

# Sustainable Food Procurement in Schools

## Recommendations from London Food Link 2005

This paper consists of extracts from a report completed by Sustain and the Food Commission for the London Development Agency in July 2005 on Sustainable Food Procurement. For a copy of the full report see

[www.sustainweb.org/pdf/Proc\\_rep\\_dec05.pdf](http://www.sustainweb.org/pdf/Proc_rep_dec05.pdf)

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## Introduction

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School food in England is undergoing dramatic transformation with the introduction of new Government standards for nutrition and requirements for a greater proportion of freshly cooked meals. We believe that it is absolutely critical that sustainability considerations are taken on as a part of the transformation process. Integrating sustainable food into school menus is a long-term process that needs considerable explanation, facilitation, training and continuing support to keep it on track, to build confidence, supplier contacts and expertise, and to give it the status it requires. To find out how London Food Link can support you, contact:

[londonfoodlink@sustainweb.org](mailto:londonfoodlink@sustainweb.org), 020 78371228.

## Background

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In 2004, the London Development Agency (LDA) asked Sustain and the Food Commission to develop training and guidance for a Local Education Authority (LEA) in London, seeking to integrate a greater proportion of sustainable food into school meals. We worked with the London Borough of Camden and surveyed many other London LEAs. The process followed in Camden and the lessons learned from the survey work are summarised in this paper and illustrate steps that could be taken by other London boroughs wanting to introduce more sustainable food into their school meals. Suggestions for where and how to specify for more sustainable food in school meal contract documents are also provided in this paper. Food procurement arrangements vary considerably between London's boroughs in terms of food provision; contractual requirements; cooking facilities; policy priorities; and the timing of contractual obligations and the re-tendering process. Not all the suggestions given in this paper, therefore, will be appropriate to all London boroughs.

## Sustainable food procurement: The case for sustainable food

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health</li><li>• Learning</li><li>• Local economy</li><li>• Environment and animal welfare</li><li>• Taste, variety and cultural richness</li></ul> |
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## Health

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### Farming and Health

#### Trace Elements

- Over the past 60 years there has been a decline in trace elements in fruit and vegetable; calcium content is down by 46% and copper by 75%. For vegetables, carrots have lost 75% of their magnesium and broccoli has lost 75% of its calcium.<sup>1</sup>
- Two possible reasons for this decline are the use of synthetic fertilisers, which has encouraged growth at the expense of other factors, and plant breeding, which

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<sup>1</sup> *Food Magazine* No. 50, published by the Food Commission

has concentrated on appearance, shelf life, and disease resistance rather than nutrition.

- Evidence suggests that organic food contains greater amounts of vitamins and minerals than conventionally produced food. In a review of 41 studies, organic crops were shown to have higher levels of Vitamin C, magnesium, iron and phosphorous, whilst organic vegetables had higher levels of secondary nutrients including antioxidants.

#### Agricultural poisons (pesticides, biocides)

- Monitoring by the Government has revealed that pesticide residues regularly exceed acceptable safety levels.
- Some biocides have been linked to endocrine disruption, cancer, birth defects and miscarriages. This puts consumers at risk, but is especially risky for farmers, farm workers and bystanders to crop spraying, from exposure to agricultural chemicals.
- Although some types of conventional farming are working to reduce the use of agricultural chemicals, certified organic food permits only seven different types, making it the most reliable way to eliminate this hazard.

#### Food Supply and Health

- Shorter and more efficient supply chains could potentially help to reduce or stabilise the increasing incidence of food poisoning by reducing the opportunities in the supply chain for contamination.
- This should also result in the reduction of food transport and its associated pollution which is linked to causing asthma and other respiratory diseases.
- In general, the shorter the period between harvesting and consumption, the higher the nutritional content of fruit and vegetables. Green beans, for instance, can lose 24% of their vitamin C after only 24 hours stored at room temperature.
- Seasonal food is more likely to come from closer by and less likely to have been 'forced', stored, grown under artificial light or with heat, and processed/ripened using chemicals.

#### Diet and Health

There is a link between low incomes and poor access to healthy food. This makes the food provided by the public sector even more important, and yet its often of poor quality.

## Learning

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Schools that have made changes to their menus, and taken a 'whole school approach' have found that not only does this have the potential to affect the long-term health of pupils, it also has benefits for the children and the school right from the start. Schools have reported that:

- Well-fed pupils are better able to concentrate;
- Well-fed pupils have fewer days off due to illness;
- An improved food service leads to a better atmosphere;
- Food service initiatives such as breakfast clubs provide opportunities for social development;
- A whole school approach to food promotes the image of a caring school to parents and pupils alike;

- An improved food services leads to greater uptake of school meals and increased revenue;
- Opportunities for curriculum links with special projects and events bring subjects ‘alive’.

Education about sustainable food, farming and cooking can also provide a great opportunity for children and adults to learn, not just about the food or curriculum subjects, but also about the importance of a good diet; cooking skills; local landscapes; traditional food production methods; rural lifestyles past and present; people’s lives elsewhere in the world; and regional specialities and recipes.

## Local Economy

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The potential benefits of sustainable, localised food systems to local economies and communities include:

- Regeneration of deprived areas;
- Improved incomes for local producers;
- Greater trust and understanding between stakeholders;
- Encouragement of entrepreneurship;
- Raised profiles of local businesses;
- Greater access to healthy, safe food;
- Support for small business and enterprise, and job creation;
- Reduced external costs to both the purchasing authority and its constituents;
- A halt in the decline in rural services and food and farming infrastructure.

Every £10 spent with a local food business is worth £25 for the local area compared to £14 for non-local food businesses. Money earned by the community stays in the community. Although institutions in the public sector are not able to use territorial preferences in procurement policies, there are ways of helping local producers and suppliers to compete, for instance by stipulating requirements such as ‘freshness’. Organisations procuring food can also hold ‘meet the buyer’ days and offer advice on how to bid.

Changes in some public sector institutions have been motivated by a desire to support local farming and rural communities in the face of the farming crisis following Foot & Mouth disease.

## Environment and animal welfare

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*Food Miles:* In 1998, the transport involved in food-related commodities in the UK (agriculture products, live animals, foodstuffs, animal fodder, and fertilizer) amounted to 48.8 billion tonne-kilometres, around a third of all commodity movement by road in the country. This is equivalent to 4 million tonnes of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. Through the development of locally focused food systems, including through public sector demand, food miles and the associated pollution could be significantly reduced.

*Industrial farming:* These systems can have severe and irreversible consequences for both global and local environments. Biocides kill much of the wildlife on farms and

disrupt the food chain. Nitrate and pesticide run off create untold damage to rivers, watercourses and coastal areas. Globally emissions of greenhouse gases from agriculture are affecting the climate of the earth and human beings' ability to sustain themselves both now and in the future.

*Sustainable farming*: In contrast to conventional systems, these have been shown to:

- Have much greater biodiversity and provide a wider range of habitats;
- Encourage the protection of natural resources such as soil, nutrients, water and air;
- Reduce the use of non-renewable resources such as fossil fuels used to produce artificial fertilisers and other agrichemicals;

The indirect costs (or 'externalities') of pollution create significant costs picked up by different parts of the supply chain. By supporting these systems through, for example, sustainable procurement, authorities will be able to deliver some objectives of their Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). To make aspirations a reality it is important to develop achievable targets. Some have already been developed by the Soil Association which you may wish to consider.

## Taste, variety and cultural richness

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*Loss of a seasonal food culture*: Only a few products are known for their seasonal availability. Children are increasingly ignorant of seasonal changes. A survey of 8-11 year olds found that nearly a third believed oranges are grown in Britain, and six in ten did not know spinach is grown in Britain. Choosing varieties which crop at different times, and appropriate storage methods, many crops can be available for much of the year. For example, one farm in Kent offers 100 varieties of apples, a selection of plums, pears, cobnuts and other fruit and vegetables. This can only happen when diversification is encouraged.

*Cultural richness...*: Much of our food has become standardised due to stringent demands of the food industry on producers, with commercial varieties replacing local and traditional crops and animals suited to regional climates and soils. As Britain becomes ever more multi-cultural, there is a growing aspiration for food to represent the cultural backgrounds of the customer. Likewise, there should be consideration of traditional regional dishes in school meals. Britain can in fact produce many of the foods favoured by ethnic communities, including coriander, pak-choi cabbage, watermelons, and okra, without the need to import them from far afield.

*..not just heritage nostalgia*: This is about informed purchasing decisions and delivering quality and value for money. Catering establishments should acquaint themselves with culturally appropriate and distinctive foods, and develop seasonal menus. This would encourage the use of home-produced fruit and vegetables, meats, fish, cheeses, and cereals.

**For more information on the above, see *Good Food on the Public Plate: A manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering*, available via Sustain: [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)**

## **Considering sustainability as part of a Best Value Review**

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### **Step 1: Conducting a Best Value Review**

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Every London borough has a different arrangement for its school meals. However, applicable to all local authorities, and indeed all schools, is the process of Best Value Review. This process is presented here as a good starting point for any local authority wishing to improve their school meal provision, including consideration of increasing the amount of sustainable food.

The system of Best Value in public service provision was introduced by the Local Government Act 1999 Part I and the guidelines that local authorities have to follow are set out in a circular from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, number 03/2003: *Best Value & Performance Improvement* (available at: [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)).

All local authorities have undergone a ‘comprehensive performance assessment’ (CPA) conducted by the Audit Commission. They must then devise a performance plan setting out their priorities for improving their service with a timetable for reviewing each aspect of their service in accordance with Best Value principles, concentrating first on those that the CPA reveals to be doing less well. Until recently, local authorities had to review every service at least once every five years, but this requirement has now been abolished. Instead they need to prioritise reviews according to factors such as costs or user dissatisfaction.

The Best Value review is based on four Cs: Challenge; Compare; Consult and Competition. There are Best Value Performance Indicators for some services which will show a local authority how it is doing in comparison with others and reveal services that are failing. Results must be reported publicly. Currently, performance indicators include specific issues reflecting core government policy, such as the percentage of waste recycled, and the percentage of ethnic minority employees. However there are no performance indicators relating to catering. Until recently, performance indicators were adjusted and reviewed every year, but OPDM has cut back the range of performance indicators to a total of 94 and announced that there will be no change for the next two to three years.

The factor most relevant to the current project is that ODPM guidance set out in the *Best Value* circular 03/2003 recommends bringing in third parties to give an external perspective. This provided an opportunity for Sustain, acting on behalf of the LDA, to become an external advisor to Camden LEA’s Best Value Review in 2005. Camden also sought assistance from a dietitian from the primary care trust.

It should be noted that individual schools that have opted out of local authority catering are not Best Value authorities so they are not subject to the full legal requirements of this status. However, they are still obliged to apply ‘principles of Best Value’ in a similar process to that followed by an LEA.<sup>2</sup> Such schools are likely to

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<sup>2</sup> There is specific guidance on this on the DfES website at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/vfm/bvalue.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/vfm/bvalue.shtml).

require a higher level of support than LEAs, and have greater need for external advisors to help them through the process.

In Camden, the Best Value Reviews has three distinct stages.

1. The first stage is entitled ‘Setting the scene and scoping the review: The baseline position’, and involved identifying key strengths and weaknesses of the service, reviewing methodology and setting a timetable for the review. *Note: From this early stage a council’s procurement policy can be examined as part of this process so that sustainability can be included in the scope of the review.*
2. Stage two forms the major part of the work where the 4Cs of Best Value are addressed (Consult, Compare, Compete and Challenge). The aim is to produce clear and robust evidence in order to establish how effective the service is, what users think of the service and what the options are for continuous improvement. It is this stage that is described in more detail below.
3. The third and final stage in Camden is to firm up proposals for the future of the service with a detailed action plan and budgetary implications, summarised in a report submitted to the Executive.

The experience of working through this process with Camden should be relevant for all LEAs. Best Value reviews can helpfully inform the improvement of a service at any time, especially if the LEA has Direct Service Organisation (DSO) catering provision. However, change is less likely, and therefore Best Value reviews are less useful, for LEAs that have just begun a new contract with an external provider, or have an existing contract with some years left to run.

- *Meetings with catering providers*

Such meetings are highly recommended, as they initiate communication between the council and potential providers. Not only do they enable the council to assess which providers are interested in meeting their objectives, they also provide valuable intelligence on how realistic such objectives are, and alert providers to the council’s sustainability objectives so that they can start preparing to meet them. Sustain would recommend that, in addition to these events, meetings with local businesses and suppliers could also be held. This would be especially useful for LEAs with in-house catering provision or schools with in-house provision, as they are likely to have more flexibility with their supply.

- *Visits to schools and other boroughs*

Sustain would recommend visits of this type, as they provide the opportunity to observe what constitutes a good and bad service, and how some styles of provision seem more able to accommodate sustainable food provision than others.

- *Stakeholder event for councillors, school heads and governors*

This type of event is a timely opportunity to raise awareness around issues of sustainable food and present what the opportunities are for increasing sustainable food procurement. Sustain would advise that head-teachers and governors from all schools in a borough should be invited. Convincing all stakeholders of the benefits of sustainable food is crucial and the sooner this can be done, the better. Sustain can provide a sample agenda, as used in Camden, and advice and possibly support for such

an event. Contact Ben Reynolds at [ben@sustainweb.org](mailto:ben@sustainweb.org) / 020 78371228 for details. Stakeholders should also be kept informed of developments following such an event.

- *Consultations with teachers, pupils and parents*

Surveys can provide extremely useful information and Sustain would highly recommend that they are a part of any Best Value review. The presentation of findings on an easy-to-use website is also valuable. The answers given to the questions about sustainable food in Camden indicated huge support for local, healthy, fresh, unprocessed, home-cooked food, and informed the recommendations presented to the Executive regarding development of the service.

- *Conducting an Equalities Impact Assessment*

An equalities impact assessment can be carried out by noting the take-up of the catering service in a sample number of schools and comparing it to the schools' ethnic population.

- *Review of kitchen facilities*

Sustain would recommend that councils carry out a full assessment of their schools' kitchens as appropriate equipment and space is essential for provision of a high quality service. It would be futile to demand use of fresh, raw ingredients for cooking from scratch if schools do not have the necessary facilities. The same applies to staff skills.

- *Presenting the final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive*

Having completed the activities detailed above, the Best Value review team are able to reach conclusions about how to take the school meal service forward and can present a report to the borough's Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Executive containing recommendations for action.

Having had these recommendations approved, the LEA can move onto drawing up the specifications for the new contract, as happened in Camden.

## Step 2: Drawing up the contract

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### *The tendering process and specifying for sustainable products*

Public procurement is a strictly regulated area. One of the most commonly identified barriers to sustainable food procurement in the public sector is the range of procurement legislation which appears at a number of levels. The legislation falls into three levels of global (i.e. World Trade Organisation Agreements); European (e.g. European Commission treaties and directives); and national. European legislation poses the greatest restrictions on sustainable food procurement and takes precedence over national legislation, although national legislation also lays down important guidelines that must be adhered to.

The legislation is largely procedural and, as long as the procedures are adhered to and a number of key principles are borne in mind, should not present as many barriers as many people believe. For example, contracts must always be awarded based on 'Best Value', generally understood as the most economically advantageous tender rather

than lowest cost. This provides opportunities for criteria to be used other than price alone, such as delivery arrangements, running costs, quality, environmental and social considerations and other services provided, for example educational services.

A whole-life cost approach to awarding tenders is recommended. However, it should be noted that, because procedural transparency is another requirement of the tendering process, these criteria and the adoption of the whole-life cost approach to awarding contracts must be detailed in the original call for tender.

Another requirement of the tendering process is that there is no discrimination on grounds of nationality. Many technical product specifications that allow for sustainable food can be used, for instance organic; seasonal; or that the product has minimal carbon-dioxide emissions associated; or minimal pesticide use in its production. Such considerations can be specified as long as, once again, these are made explicit in the initial call for tender. However, it is not possible to specify for “local food” as this implies origin and therefore discriminates on grounds of geography. Alternative criteria can be specified that amounts to a similar requirement to locality. For example, specifying fresh and seasonal food of superior quality will generally favour more locally produced food.

Questions to ask about any food product supplied to understand how sustainable it is

Does it enhance health and well-being, and:

- Have good food quality and nutritional value?
- Take account of consumers' dietary requirements or allergies?
- Avoid potentially hazardous substances or processes that could increase risks of ill-health?

*e.g. it does not contain potentially harmful additives, pesticides residues, growth hormones, antibiotics, genetically modified ingredients, irradiated ingredients*

Does it meet environmental objectives:

- Is it obtained from potentially more sustainable sources?  
*e.g. from organic farms, agri-environment schemes, or a sustainable fishery scheme.*
- Does it minimise energy consumption and pollution in its production, transportation?  
*e.g. it is grown in an unheated greenhouse or heated from a sustainable energy source*  
*e.g. it is shipped rather than air freighted*
- Is it seasonal, or has it been stored or preserved with the minimum of energy consumption?
- Are there environmentally friendly options for ‘end of life’ management?  
*e.g. the food waste can be composted safely rather than sent to landfill*
- Is it delivered in bulk or in reusable, recyclable, or biodegradable packaging / containers?
- Does it minimise the use of disposables e.g. plates?

Does it fulfill social criteria:

- Has it been produced and traded without exploiting farmers or workers or animals?

*e.g. is it Fairtrade, animal welfare-friendly*

- Does it support social enterprise, community development?
- Does it take account of the consumers' culture and religious and ethical beliefs?

#### Suggestions for specifications

The following format could be used to incorporate sustainable food in specifications.

Organic food: The Contractor is required to provide [ ]% of food [OR list products, e.g. potatoes, flour, beef, cabbages, etc.] or equivalent in their service which has been produced according to the following principles in production and process methods;

- Respect for and operating in accordance with natural systems and cycles, throughout all levels from the soil to plants and animals;
- Maintenance of and increase in the long-term fertility and biological activity of the soil;
- Ethical treatment of livestock, respecting the expression and needs of innate behaviour;
- Respect for regional, environmental, climatic and geographical differences and (appropriate) practices that have evolved in response to them;
- Encouragement of biodiversity and protection of sensitive habitats and landscape features;
- Maximum utilisation of renewable resources and recycling;
- Minimisation of pollution and waste;
- Minimum processing, consistent with the nature of the food in question;
- Maximum information on processing methods and ingredients provided to the consumer

The food must meet EC regulation 2092/91. As evidence of meeting the criteria and 2092/91, food must be certified by an authorised organic certifying body and be appropriately labelled.

GM-free food: The Contractor is required to ensure all food has not been genetically modified (GM) and all meals do not contain any GM ingredients. The Contractor is also required to ensure the food has not been produced or processed using any Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). All meat products must come from animals not fed GM feed. The contractor must immediately report to the Authority any known contamination of food by GMOs.

Packaging of goods: The Contractor is required to keep packaging to a minimum, but sufficient to ensure that goods supplied to the Authority are protected in transit and arrive in good condition, including:

- Maximum supply of food in bulk;
- Maximum use of reusable containers;
- Maximum recuperation and re-use of packaging material;
- Maximum use of recycled or biodegradable packaging.

Quality considerations: The Contractor is required to provide food products that meet certain quality considerations with, for example, parameters and tolerance levels for:

- Taste (e.g. "approved in advance with caterer");
- Varieties (e.g. Apples – "Worcester Permain and Beauty of Bath");

- Size/grade (e.g. Citrus Fruit – “Size 4-6, tolerance 40%”);
- Additions (e.g. Chicken Nuggets – “no added water”);
- Texture (e.g. firmness, crispness, and ripeness);
- Nutrition (e.g. minimum levels of minerals or vitamins, maximum levels of salt);
- Freshness (e.g. hung for two months, delivered within 8 hours of harvesting, preserved/ frozen within 1 hour of harvesting or, if stored, stored according to appropriate guidelines/without post-harvest preservatives);
- Appearance: Colour (e.g. Cabbage – “Green, White, or Red”); Shape (e.g. “all shapes”).

*N.B. The tighter the parameters, the less easy it is for local/smaller suppliers to tender, and the greater the likelihood that producers will need to use pesticides and herbicides. Standardised produce may result in less flavour, reduced nutritional quality and poorer texture.*

Assured Farm Produce: The Contractor is required to provide [ ]% of food [OR list products, e.g. chicken, lamb, and pork] or equivalent in their service which has been produced according to the following criteria in production and process methods:

- List criteria over and above legal requirements, including any relevant Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) codes for Assured Farm Produce.
- As evidence of meeting the production criteria, the food supplied must carry the ‘Little Red Tractor’ logo or other admissible label, or show other admissible evidence.

For example, for sheep and beef *Farm Assured British Beef and Lamb (FABBL)* standards ensure basic health and welfare of the stock based on Five Freedoms: Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition; Freedom from discomfort; Freedom from pain, injury or disease; Freedom from fear and distress; Freedom to display most normal patterns of behaviour.

Regional food: Distinctive food from particular areas or produced using particular methods can be specified, but with the proviso ‘or equivalent’, e.g.: The Contractor is required to provide [ ]% of food [OR list products, e.g. Welsh Lamb, Jersey Potatoes, etc.] or equivalent in their service which meets the following criteria:

- Food associated with a particular area or locale;
- Food originating from traditional production and processing methods [Set out criteria for methods if required].

The Contractor is required to provide evidence of meeting these requirements. This evidence can take the form of a protected food name; Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), or Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) label (EC regulation 2081/92) or other admissible evidence.

Artificial food additives: It is often difficult to eliminate all additives from particular foods and it is not UK Government policy to disqualify foods on these grounds. Insert, for example: The Contractor is required to ensure that artificial food additives (including artificial flavourings, colourings, sweeteners, emulsifiers and preservatives) are minimised/eliminated in the food/catering service provided.

Food labelling: The Contractor is required to ensure that all food/meals are appropriately labelled, giving information on, for example:

- Ingredients;

- Country of origin;
- Minimum meat content;
- Best before/Use by dates;
- Nutritional information;
- Allergy alerts;
- Suitability for people of particular religions or ethical persuasions;
- Product code and batch number.

Additional services: The Contractor is required to provide additional services to the Authority, and if no existing services exist to be able to develop these. To include:

- Menu development service [see below]
- Staff training services
- Educational services [e.g. including information leaflets, educational events, visits to farms]
- Recycling information and services

Menu development service: The Contractor shall provide a menu development service, in a format agreed with the Authority, that meets the specifications of the contract. The Contractor is required to develop menus and recipes following the guiding principles and requirements outlined below:

- **Health and nutrition:** The Contractor is required to provide good quality, safe, wholesome and nutritious meals and beverages in compliance with healthy eating guidelines [list these].
- **Seasonality:** The Contractor is required to provide [ ]% of [OR list products, e.g. Fruit, Fish, Vegetables, etc.] or a service providing menus and recipes based on seasonal availability.
- **Local availability:** The Contractor is required to take account of the local availability of food when developing the menus.
- **Regionality:** The Contractor is required to take account of the regional circumstances and characteristics when developing the menus and to use regionally distinctive products in the meals where appropriate.
- **Sustainable products:** The Contractor is required to take account of sustainability when developing the menus and to use sustainable products in the meals where specified.
- **Ethnic, religious, and ethical requirements:** The Contractor is required to provide food/meals which meet the ethnic, religious, and ethical needs of the consumer.

Fairtrade products: We have been advised that the specification of Fairtrade products or social labels cannot be included in the specifications of invitations to tender or contract documents. Many public bodies have successfully introduced Fairtrade products and here they have either shown their suppliers their policy on Fairtrade and encouraged them to supply Fairtrade products through dialogue, or have specified a 'wide range' of the products to be offered, and then chosen the Fairtrade options. However, we consider the ability to specify Fairtrade products a prerequisite to genuine sustainable food procurement in contracts and the EU and UK legislation should be amended in this area.

Some examples of what should be relatively easily achievable

- In the product specifications, requirements for:
  - Fish to be certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council;
  - Eggs to be free-range;
  - At least some products to be organic from the start, e.g. milk
  - Other products such as meat, chicken and turkey to be “... sourced from suppliers that meet or exceed the legal requirements for food safety, environmental implications of production and animal welfare. As evidence of meeting the production criteria, the food supplied must carry the Little Red Tractor logo or other admissible label, or through other admissible evidence”;
  - Use of Class I fruit and vegetables to be downgraded to Class II to allow for less wasteful production;
  - Use of specified varieties of fruit and vegetables and/or named seasonal products;
- Fairtrade products as a preference for hospitality events;
- A requirement for the development of seasonal menus;
- A requirement to keep packaging to a minimum, to recycle and to use biodegradable, re-usable packaging;
- A statement on GM that explicitly excludes meat from animals fed on GM animal feed.
- A request for tendering organisations to quote a range of prices for providing different amounts of sustainable and conventional food (e.g. conventional, free-range or organic eggs). This will allow sustainability considerations to feature in the contract so that at least some of them can be met (depending on budget) without putting forward such an onerous contract that companies do not tender for it.

**It is recommended that Councils contact the Office of Government Commerce for advice and guidance on their contracts – [www.ogc.gov.uk](http://www.ogc.gov.uk).**

A ‘School Meals Policy’

It can be useful for a council to have a School Meals Policy that can be included and referred to in contract documents. As well stating objectives for, for example, food quality, inclusive provision, a motivated and committed workforce, adoption of a whole school approach and good communication and consultation, the policy can state a preference for sustainable food. It can also be used to help define ‘sustainable’ for potential catering contractors. Suggested wording in such a policy is as follows:

*The Council has a strong commitment to supporting sustainable development; the maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment; social progress that recognises the needs of everyone; and effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources. It recognises that with the procurement of sustainable food, the economy, society and the environment can benefit. The Council has a policy preferentially to purchase products that are produced in a way that support sustainable development. Therefore, the contractor is required to give preference to these products also. Specifically, preference should be given to products that:*

- *Are produced and processed using methods that encourage the protection of natural resources, that use reduced amounts of non-reusable resources, that promote biodiversity and that ensure animal welfare. As evidence of meeting the production criteria, the food supplied must carry, at minimum, an assured food standard logo and/or the Red Tractor logo, and preferably another admissible*

*label that carries more robust sustainability criteria, for example an organic label, a Marine Stewardship Council label (for fish), is labelled free range (for eggs), or through other admissible evidence.*

- *Carry minimum packaging, that use reusable containers or recyclable packaging and/or products that are delivered in bulk units.*
- *Carry the Fair Trade Foundation certification.*
- *Are associated with a particular area or originating from traditional production and processing methods. Evidence of meeting this criteria can take the form of a protected food name; Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), or Traditional Speciality Guaranteed (TSG) label (EC regulation 2081/92) or other admissible evidence.*
- *Are good for consumers' health and well-being and contribute positively to the nutritional standards required in this contract. Fresh, unprocessed and seasonal foods will be favoured for their higher nutritional value.*

*In support of the Council's commitment to promoting sustainability, over the life of the contract, the contractor will be expected to develop targets for increased use of the food described above, i.e. raw, unprocessed ingredients, organic food, fresh food and sustainable food.*

#### Food for Life targets

For an example of targets that could be adopted, refer to those of the Food for Life programme.

These are targets developed by the organic certification organisation, the Soil Association, having worked with a number of schools. These targets are designed as a long-term aim, not something that would be achieved straight away. Individual schools have adopted these targets as well as Bath and Bristol LEAs. The targets are designed to raise awareness and appreciation of good food, reform menus and localise purchasing. They also aim to raise the quality of ingredients in order to reduce the amount of hidden pesticide residues, salt, fat, sugar, preservatives, colourings and artificial flavourings being dished up in local school lunches.

#### Good nutrition

Currently, nutritional standards in many schools are based on food groups rather than nutritional guidelines (such as those recommended by the Caroline Walker Trust). There is much evidence, such as a government Food Standards Agency report on secondary schools, which suggests that food-group based standards are failing to deliver adequate nutrition. The Caroline Walker Trust nutritional guidelines offer a more reliable and thorough alternative.

#### Organic food: 30% served should be certified organic

Organic agriculture is a sustainable farming system, defined by law. All organic food production and processing is governed by strict standards. It avoids the use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides on the land, relying instead on developing a healthy, fertile soil and growing a mixture of crops. The aim of the organic system is to be self-sustaining, with as few external inputs as possible. In this way, the farm remains biologically balanced, encouraging a wide variety of beneficial insects and other wildlife to act as natural predators for crop pests, and a soil rich in micro-organisms

and earthworms. No cases of BSE have occurred in organic systems. This is one alternative to a 40-75% decline in trace elements in fruit and vegetables. Several studies have shown that organic crops can have higher levels of beneficial vitamin C, magnesium, iron and phosphorous.

Sustainable supply chains (local food): 50% of ingredients should be from local sources

Using the definition used by farmers' markets in London, 'local' is within 100 miles – although it can be 30 miles in some locations. A more flexible definition would be that the products are grown and processed as locally as possible. As mentioned before – buying local food helps retain wealth in local communities.

Less processed foods: 75% of all foods eaten should be prepared from unprocessed ingredients

Even though they are often very cheap, highly processed foods can offer poor value for money because their nutritional values can be low, providing fewer micro-nutrients for the money spent compared to less processed ingredients. By using more fresh ingredients, schools could ameliorate a lot of parental anxiety about substances hidden in processed children's food and their impact on behaviour and attainment. Serving highly processed food also encourages the deskilling of the catering workforce, with an increase of unskilled labour on poor contracts. A side effect of this is high turnover in staff.

Better food education

Curriculum time will be made available for classroom and school trips to cover the subjects of why eating well matters, where food comes from, how to cook and animal welfare. The disassociation between most consumers and the farming community is emblematic of a wider malaise that ensures the UK's domestic food culture is weak, unhealthy and defined substantially by 'cheapness'.

**For more information on these targets and some of the schools who have adopted them go to the Soil Association website and check out the *Food for Life* report: [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org).**

## Step 3/4: Awarding the contract and follow-up

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*Suggestions for Council contracts teams who school meals are provided by either DSOs or private companies*

Be wary of making change too quickly.

It is not a good idea to make changes too quickly, as staff need to be trained and the service may need different equipment. It is important to be realistic about how quickly change can be achieved, and to manage expectations of school staff, children and parents. Greenwich was able to make the change very quickly (in 1.5 years all schools will have all meals freshly cooked), but this because they had three of Jamie Oliver's team spending time with each cook on a one-to-one basis, a large additional investment, and reportedly an additional 13p per meal from the authority. Staff, who have to be kept on, may not have the skills required to cook food from scratch, as may be a requirement of the new service. If parents and children are not

taken along with the process, there is a risk of a negative reaction and, as has been experienced in some boroughs, parents taking their children off the school meal service and onto packed lunches. Packed lunches are often of far more dubious quality, for example one dietitian reported seeing packed lunches consisting of “three packets of crisps and a bar of chocolate” and even a “cold McDonald’s”. It is worth noting, however, that schools in London are generally very multi-cultural and this can help smooth the process of introducing new foods. For instance, in one primary school, olives were well received on the very first day of new menus (see *whole school approach* suggestion below).

#### Meet training needs

The contractor should carry out an assessment of all staff and implement a mobilisation plan and use fresh ingredients as and when heads of kitchens are able. The contractor and council will need to develop a training programme on skills and healthy eating if one doesn’t already exist, although this must be considered in the context of a new programme of training being developed by government and promised by September/October 2005.

#### Develop a ‘whole school’ approach

As one LEA procurement officer said, “You need the whole school approach and schools on your side” and this should be specified as a requirement in the tender documents, to include:

- Encouragement of, and expectation for, school meal providers, the council catering and council teams and the Healthy Schools programme and PCT dietitian, to work in partnership to promote food and healthy eating in school. This approach can work well, adding value to the school meal service and ensuring healthy eating messages are reinforced and promoted.
- Schools making links between the school meal service and other food and healthy eating activities taking place in school. For example, a number of schools, as part of the Healthy Schools programme, have created gardens for children to grow their own vegetables which will subsequently be used in their school meals.
- Work to ensure that schools ‘buy in’ to the process of changing menus to be healthier and more sustainable, with a written commitment to support the programme by means of a wider range of activities related to food and healthy eating.
- Provision of workshops for teachers, along the lines of Sustain’s *Grab 5!* Programme

#### Write a ‘responsibilities’ document

Local authorities should produce a document setting out who is responsible for what. Where this has happened, LEA staff have reported that “Schools find it really useful”.

#### Carry out trials to inform the development of the service

Several boroughs are testing activities in one or more schools. For instance, some boroughs are testing healthy eating programmes in one school, including a health focus day, with a view to taking the elements that work to other schools. One borough is carrying out a trial of organic food in one school. The motivation came from the contracts team but the school is also very keen – for instance, they run an organic market on a Friday and are happy to introduce organic food into school meals. They have been offering fruit and some salad since January 2005, first bought from the local and organic vegetable box scheme, and more recently from an organic wholesaler. The trial is going very well; the head of kitchen says behaviour is better and the children are willing to try all new foods. The trial is being conducted with only one school because they are not sure if the organic sector can provide for all 80 kitchens, which is a very big contract.

#### Develop and implement a marketing strategy

It is important to promote the new menus to the children and parents in a way that appeals to them. It is also important to develop marketing to communicate with potential new local suppliers.

*Suggestion for Council contracts teams whose school meals are provided by large, private companies*

If the contract has already been awarded to a large, private company, it is still possible to make some improvements, even within the scope of the current contract. Schools and LEAs can negotiate menus and reject the menus offered by the companies if they are not what you want. For example, one local authority rejected a generic and a two-tier menu from one catering company. Fish fingers and sausages are now the only processed items and these are improved quality. Salad bars have also been introduced, and uptake has increased.

However, there will almost certainly be a cost implication for superior menus, for example ones which include free-range, organic, less-processed and/or locally sourced products.

*Suggestions for schools that manage their own school meal service*

All of the suggestions given above also apply to individual schools that manage their own schools meal service, either with in-house provision or via a private company. However, some of the suggestions will be easier to follow and more relevant than others.

## **School food procurement arrangements across London**

In boroughs that offer either Direct Service Organisation (DSO) or private company provision, some primary schools agree to all the contract specifications recommended by the LEA; some negotiate specification variations, and others opt out and manage their own service – either in-house or through an individual contract with a private company. In boroughs where no provider is offered, schools either run their own in-house service or contract the service out to a private company.

In some boroughs, secondary schools are included in the borough-wide contracts with DSOs or private companies, whilst in others they are offered a different council provider. In other boroughs, all secondary schools manage their own school meals service independently from the council.

There are examples of high quality school meals services, including use of sustainable food, in all of the four main options of provision: DSO provision; borough-wide private company provision; provision via individual school contracts with a private company; and school level in-house provision. There are also examples of poor quality provision for each option. For this reason, there is no service provision option that can be unanimously recommended above others. However, as discussed below, if best practice is followed, some options have more potential than others in providing a high quality service with sustainable food.

We believe that, if best practice was followed, the best options for school meals (in terms of quality of service and inclusion of sustainable food) would be as follows:

### In-house provision at school level

Under this arrangement, individual schools – both primary and secondary – run their own school meal service, in-house. They buy their own ingredients; recruit, train and employ their own staff; plan their own menus, etc. Many secondary schools already have this arrangement, but fewer primary schools. It is by no means an option of provision that will guarantee a good quality service incorporating sustainable food. But there are several case studies demonstrating that it is possible to provide meals of the highest quality (in terms of both taste and nutrition), using local and organic produce through a service that is an integral part of the whole school day; supporting learning about food and nutrition and a positive and inclusive schools ethos. St Peter's Primary in Nottinghamshire is perhaps the best known example at national level but there are also several examples in London, including Ansom Primary in Brent and Charles Dickens Primary in Southwark.

After a council-wide contract came to an end in summer 2004, Ansom Primary in Brent made links with a small catering company, Oasis.<sup>3</sup> They have seen a dramatic change to the quality of meals which have been very well received by the children. They had a committed head-teacher and a very dynamic Chair of Governors who took on the work: “a battle worth fighting for!” Since the new provision, staff report that they have experienced:

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<sup>3</sup> Note: Jeff Smith of Ansom Primary (jeff@ansom.brent.sch.uk, 020 8452 8552) is happy to be contacted and for people to visit the school to view the service.

- Better behaviour in the afternoon;
- Better lunch-time behaviour in the dining room; children enjoy the occasion;
- Increased up-take of meals by teachers (from 1-2 per day to 8-12 out of 25);
- Increased uptake by 25% in first fortnight amongst children
- Support from parents – now have a lunchtime for parents once per term with approximately 30 parents attending;
- Good publicity – the Director of Education visited and said it was “as good as a restaurant”
- Freshly decorated dining room by a group of committed school staff

Charles Dickens Primary in Southwark opted out of the council provision in 2000 and now runs their service in-house. The head-teacher was very keen to make improvements and gave the task to the facilities manager. She has succeeded in bringing about significant improvements, with menus now including mainly fresh ingredients, prepared from scratch and uptake has increased. In July 2005 they started buying their vegetables from a farmer in Kent. The produce is not organic (although they may consider organic from September 2005), but it is cheaper, especially when in season, than the conventional suppliers. The meat is from the same supplier that has been used for years and the fish is supplied by the wholesaler next door to the school who gives good deals. Frozen peas, sweetcorn and sausages are available for use in emergencies. Canned tomatoes, beans, fruit and sandwich meat fillers are sometimes permissible. Chips haven't been served over three months. Bread is provided every day. The school had to invest in a new oven and a new sink as well as two new staff to prepare the vegetables. The facilities manager says she would advise other schools to do the same.

Whilst, in an ideal world, this type of service would be possible in every school, in the real world it is not always possible. The majority of primary schools do not have the capacity, skills or inclination to run their own school meals service effectively. The schools in the case studies mentioned have relied on the skills, time and commitment of an exceptional head-teacher, school governor, a facilities manager (in the case of Charles Dickens Primary) and the school cook (in the case of St Peters). Most primary schools are not this lucky or have other activities attracting the energies of their key staff. For most schools, it would be necessary to employ a business manager with the responsibility to run the school meal service, and possibly other school services. With the demands of other priorities on school budgets this seems an unlikely action for most schools to take, although one to be recommended. Another significant problem with this option of provision is with smaller primary schools. The cost of producing high quality meals in-house in small schools is higher than in larger schools, a cost that in large contracts is absorbed but on an individual school basis would have to be met by parents, schools or local authorities.

This option of provision would be easier if local schools joined forces and became part of a consortium, enabling the sharing of expertise and resources, for example in recruitment, menu planning and procurement. The role of facilitating the group could be taken on by the local council, resulting in a system that would have similarities to the option described below, which, because of the obstacles to this option and the fact that it is unrealistic for most primary schools, is equally preferable.

### DSO provision with schools in clusters

There are some very good examples of DSO provision in London and elsewhere. An obvious advantage of this option over individual schools managing their own service is that if a council gets their in-house provision right, they will be reaching a lot of schools. There are several advantages of having an in-house service including greater flexibility with supply than in large private companies. They are also less driven by profit than private companies and any money that is made generally gets invested back into the service. It has been suggested that to increase the opportunities for local, small-scale businesses to supply products for school meals, DSOs should be able to provide for schools grouped into clusters, enabling one supplier to supply to some schools and another to supply other schools.

While this option is recommended equally to the option above, it needs to be realised that DSO provision is only as good as the contract manager. Efficiently run and forward thinking DSOs should be encouraged, despite the current climate in most LEAs of services being contracted out. A third desirable option of provision is presented below.

### Small, local private company provision

Out of 13 London boroughs which have contracts with private companies, four are with Initial, five are with Scolarest, two are with Harrison's, one is with Alliance & Partnership and Brookwood Partnership and one is with Cygnet. Therefore the majority are with large, national private companies. Visits to and discussions with each borough show that contracts with smaller, family, local businesses are more likely to be able to deliver satisfactorily on health and sustainability.

In contrast, levels of dissatisfaction with the larger providers are extremely high. For this reason, if this option of provision is adopted, it is recommended that smaller, local companies are favoured. Recommendations on how smaller companies can be encouraged to tender for the contracts are given in the recommendations to the LDA, e.g. LEAs to consider breaking their contracts into smaller lots.

## Case studies (as used in Camden 4 February 2005)

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### Bradford: contact Roger Sheard, 01274 431400, roger.sheard@bradford.gov.uk

Name	<b>Local Food for Bradford Schools</b>
Partners	<u>Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Education Contract Services (lead)</u> National Farmers Union, Grassroots Food Network (NGO), University of Bradford, Govt. Office for Yorkshire and Humber, Yorkshire Forward.
Timescale	Began Jan 2004 – still operating
Area	Across whole of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (180 primary schools, 22 secondary schools)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the amount of processed food</li> <li>• Increase the amount of local food</li> <li>• To support the local economy</li> </ul>
Outcomes (to date)	<p>See steps detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial research into potential for local supply and exploration of opportunities made between Jan-March 2004. A network was developed and a business plan developed – report available</li> <li>• 25% of all menus adapted</li> <li>• Lots of subtle menu changes, e.g. bread-crumbed shapes removed, more traditional, home-cooked meals, salt cut out.</li> <li>• Menus now follow Caroline Walker Trust nutrition guidelines, and FSA guidelines for salt.</li> <li>• Every recipe goes through the software package ‘microdiet’ which assesses nutrient content and advises on how to make the meals balanced.</li> <li>• New contracts that procure a lot more local produce – see tables below for % fruit and veg from Nov 2004, meat from Easter 2005</li> <li>• Also from Easter 2005 will also have some organic milk, beef and pasta.</li> <li>• Educational benefits have included fruit and vegetable tasting sessions with children, lessons about where food comes from, healthy eating, etc.</li> <li>• Uptake of school meals down 3%</li> </ul>
Cost	<p>When embarked on project decided to do it at no extra cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veg – new contracts same price</li> <li>• Meat – will be saving £30,000</li> <li>• Costs of including some organic absorbed by other savings.</li> </ul>
Obstacles	There aren’t enough food processors in the locality for schools’ requirements. Believes this work will encourage new businesses to start up.
Next steps	Development of seasonal menus Carry out research then market the meals appropriately.

#### Additional points

- The unit managers develop their own menus with input from parents, children and staff. Each school has a bespoke menu. Menus change termly.
- Training has been provided for unit managers but more will be needed, e.g. when seasonal menus are introduced.
- Auditing for traceability hasn’t been a problem as the chain has been shortened, so only need to assess the farmer, the processor and the distributor.

#### Contract issues

Education Contract Services (ECS) began by breaking the contracts into smaller lots. However this didn’t attract smaller, local producers to tender because they don’t have the capacity to process the foods. It is the processors and distributors that win the contracts and subsequently procure the food. Finding local processors/distributors with the capacity to prepare the products is difficult. Hopefully this will change with time as this work highlights the opportunities.

In Bradford finding vegetable processors is more difficult than finding local butchers. ECS are currently using a vegetable processor in Rochdale, so local food is being bought but still transported several miles for processing. However, the new meat supplier (from Easter 2005) will dramatically reduce food miles. The schools had been using previously frozen, free flow product which was processed in Birmingham and then transported back to Sheffield. They will now use “vac packed” meat prepared locally that can be delivered to schools once per week.

Steps taken by ECS when tendering new contracts:

1. They brought together all processors and distributors that expressed an interest to explain:

- The overall aim of work, i.e. to provide opportunities for local producers, in the context of the national and local sustainability agenda.
- The benefits, such as good PR, and possible new contracts in other local authorities.
- The importance of adding value to the catering service by providing educational services. These now include vegetable suppliers visiting schools, children being offered fruit and veg tasters and taught where food comes from, and visiting a vegetable processing plant, a factory and other suppliers.

“Light touch” changes were made to contract specifications but all those tendering knew about the aims of the initiative (described above) and were informed of the criteria in the evaluation model against which they would be scored and weighted e.g.

- Fresh, seasonal, sustainable supply chain, reduced food miles – priority one
  - Price and quality
2. Grassroots Food Network and the Farmers Union identified growers in the region and brought them together with processors and distributors.
3. ECS works in partnership with processors/distributors once the contracts are won, monitoring services and regularly introducing them to local growers.

<b>% of Potatoes, Fruit &amp; Salad items previously imported, now bought locally</b>			
<b>Produce</b>	<b>% UK-Locally grown produce</b>		<b>% Previously imported produce</b>
Cabbage Prepared	96%	Yorkshire/Lancashire	Holland
Carrots Prepared	100%	Yorkshire-York	100% Yorkshire-York
Cauliflower	60%	Yorkshire/Lancashire	France/Spain
Celery	48%	Yorkshire/Lancashire	100% Spain
Coleslaw Dry Mix	98%	Yorkshire/Lancashire	Holland
Coleslaw Mix	100%	Yorkshire-Scunthorpe	100% Yorkshire-Scunthorpe
Cucumber	52%	Humberside	100% Spain/Canary Islands
Lettuce Flat	100%	Yorkshire	50% Spain
Lettuce Iceberg	52%	Yorkshire/Lancashire	100% Spain/France
Mushrooms	100%	Northern Ireland	100% Holland
Onions Prepared	80%	Yorkshire/Lincolnshire	100% Spain/S Africa/New Zealand
Onions Whole	40%	Yorkshire/Lincolnshire	100% Spain
Parsley	80%	Lancashire-Manchester	
Pears	50%	Gloucester	100% Belgium
Potatoes Jacket	100%	Yorkshire/Lancashire/Scotland	100% Scotland
Potatoes Prepared	100%	Yorkshire/Lancashire/Scotland	100% Scotland
Salad Cress	100%	Lancashire-Southport	100% Lancashire-Southport
Spring Onions	50%	Yorkshire/Lancashire	100% Egypt
Swede Prepared	100%	Scotland	100% Scotland
Swede Whole	100%	Scotland	100% Scotland
<b>List of fruit &amp; salad items currently imported and country of origin</b>			
<b>Imported produce</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>		
Peppers Green	Spain		
Peppers Red	Spain		
Peppers Yellow	Spain		
Radishes	Netherlands		
Apples Green	France		
Apples Red	France/America		
Bananas (Dollar \$)	South America-Honduras/Columbia/Venezuela & Windward Islands		
Green Grapes	South Africa		
Kiwi Fruit	Greece		
Lemons	Spain		
Melons	Brazil		
Oranges	Spain/Morocco/Israel		
Satsumas	Spain		

**Bath & NE Somerset LEA: Sue Eades, 01225 394407, sue\_eades@banes.gov.uk**

Name	<b>Food for Life, Bradford and North East Somerset (BANES)</b>
Partners	<u>Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council's Catering Team (lead)</u> Food For Life/Soil Association
Timescale	Current
Area	Bath & North East Somerset
Objectives	A pilot project that aims to improve the quality of school meals and increase uptake by adopting the Food for Life targets.
Outcomes (to date)	Five schools have signed up for the project. One school taking part is a special school and four don't have their own kitchen so will have their meals transported from another school. Currently schools are being introduced to the aims and objectives of the project. Training has been delivered to cooks. More is planned.
Cost	At this stage is it unclear what the cost implications will be, or the amount of additional time and labour that will be required by all staff. All of these will be assessed during the pilot phase. The schools are not expected to have to increase the price they charge parents for the meals as it is hoped that any extra costs that might arise as a result of the project will be met by an increase in numbers of school meals eaten. The Catering Team have no extra budget for this project.
Obstacles	There was initially more interest in the project from schools but several pulled out when asked for a written commitment to support the programme with the implementation of a wider range of activities related to healthy eating and food, such as farm visit, healthy eating events, growing etc.

**Bristol LEA: Sue Burke, 0117 903 6267, sue\_burke@bristol-city.gov.uk**

Name	<b>Bristol City Council School Meals project</b>
Partners	Bristol City Council Contract Services (lead) Steering Group - Bristol City Council (reps from Sustainable City Team, Catering, Education Client Unit and Food Safety); the Primary Care Trust; the Soil Association, and current food suppliers.
Timescale	Sept 2004 for one year (menus changed in Nov 2004)
Area	Bristol
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2002 review of the school meals by Bristol City Council found more fresh and local food was desired.</li> <li>• Linked with Healthy Schools and the Healthy Living Blueprint Govt initiatives in 2004.</li> <li>• Long standing interest by catering team to reduce additives, sugar, fat and salt in meals.</li> <li>• A new position, with a remit of food policy and sustainable procurement, was created within the Sustainable Development Division of the City Council in 2003.</li> </ul>
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with current suppliers to improve the nutritional quality and work towards the Food for Life targets for school meals in a pilot project with 20 schools</li> <li>• Engage schools in a whole school approach to promoting food and healthy eating</li> <li>• Identify obstacles and cost implications and present to council at end of pilot phase.</li> <li>• Sort out problems that do not incur cost as project develops</li> <li>• After pilot phase, hope to spread to other schools</li> </ul>
Outcomes (to date)	See key stages outlined below
Cost	Should become clear by end of pilot phase
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of time and ownership of the project from schools.</li> <li>• Lack of time and space for catering staff.</li> <li>• Concerns about the cost of meals – we have already identified an increase.</li> <li>• The hoped for increased uptake of meals not yet achieved.</li> <li>• Currently there is probably not enough fresh, local and seasonal food to supply all the schools, but as relationships build with local producers supplies should increase.</li> </ul>
Top tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure all the schools involved are fully engaged and are willing to incorporate food education into the curriculum and way of school life</li> <li>• Encourage schools to set up growing clubs or cooking clubs so that the pupils learn exciting things about food and health</li> <li>• Don't change the menus too quickly</li> <li>• Work with current suppliers and link them up with local producers</li> <li>• Make sure you have your evaluation scheme set up at the start and know what you want to achieve</li> </ul>

### Key project stages

1. Steering group was set up, under which are four sub groups: procurement; school meal culture; menus; and evaluation.
2. Schools were invited to participate and twenty were selected. The teachers were invited to a workshop and asked to set up their own steering groups within the school in order to take ownership of their project.
3. The menus were changed in November and Catering Services liaised with the Primary Care Trust on menu choices. A nutrition awareness event has been held annually within the CREATE centre in Bristol. This included information about healthy eating with stalls and tasting sessions. The pupils were invited to:
  - see a stir fry made and to taste the results.

- taste local, organic ice cream and cheese,
  - try new and exciting fruit and vegetables,
  - learn how to brush their teeth properly and how to take care of their teeth
  - learn what constitutes a portion of fruit and vegetables, and learn where their food comes from.
4. It has been agreed that we will monitor:
- Waste in the kitchens
  - Food unit costs (per school)
  - Amount of unprocessed; local; organic food used
  - Nutritional content (of menus and through lab analysis)
  - Overtime for staff needed for meal times in the pilot schools
  - School meal uptake (against same time last year and against the other schools not participating in the project)
  - Quality of Life indicators and survey info
  - Children's behaviour (anecdotal from parents and teachers)
5. We are contracted to work with our current suppliers – who are keen to work on the pilot project. As a result we are setting up meetings and workshops to link our suppliers with local producers. We are starting with fruit and vegetables. Some of our food is already produced locally, but we will endeavour to increase this through co-operative working with local producers.

**South Gloucestershire Council: (no contact details available – staff say they have been inundated with too many requests for information)**

Timescale	2001 – present
Area	South Gloucestershire area, 115 schools, including 98 infant, junior and primary schools; 14 secondary schools and 3 special schools.
Objectives	Aim: “To work together through the South Gloucestershire Local Food Partnership to increase the availability and consumption of local food and to promote healthy eating in South Gloucestershire.”
Outcomes (to date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A network of local farmers, producers and suppliers has been set up. They supply fresh and /or organic vegetables, eggs, fresh meat, ice cream etc., all of which have appropriate traceable audit trails as required in respect of food safety.</li> <li>• Menus are sent out to every parent. Each schools menu is shaped around the needs of that school. On the back of that menu they send out messages about nutrition, the local produce, environmental issues etc.</li> <li>• A school mascot sends out healthy eating messages to the children and a sticker system has been set up, stickers are awarded to children who eat healthy meals.</li> <li>• The specification for fresh meat requires “home kill” and many of the small farming partners now direct their stock to the local abattoir, from where meat is purchase by the nominated supplier. The beef has been very well received in local schools.</li> <li>• Introduction of fruit tuck in 60 primary schools and flavoured milk in the majority of secondary schools, both initiatives are becoming increasingly successful.</li> <li>• Breakfast services have been introduced into a large number of schools for both parents and pupils. This has also proved very successful.</li> <li>• Recycling of cooking oil and packaging. A new policy has been set up with contractors for using green fuels.</li> </ul>
Cost	After the initiatives were put in place there were surplus funds and this will enable continued buying from local producers.
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local producers were not geared to complex tendering procedures and many of them showed an aversion to this process.</li> <li>• A single local producer with the result couldn’t provide the large mix of produce required therefore a complex arrangement for purchasing was required.</li> </ul>
Next steps	Marketing of the service and compilation of themed menus. There is also recognition for the need for the school meals service to form part of the overall educational process.

### **Additional material used to supplement Camden training session, 4 February 2005**

Organisation	Cornwall Council Commercial Services
Contact	Jayne Jago, tel: 01872 322000, email: <a href="mailto:jjago@cornwall.gov.uk">jjago@cornwall.gov.uk</a>
Summary	In-house providers for 32 schools, using local food where possible
Further info	<a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/scs.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/scs.htm</a>
Organisation	Diptford Primary School, near Totnes, Devon
Summary	School providing home-cooked school lunches. The young pupils can choose between a meat or vegetarian main dish with at least two vegetable choices.
Further info	<a href="http://www.devonfoodlinks.org.uk/News/Bulletins/Bulletin_Nov04.asp">www.devonfoodlinks.org.uk/News/Bulletins/Bulletin_Nov04.asp</a>
Organisation	Hampshire County Council Catering Services (HC3S), Hampshire County Supplies and Hampshire Fare (county food group)
Contact	Email: <a href="mailto:hampshire.fare@hants.gov.uk">hampshire.fare@hants.gov.uk</a>
Summary	456 primary schools and 26 secondary schools have organic local beef burgers on menu. From Rother Valley Organics of Rogate, near Petersfield.
Organisation	St Aidan's CE High School, Harrogate, Yorkshire
Summary	Turned service around by managing in-house; cost £500,000 (loan)
Further info	<a href="http://www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/St_Aidans.html">www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/St_Aidans.html</a> <a href="http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/staidans.htm">www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/staidans.htm</a>
Organisation	St Peter's Primary, East Bridgford, Nottinghamshire
Contact	Jeanette Orrey
Summary	Turned service around by managing in-house; sources a lot of local and organic.
Further info	<a href="http://www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/manuf/ffl.html">www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/manuf/ffl.html</a>
Organisation	Brampton Infant School
Contact	Cumbria, CA8 1UJ; tel: 020 8270 4100; tel/fax: 01697 72570
Summary	Did have facilities to prepare meals; with funding from Health Education Trust and council caterers put in kitchen and made other changes to improve meals.
Further info	<a href="http://www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/brampton_infant.html">www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/brampton_infant.html</a>
Organisation	Barking Abbey School
Contact	Barking, Essex, IG11 9AG; tel: 020 8270 4100; email: <a href="mailto:office@babby.bardaglea.org.uk">office@babby.bardaglea.org.uk</a> ; web: <a href="http://www.babbey.bardaglea.org.uk">www.babbey.bardaglea.org.uk</a>
Summary	Now in-house service with healthier meals; used School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG – see <a href="http://www.healthedtrust.com">www.healthedtrust.com</a> )
Further info	<a href="http://www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/Barking_Abbey.html">www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/Barking_Abbey.html</a>
Organisation	Schools Catering, Nottinghamshire
Summary	They are buying local food and more healthy options – linked with Notts Forest for a healthy meal award.
Further info	<a href="http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk">www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk</a>
Organisation	Gorrington Park Primary School and others in London Borough of Merton
Contact	Gorrington Park Primary School, Sandy Lane, Mitcham, Surrey, SM4 2YA
Summary	Parents are unhappy with service provided by Initial which has the contract with the London Borough of Merton. They are organising meetings; a photo of each day's school meal appears on the website.
Further info	<a href="http://www.gorringtonpark.merton.sch.uk">www.gorringtonpark.merton.sch.uk</a>

Organisation	High Hesket Church of England School, Carlisle
Contact	High Hesket, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 OHU; tel: 016974 73386
Summary	Parents have taken over school catering and doubled uptake of meals at a cost of 45-65p for ingredients per meal.

Organisation	Icknield High School, Luton
Contact	Icknield High School, Riddy Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire; tel: 01582 576561
Summary	A Cordon Bleu chef was appointed four years ago. Exam results and behaviour have improved considerably. The cost of ingredients is 38p per pupil. Chef David Lucas and Head-teacher Chris Dean have been asked to help the government improve school meals (Chris Dean on Interim School Food Trust).

Organisation	Collis Primary School, Teddington
Contact	Collis Primary School, Fairfax Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 9BS; tel: 020 8977 1458
Summary	Parents and governors have set up a School Meal Action Group to put pressure on Scolarest to improve its standards, including serving fresh vegetables prepared on the premises. Liaising with other schools who are concerned about poor standards.
Further info	<a href="http://www.collis.richmond.sch.uk">www.collis.richmond.sch.uk</a>

### Further information

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- Department for Education and Skills, *School meals in secondary schools in England*, research report 557: [www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2004/jul/secondarieschoolmeals](http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2004/jul/secondarieschoolmeals)
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Healthy Living Blueprint for schools: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/healthyliving](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/healthyliving)
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Purchasing Guide for schools. See: [www.dfes.gov.uk/valueformoney/index.cfm?action=GoodPractice.Default&ContentID=21](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/valueformoney/index.cfm?action=GoodPractice.Default&ContentID=21) - printed copies of the guide are available by calling our Publications Office on 0845 60 222 60, quoting reference number DfES/0547/2001.
- Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) – case studies: [www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/)
- East Anglia Food Link, *Guidance on providing school meals* and *Sustainable schools fruit feasibility study*: [www.eafl.org.uk](http://www.eafl.org.uk)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA), report on food and nutrition education in nurseries and primary schools, *Starting early: food and nutrition education of young children*: [www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2004/jul/foodinschools](http://www.food.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2004/jul/foodinschools)
- Hurley, C. & Riley, A. (eds) (2004), *Recipe for change. A good-practice guide to school meals*. Available from Child Poverty Action Group, tel: 020 7837 7979, [www.cpag.org.uk](http://www.cpag.org.uk)
- Kevin Morgan, *School meals and sustainable food chains: The role of creative public procurement*, price £7.50 inc p&p, (ISBN 1 897820 194), [www.cwt.org.uk](http://www.cwt.org.uk)
- Soil Association, *Food for Life: Healthy local, organic school meals*: [www.foodforlifeuk.org](http://www.foodforlifeuk.org)
- Sustain: The alliance of better food and farming and East Anglia Food Links, *Good Food on the Public Plate: A manual for sustainability in public sector food and catering*, price £110.00 or £55.00 for not-for-profit organisations; tel: 020 7837 1228: [www.sustainweb.org](http://www.sustainweb.org)