

SUGAR SMART Campaign Webinar - 7th February 2019: Sugar reduction in Schools and School meals

Q&A session

1. **Mariella Porter, Ghaxaq:** *Is this project just for UK? Have you reached out to other countries? What reactions have you had from parents and teachers? Did they always cooperate? Did they rebel against the project?*

Fran Bernhardt, SUGAR SMART: Yes, SUGAR SMART is just a UK-based project and unfortunately our funding doesn't cover supporting Maltese campaigns. However, there's nothing to stop you from accessing the tools and information from our website: www.sugarsmartuk.org – and we would love to hear about you campaigning on sugar overconsumption in Malta. Do keep us posted if you do!

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2. **Mariella Porter, Ghaxaq:** *What happens when food brought to school is not in line? Are kids still allowed to consume it? Is a note sent home?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): It is up to the school to decide which foods are allowed to be brought in and which foods aren't. It is also up to school how they are going to be monitoring this and what they do when the guidelines are not adhered to. Most commonly, the offending item is removed from the packed lunch and returned to the parent with information that this food is not allowed in packed lunches.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter):

We encourage schools to have a whole school food policy, which includes a section on packed lunches and recommendations what should be included within a packed lunch and suggests alternatives for food high in fat, salt, sugar. This is in order for packed lunches to meet the same standards for school meals and to ensure children get the essential variety and balance needed. Within the policy we recommend schools have a review and monitoring sector, we suggest that 'packed lunches will be regularly reviewed by teaching staff / catering staff / midday meal supervisors / pre-identified pupil packed lunch helpers. If a child's packed lunch does not continually conform to the policy then the school may contact the parents to discuss this.

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3. **Mariella Porter, Ghaxaq:** *Are the policies law? What if administration/ teachers/parents do not wish to abide by them? Are they free to do so?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): The only law is the school food standards for lunch and for school food other than lunch. Nothing else is law but nor is the uniform or the haircut.

- **Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter):** The standards for school food are currently statutory for all maintained schools as well as all new academies and free schools opening after 1st June 2014.

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4. **Bhav Jessani, London:** *Re. sugar reduction in school lunches do you think anything needs to be done at a higher level on this e.g. through incorporating stricter requirements in school food standards or FFLSH standards?*

Fran Bernhardt, SUGAR SMART: We expect the school food standards to be reviewed when they are brought into line with the SACN guidance – this will redefine the standards

particularly around free sugars and fibre. The Children's Food Campaign at Sustain will be working on this with School Food Matters, you can stay up to date with the work by [signing up to the Children's Food Campaign mailing list](#).

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): Yes absolutely, I think the School Food Standards should be updated. However, academies which were set up between 2010 and 2014 are excluded and no one is monitoring the implementation of the standards.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): Yes, I agree that the standards should be reviewed and brought in line with the SACN recommendations. I also agree with Marjon that schools that converted to an academy between 2010 and June 2014 should be included within the standards.

5. **Margaret Cornthwaite:** *Are there any measures or considerations about care to avoid blurring messages that could lead a path to eating disorders?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): I think eating disorders are more likely to occur when children are feeling conscious about their weight and search for ways to lose weight rather than public health messages that are intended for everyone to be healthy. No one is saying we should implement this because an individual person is overweight.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): Curriculum messages focus on balanced eating for all pupils, we do not encourage schools to focus on weight gain or loss.

6. **Emma Eaves-Anderson, London:** *Can you tell us anything about secondary schools taking part?*

Fran Bernhardt, SUGAR SMART: Certainly, Emma. There are [lots of actions specifically for secondary schools](#) taking part in SUGAR SMART. We've also spotlighted secondary schools taking action on our website such as [Hackney's youth debates](#) about the London Mayor's junk food ad ban.

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): In Islington, desserts in secondary schools are covered in the school meal contract. We have done quite a bit of work with Caterlink around the amount of sugar and portion sizes of the desserts offered as part of the meal deal in secondary schools.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): We have had three Secondary Schools engage in the SUGAR SMART campaign (taking part in pledges and promotion of the campaign to young people/families) and one caterer engage across a Multi-Academy trust – this a further two secondary schools. Update of public health campaigns among Secondary schools is always fewer than primary schools, our school nurses have had to promote the campaign in Secondary schools and also attending the PSHE teacher network helped to encourage sign ups.

7. **Kirsten Foster from London:** *Have traditional views of and ideas about school meals been a barrier?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): With catering staff possibly, particularly around portion sizes, but overall very little.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): We have done a lot of work since the introduction of the School Food Plan to misspell myths among families about schools meals. Schools invite families in for lunch, and some of our caterers have ‘tasting events’ in the school playground, during induction/open evenings and also parent’s evenings. We have also carried out training with catering staff including kitchen managers and staff that serve meals to ensure all staff are upskilled about the school food plan, the standards and the importance of correct portion sizes.

8. **Kirsten Foster from London:** *How have attitudes of pupils, parents, and meal providers (caterers, cooks, servers etc) affected success of campaigns?*

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): We have had really positive attitudes from pupils, parents and meal providers which has made the campaign a real success here in B&NES. Everyone seems to be happy to talk about sugar!

9. **Anna Tummon from Barnsley:** *what is your recommendation on % reduction of sugar in school catering?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): I have been working on absolute figures so it depends on where you come from in relation to current level of sugar in desserts. I would recommend that in primary schools the total amount of sugar for lunch is no more than 6.5g and for secondary no more than 9g (this is slightly less than a third of the recommended maximum amount of sugar across the day for the different age groups) and is based on Children’s Food Trust and LACA recommendations.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): When we carried out our work with the central catering service, we did not have access to nutritional analysis software, as the new standards no longer require this. Therefore, we took a % reduction approach.

10. **Kirsten Foster from London:** *What can readers do if they feel their school isn't offering a healthy school lunch option?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): Depends on what this is based on. Does the school need to meet the school food standards legally, in which case take it to governors and make them aware of their responsibilities. If that does not work take it to local authority if a maintained school or DfE if is an academy or Free School.

If it is about school food beyond the statutory school food standards (such as amount of sugar) or the school is an academy set up between 2010 and 2014, see if you can get parent pressure and ask (demand) for changes voluntarily.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): If readers feel their school isn't offering a healthy school lunch option, then I would encourage them to speak directly to their school about their concerns. School nurses could support families with this. Parents and carers could ask to see the schools whole school food policy or speak directly to the caterer if they have concerns.

11. **Anna Tummon, Barnsley:** *Were parents and children involved in the reformulation of recipes and the other changes in the school catering service?*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): Part of contract monitoring meetings involve stakeholders which are from schools. They have been involved in awarding the new contract, they comment on menus and taste new dishes so they have been involved all the way through.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): Yes children were involved in recipe tasting; we used pupil councils and school nutrition action groups, which involve parents and carers to help with this.

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12. **Megan Saunders, Winchester:** *Do you have any suggestions on how to get Head Teachers to change their attitude from "I'd rather the children ate something, even if it is a chocolate biscuit" to "packed lunches should include only healthy items"?*

Emma Eaves-Anderson, London: An argument I have used is that school meal children are provided with a nutritionally balanced meal during the day and so packed lunch children should be able to expect the same thing

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): If we consider how the behaviour of pupils change in the afternoon based on what they eat, we can start to have this conversation about healthier food. There is a lot more evidence about the impact of diet on brain development, on behaviour, on being able to concentrate than there is on the impact of uniform. This is an issue that is very much linked to equality. Pupils from better off families will have better diets containing higher levels of iron than those pupils from families on lower incomes. Iron is required for the circulation of oxygen in the blood. Low iron levels make us feel lethargic but also affects brain development. Lack of iron will cause brain abnormalities which are irreversible therefore causing long lasting impact on those children and perpetuating the inequalities.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): Agree with Marjon, the links of health and wellbeing to attainment have helped. We have used the approach that we would like packed lunches to be in line with schools meals. Parents have challenged heads when terms like "only healthy items" are allowed, due to school meals serving puddings such as shortbread, flapjack etc. Therefore within the model whole school food policy we suggest:

X Confectionery e.g. chocolate, chocolate-coated biscuits/bars, sweets

✓ Try a small piece of homemade cake, flapjack or cookie, especially those with added fruit. Puddings provided at school meals are homemade containing less sugar than similar shop bought products and contain 50% fruit (from weighed raw ingredients).

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13. **Ruth Harvey, Exeter:** *Have you ever challenged the School Food Standards - ask for a review of the acceptance of a sugary dessert as part of lunch? I've struggled to find who to approach about the current standards.*

Fran Bernhardt, SUGAR SMART: There is a group of campaigners that are looking at the School Food Standards, known as [School Food Plan Alliance](#). Check out their website which is full of resources and a list of people to connect with on this.

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): No, I haven't. Hopefully though the standards will be revised and updated as part of the obesity strategy and the SACN guidelines on Carbohydrates will be taken into consideration.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): We are waiting for the standards to be updated - it was a commitment within Chapter 1 of the Childhood Obesity Plan

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14. **Kirsten Foster from London:** *Have any schools gone dessert-free? If parents in Islington are asking why still serving desserts what are barriers to stopping desserts altogether?*

Fran Bernhardt, SUGAR SMART: We know of some that are looking into putting this into their plans so hopefully we will be able to update you on this soon. Watch this space!

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): I think there is an educational element in having desserts that are low in sugar so that pupils can develop a taste for less sugary foods. Also, we consider when we don't serve desserts quite carefully so that we make sure that pupils always have a healthy meal providing them with a variety of foods. We do not want to make desserts into evil foods as they can still provide a variety of useful nutrients such as fibre, fruit / vegetables, dairy etc.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): We haven't had schools go dessert-free, we need to ensure energy and nutrient requirements as Marjon suggested – especially thinking of our free school pupils where this may be their own meal hot meal of the day. We have had schools have fruit or fruit and yoghurt only days on 1 or two days of the week, in order to echo the 'balanced eating' message.

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15. **Lynn Butler from Winchester:** *Is the barrier the cost to caterers? My thinking is that desserts can be relatively cheap to produce. Without desserts, the portion sizes of main meals would have to be increased in order to meet the kcal requirements in the school food plan, this might affect the viability of catering contracts. I would be interested to know if anyone has had this discussion with school caterers!*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): Our school meals provide the option of additional bread (as should be as part of school food standards) as well as a choice of 5 salads, often including a bean salad, so there are opportunities for pupils to tailor their lunch to suit their calorie need in a number of different options.

Claire Davies, Bath and North East Somerset (webinar presenter): We haven't had a cost as an issue.

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16. **Anna Harris from Bristol:** *Hello, the amounts 4g, 6.5g etc Are these total sugar, as in carbohydrates which sugar, or just refined sugar as an ingredient? Guessing it's the latter but not sure. Thanks, Anna*

Marjon Willers, Islington (webinar presenter): Free sugars.