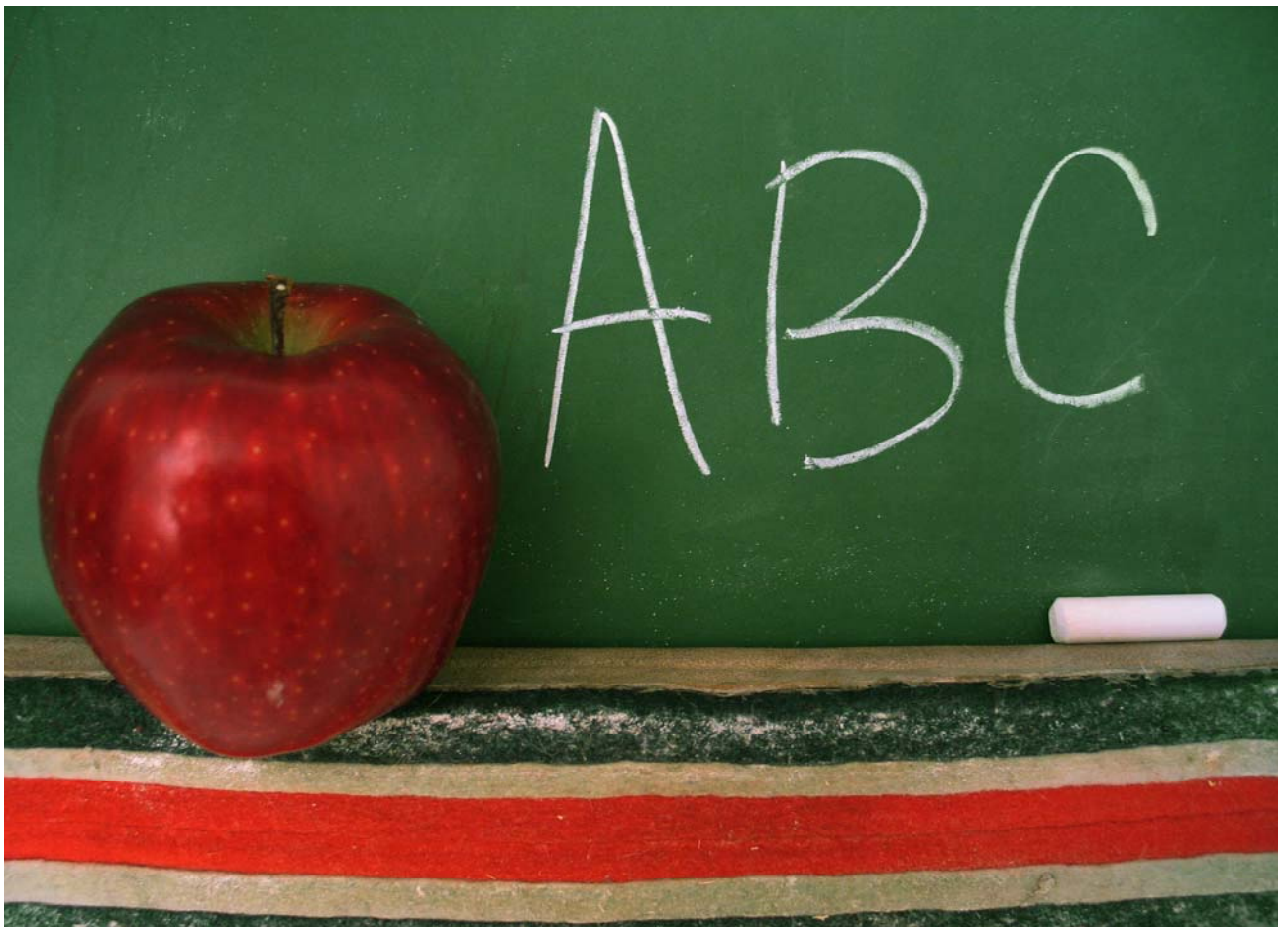


Healthy Eating in Schools



Services for Children and Young People
Scrutiny Panel

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY
PANEL

Healthy Eating in Schools

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Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

Healthy Eating in Schools

1. Introduction by the Chair

I am very pleased to present this report which follows the review carried out by the Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel in to health eating in Tameside Schools.

The Panel has found this a very interesting review and it has provided members with an insight into the issues facing school catering and the provision of nutritious food. The review has highlighted the key role required to be played by head teachers, especially in secondary schools in providing essential support and encouragement for the catering service within the in their school and the importance of not letting pupils leave school during lunch breaks.



The Scrutiny Panel was very impressed with the hard work, attitude and dedication of the secondary school catering managers that they met and also when they undertook visits to sample menus, speak to pupils and see facilities for themselves. Catering staff in both primary and secondary schools were trying innovative ways to stem the decline in the uptake of school meals and the effect that this can have on school budgets, especially in the secondary sector. Catering mangers in the main, however feel isolated and need more support with information technology and dietician information. The condition of the dining facilities are very important in helping pupils decide whether to have schools meals or not and the Panel was aware that in one school in particular these were not considered satisfactory. There are, however proposals to address these issues under the Building Schools for the Future Programme, which will see new facilities serving school meals in attractive environments fully meeting the nutritional standards set by the School Food Trust.

This report makes a number of recommendations which if implemented, the Panel agree will add value to healthy eating in schools and support the school catering managers who have to deliver new exacting nutritional standards and a high take up of school meals.

I would like to thank on behalf of the Panel all those people who gave information to members in support of this review and made members welcome during their visits. I would also like to express our appreciation for the invaluable help for the support from our designated scrutiny support officer.

Councillor V Ricci
Chair

2. Summary

Following high profile campaigns, the government through the School Food Trust, introduced new exacting nutritional standards that Tameside schools are keen to meet. The problem of childhood obesity is a serious concern to the authority and its partners who are keen to encourage healthy eating. The Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a review of the progress in implementing the new standards and sought good practice that can be highlighted as well as looking at some of the issues relating to costs, uptake, dining facilities and the pressures on catering staff.

Apart from three exceptions, catering in all the primary schools in Tameside is provided by the School Catering Service, whereas secondary schools are responsible for their own catering services. The Panel learned from the Primary Schools Catering Manager that there was a good take up of school meals in this sector and that the funding rates were satisfactory.

In secondary schools however, catering was the responsibility of the catering managers in the individual schools. The Scrutiny Panel met catering managers to hear their experiences and members also visited schools to view conditions and sample menus for themselves and meet some of the pupils. The Panel feels that catering managers are providing excellent nutritious meals but in some cases were working in kitchens designed for convenience food and unsuitable for the delivery of nutritious meals provided to specific standards. The take-up of meals was also challenged by a resistance to healthier meals and in some cases pupils leaving the school premises during the lunch break. Members learned about the innovative ways that school catering managers sought to engage parents and students and how successful the biometric system employed in some schools was in reducing queuing problems and how it enabled student choices to be monitored.

The Panel considered the proposals for the provision of school meals under the Building Schools for the Future programme and met representatives of the catering providers.

This report makes a number of recommendations that the Panel felt would help improve the service and help disseminate good practice.

3. Membership of the Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Ricci (Chair) Councillor R Welsh (Deputy Chair)
Councillors Brelsford, R Etchells, Highton, Patrick, S Quinn, Reynolds, Sullivan, Warrington (part) and Wild.

4. Terms of Reference

Aim of the Scrutiny Review:

To carry out a reality check on the implementation and outcomes in Tameside schools, of the Government's interim food based standards for school lunches (introduced in 2006) and food based standards for food other than lunch (introduced in 2007); and to identify examples of good practice.

Objectives:

- A. To consider the level of take-up of school meals in Tameside schools since the introduction of the interim food based standards for school lunches; and to consider any variations in the experiences of different primary and secondary schools;
- B. To examine the financial implications of implementing the interim food based standards for school lunches, and the food based standards for food other than lunch;

- C. To evaluate policies and procedures in Tameside schools for regulating and monitoring the nutritional content of packed lunches; and to identify examples of good practice;
- D. To consider measures for engaging children, young people and their parents / guardians in healthy eating and to identify examples of good practice;
- E. To consider preparations for the effective implementation in Tameside schools, of the Final Food Based and new Nutrient Based Standards to be introduced in September 2008 (in primary schools) and September 2009 (in secondary schools);
- F. To compare Tameside's experiences with the experiences of other areas; and to identify examples of good practice.

Value for Money:

Value for money is a key element of this review. The review will consider the financial implications of implementing the Government's standards for school food and it will explore ways to increase take up of school meals in order to maximise value for money.

Equalities:

Local authorities and schools have a statutory responsibility to promote a healthy eating policy which is inclusive of all children and young people. Therefore consideration of the ways in which schools are ensuring healthy food options are accessible to all children and young people, including those with specific cultural, religious, or other dietary needs, food allergies and disabilities, will form an important part of this review. In addition this review will monitor the take-up rate of school meals by children and young people from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

5. Methodology

5.1 During the course of the review Members met:

- The Tameside MBC Healthy Schools Scheme Co-ordinator to discuss the role of the Council in helping to ensure the successful implementation of the new statutory standards;
- The Manager of the Primary Schools Catering Service to discuss the challenges arising from the implementation of the new standards in primary schools, and the ways in which the Service is addressing such challenges;
- Catering Managers from St Thomas More RC High School, Droylsden High School for Girls and Egerton Park Arts College to discuss the specific challenges secondary schools face following the introduction of the new standards and measures for combating these challenges;
- The Project Manager for the Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSF) in Tameside, the Facilities Bid Manager from the Inspired Spaces Consortium and the Contracts Manager for Facilities Management Delivery from the Inspired Spaces Consortium, to discuss the ways in which BSF will support drives to promote healthy eating in schools and increase take up of school meals.

5.2 In addition representatives of the Panel:

- Consulted with Catering Managers from ten Tameside secondary schools at a meeting of the Secondary School Catering Managers Forum;

- Visited three local secondary schools in order to gain a first hand insight into the kitchen and dining facilities available and the catering service provided; and to talk to catering staff and pupils about their experiences and opinions relating to school lunches from an “on the ground” perspective.

6. Background to the Review

6.1 Setting the scene

6.1.1 Healthy eating in schools is an important issue for the Scrutiny Panel to review as improving the diets of children and young people is a key national and local priority.

6.1.2 A nutritious balanced diet is central to the health, development and wellbeing of children and young people, in addition to establishing the foundations for improved standards of health and wellbeing throughout society.

6.1.3 Children who eat an unhealthy diet high in saturated fat, salt and sugar have a higher risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes; and in later life, becoming obese as an adult, suffering high blood pressure, raised blood cholesterol and some types of cancer.

6.1.4 In addition research shows that overweight and obese children and young people are more likely to experience social stigmatisation, bullying at school, low self esteem and mental health problems. They are also more likely to leave education earlier than their peers and, as an adult, earn a household average of £3,500 less per year than the national average.

6.1.5 National research shows, however, that many children and young people are failing to eat a healthy balanced diet. For example, the most recent Health Survey for England revealed:

- Only 19% of boys and 22% of girls aged 5-15 years eat 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day;
- 7% of boys and 6% of girls eat no fruit or vegetables at all.

6.1.6 Children and young people from lower income households are slightly less likely to eat their recommended quota of fruit and vegetables:

- 13% of boys and 17% of girls from low income households consumed 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables, compared to 28% of boys and 34% of girls from high income households.

6.1.7 Meanwhile national data shows that childhood obesity rates are rising. In 2006/7, 22.9% of 4-5 year olds and 31.6% of 10-11 year olds were classified as “overweight” or “obese.” The British Medical Association estimates that 30% of all boys and 40% of all girls will be obese by 2020 if current trends continued.

6.1.8 The Government’s strategy for tackling obesity summarises:

“Britain is in the grip of an epidemic. Almost a third of children are overweight or obese; and work suggests that, without clear action, these figures will continue to rise.”

6.2 Healthy Eating in Schools

6.2.1 Improving the nutritional content of the food eaten by children in schools is central to the Government’s strategy for improving the diets of children and young people and tackling obesity at a national level. The School Food Trust explains:

“Schools have a responsibility to help children establish healthy eating patterns ...if they fail in this duty, they may introduce and reinforce habits which erode children’s health.”

6.2.2 In recent years Central Government has introduced strict standards designed to regulate the nutritional content of the food served in schools. The standards are being introduced in three stages;

1. **Interim Food Based Standards for School Lunches** – all schools were required to implement the Interim Food Based Standards for School Lunches by September 2006. The Standards set minimum nutritional requirements for foods permitted to be served as part of a school lunch and place restrictions on less “healthy” foods. Under the interim standards all food is divided into three categories depending on its nutritional content: “green” category foods may be provided every day; “amber” category foods may be provided with a restricted frequency or restricted amount; and “red” category foods are not permitted in schools.
2. **Standards for Food other than Lunch** – all schools were required to implement the Statutory Standards for Food other than Lunch by September 2007. These Standards extended the Interim Food Based Standards for School Lunches to apply to all food served on school premises until 6pm. This includes food served at breakfast clubs, mid morning break services, vending machines, tuck shops and snacks and meals served at after school clubs.
3. **Nutrient Based Standards for School Lunches** – the Nutrient Based Standards for School Lunches go a stage further than the Interim Food Based Standards by requiring that school meals meet specific nutritional criteria. They specify for the average school meal, the maximum amount of fat, saturated fat, sugars and sodium; and the minimum amount of carbohydrate, protein, fibre, vitamin A and C, folate, calcium, iron and zinc.

All schools are required to implement the Nutrient Based Standards in conjunction with a final set of Food Based Standards. Primary schools are expected to have implemented the final set of Nutrient Based and Food Based Standards by September 2008 and secondary schools are required to implement the Standards by September 2009.

6.3 Rationale for the Scrutiny Review of Healthy Eating in Schools

- 6.3.1 National data shows that there has been reduction in uptake of school meals following the introduction of the Government’s statutory standards for school food in 2006. Official figures reported that nationally the number of pupils eating schools meals fell by 424,000 during the first two years following the introduction of the new Standards. Consequently, it is reported, many school catering services have been forced to run at a deficit.
- 6.3.2 This Scrutiny Review provides the Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel with an opportunity to carry out a “reality check” on the implementation and outcomes, in Tameside schools, of the Government’s Interim Food Based Standards. In addition the review provides the Panel with an opportunity to identify examples of good practice in Tameside schools and other areas; and to make recommendations for improvement.
- 6.3.3 This is a particularly timely review as the Panel’s findings may be used to inform the successful implementation of the Government’s Final Food Based and Nutrient Based Standards, implemented in September 2008 in primary schools and due for implementation in secondary schools by September 2009.

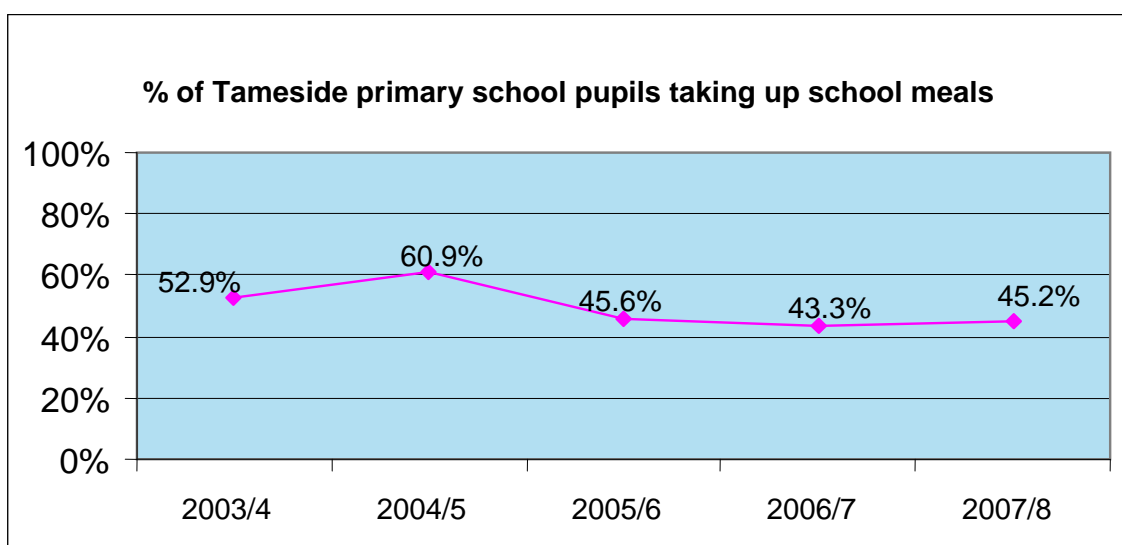
6.3.4 This Scrutiny Review supports a number of local priorities and targets, including:

- The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership’s priority to “improve children and young people’s health outcomes”;
- Tameside’s Local Area Agreement targets relating to childhood obesity;
- The “Be Healthy” outcomes contained in “Every Child Matters;”
- The Community Strategy theme of “A Healthy Population.”

7. Review Findings

7.1 Performance Data - Uptake of school meals in primary schools

7.1.1 The graph below shows the percentage of primary school pupils taking up school meals between 2003/4 and 2007/8



7.1.2 The graph shows:

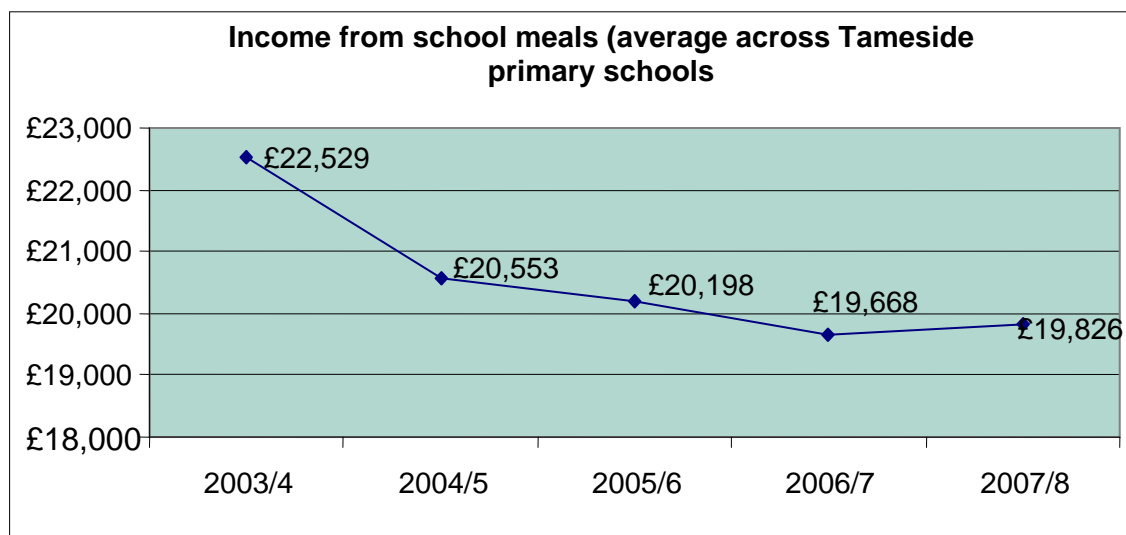
- In 2005/6 there was a significant decline in the percentage of pupils taking up school meals. This decline coincided with the publication of the Government’s schedule for transforming school food.
- A further decline coincided with the statutory implementation of the Interim Food Based Standards in 2006/7.
- There was a slight increase in uptake of school meals in 2007/8; however the average take-up rate remains 15.7% lower than in 2004/5.

7.1.3 All primary schools experienced a decline in uptake of school meals at some point between 2005/6 and 2006/7. However the following schools experienced the least decline:

School	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8
Corrie Primary	44.9%	39%	35.1%	46.8%	47.6%
Holden Clough	45.4%	47.3%	31%	44.4%	48%

Holy Trinity, Ashton	59.5%	54.8%	59.7%	56.6%	50.5%
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7.1.4 The graph below shows the average income derived from the sale of school meals across Tameside primary schools.



7.1.5

The graph shows:

- In 2005/6 and 2006/7 income received from school meals declined.
- There was a slight increase in 2007/8, however the income generated from school meals remained at its second lowest point since 2003/4.
- This trend mirrors the changes in uptake of school meals between 2005 and 2008.

7.2 Performance Data – Uptake of school meals in secondary schools

7.2.1 Uptake of school meals in secondary schools is not recorded centrally by the local council, but is collected by the individual school. In addition individual secondary schools are responsible for managing their own catering budget. Consequently data regarding take up rates and income received from school meals in secondary schools is not as readily available as the same data for primary schools.

7.2.2 However the information received by the Panel during the course of the review indicates that there has been a decline in take-up of school meals since the introduction of the Interim Food Based Standards in September 2006; and that this has impacted upon schools' catering budgets. For example:

- The Panel received catering accounts from Fairfield High School for Girls, Longdendale Community Language College, All Saints Catholic College, Egerton Park Arts College and Littlemiss High School for Boys. All schools reported a decline in income received from school meals since 2005.
- In addition some schools reported significant budget deficits, further hindered by the economic climate, the rising cost of food, and the more expensive ingredients schools are expected to purchase under the new Statutory Standards.

- Furthermore anecdotal evidence, received from members of the Secondary School Catering Managers' Forum, suggested that most of the borough's secondary schools had experienced a decline in uptake of school meals.
- There was a general feeling that uptake had started to recover during the current municipal year, this was attributed to the increased and sustained take up of school meals from the new Year 7 intake; however the vast majority of Catering Managers reported that uptake remained lower than in the past.

Conclusions

1. All Tameside primary schools experienced a decline in uptake of school meals following the publication of the Government's schedule for transforming school food (2005/6) and the introduction of the Interim Food Based Standards (2006/7). There was a slight increase in uptake of school meals in primary schools during 2007/8. However the average take-up remains 15.7% lower than in 2004/5 and income generated from school meals remains at its second lowest point since 2003/4.
2. Data regarding uptake of school meals in secondary schools is not as readily available as the same data for primary schools. However information received by the Panel indicates that there has also been a decline in uptake of school meals in Tameside secondary schools; and that this has impacted on schools' catering budgets.

7.3 Measures for increasing take-up of school meals in primary schools

7.3.1 The role of the Primary Catering Service

7.3.2 The Tameside Primary School Catering Service is managed by the Council. The Service financially administers and delivers a catering service for all of the borough's primary schools, with the exception of St Mary's Church of England Primary School in Droylsden and the two primary schools funded through Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The Service employs two managers, four area supervisors and 330 catering staff who are responsible for managing 81 kitchens across the borough.

7.3.3 **In addition the Service has statutory responsibility for ensuring that the Government's Statutory Standards for school food are implemented effectively in the primary schools it caters for.**

7.3.4 The Service offers schools two menus:

- **a foundation menu** comprising of three choices of main meal (including a vegetarian option) and two choices of desert;
- **a Halal menu** also comprising of three choices of main meal and two deserts. The Halal menu is supplied according to demand from individual schools and is currently being served in nine Tameside primary schools.

The nutritional content of both the Foundation and Halal menus have been analysed using bespoke computer software, and both satisfy the Final Food Based Standards and Nutrient Based Standards.

7.3.5 Increasing uptake of school meals is a key priority for the Service. The Service currently has a target to increase uptake by 4% across all the primary schools it caters for, rising to 10% by 2010.

7.3.6 The Service implements a range of initiatives designed to help achieve these targets, including work to promote school meals amongst children and their parents/guardians.

Further information regarding specific initiatives is outlined in the text boxes below.

Initiatives to promote school meals to children

- All menu options are designed in order to appeal to children's tastes and preferences. The Panel was informed that a key element of the catering service was to establish a balance between fulfilling nutritional requirements and providing food which appeals to children. To this end, the Service offers healthy versions of traditional favourites such as turkey burgers, fish fingers and vegetarian sausage rolls and puddings with custard.
- Self service salad bars have been introduced at all primary schools in order to encourage children to make healthy choices about their diet. Schools have found that this facility provides a novel opportunity for children to influence what they eat and has proved very popular.
- The Primary Schools Catering Service works with schools in order to implement incentive schemes designed to encourage children to eat healthily. For example children are awarded stickers for consuming five portions of fruit or vegetables per day, or for finishing a meal.
- The Service offers a range of further ad hoc measures designed to engage children in healthy eating and promote school meals, such as themed menus linked to wider curriculum activities and "design a dish" or "fill a flatbread" competitions.
- Furthermore the Service has successfully supported Linden Road Primary School's successful bid for funding through the national "Food for Life" initiative. This national initiative aims to raise children's awareness of the origins and nutritional benefits of different types of food; and equip them with the skills they need to make healthy choices about the food they eat and to enjoy a balanced diet.

Initiatives to raise parental support for school meals

- The Panel was informed that the Primary School Catering Service plan to publish its menus in the Citizen newspaper. It is hoped that this will generate positive publicity and help to dispel longstanding myths regarding the poor quality of school meals.
- The service also produces a range of leaflets for parents and guardians; and offers taster sessions at parent evenings, in order to provide parents with a firsthand insight into the catering service available in schools.

7.3.7 In addition the Primary School Catering Service has a wider role in increasing take-up of school meals by helping to engage children in healthy eating. For example the Manager of the Primary Catering Service has worked with Dental Health, Community Dieticians and

Community Health Workers to produce a generic food policy for Tameside schools. This policy aims to ensure healthy eating is promoted throughout all aspects of school life.

7.3.8 In particular the policy contains guidelines for promoting healthy eating through:

- 1) The formal curriculum;
- 2) After school provision;
- 3) Extra curricular activities;
- 4) Breakfast clubs;
- 5) Break-time snacks and tuck shops;
- 6) Vending machines;
- 7) Dining facilities (i.e. creating an inviting environment);
- 8) School meals;
- 9) Guidelines for packed lunches;
- 10) Water provision;
- 11) Rewards and celebrations

7.3.9 The Service is also providing intensive support for three schools with the lowest take-up of school meals. This includes liaising with the relevant schools in order to identify the key reasons for low take-up and to devise specific solutions to meet the schools' needs.

7.3.10 However the Service faces many obstacles to increasing uptake of school meals. Primarily, the Service is only able to offer advice to schools and consequently relies on the co-operation and engagement of head teachers and governing bodies to implement initiatives.

7.3.11 The Panel was informed that there are wide variations between schools' regarding their engagement with healthy eating. The Service has attempted to proactively engage head teachers and governors in catering provision by inviting them to attend "recipe team" meetings. However the Panel was informed that involvement is patchy, usually with little involvement from those schools with lower take-up rates.

7.3.12 In addition overcoming parental apathy regarding healthy eating and lack of parental support for school meals are also key challenges for the Service. The Manager of the Primary School Catering Service informed the Panel that 18,000 customer feedback forms had been recently distributed to parents and guardians across the borough; however only 45 responses were received which it was felt indicated the low level of interest in school meals.

7.3.13 Furthermore the Panel was informed that many parents had a negative attitude towards school meals. It was felt that this attitude was fuelled by the negative publicity regarding school meals which surrounded Jamie Oliver's campaign in 2005. It was felt that the case studies selected for the campaign were intended to be hard hitting rather than typical of school catering; and had produced a negative stigma which had become associated with school meals in general. The Panel was informed that take up rates of school meals in primary schools in Tameside declined by 15% in the months which followed the series' broadcast.

7.3.14 The Panel acknowledge that the long term outcomes of Jamie Oliver's campaign were positive in many ways. For example the campaign raised the profile of school catering, increased the Government's emphasis on the benefits of healthy school meals and helped to secure additional funding. However School Catering Managers feel that school catering services are now engaged in an uphill battle to overcome the negative stigma the campaign produced.

7.3.15 Finally the Panel was concerned that the lack of regulation regarding food brought into school from home could undermine attempts to promote healthy school meals. The

Manager of the Primary Schools Catering Service reported that the proportion of children bringing packed lunches into primary schools had increased in recent years. However food brought in from home is not subjected to statutory standards, and, in the majority of schools, is not regulated or monitored. The Panel was concerned that the lack of regulation regarding packed lunches could undermine the Primary Schools Catering Service's efforts to promote healthy school meals.

Conclusions

3. The Primary School Catering Service is responsible for ensuring that the Government's statutory standards are effectively implemented in all but three of the borough's primary schools.
4. The Service carries out a range of innovative measures to promote school meals amongst children and their parents/guardians. In addition it also plays a wider role in helping to engage children in healthy eating. This includes important work with schools in addition to work with Dental Health, Community Dieticians and Community Health Workers.
5. However the Service faces a number of obstacles to increasing uptake of school meals, including:
 - Overcoming the variations between different schools' engagement with healthy eating;
 - Overcoming enduring parental apathy regarding healthy eating and school meals;
 - Overcoming a negative stigma associated with school meals;
 - The Panel was particularly concerned that lack of regulation regarding food brought into school from home was undermining schools' attempts to promote healthy school meals.

Recommendations

1. That current activities to promote and market school meals to young people and parents continue to be implemented and developed; and are taken on board by all schools.

7.4 Measures for increasing take-up of school meals in secondary schools

7.4.1 The role of secondary school catering managers

7.4.2 Since April 2000 budgets for secondary school catering in Tameside have been delegated from the local authority to the individual school. Therefore, unlike in primary schools, the local council is not responsible for managing the secondary school catering service and there is no centralised catering provision.

7.4.3 Responsibility for running the school meals service in secondary schools resides with the individual school's Catering Manager. The majority of secondary school catering managers in Tameside secondary schools are employed by their school. The two exceptions are Audenshaw High School, which contracts out its catering service to an independent company; and Alder Community High School, where catering provision is included in the school's PFI contract.

- 7.4.4 The Catering Manager has total responsibility for running their school's catering service. This includes managing the kitchen, planning recipes, sourcing ingredients, ensuring value for money, in addition to preparing and serving food.
- 7.4.5 Furthermore the Catering Manager (along with the school's Governing Body) also has statutory responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Government's statutory standards for school food.
- 7.4.6 To this end secondary school catering managers are expected to:
- i. devise menus which meet the Government's standards;
 - ii. implement appropriate computer based systems for calculating the nutritional content of school lunches in order to meet the Nutrient Based Standards by September 2009.
- 7.4.7 During the course of the review Panel Members consulted Catering Managers from ten Tameside secondary schools and visited three of the borough's schools (including the PFI school, Alder Community High School).
- 7.4.8 The Panel found many examples of good practice in providing nutritious and appetising food. They were extremely impressed with the quality and range of meals offered, including provision for vegetarian and, where appropriate, Halal diets. Each of the schools visited offered at least three choices of hot meals and a hot desert, in addition to lighter options such as jacket potatoes, soup, pizza slices, sandwiches, yoghurt and fruit.
- 7.4.9 The Panel was particularly pleased with the Catering Managers' commitment to engaging pupils in healthy eating and increasing take-up of school meals. For example the three schools visited offered healthy versions of popular dishes such as burgers and curry and the Catering Managers evaluated and modified menus on an on-going basis in order to ensure the food served matched trends in pupils' tastes. Furthermore many Catering Managers consult with pupils through the school council and some produce feedback questionnaires, which the Panel felt was particularly good practice. The Panel was also impressed with plans currently being discussed by the Catering Managers' Forum, to take pupils to visit different schools at lunch time in order to provide them with an opportunity to identify and share examples of good practice from a young person's perspective.
- 7.4.10 The Panel was also informed that schools carry out a number of promotional activities in order to encourage increased take up of school meals. For example all schools organise themed days with the aim of attracting to the canteen pupils who don't usually purchase school meals; and many schools offer "meal deals" which are marketed in a fashionable "high street" style. In addition Catering Managers proactively try alternative ways of making school meals more appealing to pupils. For example Longdendale Language College has recently started serving noodles in take-away containers, in response to pupils leaving the school grounds to purchase Pot Noodles from the local shop.
- 7.4.11 In addition some Catering Managers have liaised with individual pupils in cases where concerns have been expressed regarding the pupils' eating habits, in order to encourage them to eat a more balanced diet. For example some schools offer such pupils smaller portions or provide a small serving of vegetables with every meal in order to encourage them to try new foods. Furthermore one Catering Manager had consulted with individual pupils in order to devise specific dishes which appealed to them. Though this measure was only practical in extreme cases, the Panel was informed that it had been successful in initially promoting school meals to "hard to reach" pupils and had encouraged such pupils to try other dishes on the menu.
- 7.4.12 The Panel was informed that a new biometric system of payment, which has been introduced at a number of the borough's secondary schools, has provided a mechanism

for monitoring young people's diets and can be used to help identify pupils with eating problems or poor eating habits. The system uses a pupil's fingerprint, rather than a swipe card, to access the pupil's school meal account and allows Catering Managers to produce a full breakdown of the food purchased by each individual pupil if requested by their parent or guardian.

- 7.4.13 In addition the biometric system has other benefits which the Panel felt would further help to increase take-up of school meals. For example the system helps to alleviate long queues to pay for food, which Catering Managers reported was one of the key reasons why pupils chose not to purchase school meals. By using a finger print, the biometric system removes the need for dealing with cash or lost swipe cards, both of which have the potential to cause disruption at the payment point. In addition the system helps to reduce bullying for cash or swipe cards, which the Panel felt deterred some pupils from entering the queue for school meals.
- 7.4.14 Members were also impressed with the efforts made to engage parents in helping to increase take-up of school meals. Catering Managers informed the Panel that parents were welcome and encouraged to visit schools' catering facilities and try a school meal. In addition it was reported that in some schools parents were given the opportunity at open evenings to try some of the menus served. It was reported that parental interest in school meals had increased since the introduction of the biometric payment system as more parents were requesting a break down of their children's expenditure on school food. However it was acknowledged that feedback from parents remained very limited.
- 7.4.15 However the Panel's research and consultation with Catering Managers revealed that secondary schools face particularly potent challenges in increasing take up of school meals, both nationally and in Tameside.
- 7.4.16 Firstly the Panel acknowledge that the new Statutory Standards for school food are very stringent and inflexible, which can render it difficult for schools to serve the type of food that is popular amongst young people. The Panel was informed that catering staff were forced to continuously explain to pupils the reasons for changes to menus and that uptake of school meals had fallen considerably since the introduction of the new standards. It was reported that the decline in take up of school meals, combined with the increased cost of food, had resulted in the vast majority of secondary schools running their kitchens at a loss. The Catering Managers explained that falling uptake of school meals, pupil complaints, and budgeting deficits, could be very demoralising for catering staff.
- 7.4.17 The Catering Managers also explained that practical enforcement of the Nutrient Based Standards proved very difficult. They reported that the system was based on the premise that pupils eat a set meal which includes a main meal, a side portion of vegetables or salad, and an optional desert. It was explained, however, that though pupils are required to purchase a set meal package at many schools, there are no means of ensuring they consume it all.
- 7.4.18 The Catering Managers acknowledged that encouraging children to eat a healthy balanced diet is essential, however they felt that the statutory standards were introduced too hastily and are too harsh and inflexible to satisfy young people's needs. It was felt that, for example, offering pupils a sausage sandwich for breakfast (currently prohibited) is more beneficial than them purchasing chocolate and crisps on route to school.
- 7.4.19 Furthermore the Catering Managers also felt that the standards are sometimes inconsistent and impractical. For example they reported that schools are able to serve flap jacks but not decorate buns with one chocolate drop; and cheese whirls made wholly from pastry are permitted but pies with a pastry top and bottom are prohibited. The Catering Managers explained that some of the recommended recipes are very difficult to

serve; for example serving a pie without a pastry bottom takes longer and thereby increases queuing time which has a further detrimental effect on take-up rates.

- 7.4.20 After visiting three of the borough's schools, the Panel agreed that the food served is of a high quality and that Catering Managers show a great deal of innovation in adapting popular recipes to meet statutory nutritional requirements. However Members were informed that there is a culture of resistance amongst many teenagers. The Catering Managers explained, for example, that a large proportion of the new Year 7 intake were content to purchase school meals for the first few months after starting secondary school, but numbers start to reduce as they become accustomed to pupil trends in high schools. Though it was felt that retention of the number of Year 7 pupils purchasing school meals had improved during the current academic year. This is attributed to the increased emphasis on healthy eating in primary schools, which the Panel felt was a positive sign for the future.
- 7.4.21 Secondly, the Panel found that some schools are not adequately equipped to implement the new standards. In some schools, kitchen facilities have not developed in accordance with the demands for fresh home cooked food. Consequently such school kitchens remain furnished with freezers and other equipment which are largely unused; whilst cookers and ovens are old and do not have the required capacity. Some schools lack equipment for preparing vegetables in large quantities, which significantly increases the time taken to prepare meals and necessitates a high level of organisation.
- 7.4.22 Furthermore one school visited by Members, lacked work space in the kitchen for preparing foods and even washing plates and cutlery. This forces them to purchase disposable wear which becomes an additional expense. The Panel was also informed that the same school had tried to make bread on the premises in order to make financial savings, but lacked space in the kitchen.
- 7.4.23 The Catering Managers consulted also explained that many school kitchens were understaffed due to the budget deficit, this compounds capacity issues further. It was acknowledged, however, that catering facilities and resources do vary widely between schools, with some schools, such as Droylsden High School for Girls and Alder Community High School, benefiting from superior equipment and increased staffing levels.
- 7.4.24 Members found similar contrasts are evident between the dining facilities provided in different secondary schools. For example, of the schools visited by Panel Members, the best dining facilities were modern, clean, spacious and pleasant environments for eating and socialising. In particular, Members identified the following examples of good practice:
- Some schools have interconnected dining areas: one serving hot food and a café style dining area serving lighter options such as sandwiches and jacket potatoes etc. Members felt that this setting produced an informal and social atmosphere; whilst the multiple serving areas helped to reduce queuing time.
 - In some schools, pupils bringing food from home are permitted to eat in the same dining area as those purchasing school meals. Members were informed by the young people they consulted, that this practice encouraged pupils to try an occasional school meal as they gained an insight into the choice available. Furthermore it also helped to make lunchtimes a social occasion for all pupils.
 - In one school the serving area for hot food was very open, enabling pupils to view the food available and preparation area. Members observed that this helped to reduce queuing as pupils were able to make their selection before reaching the end of the queue. In addition they felt that the visibility of all food choices may encourage pupils to try new foods.
 - Some school canteens display posters and collections of pupils' work to promote healthy eating. Members felt that this may help to establish a link between curriculum

work around healthy eating and applying learning in practice at lunch time. In addition Members felt that such displays helped to create a more inviting dining area and may encourage more pupils to visit.

- 7.4.25 By contrast the dining area in one of the schools visited by Panel members was a much less inviting environment. Members felt the room was in need of general maintenance; paint was peeling off the walls, the windows were dirty and the furniture was old and unattractive. In addition very few posters or pupils' work was displayed to promote healthy eating and improve the décor of the room. Members felt that this environment did nothing to attract young people; and despite the very high quality of the food offered, Members could understand why pupils may be reluctant to eat in school.
- 7.4.26 In addition some of the schools visited by the Panel had much smaller serving areas which resulted in congestion and longer queues as pupils were unable to see the food available and make their choice before reaching the serving hatch. Furthermore Members felt that policies for routing the queue for food around the canteen could create a disorderly and nosy atmosphere, which it was felt may deter quieter all less confident pupils from eating a school meal in the canteen.
- 7.4.27 Significantly, those schools exhibiting the above examples of good practice experienced a consistently higher uptake of schools meals than the school aforementioned.
- 7.4.28 The Panel also found that the effective implementation of the statutory standards was effected in different schools by mixed support from the wider curriculum and administration of the school day. For example the Panel identified the following examples of good practice in Tameside and other local authority areas:
- In some schools the Catering Manager works very closely with the Healthy Schools Scheme Co-ordinator in order to ensure that the food served in the canteen and curriculum work around healthy eating are complementing each other. Members felt that this further helps to establish a link between the theory of healthy eating and the practice.
 - Some schools have a strictly enforced policy of keeping all pupils on the school premises during lunchtime. These schools had a higher take-up rate of school meals.
 - Furthermore Alder Community High School offers a wide range of extra curricular activities at lunch time. The Head Teacher felt that this is crucial to the maintaining the high take up rate, as lunch time give pupils a reason for wanting to stay in school. In addition he explained these activities keep pupils occupied and thus make it easier to manage large numbers of pupils on school premises during lunch time.
 - It was noted by the Panel that the engagement of the Head Teacher in promoting school meals and healthy eating was crucial to increasing and maintaining uptake of school meals.
- 7.4.29 Thirdly, the Statutory Standards also make financial and administrative demands on schools' catering services. The Standards require that all schools purchase computer software in order to analyse the nutritional content of menus, which the Panel was informed has proved a drain on schools' already stretched catering budgets. In addition inputting menus in to the software is very time consuming and adds an extra responsibility to Catering Managers' day to day work. It also requires computer skills which many Catering Managers are not confident with. Furthermore though the bulk of the data inputting will be carried out initially, the Panel is concerned that the requirement to input new recipes into the software may make it difficult for Catering Managers to continue to offer the level of choice currently provided. The Panel feels that this is a particular concern as the wide choice of menus is expected by pupils and a key influence in helping to increase and maintain a high take up of school meals.

- 7.4.30 The Catering Managers consulted by the Panel agreed that the support of a trained dietician or nutritionist was required in order to ensure menus are input in to the software correctly and meet the statutory standards. It was explained that the nutritional analysis of menus is affected by cooking methods in addition to ingredient combinations, and that correctly interpreting the nutritional readings requires expert support. The Panel was informed that a dietician employed by the Primary Care Trust (PCT) chaired the Secondary School Catering Managers Forum in the past, however she has now left the PCT and no further links have been established. The Panel noted that the active support of a dietician in inputting and analysing data was also advocated by the School Food Trust as best practice.
- 7.4.31 The Catering Managers felt they have not received adequate training and support to implement the standards. In particular they felt that they are expected to undertake the role of a dietician which, even with additional training, they would not be qualified for. They added that the School Food Trust has issued written guidance, but has failed to provide schools with the practical support they need; as a result they were unsure who to direct enquiries to. The Catering Managers agreed that they needed someone in an advisory role to support them in implementing the standards on a day to day basis. It was also felt that this position would help to further identify and promote examples of good practice in schools in Tameside and other local authority areas.

Conclusions

6. Since April 2000 budgets for secondary school catering in Tameside have been delegated from the local authority to the individual school. Therefore responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Government's Standards in secondary schools resides with the individual school's Catering Manager.
7. There are many examples of good practice, in Tameside secondary schools, of engaging young people in healthy eating and increasing uptake of school meals. In particular the Panel was very impressed with:
 - the quality and range of meals offered, including provision for vegetarian and, where appropriate, Halal diets;
 - the great deal of innovation shown by Catering Managers, in adapting popular recipes to meet statutory nutritional requirements.
 - the innovative ways devised by Catering Managers and schools, to consult with young people regarding their preferences (e.g. organising for pupils to visit different schools at lunch time); and Catering Managers'
 - responsiveness to feedback;
 - the range of promotional activities carried out by schools and alternative ways of marketing school meals, in order to make them more appealing to young people;
8. The Panel feels that the biometric payment system, which has been introduced in a number of local schools, is an important tool in helping to increase uptake of school meals. By using a finger print to access a pupil's account, the system removes the need for swipe cards or cash and thereby helps to alleviate long queues to pay for food, which is one of the key reasons why pupils choose not to purchase school meals. In addition the system helps to reduce bullying for cash or swipe cards, which the Panel felt deterred some pupils from entering the queue for school meals.
9. The system provides a mechanism for monitoring young people's diets by allowing Catering Managers to produce a full breakdown of the food purchased by each individual pupil if requested by their parent/guardian. This has also resulted in a

slight increase in parental interest in school meals. However Members feel that further work is required in order to raise parents' awareness of this facility.

10. Schools operating an effectively enforced policy of keeping all pupils on the school premises during lunch time experience a higher take-up rate of school meals. The Panel felt that this was crucial to increasing take up rates.
11. However Secondary School Catering Managers face some significant challenges in both increasing uptake of school meals **and** effectively implementing the new Standards, including:
 - Uninviting canteens and long queues in some schools deter pupils from taking up school meals.
 - Overcoming a negative stigma associated with school meals;
 - Wide variation between different schools' kitchen facilities, with some schools inadequately equipped to effectively implement the new standards.
 - The Standards make additional demands on the time and skills of Catering Managers. For example, inputting data into computer software is time consuming and requires basic computer skills which some Managers are not confident of; and interpreting nutritional analysis' requires specialist support (from a Dietician).

Recommendations

2. That, where possible, all schools implement an effectively enforced policy of keeping pupils on school premises at lunch time; including, where possible, providing a range of lunch time activities.
3. That, where possible, schools implement the biometric payment system.
4. That primary and secondary schools explore new ways of engaging parents in healthy eating and school meals, for example by publishing menus in school newsletters and local newspapers, taster evenings.
5. That schools explore ways of providing in-house technical support, where required, to support Catering Managers in using computer software for nutritional analysis.
6. That school canteens are decorated and furnished in order to create a pleasant dining area for pupils. In particular canteens should display posters promoting healthy eating and pupils' work relating to healthy eating, in order to create a more inviting environment.
7. That queuing for school meals is kept outside the canteen in order to create a calmer and more orderly atmosphere in the dining room.

7.4.32 The Secondary School Catering Managers Forum

7.4.33 The Secondary School Catering Managers Forum was formed in 2005 by Catering Managers from a cross section of Tameside secondary schools. The Forum, which meets on a monthly basis, is designed to provide a mutual source of support for Catering Managers; and an opportunity for sharing good practice in tackling the challenges relating to secondary school catering.

- 7.4.34 The Panel was very impressed with the work of the Forum. The Panel felt that the Forum provided an effective channel for sharing examples of good practice, as well as providing Catering Managers with an important source of support in dealing with the particularly challenging issues arising from the introduction of the new Statutory Standards.
- 7.4.35 For example the Forum has arranged training for Catering Managers on a wide range of issues, including nutritional analysis and the use of computer software required by the Statutory Standards; health and safety; and food hygiene. Furthermore Forum members proactively identify training needs on an on-going basis and jointly arrange bespoke training or ad hoc presentations as appropriate. Meanwhile meeting agendas include regular updates on the latest statutory requirements and any guidance issued by the School Food Trust.
- 7.4.36 The Forum has also arranged visits to other local authority areas in order to view examples of good practice, such as St Aidan's Church of England High School in Harrogate. In addition plans are currently being devised for Catering Managers to visit different schools in Tameside in order to identify and share effective practices.
- 7.4.37 Meeting agendas also include regular updates on guidance issued by the School Food Trust and its implications for Catering Managers and their staff.

Conclusions

12. The Catering Managers Forum provides an invaluable channel for sharing examples of good practice, as well as providing Catering Managers with an important source of support in dealing with the particularly challenging issues arising from the introduction of the new Statutory Standards.

Recommendations

8. That the Secondary School Catering Managers' Forum is acknowledged and supported as an invaluable source of support for Catering Managers and an opportunity to develop and share good practice.

7.5 Support provided by the Tameside and Glossop Primary Care Trust

- 7.5.1 Supporting schools around healthy eating is a key focus of the Tameside and Glossop Primary Care Trust's Children's Nutrition Team. In particular the team works closely with schools in order to promote a "whole school" approach to healthy eating, which involves schools implementing a consistent food policy and promoting healthy eating throughout the curriculum.
- 7.5.2 The Children's Nutrition Team supports and assesses schools in achieving the Tameside and Glossop Healthy Food and Drink in Schools Award. This award provides evidence for the healthy eating component of the National Healthy Schools Status; and includes the following criteria:
- i. A school food policy in place;
 - ii. Staff trained in food and hygiene;
 - iii. The school must have achieved the Tameside Healthy Choice Award.

The aim of the *Tameside Healthy Choice Award* is to improve the availability of healthy, nutritious food, using healthier cooking methods and conversely to reduce availability of

less healthy food choices. Food providers are also encouraged to promote their healthier choices. To achieve the award high standards of food hygiene are also required.

7.5.3 Currently 32 Tameside schools have been successful in achieving the Healthy Food and Drink in Schools Award and another 28 schools have had assessments and further work is planned to assist them with meeting the criteria for the award. This includes work with school catering departments and meetings with healthy school co-ordinators.

7.5.4 However the Tameside and Glossop Nutrition and Dietetic Service does not offer specialist support to Catering Managers in relation to the everyday practicalities of interpreting nutritional analysis and ensuring menus meet the Government's stringent standards.

Recommendations

9. That the Primary Care Trust explore ways of making specialist support available to help Catering Managers ensure menus meet statutory nutritional standards.

7.6 The role of the Healthy Schools Scheme

7.6.1 The Healthy School Scheme is a national programme introduced by Central Government in 2005 in order to support schools in promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

7.6.2 The programme consists of for themes:

- i. Personal, Social and Health Education;
- ii. Healthy Eating;
- iii. Physical Activity;
- iv. Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Schools are required to meet specific criteria in relation to each theme in order to be awarded "Healthy Schools Status".

7.6.3 The Healthy Eating theme includes criteria regarding the implementation of the statutory standards and measures for engaging pupils in healthy eating, in particular schools are required to show how they have established a "whole school" approach to healthy eating, by implementing a consistent food policy and promoting healthy eating throughout the curriculum.

7.6.4 In addition schools are expected to proactively involve pupils and parents in the development of the food policy. The Panel was informed, by the Tameside Healthy Schools Scheme Co-ordinator, that consultation with pupils regarding their preferred foods, catering provision and dining arrangements in school, and healthy eating in general, is essential to engaging them in a whole school approach to healthy eating. Furthermore, it was reported that schools are required to consult parents due to parents' strong influence on their children's eating habits. The Healthy Schools Scheme Co-ordinator explained that the scheme aimed to instil, in pupils and parents, positive attitudes towards healthy eating which transcend school, but also influence their diets outside school.

7.6.5 Tameside Council provides a range of support materials to help the borough's schools achieve "Healthy Schools Status." In particular the Healthy Schools Team provides schools with extensive support in promoting healthy eating through the curriculum. The

Council also works with the Primary Care Trust in order to ensure teaching staff receive appropriate training for addressing issues relating to healthy eating through various curriculum subjects.

7.6.6 At the time of writing, almost 100 Tameside schools were participating in the Healthy Schools Scheme; and 58 schools had already received “Healthy Schools Status.”

7.6.7 During the course of the review the Panel also received an overview of a number of other national campaigns which some Tameside schools had successfully used to help engage pupils in healthy eating. Including:

- The “Food for Life” scheme – aims to provide opportunities for children to develop practical cooking skills within the constraints of the primary school setting.
- The “From Farm to Plate” scheme – aims to engage children in healthy eating by providing opportunities for them to follow the process of producing food, from growing it to preparing it.
- The fruit and vegetable distribution scheme in primary schools – ensures children have access to at least one portion of fruit or vegetable per day and encourages children to try new healthy foods.
- The “Million Meals” scheme – developed by the School Food Trust to support schools in increasing uptake of school meals in primary and secondary schools. Schools signing up to the scheme have access to case studies and resources used by schools with high uptake of school meals.

Conclusions

13. In order to achieve Healthy Schools Scheme status schools are required to satisfy criteria in relation to 4 themes, including Healthy Eating. The Scheme requires that schools produce a food policy which promotes a “whole school” approach to healthy eating, encompassing school catering and the curriculum. The Panel particularly welcomes this “whole school” approach, it is felt that the proactive support of the Head Teacher, and links between catering service delivery and the curriculum are essential to establishing a good uptake of school meals.

Recommendations

10. That the Healthy Schools Team continues to support schools in achieving Healthy Schools Status

7.7 The role of Building Schools for the Future in promoting healthy eating and school meals

7.7.1 Background information about Building Schools for the Future

7.7.2 Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is the Government’s ambitious programme to transform secondary schools throughout England. The overall aim of the BSF programme is to create modern secondary school buildings which:

- facilitate teaching and learning;
- contribute to higher pupil attainment;
- meet the demands of the 21st century curriculum.

- 7.7.3 The BSF programme was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003. The programme combines long term Government investment in secondary school buildings with wider educational reform.
- 7.7.4 Under BSF funding will be rolled out to every local authority in England over a series of 15 waves. By 2020 it is expected that all secondary schools will have been re-built or re-modelled using funding allocated through the programme.
- 7.7.5 Tameside has been allocated funding in wave 3 of the programme. This funding is being used to re-model or re-build nine of the borough's secondary schools.
- 7.7.6 Four schools have been selected as "sample schools" for initial work. These schools include:
- i. Mossley Hollins High School,
 - ii. St Damian's RC Science College,
 - iii. The New Charter Academy (to replace Hartshead and Stamford High Schools)
 - iv. Samuel Laycock Special School
- 7.7.7 The borough will receive additional investment in later waves of the programme. This could be in 7-10 years time.
- 7.7.8 It is expected that construction will begin on the new Mossley Hollins High School and St Damian's RC Science College in November 2008. Meanwhile work to prepare the site for the New Charter Academy and Samuel Laycock School is almost complete. It is expected that all four schools will be completed by September 2010.
- 7.7.9 All re-building or re-modelling carried out as part of the BSF programme must support the Government's key priorities for educational reform. These priorities include:
- Raising educational attainment at Key Stage 3 and 4;
 - Improving behaviour and attendance in schools;
 - **Promoting healthy schools initiatives;**
 - Maximising the use of Information and Communications Technology in schools;
 - Facilitating reforms to the 14-19 curriculum;
 - Promoting extended schools and community provision;
 - Supporting school re-organisation

The role of Building Schools for the Future in promoting healthy eating in schools

- 7.7.10 BSF has a key role in the drive to promote healthy eating in Tameside schools. As outlined above, "promoting healthy schools initiatives" is one of the key priorities that all BSF projects must support. Furthermore BSF provides an opportunity to ensure, where possible, solutions to some of the challenges which established secondary schools are currently facing are incorporated into new builds.
- 7.7.11 Consideration of the ways in which the BSF project supports the promotion of healthy eating is an important part of the Scrutiny Panel's Review of Healthy Eating in Schools.
- It provides members with a timely opportunity to identify recommendations which may contribute to the approach to catering in the newly built schools.
- 7.7.12 In Tameside Carillion, part of the Inspired Spaces Consortium, has been contracted to provide a total catering service in the BSF schools funded by Private Finance Initiative (PFI). This catering service will meet the statutory standards for food served in schools and the Panel was informed that consultation will be undertaken with pupils in order to ensure menus reflect, as closely as possible, pupil demand. In addition the Panel learnt

that Carillion has a contractual obligation to ensure that choice is provided for pupils with special dietary requirements.

- 7.7.13 Members welcomed the level of resource Carillion has invested in initially implementing the Standards. Currently one Catering Manager had been seconded for 2.5 days per week to input menus into computer software approved for nutritional analysis. It is anticipated that there will be a need for long term support in order to ensure menu changes are analysed, however the extent of this support had not yet been agreed.
- 7.7.14 Carillion and the Inspired Spaces Consortium already deliver a catering service in 20 secondary schools and 25 primary schools across the country; and many of these schools have experienced significant increases in pupil uptake of school meals since the implementation of the new service. The contractor's proposals for catering in Tameside schools are modelled on the most successful elements of existing provision. Catering staff from Mossley Hollins High School and St Damian's RC Science College have visited a school serviced by Carillion in Redcar and Cleveland, which consistently records a take-up rate above 60%.
- 7.7.15 Inspired Spaces have budgeted for a 60% take up rate of school meals in order for the service to be financially viable; however the cost of school meals will be fixed and will not be affected if uptake is lower.
- 7.7.16 The Panel learnt that Carillion and Inspired Spaces have implemented, in its existing schools, a range of initiatives designed to promote healthy eating and school meals, including:
- Responding to feedback from pupils, generated through customer surveys and consultation with the school council;
 - Proactively involving pupils in setting menus through "design a dinner" competitions;
 - Marketing food in a way that replicated popular "high street" trends, such as meal deals;
 - Organising promotional or themed days, which aimed to generate interest in school meals and act as a "hook" for attracting and maintaining new custom.

The Panel welcomes these initiatives as examples of good practice, and acknowledges that many of these initiatives have already proved successful in some of the borough's schools.

- 7.7.17 The Panel was informed that Carillion works with schools in order to create a "whole school" approach to healthy eating. The Panel welcomes this approach; in particular Members feel that the proactive support of the Head Teacher, and links between catering service delivery and the healthy eating curriculum, are essential to establishing a good uptake of school meals.
- 7.7.18 However Carillion has no fixed solutions to promoting healthy eating and will tailor solutions in order to adapt to the specific context of the individual school. For example the Panel were particularly interested in the Facilities Bid Manager's suggestion that there may be opportunities to establish mutually supportive links between the catering service at Mossley Hollins High School and the schools' specialist sports status. The Panel was informed that pupils may be able to examine the statutory standards and use the catering service's bespoke computer software in order to nutritionally analyse the food they eat and improve their understanding of healthy eating.
- 7.7.19 Carillion's designs for dining areas are driven by the individual school in order to support the school's ethos. However the over-arching aim is to make lunch time a positive experience for pupils. During the course of the review the Panel discussed, with the Project Manager for BSF, the design preferences of the four sample schools involved in

the Tameside BSF programme: it was reported New Charter Academy wanted a central dining zone with break-out areas; Samuel Laycock Special School wanted to establish a family atmosphere, with a café style restaurant and break-out areas; meanwhile Mossley Hollins High School and St Damian's RC Science College wished to create a more formal atmosphere with a "top table" and table cloths.

- 7.7.20 Members particularly welcome the introduction of "break out" areas from a central dining zone. Members feel that the shift away from a formal dining hall, where all pupils are required to eat, provide greater freedom and is therefore popular with young people. The Panel, however, acknowledge that space is limited in schools and consequently this set-up is difficult to implement.

Conclusions

14. Building Schools for the Future provides an opportunity to ensure, where possible, solutions to some of the challenges which established schools are currently facing are incorporated into new builds
15. Carillion and the Inspired Spaces Consortium plan to implement a range of initiatives designed to promote healthy eating and school meals. The Panel welcomes these initiatives as examples of good practice and acknowledges that many have already proved successful in some of the borough's schools.

Recommendations

11. That consideration is given to installing larger serving areas in the new schools to be built as part of the Building Schools for the Future Programme

8. Conclusions

1. All Tameside primary schools experienced a decline in uptake of school meals following the publication of the Government's schedule for transforming school food (2005/6) and the introduction of the Interim Food Based Standards (2006/7). There was a slight increase in uptake of school meals in primary schools during 2007/8. However the average take-up remains 15.7% lower than in 2004/5 and income generated from school meals remains at its second lowest point since 2003/4.
2. Data regarding uptake of school meals in secondary schools is not as readily available as the same data for primary schools. However information received by the Panel indicates that there has also been a decline in uptake of school meals in Tameside secondary schools; and that this has impacted on schools' catering budgets.
3. The Primary School Catering Service is responsible for ensuring that the Government's statutory standards are effectively implemented in all but three of the borough's primary schools.
4. The Service carries out a range of innovative measures to promote school meals amongst children and their parents/guardians. In addition it also plays a wider role in helping to engage children in healthy eating. This includes important work with schools in addition to work with Dental Health, Community Dieticians and Community Health Workers.

5. However the Service faces a number of obstacles to increasing uptake of school meals, including:
 - Overcoming the variations between different schools' engagement with healthy eating;
 - Overcoming enduring parental apathy regarding healthy eating and school meals;
 - Overcoming a negative stigma associated with school meals;
 - The Panel was particularly concerned that lack of regulation regarding food brought into school from home was undermining schools' attempts to promote healthy school meals.
6. Since April 2000 budgets for secondary school catering in Tameside have been delegated from the local authority to the individual school. Therefore responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Government's Standards in secondary schools resides with the individual school's Catering Manager.
7. There are many examples of good practice, in Tameside secondary schools, of engaging young people in healthy eating and increasing uptake of school meals. In particular the Panel was very impressed with:
 - the quality and range of meals offered, including provision for vegetarian and, where appropriate, Halal diets;
 - the great deal of innovation shown by Catering Managers, in adapting popular recipes to meet statutory nutritional requirements.
 - the innovative ways devised by Catering Managers and schools, to consult with young people regarding their preferences (e.g. organising for pupils to visit different schools at lunch time); and Catering Managers'
 - responsiveness to feedback;
 - the range of promotional activities carried out by schools and alternative ways of marketing school meals, in order to make them more appealing to young people;
8. The Panel feels that the biometric payment system, which has been introduced in a number of local schools, is an important tool in helping to increase uptake of school meals. By using a finger print to access a pupil's account, the system removes the need for swipe cards or cash and thereby helps to alleviate long queues to pay for food, which is one of the key reasons why pupils choose not to purchase school meals. In addition the system helps to reduce bullying for cash or swipe cards, which the Panel felt deterred some pupils from entering the queue for school meals.
9. The system provides a mechanism for monitoring young people's diets by allowing Catering Managers to produce a full breakdown of the food purchased by each individual pupil if requested by their parent/guardian. This has also resulted in a slight increase in parental interest in school meals. However Members feel that further work is required in order to raise parents' awareness of this facility.
10. Schools operating an effectively enforced policy of keeping all pupils on the school premises during lunch time experience a higher take-up rate of school meals. The Panel felt that this was crucial to increasing take up rates.
11. However Secondary School Catering Managers face some significant challenges in both increasing uptake of school meals and effectively implementing the new Standards, including:
 - Uninviting canteens and long queues in some schools deter pupils from taking up school meals.
 - Overcoming a negative stigma associated with school meals;
 - Wide variation between different schools' kitchen facilities, with some schools inadequately equipped to effectively implement the new standards.

- The Standards make additional demands on the time and skills of Catering Managers. For example, inputting data into computer software is time consuming and requires basic computer skills which some Managers are not confident of; and interpreting nutritional analysis' requires specialist support (from a Dietician).
12. The Catering Managers' Forum provides an invaluable channel for sharing examples of good practice, as well as providing Catering Managers with an important source of support in dealing with the particularly challenging issues arising from the introduction of the new Statutory Standards.
 13. In order to achieve Healthy Schools Scheme status schools are required to satisfy criteria in relation to 4 themes, including Healthy Eating. The Scheme requires that schools produce a food policy which promotes a "whole school" approach to healthy eating, encompassing school catering and the curriculum. The Panel particularly welcomes this "whole school" approach, it is felt that the proactive support of the Head Teacher, and links between catering service delivery and the curriculum are essential to establishing a good uptake of school meals.
 14. Building Schools for the Future provides an opportunity to ensure, where possible, solutions to some of the challenges which established schools are currently facing are incorporated into new builds
 15. Carillion and the Inspired Spaces Consortium plan to implement a range of initiatives designed to promote healthy eating and school meals. The Panel welcomes these initiatives as examples of good practice and acknowledges that many have already proved successful in some of the borough's schools.

9. Recommendations

1. That current activities to promote and market school meals to young people continue to be implemented and developed; and are taken on board by all schools.
2. That, where possible, all schools implement an effectively enforced policy of keeping pupils on school premises at lunch time; including, where possible, providing a range of lunch time activities.
3. That, where possible, schools implement the biometric payment system.
4. That primary and secondary schools explore new ways of engaging parents in healthy eating and school meals, for example by publishing menus in school newsletters and local newspapers, taster evenings.
5. That schools explore ways of providing in-house technical support, where required, to support Catering Managers in using computer software for nutritional analysis.
6. That school canteens are decorated and furnished in order to create a pleasant dining area for pupils. In particular canteens should display posters promoting healthy eating and pupils' work relating to healthy eating, in order to create a more inviting environment.
7. That queuing for school meals is kept outside the canteen in order to create a calmer and more orderly atmosphere in the dining room.
8. That the Secondary School Catering Managers' Forum is acknowledged and supported as an invaluable source of support for Catering Managers and an opportunity to develop and share good practice.

9. That the Primary Care Trust explore ways of making specialist support available to help Catering Managers ensure menus meet statutory nutritional standards.
10. That the Healthy Schools Team continues to support schools in achieving Healthy Schools Status.
11. That consideration is given to installing larger serving areas in the new schools to be built as part of the Building Schools for the Future Programme

10. Borough Treasurer's Comments

A number of the recommendations raised in the review require financial support which will need to be addressed from existing resource allocations.

The Primary Catering Service (managed by Services for Children and Young People) is responsible for the following revenue budget (including free school meals allocation) in 2008/2009:

	2008/2009 Budget £
Gross Expenditure	4,367,140
Gross Income	2,664,290
Net Expenditure	1,702,850

In addition to the above, the three primary schools who either administer or deliver the service themselves (St. Mary's Droylsden) or via a Private Finance Initiative provider (Arundale and Pinfold) have delegated catering funding of £93,580 in the current financial year. Secondary schools have received delegated funding of £941,090.

The majority of the funding detailed above is financed via the Council's Dedicated Schools Grant Allocation (from within the Council's total allocation of £133 m in 2008/2009). However, £374,170 is financed via a Department for Children Schools and Families Standards Fund grant which is allocated to improve nutritional standards in school meals.

The primary catering service revenue budget and school meal take up levels are regularly monitored by the Resource Management service in conjunction with the Primary Catering Service management team within Services for Children and Young People to ensure targets and value for money are achieved.

Schools who receive delegated catering funding are responsible for the management and control of these resources within their overall total level of delegated funding from the Council.

11. Borough Solicitor's Comments

This is an important report which supports:

- The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership's priority to "improve children and young people's health outcomes"
- The Local Area Agreement targets relating to childhood obesity
- The "Be Healthy" outcomes contained in "Every Child Matters"
- The Community Strategy theme of "A Healthy Population."

All secondary schools and a few primary schools – as set out in the Borough Treasurer's comments - have a delegated catering budget. For these schools, the recommendations in this report can only be implemented by the school's Governing Body.

The biometric payment system raises data protection issues which need to be addressed to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place. We need to ensure that adequate information is given to those participating in the scheme and their parents. We also need to ensure that the use made of the data collected is lawful and I will be happy to advise further on the implementation of the schemes.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HEALTHY EATING IN SCHOOLS

MAY 2008

AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW EXERCISE

To carry out a reality check on the implementation and outcomes in Tameside schools, of the Government's interim food based standards for school lunches (introduced in 2006) and food based standards for food other than lunch (introduced in 2007); and to identify examples of good practice.

OBJECTIVES

- A. To consider the level and take – up of school meals in Tameside schools since the introduction of the interim food based standards for school lunches; and to consider any variations in the experiences of different primary and secondary schools;
- B. To examine the financial implications of implementing the interim food based standards for school lunches, and food based standards for food other than lunch;
- C. To evaluate policies and procedures in Tameside schools for regulating and monitoring the nutritional content of packed lunches; and to identify examples of good practice;
- D. To consider measures for engaging children, young people and their parents / guardians in healthy eating' and to identify examples of good practice;
- E. To consider preparations for the effective implementation in Tameside schools, of the new nutrient based standards for school lunches to be introduced in September 2008 (in primary schools) and September 2009 (in secondary schools);
- F. To compare Tameside's experiences with the experiences of other areas; and to identify examples of good practice.

VALUE FOR MONEY / USE OF RESOURCES

Value for money is a key element of this review. The review will consider the financial implications of implementing the Government's standards for healthy school meals and it will explore ways to increase take-up of school meals in order to maximise value for money.

EQUALITIES ISSUES

Local authorities and schools have a statutory responsibility to promote a healthy eating policy which is inclusive of all children and young people. Therefore consideration of the ways in which schools are ensuring healthy food options are accessible to all children and young people, including those with specific cultural, religious, or other dietary needs, food allergies and disabilities, will form an important part of this review. In addition this review will monitor the take-up rate of school meals by children and young people from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

TIMESCALE

This review will be completed by

DETAILED ACTION PLAN (in broadly chronological order)

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Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(1) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale for the Scrutiny Review of Healthy Eating in Schools; • The impact of healthy school meals on children and young people’s health and wellbeing; 		Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 24 th June 2008	Gaynor Alexander	Completed (June 08)
(2) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory requirements regarding food served in schools; • The statutory responsibilities of local authorities and schools (including the organisation of catering provision in schools); • Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider regarding Tameside’s progress towards meeting statutory requirements. 		Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 24 th June 2008	Gaynor Alexander	Completed (June 08)
(3) Meet with representatives from Tameside Council’s Healthy Schools Team to receive background information and set the scene for the review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current progress towards meeting statutory requirements for food served in schools (measures in place and outcomes); • Take-up rates of school meals (including take-up rates of different cultural / religious groups, different schools and variations between primary and secondary schools); • Challenges relating to the implementation of statutory requirements (including financial implications, engagement of children, young people and their parents...) 	A, B, E & F	Scrutiny Panel meeting 24 th June 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed (June 08)

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(4) Visit a selection of local primary and secondary schools to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain a firsthand insight into lunch time arrangements in schools; • Talk to children and young people about their experiences and opinions regarding school meals / healthy eating; • Talk to schools' catering staff about their experiences and opinions regarding the implementation of statutory requirements for food in schools. 	C, D & F	Dates to be confirmed	Scrutiny Panel Members & Gaynor Alexander	To be arranged (Sept 08)
(5) Briefing paper summarising key issues arising from the Scrutiny Panel's visits to schools.	C, D & F	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 15 th July 2008	Gaynor Alexander	To be arranged (Sept 08)
(6) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of local authorities in relation to the effective implementation of statutory requirements for food served in schools; • Challenges facing Tameside Council – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Analysis of data regarding take-up of school meals (including any trends in take-up); ➤ A summary of the financial implications of statutory requirements for food served in schools; ➤ A summary of any other key challenges arising from the statutory requirements (e.g. impact on packed lunches, issues arising from consultation); • Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider regarding the role of the Local Authority in addressing key challenges. 	A & B	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 15 th July 2008	Gaynor Alexander	Completed (July 08)
(7) Meet with representatives from the Council's Healthy Schools Team and the Primary School Catering Team to discuss	A, C, D, E & F	Scrutiny Panel meeting 15 th July 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed (July 08)

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
measures for ensuring the successful implementation of statutory requirements for food served in schools : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current measures and future plans for increasing take-up of school meals; • Measures / plans for engaging children, young people and their parents in healthy eating; • Measures for monitoring packed lunches; • Examples of good practice in Tameside schools; • Are we learning from the good practice of other authorities? • Any issues arising from the Scrutiny Panel's consultation 				
(8) Meet with representatives from the Council's Licensing department to discuss issues relating to the location of fast food outlets close to school premises.	D	Technical, Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel meeting 1 st September 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	Completed (Sept 08)
(9) Briefing paper outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of schools in relation to the effective implementation of statutory requirements for food served in schools; • A reminder of the key challenges facing schools (see point (4)); • Key issues for the Scrutiny Panel to consider regarding the role of schools in addressing key challenges 	A & B	Briefing paper for Scrutiny Panel meeting 7 th October 2008	Gaynor Alexander	
(10) Meet with School Catering Managers regarding their experiences of implementing the new statutory standards	A, B, C, D & E	Scrutiny Panel meeting 7 th October 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	
(11) Meet with representatives from schools (primary and secondary) offering examples of good practice, to discuss their initiatives for facilitating the successful implementation of statutory requirements	A, B, C, D & F	Scrutiny Panel meeting 4 th November 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
for food served in schools, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures for increasing take-up of school meals; • Initiatives for engaging pupils and parents in healthy eating; • Measures for monitoring packed lunches and other snacks; • Measures to address any issues arising from the Scrutiny Panel's consultation; • Involvement of School Governors in formulating healthy eating strategies 				
(12) Consultation with School Governors regarding their involvement in the implementation of statutory requirements for food served in schools	A, B, C, D & E	Date to be confirmed	Scrutiny Panel Members & Gaynor Alexander	Currently being arranged
(13) Consultation with parents regarding their views of school meals, schools healthy eating policies (including schools' communication with parents) – Questions on Citizen Panel?	C, D & F	Date to be confirmed	Gaynor Alexander	Currently being arranged
(14) Briefing paper summarising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key issues arising from the Scrutiny Panel's consultation with School Governors; • Examples of good practice from other authorities 	A, B, C, C, D & E	Scrutiny Panel meeting 16 th December 2008	Gaynor Alexander	
(15) Produce draft report	All	Scrutiny Panel meeting 16 th December 2008	Gaynor Alexander	
(16) Identify conclusions and recommendations	All	Scrutiny Panel meeting 16 th December 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	
(17) Agree final report	All	Scrutiny Panel meeting 16 th December 2008	The Scrutiny Panel	

Anticipated agenda for Scrutiny Panel meetings

Date of Scrutiny Panel Meeting	Item
24 th June 2008	Background information / setting the scene for the review – TMBC Healthy Schools Team
15 th July 2008	The role of the Council in ensuring the successful implementation of statutory food requirements – TMBC Healthy Schools Team & the Council's School Catering Team & a representative form the Council's Licensing Department
7 th October 2008	Role of schools – meet staff from schools offering examples of good practice
4 th November 2008	Agree conclusions and recommendations
16 th December 2008	Agree final report

Anticipated agenda for Scrutiny Panel meetings

Date of Scrutiny Panel Meeting	Issue	Briefing Presentation	Scrutiny Panel Meeting
	Background information / setting the scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background information on healthy eating in schools as a national and local priority (including rationale for review); • Government standards for food served in school; • The statutory responsibilities of local authorities and schools; • Key issues and suggested discussion points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TMBC Healthy Schools Co-ordinator (school meals);
	Information and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local sources of information and support; • Examples of good practice; • Update on consultation; • Key issues and suggested discussion points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative from Connexions and the NEET project; • Representatives from the Youth Service and Youth Offending Team
June 2007 (date TBC)	Role of Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update / feedback on consultation and meetings with YOT and Bridgeway PRU (?); • Information and support provided by schools (statutory requirements – including relationship with Connexions); • Examples of good practice; • Key issues and suggested discussion points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSHE Co-ordinators / Head Teachers from schools offering examples of good practice
Scrutiny Panel meeting (date TBC)	Role of Colleges / other training providers (including opportunities provided by the Council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on drop out rates at 17; • Post 16 education and training providers have 2 important roles in helping to increase staying on rates: (1) by marketing their product (how they encourage young people to stay on and what opportunities are available in Tameside) and (2) by helping to reduce drop out rates at 17 (identification – courses and vulnerable young people and support); • Profile of Skills Solutions and key issues; • Statutory responsibilities of colleges and key issues (including promotion of post 16 education and training in schools and measures to reduce drop out rates at 17) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Liaison Officers from local colleges and representatives from Skills Solutions / Council

Scrutiny Panel meeting (date TBC)	Role of the Youth Offending Team and Pupil Referral Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on the education / employment activities of pupils in YOT and PRU; • Background information on the profile; and role and (statutory?) responsibilities of the YOT and PRU in relation to staying on and drop out rates; • Key issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives from the YOT and PRU
TBC	Conclusions and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structure of the draft report; • Key findings of the review; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Deputy, Lifelong Learning Services; • Director of Education
TBC	Agree final report		