

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

### HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

18 JUNE 2003

#### Reference from the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003: Review of the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Mainstream Schools

1. At the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003, the Sub-Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Review Group, which outlined the key findings and recommendations from the review of the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools; the relevant minute is attached as Appendix A.
2. **The Sub-Committee resolved, inter alia, that the Health and Social Care Sub-Committee be requested to work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to examine ways in which resources allocated to school nurses could be increased.**

**Reason for Reference:** Members felt that the role of the school nurse was very important and that increased involvement and activity of school nurses with pupils, parents and staff would be highly beneficial to schools.

#### **FOR CONSIDERATION**

Background Papers: Minutes of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003 and report of the Scrutiny Review Group: Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Schools.

Contact: Sam Johnson, Borough Secretariat and Legal Services. Tel: 020 8424 1264.  
E-mail: [samantha.johnson@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:samantha.johnson@harrow.gov.uk)

**Extract from the meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003**

62. Review of the Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Schools – Final Report: The Sub-Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Review Group which examined the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools. The Review Group was chaired by Councillor Mitzi Green and additionally comprised Councillors Branch, Mary John, Jean Lammiman and Marie-Louise Nolan.

The Chair of the Review Group referred to the objectives and scope of the review and the methodology that was adopted, which detailed the frequency of Review Group meetings and also schools visits undertaken. The Sub-Committee discussed the key findings within the report and the Chair encouraged Members to comment on the different aspects of the review.

A Member of the Panel requested that the key finding in relation to the availability of water in schools be clarified. Responding, the Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that the majority of primary schools provided pupils with access to water throughout the school day; pupils kept water bottles on their desks during lessons and were able to re-fill their water bottles as and when required. However, in secondary schools, pupils were not generally allowed to keep water bottles on their desks during lessons, as schools felt that it could lead to disruption. Also, pupils expressed dissatisfaction in accessing water via the water fountains.

The Chair explained that Members of the Review Group were concerned that pupils who were used to accessing water freely at primary school would encounter difficulty in maintaining this access upon transferring to secondary school and that this issue needed to be urgently addressed. The Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that some secondary schools were currently looking into ways of improving access to water throughout the school day.

A Member of the Panel questioned whether the advertisement of food and drink brands that were 'unhealthy' was being addressed in schools. In response, the Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that schools had a resource checklist to use, which detailed acceptable food and drink by category, rather than brand, in an attempt to avoid the promotion of 'unhealthy' food and drink in schools. The Chair added that one school, which was visited by Members, had removed their 'fizzy' drinks machine in an attempt to promote healthy lifestyles.

A Member of the Panel queried whether there was a service level agreement between the schools and Contract Services, in relation to the variety and quality of the free school meals (packed lunch provision). The Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that she was unsure of the exact contractual arrangements between the schools and Contract Services but that the emphasis of the finding was that although the free school meals (packed lunch provision) met the required nutritional criteria, they lacked variety and quality. The Chair advised that this was a view expressed by all the schools that Members had visited and needed to be urgently addressed.

In addition, the Chair advised that she had received correspondence from the Head of Contract Services to the effect that the recommendation to improve the variety and quality of free school meals (packed lunch provision) was an excellent proposal which should be agreed and subsequently implemented. The Vice Chair advised that another aspect which needed to be addressed, in relation to free school meals (packed lunch provision) was the fact that older children received the same quantity of food as the younger children, which was illogical as the older children clearly required larger amounts of food. The Sub-Committee agreed that the free school meals (packed lunch provision) be additionally assessed in order to ensure that the quantity of food in the lunch was appropriate to the age of the child.

The Curriculum Leader (PSHE) informed Members about the National School Fruit Scheme and clarified that pupils participating in the scheme were offered one free piece of fruit per school day and that it was a requirement of the scheme that the fruit was not to be consumed during lunch break. Members were informed that this was to assist in the development of pupils' social skills, as they would be encouraged to eat the fruit together, and also increase their energy levels in a natural way; to enhance concentration levels in lessons.

In response to a question from a Member regarding Recommendation 5, the Chair advised that Members wished for pupils to learn which foods were, for example, 'low in fat' and 'high in fibre' rather than labelling calorific value. A Member suggested that pupils could perhaps devise pictorial examples of the different food groups, as part of a competition to label the different food served in school canteens.

In response from a query from a Member, the Curriculum Leader (PSHE) advised that there were current initiatives within schools that dealt with eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia, and that she had a meeting planned with community dieticians later that week. The Chair advised that Harrow High School discussed with Members ways in which they dealt with pupils with eating disorders.

Following a discussion of the various recommendations, as outlined in the report, the Sub-Committee agreed the Review Group's recommendations, as now amended, and the action arising as set out in paragraphs (2), (3), (4) and (5) below.

Members wished to record their appreciation of the work that Gill Roberts (Curriculum Leader (PSHE)), Brenda Rayson (Senior Adviser, Education Services) and Samantha Johnson (Committee Administrator), had contributed to the review.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That the Review Group's report be received and the recommendations, as now amended, be endorsed as follows: -

- (i) that the variety and quality of free school meals (packed lunch provision) be urgently addressed. [See Note 1];
- (ii) that the free school meals (packed lunch provision) be additionally assessed in order to ensure that the quantity of food was appropriate to the age of the child consuming it;
- (iii) that schools encourage PSHE co-ordinators to attend the termly meetings as well as explore other means for the exchange of ideas;

(iv) that all schools be encouraged to consider ways in which water can be made freely available to all pupils throughout the school day without incurring extra financial cost to pupils. [See Note 2];

(v) that the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee be requested to work with the PCT to examine ways in which resources allocated to school nurses could be increased. Members felt that the role of the school nurse was very important and it was felt that increased involvement and activity of school nurses with pupils, parents and staff would be highly beneficial to schools;

(vi) that ways be explored of explaining the nutritional values of foods served from school canteens; e.g. primary schools' canteens could use pictorial examples, e.g. a skeleton/bones to show that the food was high in calcium, whereas secondary schools could classify the different food groups, e.g. 'low in fat' or 'high in fibre';

(vii) that schools be encouraged to actively work with parents in relation to getting the healthy lifestyles message across;

(viii) that a copy of the final scoping report on Healthy Lifestyles in Schools be sent to governing bodies in order for governors to encourage healthy lifestyles within their individual schools;

(ix) that schools be requested to designate a governor to oversee the promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools;

(x) that a report be received at the joint meeting of the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Sub-Committee and Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee, which would outline steps taken to implement the findings of the Scrutiny Review Group;

(xi) that specialist colleges be encouraged to continue to share and develop their expertise and facilities with their cluster schools and the wider community.

(2) that the Review Group's recommendations, as now amended, be sent to the Education and Lifelong Learning Portfolio Holder;

(3) that the report be placed on the Cabinet Information Circular;

(4) that copies of the report be sent to the four schools involved with the review along with a letter of thanks to the headteacher of each school;

(5) that recommendation (v) (above) be referred to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

[Note (1) Members requested that officers in the Council's Contract Services Division be informed of this Recommendation;

(2) that health and safety guidelines, in relation to the accessibility of water during certain lessons, e.g. science, be adhered to].