

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY SCREENING

FOR

Update to Nutritional Standards for School Food

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ED1/19/203193

Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in the Equality Commission publication [Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment](#)

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Title of policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

Update to Nutritional Standards for School Food

1.2 Type of Policy Development

This is an Existing Policy

1.3 Description of policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

The Aims of the revised policy are:

- **Update the Nutritional Standards for School Lunches (2007) and the Nutritional Standards for Other Food and Drinks in School (2008) to ensure that all food provided in school is in keeping with government guidance on healthy eating.**
- **Minimise the impact on paying pupils and their families of any increase in the cost of a school meal as a direct result of updated Nutritional Standards.**
- **Minimise any reduction in the uptake of school meals as a direct result of the updated Nutritional Standards.**
- **Put the updated Nutritional Standards in place in all grant aided schools by September 2020.**
- **Put in place arrangements for mandatory compliance, evaluation and monitoring.**

Research shows that having a healthy diet can have a critical role in cognitive development. Providing a nutritious school meal can increase pupil's concentration levels during afternoon lessons which can help close the performance gap and reduce inequality.

The benefits of a healthy diet are well known and can not only help maintain a healthy weight but can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and some cancers. It can also help improve the wellbeing of children and young people and improve their mental health by increasing self-esteem and improving mood.

The Food in Schools policy, in particular the mandatory Nutritional Standards, is this Department's major contribution to the Executive's obesity prevention strategy A Fitter Future for All; contributes to a number of draft Programme for Government outcomes including outcome 4– We enjoy long, healthy, active lives and Outcome 12 - We give our children and young people the best start in life; and outcome No 3 – we have a more equal society which also links to the Departments Children and Young Peoples strategy.

In 2007, the Nutritional Standards for School Lunches and Other Food and Drinks in Schools were developed in keeping with government guidance on healthy eating at that time. Since the standards were introduced 12 years ago, evidence and research has shown that we should eat more fruit, vegetables and dietary fibre whilst reducing the amount of sugar, salt, fat and processed red meats. Government guidance on healthy eating, as outlined in the Eatwell Guide, has been updated to reflect this. The Eatwell Guide is a policy tool, produced by Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and Food Standards Agency (FSA) in NI, and is used to define

government recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet.

It is important that we update the existing Nutritional Standards to ensure that all children and young people who avail of food and drinks in school benefit from the opportunity to eat a healthy balanced diet in keeping with up-to-date government guidance on healthy eating. Therefore, the current Nutritional Standards' as defined in the Department's Arrangements for the Provision of Milk, Meals and Related Facilities, now need to be updated to reflect these changes.

Receiving healthy, nutritious food within the school environment has a number of benefits to the child not least providing resilience against adverse childhood experience (ACE). These are recognised as stressful events during childhood that can have a profound impact on an individual's present and future health. Growing up in the face of such adversities is recognised as an important public health concern both in the UK and internationally and therefore the need to update and implement the Nutritional Standards is critical in this regard. This is particularly important for children from the most deprived backgrounds who are entitled to free school meals and for whom the school meal may be the only meal the child will receive that day.

1.4 What factors could contribute to, or detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project? (Please click on relevant boxes)

None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legislative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify) Click here to insert text.	

1.5 Main stakeholders affected (Please click on relevant boxes)

Pupils (Actual or Potential)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Parents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Teaching Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Unions or Professional Organisations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other Public Sector Organisations – Education Authority VG&GMI School Catering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Departmental Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify) School Catering staff / Catering Suppliers	

1.6 Who is responsible for?

(a) Devising the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

The draft update to the Nutritional Standards for School Food has been devised by Department of Education in collaboration with health and education catering partners.

(b) Implementing it

The Department of Education is responsible for formulating and developing policy on school food including Nutritional Standards. The Education Authority and individual

voluntary grammar (VG) and grant maintained integrated (GMI) schools are responsible for implementing the policy in accordance with the Department’s Arrangements for the Provision of Milk, Meals and Related Facilities under Articles 58 and 59 of the Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, as amended.

(c) Explain the relationship?

The Department sets the policy - Healthy food for healthy outcomes – Food in schools policy and advocates a whole school approach to all food provided and consumed in schools. The EA is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school meals service in the controlled and maintained school sectors and for the administration of the award of free school meals entitlement to pupils in all schools. School meals services contributes to this policy by ensuring that all meals served are compliant with the Nutritional Standards as set out in the Arrangements.

1.7 Other policies or objectives with a bearing on this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project

Providing healthier school meals, including free school meals, directly contributes to the draft Programme for Government indicator No 3 – we have a more equal society, indicator No 4 - we enjoy long, healthy, active lives and indicator 12 – we give our children and young people the best start in life.

The policy is also part of the Department’s contribution to the Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023 “Making Life Better” and the Obesity Prevention Framework 2012-2022 “A Fitter Future for All” developed by the Department of Health. In addition it contributes to the Department’s Children and Young Peoples Strategy outcome 1 which focuses on the physical and mental health of children and young people.

2. EVIDENCE

2.1 What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project in respect of each of the categories?

Section 75 Category	Details of Evidence/Information
Religious Belief	<p>All the following statistics are taken from the Northern Ireland School Census 2018/19</p> <p>The current Nutritional Standards have flexibility to cater for religious belief. This will not change in the updated Nutritional Standards.</p>

	The 2018/19 Free school meals entitlement (FSME) is:				%	
	Religion	Non FSME	FSME	Total	Non FSME	FSME
	Protestant	81,954	28,315	110,269	74	26
	Catholic	115,652	53,584	169,236	68	32
	Other Christian	10,227	2,396	12,623	81	19
	Non-Christian (Bahai, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh)	2,206	1,512	3,718	59	41
	No religion / not known	25,259	11,338	36,597	69	31
	Total	235,298	97,145	332,442	71	29
Political Opinion	Not applicable					
	The current Nutritional Standards have flexibility to cater for racial, cultural and religious groups. This will not change in the updated Nutritional Standards.				%	
	Race	Non FSME	FSME	Total	Non FSME	FSME
	White	225,285	91,763	317,048	71	29
	Irish traveller	206	821	1,027	20	80
	Chinese / Hong Kong	1008	362	1,370	74	26
	Indian/ Sri Lankan	1642	61	1,703	96	4
	Pakistani	251	120	371	68	32
	Black	933	918	1,851	50	50
	Mixed Ethnic group	3163	1684	4,847	65	35
	Other Ethnic Group	2810	1416	4,226	66	34
	Total	235,298	97,145	332,443	71	29
Age	School age children and young people are the main recipients of the proposed update to Nutritional Standards which will require school meals and all food and					

drinks provided at school to be in keeping with up-to-date government guidelines. This should have a positive impact on the health of children and young people who avail of school food.

Age	Non FSME	FSME	Total	%	
				Non FSME	FSME
2	456	75	531	86	14
3	6,886	2,546	9,432	73	27
4	17,379	7,040	24,419	71	29
5	17,663	7,271	24,934	71	29
6	17,992	7,781	25,773	70	30
7	17,864	7,759	25,623	70	30
8	17,653	7,669	25,322	70	30
9	17,918	7,606	25,524	70	30
10	17,748	17,748	35,496	50	50
11	16,654	7,664	24,318	68	32
12	16,081	7,156	23,237	69	31
13	16,089	7,062	23,151	69	31
14	15,937	6,876	22,813	70	30
15	15,753	6,532	22,285	71	29
16	11,551	3,328	14,879	78	22
17	10,609	2,529	13,138	81	19
18	1,046	378	1,424	73	27
19	19	8	27	70	30
Total	235,298	97,145	332,443	69	31

Marital Status	Not applicable
Sexual Orientation	Not applicable
Men And Women Generally	School catering staff, 97.6% of which are female as at October 2019.

Disability	Children with a disability (food must be suited to the child's need eg. food allergy and medical conditions) The updated Nutritional Standards will continue to cater for special dietary requirements.					
					%	
	Disability	Non FSME	FSME	Total	Non FSME	FSME
	Disabled	4,845	3,630	8,475	57	43
	Non-Disabled	230,423	93,513	323,936	71	29
	Total	235,268	97,143	332,411	71	29
Dependents	Not applicable					

2.2 Taking into account the evidence gathered at 2.1 what are the needs, experiences and priorities of each category in relation to this particular policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project?	
Section 75 category	Needs/Experiences/Uptake/Priorities
Religious Belief	No change
Political Opinion	Not applicable
Racial Group	No change
Age	All school age children and young people should have access to school meals that meets Nutritional Standards, in keeping with government guidelines, in particular children from low income families who are entitled to free school meals, suitable as the main meal of the day.
Marital Status	Not applicable
Sexual Orientation	Not applicable

<p>Men And Women Generally</p>	<p>The update to the Nutritional Standards is likely to result in an increase of 5 to 7 pence per meal. Increased school meal prices may result in a reduction of uptake. If this results in a reduction of the meals being consumed and therefore produced this could have an impact on the staff employed in the production and serving of the food, a disproportionately high number of which are female (97.6%as at October 2019). However, recent reductions (1.2% since 2015/16) in the uptake of schools meals have not resulted in any reduction in the numbers of catering staff. The Department expects the Education Authority and VG/GMI schools to constantly review school catering operations to ensure value for money.</p>
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Some children with disabilities have particular dietary requirements. The Food in Schools policy acknowledges this and requires school authorities to ensure that school meals and other food in school can accommodate the needs of these children. It can be more expensive to purchase/prepare food which meets these requirements given the small quantities required (diseconomies of scale). However, this cost is not passed on to pupils requiring a special diet and this will not change with the updated Nutritional Standards.</p>
<p>Dependents</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>

3. SCREENING QUESTIONS

3.1 What is the likely impact of this policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on equality of opportunity for each of the Section 75 equality categories?		
Section 75 category	Level of Impact?	Details of policy impact
Religious belief	MINOR	<p>The updated Nutritional Standards for School Food will have a positive impact on the health of all pupils that avail of school meals and other food and drinks in schools.</p> <p>The Department will undertake a public consultation seeking views on the draft updated Nutritional Standards. Subject to the outcome of this consultation the Department would seek to make a robust case to secure additional funding to meet any increased cost. However, in the current budgetary climate this would be challenging and the additional cost may have to be passed on to paying pupils or the implementation of the updated standards may have to be delayed until funding is available.</p> <p>Families who are just above the free schools meals eligibility threshold could be impacted most by any increase in price. Forecasting suggests that 2000 pupils could lose their entitlement to free schools meals when families are reassessed under the Universal Credit free schools meals criterion. However, a further 4000 pupils who had not previously qualified for free schools meals would now be eligible under Universal Credit which equates to a net gain of 2000 pupils being eligible for free schools meals following the completion of the Universal Credit roll out in December 2023.</p> <p>Menu changes or increased prices as a result of the updated Nutritional Standards could result in a reduced uptake of school meals. This could impact on catering staff who prepare and serve these meals, a disproportionately high number of which are female (97.6% as at October 2019). However, recent reductions (1.2% since 2015/16) in the uptake of schools meals have not resulted in any reduction in the numbers of catering staff.</p>
Political opinion	MINOR	
Racial group	MINOR	
Age	MINOR	
Marital status	MINOR	
Sexual Orientation	MINOR	
Men and Women generally	MINOR	
Disability	MINOR	
Dependents	MINOR	

3.2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?

Section 75 category	YES/NO	Provide Details
Religious belief	YES	<p>Poor diet is detrimental to children’s development, learning, concentration and behaviour and is not in keeping with the Department’s corporate goals in particular - Improving the wellbeing of children and young people and Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality. Evidence shows that eating a nutritious meal at lunchtime has important health and educational benefits for children and aids concentration and behaviour. Research shows that having a healthy diet can have a critical role in cognitive development. Having a nutritious school meal can increase pupil’s concentration levels during afternoon lessons which can help close the performance gap and help reduce inequality. The benefits of a healthy diet are well known and can not only help maintain a healthy weight but can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and some cancers. It can also help improve your mental health by increasing self-esteem and improving mood.</p> <p>In addition, receiving healthy, nutritious food within the school environment can provide resilience against adverse childhood experience (ACE). These are recognised as stressful events during childhood that can have a profound impact on an individual’s present and future health. Growing up in the face of such adversities is recognised as an important public health concern both in the UK and internationally and therefore the need to update and implement the Nutritional Standards is critical in this regard. This is particularly important for children from the most deprived backgrounds who are entitled to free school meals for whom the school meal may be the only meal the child will receive that day.</p>
Political opinion	YES	
Racial group	YES	
Age	YES	
Marital status	YES	
Sexual Orientation	YES	
Men and Women generally	YES	
Disability	YES	
Dependants	YES	

3.3 To what extent is the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project likely to impact on good relations between: people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	Impact	Details of policy impact
Religious belief	NONE	Click here to enter text.
Political opinion	NONE	Click here to enter text.
Racial group	NONE	Click here to enter text.

3.4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Good relations category	YES/NO*	Provide Details
Religious belief	NO	Click here to enter text.
Political opinion	NO	Click here to enter text.
Racial group	NO	Click here to enter text.

3.5 Additional considerations - Multiple identities

Please provide details of data on the impact of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on people with multiple identities and specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

The update of the Nutritional Standards for School Food is a positive initiative to ensure that all food and drinks available in grant-aided schools in NI is in keeping with up-to-date government guidance on healthy eating as outlined in the Eatwell Guide 2016. These updated Nutritional Standards will benefit all children who avail of a school meal and is of particular help to children from the most deprived backgrounds, in receipt of free school meals, for whom the school meal may be the only meal the child will receive that day.

4. SCREENING DECISION

Not to conduct an equality impact assessment; although there is a minor impact, on one or more of the equality of opportunities and/or good relations categories but mitigation/alternative policies will offset the minor adverse impact(s).

Details which support the screening decision

The updated Nutritional Standards policy will reflect up-to-date government guidance on healthy eating as outlined in the Eatwell Guide, research on the effects of high intakes of red meat and processed meats and Public Health England salt and sugar reduction targets. All pupils who avail of a school meal will benefit.

Healthy and nutritious food can aid concentration, resilience and behaviour as well as obesity prevention.

This will be of particular benefit to children from those families most in need, for whom the school meal may be the only meal the child will receive that day.

For those families not in receipt of free school meals, any increase in costs is likely to be in the region of 5-7 pence per meal. Subject to the outcome of a public consultation the Department would seek to make a robust case to secure additional funding to meet any increased cost.

Subject to the outcome of a public consultation and availability of funding, it is planned that revised menus and supporting resources/training will issue around May/June 2020 with a view to the updated Nutritional Standards being implemented in all grant-aided school from September 2020.

5. TIMETABLING AND PRIORITISING

5.1 [Click here to select appropriate statement.](#)

Criterion	Priority Rating
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	Choose score.
Social need	Choose score
Effect on people's daily lives	Choose score
Relevance to a public authority's functions	Choose score
Total	Choose Total

5.2 **If the policy is affected by timetables established by other relevant Public Authorities please provide details**

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Note: Details of the Department's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable will be included in a Quarterly Screening Report.

6. MITIGATION

If you conclude that the likely impact is ‘**minor**’ and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, you should consider: mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Why and how will the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

The updated Nutritional Standards for School Food will bring health and education benefits to children and young people who avail of food and drinks in school and will be of particular benefit to those most in need who are in receipt of free school meals and for whom the school meal may be the only meal that day.

Subject to the outcome of the public consultation the Department would seek to make a robust case to secure additional funding to meet any increased cost of a school meal to ensure it is not passed on to paying pupils.

Any increase to the cost of providing free school meals will be funded by the Department.

7. MONITORING

Effective monitoring will help identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project on any of Section 75 equality categories

The uptake of school meals provided by the Education Authority is monitored termly by the Department. The Department's School Meals Census provides comprehensive data on uptake of school meals on school census day each year. The Department will avail of these data sources to monitor the effect of the updated Nutritional Standards, any future adverse impact assessed in future years and to help with future policy development. Updates to the Nutritional Standards for School Food will be considered in line with developments in the UK, international research and government guidance on healthy eating.

8. DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

8.1	Please state if the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project in any way discourages persons with disabilities from participating in public life or fails to promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities.
Nil	
8.2	Please state if there is an opportunity to better promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities or encourage participation in public life by making changes to the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project or introducing additional measures.
Nil	
8.3	Please detail what data you will collect in the future in order to monitor the effect of the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project with reference to the disability duties.
Nil	

9. CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

9.1 How does the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project review/revised policy/pilot/project affect anyone's Human Rights?	
The Human Rights Act (1998)	Neutral Impact
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	Neutral Impact
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)	Neutral Impact
The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Neutral Impact
Other,(please state here)	Choose

9.2 If you have identified a negative impact who is affected and how?
<p>Click here to enter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human Right impacted 2. Nature of the impact and 3. Who will be impacted <p><i>At this stage you should determine whether to seek legal advice and to refer the issue to the Equality Team to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>whether there is a law which allows you to interfere with or restrict rights</i> • <i>whether this interference or restriction is necessary and proportionate and</i> • <i>what action would be required to reduce the level of interference or restriction).</i>

9.3 Outline any actions which could be taken to promote or raise awareness of human rights or to ensure compliance with the legislation in relation to the policy/policy review/revised policy/pilot/project .
Click here to enter text.

10. APPROVAL AND AUTHORISATION

Screened by:	Position	Date
Adrian Harris	Staff Officer	13/11/2019
Approved by:	Position	Date
Jill FitzGerald	Grade 7	13/11/2019

FOR COMPLETION BY EQUALITY TEAM		
Screening Decision	Agreed	
Quality Assured by:	Richard Magowan	13/11/2019
Click here to enter comments.		
Date Directorate/Team Informed:	Click here to select date.	

FOR COMPLETION BY POLICY TEAM	
TRIM Ref No.	ED1/19/203193 – Completed Screening form of Update to Nutritional Standards for School Food
Date screening form placed on Internet by policy team	Click here to select date. Note As soon as possible, following quality assurance, you must publish a copy of the screening form on the Department's website: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications With a link on the "Policy Screening" page: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/de-equality-screenings
Date email sent to Stakeholders by policy team	Click here to select date.