

Briefing note to the Childhood Obesity Scrutiny Review on the School Meals Service

Statistics on School Meal Uptake annually since 2003 and corresponding prices

Tables A, B & C are attached at Annex E1

Appendix A & B are at Annex E2 to this report

1. A list of York's school meals arrangements is given in **Table A**. **Table B** shows total take up and selling prices for schools in the local-authority procured catering contract with North Yorkshire County Caterers. Schools are not identified in take up information released into the public domain because of commercial confidentiality and also because reasons for varying take up are wide ranging. These can include:
 - school lunch clubs which do not always allow pupils time for a school meal
 - some schools require payment a term or half a term in advance to reduce time and expense of cash collection
 - some schools insist paying pupils have a school meal every day or not at all
 - whether or not pupils like what is on the menu – popularity of a dish can vary greatly from school to school
 - a cook's aptitude for producing appealing meals (cooks pay is banded according to the number of meals they prepare, and their hours generally reduce if take up falls)
 - dining room capacity - some headteachers are able to make lunchtime a social occasion, learning to eat tidily at a table with cutlery and an opportunity to try different foods; others have to get pupils in and out as quickly as possible
 - the importance a headteacher places on having a school lunch – some schools offer staff a free lunch when they eat with the pupils
 - sometimes take up is low for no discernable reason
 - figures are not adjusted to take into account exclusion or any other type of absence such as study leave, which obviously reduces secondary school take-up, or phased starts in Nursery/Reception classes.
2. Therefore the average for all contract schools has been given for each year, together with the range of take up. This includes the Free School Meal take-up from each January school census snapshot, for which schools are allocated funding based on the number of their pupils who have successfully applied for Free School Meals. However this funding is not ring-fenced and therefore no financial incentive for schools to ensure the free school meals are actually taken.
3. Schools outside the contract have only reported figures to the LA since 2007/08, and these are summarized at **Table C** by financial year, as reported

to the Schools Food Trust.

The typical menu and nutritional content of such school meals annually since 2003.

4. Legislation required nutritional standards and analysis from September 2008 for primary schools and September 2009 for secondary schools. Prior to 2008, school menus followed the School Food Trust's Food-Based Standards, following interim standards from September 2006, fully implemented September 2007 (**Appendix A**). These which required that protein, fruit and vegetables were served every day, limited the amount of fat used and for meals to be low sugar and low sodium. From approximately 2003 onwards, prior to the implementation of the Food-Based Standards and Jamie Oliver's campaign, North Yorkshire County Caterers had already limited the amount of processed foods, removing items such as turkey twizzlers and turkey dinosaurs from their menus.
5. North Yorkshire County Caterers work with a nutritionist who advises on menu compilation and can suggest particular foods to boost certain nutrients, for instance including edamame beans to boost zinc levels. NYCC's nutritional analysis generated by their 'Saffron' industry database and menus from Autumn term 2009 are attached (**Appendix B**). To meet this analysis of planned provision in line with nutritional standards, correct age-appropriate portion sizes must be adhered to, which is the cooks' responsibility. The CYC School Catering Monitoring Officer monitors school meals provision in all catering contract schools, PFI schools and other schools who choose to buy-in the monitoring service. Portion size and menu adherence are two of the key criteria checked. The contractor for the PFI schools also uses the same system for their nutritional analysis.
6. The meals are two courses. Desserts have changed from stodgy puddings to fruit-based desserts. Fresh fruit is also offered every day. All the recipes have been re-developed to lower fat and sugar content – eg using honey and molasses as sweeteners, 'concealing' fruit such as the pears in Chocolate Fudge Cake.
7. Intermittent packed lunches provided by the contractor (for school visits etc) would aim to meet the food-based standards. It is unlikely a portable packed lunch could meet all the nutritional guidelines owing to the relatively high carbohydrate content of sandwiches and their limitations in providing sufficient protein, for example. Each school sets their own guidelines on what pupils can or cannot bring in their lunchboxes.

Additional information

8. The Client Catering Manager and Monitoring Officer take part in the Healthy Schools Group Quality Assurance Group and advise on the food element when assessing schools' applications for Healthy Schools Status.