a key determinant of health

Launched today by Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin, TD, *Healthy Food for All* has released a 'how to' guide on school food initiatives - an essential guide to accessing and availing of school food provision and examples of best practice. The Guide is about connecting school food provision with national policy objectives in relation to food poverty, food and nutrition, obesity and health inequalities.

Highlighting the need for good practice in the roll out of food provision in schools, Deirdre O'Connor, Chair of Healthy Food for All said: "School food initiatives are critical in tackling food poverty and the issues of food obesity. Though there is food provision available for schools, there is a need to promote and support good practice when availing of such provision."

"A fifth of children (20%) under the age of 16 experience some form of food deprivation, with 1 in 5 children going to bed hungry because there is no food in the home."

School food provision is made available under a number of schemes, including the EU Milk and Fruit Schemes, and the School Meals Programme. In 2008 alone, the Department of Social and Family Affairs provided €32 million towards school food provision.

As Deirdre O'Connor noted "There has been a significant expansion of school food provision through the Department of Social and Family Affairs' school food scheme, the Department of Education and Sciences school retention scheme and the Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries' initiatives such as Food

Dudes and the new EU-supported school fruit scheme. We need to ensure that these resources are applied in the best way possible to maximize nutritional quality, to encourage take-up of food among children and to promote a healthy eating message in the wider school community. A whole school approach to healthy eating and drinking is essential to maximize the impacts on attitudes to food and the consumption of food by children and their families.”

As Ursula O’Dwyer, National Nutrition Policy Advisory for Department of Health and Children states “Providing children with good food and nutrition early in life is a key determinant of health and will help enhance the nutritional health of the next adult generation in Ireland.”

Targeted initially at all DEIS schools, who will receive a free copy of the Guide in the autumn, the Guide will also be available on-line (www.healthyfoodforall.com).

About the Guide

A Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives offers advice on funding for school meal initiatives, how to provide school lunches, how to set up and run breakfast and after-school clubs, how to plan a school food initiative, as well as how to devise a Healthy School Food Policy, including introducing healthier snacks and lunchboxes, the provision of water in schools and school fruit and vegetable growing projects.

Food Poverty Statistics

- 20% of children under age 16 experienced food deprivation (EU SILC 2006)
- 1 in 5 children are going to bed hungry because there is no food in the home (HBSC Survey 2006¹)
- 16% of children never eat a breakfast on weekdays (HBSC Survey 2006)

¹ www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc

- Studies show an increasing reliance on high fat and/or high sugar snacks and drinks. Vegetable intake falls far short of the recommended intakes (SLAN 2007², National Children's Food Survey³, for example)
- Children have inadequate intake of folate, calcium, iron and vitamins A, C and B2. (National Children's Food Survey)
- There are inequalities in food consumption and dietary behaviour between DEIS and non-DEIS schools (HSBC report 2008)

In addition, there is an increase in obesity among children of school age:

- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 5 boys are either overweight or obese (National Children's Food Survey)
- 22% of 5-12 year olds are overweight or obese (National Children's Food Survey)

A copy can be obtained on Healthy Food for All's website

www.healthyfoodforall.com

Healthy Food for All is an all-island multi-agency initiative seeking to promote access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups.

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² http://www.dohc.ie/publications/slan07_report.html

³ <http://www.iuna.net/index.php/research/childrens-food-survey>