

~Round-table Discussion~

How is policy influencing what is happening on the ground?’

Participants split into three groups for this round-table discussion, and focussed on three key questions:

- 1. What is happening in your area and what policies drive this activity?**
- 2. What are the challenges and opportunities of these policies?**
- 3. What policies would help make your work more effective?**

Participants shared and compared regional policies from across the UK. For example, some people perceived a policy vacuum in Scotland concerning the obesity agenda, whereas in Ireland there was a family based approach to childhood treatment of obesity which was proving highly effective. Various other existing strategies were discussed such as the joint health improvement plan in South Lanarkshire.

It was felt that national policy supports many short term initiatives but that there are a lack of longer term local and sustainable policies emerging. A multi-disciplinary approach was agreed to be important in defining and implementing local strategies. By ‘thinking outside of the box’, policies are more likely to include a range of target groups, and to develop a strong evidence base resulting in longer term sustainable funding.

There was a strong feeling that links to the private sector are a key factor in implementing policy, and that policies are only adequate when they lead to practical successes on the ground. Participants discussed opportunities for wider ranging policies involving themes such as training for nursery staff, work with older people, education with Mothers in ante-natal classes and advertising of positive food messages.