

Prepared by Sustain:
the alliance for better food and farming



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Preface

The London Development Agency (LDA) asked the Sustain project team to develop training and guidance for one Local Education Authority in London, seeking to integrate a greater proportion of sustainable food into school meals within that borough. We chose to work with Camden, and the following pages report on the work we undertook in partnership with the London Borough of Camden between September 2004 and July 2005.

The report presents lessons learned and recommendations to the LDA for next steps. The LDA coordinate and fund 'London Food' which, at the time of writing, is preparing a sustainable food and farming strategy for London. The aim of this strategy is to benefit the health and welfare of Londoners and to help develop a more sustainable food system for London. The strategy is the focus of a major consultation until December 2005 and is due to be launched in Spring 2006. The recommendations in this report will inform the development of the strategy so this report may be followed by more activities.

It is important to note that, since this report was written, an unprecedented number of initiatives have been announced on food in schools, including the publication of the School Meal Review Panel's recommendations in October 2005. It was not possible to reflect on these developments in the report, although most were predicted, or reflect the most recent progress made in some schools and local authorities.

Given the complexity of the developing school food scene, we believe that it is absolutely critical that sustainability considerations are taken on as a part of this process. We also believe that sustainability may get lost in the clamour around nutrition and obesity, and needs an advocate or team of advocates to ensure that sustainability is integrated into school food provision. Our recommendations reflect these observations.

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Action for LDA to take the sustainable food procurement agenda forward

The following recommendations have been drawn up in the light of experiences of working on this LDA project and our related work on sustainable procurement with London hospitals; and drawing on responses from our survey of London's LEAs. We have discussed the suggestions in some detail below.

1. Raise awareness and set the agenda.
2. Employ a sustainable food procurement team to take the work forward.
3. Develop a sustainable food procurement toolkit.
4. Improve the sustainable food supply capacity and infrastructure.
5. Influence relevant standards development procedures.
6. Fund a pilot study in one London council to examine the economic impact of sustainable food procurement (as carried out in Northumberland).
7. Advise on the development and provision of training.
8. Support the development of Best Value Performance Indicators.

1. Raise awareness and set the agenda

The case for sustainable food needs to be presented loud and clear to all stakeholders, and championed at many levels, presenting the case in ways that different audiences will accept and respond to. For example, our experience shows that:

- councillors and council officers are often interested in evidence that sustainable food procurement is good for business, economic regeneration, social cohesion, environmental protection and for meeting government targets for sustainability (e.g. meeting London's carbon dioxide emissions targets)
- catering companies are often interested in the argument that providing sustainable food will differentiate them from competitors
- head-teachers, school governors and parents are often most convinced by the health and educational benefits (the LDA could helpfully support or encourage a review of research into the effects of food on children's behaviour and attainment).

It is our observation that there are many deeply ingrained prejudices and assumptions to be overcome. For instance, we note that many people we have talked with take 'sustainable food' to mean simply 'organic', and have previously ruled out further consideration because they assume this to be too costly. Similarly, many rule out 'local' food because they assume that there is no farmland in or near London. We think, therefore, that a particularly useful role for the LDA would be to demonstrate, through policy statements and its own good practice, that nutrition and sustainability are interlinked, not separate concepts. It would also be helpful for the LDA and/or sustainable food procurement team (see recommendation 2) to encourage/facilitate meetings between procurement officers of catering companies and with borough contracts teams to address such issues. One contracts manager from Croydon reported that she "would be thrilled" if such a dialogue could be started, having, over the years, found it very difficult to meet with procurement staff from catering companies.

2. Employ a sustainable food procurement team to take the work forward

Throughout our work, and in our survey of London LEAs, participants have voiced support for a dedicated person or team to be available to deal with queries on school meals and sustainable procurement; to develop tailored programmes of work for the varied situations facing different London boroughs; to keep in touch with both practitioners and policy level developments; to share best practice; to run conferences and workshops; to facilitate links between caterers/procurement teams and suppliers/farmers; to liaise with other London agencies; to act as an 'external advisor' to the Best Value Review process for LEAs; and to help facilitate many of the further recommendations set out below.

It might also be useful for a member of such a team to sit on appropriate policy committees, such as the new School Food Trust. As these posts would compliment the work being proposed by the School Food Trust, it may be that part of the funding could come from there. This team could also deal with other public sector institutions; although they are affected by slightly different issues, the team could perform a vital linking role.

3. Develop a sustainable food procurement toolkit

We recommend that the guidance presented in this report, both for LEAs and individual schools, be further developed and turned into a toolkit, probably electronic, and probably with a 'facilitated' element, for example by the team whose role is outlined above, to help guide procurement and catering practitioners, and school heads and governors through the complex process of increasing their use of sustainable food. The toolkit would need to be flexible enough to deal with the very varied circumstances of London's school food provision. An electronic format is recommended to allow for frequent updates, ease of use, ease of dissemination, and the ability to expand the tool to incorporate case studies, news and policy updates in this rapidly developing area.

The recommendation to develop a toolkit comes with the following suggestions.

- Provide exemplary specifications, costings and descriptions of what a healthy and sustainable school meal can consist of.
- Enhance, but not replace practical training, one-to-one meetings, and long-term support for LEAs and caterers.
- Transform existing printed information (i.e. advice supplied in this document, the Sustain public procurement manual, and material from other organisations specialising in this area) into 'decision tree' format (probably electronic) to facilitate practical application of sustainable procurement principles.
- Directly involve practitioners (contracts managers, caterers) to ensure that it remains realistic and relevant.
- Reflect current and developing government work on school food; training; kitchen investments; new nutritional standards; vending machine policy; OFSTED reporting requirements; monitoring, etc.
- Provide examples of LEAs that have succeeded in procuring sustainable food.
- Offer guidance on what schools can do if they want to pull out of current contracts but have been told that they will face "substantial financial penalties", for example schools under Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements.
- Give advice on and materials for training.
- Reflect the 'four stages' approach followed with Camden LEA, and presented in the body of this report (see below).

If the toolkit were published *online*, then it could also provide the following aspects.

- A facilitated discussion forum for caterers and procurement staff, who sometimes report that they feel ‘isolated’, especially where schools have opted out. This might also facilitate buyer groups to support co-operative purchasing, and to attract other public procurement departments (e.g. hospitals; care homes) to share procurement orders in order to cut costs and become a regular buyer for local suppliers (since schools operate for only part of the year).
- A useful format to communicate with, and provide information for, head-teachers and school governors who are key decision-makers regarding school meals but hard to reach, especially in those schools that manage their own service.
- A newsletter or news update for interested parties, including those mentioned above and parents.
- Links to local authorities, schools, caterers and other interested parties in other parts of the country, facilitating the sharing of information and best practice.

However, the toolkit *should not*:

- duplicate the material already available, including the DEFRA toolkit and the Sustain/East Anglia Food Links manual ‘Good Food on the Public Plate.

4. Improve the sustainable food supply capacity and infrastructure

Many have conveyed their concern, based on evidence, or preconceptions, that there is currently insufficient supply of seasonal, fresh, local and organic food for the scale of contract required by a London borough. Survey responses on this point are detailed below.

- “The main problems facing the London Boroughs, is one of access to good local suppliers. Also, can they provide the large quantities required?”
- “I have been reading around the subject and know that currently the farmers that are out there don’t have the wheels or guaranteed ability to supply in the way the service needs them to.”
- Other client teams and the Direct Service Organisation (DSO) have had problems asking for large quantities of food, and with asking for organic milk for only 39 weeks of year.

However, it is also important to note that this is a rapidly developing area. Both sides of the supply and demand equation need support in order to achieve a sustainable food chain. Bristol City Council, for instance, is currently working towards the Soil Association’s *Food for Life* targets. The Council have faced problems with quantity of supply, but say they believe supply will increase as relationships with local producers are forged. Indeed, communication with local producers, processors and distributors and forging links between them and providers is seen as an essential component for tangible progress to be made in sustainable food procurement. Similar experiences have been reported by, for example, Bradford City Council, Northumberland County Council and South Gloucestershire (see Appendix VI for case study information shared with Camden staff at a training seminar).

To facilitate the process of overcoming supply problems, the LDA might consider the following key points.

- Communication with local producers, processors and distributors to identify growers; bring them together with processors and distributors, clarify and communicate benefits, create positive public relations, and facilitate connections with other possible contracts beyond the school meal system. Such work could be led by the LDA and/or sustainable food procurement team in partnership with London business link organisations. This work could take the form of trading events or ‘meet the buyer’ events, as are organised in other counties, where producers and suppliers of

sustainable produce could present to, and do business with, public-sector catering and contract teams.

- Nurturing small, local catering companies. Our research shows that some sustainable food requirements can best be met by small catering providers, especially where contracts can be broken up into smaller components. Food co-operatives may also be able to undertake such contracts (e.g. East London Food Access Partnership is exploring this possibility).
- Developing a sustainable food distribution hub to support school meals services and other public sector caterers. The LDA is already supporting this work through Sustain's Sustainable Food Chains project. We mentioned these ideas to those London LEA survey participants who seemed most interested in wider food policy, and received a very positive response. Some procurement staff saw the need for some kind of group or coordinated purchasing to provide a stable year-round market for UK farmers.
- Influencing large national and regional catering companies to overcome their inertia to change suppliers to more sustainable sources. Currently, certain suppliers have what amounts to a monopoly of the market and offer catering companies huge discounts for regular orders, such as, offers of an additional 3% discount on top of a 10% discount if purchases of food and equipment go above £0.5m. If large caterers can be persuaded to favour at least some sustainable food, the impact would be significant, but is likely to require substantial input, and a change in business practices shifting away from the current drive towards centralised purchasing.

5. Influence relevant standards development procedures

School procurement staff are likely to have neither the time nor expertise to judge the sustainability of each product that they buy. This judgement is deferred in large part to certification procedures, such as those implemented by assurance schemes, including the Little Red Tractor (for the certification of farm assured produce); the Soil Association and other certification bodies (for certification of organically grown and organically processed foods); and the Fairtrade Foundation (denoting products for which producers from poor countries have received a fair price). Many of these standards are in constant development.

One of the LDA Project Team (Kath Dalmeny) sits on the Soil Association's Processing Standards Committee, and Sustain staff (Dan Keech and Kate Bowie), with Sustain's Sustainable Food Chains working party, are contributing to the development of a suggested 'Little Green Tractor'¹ logo scheme to embody enhanced environmental farming practices that do not meet the stricter requirements of organic, but exceed the baseline standards of the Little Red Tractor. We believe that the continuing development of such standards is essential background support to the process of developing sustainable food procurement. It would be extremely useful to have high-level support for and interest in such work, for instance from the LDA.

The LDA could also seek to influence the development of nutrition standards to incorporate sustainability, and of sustainable procurement standards to incorporate nutrition. Currently, sustainable procurement and nutrition standards are being developed separately by government, and by private and voluntary organisations. It would be helpful for there to be more coherence in this process.

6. Fund a pilot study in one London council to examine the economic impact of sustainable food procurement (as carried out in Northumberland)

¹ See: Response of the Sustainable Food Chains Working Party to the Levett-Therivel Review of the Little Red Tractor scheme: www.sustainweb.org/news_detail.asp?iEve=116&iType=1078

Northumberland County Council used the New Economics Foundation (NEF) Local Multiplier tool (LM3) to assess the economic impact of the council's food purchasing on the local economy.² NEF found that local suppliers re-spent on average 76% of the money gained from council contracts with local people and businesses, whilst non-local suppliers spent only 36%. This translates to an extra £34m for the local economy and community if the county were to increase the proportion of locally procured supplies by 10%. As a result, they have seen a five-fold increase in local supplier expressions of interest and a resulting four out of seven product categories awarded to local suppliers. LM3 measurement has also highlighted positive effects on regeneration and has raised the profile of the council with local businesses. Whilst the application of LM3 analysis to catering provision can be complicated, an adapted version has been applied by the New Economics Foundation to hospitals participating in Sustain's Hospital Food Project. This adapted approach analyses the effect of local purchasing in particular food categories. We recommend that the adapted version of LM3 be applied to the pilot study recommended here.

7. Advise on the development and provision of training

As noted above, the Education Secretary announced in March 2005³ the provision of "a ladder of qualifications" to meet the skills needs of all kitchen staff, from the basics of hygiene and nutrition through to more specialist preparation and cooking. In addition, we note that the FSA is also in the process of developing "Promotion of a vocational qualification for school caterers – completed in England, under consideration in Scotland,"⁴ and that People 1st (the Skills Sector Council) has been undertaking research in this area – we understand on behalf of DfES and the FSA.⁵

The LDA can no doubt add value here, especially since training is likely to focus only on nutrition standards, without necessarily including the wider sustainable food issues, e.g. skills needed to cook from scratch with seasonal vegetables and importance of promoting (rather than simply providing) healthy options. It is not yet clear what level of support will be made available from central government and in what format.

In addition, many London boroughs already provide or are exploring some level of training for catering staff, to meet the needs of preparing fresh food. It should be noted that such courses require a large amount of staff time and that most courses offered in colleges are aimed at restaurant chefs not school cooks. The LDA could take a strong lead in ensuring that the experiences of boroughs that either run catering training, or have abandoned it, inform the development of future training. In addition, it will be important to ensure that all catering staff, not just those employed by the LEA but also those employed by catering companies and schools that have an in-house service, receive appropriate training in safety, health and sustainability considerations, including seasonal menu planning. It may be worth the LDA revisiting the catering training that was once provided by the Greater London Council (GLC), as this may provide a useful reference point to developing new training materials.

8. Support development of Best Value Performance Indicators

² New Economics Foundation (2005) *Public spending for public benefit: How the public sector can promote local economic development through purchasing power now*. London: NEF

³ Announcement made by Education Secretary Ruth Kelly, March 2005, see: http://dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2005_0044

⁴ Food Standards Agency, June 2005, Consumer Committee notes: Advertising and promotion of foods to children, ConsComm I0035/05

⁵ Contact: Preeti Sumal, People 1st; tel: 0870 060 2550; email: preetkiran.sumal@people1st.co.uk

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) measures performance of local authorities against performance indicators set by central government. They are called Best Value Performance Indicators, set since the duty of best value on local authorities came into effect under the Local Government Act 1999. Once new national standards for nutrition and sustainable procurement are in place, the LDA should consider lobbying for, and supporting, a new Best Value Performance Indicator. This will be an essential component of the monitoring and review procedure to ensure that local authorities meet health and sustainability objectives. Whilst the establishment of such a Best Value Performance Indicator is probably several years away, we highlight it here for the information of the LDA.⁶ In the meantime, the LDA (and sustainable food procurement team, if such is established) needs to develop regular monitoring and review systems so that schools making changes can see if they are working and, if not, create ways to improve the situation without having to wait for the end of a long contract and/or a Best Value Review.

⁶ For information on Best Value Performance Indicators, see: www.bvpi.gov.uk/pages/Index.asp

Sustainable food procurement: London's schools

Overview

The LDA asked the Sustain project team to develop training and guidance for one Local Education Authority (LEA) in London, seeking to integrate a greater proportion of sustainable food into school meals within that borough. We chose to work with Camden, and the following pages report on the work we undertook in partnership with the London Borough of Camden, lessons learned and recommendations for next steps. In this report, we use the process we followed with Camden to illustrate the steps that would need to be taken to achieve a workable school meals contract that reflects a good balance of practicality, affordability and ambition.

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.

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.

We came to the conclusion, in discussion with the Food Strategy Unit, that the process followed in Camden could not necessarily be transposed onto other boroughs without taking such variations into account. The Food Strategy Unit expressed an interest in receiving recommendations for how to take steps to increase sustainable food procurement across the city. We therefore contacted every London LEA to ask them questions about their service provision and circumstances. The findings of this survey informed the recommendations for how the LDA might progress with each borough, depending on their current school meal and contractual arrangements.

However, this is not an exact science. Our experiences in this project, and in other related projects at Sustain⁷ have underlined our understanding that there are many aspects to the successful integration of sustainable food into public procurement. It takes time, support and sensitivity to the needs, aspirations, history, organisational structure, staff enthusiasm, expertise and budget of each service provider – not to mention persistence. Our recommendations reflect these experiences.

The survey also revealed that LEAs have very mixed attitudes to sustainable food procurement. Some responded enthusiastically, and said that they hoped to be able to increase the proportion of sustainable food on their menu. Most seemed to think that some progress on sustainable food procurement was possible in the near-term. Others

⁷ E.g. the Hospital Food Project – a project funded by Defra and the King's Fund, run by Sustain to promote sustainable food procurement in London's hospitals. See: www.sustainweb.org; Also, the Grab 5! Project (see below).

gave the impression that sustainability considerations were low priority. A small minority responded with a degree of suspicion – even hostility. For the vast majority of LEAs, partly as a result of the ‘Jamie Oliver’ effect and frequent coverage of school meals in the local and national media, plus pressure from concerned parents, teachers and primary care trusts, the main priority was felt to be improving the nutritional quality of school food. However, even with schools or authorities who are not yet ready to incorporate a fully integrated approach to sustainable food procurement, there are still opportunities here to develop sustainability themes – for instance the freshness of ingredients – which can contribute to achieving both health and sustainability objectives.

The experience of working on this project has re-affirmed our opinion that 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. It also needs high-level backing to set the issue in policy context, and to demonstrate to schools how sustainable food procurement can help them to meet a range of public and educational objectives.

The current policy context

It is important to note that the current project has taken place in a period of unprecedented political and media attention on school food provision. Children’s food has become a key political issue, with the publication of the Department of Health’s public health white paper in autumn 2004; TV chef Jamie Oliver’s 270,000-name petition to Downing Street for better school meals in March 2005; and inclusion of school food in party manifestos for the General Election in May 2005.

Of course, this storm has long been brewing. A campaign to emphasise the importance of cooking skills for children (Get Cooking!), for example, ran throughout the 1980s, alongside campaigns for School Nutrition Action Groups. More recently, in 2004, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Ofsted produced a report on primary school meals⁸ that found some good practice in relation to nutrition.

- In schools, there was rarely a coherent programme of food and nutrition education to build children’s knowledge and understanding of healthy eating in a planned and systematic way. “As a result, children’s knowledge of food and nutrition was generally poor and what they learned had little impact on what they chose to eat and drink, even when they had the opportunity to select from a range of options.”
- “The meals provided in most of the schools did not complement sufficiently the healthy eating messages that the teaching sought to convey.”

A Department for Education and Skills (DfES) / FSA report into secondary school meals, also released in 2004, concluded there was “a failure of the National Nutritional Standards and contract specifications to have a substantial positive influence on food choice”.⁹

Even now, there is a lot of uncertainty about what will be provided, and what local authorities and schools will be required to do. Most boroughs that we talked to in the course of this LDA project expressed a clear desire to know what they can expect, especially as changes are now imminent.

⁸ HMI (2004) *Starting early: Food and nutrition education of young children*. HMI 2292; www.ofsted.gov.uk

⁹ Department for Education and Skills / Food Standards Agency (2004) *School meals in secondary schools in England*. DfES RR557; www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/secondaryschoolmeals.pdf

The Department of Health's public health white paper (2004)¹⁰ included general commitments/expectations that:

- half of all schools will be healthy schools by 2006, with the rest working towards Healthy Schools status by 2009
- the Healthy Schools programme will focus particularly on key health priorities and will contribute directly to meeting national targets including those on childhood obesity.

The white paper says that government also wants to see all schools:

- "deliver clear and consistent messages about nutrition and healthy eating"
- "provide opportunities to learn about diet, nutrition, food safety and hygiene, food preparation and cooking as well as where food comes from"
- "actively promote healthy food and drink as part of an enjoyable and balanced diet and restrict the availability and promotion of other options."

In March 2005, the government announced that, that from September 2005 and over the next three years, schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) will be supported in transforming school meals,¹¹ with:

- £220 million new funding grants direct to schools and LEAs, to support minimum spending on ingredients of 50p per pupil per day for all primary schools, and 60p per pupil per day for all secondary schools, as well as providing increased training and working hours for school cooks
- £15 million to a School Food Trust to give independent support and advice to schools and parents to improve the standard of school meals
- tough minimum nutrition standards developed by an expert panel to be implemented in primary and secondary schools from September 2005, and becoming mandatory from September 2006
- proposals to enable parents to work with schools and the School Food Trust to improve the quality of their child's school meal, with a 'toolkit' for parents
- Ofsted to review the quality of school meals as part of regular school inspections from September 2005, and to perform detailed inspections with nutritionists of the nutritional content of school food in a sample of schools in every LEA
- new guidance for schools and LEAs in drawing up catering contracts to ensure healthy school meals services and healthy food in vending machines, tuck shops, or breakfast clubs
- a "ladder of qualifications" to meet the skills needs of all kitchen staff, from the basics of hygiene and nutrition through to more specialist preparation and cooking
- new or upgraded school kitchen facilities where fresh produce can be prepared and served will be a priority through the current school rebuilding and refurbishment programmes. The Government is investing £5.5bn in 2005-2006, rising to £6.3bn in 2007-2008, to improve secondary school buildings. Additional funding of £650 million for primary schools has already been announced for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

In addition, a report of a 'School Meals Nutritional Standards Pilot Scheme' in Northern Ireland is due to be published in September.¹² And since 2002, the Scottish Executive has been developing a whole school food approach for Scottish schools, in a programme called *Hungry for Success*.¹³

¹⁰ Department of Health. White Paper, *Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier*, Nov 2004

¹¹ By Education Secretary Ruth Kelly, see: http://dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2005_0044

¹² Contact Sam Gunning, Schools Administration Branch, Northern Ireland Department of Education; tel: 028 9127 9442

¹³ Scottish Executive (2002) *Hungry for Success: A whole school approach to school meals in Scotland* (final report of the Expert Panel on School Meals). Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

In the course of our background research for the LDA sustainable food procurement project, we found reference to several further components of school food policy in a Scrutiny Committee report from the London Borough of Richmond, published in June 2005.¹⁴ This hints at several additional requirements, although we have not established whether these are government commitments or informed speculation. Richmond's Scrutiny Committee reported several important points.

- "New school food regulations will be both nutrient and food group based."
- "The government is expected to announce that the cash cafeteria style of service used in the secondary schools may no longer be acceptable and a plated meal will have to be served."
- "£3,000 will be allocated to each primary and special school and £6,000 to each secondary school over a three-year period. This money will be for the food in school programmes but will not be 'ring fenced'."
- "An advisor will be appointed, via the School Food Trust, to each LEA to advise on food education, catering and healthy schools. It is understood that these appointments will be funded from a Big Lottery grant of £45m."
- "It is believed that, in the main, these appointments will come through local primary care trusts and will be nutritionists or dieticians."
- "It is not known how training for caterers will be funded or whether money will be allocated to pay for the hours that the training takes".

The above discussion summarises the governmental policy context relating to school meals. However, there are many organisations working on the development of better standards for school meals, for instance the Soil Association's *Food for Life*¹⁵ programme and Sustain's campaign for a Children's Food Bill.¹⁶

As well as policy developments directly relevant to school food, there is also a considerable body of work developing in relation to sustainable procurement and sustainability in the food industry in general, not least of which is the London Food Strategy coordinated by the Food Strategy Unit of the London Development Agency. A small selection of other current work relevant in this context is from:

- the Government Office for London: developing a centre for sustainable procurement excellence – Sustain is keeping in close contact with this work
- the Sustainable Development Commission and the Sustainable Consumption Roundtable in partnership with the National Consumer Council – Sustain and the Food Commission are involved in policy development with these organisations, and contributing on a consultancy and advisory capacity to their deliberations
- Defra's development of a Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (FISS)
- Defra's Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI)¹⁷
- IDeA: developing generic guidance on sustainable procurement.

Wherever appropriate, Sustain and the Food Commission have sought to supplement the work on the LDA project with contributions to bodies such as those mentioned above, hoping to ensure that practical advice on sustainable food procurement is supported by a useful policy framework. In Appendix VIII, we include a copy of Sustain's submission to Defra's consultation on the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy to illustrate this theme.

¹⁴ [http://cabnet2.richmond.gov.uk/Published/C00000167/M00001317/AI00008512/\\$EducationOSJune2005.doc.pdf](http://cabnet2.richmond.gov.uk/Published/C00000167/M00001317/AI00008512/$EducationOSJune2005.doc.pdf)

¹⁵ See: www.soilassociation.org.uk/web/sa/saweb.nsf/manuf/ffl.html

¹⁶ See: www.childrensfoodbill.org.uk

¹⁷ See: www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/

Given the complexity of the developing school food scene, we believe that it is absolutely critical that sustainability considerations are taken on as a part of this process, especially where they can be shown to provide health benefits as well as sustainability through, for example, commitment to fresh and seasonal foods, which will in turn tend to reduce storage times and food miles, enabling dealings with small-scale and local suppliers. We also believe that sustainability may get lost in the clamour, and needs an advocate or team of advocates to ensure that sustainability is integrated into school food provision. Our recommendations reflect these observations.

Working with Camden

We were lucky enough to start work with Camden LEA at a time when they were putting their school meal provision through a Best Value Review, and to work with enthusiastic staff ready to grasp new ideas (See comments on page 16, 'Choosing an LEA'). Even so, each step of the process has required considerable time and effort from Camden staff to keep the process on track, with support from Sustain staff to ensure that sustainability was considered at every stage, and we know that this is only the first stage in a long process with many potential pitfalls. To our knowledge, this is the first time that such an ambitious sustainable food project has been attempted in the UK with a Local Education Authority that has contracted its school meal service out to a private contractor.

Camden's new school meals contract

With this report, we have submitted a copy of Camden's new school food contract specifications, which will be put out for tender in autumn 2005. N.B. This document was not finalised by the deadline for the submission of this report to the LDA. The contract submitted to the LDA is therefore the latest draft, at 15th July 2005. We do not know if substantial changes will be made to this document. Camden staff plan to send a draft version to organisations interested in tendering for the work. A final version will be produced by 1st September 2005. The key component that has not been completed in the current draft is a section on product specifications for maximum fat, sugar and salt content of particular product categories (e.g. sausages). We helped Camden staff to write the contract specifications, integrating a whole-school food approach and sustainability considerations into the document. We do not describe this document as a 'model specification', but rather as the best progress possible at this time, given the realities of budgets, competing priorities, competitive tendering, staff acceptance and the Best Value Review process (and the fact that it is not yet complete). In our report to the LDA, we have also included comments on how such specifications might be developed to achieve the LDA's goal of integrating sustainable food into more of London's schools.

Camden's new school meals standard

The new Camden 'school meals standard' consists of three major components, which together form a requirement for their school meals contract. We helped Camden staff to develop this standard. As above, we do not describe this work as a 'model standard' but rather as the best progress possible at this time. Catering companies tendering for the Camden school meals contract will be contractually required to ensure that meals meet 'Camden's Standard for School Lunches', which consist of:

- guidance on menu planning and adopting a whole school meal approach (based on *'Hungry for Success – A whole school meal approach in Scotland'*;¹⁸ changes

¹⁸ Scottish Executive (2002) *Hungry for Success: A whole school approach to school meals in Scotland* (final report of the Expert Panel on School Meals). Edinburgh: Scottish Executive

have been made to make the menu guidance stronger, and to ensure that a whole school approach is specified);

- nutrient standards for 5-11 year olds and 11-18 year olds (taken from the Caroline Walker Trust 'Nutrient-based standards for school food', 2005).¹⁹
- Camden's School Meal Policy 'School Meals Service Objectives' (incorporating sustainability).

Camden's draft School Meal Policy (*see note above*) is reproduced in Appendix VII of this report, and is included in Camden's contract document, which will be put out for tender in September 2005 (advert placed 1st July). The contract also contains a statement of Camden's 'Preference for sustainable food', reproduced in Appendix VIII. This is an aspirational note which we helped Camden to devise. Best Value review team members have agreed to ask tendering organisations to quote a range of prices for providing different amounts or types of both conventional and sustainable food such as conventional, free-range or organic eggs. The statement of 'preference for sustainable food' helps Camden to define 'sustainable' for potential catering contractors and to indicate that they would like to work in partnership with a caterer to develop progressive targets on sustainability issues over a period of time.

LDA project team contact details

For enquiries on Sustainable Food Procurement, contact:

- Jeanette Longfield, Coordinator of Sustain; email: jeanette@sustainweb.org
 - Ben Reynolds, London Food Link project officer; email: ben@sustainweb.org
 - Kate Bowie, Sustainable Food Procurement project officer; kate@sustainweb.org
- Sustain: The alliance for better food & farming, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF; 020 7837 1228.

¹⁹ Caroline Walker Trust / National Heart Forum (2005) *Nutrient-based standards for school food: A summary of the standards and recommendations of the Caroline Walker Trust & National Heart Forum*

Section 1: Training and guidance for a Local Education Authority in London

What we did. In summary, during the LDA sustainable food procurement project:

- Sustain has worked closely with Camden Local Education Authority by:
 - becoming a member of the Best Value Review team
 - running a training seminar with LEA, school and catering staff
 - advising on how to integrate sustainability into contract specifications
 - helping to draft contract specifications
 - contributing to the development of the Camden school meals standard.

This has resulted in:

- sustainable food procurement being incorporated into the contract specifications for Camden LEA school meals, to be put out to tender autumn 2005
 - development of useful training materials that can inform future work on sustainable food procurement.
- Sustain also undertook a survey of all London LEAs²⁰ to gather information on:
 - initiatives that LEAs are conducting or planning, to increase sustainable food procurement and/or healthy eating
 - projects taking place in individual schools
 - attitudes and requests of parents, governors and head-teachers
 - what information or support LEAs would like in sourcing more sustainable food for school meals
 - what LEAs feel are the obstacles to increasing the amount of sustainable food
 - the current situation with the school meals contract in each LEA; who provides the food; when the contract is coming up for tender; cost per meal to pupils cost for ingredients; type of kitchens.

As a result of this work, we have:

- sorted boroughs according to their circumstances and timetable for contract renewal
 - submitted a priority list of recommendations to the LDA on how each borough and type of borough could be approached to increase the sustainability of their school food (see later in this report).
- Drawing on the experience with Camden, the survey of all London LEAs, and experience from related work such as the Hospital Food Project,²¹ Sustain has developed detailed advice and guidance for each stage of the sustainable food procurement process, presented in the body of this report. In our recommendations (see above), we have suggested that this should form the basis of a sustainable food procurement toolkit, probably in electronic format, developed in detailed consultation with catering and procurement practitioners, in conjunction with the employment of a sustainable food procurement team.

Work with Camden, and findings of the survey, are described in detail in the following pages.

²⁰ Note: Whilst we contacted every London LEA, we have not received information from all of them.

²¹ Hospital Food Project – a current Defra-funded project run by Sustain to promote sustainable food procurement in London’s hospitals. See: www.sustainweb.org

Choosing a Local Education Authority

Previous work in schools by Sustain has given us many connections with schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in London. Through the *Grab 5!* project²², in particular, we had good links with Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark, and they expressed an interest in working on the project. However, since our links were already well established, it was felt there was value in working with a new LEA, and both Camden and Greenwich were approached.

After meeting with representatives of both authorities, and following consultation with the Food Strategy Unit, it was agreed that we should work most closely with Camden, whilst maintaining good links with Greenwich. The main reason for not choosing Greenwich was their involvement in a series of television programmes *Jamie's School Dinners*, featuring the TV chef Jamie Oliver (broadcast February to March 2005, Channel 4). While successfully raising the profile of issues around food in schools and children's food education, this initiative has absorbed a great deal of staff time in Greenwich and it seemed very unlikely that there would be spare capacity to engage with the LDA project.

One of the key reasons for choosing Camden was that they had a single officer who could act as our liaison. Also, shortly after deciding to work with Camden, they announced they were carrying out a Best Value Review of the school meals service. This proved to be fortuitous timing, since the Best Value Review closely matched the timetable of the LDA project and has been identified as a key starting point for LEAs wanting to explore opportunities for increased sustainable food procurement. Sustain staff therefore joined the review team.

Project visits and other case studies

As part of the review process, the review team sought to broaden its understanding of the school meal provision in Camden and other London LEAs by site visits and meetings with key staff, summarised below:

Camden: We undertook two days of visits to Camden schools, including primary and secondary schools, on-site kitchens, regeneration kitchens (small-scale kitchens in schools that lack full facilities, where the majority of food is simply heated up on site), and dining centres (where the food cooked at a central site and transported in still warm and ready to eat).

We also visited schools in Ealing, Haringey, Kensington and Lambeth.

In addition to these visits, we have been in contact with many other examples of sustainable procurement in schools across the country. Some of these were presented as case studies at Camden's training seminar (see Appendix VI) and we plan to add these and other examples to the London Food Link website, to share the learning with London Food Link members. This material proved to be valuable in informing both our training seminar with Camden and the development of specifications and a new school food contract for Camden LEA (see below).

- Meetings with other relevant organisations

²² Grab 5! – a Lottery-funded project run by Sustain to promote fruit and vegetables consumption amongst 7-11 year olds, with a focus on low-income families. See: www.grab5.com

As well as becoming a member of Camden's Best Value Review team, we have also made links with other relevant organisations.

- A meeting was held in January attended by Healthy Euston Partnership, Camden Friends of the Earth, the local 5-a-day co-ordinator, the Sustainability Co-ordinator of the Environmental Policy team, and the sustainable procurement officer and the PCT dietitian from the review team. The Healthy Schools officer for Camden was unable to attend but we have kept her updated on progress.
- We have continued our involvement in Sustain's *Grab 5!* Project.²³ Over the past six months, we have worked with schools in the Bristol, East Midlands, Isle of Wight, Islington Knowsley, North Devon, Portsmouth, Taunton, Torbay, Shropshire and the Wirral, running courses for head-teachers, caterers, and school health workers aimed at equipping participants with the knowledge and confidence to implement a whole-school food approach to improving food in schools. We have gained valuable insights from the overlaps between this work and the LDA project that have assisted us in developing workable criteria for the school food standard for Camden.
- We have continued to contribute to the development of plans for a London Food Centre and regional food hubs. We mentioned these ideas to those London LEA survey participants who seemed most interested in wider food policy, and received a very positive response. Some procurement staff saw the need for some kind of group or coordinated purchasing to provide a stable market for UK farmers.
- We have continued to contribute to the development of ideas for a 'Little Green Tractor' assured food certification, being explored by the government's Sustainable Development Commission, on the understanding that sustainable procurement officers would benefit from certification that could summarise and assure sustainability criteria for food and ingredient supplies.
- Beyond Camden, we have also maintained contact with other organisations working on sustainable food procurement in schools, and all receive updates on this project via the London Food Links newsletter *Jellied Eel* and a sustainable procurement email update service – over 100 contacts, including schools, caterers, campaigners, researchers and a wide range of food and sustainability experts from London and the rest of the UK.

Background to school meals in Camden (information as of June 2005)

Camden's school meal service was provided by the Direct Service Organisation (DSO) until 1993, when it was put out to compulsory competitive tender. Since January 1994 the service has been run by a private contractor. Their contract began in April 2003, running for three years, with the option to extend for two years, so it is due to expire in March 2006.

At 60%, the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is among the highest in London. Some 1.4 million meals are provided each year through the contract, and only four of Camden's 60 schools have opted out of this main contract.

Camden's school catering has received a lot of negative media coverage in recent months, and it is sometimes characterised as epitomising the highly processed, nutritionally deficient foods served to children all over the country. Our visits to some schools showed that there are exceptions to the low standards, but many within Camden LEA said they felt criticisms were justified.

²³ Grab 5! – a Lottery-funded project run by Sustain to promote fruit and vegetables consumption amongst 7-11 year olds, with a focus on low-income families. See: www.grab5.com

This was the context to the LEA setting up a Best Value Review, with the intention of finding a provider who could meet their criteria for better quality school meals. The new contract starts in April 2006. This gave the LDA, through this contract with Sustain, an invaluable opportunity to help shape the process and outcome of a new school meals contract for almost 60 schools in Camden.

The process followed in Camden (and lessons learned)

The process followed in Camden is presented in detail in the following pages, and recommended as a model for the LDA of how to proceed with other London boroughs going through a Best Value Review process for their school meals provision. In summary, the process consists of:

- Step 1: Conducting a Best Value Review.
- Step 2: Drawing up a contract.
- Step 3: Awarding the contract.
- Step 4: Follow-up once the contract is awarded.

Step 1: Conducting a Best Value Review

Commentary on school meal provision in London boroughs, illustrates that every 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. Sustain has tracked and supported Camden as they have gone through this process, and it 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).

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. Camden therefore sought assistance from a dietician from the primary care trust. This also provided an opportunity for Sustain, acting on behalf of the LDA, to become an external advisor to Camden LEA's Best Value Review.

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.²⁴ Such schools are likely to require a higher level of support than LEA, and have greater need for external advisors to help them through the process.

Table 1: Members of Camden's 'Best Value Review' steering group
<i>Core team members</i>
Client Monitoring Officers, Education
Contracts & Finance Manager, Education
Interim Assistant Director, Education
Head of Property and Contracts, Education
<i>Members kept informed of progress</i>
Head of Tendering and Contracts, Sustainable Procurement Unit
Business Manager, Social Services
Transport Manager, Leisure & Community Services
<i>Member from other council department with particular sustainable procurement expertise</i>
Sustainable Procurement Officer, Sustainable Procurement Unit, Finance
<i>Members from outside organisations with nutrition and sustainable food expertise</i>
London Food Link / Sustain
Public Health Lead: Food and Nutrition, Camden & Islington Primary Care Trust
<i>Note: Government guidance recommends inviting in third parties to a Best Value Review, to give an external perspective. Camden involved a dietician from the PCT and sustainable food advisers from Sustain. Sustain feel this is good practice and something to be recommended.</i>

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

²⁴ There is specific guidance on this on the DfES website at: www.dfes.gov.uk/vfm/bvalue.shtml.

report submitted to the Executive. Relevant extracts from this report are shown in Appendix V; the full report is available on request.

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. Our survey and analysis of the circumstances of other LEAs, with expert input from other individuals and organisations, sheds light on this problem and we have given recommendations for next steps for the LDA later in this report.

- Meetings with providers

Camden's Best Value review team met with catering providers such as Scolarest and Serco, with the aim of assessing these providers' views and capacity on issues such as: provision of fresh, home-cooked food; purchase of organic and local food; transported meals; whole borough contracts versus smaller contracts, and staff training. In April, one company also arranged a tasting event for school and council representatives, introducing their "enhanced menus".

What we learned: 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, as suggested in our recommendations to the LDA, above. 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

With members of the Best Value review team, we visited several London boroughs, including Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Haringey, Kensington & Chelsea, and Lambeth. The aim of these visits was to observe how school meals are provided in other boroughs and to consider how they might inform decisions for provision in Camden. In Camden, we visited both primary and secondary schools that had on-site kitchens, regeneration kitchens (small-scale kitchens in schools that lack full facilities, where the majority of food is simply heated up on site), and dining centres (where the food is cooked at a central site and transported in still warm, ready to eat). We also visited:

- Thomas Fairchild School, which provides its catering service in-house, with 95% uptake and inclusion of organic items
- Kingsgate Primary School, which is piloting the contractor's "enhanced menu", seemingly with success.

What we learned: *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

As a Best Value advisor to Camden, we proposed that we should convene a stakeholder event for head-teachers, governors and councillors combining discussion and training elements. The aim was to discuss the importance of improving the sustainability of school meals and the need for their commitment and support.

After liaison with Camden LEA staff, the session was held in February and attracted 20 participants, including councillors, officers from the education department (including the Best Value Review team), school governors and a head-teacher. Participants discussed the idea of introducing long-term targets for future school meals providers, and the following were suggested.

- 100% meet the Caroline Walker Trust nutritional guidelines
- 75% unprocessed
- 50% local
- 30% certified organic
- 30% Fairtrade
- Better food education.

These figures are based on the 'Food for Life' targets of the Soil Association, except for the Fairtrade figure. This was included because Camden has recently become a 'Fairtrade borough', and this fits well with the Mayor's commitment to Fairtrade in London. The Best Value Review team became interested in using targets like these in the contract specifications, with the reservation that some catering firms might find such targets daunting. Workshops at the event allowed a deeper exploration of this issue and other obstacles, and how they might be overcome, and the discussions are summarised in Table 2 (below, taken from a note of the meeting).

<i>Obstacle</i>	<i>Solution</i>
Rigid specification discouraging catering companies for responding to the tender	Flexible specification to encourage companies to respond to the tender
Lack of understanding of the spec provided	Provide a clear specification
Finding suitable contractors, i.e. those concerned with food quality who are willing to buy local, Fairtrade, etc.	Providing a more attractive and flexible specification, and increasing the amount of money spent on meals to attract a number of contractors.
Lack of cooking skills (among staff used to cook processed foods) and lack of training. Disaffection of staff – undervalued and high turnover	Training staff, re-introducing traditional kitchens (would provide greater responsibility and, in turn, lead to increased job satisfaction among staff)
Lack of customer care – specifically, lack of interaction with children, no knowledge of healthy eating, de-skilled two tier workforce	Training for staff and mid-day staff supervisors
Lack of kitchen space or no kitchens	Regeneration kitchens – need less space. Main courses could be supplemented with fresh vegetables/fruit etc.
Cost of food and issues related to free school meals	More money needed to be spent on food
Increased costs. Extra money can be sought from school budgets but might be taken at	Increase prices to the individual. Ring-fence government funding for meals

the expense of other school costs, e.g. books	
Children's preference for unhealthy options	Whole-school approach to healthy eating through curriculum and by visiting local farms/gardens (cooks could also be involved in this process)
Excessive choice – many poor options	Limit choice – focus on quality rather than quantity
Lack of interest from children – recognition of parental influence	Cooks reinstating traditional choices and gradually getting parents involved
Ethnic variations – food should be relevant to the local population	Increased local flexibility in the contract
Provision of Halal food	Increased local flexibility in the contract
Traceability	Introduction of sustainable foods
Other obstacles identified, for which no specific solutions were identified (although discussions covered many issues relevant to these factors) were: the possibility of a price/quality trade-off; performance standards; contractor approach; seasonality; and challenges faced by schools opting out.	

As well as the case studies shown in Appendix VI, participants also received a copy of the Camden School Meal Services Review issues paper (see Appendix I). Time was allowed for discussion of the options outlined in this paper.

The seminar concluded with a presentation from Roger Sheard, Business Development Manager of Education Catering Services in Bradford, who explained how they are overcoming some of these obstacles and improving the sustainability of school food. (See case studies, Appendix VI). Participants reported that they found this case study especially useful, and responded positively to hearing that sometimes sustainable food can be cheaper (in this instance, it was from buying local meat). Participants were also interested in the catering company's role in educating children and catering staff about eating a balanced, healthy and sustainable diet.

Camden agreed that a second training session would be valuable, to work with catering staff to help them understand the principles and practice of sustainable catering. However, it seemed likely that the contract will change hands. Even though many catering staff remain when a contract changes to a new company, it was felt that a commitment to training from the company as well as the staff would be needed for the training to be worthwhile. Thus, it was agreed with Camden that a second training session would be put on hold until after the tendering process. Either Sustain or the LDA may be able to facilitate such a process at a later date.

What we learned: 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.

- Consultations with teachers, pupils and parents

A questionnaire was developed by the Best Value Review steering group, passed by the Consultative Board and then sent to the schools involved in the consultative process. The questions were also made available to all schools and parents in Camden via the council website. Steering group members also met groups of children in school to ask

them the questions verbally, as it was acknowledged that young children would not be able to respond to online or paper questionnaires. As summary of results from the survey is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary results of Camden’s survey of pupils, parents, head-teachers and teachers
<p><i>Survey of pupils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 586 Camden pupils took part; 65% said they have a school lunch. • 40% do not like the taste of the food; 36% thought there was not enough fresh or home-cooked food; 81% would like a hot cooked meal for lunch. • 58% want better food; 71% want environmentally friendly food, and 40% wanted better-cooked fresh foods. • Pasta, chicken and fresh fruit were chosen as the favourite food options, by around three-quarters of the respondents. <p><i>Quotes from pupils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “They just give me carbohydrates. They make me act up in the afternoon and as we have to go straight out to play after lunch, there is no time to let our food go down.” • “I think that my school meals should be as healthy as Jamie Oliver’s and that they should be cooked to his standard. I also think that the food in my school should be warm when I go inside the dinner hall to eat it.” • “We order school meals from Scolarest; the food isn’t good. I quit school meals.” • “There is too much fast food and not enough fresh food. Don’t get any fresh fruit.” <p>For full results, see: http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=94334942583</p>
<p><i>Parents Survey</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 393 Camden parents took part; 53% said their child has a school lunch. • 76% said there was too much convenience/processed food; 74% did not like the overall quality of the meals; and 68% thought the meals did not have enough nutritional value. • 91% thought that school meals should be good enough to be the main meal of the day; 97% thought schools should provide a hot cooked meal. • 46% were dissatisfied with the sustainability of ingredients. • 38% (the largest group) were prepared to pay up to £2 for a meal. • The majority would spend a lot more on the meals (up to £2). • 89% wished to see the introduction of organic and/or local sustainable food, even if the meal price had to rise. <p><i>Quotes from parents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Should all be cooked from natural, fresh ingredients, sourced as locally as possible. Should provide a hot and healthy option for children as well as a service that is trusted by their parents.” • “Improve all school dinners in Camden by ending the contract with Scolarest. Give contract to company who delivers less choice but better quality.” • “My nursery child used to enjoy a variety of foods but now often demands high fat, high sugar food after returning from school. We also see more tantrums and poor behaviour. Some of the choices available are good but when faced with spaghetti hoops and salad or cake and fruit children need assistance to make the right choices and understand how this impacts on their long term health.” • “The menus need to have less processed food, with a much greater proportion of fresh whole foods – I have no idea why chips, nuggets and cakes are on the menu regularly – their nutritional value is very limited.” • “The current meals service is appalling. My son suffers from colitis, a debilitating gastro-intestinal complaint, and cannot possibly eat the food served in school, even

though I am entitled to free school meals! Therefore I have to provide a nutritious packed lunch.”

- School meals should be given back to the local authority. Fresh vegetables and non processed meat should be cooked in the school kitchens,, for many children this is the only meal that they have each day.”
- “I think that a major improvement in the school meals service requires a return to in house provision where all monies are spent on the service and none goes into the pockets of a private company. The top priority for school meals should be what kind of food is best for children in terms of health, but also in terms of what type of food helps them learn. There is much evidence that certain types of food hinder learning and that others promote learning. Establishing this and acting on it should be the priority when providing food in a place of learning.”

For full results, see: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=94000777441>

Head-teachers survey

- A total of 42 head-teachers took part in the survey.
- 79% said there was too much convenience/processed food.
- 97% thought that school meals should be good enough to be the main meal of the day; 91% thought schools should provide a hot cooked meal.
- Head-teachers were also concerned about the presentation of food.
- Head-teachers thought parents would pay up to £1.70 for a meal.
- 100% wanted to see more fresh and home-cooked food on offer; 76% wished to see the introduction of organic and/or local sustainable food, even if the meal price had to rise.

Quotes from head-teachers

- “The quality of school meals are appalling; you should take note of Jamie Oliver’s programme. Isn’t it time that children received real food, instead of cheap processed or poorly cooked food? There is no argument to support feeding children rubbish!”
- “It really is time for change. So many of us are seriously looking for alternative provision if the LEA doesn’t act when this contract is renewed. Brookfield have shown what is possible, and how some costs can be saved – less choice, two-week cycle. Camden should take a national lead and opt out of this major corporate contract and make a stand for the nation’s future health.”
- “More training needed in cooking, presentation, hygiene and nutritional value of food. Staff to have a better understanding of the needs of the pupils, especially in special schools. Complete ban on cheap junk food.”
- “We meet with Scolarest staff frequently- a recent change in cook has notably improved matters. However, I don’t believe they can or will deliver sufficient improvement under this contract nor, indeed, under their modus operandi.”

For full results, see: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=92647619231>

Class teachers survey

- A total of 63 class teachers took part in the survey.
- 64% said there was too much convenience/processed food.
- 96% thought that school meals should be good enough to be the main meal of the day; 98% thought schools should provide a hot cooked meal.
- Class teachers were mainly concerned with overall food quality, and that food should be fresher and less processed.
- 40% of class teachers thought parents would pay up to £2.00 for a meal; 32% that parents would pay up to £1.50.
- 98% wanted to see more fresh and home-cooked food on offer; 74% wished to see the introduction of organic and/or local sustainable food, even if the meal price had to rise.

Quotes from teachers

- “The staff that serve the food seem to have no idea of its content. For example, I asked if an unidentifiable meal contained wheat and was assured it did not. When I started to eat it I found that it contained pasta. The member of staff was surprised to learn that pasta contains wheat. If they received training in the subject it would benefit both their professional development and the consumer.”
- “Children rarely choose the ‘home-cooked’ version or vegetables. Our cooks don’t even offer them half of the time. We need a limited choice of healthier options cooked fresh on the premises; no processed food; real cheese and potatoes.”
- “I believe that funding will need to rise to provide the improved quality that is being widely expected. I think that the current debate is overdue and that children need to have daily access to healthy food. Surely healthy eating is a very important part of their education; it impacts directly on their learning.”

For full results, see: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/Report.asp?U=103587541871>

What we learned: This survey provided extremely useful information and we would highly recommend that they are a part of any Best Value review. The presentation of findings on an easy-to-use website was also valuable. The answers given to the questions about sustainable food 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

The Best Value Review team will conduct an equalities impact assessment, probably by noting the take-up of the catering service in two schools and comparing it to the schools’ ethnic population.

- Review of kitchen facilities

Feasibility studies were carried out on the Camden dining centres (hotplate style service areas where ready prepared foods from a central production kitchen can be served to customers) to establish a figure for conversion into regeneration kitchens (small-scale kitchens where some food preparation can take place, including re-heating of pre-prepared food). Visits to regeneration kitchens in another borough resulted in members of the Best Value Review team concluding that they are preferable to dining centres when used to cook fresh food, for instance boiling pasta and steaming vegetables. From discussions with other boroughs, it has become apparent that these kitchens are more commonly called “mini-kitchens” now rather than “regeneration kitchens”, reflecting that they are increasingly being used for some cooking. Whilst proper kitchens are preferable, as they are likely to have more space and equipment for food preparation, mini-kitchens can be seen as progress compared to transported pre-prepared meals.

What we learned: *Sustain would recommend that other councils also 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, as detailed in our recommendations to the LDA (see above).*

- Reporting to governors and parents

School governors and heads were kept informed of the progress of the review via a meeting on 22nd April.

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

Having completed the activities detailed above, Camden Best Value review team were able to reach conclusions about how to take the school meal service forward. They presented a report to the borough's Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Executive containing recommendations for action – for which it sought, and received, approval. The recommendations are shown in Table 4.

The report summarised the results and conclusions of the review of the school meals service and made recommendations for the new contract in areas covering: service type; food quality and nutrition; food costs and other costs; meal prices; transported meals; contract structure and the procurement process for the new contract. In addition, the report made recommendations for the adoption of an interim package of service improvements to the current contract prior to re-tendering. The report was brought to the Executive in accordance with Contract Standing Order 3.2 which requires that the Executive must agree the contract award strategy for all proposed revenue contracts of £500,000 or more.

Table 4: Recommendations put to Camden's Overview & Scrutiny Executive by the Best Value Review team

Note: Underlined text highlights how certain factors were addressed by the Best Value Review team to pave the way for increased healthy and sustainable food procurement in Camden's school food provision.

That the new school meals contract to be tendered to start on 1st April 2006 should contain the following key requirements for delivery via the procurement strategy.

1. The school meal should continue to be adequate in quality and quantity to be the main meal of the day and that it should be based on a hot cooked meal service offering two main course choices.
2. The core food and nutrition specification should be based around the requirements set out in section 4 of this report and that the new catering service contract should contain development targets for the introduction of organic and/or sustainable food ingredients over the life of the new contract and as costs/resources allow.
3. The core food specification should require meals and ingredients requiring spending in the range of 60-70p on food items together with associated staff hours allowances and skills training.
4. A paid meal price of £1.70p should be used as a guide level during the procurement process for the new contract and any increase beyond this level to support the enhanced service contract in the longer term will be brought back to the Executive for decision as part of the construction of the 2006-2007 education budget in the spring of 2006.
5. A phased programme for the installation of regeneration kitchens is implemented to commence during the life of the current contract and following through into the new contract from April 2006 as described in the report.
6. The service should continue to be delivered via a contract with an external catering provider retaining the current arrangement of a contract with a three year initial term which can be extended by up to two years.
7. The outline procurement timetable and tender appraisal criteria be approved.
8. The new contract should be a single contract covering all primary and secondary schools wishing to be covered but that individual contract proposals for secondary

schools be invited.

9. The new contract should be awarded via a restricted procedure following an advertised invitation against a published core specification.
10. The Executive should decide either that Halal provision should continue to be offered on a school by school basis subject to demand and following consultation with governors and parents or offered as standard throughout the service.
11. The interim improvement programme as described in section 11 of the report be approved and paid for from a one-off use of Council general balances. This will be reviewed when the 2004/2005 accounts are closed and in the light of the final outturn.
12. Full year costs should be built into discussions on the schools block within the 2006-2007 education budget following discussions with schools and the Schools Forum.

Having had these recommendations approved by the borough's Overview & Scrutiny Executive, Camden LEA then moved onto drawing up the specifications for the new contract, once again advised by the Sustain LDA project team.

Step 2: Drawing up the contract

Sustain staff worked in detail with Camden LEA staff to transform the Best Value Review recommendations into a workable contract, school meal standard and specifications, due to be put out to tender in autumn 2005. We helped Camden staff to write the contract specifications, integrating a whole-school food approach and sustainability considerations into the document. N.B. This document was not finalised by the deadline for the submission of this report to the LDA. The contract submitted to the LDA is therefore the latest draft, at 15th July, 2005. We do not know if substantial changes will be made to this document, but Camden staff are happy that this draft be shared with the LDA. Camden staff plan to send a draft version to organisations interested in tendering for the work. A final version will be produced by 1st September 2005. The key component that has not been completed in the current draft is a section on product specifications for maximum fat, sugar and salt content of particular product categories (e.g. sausages). Camden LEA aims to award the contract in December 2005/January 2006, for the contract to commence in April 2006 (see Table 5).

Executive approval	25 May 2005
Advert	1 July
Visit to schools by Potential tenderers	From 4 July onwards
Draft Specification and Conditions of Contract	8 July
Consultation with potential tenderers re specification and conditions of contract	From 15 July onwards
Deadline for expression of interest	5 August
Invitation to tender	1 September
Receipt of tenders/proposals	14 October
Evaluation	From 17 October onwards
Award of contract	December
Start of new contract	1 st April, 2006

For the purposes of this report to the LDA, we do not describe this document as a 'model specification', but rather as the best progress possible at this time, given the realities of budgets, competing priorities, competitive tendering, staff acceptance and the Best Value Review process. We include a commentary, in Table 6 (below), on how

such specifications might be developed to achieve the LDA's goal of integrating more sustainably produced food into London's school meals.

- 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, seasonal food with limited transport time will generally favour more locally produced food.

- Health and sustainability in Camden's contract and school meals standard

The new Camden 'school meals standard' consists of three major components, which together form the requirements for their school meals contract. We helped Camden staff to develop this standard. As above, we do not describe this work as a 'model standard' but rather as the best progress possible at this time. Catering companies tendering for the Camden school meals contract will be contractually required to ensure that meals meet 'Camden's Standard for School Lunches', which consist of:

1. Guidance on menu planning and adopting a whole school meal approach (adapted from '*Hungry for Success – A whole school meal approach in Scotland*');
2. Nutrient standards for 5-11 year olds and 11-18 year olds (taken from the Caroline Walker Trust '*Nutrient-based standards for school food*', 2005).
3. Camden's 'School Meals Service Objectives' (incorporating sustainability).

Camden's 'School Meals Policy' statement is reproduced in Appendix VII of this report, and is included in Camden's contract document, which will be put out for tender in

September 2005. The contract also contains a statement of Camden’s ‘Preference for sustainable food’, reproduced in Appendix VIII. This is an aspirational note which we helped Camden to devise. Members of the Best Value review team have agreed to ask tendering organisations to quote a range of prices for providing different amounts or types of both conventional and sustainable food (e.g. conventional, free-range or organic eggs). The statement of ‘preference for sustainable food’ helps Camden to define ‘sustainable’ for potential catering contractors and to indicate that they would like to work in partnership with a caterer to develop progressive targets on sustainability issues over a period of time.

Table 6: Commentary on the Camden school meals standard and contract
<i>Comments on the current draft contract and school meals standard (15th July, 2005)</i>
<p>In Camden LEA’s process of drawing up a school meals standard and contract, the key areas in which we have sought to have an influence, to improve the sustainability of Camden’s school meals, are as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of sustainability targets, as part of Camden’s ‘School Meals Policy’ (see Appendix VII), which form one of three elements of ‘Camden’s Standard for School Lunches’. • A statement on Camden’s ‘Preference for sustainable food’ (see Appendix VIII); the contractor will be required to develop targets that move towards those of the Soil Association’s ‘Food for Life’ programme. • Woven throughout the contract are elements that contribute to a definition of ‘fresh’ and ‘unprocessed’, incorporating a local element without explicitly saying so. • There is now 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. • In the product specifications, the requirements for meat, chicken and turkey now say “...shall 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” (and in the appendix to the contract ‘preference for sustainable food,’ (see also Appendix VIII) the text explains that if they can show evidence of superior sustainability, these will be preferred). • Fairtrade products are mentioned as a preference for hospitality events. • A statement on GM 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. • A request for the tendering organisations to propose how they will develop the sustainability targets, including how they will be implemented and monitored. <p>In addition, Camden staff have put considerable effort into improving the health qualities of their food specification. For instance they are continuing to amend the draft specifications, seeking to require that the contractor offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A major focus on the whole-school approach, with suggestions given for how the catering service can support the curriculum, promote healthy options, etc • a two-choice menu (rather than three or more as at present) • water and wholemeal bread available every day, free of charge • suggestions for menu planning stronger than those put forward in <i>Hungry for Success</i> (e.g. the only processed products allowed are sausages and fish fingers and each of these only once a fortnight, except for a few specified processed foods such as bread)

- all food must be fresh, except for a few specified products such as frozen vegetables and fruit and canned tomatoes
- maximum salt, fat and sugar levels will be specified for the meat and fish products (fish fingers and sausages).

There is also a training requirement to help staff meet these objectives.

Other areas that could have been addressed

The following comments give thoughts on what other areas could have been addressed, were it not for competing priorities and the realities of the competitive tender process. For instance:

- more clarity is needed with regards to the definition of ‘unprocessed’ and ‘fresh’ – we have submitted further comments to Camden on this theme
- there has probably been too little discussion of how the targets will be monitored, and this is an area also being explored (although as yet not resolved) by the Soil Association in its *Food for Life* programme
- more ambitious changes could have been demanded for secondary schools, for instance a cashless system, and more suggestions/requirements for improving the service in both primary and secondary, for example replacement of airline plates with conventional plates and bowls
- the contract could contain more details on training
- in the product specifications, there could have been 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, such as milk
 - use of Class I fruit and vegetables to be downgraded to Class II to allow for less wasteful production (which may be incorporated into the next draft of the specifications); and specifying variety and seasonality
 - sample menus to better reflect sustainability (e.g. by being more seasonal).

Table 7: Suggestions for local authorities to strengthen their procedure and ensure they get the catering service they want

Note: The following suggestions were drawn up after discussion with procurement, contracts and catering staff and Healthy Schools coordinators from other London LEAs.

Join a client catering group

- A client catering group for catering teams/contracts staff from the LEAs can prove very useful for monitoring the cost of meals, sharing experiences of sustainable food procurement, and potentially arranging for joint purchasing.

Examine other school meal standards for suggested tender specifications

The school meal specifications drawn up with Camden as part of the Best Value Review and re-tendering processes, in discussion with Sustain, are one such example (see separate document, but also Appendix VII and VIII for extracts relating to sustainability). Useful sample specifications would include the following.

- Menu planning guidelines and nutritional requirements.
- Sustainable food commitments (see at the end of this table, under: ‘Consider issues related to sustainable food procurement and how obstacles can be overcome’ for more suggestions on this theme).
- A requirement for training in healthy eating and cooking skills.
- A requirement to adopt a whole school approach. The providers should be expected to work with the school, supporting activities that promote food and healthy eating, for example with promotions of healthy options; food promotions at school events; welcoming parents to taste school meals; and participation in

School Nutrition Action Groups, Healthy Schools forums and school councils, or equivalent.

- A requirement to develop and implement monitoring. Monitoring is key, including asking for monthly stock-takes to check that the amount agreed is, in fact, being spent on ingredients. This needs to be set up clearly in the contract. Appropriate evaluation of new provision, and evaluated pilot projects (such as trials of new food products) need to be implemented right from the start, to help both caterer and client gain an understanding of what works and what doesn't work. Such monitoring and evaluation can also help schools and LEAs to justify their judgement that sustainable food is good value even if it costs a bit more.
 - For example, Bristol City Council, as they undertake a *Food for Life* pilot project with the Soil Association, are measuring, and monitoring over time: kitchen waste; food unit costs; the amount of processed, local and organic food used; uptake; quality of life indicators; children's behaviour.

Be wary of asking for too much in the contracts

- Some boroughs have experienced issuing demanding tenders that no contractors or only one or two apply for. Compromises may have to be made to the provision desired or a period of difficulty follows when individual schools have to sort out their own contracts.

Make it clear it will be a partnership & consider advertising the contract as a negotiated process

- Working in partnership is important for a smooth running service.

Consider breaking the contracts into smaller lots

- Breaking the contracts into small lots can enable smaller companies to tender. Schools are increasingly expected to work in 'cluster' groups so different companies could provide for different clusters. One potential problem with smaller contracts is that, if they cater for a smaller number of schools and a lot of these schools are small schools, they may be less economically viable.
- With big contracts the bigger schools can accommodate the smaller schools but with smaller contracts they may not be happy to do this. By splitting the contract into two, there is more flexibility if the providers fail to provide a service to the required standards.

Consider issues related to sustainable food procurement and how obstacles can be overcome

It may well be that the council, councillors, head-teachers, governors and parents have all expressed some level of commitment to including sustainable food in the school meals service. There are many issues that need to be addressed to turn this commitment into a reality. It might be worthwhile holding some kind of event for all stakeholders to explore these issues before getting to Best Value Review, negotiation or contract stage. Such issues included are detailed below.

- *Cost:* Sustainable food (local, organic, higher production standards, less processed, free-range eggs, fair trade, etc.) can cost more than conventionally produced food. Hopefully, enough money has been committed to the new school meals service to enable use of better quality ingredients and meet at least some of the associated higher cost. Extra costs can be reduced by considering reducing the amount of meat provided, buying local produce when it is in season, specifying for Grade II produce rather than Grade I, taking into account whole life costs or joint purchasing with another agency or school. If additional funds are not available, providers could at very least be required to use and develop menus based on seasonal produce (i.e. produce available in line with UK seasons).

- Councils that have successfully integrated sustainability into their school meals services have thought creatively how they can make money to accommodate extra expenditure. For instance, Jeanette Orrey, in St Peter's Primary, Nottinghamshire, provides a senior citizen lunch club and sells bread (made in school) at the local post office. Kay Knight of South Gloucestershire County Council combined the cleaning contract with the catering contract and puts all the money made from cleaning into catering.
- *Lack of skills* amongst kitchen staff to cook using fresh, raw ingredients and plan seasonal menus. Training needs need to be met.
- *Lack of kitchen equipment*. Consideration needs to be given to what investment is needed.
- *EU procurement laws*. The main (or perceived) barrier to sustainable food in EU procurement is the inability to specify local food. However, this obstacle can be overcome with careful wording (e.g. requesting fresh and seasonal produce) as demonstrated in the Camden School Meal Standard and contract (submitted as a separate document); and by the award criteria used (using Best Value criteria but weighting award evaluation criteria on quality and price by a ratio of, for example 60:40).
- *Lack of supply*. The process of sustainable procurement requires building sustainable markets and confidence between suppliers and caterers. This issue is addressed to some extent in the recommendations to the LDA, but it is important for contractors to be aware of the supply of the particular food they are specifying (e.g. local vegetables), and to discuss their needs early on with the potential providers. It is strongly advised that links are made with local producers, distributors and processors early on, to assess their capacity and to convey the authority's aims; to consider breaking the contract into lots; to consider collaborating with other council departments and other councils; to specify for variants if necessary; and to set realistic development targets.

Step 3: Awarding the contract

Because our contract with the LDA is now complete, Sustain will not be able to offer formal support to Camden as they take their contract through to the tender and contract award stage. However, we are keen to ensure that Camden achieves a satisfactory outcome, and will offer what help and support we can on an informal basis. We will report back to the LDA as appropriate.

A few comments we have received from other LEAs on the subject of awarding contracts may act as a note of caution for Camden. Other LEA procurement staff have said that LEA staff should be wary of the 'gloss' or 'spin' that some catering companies can put on their tender, by "talking a good show", and offering investment that goes towards cosmetic attractions such as front of house appearance, posters, etc., rather than to equipment. Hence the need for well thought through specifications, a well negotiated contract, and an inbuilt system of monitoring and review.

Step 4: Follow-up once the contract is awarded

As with step 3, Sustain's contract with the LDA came to an end before Camden got to this stage. The following suggestions were received from staff in other LEAs.

Table 8: Suggestions for Council contracts teams who school meals are provided by both DSOs and private companies

Note: The following suggestions were drawn up after discussion with procurement, catering and contracts staff and Healthy Schools coordinators from London LEAs.

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. The Head at one primary school we spoke to who had taken the service on in-house described this problem as "an absolute nightmare" (see *training* suggestion below).
- 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 the following.

- 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. In Bath and North East Somerset, for instance, this approach has been successfully encouraged as part of a pilot Food for Life project in some schools (see Appendix VI).

- 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, 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.

Section 2: Applying the lessons learned to other London Local Education Authorities

Summary

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.²⁵ 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:

²⁵ 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.

Boroughs to work with first

Boroughs with catering departments that receive some money from the council are better off than catering departments that don't. They are more likely to have better kitchen facilities and less likely to have to take a proportion of the meal price to invest in facilities.

At the special request of the LDA, we tried to find out the styles of kitchen in each borough had – either a kitchen for cooking meals on-site; a regeneration kitchen; a production kitchen (i.e. cooking meals on-site and for other schools); or no kitchen (being a dining centre with transported meals). It was felt that this information would be useful as it could inform an assessment of which boroughs were in greatest need of kitchen investment. However, the information proved to be very hard to obtain and sometimes contradictory, due to the fact that this information is not necessarily kept or updated centrally, and due to the limited time available.

Out of 33 boroughs, 12 provide their school meals through a DSO, 1 has a DSO arrangement for secondary schools but not for primary schools, 13 provide school meals through contracts with private providers and six have delegated all responsibility for school meal provision to the schools themselves. Schools in these boroughs, either run the service in-house or have independent contracts with private companies. The information for two boroughs is unknown. It should be noted that, in all LEAs, some schools will have opted out of the council provision, making their own arrangements.

If the LDA decides to approach particular boroughs about sustainable food procurement it is suggested that the following boroughs are approached first:

All boroughs which have DSO provision. There is more flexibility with a DSO in terms of supply, and more opportunities to make change during the life of a contract. Examples of good practice (see case studies, Appendix VI) are more likely to be where there is in-house council provision. Out of DSOs in London, some will be more receptive and keen on considering sustainable food procurement than others. Councils with DSO provision are not required to put their service out to re-tender at the end of a contract term. However, they will still review their contracts at this time and it is then that they may be more interested in exploring opportunities for sustainable food.

Some boroughs that have contracted out their school meals service will also be worth approaching early on as they have expressed an interest in sustainable food procurement.

Schools that have no support from their local authority are likely to need and/or be very receptive to advice and support for improving their school meals and sustainable food procurement. Consideration should therefore be given to all schools in these six boroughs, and indeed schools which have opted out of council provision in other boroughs. However, it may be difficult to reach all these schools.

Appendices

APPENDIX I: Camden School Meals Service Review – issues paper

Note: This document was developed by the Best Value Review team to frame discussions of the integration of sustainable food into Camden's school food.

Current Position (as of Feb 2005)

The service review of school meals has been progressing through the autumn term 2004 and the aim is to report to the Executive during May 2005 with proposals for a revised service offer and tender strategy for the new contract. The tendering process will take place in the second half of 2005 with the new contract starting on 1st April 2006.

A number of key issues have arisen from the work undertaken so far which will need to be addressed during the remainder of the review. This will enable recommendations to be made to the Executive for the outcome of the review and tendering strategy for the new contract. This paper outlines those issues for comment and discussion.

Issues

Service type is a key issue. The current service is based around a hot meal with a two or three choice main course, and a sweet course with fruit alternatives. Salad and bread are also required to be available. The aim is to provide pupils with the main meal of the day. There appears to be consensus that this is the type of service which is required to carry on, however it is important to confirm that the Council is still supportive of that approach.

Food Quality is seen as probably the most important issue. There is a need to improve the quality of the food served together with its cooking and presentation. There appears to be strong support amongst schools for this. Linked to that is a desire to see a reduction in the use of processed food items and overall to improve the consistency of the current service. All of these matters have implications for the cost and organisation of the service and the prices charged.

Food Costs Informal information from other Councils and contractors suggests that the desirable level of food allowance should be in the 60p - 70p range. This would have significant financial implications for the Council.

In relation to free meals, as they are a legal entitlement for pupils who qualify then the whole extra cost will fall on the Council/schools. For paid meals the figures above assume no increase in price charged to parents. However the extra cost could be offset to some extent or in total if the price were increased.

Meal Price will be affected by the decisions on food quality. Feedback so far is that schools and parents would be willing to pay more for a higher quality meal delivered to a consistent standard. The meal prices in London boroughs range from £1.35p to £1.85p. There would therefore appear to be scope for a price increase to offset some additional costs.

Other costs will also arise from a higher quality of service. A move towards greater use of fresh food and cooking will require training the workforce, generating costs for the contractor which will be passed on via the contract price. Information from other contracts also shows that there is a move to increasing staff wage rates beyond the

minimum level as a recruitment and retention measure to ensure a stable and well-motivated workforce.

Transported meals are not seen as generally providing the same quality of meals as those cooked on the premises. The main issue here is the number of schools who do not have their own kitchens and do not have the space to set one up. This leads to meals being cooked early in the day for transport to other schools, which results in a lower quality of meals. One possible solution is the installation of regeneration kitchens, which have been set up in three schools so far as pilot schemes. This enables the production of some fresh food on the premises and use of frozen items. There are however capital costs to be met with a programme covering all schools without kitchens. The change would also impact on the Council mail service, which operates vehicles used for meals.

Contract structure decisions will be required. This will include how long the contract will be (currently 3 years + 2 years optional extension) and whether we continue to offer a single borough wide service contract or seek some other arrangement. Most London boroughs appear to have single borough wide contracts for their centrally operated service, although some schools operate outside of that structure either with single school contracts with their own providers or by employing their own staff.

Questions

1. What service type does the Council want for school meals - traditional main meal or some other option?
2. What is our approach to the food quality issues in the light of the likely scale of extra costs?
3. What is the right price for a school meal in Camden?
4. Is the Council prepared to accept higher staff costs if that is required to recruit, retain and train the workforce required for a higher quality service? What is the attitude of schools towards this and will they agree to the allocation of the required funding?
5. Do schools want to move to regeneration kitchens where possible?
6. Is the Council able to deliver the capital required for regeneration kitchens and deal with the impact on the transport service?
7. How long should the new contract be? Should we be looking at other service models?
8. Are there any other major issues?

APPENDIX II: Programme for Camden school meals seminar, February 2005

School meals in Camden – what's on the menu?

Friday 4th February, 2005

Conference Room, Crowndale Centre, 218-220 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BD

Objectives

- To look at the current school meals service in Camden.
 - To examine key issues and options arising so far in the service review of school meals and implications for the Council and stakeholders.
 - To explore opportunities for sourcing sustainable food for school meals in Camden within future service arrangements.
 - To provide recommendations to the service review.
-

Agenda

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 12.30-1.30 | Registration and lunch |
| 1.30-1.45 | Introductions and outline of the afternoon |
| 1.45-2.05 | School meals in Camden
Current provision
Brief overview of school meal provision (legal responsibilities and options for provision)
Best Value Review – issues, implications and options |
| 2.05-2.20 | The case for sustainable food
Better for learning, the local economy, health, the environment and animal welfare, taste, variety and cultural richness |
| 2.20-3.00 | Discussion: Obstacles and solutions to improving school meals |
| 3.00-3.10 | Refreshment break |
| 3.10-3.50 | Examples of LEAs that procure sustainable food
Presentation by Roger Sheard, Education Contract Services Bradford |
| 3.50-4.50 | Options for future service
Discussion and recommendations from the group |
| 4.50-5.00 | Summary and close |

APPENDIX III: Support materials – Making the case for sustainable food

Note: This document was used as a discussion point, and to help the Best Value Review team see how they could make the case for specifying more sustainable food.

Sustainable food procurement: The case for sustainable food

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

Health

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.²⁶
- 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 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.

²⁶ *Food Magazine* No. 50, published by the Food Commission

- 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

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

The potential benefits of sustainable, localised food systems to local economies and communities are listed below.

- 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

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

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

Food for Life targets

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.

London case study: Kensington LEA is one authority that has stipulated the use of certain categories of organic produce in its school meals, from April 2005.

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.

London case study: Waltham Forest LEA has in-house catering gets supplies from New Spitalfields market. They ask suppliers to use British/local produce when available at a reasonable cost. This is clearly easiest when the produce is in season. To support this

purchasing they try to make the menu reflect seasonal changes where possible. They have found that by using more fresh ingredients (70%), the service has improved in recent years.

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.

London case study: Harrison's catering company, which operates the catering for Ealing LEA (amongst other London boroughs) have made a commitment to using 60-65% fresh ingredients. They now spend 70p on ingredients (out of £1.65 charge per meal). The better quality has meant that despite the price rise from £1.50, there has still been increased uptake of school meals, and they expect to grow even more in the next few years.

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'.

Fairtrade

Although it is not a Food for Life target, it is worth mentioning the subject of Fairtrade. This is something that Camden has committed to in a variety of sectors. With schools, much of the more commonly available Fairtrade produce like tea, coffee and chocolate are not applicable to school catering, although they might be relevant as options at secondary school. Other products like bananas could be more relevant, but there are very few examples of schools bringing Fairtrade produce into the school meals. Some schools do have Fairtrade vending machines. However, there are an increasing number of staple Fairtrade products coming onto the market, such as fruit juice, rice, dried fruit and nuts. This is a rapidly developing sector.

Finding out more

There has been some support from the Best Value Review team for these targets. Some are more achievable than others in the short term.

Is this something that everyone here would see Camden aiming for? We would like your feedback on this at the options stage at the end of the day.

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.

APPENDIX IV: Support materials – Specifying more sustainable products

Note: This document was used as a discussion point, and to help Camden LEA procurement and catering staff explore what criteria could be considered for specifying more sustainable food.

Sustainable food procurement: Specifying more sustainable products

What sorts of questions will you need to ask about any current food products 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 the following.

- 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:

- 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.

APPENDIX V: Camden BVR team report to Overview & Scrutiny Executive, May 2005

Note: This document (extracts reproduced here) is the report from Camden's Best Value Review team (Director of Education) to Camden's Overview & Scrutiny Executive, May 2005.

School meals service review & tendering strategy (ED/2005/6)

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The current school meals service is delivered through a contract with Scolarest, part of the Compass group, awarded from 1st April 2003 with an initial three year term expiring on 31st March 2006 which can be extended by the Council for a further two years. The contract covers 40 primary schools four special schools and four secondary schools. There has been significant dissatisfaction with the quality and overall performance of the service over the last two years. Although service improvements have been obtained in some schools there remains an underlying level of dissatisfaction and the service continues to perform at a level below the expectation of schools and parents as well as the Education Department. For these reasons it was decided to conduct a full review of the service prior to re-tendering to ensure that future service arrangements meet the expectations of the Council, schools and service users and require a higher level of performance from the contractor.

This report summarises the results and conclusions of the review of the school meals service and makes recommendations for the new contract in areas covering service type, food quality and nutrition, food costs and other costs, meal prices, transported meals, contract structure and the procurement process for the new contract. In addition the report also makes recommendations for the adoption of an interim package of service improvements to the current contract prior to re-tendering. The report is being brought to the Executive in accordance with Contract Standing Order 3.2 which requires that the Executive must agree the contract award strategy for all proposed revenue contracts of £500,000 or more.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. That OSC note and comment on the report.

Executive

That the new school meals contract to be tendered to start on 1st April 2006 should contain the following key requirements for delivery via the procurement strategy.

1. The school meal should continue to be adequate in quality and quantity to be the main meal of the day and that it should be based on a hot cooked meal service offering two main course choices.
2. The core food and nutrition specification should be based around the requirements set out in section 4 of this report and that the new catering service contract should contain development targets for the introduction of organic and/or sustainable food ingredients over the life of the new contract and as costs/resources allow.
3. The core food specification should require meals and ingredients requiring spending in the range of 60p – 70p on food items together with associated staff hours allowances and skills training.
4. A paid meal price of £1.70p should be used as a guide level during the procurement process for the new contract and any increase beyond this level to support the enhanced service contract in the longer term will be brought back to the Executive

for decision as part of the construction of the 2006-2007 education budget in the spring of 2006.

5. A phased programme for the installation of regeneration kitchens is implemented to commence during the life of the current contract and following through into the new contract from April 2006 as described in the report.
6. The service should continue to be delivered via a contract with an external catering provider retaining the current arrangement of a contract with a three year initial term which can be extended by up to two years.
7. The outline procurement timetable and tender appraisal criteria be approved.
8. The new contract should be a single contract covering all primary and secondary schools wishing to be covered but that individual contract proposals for secondary schools be invited.
9. The new contract should be awarded via a restricted procedure following an advertised invitation against a published core specification.
10. That the Executive should decide either that Halal provision should continue to be offered on a school by school basis subject to demand and following consultation with governors and parents or offered as standard throughout the service.
11. That the interim improvement programme as described in section 11 be approved and paid for from a one-off use of Council general balances. This will be reviewed when the 2004-2005 accounts are closed and in light of the final outturn.
12. That full year costs should be built into discussions on the schools block within the 2006-2007 education budget following discussions with schools and the Schools Forum.

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Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

- Results of survey questionnaires to head-teachers, parents and pupils
- Records of visits to other Councils and school catering services
- Food and nutrition recommendations from PCT
- Interim improvement programme offer letter from Scolarest dated 9th May 2005

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The current school meals service is delivered through a contract with Scolarest, part of the Compass group, awarded from 1st April 2003 which can be extended by the Council for a further two years. The contract covers 40 primary schools four special schools and four secondary schools. There has been significant dissatisfaction with the quality and overall performance of the service over the last two years. Although service improvements have been obtained in some schools there remains an underlying level of dissatisfaction. It was decided to conduct a full review of the service prior to re-tendering to ensure that future service arrangements meet the expectations of the Council, schools and service users and require a higher level of performance from the contractor.
- 1.2 This report summarizes the results and conclusions of the review of the school meals service and makes recommendations for the new contract and the tender strategy. The report also makes recommendations for the adoption of an interim package of service improvements to the current contract prior to re-tendering. The full service review report is attached [*N.B. not in this report*].

2. Service Review Process

- 2.1 A review group led from the Education Department with representatives from Strategic Procurement, Leisure and Social Services was set up in the autumn term 2004 and has been working since then reviewing all aspects of the service. The group also included a Primary Care Trust (PCT) Dietitian and had support from London Food Link through a sustainable food procurement project, funded by the London Development Agency.
- 2.2 The review has examined the competition/procurement options and market issues involved in the provision of school meals. Consultation processes involving schools, parents, pupils/students and governors were established. These included web-based questionnaires for head-teachers, parents and pupils/students and direct discussions with groups of governors and parents. Some school councils and parents groups in schools have been used for face to face consultation exercises and a small number of schools volunteered to conduct whole school surveys. Consultation responses have been received from 42 head-teachers, 360 parents and 525 pupils. Visits to other London Boroughs with both in-house and externally contracted services took place. Discussions with the existing school meals contractor, and with a number of other meals contractors took place. The structure of the review was arranged around several key issues and the remainder of this report together with the recommendations are set out under headings relating to those issues.

3. Service Type

- 3.1 The current service is based around a two or three course hot meal with sweet course. The aim is to provide the main meal of the day. Most other boroughs consulted adopted this approach. The intention to carry on offering this type of service was supported by 91% of parents (although only 42% of pupils responding agreed with this). Over 90% of Heads responding agreed that the school meals service ought to continue to offer a hot cooked meal. This view was also supported by 98% of parents and 84% of pupils responding to the survey. The current offer has up to three choices. It would be possible to improve quality and support healthier choices by pupils if this were reduced to two choices in the new contract. This is the view of a number of providers including our current contractor. When asked if they would be happy to reduce choice if this resulted in better quality and consistency over 90% of Heads agreed. On this issue 91% of parents responding would be happy to reduce choice if higher quality could be obtained as a result. It is therefore recommended that the new service contract be based on a two choice main menu with the aim of improving quality before any later extension of choice is introduced.

4. Food Quality and Nutrition

- 4.1 Food quality is seen as the most important issue by all stakeholders. Current DfES nutritional standards have been in place since 2000 but they have been criticised as due to the way they work school meals may meet the standards but still be highly processed and nutritionally inadequate. New standards are due to be introduced in September 2006. In advance of that the PCT has recommended that the new contract be based on best practice from Scotland. "Hungry for Success", the report of the Scottish Executive's Expert Panel on School Meals (supported by Food Standards Agency Scotland) sets out nutrient based standards for school lunches, with key recommendations to link school meals with the broader aspects of school based health promotion. The aim is to contribute to a diet which is based on more bread, cereals and other starchy foods, more fruit and vegetables, and less fat, sugar and salty foods and which is richer in minerals and vitamins.

5. Sustainable Food

- 5.1 The scope for use of sustainable produce has been examined by the review. The Soil Association 'Food for Life' targets are designed to reform menus by making school meals 30% organic, 50% locally sourced and 75% unprocessed. The targets may be unrealistic in the short term but they do set out a framework for development. Whilst a number of more basic food quality issues remain to be addressed the main priority for the service and the use of any additional resources in Camden is seen as improvement to the quality of the current offer. Having said that, there is support for the introduction of organic ingredients in school meals in Camden with 76% of Heads supporting the introduction of organic and/or sustainable food ingredients even if the price had to rise and 89% of parents responding supported this view. Consequently it is recommended that the new catering service contract should move towards the inclusion of sustainable food where possible.

6. Food Costs

- 6.1 Food Costs within the current service are paid at 45p per meal in primary and special schools. Evidence gathered as part of the review suggests that this needs to rise to somewhere between 60p and 70p in order to improve the quality of ingredients used in school meals to an acceptable level and to provide a significant increase in fresh ingredients, allowing processed items to be deleted.
- 6.2 Based on current meal numbers in primary and special schools this might bring extra costs in the range of £210,000 - £350,000 p.a. for paid and free meals including a 5% allowance for increased numbers. In secondary schools the Council meets the cost of free meals but does not subsidise paid meals. Increasing the cost allowance for secondary paid meals by 15p and allowing a 5% uptake increase margin would cost £55,761. All figures include an allowance for schools not in the main contract as they will be entitled to a formula driven share of any additional funding made available.
- 6.3 A move towards greater use of fresh food and cooking will require training of the workforce generating costs for the contractor which will be passed on via the contract price. Delivering menus with a higher fresh food content requires greater staff time for cooking which in turn will increase costs. This could add up to a further 5p per meal beyond the increased food allowance i.e. approx. £70,000 in a full year. Information from other contracts also shows that there is a move to increasing staff wage rates beyond the minimum level as a recruitment and retention measure to ensure a stable and well-motivated workforce. If the contractor were to operate single status based on the hourly rate paid to ex-Camden staff then the total extra cost might be up to £170,000 p.a. In total therefore, and taking the highest assumptions, additional costs might in the region of £650,000.
- 6.4 All of these additional costs will only be known with certainty when the contract has been re-tendered and a new contract awarded which is likely to be in November/December 2005. There are likely also to be additional, as yet unquantified, capital costs for equipment appropriate for production of a fresh food based menu.

7. Meal Price

- 7.1 The current price of a school meal in Camden is £1.50p. The meal prices in other London boroughs range from £1.35p to £1.85p. During consultation 35% of Heads agreed they would be prepared to see the price of a meal rise to £1.70 in order to secure improvements of quality and nutritional value although 25% (the second largest proportion) felt that £1.50 was a reasonable limit with 15% considering an increase to £2 appropriate. 43% of parents responding to the survey supported a

price increase up to £2 to obtain quality and nutritional improvements with a further 17% supporting a rise to £1.80. 15% of parents supported an increase to over £2.

- 7.2 A meal price of £1.70 would deliver a package of food quality, staff hours and training enhancements sufficient to produce a strong improvement in the service on those issues identified as priorities and it is recommended that this paid meal price should be used as a guide level during the procurement process.

8. Transported Meals

- 8.1 Transported meals do not generally provide the same quality of meals as those cooked on the premises. The main issue here is the number of schools (currently 12), which do not have their own kitchens and do not have the space to set up a full production kitchen. This leads to meals being cooked early in the day for transport to other schools, which results in a lower quality of meals.

- 8.2 Regeneration kitchens have been set up in three schools so far as successful pilot schemes. This is not a process of using microwaves to heat pre-prepared meals. Regeneration kitchens have combination ovens and where space permits traditional cookers are also installed. This means that some fresh food can be cooked from scratch on site and therefore prepared later in the morning, closer to lunchtime - rather than being cooked elsewhere and delivered to the school. Some food is also cooked from frozen in these ovens. There are however capital costs of the order of £230,000. At present revenue costs of £113,900 per annum are paid to meet the costs of transporting meals. It would be possible to use this budget to pay for a rolling programme of installing regeneration kitchens over a period of two financial years. It is recommended that a programme for the installation of regeneration kitchens is implemented on this basis to commence during the life of the current contract and followed through into the new contract.

9. Contract Structure and Procurement

- 9.1 Camden does not have any in-house capacity for direct service provision of catering services at present. Establishing an organisation capable of running a daily meals service for over 40 schools by April 2006 would be a very demanding project and there is no guarantee that this would result in the desired increase in quality. The main priority for the school meals service in Camden is to produce an increase in service quality in the short term, which can be sustained and then built upon in the longer term. The capacity which would be required to establish such an organisation would be a significant distraction from the immediate improvement agenda and would not bring any guarantee of success. It is more likely that a successful contractor with a track record in producing high quality schools meals and the existing management and professional capacity would be a better delivery vehicle for the service to meet its current objectives.

- 9.2 The school meals market is fairly small. There was a very low level of response to this contract when it was last re-tendered although discussions with contractors as part of this review suggest a higher level of interest next time. It is proposed that tenders should be invited via the restricted procedure and assessed, using suitable weightings, on the basis of the most economically advantageous offer using the following criteria:

- Experience and expertise
- Price
- Food quality and nutrition proposals
- Sustainability proposals
- Methods & Resources including staffing resources
- Level of managerial and supervisory input

- Health & Safety
- Quality Control Assurance
- Understanding of the specification

The outline procurement timetable is detailed below.

- Executive approval 25th May 2005
- Advert 1st July 2005
- Expression of interest 5th August 2005
- Invitation to tender/negotiate 1st September 2005
- Receipt of tenders/proposals 14th October 2005
- Evaluation/negotiation From 17th October 2005
- Award of contract December 2005/Early January 2006
- Start of new contract 1st April 2006

10 Equalities Issues

10.1 The school meals service has a very significant equalities dimension bearing in mind the proportion of pupils taking up a meal who are entitled to a free school meal (58%) as well as the links to health and the heightened attention locally and nationally on nutritional issues. It will be essential that the new contract is able to deliver on the Council's ambitions in these areas.

Specifically the current contract includes requirements for the provision of specialist meals where required to meet various cultural and religious requirements. Halal provision in particular is one area where specific provision has been made via the contract with two primary schools having a Halal service and one other primary school is currently in discussion regarding introduction of Halal items into the menu. The issue of how Halal provision is made for schools has been examined as part of the review as the practice so far has been to introduce this provision upon request by individual schools rather than blanket provision. Introduction of a Halal service in schools so far has been school-by-school following consultation with governors and, through them, consultation with parents. In consultation on the meals review 79% of parents responding supported this approach with 78% of Heads also taking this view. This tends to be the approach of most other authorities consulted. Alternatively the Council could introduce Halal provision as standard which would guarantee access to Halal food for all those pupils requiring access to it. In the light of the consultation response the Executive is recommended to agree that Halal provision should continue to be offered on a school by school basis subject to demand and following consultation with governors and parents. Consultation with schools on this issue can then carry on into the programme for awarding the new contract. The Executive is asked to make a decision on this issue.

11. Interim Service Improvement Programme

11.1 Officers have had discussions with Scolarest, the current contractor, who would be willing to reach an agreement with the Council. This would be a menu enhancement in the current year based on a number of pilot services with enhanced menus which Scolarest have funded and delivered in several schools in the spring and summer terms. It would be possible to increase the food and labour costs from September 2005 and subsidise all meals. A September start would give the contractor reasonable time to prepare to deliver the enhanced service to all schools. Prior to that Scolarest intend to extend the pilot enhanced menu service to more schools at their expense in the summer term 2005.

11.2 The offer from Scolarest for the interim improvement programme proposes increasing the primary school food cost by 15p per meal to allow all 'shaped'

products to be removed from the menu (except for sausages, burgers and fish fingers, which will be higher quality/content), an increase in home cooked dishes from 67% to 87%, some enhanced portion sizes, reduced fat, sugar and salt content lower than current DfES limits, enhanced range of fruit, vegetables and salad and wholemeal low sodium bread.

- 11.3 The package is based on increasing the food allowance by 15p to 60p in primary and special schools. In secondary schools an increase in food costs of 15p is proposed. This offer covers enhanced quality menu items with reduced salt, fat and sugar, enhanced range and quality of fruit and vegetables, free salad with the main meal and a balanced 'whole meal' offer. Subject to final agreement on the content of this aspect of the package it is recommended that financial provision should be made for it. Additional funding of £37,000 will be required to meet costs for enhancement in secondary schools and to provide a formula budget share for schools not in the main contract.
- 11.4 Use of additional fresh food will create extra labour costs. A broad estimate is 5p per meal (£69,000 in a full year). Scolarest have offered to meet this cost. One-off training costs of £7,500 will also arise which the Council is being asked to meet. On this basis the estimate of the cost of the interim improvements is:

	<i>Autumn Term</i>	<i>Spring Term</i>	<i>Total 05-06</i>	<i>Full Year 06-07</i>
<i>Primary Free</i>	40,425	40,425	80,850	121,275
<i>Primary Paid</i>	29,400	29,400	58,800	88,200
<i>Labour*</i>	23,000*	23,000*	46,000*	69,000
<i>Training</i>	7,500	-	7,500	-
<i>Secondary</i>	18,500	18,500	37,000	56,000
TOTAL	118,825	111,325	230,150	334,475
* Costs to be met by Scolarest				

The cost of the interim package to the Council does not include additional labour/staff costs arising from the introduction of higher specification menus or enhancements to hourly pay rates which may arise after re-tendering of the contract from April 2006.

- 11.5 The Education Department would be unable to meet the additional costs from the current budget and would require support from corporate resources. It is therefore proposed that in the short term the additional costs of up to £230k in 2005-2006 be paid for from a one-off use of Council general balances. This will be reviewed when the 2004-2005 accounts are closed and in the light of the final outturn for both Education and the Council at which time agreement could be reached on an appropriate split between Education and Corporate balances.
- 11.6 There may also be a further opportunity to offset costs. The Secretary of State for Education has recently announced additional new funding for school meals to enable all schools/LEAs to spend at the level of 50p food cost per primary school meal and 60p per secondary meal. Further information on how this money will be distributed is awaited. However, funding at this level in the current year would assist Camden by an extra 5p per meal above current expenditure on primary and special school meals i.e. approximately £67,000. The food cost element in secondary school meals within the contract is already 67p i.e. above the government 60p benchmark therefore it is assumed that no additional resources for this area of the service will be obtained from central government.
- 11.7 Any improvements from September imply a commitment to carrying them through at least at that level into a full year effect from April 2006 - in other words a pre-emptive budget decision for the Council. Full year costs need to be built into discussions on the schools block within the 2006-2007 education budget following

discussions with schools and the Schools Forum in the run up to the 2006-2007 budget.

12. Finance Comments

- 12.1 The main financial implications are contained in the report.
- 12.1 There are minor financial implications relating to delegation matters. Under existing delegation requirements the funding to cover the additional costs for the interim improvement programme described in section 11 would have to be delegated to all schools. Under delegation regulations schools do have almost total flexibility on how they spend their delegated budget. However, as most schools buy-back into the Council's central contract then this funding will automatically return to the LEA and be automatically allocated to meeting these additional costs. For the few schools (5 secondary and 1 Primary) that do not buy-back into the central contract the situation is slightly different. For these 6 schools the additional funding will assist them to meet or to continue meeting these improvements

13. Legal Comments

- 13.1 It is confirmed that this report has been brought before the Executive in compliance with the requirement under Contract Standing Order 3.2 to obtain the Executive's agreement to the proposed contract award strategy for all proposed revenue contracts of £500,000 or more, including decisions on criteria and methodology to be adopted in the award process. It is also confirmed that the strategy complies with all other requirements of Contract Standing Orders
- 13.2 With regard to EU procurement legislation the service being provided is defined as a Part B Service and is therefore exempt from most of the EU procurement rules including any obligation to advertise the contract in the Official Journal of the European Union.
- 13.3 In considering this report Members need to be satisfied that the strategy to be employed will result in Best Value being obtained for the Council.
- 13.4 If the new school meals contract is awarded to a new contractor, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will apply. The current 162 Scolarest staff will transfer over to the new contractor on their current terms and conditions of employment (those 32 staff who transferred over from the Council to Scolarest will continue on their Camden Terms and Conditions of employment unless these have been varied by consent).
- 13.5 The Transfer of Employment (Pension Protection) Regulations 2005 will also apply to employees who have access to a pension in their current employment with Scolarest whereby they will have a right to a minimum pension from their new employer. Those employees who previously transferred from the Council and are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme must have continued access to the LGPS, in which case the new employer will have to apply for admitted body status to the scheme if not already a member, or alternatively provide to the transferring ex-Council employees a good quality occupational pension scheme. There must also be arrangements in place for handling accrued benefits which these employees have already earned.
- 13.6 The ODPM Code of Practice on Workforce Matters is also likely to apply to the transfer, unless Members decide to opt out of applying the Code in this instance. The Code provides that new joiners recruited to work alongside transferred employees must be given fair and reasonable terms and conditions which are, overall, no less favourable than those of transferred employees. This is extended to pension provision.

14. Workforce Issues

14. Camden supports the aims and objectives of the Best Value and Performance Improvement Circular (ODPM 3/03), which emphasises the importance of delivering public services to a high standard. We endorse the view that “best value cannot be delivered without a well trained and motivated workforce”. We accept, as the Circular suggests, that this is our responsibility, irrespective of whether a service is to be delivered in-house or externally on our behalf. Workforce issues will therefore be a vital consideration in any contracting process.
- 14.2 Whilst we support the principle of eliminating the two-tier workforce in contracted out services, the strict application of the Code of Practice contained in the Best Value Circular may not achieve this objective and in some circumstances may conflict with achieving Best Value.
- 14.3 We will have a starting presumption that the Code will apply, but consider the impact of applying it in respect of each individual contract letting. However, where it can be shown that the Code’s application would in practice hinder the achievement of Best Value, or not achieve its aims, we will look to alternative means within the contract to address workforce matters”.
- 14.4 Given this and the nature of the contract, there will be a need for officers to observe the policy agreed by the Executive and to consider the implications of applying the Code of Practice as part of the tender process.

EXECUTIVE REPORT ENDS

APPENDIX VI: Case studies used in Camden training session 4 February 2005

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

Name	Local Food for Bradford Schools
Partners	Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Education Contract Services (lead) 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"> • Reduce the amount of processed food • Increase the amount of local food • To support the local economy
Outcomes (to date)	<p>See steps detailed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 25% of all menus adapted. • Lots of subtle menu changes, e.g. bread-crumbed shapes removed, more traditional, home-cooked meals, salt cut out. • Menus now follow Caroline Walker Trust nutrition guidelines, and FSA guidelines for salt. • Every recipe goes through the software package ‘microdiet’ which assesses nutrient content and advises on how to make the meals balanced. • New contracts that procure a lot more local produce – see tables below for % fruit and veg from Nov 2004, meat from Easter 2005. • Also from Easter 2005 will also have some organic milk, beef and pasta. • Educational benefits have included fruit and vegetable tasting sessions with children, lessons about where food comes from, healthy eating, etc. • Uptake of school meals down 3%.
Cost	<p>When embarked on project decided to do it at no extra cost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veg – new contracts same price. • Meat – will be saving £30,000. • Costs of including some organic absorbed by other savings.
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.

- 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.

% of Potatoes, Fruit & Salad items previously imported, now bought locally			
Produce	% UK-Locally grown produce		% Previously imported produce
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

List of fruit & salad items currently imported and country of origin

Imported produce	Country of Origin
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

Name	Food for Life, Bradford and North East Somerset (BANES)
Partners	Bath & North East Somerset Council's Catering Team (lead) 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.

Name	Bristol City Council School Meals project
Partners	<u>Bristol City Council Contract Services</u> (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"> • 2002 review of the school meals by Bristol City Council found more fresh and local food was desired. • Linked with Healthy Schools and the Healthy Living Blueprint Govt initiatives in 2004. • Long standing interest by catering team to reduce additives, sugar, fat and salt in meals. • 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.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Engage schools in a whole school approach to promoting food and healthy eating. • Identify obstacles and cost implications and present to council at end of pilot phase. • Sort out problems that do not incur cost as project develops • After pilot phase, hope to spread to other schools.
Outcomes (to date)	See key stages outlined below
Cost	Should become clear by end of pilot phase
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time and ownership of the project from schools. • Lack of time and space for catering staff. • Concerns about the cost of meals – we have already identified an increase. • The hoped for increased uptake of meals not yet achieved. • 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.
Top tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure all the schools involved are fully engaged and are willing to incorporate food education into the curriculum and way of school life. • Encourage schools to set up growing clubs or cooking clubs so that the pupils learn exciting things about food and health. • Don't change the menus too quickly. • Work with current suppliers and link them up with local producers. • Make sure you have your evaluation scheme set up at the start and know what you want to achieve.

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"> • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • Introduction of fruit tuck in 60 primary schools and flavoured milk in the majority of secondary schools, both initiatives are becoming increasingly successful. • Breakfast services have been introduced into a large number of schools for both parents and pupils. This has also proved very successful. • Recycling of cooking oil and packaging. A new policy has been set up with contractors for using green fuels.
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"> • Local producers were not geared to complex tendering procedures and many of them showed an aversion to this process. • A single local producer with the result couldn’t provide the large mix of produce required therefore a complex arrangement for purchasing was required.
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: jjago@cornwall.gov.uk
Summary	In-house providers for 32 schools, using local food where possible
Further info	www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/scs.htm
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	www.devonfoodlinks.org.uk/News/Bulletins/Bulletin_Nov04.asp
Organisation	Hampshire County Council Catering Services (HC3S), Hampshire County Supplies and Hampshire Fare (county food group)
Contact	Email: hampshire.fare@hants.gov.uk
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	www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/St_Aidans.html www.defra.gov.uk/farm/sustain/procurement/casestudies/staidans.htm
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	www.soilassociation.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/manuf/ffl.html
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	www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/brampton_infant.html
Organisation	Barking Abbey School
Contact	Barking, Essex, IG11 9AG; tel: 020 8270 4100; email: office@babby.bardaglea.org.uk ; web: www.babbey.bardaglea.org.uk
Summary	Now in-house service with healthier meals; used School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG – see www.healthedtrust.com)
Further info	www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/Barking_Abbey.html
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	www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk
Organisation	Gorringe Park Primary School and others in London Borough of Merton
Contact	Gorringe 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	www.gorringepark.merton.sch.uk

Organisation	High Hesket Church of England School, Carlisle
Contact	High Hesket, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA4 0HU; 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	www.collis.richmond.sch.uk

Further information

- Department for Education and Skills, *School meals in secondary schools in England*, research report 557:
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
- Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Purchasing Guide for schools. See:
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/
- East Anglia Food Link, *Guidance on providing school meals* and *Sustainable schools fruit feasibility study*. 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
- 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

- 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
- Soil Association, *Food for Life: Healthy local, organic school meals*.
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

APPENDIX VII: Camden's 'School Meal Service Objectives'

Note: The following text comprises Camden's School Food Policy, a component of Camden's school meals contract (this document was not finalised by the deadline for the submission of this current report. The following text is draft, but is unlikely to change substantially). See also Appendix X. Catering companies tendering for the Camden school meals contract are required in the contract to ensure that meals comply with the Camden School Food Policy (text below) and meet 'Camden's Standard for School Lunches', which consist of:

- guidance on menu planning and adopting a whole school meal approach (taken from 'Hungry for Success – A whole school meal approach in Scotland'),
- nutrient standards for 5-11 year olds and 11-18 year olds (taken from the Caroline Walker Trust 'Nutrient-based standards for school food', 2005).
- objectives for sustainable food (see Appendix X) .

Camden's school meal service provision is intended to include the very best in a school meal service. The main contract objectives of London Borough of Camden are:

Provision of high quality, healthy food: The school meal should be adequate in quality and quantity to be the main meal of the day and it should be based on a hot cooked meal service offering two main course choices. The main priority of the Council is that the menus and food products meet the nutrient based standards and quality standards in the specification.

Camden has a commitment to a high quality service based on fresh food, healthy choices and high nutritional standards. Camden would expect the fresh food to be cooked from scratch using high quality raw ingredients that are unprocessed and, where applicable, seasonal.

Menu planning, food presentation and the dining room environment must enable and encourage children and young people to make healthy choices and to enjoy their lunch time experience. They should also reflect the diverse culture of pupils attending Camden schools.

The Council has a strong commitment to sustainable development, to improving and protecting the environment and to social justice. It has a policy preferentially to purchase products that are produced using sustainable methods and/or ethically traded. The new contract will contain development targets for the introduction of organic or sustainable food ingredients over the life of the contract and as costs/resources allow.

A motivated and valued workforce: Camden is committed to investing in its workforce and those that work for its contractors. The Council will expect the contractor to develop and provide training in food handling, production and service in healthy eating for all its employees. Staff should receive a reasonable rate of pay, which should be above the national minimum wage rate. All staff should feel an ownership of their area of work and be respected.

A whole school meal approach: The school meal service should be an integral part of the school day representing an educational and social occasion providing opportunities for learning experiences that reinforce messages about food and healthy eating. The contractor will be expected to work with the LEA and schools in ensuring that all catering staff and dining room supervisors are adequately trained in food and health to deliver this

objective. The contractor will consult with parents, Head-teachers, teachers and pupils, via the school councils where they exist, on a regular basis on the provision of school meals.

Good communication: The Council place communication as a very important part of delivering a good service. The Council expects to meet with the contractor on regular basis to discuss all aspects of the service. Moreover, the Council will expect the contractor to meet on regular occasions with the head-teachers and student councils as part of the whole school approach in delivering the service.

APPENDIX VIII: Camden's 'Preference for sustainable food'

Note: The following text comprises a statement of Camden's 'Preference for sustainable food', which has been included in the contract document. Camden is exploring the option of tendering organisations being asked to give a range of prices for meeting different levels of requirement of the contract. The statement of 'preference for sustainable food' helps Camden to define 'sustainable' for potential catering contractors and to indicate that they would like to work in partnership with a caterer prepared to develop progressive targets on sustainability.

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 and foods that have been delivered to the point of consumption from the point of harvest / production in the minimum amount of time.

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 and sustainable food. The targets will work towards those of the *Food for Life* programme.

- 75% unprocessed by weight of ingredients: raw basic ingredients such as fresh produce, fresh meat, fresh or frozen fish, poultry, cereal flour, pulses and beans. 30% organic: At least 30% of ingredients to be served from certified organic schemes, of known provenance and incurring minimum food miles. Priority to be given to the sourcing of meat, milk, eggs and fat products, and fresh produce shown in Government testing to consistently carry fewer pesticide residues (like lettuce, tomatoes and potatoes).

- 50% fresh produce: at least half of the food to be sourced from sustainable forms of local food production. By fresh produce we mean produce that is freshest on the point of delivery to school and therefore food that has not been processed and has not travelled far from the point of harvest/production.

APPENDIX IX: Sustain's submission to Defra's consultation on the draft Food Industry Sustainability Strategy

1. Background

- 1.1 *Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming* advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. We represent over 100 national public interest organisations working at international, national, regional and local level (see www.sustainweb.org/member_details.asp).
- 1.2 Sustain has been involved, along with several other Sustain member organisations, with the development of the Food Industry Sustainability Strategy (FISS), and while there has been considerable progress over the past two years, we still feel that the document is disappointing.
- 1.3 This submission is the result of consultation with our membership, but does not represent the detailed views of the entire membership. Several members have also submitted their own responses, focusing on their particular area of expertise.

2. Sustain comments

2.1 In summary

2.1.1 Sustain welcomes the use of targets in the strategy, as we understand that these have been useful, for example, in helping the public sector to make progress with becoming better equal opportunities employers. Thus, under equal opportunities, the target to 'double the representation of women and ethnic minorities in skilled, and administrative and managerial grades by 2010' could help the private sector to make significant improvements.

2.1.2 However, the FISS fails to recognise the limitations of consumers' ability to drive sustainability through the food industry and there seem to be very few incentives or penalties for either consumers or the industry to give priority to sustainability over (say) price or advertising.

2.1.3 We would therefore like to see a **legislative** framework which (i) compels 'laggards' to come up to scratch, (ii) offers clear and challenging targets which the industry **MUST** meet within a specified time period, thereby creating a "level playing field" and (iii) rewards market leaders who have already achieved sustainability targets prior to legislation.

2.1.4 Finally, Sustain regards the FISS as only the current phase in a longer process. DEFRA should continue discussions with the private and public interest sectors about tackling fundamentals such as reducing consumption of whole categories of food and drink, and investing in the infrastructure to support shorter, more local and more sustainable food supply chains. The FISS also needs to be regularly monitored, reviewed and updated.

- 2.2 While we welcome the progress made on FISS over the past two years and are broadly supportive of the targets outlined in the draft strategy, nevertheless sustainability does not appear to be fully integrated into the strategy and some of the targets are weak. Others, such as those on health and safety at work, strike us to be plain good practice and are insufficiently ambitious. We would not like to see any further weakening in the final version of FISS and propose DEFRA be explicit about how it intends to push the industry forward on sustainability, rather than simply reinforcing existing best practice or regulatory minima in some areas.

- 2.3 We note that FISS concerns itself only with the food chain beyond the farm gate. However many Sustain members would strongly urge DEFRA not to overlook fairness in trading. Examples of supplier abuse are most common beyond the farm gate, since very few farmers/growers actually supply retailers directly. Supply chain management and the narrowing of the supply base sets up its own pattern of competition between suppliers which allows exploitation by supermarket buyers. Primary producers are indirectly affected, but this is very much also a post-farm gate issue.
- 2.4 We note therefore, with mounting concern, the failure of successive Competition Commission inquiries to tackle the abuse of buyer power by the major supermarkets. It is abundantly clear that the voluntary approach is not working, and we support proposals by a wide range of organisations for this to be replaced by robust legislation.
- 2.5 In addition, we contend that the FISS must connect directly with other aspects of government policy on sustainable farming and food. There should, for example, be a clear link to the range of activities resulting from the Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming – particularly the Organic Action Plan. In addition, government’s pesticide reduction initiative needs to be linked to the FISS, since a significant proportion of pesticides used on farms are used as a direct result of cosmetic standards for fruit and vegetables set by the major supermarkets.
- 2.6 We understand that the structure of the document reflects the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. However, we have specific criticisms.
- Food miles make an environmental impact through, for example, emissions and road congestion but the matter is also clearly concerned with (economic) supply chain logistics. Thus, changes in, for example, fuel taxation and planning law may be needed to encourage investment in infrastructure to optimise local food procurement.
 - The separation of the three pillars of sustainability into “silos” offers opportunities to ‘cherry-pick’. Industry might be expected to focus on economic priorities, rather than environmental or social issues. Sustainability needs to be integrated into all industry activities, and not appear to be just an option from a menu which also includes (say) efficiency, workforce development and health and safety.
 - This silo approach means that some issues are misfiled (so to speak). A clear and regrettable example of this is ethical trading which has been classified as a “social” issue, when it is clearly an economic trading system and a way of moving the “zone of profitability” downstream. It should be noted that retailers such as the Co-op have well-planned marketing strategies for fair-trade goods which allow them to offer these as own-brand goods with profit margins large enough to absorb increases in global commodity prices. Ethical trade in the industry is an economic challenge, as well as a moral and social responsibility.
 - The intention of the Ethical Trading Initiative to ensure payments of a ‘living wage’ needs more clearly defining. It could for example be defined against the cost of a basket of basic living commodities – food, clothing, shelter etc. in the UK and set proportionally against those costs in the country concerned.
 - The silo approach largely fails to explore the interactions – tensions, as well as mutual reinforcement – between the economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainable development.
 - To focus on Science Based Innovation, Workforce Skills, and Retail Crime in the ‘Primarily Economic’ chapter is unhelpful. It may imply that only the

economic performance of processors, manufacturers and retailers is considered as 'sustainability', and ignores the effects which the industry has on the economic performance of other actors such as producers, suppliers, workers, and independent retailers.

- 2.7 There seem to be few market or legislative incentives for the targets to be realised, or market or legislative penalties if they are not met. On the basis of previous experience, the absence of incentives and penalties almost guarantees that the targets will not be met. By contrast, the Irish plastic shopping bag tax shows how effective fiscal measures can be, and experience with reducing unnecessary packaging in the 1990s shows that industry can welcome legislation²⁷.
- 2.8 Some of the case studies are dated. This is worrying, since it indicates either that the food industry has no more recent examples to give (so activity has stagnated) or that there is a lack of willingness to provide new examples of good practice.
- 2.9 The opportunities for making the food industry more sustainable are not at all reflected in the infrastructure which serves the supply chain. Large retail and catering companies, for example, have global and national supply chains which, while offering customers convenience, consistency and low prices, have a negative impact on the environment and (some argue) the economy, once external factors are taken into consideration. We would argue that the regionalisation and localisation of supply chain infrastructure would support a more sustainable and diverse food economy. However, despite the welcome target for a reduction in food miles, there are currently no obvious plans for developing sustainable infrastructure in the draft FISS.
- 2.10 A final, more detailed point concerns some references. The link to the Marks & Spencer's apple packaging data on p11 does not appear to exist, and the validity of the study has been questioned by Sustain members. Confusingly, the next example from Unilever gives the same web-link reference.
- 2.11 In conclusion, we commend DEFRA for its persistence with the FISS in the face of industry intransigence over a period of some two years. We urge you to maintain the current targets, and strengthen and extend them wherever possible. However, we are certain that the targets will not be met unless they are underpinned by fiscal and/or legislative incentives and penalties. DEFRA should continue to work with the private and public interest sectors not only to monitor, evaluate and regularly update the FISS, but also to address fundamental issues around the volume and type of food produced and consumed, and the nature of the supply systems that provide it. If issues such as these are not tackled, the farming and food system will continue to fall a long way short of being sustainable.

²⁷ A Friends of the Earth report *A Superficial Attraction – the voluntary approach and sustainable development* (1995) reports that the packaging industry's Producer Responsibility Group asked government to regulate, as it was clear that not all companies would comply with its voluntary scheme.

OTHER LANGUAGES AND FORMATS

This Publication is also available in large print, braille, on disk, audio cassette and in the languages listed below.

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Gujarati

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય તો, કૃપા કરી આપેલ નંબર ઉપર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે સંપર્ક સાધો.

Hindi

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज़ की प्रति अपनी भाषा में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया निम्नलिखित नम्बर पर फोन करें अथवा रिसे गये पता पर सम्पर्क करें।

Greek

Αν θα θέλατε ένα αντίγραφο του παρόντος εγγράφου στη γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ να τηλεφωνήσετε στον αριθμό ή να επικοινωνήσετε στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση.

Bengali

আপনি যদি আপনার ভাষায় এই দলিলের প্রতিলিপি (কপি) চান, তা হলে নীচের ফোন নম্বরে বা ঠিকানায় অনুগ্রহ করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Punjabi

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Chinese

中文
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Arabic

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