



National Foundation for Educational Research

RESEARCH INTO SCHOOL BREAKFASTS IN WALES

Final Report

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WBR

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1. Introduction

School breakfast clubs have been run on an ad-hoc basis throughout the UK for some time. The British Nutrition Foundation (2005) finds that:

School breakfast clubs serve food to children who arrive early at school, before formal lessons begin. The way in which the clubs operate depends on the individual circumstances of the school... and the emphasis of different clubs varies considerably. For example, some breakfast clubs have objectives of integrating study or welfare support, while others focus on providing breakfast and a time for informal interaction between children and school staff.

Various benefits have been attributed to these clubs, including their impact on pupils' diet, concentration levels, behaviour, and involvement in school.

The Welsh Assembly Government took a major policy decision in relation to the provision of breakfast in schools in 2003 when it announced a commitment to funding the opportunity for all primary school pupils to have a free breakfast in the lifetime of that Assembly.

The free breakfast initiative is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Health Challenge Wales which stipulates that education should undertake

action in all parts from nursery to further/higher education to encourage children and young adults to look after their health and to improve it;

(Welsh Assembly Government, 2004a)

Commenting on the breakfast initiative, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson said:

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that a healthy breakfast is linked to better health, concentration and behaviour in schools. We want to give every child in Wales a flying start – this exciting initiative is doing just that.

(Welsh Assembly Government, 2003)

The initial phase of the initiative was to be piloted from September 2004 in Community First areas in nine LAs:

Pembrokeshire	Neath Port Talbot
Carmarthenshire	Caerphilly
Merthyr Tydfil	Cardiff
Anglesey	Wrexham
Denbighshire	

It was anticipated that up to 11,000 children would be provided with the opportunity to have breakfast at school as a result of the pilot, which would cost £1.5 million in 2004-2005. It was hoped that breakfast provision would be rolled out to all primary schools in Wales by January 2007.

This report presents the outcomes of research conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on behalf of the Welsh Local Government Association, into the provision of breakfasts in schools in Wales. The next chapter outlines the aims of the research and the methodology adopted. Chapter 3 presents the outcomes of a review of the key literature on the subject. Chapter 4 presents the findings of research conducted in the schools which delivered breakfasts as part of the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative and Chapter 5 examines practice in other schools where breakfasts were provided.

2. Research aim and design

This chapter outlines the aims and objectives of the research and the methodology used.

2.1 Research aims

The aims of the research project were to:

- describe practice in schools with established breakfast schemes
- describe emerging practice in the breakfast initiative schools
- obtain mainly qualitative information about the impact of the arrangements on pupils' attendance, behaviour, learning and attitude to healthy eating
- identify what is considered to be good practice in the arrangements of the breakfast initiative
- identify any emerging problems in the development and management of the breakfast initiative
- identify issues which will inform the roll-out of the programme
- offer recommendations to inform future development.

2.2 Research design

The project team used a combination of research methods, including a desk-based documentation review, and qualitative, face-to-face interviews.

Relevant documentation was analysed in order to review recent research on breakfast scheme issues, including evidence from other countries/regions within the UK.

Interested bodies also participated in the research through telephone interviews. These included nutritional experts, school nurses and dentists, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin, the Playgroups Association, Clybiau Plant Cymru and others.

Interviews were conducted with a sample of seven LAs and eight schools which were part of the Welsh Assembly Government's pilot programme during 2004-2005 and with four breakfast clubs.

Five of the pilot schools had begun delivering the breakfast provision during the autumn term, 2004, whilst others started later in the year.

The children who were interviewed in the pilot schools were in the following year groups:

Year 1	2
Year 2	8
Year 3	9
Year 4	15
Year 5	12
Year 6	5

The sample group was too small for statistically meaningful results to be drawn about the extent to which pupils had eaten breakfast before it was available in school. However, a statistical analysis of the impact of the school breakfast scheme on school attendance will be undertaken when that information is available from the Welsh Assembly Government.

A review of key documentation concerning the provision of breakfasts in schools is presented in the next chapter.

3. The provision of breakfast in school: existing research

This chapter presents the findings of a review of key documentation, including academic studies and official publications, concerning the provision of breakfasts in schools.

3.1 Introduction

The concept of breakfast provision in schools originated in the United States in the 1960s and became increasingly widespread there as a result of the School Breakfast Programme, established in 1966 to provide federal funding to assist schools serving breakfast to nutritionally needy children in poor areas (Shaw, 1988). The introduction of breakfast programmes into the UK is a more recent innovation (Shemilt *et al.*, 2003).

The provision of school meals in schools for pupils is not a new phenomenon. For example, it has been an element of the English education system since 1906, but has until now been restricted solely to the provision of food at lunchtime. Until recently, the concept of school breakfast provision had received little attention in the UK and developments have been slow (Simpson, 2001). However, several factors resulted in the provision of breakfast for school pupils attracting interest in the UK in the 1990s. Positive research findings from evaluations of breakfast provision in countries that had already developed breakfast programmes for pupils, such as the United States, Peru and Jamaica, were a catalyst for change in the UK (Simpson, 2001; Ani and Grantham-McGregor, 1999).

Alongside the emerging benefits of such programmes, evidence linking material deprivation suffered by children with ill health (Simpson, 2001), and the recognition that breakfast programmes could assist in meeting a wide range of needs, further bolstered the development and support for such provision. Initial developments of breakfast provision in the UK focussed on breakfast clubs which Donovan and Street (1999) suggest: *'have attracted*

widespread interest in the 1990's because they can collectively meet: children's health needs by providing a balanced meal at the beginning of the day; educational needs in terms of ensuring children start the day on time, feeling well, nourished and settled; and the childcare needs of children and their families through the provision of a safe, supervised environment before school starts.' Shemilt *et al.* (2003) state that the development of breakfast clubs can be seen as *'part of the broader governmental child sensitive family policy approach in the late 1990's to reduce inequalities between children whilst supporting families in general.'*

3.2 Evaluations of breakfast provision

Evaluations of breakfast clubs, as mentioned above, although primarily from countries such as the United States (Simpson, 2001) and Peru and Jamaica (Ani and Grantham-McGregor, 1999), are on the whole very positive and highlight a range of benefits. Some of the research conducted in Britain (University of East Anglia, 2002) was unable to identify hard quantitative evidence but found that qualitative evidence provided a consistently positive picture. Research has also indicated that establishing and sustaining breakfast clubs can pose a number of challenges.

3.3 Benefits of providing breakfast

The concept of breakfast clubs gained fundamental support because of their potential to address a range of needs, including health, educational and parent and family life (BNF, 2005; Street and Kenway, 1999). Simpson (2001) states; *'the value of school breakfast clubs is considered from the health, childcare and family support, and education perspectives and a compelling argument is put for them'*. It is suggested that missing breakfast may have adverse health effects in the long term, and adverse educational and social effects in the short term (Lucas, 2003).

3.4 Health and nutritional benefits of breakfast provision

Research has revealed the proportion of school pupils who do not eat breakfast. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food study

(2000), 17 percent of British school children leave home in the morning having eaten nothing, while Balding (2000) states that breakfast is a particularly common meal to miss. In a survey of Year 6 pupils, five percent reported eating no breakfast, three percent just had a drink, and nine to thirteen percent ate crisps or chocolate for breakfast. In a survey of Year 10 girls, more than a fifth (21 percent) reported eating no breakfast. The Child Poverty Action Group has estimated that 30 percent of children do not go home to a cooked meal and that for some a school meal is the only 'real meal' they get each day (NPI, 2000)

The poor, long-term health prospects arising from the imbalanced diets of many children have been documented (Donovan and Street, 1999). It is suggested that breakfast clubs can address these health needs by contributing to children's nutritional requirements for a balanced diet by providing a meal at the beginning of the day (Street and Kenway, 1999). Breakfast clubs have the potential to have a significant impact on children's health and wellbeing by providing a nutritious breakfast or supplementing daily diets with fruit (Lucas, 2003). Research by the University of East Anglia (2002) raised concerns about the nutritional value of some of the food which was offered in breakfast clubs. The challenge of balancing the need to attract pupils to clubs with a commitment to provide food which was nutritional was also noted. In particular, it was acknowledged that the provision of certain food could lower clubs' attractiveness in the eyes of some children. This had led some clubs to offer 'popular' foods. However, the UEA (2002) also noted the existence of *'successful strategies for ensuring that healthier options were provided without loss of "attractiveness"'*. One example of this practice was a club which had *'placed fruit cut into small pieces in bowls on each table. Staff were initially surprised at the relatively high take-up and described how some children had actually sampled fruit for the first time. It was also found that some parents felt that their children had become more receptive to new and more diverse types of food as a result of attending clubs'*.

The UEA (2002) reported that clubs had reinforced messages about the importance of eating breakfast and that pupils who had taken part in those clubs had disseminated messages about health and nutrition elsewhere, for example in their own homes.

Breakfast clubs can also offer an opportunity to teach children about healthy foods, the importance of healthy eating and food hygiene, as well as providing information on unhealthy behaviours such as smoking and drinking (Street and Kenway, 1999).

3.5 Educational benefits of breakfast provision

The New Policy Institute (NPI) suggests that educational difficulties often arise from the '*erratic attendance and poor concentration and behaviour in school*' exhibited by a significant number of children from the first years of primary school (Donovan and Street, 1999). A number of studies indicate that breakfast clubs have the potential to address these issues and improve the educational experience of pupils, particularly in terms of classroom performance, school attendance and punctuality (BNF, 2005; Teachernet, 2005b; NPI, 2000).

In terms of classroom performance, Street and Kenway (1999) suggest that breakfast clubs provide a form of before-school care in an informal atmosphere which helps the children start the school day on time, calm and ready for learning, rather than having their concentration interrupted by feelings of hunger. This conclusion was supported by the UEA (2002) who found that: '*There were felt to be close associations between mental alertness and reduced preoccupation with feelings of tiredness or hunger, a more social, settled transition into the school day, or the development of more positive attitudes towards the school*'. Studies by the NPI (2000) and the UEA (2002) found that attendance at such clubs made the children appear more settled, attentive and motivated to learn (BNF, 2005) and that it appeared to '*smooth the transition between home and school*' (UEA, 2002). Research into pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties indicated that there were significant positive effects of providing breakfast. These included increasing on-task behaviour (Bro *et al.*, 1994, 1996), bringing about a decrease in behavioural problems (Terry and Kerry, 2000) and helping the children start the day in a good mood which was perceived as having an overall educational benefit (Watson and Marr, 2003). However, the UEA (2002) found that in some schools behaviour was said to have declined as children had become more energetic.

Research also suggests that breakfast clubs have a positive effect on attendance. In an evaluation of breakfast clubs within an Education Action Zone in Middlesbrough (Simpson, 2001) it was found that groups of pupils who regularly participated in breakfast clubs improved their attendance at a faster rate than those who did not attend. Clubs were a way of ensuring that pupils arrived in school earlier and with less fuss (UEA, 2002) and that by attending school more frequently, pupils were in a better position to take advantage of the opportunities available to them (Simpson, 2001). The clubs could also offer a quiet space for homework and the opportunity for small-group learning support (Street and Kenway, 1999).

Alongside meeting educational needs, the potential for breakfast clubs to address social learning needs has been highlighted. Psychological research has highlighted that secure attachment relationships, structures and routines within an informal network can be effective in mobilising resources within children (Gilligan, 1999; Marsh and Crow, 1998). Street and Kenway (1999) suggest that breakfast clubs can provide a forum for children and adults to interact on a social basis, creating opportunities for conversation, nurturing, sharing responsibilities and children benefiting from positive adult role models. Relationships between pupils and teachers sometimes improved as a result of meeting each other in the more informal setting of the breakfast club (UEA, 2002). The idea that giving and sharing food within the context of nurture groups helps in the development of trusting relationships between adults and children has also been recognised (Bennathan and Boxall, 2000). Breakfast clubs were perceived positively as a forum for the development and practice of social skills, even if benefits from a work and behaviour perspective were not clearly evident (Watson and Marr, 2003).

Breakfast clubs can also provide opportunities to build children's confidence and self-esteem by developing an overall caring ethos amongst peer groups which may go some way to enhancing learning experiences by tackling problems of school bullying, truancy and unauthorised absences (Street and Kenway, 1999). Research including pupils with emotional behavioural difficulties found that breakfast club provision had helped to enhance a positive ethos within the schools because the children had been involved in planning the club and had accepted and respected rules such as being polite to each other (Watson and Marr, 2003).

3.6 Impact of breakfast provision on parents and family life

The positive effects breakfast clubs may have for children and families because of their ability to support the family unit both socially and economically have been documented (Donovan and Street, 1999). During the period of time before school a number of difficulties can arise for parents who may need to travel to work or search for employment. It has been suggested that, as a result, there is an increasing phenomenon of ‘latchkey’ children experiencing a lack of adult supervision before school (Donovan and Street, 1999). The UEA (2002) found that the clubs were an additional form of support for parents who were working, studying or seeking employment and that they were perceived as safe, secure and settled environments (UEA, 2002). Breakfast clubs can provide adult-supervised care for the period before school when it is not possible for parents to be there (Street and Kenway, 1999). In addition, research indicates that breakfast clubs can help ease the strain and pressures of family morning routines, particularly amongst families with several school aged children and single parents (Shemilt *et al.*, 2003).

According to the NPI (2000) nearly one-third of children in the UK live in poverty. Such financial circumstances can have serious implications in terms of the amount of money families can spend on food. Breakfast clubs have the ability to ease this concern for families by providing children with healthy breakfasts. The UEA (2002) found that many of the pupils who attended came from families where a parent noted ‘marked’ or ‘high’ levels of stress and that *‘Overall, there was evidence that school breakfast clubs provide a service capable of reaching families likely to be most in need of support including some families at risk of or experiencing social exclusion.’*

3.7 Challenges to breakfast provision

Research suggests that the most significant challenge to breakfast provision in schools is finance. Financial viability and stability have been highlighted as major factors that may limit the development of breakfast clubs (Street and Kenway, 1999). In some cases volunteers contributed extensively to running breakfast clubs but it was recognised that relying on this support was not a sustainable approach (UEA, 2002). This meant that difficult decisions may have to be taken about breakfast clubs when the initial funding comes to an

end. Dilemmas regarding prioritising the school budget could mean that breakfast clubs become overlooked (Teachernet, 2005a). A national evaluation of a breakfast programme pilot scheme in England undertaken by the Department of Health in 1999 indicated that the stability of such clubs was a major concern for all stakeholders and in some cases charges were introduced to supplement the initial input of funding or provide a source of funding when initial funding ran out. However, even nominal charges were considered a barrier to attendance (Shemilt *et al.*, 2003). There is also evidence to suggest that even when fees were charged for attending the clubs, finances still remained a concern (Street and Kenway, 1999).

Limited budgets for breakfast programmes may impact on the extent of breakfast provision that can be made. For example, the food offered may be restricted, particularly in the case of more perishable foods such as fresh fruit. The number of places on offer to pupils and families may also be restricted (Street and Kenway, 1999). Harrop and Palmer (2002) found that breakfasts at the clubs were not always nutritious and well-balanced, which was sometimes the result of restricted budgets. However, some clubs had also had to adopt a '*give them what they want*' philosophy to ensure a good take-up of breakfasts. Healthy options often meant low-take up rates of such provision by pupils

Staffing represented the main item of cost associated with the delivery of breakfast clubs (Street and Kenway, 1999) (Teachernet, 2005a). This was especially true of primary schools where supervision ratios were higher than in secondary schools (UEA, 2002). Staff recruitment and retention was also highlighted as a real concern (Street and Kenway, 1999).

There is other evidence that suggests that although breakfast clubs have the potential to address a range of both educational and social needs of pupils, such needs were not always met effectively. A study undertaken by Street and Kenway (1999) found that there were continuing problems with children arriving early and being unsupervised in the playground at school, or missing breakfast, even when the clubs were running. Those children who had significant issues with punctuality and attendance largely failed to benefit from the introduction of clubs because they either arrived too late or not at all. Breakfast clubs also had little control over '*grazing behaviour*' [eating high fat snacks throughout the day] on the way to school. A further study found that staff were concerned that breakfast provision was not reaching those most at

need. This was reflected in research in Scotland which found some evidence that parents regarded the clubs as a form of childcare (Cassels and Stewart, 2002). Other concerns have also been voiced. For example, one study found that some children arrived at school late as a result of attending breakfast clubs (Watson and Marr, 2003). In another study staff felt that there were few apparent benefits for those pupils at risk of exclusion from schooling or those pupils that lacked confidence (Harrop and Palmer, 2002).

Targeting particular groups in order to include those most in need was not always appropriate because of the suspicion of children or parents and the perceived stigma of being included, or an inability to pay charges or arrive at school early enough to attend. This often meant that those who would benefit most were not necessarily taking advantage of the clubs (Harrop and Palmer, 2002).

The concept of breakfast programmes has moved forward, but some suggest not to its full potential. Harrop and Palmer (2002) state: *'The breakfast club movement stands at the intersection of several key developments in public policy, not least the 'childcare revolution', the rise of out of school hours learning, and the government's ambitious agenda for social inclusion. But still, the status of breakfast clubs seems a little ambiguous and insecure. Our suspicion is that breakfast clubs are catching only the slipstream of the energy and resources being devoted to childcare, study support and school standards.'*

3.8 Day-to-day operation of breakfast clubs

Breakfast clubs exist to provide meals for pupils before school begins, but there are differences in the way individual clubs are organised and function. Street and Kenway (1999) explain; *'breakfast clubs, like many other areas of children's services, are very diverse, reflecting the way they have grown gradually, often in response to some particular local interest or need.'* Simpson (2001) suggests that breakfast clubs often reflect initiatives by local education and health provision departments because of the recognition that breakfast projects are able to make; *'a serious contribution in helping to tackle a range of current areas of concern'* (Street, 1999). For example, in a study of 37 breakfast clubs in the UK, all clubs aimed to improve the health and

nutrition of the pupils, but it was the primary aim of just two-fifths of the clubs surveyed. The same percentage of clubs reported that their primary aim was improving the children's education. All clubs aimed to meet children's social needs and in three-quarters of the primary schools, improving parent and family life was on the agenda (Harrop and Palmer, 2002).

In addition to the influence of local interests and needs, the individual circumstances and objectives affected the operation of each breakfast club. Schools often integrated different priorities into breakfast programmes such as study support, welfare support, and encouraging informal interaction between children and school staff (BNF, 2005). For example, a breakfast club in one school, supported by BUPA Community Connections, includes a weekly visit from BUPA international volunteers to help pupils to use computers, assist with reading, spelling and maths and provide language tuition (BUPA, 2005)

3.9 Location of breakfast clubs

Breakfast clubs are predominantly school-based and are delivered in settings ranging from nurseries to secondary schools. Despite the fact that the large majority of breakfast clubs are situated in schools, Street and Kenway (1999) argue that a diverse range of provision has also emerged that is not school-based. Non-school premises, including community centres, sport and church premises, are used to offer services to children only or to both children and parents. In these premises breakfast provision is often available to pupils who attend a number of schools in the locality. In a year-long study of 37 breakfast clubs in the UK, 19 were based in primary schools, 10 in secondary schools, three in special schools and one club was based at a charity educating children that had dropped out of the school system (Harrop and Palmer, 2002).

3.10 Attendees at breakfast clubs

Studies show that there is often a core group of pupils who attend clubs regularly, but that there is a greater turn-over of other pupils and significant variation in attendance on a day-to-day basis. It must be noted that making links between breakfast clubs and improvement in pupil performance in any

form can be difficult due to the fluctuations in pupil attendance (Harrop and Palmer, 2002).

Harrop and Palmer (2002), in a study of 37 breakfast clubs, identified four categories of children for whom breakfast is provided. These included:

- Children living in households where no food is available in the mornings. The reasons for this included households where parents could not afford enough basic food and families where parents neglect their children.
- Children who are not offered breakfast, even though food is available. Reasons for this included chaotic, rushed mornings, and early starts because of lengthy journeys.
- Children who are offered breakfast, but who decline to eat it. Reasons for this included nausea, lack of hunger in the morning and social and psychological influences.
- Children who eat poorly in the mornings, particularly those who buy high-sugar snacks on the way to school.

Research conducted by the UEA (2002) in England found that the type of pupils most likely to take up the provision were:

- Those who would have had breakfast at home but wanted to attend the club because it was a social event at the start of the school day.
- 'Fussy eaters' whose parents recognised that they were more likely to have breakfast at school even though it was available at home.
- Children whose lower-income parents made sure they had breakfast at home if no club was available at school but who got a higher quality and more varied breakfast at school.
- Children whose parents were students or in work.
- Children whose parents could not always afford to provide breakfast.
- Children whose parents were unable to organise breakfast.

3.11 Staffing of breakfast clubs

The staff who operate breakfast clubs can be as diverse as the location itself. Breakfast clubs can be run by parents, volunteers, school staff and staff from community organisations (Street and Kenway, 1999). Cassels and Stewart (2002) found that most staff in Scotland were paid whilst a study by Street and Kenway (1999) found that a range of staff were contracted to run the clubs,

including school staff such as Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs), home liaison staff, catering staff and after club leaders. Cassels and Stewart (2002) highlighted a concern that the amount of training offered to those who worked in breakfast clubs was inadequate.

3.12 Funding of breakfast clubs

Breakfast clubs are funded in a variety of ways. Possible sources for funding include health authorities and health promotion funds, education action zones, education business partnership funding, targeted regeneration programmes, local authority budgets, charitable grants, private business grants and supermarkets, and lottery funding.

Some breakfast clubs charge fees for attending, but there is much variation in the fees reported. Street and Kenway (1999) found that this could vary between 20 pence per day to £2.50. Another study found that charges ranged from 30p to 60p and clubs were dependent upon outside funding if they needed to cover additional staff or food costs (Harrop and Palmer, 2002). In their research into breakfast clubs in Scotland, Cassels and Stewart (2002) noted that more than four fifths of clubs levied a fee for attending (which in some cases was reduced if more than one child from the same household was making use of the provision).

There are many examples of companies financially supporting the operation of breakfast clubs. For example, a bakery was responsible for supporting a number of clubs by offering two-year funding schemes, bread free of charge and money for cereal and juice and one-off payments for equipment such as toasters. A school-based breakfast club for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties is sponsored by an oil company (Watson and Marr, 2003).

Partnerships have also developed in order to support breakfast clubs. For example, the ContinYou educational charity has worked in partnership with a major cereal manufacturer for several years to assist the development of breakfast clubs by providing 'how to' guides for breakfast clubs, a website, a national award scheme, funds to schools, and conducting research into the

impact of breakfast clubs on schools and their communities. In the West Midlands, six LA clusters have run a healthier breakfast clubs initiative. The clusters are working together to plan celebration events to promote the projects (Department for Health, 2005). However, research conducted by UEA (2002) noted that developing partnerships was often a time-consuming process and that there was a need to ensure that those responsible were given enough lead-in time.

3.13 Categories of breakfast clubs

Street and Kenway (1999) identified four main types of breakfast clubs incorporating the variations in day-to-day operation. These included:

- Community-based organisations serving many schools from a community location.
- School-based initiatives with a specific focus on tackling punctuality or poor eating habits and a welfare assistant to supervise pupils.
- Schools with a voluntary group where school staff worked as volunteers.
- Partnerships between the local health board, social services and a school where school staff worked voluntarily with the presence of meal supervisors.

3.14 Free school breakfasts in Wales

Along with other areas of the United Kingdom, schools in Wales have provided breakfast in school for a number of years. In 2003, it was reported that of the 1,700 primary schools in Wales, 34 offered breakfast (BBC, 2003).

However, prior to 2003 there had been no funding for the provision of school breakfasts from either local education authorities or the Welsh Assembly Government.

In late 2003, the Welsh Assembly Government announced its intention to fund the opportunity for '*all primary school children to have free breakfasts*' by 2007. This development was reported to build on the work '*being done on healthy eating and nutrition through the Welsh Network of Healthy School*

Schemes (WNHSS) and is part of the Welsh Assembly Government's Health Challenge Wales initiative.'

Welsh Assembly Government, 2004b

Health Challenge Wales is a key initiative of the Welsh Assembly Government and the minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Jane Davidson noted that it linked with the Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative because

We know that health patterns are laid down early in life and that an unhealthy lifestyle in childhood can lead to diabetes, heart disease and even cancer in later life. Fortunately much of this can be prevented, if we can build a consensus on what we all need to do. And that's where Health Challenge Wales and our free school breakfasts scheme comes in.

Welsh Assembly Government, 2004a

The importance of providing breakfast was also acknowledged by Jane Davidson who stated that

The Welsh Assembly Government recognises that a healthy breakfast is linked to better health, concentration and behaviour in schools. We want to give every child in Wales a flying start - this exciting initiative is doing just that.

Welsh Assembly Government, 2003

The development of the free school breakfast initiative was piloted in Communities First areas in nine local education authorities across Wales. The nine local education authorities selected to participate in the pilot were

Pembrokeshire	Neath Port Talbot
Carmarthenshire	Caerphilly
Merthyr Tydfil	Cardiff
Anglesey	Wrexham
Denbighshire	

Through the pilot programme it was anticipated that some 11,000 children would be provided with the opportunity to have breakfast in school which would not replace breakfast that is already provided through a breakfast club. The pilot was estimated to cost £1.5 million in 2004-2005. It was hoped that

the breakfast club initiative would be rolled out to all primary schools in Wales by January 2007.

The Welsh Assembly Government published guidance in relation to the free breakfast initiative (2004b), which focused on pupil/staff ratios, timings, and the food to be provided. The guidance states that providing breakfast in school will improve the health and nutrition of pupils by encouraging healthy eating and will assist in

- *promoting the importance of breakfast and highlight its benefits*
- *providing children with a good start to the school day*
- *helping raise achievement*
- *improving concentration*
- *improving attendance and punctuality*
- *improving children's attitude to learning*
- *enhancing social and personal skills*
- *enhancing relationships with peers/parents/carers.*

In pilot schools, pupils eating breakfast would have the opportunity to choose one item from each of the following four food groups.

milk based drinks or products

cereals - not sugar coated

fruit

breads.

Within the guidance the portion sizes for each food group have been prescribed. Breakfast provision was not expected to open to pupils prior to 8am in the morning and was expected to end 10 minutes before the start of the school day. However, the guidance states that

All schools will have the flexibility, within these guidelines, to decide how they provide and run the free breakfast sessions. Where existing breakfast clubs/sessions already operate, schools are encouraged to explore the possibility of collaborating with the current provider.

Schools were required to ensure that breakfast provision complied with regulations relating to Health and Safety, Food Safety, Fire Safety and Drills,

First Aid and to ensure that the breakfast provision was covered for insurance purposes.

Supervisory staff for the breakfast provision could be drawn from a wide number of sources which could include

teaching staff, the kitchen staff, lunchtime supervisors, parent helpers or Learning Support Assistants (LSAs)...If a child's statement of Special Educational Needs identifies additional support for that child this must be considered when recruiting supervisory staff for the breakfast session.

Any person employed to supervise the breakfast provision must be subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check and would be employed for one hour per day. The following supervisor/ pupil ratios were set for the pilot:

<i>Number of pupils in club</i>	<i>Number of supervisory staff required</i>
<i>1-55</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>56-85</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>86-125</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>126-165</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>166-215</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>216-265</i>	<i>7</i>

The Welsh Assembly Government provided funding for the pilot breakfast provision which included set-up costs to a maximum of £2000 per club and £500 per term for operational costs. Food costs were subsidised to a level of 25p per day per child. Funding was also provided for supervisory and catering staff for one hour per day, the number of whom depended on the number of pupils attending the breakfast provision.

No educational activities were to be integrated as part of the free breakfast initiative. However, pupils were encouraged to be involved in designing menus and, through school councils, to be involved in the running of the club. The guidance stressed that parents would need to give notification of attendance a term in advance to the school and that:

Free breakfast is not a right. Schools can refuse entry to any children on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour. Once children have registered on arrival they must remain in the breakfast session.

The development and funding of the free school breakfast initiative marked a new thrust in educational policy in Wales, with the Welsh Assembly Government taking the decision to provide breakfast in school and laying down clear guidance to schools participating in the pilot.

Key Findings

The provision of school breakfasts has been inspired by evidence of the positive impact it can make on a range of issues, including school attendance, punctuality, concentration, attainment, and in promoting messages about health and nutrition; such programmes have been introduced in a number of countries worldwide.

There is little quantitative evidence about the effectiveness of school breakfasts; however the qualitative evidence is consistently positive.

Breakfast provision in school is a way of encouraging those groups of pupils least likely to eat breakfast at home to have something to eat; a nutritional breakfast has the added value of contributing to a balanced diet; however, it is recognised that a difficult balance has to be reached between attracting children who do not eat breakfast and providing a healthy breakfast.

In addition to the food content and messages about health, school breakfasts can contribute to a more settled school day and greater motivation to learn; they can also contribute to the development of pupils' social skills and confidence.

School breakfasts are also a means of enabling parents to ensure their children have a morning meal at a time of increasing problems related to work-life balance.

Providing breakfast in schools offers one way of reaching children who are living in poverty; however, concerns remain that some opportunities are not being taken up by those in greatest need.

Funding for school breakfast provision is limited and the temporary nature of much of what is available raises questions about sustainability.

School breakfasts can be seen as part of a much broader development of 'extended schools' whereby schools take on an increasing level of responsibility for children, over and above traditional notions of education.

The aims of individual clubs may differ; some are focused mainly on health and wellbeing, others have a more educational focus; some seek to address more general social issues.

Breakfasts are often provided on school sites; however, other venues are also used.

A range of pupils have been found to take up breakfast provision where it is offered; these include those who would not normally eat breakfast at home alongside others, such as those whose parents are working early in the morning or who cannot organise breakfasts for some other reason.

Breakfast provision is delivered by a range of individuals, including volunteers and school-based staff.

A number of charitable organisations and private businesses have contributed to individual breakfast initiatives; however, there is no stable source of funding outside Wales.

The Welsh Assembly Government has committed itself to providing healthy, free breakfasts for all primary school children; schools have been invited to take part but no school would be compelled to deliver breakfast.

Schools serving Communities First wards were the first to be offered the opportunity to develop school breakfast provision.

The Welsh Assembly Government has stipulated the staffing levels, time commitment, and the type of food to be provided in the clubs which it supports.

4. The Welsh Assembly Government school breakfast initiative

This chapter examines the experiences of a sample of those schools where the Welsh Assembly Government's school breakfast initiative was delivered during 2004-05. The evidence draws on the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders, including LA personnel, headteachers and other school-based staff, and pupils.

4.1 Perspectives of the school breakfast initiative

LAs offered a number of different reasons for taking part in the breakfast initiative. These included concern that some pupils were not eating breakfast before school and also a belief that eating breakfast would enhance pupils' attainment and contribute to better behaviour. A number of LAs stressed the importance of the health aspect of the initiative as well as its potential educational benefits. It was felt by a number of LAs that the programme was a valuable contribution to the work of schools which often faced the greatest challenges, given that it was being piloted in schools which served the most deprived wards in Wales. The initiative had matched closely some LAs' own initiatives to support those schools. For example, one LA saw participation in the breakfast initiative as: *'the start of a ten hour day. It is part of a move to complete wrap-around services and extended care'*.

Some LAs were more cautious and said that they retained an open mind about the initiative. Some said that they would evaluate the initiative after they had taken part in the pilot phase. For example, one LA was concerned by evidence that the provision of breakfast was impacting on pupils' eating patterns: *'Pupils are having breakfast at 8.30 - 9, then fruit tuck, milk and then lunch by 12. Then from 12.30 on until may be 6.00 or whenever they have their tea there is nothing. I'm not saying that they shouldn't have it but we should be rethinking it if it is going to be rolled out for example, fruit before they go home. All the initiatives run from 8.30 - 12.00'*.

One LA expressed serious reservations, especially concerning the cost:

I have a very strong personal view about it - there's nothing wrong with the ethos behind the free breakfast, but there's no way you can justify the amount of money it's taking to get it off the ground.

Most headteachers felt that the Welsh Assembly Government's breakfast initiative would be beneficial and could benefit all pupils if it was promoted effectively and was able to reach the children who were most in need. A representative comment was that they recognised the desirability of: '*providing a healthy breakfast for those children in the school that came to school without breakfast*'.

Two headteachers admitted having had initial reservations about the programme's aims, one of whom said 'we were working hard to get parents to accept responsibility with us for working with their children and the breakfast club was removing that parental responsibility even more ... for those parents who don't get up with their children, it has absolved them of the responsibility even more'. A member of catering staff at another school concurred and said that she remained opposed to the initiative. In her opinion schools were being asked to do too much and parents were not taking appropriate responsibility. Despite having initial reservations, another headteacher conceded that the initiative had been beneficial: '*I thought at first it was wrong, I thought that this was the parents' job and that we were getting into the nanny state ... but when you see in this type of area the effect it is having then yes, it is a good idea*'.

4.2 Links to other initiatives

Although the breakfast initiative was launched as a standalone programme, a number of LAs ensured that it was linked to other LA strategies. For example, several LAs had established nutritional or health-related groups who played some role in the breakfast provision. In particular, it was felt that the breakfast initiative complemented Healthy Schools initiatives.

All of the sample schools had linked the breakfast initiative to other health-related themes. Some headteachers said that it was part of Healthy Schools Initiatives and that the breakfast provision was part of a whole-school

approach to promoting health eating. Even so, many recognised that changing eating habits was a long-term goal because: *'it takes years for these things to become embedded'*.

One headteacher commented that the school provided a dedicated room where the breakfast was delivered which was also used for cookery and lessons about healthy lifestyles. Another said that they spent the first two weeks of every academic year looking at healthy eating as a cross-curricular theme.

4.3 Preparing the initiative

A range of factors influenced the way that the initiative was developed in schools. These issues are categorised below.

Communication between the Welsh Assembly Government and LAs

LA respondents were very positive about the communication that had occurred between themselves and the Assembly during the pilot period which was described by many as a two-way process. An illustrative comment was *'I feel that the Welsh Assembly has listened to us, and they've acted on what they've heard'*. In particular, LAs welcomed the working meetings which had been held. These had offered valuable opportunities for LAs to discuss and further develop the pilot. Interviewees referred positively to instances when draft guidance had been amended following such meetings. Moreover, a number of LAs felt that their experiences with the breakfast initiative had been on the whole positive.

Selecting schools

The selection of schools had been conducted on the basis of the Welsh Assembly Government's criteria that schools should be located in or served Communities First areas. One LA had taken the step of writing to all primary schools and had received twenty positive responses from schools across the LA. This number had then been reduced in line with the Communities First criteria to provide the LA with their pilot schools. In several LAs, schools that already ran breakfast clubs had been incorporated into the pilot. Most LAs had not distinguished between schools which had fully-equipped kitchens and

those which did not have such facilities and in some cases had invested in additional equipment for schools without kitchens.

Informing schools

Pilot schools had all been briefed about the initiative at meetings organised by the Welsh Assembly Government. One headteacher said that the meeting had included a presentation from a headteacher who was already running breakfast provision and that being told about it by someone with hands-on experience had been useful. In most cases the Welsh Assembly Government meetings had been followed by meetings organised by LAs. Some refinements had been made to the proposed management structure for the initiative following those meetings; for example, in one LA it had been decided not to use the same rate to pay breakfast supervisors as was used to pay dinner-time supervisory staff.

Arrangements for school transport

Many LAs were aware that headteachers and others had expressed concerns about the possible impact that the breakfast initiative could have on school transport. LA respondents believed that these issues raised questions about equality of opportunity and equal access. This was summarised by one LA officer who said:

You may have a bus load of pupils where half the parents want their children to have breakfast and the others don't. What do you do? Take them all in early? Have two buses?

A further LA officer expressed concern that: 'Once you start providing transport to breakfast where does it stop?'

However, the vast majority of school and LA respondents noted that due to the geography of the areas served by the pilot schools, school transport had not been affected because pupils walked to school or arrived by car. However, in some areas a larger number of pupils were conveyed by bus or taxi. Contract buses and taxis ensure pupils arrived for the start of the school day and therefore those pupils travelling by contract bus or contract taxi who wanted to have breakfast were not able to do so. Similarly, those travelling on service buses could only access the provision if a service bus ran at a time which enabled them to arrive at school when breakfast was served. LAs considered that when the initiative was rolled out there may be greater school transport

issues, particularly for rural, faith and Welsh-medium primary schools that draw their pupils from wider catchment areas.

However, LAs and schools noted that there had been an impact on school crossing patrols due to the breakfast initiative. In some cases difficulties had been avoided by delaying the start of breakfast until after 8.15am.

Arrangements for pupils with special dietary needs

Schools had been able to respond to the needs of pupils who had a range of special dietary needs or Special Educational Needs. Schools had made local amendments to the initiative, including:

- making provision for pupils with special dietary requirements, e.g. allergy to nuts
- providing alternative foods for a pupil with lactose intolerance
- ensuring that additional staff supervised statemented pupils with EBD – usually a different person to that employed to work with them during the school day.

However, as noted above, it was recognised that pupils for whom special transport arrangements, for example taxis, were made were often unable to attend the breakfast initiative.

4.4 Delivering the initiative

Each LA and participating school was asked to describe how breakfast provision was delivered and to outline the issues which delivery raised.

Previous experience

Two of the eight pilot schools said that they had run breakfast clubs before the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative. One had done so with the aid of a small grant from the Healthy Schools Initiative, while the other had accessed lottery funding. In one of these schools, a small charge had been levied on parents to assist with the cost of food prior to the breakfast initiative.

Preparation

Schools felt that they had had adequate time to prepare. In one, the timescale had been more challenging because they had been inspected by Estyn at the time the initiative was being introduced. Several schools felt that the considerable level of preparation by their LA had been an important element in its smooth introduction.

Marketing

Schools said that they had informed parents by letter that the breakfast initiative would be launched. Parents were also reminded about it through regular mailings. Pilot schools had also promoted the initiative to pupils during school assemblies and pastoral sessions. The response from parents had been mixed. One headteacher described how the school had estimated from parents' replies that 100 pupils would be attending but only 60 did so. In one LA parents had been given two opportunities, the first at the end of the summer term and the other at the end of the autumn term, to enrol their children. All parents had been asked to commit to ensuring that their children attended every day for a term. The headteachers concerned commended this approach as it gave them some stability and a basis for planning staffing and food.

The supply and quality of food

In the majority of LAs, the monitoring of food quality was the responsibility of the lead member of catering staff at each school. These staff monitored the quality of the food provided by suppliers and alerted their line managers to any potential problems. In a small number of LAs, catering managers and other staff had visited schools during breakfast to monitor delivery and the quality of the food. All of the headteachers said that they were happy with the quality of the food.

All of the schools and LAs reported sourcing their food from their normal providers who supplied food to the school. Two headteachers said that they had considered buying fruit from a local retailer who provided the fruit for their tuck shop but this had not been possible because that would mean a further tender process. Another headteacher who had considered buying fruit locally said that the process would have been too time-consuming to organise. Where food was purchased by the LA or a company working on behalf of

LAs, there was qualitative evidence that some local suppliers were used where possible.

Delivering breakfasts in school

A member of the catering staff, already employed at the school, described how the breakfast provision worked. She prepared the breakfasts every day which meant arriving 45 minutes earlier than prior to the initiative. Usually the breakfasts took around 20 minutes to prepare, and then she served the pupils and cleared away. She was assisted in the kitchen by one other person who washed dishes and tidied up. Without that help she felt that it would be difficult to start preparing the school lunch.

In another school, the cook started work at 7.30 and supervisors arrived at 8am. Few practical problems had been encountered although a member of the catering staff at one school said that challenges arose because the dishes used for breakfast could not be sterilised until 9.30 (because the sterilisers were not warm enough to be used before then) which could mean that there might not be enough plates available to be used at dinner time.

Table 4.1 shows the guidance issued by the Welsh Assembly Government stating that the following food groups and portion sizes should be provided for pupils.

Table 4.1: Food provided by the free breakfast initiative

<i>Food group</i>	<i>Portion size</i>	<i>Suggested items</i>
<i>Milk-based drinks and products</i>	<i>125-175ml or small carton</i>	<i>Semi- skimmed milk Smoothies Yoghurt/fromage frais</i>
<i>Cereals – not sugar coated*</i>	<i>25-42g</i>	<i>Whole-wheat biscuits Corn flakes Rice-based cereal Shredded wholegrain wheat biscuits (including fruit filled) Sugar-free muesli Malted wheat squares Bran Flakes</i>
<i>*To avoid adding sugar, children should be encouraged to use fresh fruit and dried fruit as sweetener</i>		

<i>Fruit</i>	<i>With fruit this is determined by what a child could hold in the palm of their hand or 100-125ml of juice</i>	<i>A selection of chopped fresh fruit or dried fruit to add to the cereals. Fruit canned in natural fruit juice. Unsweetened fruit juices</i>
<i>Breads</i>	<i>1 slice or small roll/bun 25g</i>	<i>Toast with a variety of toppings e.g. Low fat cheese spread, reduced sugar jam, banana.</i> <i>Bagels and reduced fat cream cheese.</i> <i>Muffins and crumpets.</i> <i>Hot cross buns and tea cakes.</i> <i>Fruit loaf.</i> <i>*one of these items available 2 times a week</i> <i>Note: where required a low fat polyunsaturated spread should be used</i>

In general, LA respondents felt that the provision of clear guidance on portion sizes had been appropriate. A small number of the LAs had interpreted the guidelines in a way which allowed flexibility within the menu. This meant that although each item listed in the guidance was offered at some point each week, an item might not be available every day. For example, in one LA fresh fruit was provided twice weekly and fruit juice was offered on the other three days. Some LA respondents noted that they had chosen not to provide the full range of food such as smoothies due to cost considerations. One LA had trialled hot cross buns and found that the take-up of these was minimal and consequently withdrew them.

The children interviewed described a typical breakfast: *'We can pick any cereal we want and toast and we can either have fruit drink or milk. Sometimes we can have dried fruit or fresh fruit'*. They said that they were not provided with sugar-coated cereals and that they were not allowed sugar on their cereals. Many of them said that this was a good thing and referred to the effect which too much sugar had on teeth. Children at another school remarked on the importance of eating five pieces of fruit or vegetables daily and said that the fruit they ate in school helped them to reach this target. Pupils at another school said that there were no foods that they didn't particularly like and remarked on the freshness of the fruit juice and milk which they drank for breakfast at school.

Food take-up

LA staff reported that the take-up of fresh fruit and yoghurt was lower than they had anticipated. Catering staff said that toast, fruit juice, rice krispies and cornflakes were the most popular items with pupils but that shredded wheat or yoghurts were less popular. Staff in two schools said that the children were not keen on fruit, especially the fruit cocktails and peaches although apples and bananas were more popular. One supervisor noted that there had been a change in eating habits; *'At first they would choose everything, now they are being more selective'*. This included a greater willingness to eat fruit. In general staff, reported that there was very little wastage.

Headteachers felt that the Welsh Assembly Government's stipulation of the type of food provided sufficient choice and variety for pupils which meant that the children could choose what they wanted to eat. One school described how children who did not like some food were offered larger portions of what they did like.

LA respondents did not think that the food offered had affected take-up and one respondent noted that the breakfast provision was a way of influencing children's choices given that *'there's a need to wean them off things slowly. Some are not coming because they can't have what they want'*. A number of LA officers said that the lack of sugar-coated cereals had not presented a barrier in schools. These views were echoed by headteachers and pupils. Very few headteachers felt that the type of food on offer in the breakfast provision had influenced the type of pupils who attended. Moreover, several said that it would not be acceptable to provide food which was not healthy. Children at

one school said that they wouldn't go to the breakfast if they did not like what was on offer, suggesting that the type of food was appropriate.

Behaviour during breakfast

In general schools reported that behaviour during the breakfast sessions was good. This was emphasised by many catering staff. A typical comment was *'They're good kids really ... we don't have much to complain about'*. Issues of serious misbehaviour or dangerous conduct were referred to senior staff in the school. Headteachers said that it was important that the staff providing breakfast had recourse to calling on them because of the challenging nature of some of the pupils with whom they worked. This included a minority of headteachers who said that they would only become involved in the breakfast initiative if such issues arose. These would then be addressed through the school's normal disciplinary procedures.

Activities for pupils following breakfast

The need to provide activities for the children after they had finished their breakfasts was an issue raised by a number of respondents. According to one LA representative: *'Kids are going to get bored colouring in and watching television, we may need to think about other activities, for example, fitness, discussing health issues'*. This view was echoed by a number of headteachers who said that there was a need to ensure that the children did not sit unoccupied or watch television but were given the opportunity to play stimulating games or take part in some form of exercise. However they insisted that this could not be done with current funding levels.

4.5 Staffing the initiative

LA and a range of school-based staff played key roles in the delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's school breakfast initiative.

Role of LA staff

The role of LA staff was seen as crucial if the initiative was to succeed. In particular, schools welcomed LA staff involvement because of their knowledge of food procurement and quality control issues. LAs also described their work in monitoring and managing the initiative, such as collating attendance figures for the Welsh Assembly Government and collecting

information about the number of hours worked by catering and supervisory staff.

Background of staff delivering breakfasts

All LAs said that the staff employed in a supervisory capacity in the breakfast initiative already worked in the schools. These staff represented a wide range of school staff, including lunchtime supervisors and LSAs. These staff had received temporary contracts for the supervisory role.

The use of existing school staff within the breakfast initiative was considered by all LAs to provide benefits because pupils knew them and were comfortable in their care. One officer noted that it was important not to: *'put too much change within the school. It's beneficial that the children know the workers because it makes them more comfortable'*. A further LA noted that existing staff may have: *'greater knowledge of the children and the children get to know them better, which may make discipline easier.'*

Headteachers supported using existing staff to deliver the breakfast due to the desirability for these staff to know the children and to understand the school's ethos. One headteacher commented: *'They know the children –there's no nonsense from the children'*. Sometimes those staff were able to detect issues affecting children in an informal situation which would not be possible in classroom settings: *'The staff know and can pick up if the children are having any family problems, so they can give them extra support. They can pass on information that has been passed on to them and that may help us manage the pupil that day'*. This was regarded as an important contribution to schools' pastoral work. In one LA, headteachers were employed as breakfast supervisors.

Catering staff also felt that the breakfast provision strengthened positive relationships within the school. According to one of them: *'It has been nice running breakfast as I have been able to get to know the pupils. You get the chance to talk to them as there is less of a hurry'*. A supervisor at another school emphasised the way that their knowledge of the children contributed to discipline and said: *'We know them and have the control whereas someone new would not have the control'*.

All headteachers said that Criminal Record Bureau checks were always carried out on the staff who worked in the breakfast provision before they commenced their duties, which was standard procedure for all adults who worked with children.

Recruitment of staff

Some LAs reported that they had not experienced any difficulties in recruiting catering staff. In many cases existing catering staff delivered the breakfast initiative and then took a break before preparing school lunches.

However, other LAs had experienced difficulties in recruiting staff. For example, one LA in a rural area was concerned whether sufficient staff could be found to prepare and serve breakfast in all primary schools. Particular difficulty had been experienced in schools which lacked a fully equipped kitchen, defined as *'dining centres.'* In one case this had been overcome by extending the hours for catering staff because there were: *'issues about small kitchens where the cook may come in at 10.30am and so we may have someone there working until 9am and then we need to fill that hour and a half.'*

Some LAs felt that because the breakfast initiative started at 8am in the morning, the *'natural'* market for staff may be limited. As one LA officer asked: *'who wants to come to work for an hour? People who are on benefits could lose their benefits'*. The hours of work were also felt to be a major barrier to the recruitment of staff. It was felt that many possible staff would find it difficult to commit to a job that entailed working early in the morning because of factors including childcare needs.

One LA reported that a number of different solutions had been found to the challenges that recruitment had presented. For example, in one LA it was reported that:

one of our cooks is doing the breakfast service at a different rate to her normal (higher) rate but not everyone would accept that. In one case the cook refused and we have two catering assistants running it there with the cook only doing the ordering.

In another LA, a cook was employed to prepare and serve breakfast in a different school to where she prepared and served lunch. Most of the catering

staff who delivered the breakfasts said that the additional hours suited them and that they fitted in easily with their other work commitments. However, a cook at one school said that she had been involved in the breakfast provision but had found that the additional commitment had been too much for her.

No headteachers reported any difficulties in recruiting supervisory staff. For example, one headteacher said that it had simply been a matter of asking dinnertime supervisors to volunteer. However, a headteacher said that it was sometimes difficult to retain staff, both for the breakfast initiative and more generally. The headteacher said that this was especially true of staff whose contracts meant that they were not paid fully during holiday periods.

Staff contractual arrangements

One recurring theme highlighted by LAs was the amount of time allocated to catering staff for the breakfast initiative; the pilot supplied funding for one hour per member of catering staff. This was found to be insufficient by a number of LAs and one LA had conducted a time and motion study to identify where any potential time savings could be made. Although some savings were identified, the catering manager stated that one hour was still insufficient to prepare, serve and clear away the breakfasts. The officer in question noted: *'I am not prepared to put the staff under pressure as that may cause accidents'*. In this LA, catering staff were reported to be recording more than one hour per day for the breakfast initiative for which they had to be paid from the money received by the LA to deliver the scheme and officers felt this to be an issue that needed to be addressed.

The level of pay for catering staff was considered to be an issue by a minority of LAs. One noted that *'kitchen staff are on different rates of pay according to site size and only the lower rate falls in line with the Assembly's rates'*.

Staffing levels

The headteachers said that the supervisory staffing levels set by the Welsh Assembly Government for the breakfast initiative were appropriate. In one school, it was felt that the staffing was sufficient to enable supervisors to take the children out to play after they had eaten breakfast. Few problems were reported with supervisory levels although one pilot school commented that having two staff for 30 pupils was insufficient because they had found that one was needed to supervise the pupils after they had finished eating.

A number of issues were raised by respondents regarding the nature of supervision within the breakfast initiative. These included concerns about what the pupils should do once they have eaten breakfast, and the impact of factors such as staff illness on the actual number of supervisors present. According to the draft guidance for the breakfast initiative there was no requirement to provide any activities for pupils once they have eaten breakfast; however, one respondent queried '*When they have eaten what they have eaten, they still need to be cared for and supervised. It cannot be just about food*'.

Another respondent who considered the current staffing levels to be appropriate posed the following question 'it depends if it is seen as supervision or child care. Where do they go after they've left the breakfast table? What if they go into the yard and there's an emergency?'

Roles of headteachers

A number of LAs recognised that although headteachers were not required to be present at the school during the breakfast initiative, many were present and one LA recognised that: '*some headteachers act as senior supervisors as they would not be happy for the thing to go on without there being teachers present*'. This was, however, identified as an issue for headteachers to resolve for themselves.

Effect of the breakfast initiative on staff workload

Some headteachers did not consider that their own workload had increased as a result of the breakfast initiative and said that for many of the supervisors the additional hours had been as a way of supplementing their existing hours. Where headteachers had experienced a minimal increase in additional work, the paperwork was handled by either a member of the school staff responsible for the breakfast initiative or by the LA. One headteacher said '*that I will be here from 8.30 and not before*'. In one LA the headteachers interviewed all those who worked as breakfast supervisors and were paid additionally for this work. According to two of them, it was essential for them to be there in order to ensure that discipline was upheld. One noted '*if you lose discipline early in the morning then you've had it for the rest of the day*'.

Other headteachers said that despite there being no obligation for them or their deputies to be present, they still felt a duty to be on site when the breakfast provision was running. According to one: *‘There is an issue in that I would not allow anything to run in my school without either myself or my deputy being present ... We are in a volatile area with volatile pupils and parents. It is not worth the risk of leaving the pupils without some form of teacher being around ... so it does place a further burden on myself, it is another pressure’*. This issue was acknowledged by one LA officer who said: *‘It’s ironic that at a time where we are trying to unburden heads we are taking it out of the front of the van and adding it to the back’*.

4.6 Funding the initiative

LAs were asked whether they considered the funding provided by the Welsh Assembly Government to be sufficient and also whether enough money was provided for different types of expenditure, for example, food or staff costs. They were also asked for their opinions on the amount of funding provided for the breakfast initiative compared with that provided for school dinners.

Funding arrangements

All the LAs interviewed received funding for the breakfast initiative from the Welsh Assembly Government based upon their submissions for staffing, food costs and initial set-up costs. This was used to deliver the provision in schools although in several cases the amount of money handled by schools themselves was kept to a minimum and payments were made by the LAs. This was a system which suited most schools because it minimised the administrative work they had to undertake. However, in one *‘cheque book school’* they managed the budget themselves and paid all bills; the school felt that this was a more efficient way of working but noted that delays sometimes occurred when they claimed expenditure back from their LA.

Funding levels for the breakfast initiative

In general, LAs were satisfied with the level of funding for establishing the provision in schools. However, several LAs raised issues concerning the delivery of the provision, which was based upon a 75 per cent take-up. All LAs reported that this take-up level was not being reached in any school.

Some LAs were dissatisfied about the level of funding for the food. Three believed that the amount allocated per pupil, per day was not enough to enable them to provide the range of foods outlined in the draft guidance. One of them said that in order to provide the breakfast outlined in the draft guidance: *'We suggested 50p, but the Assembly have only given us 25p. It has been explained to them that it isn't enough even for the basics'*. This was an opinion shared by another LA, which believed that it was in

a chicken and egg process ... the view of the LEA at the moment is that the expenditure is far out-stripping the guideline sums of the Assembly. I know the Assembly are willing to review the expenditure but at the moment they haven't got enough facts. We need to get them facts as soon as possible so they can structure a report that will then rationalise the funding.

A further LA considered that the expenditure on providing breakfast would be far greater than the funding received and so there would be a need for the LA to supplement this in some way. However, this was contradicted by other LAs who noted that if they had to support the initiative from their own budgets they would withdraw from the pilot. This reflected a concern among schools as was evidenced by an LA which reported that staff had been *'asked for a guarantee that no other budget will be affected by this (breakfast initiative)'*.

Other LAs felt that it was too early to comment on the level of food funding due to the limited amount of data that was available to them.

Several LAs said that there was a need to re-examine the amount of funding provided for catering staff. For example, one LA noted that: *'The Assembly are providing £4.60 for staff and that doesn't relate to any staffing scale we've got and it doesn't include on-costs like National Insurance'*. A majority of the LAs interviewed also noted that funding was insufficient because: *'The labour cost was 16-18p too short because the national LGC rate and on costs are more than £6.40 an hour'*.

LAs had also been asked to consider by schools if the need for caretaking staff to open premises earlier than normal as well as the additional heating and electricity required by the breakfast provision should be claimed by schools from the Welsh Assembly Government.

One LA questioned the impact on administration when and if the programme was extended to all schools; a member of staff currently undertakes the administration of the scheme for a small number of schools, but the LA officer was uncertain whether this administrative time could be reclaimed.

The majority of schools thought that the funding allocated by the Welsh Assembly Government was sufficient. However, one school disagreed and referred specifically to problems it had encountered because, in the headteacher's opinion, the number of staff preparing breakfast was insufficient.

4.7 Comparison with funding for school meals

Some LAs said that in their experience, the funding provided for school breakfasts was more than that provided for school dinners. According to one: *'The price of serving a bit of toast is extraordinary. We get £1.33 from council to provide a two-course lunch and it is costing way over £2.50 to provide a bit of toast for breakfast. I don't think that's best value expenditure'*.

4.8 Take-up and impact

Measuring take-up and impact was an extremely important means of identifying strengths and highlighting any challenges to the effective delivery of school breakfasts.

Attendance data from before the breakfast programme began and from the year of breakfast programme inception was compared for schools involved in the breakfast programme to examine the impact of the programme on attendance. Additionally, the socio-economic characteristics of the schools involved in the breakfast programme were examined in the context of all primary schools in Wales. The analysis indicated there was no statistical difference in attendance between breakfast programme schools and those not yet receiving the breakfast programme. It should be noted that the small sample size is likely to mask any effect the programme had on attendance.

Measuring impact

The interviews were conducted at an early stage in the introduction of the breakfast initiative, and so many LAs and schools felt that they were only able to offer tentative comments regarding the impact of the provision. No LA was able to report that formal systems were in place to monitor the impact, and one recognised that formal methods such as a questionnaire survey may not elicit a substantial response rate from parents. The feedback relating to impact was based on the day-to-day informal contact that many of the LA respondents had with schools. This feedback may be received in the course of discussions relating to other school meal provision and was considered to be anecdotal, as one respondent stated: *‘The children eating breakfast appear to be more settled and calm, but how do you measure it?’* One LA respondent considered that as they had not received any direct contact from schools relating to the provision then they assumed schools to be satisfied with the provision.

One LA respondent noted that caution must be exercised when considering the impact of providing breakfast in school because:

This would be an unrealistic task. You cannot attribute improvements in performance to school breakfasts and it would be pushing things too far to try to make connections between the two things. It would not have a scientific basis.

Attendance at breakfast

A number of LAs noted that in the spring term take-up levels had fallen from those recorded prior to Christmas. This was attributed to the weather and darker mornings. A number also noted that take-up levels had been lower than had been initially anticipated. One LA reported that:

We used to have a successful New Opportunities Fund funded provision which attracted 40 per cent attendance. Now we average about 22 per cent in the Welsh Assembly Government scheme. This may be attributed to the stigma that it’s about poor children having breakfast which is also the stigma attached to free school meals. Ironically there was a higher take-up when a small charge was made.

Factors influencing attendance

Although it was recognised that the initiative had not been running long enough to come to firm judgements about patterns of attendance, there was emerging evidence about the factors which influenced attendance. Daylight

and the weather influenced attendance at breakfast in some areas with higher attendance during light mornings and fine weather. Other patterns in attendance were also identified by headteachers. One headteacher had observed that when one member of a family took up the breakfast then siblings usually did the same. It was also remarked that when a pupil decided to come their friends often joined as well. Some pupils' attendance fluctuated depending on their parents' shift patterns.

Nature of pupils attending breakfast

A minority of LAs questioned whether those pupils who attended the provision at the schools were those pupils who schools knew may not eat breakfast at home. According to one LA:

How many parents are going to use it to get rid of their children earlier? It has happened in one school. We received a query at a school where we were opening the doors at 8.15 and found parents queuing at 8.00, so we had a request for doors to open earlier, but we haven't had an increase in numbers.

A number of respondents felt that: 'The scheme is not targeting the children who needed it most'. However, two other LAs felt that: 'We are capturing the right type of pupils.'

Most headteachers felt that the most important aim of the breakfast provision was that it provided a meal for those children who normally would arrive in school without having eaten. Three of them said that the programme was reaching those children who were most in need. According to one: '*We are extending the school day for some of the most volatile pupils*'. Two of them said that they knew that some of the children had got themselves ready to go to school and would not have had breakfast. According to one headteacher: '*Some families arrive earlier in the morning but we know that their mothers are still in bed and the children get themselves ready and dress themselves*'. A headteacher with similar experiences said that in the past many of those children would have bought their own breakfast, usually a bag of sweets or chocolate, on the way to school. This comment was echoed by a supervisor at another school who said that they now had a proper breakfast whereas in the past: '*They may have been sent to school with a biscuit in their hand*'. Two other headteachers said that some of the pupils who took advantage of the

breakfast provision would not have eaten before they came to school although they stressed that this was not true of all pupils.

One deputy headteacher warned that it was important that all pupils were given the opportunity to attend. He referred to suggestions he had heard that only those pupils receiving free school meals should have breakfast free of charge; he believed strongly that the present arrangements were much better than any such suggestions.

Three headteachers were not convinced that the breakfast initiative was benefiting those most in need. One stated that: *'The children I most wanted to access breakfast don't come –there has been no impact there'*. Indeed, it was seen as something which was *'convenient for working families at the moment'*. It had proved difficult to persuade some parents to send their children to the breakfast (sometimes because the parents would have to bring their children to school earlier) and that this meant that they were not reaching all of those who they would like to see using the provision. It was also emphasised that approaching parents was a sensitive and delicate matter. A representative comment was: *'You have to be very careful when you approach parents about this subject ... you can't be seen to be saying "your child doesn't eat breakfast" ... I have said to parents that this is another opportunity'*.

It was also emphasised that there were many parents who schools might have thought eager for the opportunity for their children to have a free breakfast in school who chose not to do so and gave their children a breakfast at home.

Impact on pupils' attendance, motivation and attainment

Most LAs felt that there was some evidence that the introduction of breakfast provision had influenced pupils in ways which included:

- pupils being more settled in school
- increased social skills of pupils
- better relationships between staff and pupils
- improved behaviour
- improved attendance of some pupils
- an improved atmosphere in school.

Most headteachers felt that children who ate breakfast in school benefited from it. For example, one referred to qualitative evidence that children were concentrating more. Two said that it was clear that the pupils had more energy in the mornings. Another said: *'Some pupils may not have had nutritionally good breakfasts, and it has, now, a dramatic impact on their attitudes to work and that has impacted on their learning. Consequently I have seen self-esteem rise as well'*. However, other headteachers were more cautious. According to two of them, there was a need to monitor the situation over a longer period. Another believed that the breakfast provision was only one of many factors which influenced pupil concentration and that other initiatives such as having water on desks, the healthy tuck shops being run in some schools and the general teaching and learning environment were also key factors. It was also noted that some pupils missed fewer lessons because they turned up early to attend the breakfast initiative.

One headteacher felt that punctuality had improved because children who had tended to arrive late at the start of the school day now arrived early for breakfast. However, another noted that this remained an issue and although the breakfast initiative had helped it had by no means resolved the problem.

One LA respondent reported there to have been major impacts within one specific school where nearby there is a:

traveller camp and the head says it has been a blessing because the children need breakfast to cope with what they've seen the night before and in the morning. They need a half hour calming down period and with this breakfast they calm down in that time. It's a benefit to the children and school because they are more alert to be taught straight away. When it first started the school had a 16 year old brother and sisters turning up for breakfast.

However, another LA had conducted some work with schools relating to the provision of breakfast in school which revealed:

poor attendance, not enough choice of food, a cheap form of childcare, the stigma of something that is free, lack of clarity about who is responsible for the children, hidden costs and the fact that the funding does not take account of these.

Awareness of importance of eating breakfast

It was clear that the breakfast initiative had not been running long enough to enable firm judgements to be made about the extent to which it had promoted awareness of the importance of eating breakfast and broader notions concerning nutrition. One commentator noted that: *'You would need to track those children ten years down the line to see if that happened'*. Even so, there was limited evidence that these messages were being taken on board by pupils. According to one headteacher, the breakfast initiative would *'establish the habits of a good breakfast'*, and felt that was important.

The pupils believed that it was extremely important to eat breakfast. According to one group it was the most important meal of the day. One message was that it was a way of keeping healthy. Other children emphasised that it was important to avoid becoming hungry during the school day. According to one of them, not doing so affected concentration because: *'It is harder to listen to my teacher than my tummy'*. Another comment was that eating breakfast: *'gives you brains to do more work ... you need food before doing anything in the morning'*.

Awareness of nutrition

A minority of headteachers felt that the breakfast initiative had influenced pupils' perceptions of nutrition and healthy lifestyles. The impact of these positive messages was described by one headteacher who referred to qualitative evidence from local retailers that children wanted their parents to buy fruit for them. However, they said that the breakfast initiative could be one of many positive influences. One headteacher said that: *'the whole food ethos is better now and they are choosing healthier options'*. Another comment was: *'anything you can do as a health promotion thing within a school has benefits ... [but] it is not one thing, it is the whole ethos of the school'*.

Very few headteachers felt that the breakfast initiative had increased awareness of issues concerning nutrition in the wider community and they felt that such an impact would be extremely hard to measure. Some children said that they had talked to their parents about the type of food which they had in school and other issues which they learned through their school's health promotion themes. However, a headteacher who had discussed the issue of nutrition with local retailers remarked that some of them had revealed that

even though children asked for fruit '*the parents don't buy it*'. However one of them emphasised that the message would eventually permeate the community given that pupils who had been nurtured in an awareness of the importance of a healthy breakfast would be more likely to remember that later in life.

4.9 Good practice in the Welsh Assembly initiative

Respondents were asked if during the initial stages of the pilot they had identified aspects of good practice in the provision of school breakfasts within their LA. The issues raised by the LA representatives focused on the need to:

- use existing LA catering staff
- foster positive attitudes towards the provision on the part of headteachers
- ensure two-way communication between schools and the LA
- keep food choices simple
- use suppliers from whom LAs already procure food
- use existing school staff as supervisory staff
- integrate the initiative into wider LA policies.

The use of existing LA catering staff in the delivery of breakfast was a common feature in every LA and was identified as having aided the successful introduction of the provision. This was because staff had considerable experience of delivering school meals. It was also advantageous to employ supervisory staff who were familiar with the pupils participating in the breakfast provision and with school routines.

A positive approach from the school headteachers to the provision of breakfast in school was seen as a key element of good practice. LA respondents considered that delivery might otherwise have been more challenging. It was felt to be important that headteachers understood what the initiative hoped to achieve. Their role was often vital because they were best placed to ensure that staff across schools were aware of the initiative and the benefits it brought.

The need to ensure two-way communication between each LA and their schools in relation to the breakfast initiative was emphasised. This enabled any issues which might arise to be dealt with swiftly and had enabled LAs to identify that many headteachers are undertaking supervisory roles.

A number of LAs felt that by providing a flexible breakfast menu that could change from day to day, they were able to make the best use of the funding provided. However, this meant that not all LAs provided the whole range of foods each day. A flexible menu that reflected the eating patterns in each school was felt to offer advantages to both pupils and LAs.

The use of suppliers who provided other food was identified as an area of good practice as relationships had been built between LA staff and these suppliers. The use of existing suppliers also meant that LA staff had built-in arrangements for the monitoring of food quality. A number of LAs reported that their suppliers were locally-based and some LAs were considering how the use of local suppliers could be increased in order to ensure that food was as fresh as possible. However, local economic circumstances and rigorous rules about procurement had restricted LAs' flexibility in this respect.

One LA had established a working group which focused on health matters within schools and these groups had been involved in the development of the LA's breakfast provision. This group was made up of representatives of:

Clybiau Plant Cymru and the Healthy School Scheme, the Local Health Board, the NHS dietician, the PSE curriculum advisory service. All contribute under the umbrella of the nutrition strategy. They advise on the menu within the National Assembly's guidelines, for example which butter to use, providing non-sugar coated materials, the percentage of white bread to brown bread, how much fruit.

Headteachers referred to the need to ensure:

- effective support from the LA
- that the adults responsible for the provision were known to the children and understood the ethos of the school
- that training was provided to staff on issues such as hygiene
- pupil attendance was monitored
- children had opportunities to play after eating breakfast
- that issues concerning healthy lifestyles were discussed with pupils, including matters such as the dangers of obesity.

4.10 Future roll-out

All LAs expressed concerns relating to the recruitment and retention of staff as the pilot provision is extended to incorporate all primary schools by early 2007. This was despite the recognition from many of the LAs that the provision of breakfast fits in alongside other present initiatives to extend educational provision. One respondent stated that because the pilot was being run in Communities First areas:

When it goes into more affluent areas staffing could be an issue because you tend to have more problems with recruiting staff in those areas because there is alternative employment.

LAs also recognised that challenges would be faced by schools which had a 'dining centre' rather than kitchen where a member of catering staff may be required from 8am until 9am but who would then have no duties until 11am. LAs were concerned that this may present a barrier to recruitment. At the same time they were concerned that the wage levels set for catering and supervisory staff posed an additional barrier to recruitment and retention at present, particularly when the hours allocated for service were limited. This was felt to be less of an issue for supervisory staff who may be content to extend the hours within a school.

The research found that the need to consider providing activities for pupils after they finish eating was another major concern.

A number of LAs noted that some concerns relating to home-to-school transport had not materialised. However, there was a recognition that commencing the school day earlier through the provision of breakfast would impact on school crossing patrols.

There was felt to be a need for some further promotion of the precise purpose of providing breakfast in school to some parents.

Many LAs said that there was a need to increase the level of funding, in particular the amount allowed for administration. At present, LAs could administer the system without additional staff because the number of schools participating in the pilot was relatively small. However, they insisted that there

would be a need for additional administrative staff if the programme was rolled out further.

Likewise, the headteachers reported a number of issues which would need to be addressed before the initiative was rolled out to every primary school in Wales. These included issues concerning school transport (especially in rural areas), the need to consider carefully whether breakfast provision was cost effective and whether the money could be used more effectively to promote cohesion and attainment in schools. According to one headteacher, an extra teacher or LSA for every school might be a better use of money. An equally strong message was that delivering breakfast alone was not enough and that there was a need to develop other morning activities both in order to keep the children amused and also to benefit them educationally and socially. A typical comment was *'The children finish their food at 8.40 and we have to keep them in the hall until 8.50 because there's no teacher on yard duty. So they watch TV. I'd like resources like games etc that they could play during that time especially in the winter months'*.

Key Findings

Most stakeholders believed that the breakfast initiative would benefit children in Wales; others who were more cautious said that they remained to be convinced that it would make a great deal of difference.

School breakfasts usually complemented other strategies which LAs had developed to promote health, nutrition, and educational attainment.

There was a generally positive view of the way that the initiative had been introduced and the criteria used to select schools.

School transport arrangements had not generally been altered to reflect the timing of school breakfasts.

The Welsh Assembly Government's initiative had induced some schools to provide a breakfast for the first time; other schools had done so previously.

Most schools felt that the lead-in time to prepare the initiative had been adequate.

Schools had used their internal structures to market the provision to pupils and parents.

Most of the food was sourced from LA suppliers and was subject to the same quality control procedures as other food provided in schools.

There was general agreement that the type and quantity of food was appropriate, although children clearly preferred some foods to others; it was found that children were more likely to eat healthily when schools and/or LAs had well-developed strategies to emphasise the importance of healthy lifestyles.

Few disciplinary problems had been experienced although the need to engage pupils after they had eaten was an issue emphasised by a number of respondents.

Most of the staff who delivered the initiative were already employed in some capacity in the schools; the level of teacher and headteacher involvement was usually limited; recruiting staff had proved more challenging in some areas than in others; in general, it was felt that the staffing levels set by the Welsh Assembly Government were appropriate.

Some LAs were concerned about the funding methodology adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government; there was a strong view that the initiative could not be sustained from sources other than additional funding from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Different methods were used to measure attendance at breakfast; a range of factors influenced attendance although it was too early to identify patterns; the information about the type of pupil who was taking advantage of the provision was mainly qualitative; most schools felt that children most in need were being reached but that not all such pupils were taking the opportunity.

There was qualitative evidence that eating breakfast in school was having attitudinal, social, and educational benefits; however, it was difficult to isolate the influence of school breakfasts from other factors.

There was evidence that the free school breakfasts were reinforcing schools' messages about the importance of eating breakfast and of nutritional issues in general.

Using existing school-based staff, support from school senior managers, effective communication, flexibility in the food provided, a reliable supply of food, and linking the initiative with other health-related programmes, were identified as contributing to the effective delivery of school breakfasts.

Possible challenges to the effective roll-out of the programme included the possibility that breakfast staff recruitment could prove problematic, the lack of adequate food preparation facilities in some schools, school transport issues, and the need for adequate additional funding to be made available for administrative work.

5. School breakfast provision not funded by the Welsh Assembly Government initiative

This chapter examines the experiences of schools where breakfasts were delivered but which were not part of the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative. A series of visits were conducted to four breakfast clubs in Wales. Table 2 below summarises key information about each of the breakfast clubs visited.

Table 2: Key information about the breakfast clubs

	<i>Number of pupils at school</i>	<i>Number attending per day</i>	<i>Charge</i>	<i>Food provided</i>	<i>Opening Times</i>	<i>Activities provided, if any</i>	<i>Established in</i>
<i>Club 1</i>	400	30	10p per item	<i>Toast and spreads, Crumpets / scones, pancakes.</i> <i>Cereals- non sugar coated and no sugar allowed, juice/ milk.</i>	7.30-9am	<i>Television, radio.</i>	2002
<i>Club 2</i>	300	35	25p	<i>Orange juice, milk and toast.</i>	8.30-8.55	<i>Board games, card games, television.</i>	1997

<i>Club 3</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>£2.25 per day and £1.75 for siblings.</i>	<i>Cereal, yoghurts, crumpets, Hi juice, milk.</i>	<i>8-9am</i>	<i>Board games, card games, television.</i>	<i>2003</i>
<i>Club 4</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1.50</i>	<i>Fortified cereals – not sugar coated, toast, yoghurts, juice, milk, water.</i>	<i>7.45- 9am</i>	<i>Board games, card games, television, use of electronic games, use of all play equipment.</i>	<i>2003</i>

Three of the breakfast clubs were run in schools with the other club run at a newly built Integrated Children's Centre situated on a school site.

5.1 Reasons for establishing the breakfast club

Club 1 had been established in response to the:

number of pupils who would arrive in school without breakfast or late for school. The catchment area is from the lower social economic groups. We started it as a pilot and it has kicked in a very positive way.

A representative at the school commented:

Providing breakfasts is a very good thing. As a teacher we used to provide breakfast to some of the pupils as you knew they had not had breakfast and so they were half asleep. There needs to be more money invested into it, as if you are going to do it you need to do it properly.

Club 2 had been set up as a form of childcare for working parents. The headteacher at Club 2 had noticed that a group of pupils were arriving in school without eating breakfast, and staff had reported that they lacked concentration and appeared hungry throughout the school day. A group of 10-12 pupils had attended since the club was established.

Club 3 had been established by the headteacher of the school after a similar club had been established in a neighbouring primary school, in conjunction with a private nursery. The headteacher was concerned that the school could lose pupils to the neighbouring school if it was unable to offer similar facilities.

5.2 Links to other school initiatives

In the school-based clubs, providing breakfast was linked to other school-based health initiatives, such as the provision of drinking water on desks. All of the schools reported that pupils were actively discouraged from eating sweets, crisps and chocolate at break times. Fruit tuck shops had also been established in each school. In one of them the profits from this shop were

used to purchase new classroom equipment and the pupils 'staffed' the fruit tuck shop.

5.3 Charges, funding and facilities

Table 2 shows the charges made to pupils and parents for the breakfast clubs. Club 1 charged 10p per item, whereas Club 3 charged £2.25 for the first child in each family and a subsequent £1.75 for each sibling.

Club 1 was funded by the school. It was in the process of renovating a community facility into which the breakfast club would move from its present location within a classroom.

Club 2 was established by the school in partnership with the LA catering service. The charge made ensured that catering staff costs and food charges were covered. When the club first opened the headteacher reported that:

We needed 25 children in a week to make it cost-effective for them and they (LA catering service) would pull the funding if we did not hit that.

Any profit was retained by the LA catering service and the club regularly attracted more than 25 pupils.

Club 3 was funded solely by the charge made to pupils. The club had also received a £5000 grant from Clybiau Plant Cymru in March 2004. This enabled the school to purchase catering and other equipment. However the headteacher reported that although:

There is some funding left there is not much and so we really want to try and access the Welsh Assembly Government's money. If we do not get that then we would have to raise the fees and I do not want to do that.

Club 4 had received start-up funding from the New Lottery Fund's New Childcare Programme places and operational costs were met by the daily charge to children and parents.

5.4 Staffing

Club 1 was staffed by two adults who were employed in the school in other roles as LSAs. They were paid additionally for their roles in the breakfast club. One member of staff prepared and served the breakfasts while the other supervised the pupils.

At Club 2 LA catering service staff were employed and members of the school's senior management team carried out supervisory duties. However, no member of school staff was paid for these duties.

Club 3 was staffed by a member of kitchen staff who prepared and served the food, while a parent governor, who was also a LSA, supervised the pupils. Club 4 was staffed by staff who had play work qualifications and worked solely in the breakfast club. None of the clubs had experienced difficulty recruiting staff. Club 4 had recently advertised for a new member of staff and had received a large number of applications.

Every club had made arrangements to cover staff in case of illness or other unforeseen absence. If a member of staff was ill in Club 3 the headteacher would assist in the supervision of the pupils. At Club 2 cover was found from among the catering staff and teaching staff were not involved.

It was emphasised that the atmosphere of a breakfast club should not be the same as school. This was a key consideration for each of the school-based clubs who stressed that the breakfast club had to be identified by pupils, parents and staff as separate to school. One headteacher stated '*It should not be school before 9 o'clock, it needs to be different to school*'. The leader of Club 4 considered that staff employed as supervisors in the Free Breakfast Initiative would benefit from some form of play training, where appropriate because '*if children get bored then you can get difficulties.*'

5.5 The breakfast provided

A wide range of breakfast was available in Clubs 1, 3 and 4. Club staff stressed that healthy breakfasts were promoted to pupils through information and through the choices offered. This was felt to be a key element in each of

the clubs. However, Club 2 provided a more limited range of food. This was also the club that was open for the shortest period of time each day.

5.6 Family background of pupils taking part

Club 2 was based at a bilingual school with a number of pupils who travelled to school by bus. The club catered mainly for those children who could walk or were driven to school. Pupils who arrived by bus were unable to access the breakfast. The headteacher stated that:

We are finding it is also being used by some parents who are working to allow them to drop the children off at school before going to work. That was not the initial target group. Some of those would already have had breakfast. In some ways it is more a social than nutritional event

The school had, however, also targeted specific families to take part in the club

For many parents there was a massive rush in the mornings ... one family with four children under seven ... were coming into school at 9:20 in the morning without breakfast and so we let them come into the breakfast free and that had a real impact on their attendance and punctuality. They were settled unlike before.

Club 1 was also providing targeted support to some families through the breakfast club. However, children from a wide range of backgrounds were reported to be using the club. Clubs 3 and 4 said that they were mainly attracting children of working parents. Those parents used the club as childcare to enable them to access work earlier in the mornings. One headteacher reported that the breakfast club was praised by parents through questionnaires in which they stated that *'it is convenient and it takes pressure off them in the mornings with more than one child'*.

5.7 Promotion

All clubs used promotional material in the form of posters and newsletters at the start of each school term to all parents to raise the profile of the breakfast club. This was particularly important to Club 2 as this club had a set target of

pupils to attract each day. Club 1 recognised the efficacy of themed days in attracting new pupils to the club; recent events days had included Wrong Trousers Day, Mother's Day and 'Wimbledon' breakfasts. A greater number of pupils and parents were reported to attend on these special occasions.

5.8 Impact

The provision's impact varied, according to staff. At each one, it was reported that the concentration levels of those children who ate breakfast had improved during the school day. One headteacher acknowledged that although there:

are not formal assessments that can give us comparable data, all we can do is note individual teachers' comments about pupils. It (the breakfast club) changes their ability to concentrate and to focus on tasks in school far better.

The supervisor at this club noted that:

if they miss breakfast then many of the pupils become very agitated and difficult. The breakfast seems to make them work harder. Many of the pupils are more settled and we do have some pupils who come in without breakfast who we give some toast to or cereal if they feel unwell or say that they cannot concentrate.

Other impacts of the breakfast clubs included improved social interaction between pupils. The headteacher at Club 3 reported that:

The children eating together is another positive aspect and that is lacking in society today and they sit and talk. When they eat together even the more reluctant eaters tend to eat more as they do not want to be seen as fussy by the others.

Other types of impact included greater awareness of eating healthy foods and the importance of nutritional breakfasts among some pupils. Each of the clubs stressed the importance of not providing sugar-coated cereals but reported no difficulties in pupils accepting this policy.

At Club 2 the headteacher identified that the provision of a breakfast club had improved attendance for a specific group of pupils.

5.9 Future development

Each of the clubs visited expressed some concerns regarding their future funding and development. Club 4 noted that in their locality a number of other breakfast clubs had closed due to the establishment of the Free Breakfast Initiative. The school in which the club was run had recently begun to deliver provision through the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative. The club expected to increase in numbers at the start of the new school year.

Club 1 had won awards for its breakfast provision and was looking forward positively to the roll-out of the Free Breakfast Initiative because:

I wish the Assembly would fund our club. We charge what we need to cover the cost of the food but staffing is borne by the school. If the National Assembly covered the staff and food costs it may well be that it would attract more pupils. I do not however see that the minimal charges we make put off any pupils in any way.

Club 2 wished to develop the type and range of food that it could provide at its breakfast club and felt that it was ironic that the school had been running a breakfast club

for many years and would like the funding but we are not in the right catchment for the funding and cannot improve, for example by providing cereals as we are governed by financial constraints. With more funding we could sell it to more parents and to a wider group of pupils.

Club 3 also wished to join the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative. The headteacher stated that:

it would be a shame if after taking the decision to run a club for ourselves that we might have to wait at the end of the queue. I would like to target those pupils most in need of breakfast and they are not the group who access the club at the moment.

5.10 Good practice

A number of areas of good practice were highlighted by the clubs visited. These included:

- commitment from both operational staff and senior management in the school
- pupil enjoyment
- convenience for parents
- providing a wide range of healthy and well balanced foods
- outlining the benefits to parents
- making the club totally inclusive and allowing access for all.
- providing a homely but not a rigid environment.

Key Findings

The clubs established outside the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative had been set up because schools had identified the need for such provision in their areas.

There were clear links between those breakfast clubs and other school-level initiatives such as providing drinking water in classrooms and other efforts to promote awareness of a healthy lifestyle.

Those clubs usually charged a fee for breakfast although some were in receipt of grant-aid from outside bodies.

The provision of breakfast was sometimes linked to other opportunities for children to use school facilities for exercise, recreation or homework; however, this was not the case in all breakfast clubs.

School-based staff usually led these breakfast clubs; however, it was emphasised that the atmosphere in the club should be different from the more formal ambience of the school.

The clubs emphasised that the type of food which was provided should be healthy.

Qualitative evidence suggested that a wide range of pupils used the breakfast clubs; these included a large number of children whose parents were working.

Qualitative methods were also used to measure the clubs' impact; positive outcomes had been identified including better concentration among pupils and improved social interaction.

Some clubs were concerned about sustainability and some wished to become part of the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative; however, its aims and objectives did not always mirror those of these school breakfast clubs.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Benefits of school breakfasts

The research found qualitative evidence that the provision of breakfast in school had impacted on those pupils accessing the provision in the following ways:

- pupils being more settled in school
- increased social skills of pupils
- improved relationships between staff and pupils
- improved behaviour
- improved attendance and punctuality from some pupils
- improved concentration of some pupils
- an improved atmosphere in school.

6.2 Key features of effective delivery in the Welsh Assembly Government initiative

The research identified a number factors which contributed to effective delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government's school breakfast initiative. These were:

- the use of LA catering staff already employed at the school
- positive attitudes towards the provision on the part of headteachers
- effective two-way communication between schools and LAs
- simple food choices
- the use of suppliers from whom LAs already procure food
- the use of supervisory staff already employed at the school
- the integration of the programme into wider LA initiatives, such as those aimed at promoting healthy eating habits
- LAs' contribution in providing effective support to schools

- ensuring that the adults responsible for the provision were known to the children and understood the ethos of the school
- close monitoring of pupil attendance in order to identify whether those who would benefit the most took advantage of the opportunity
- providing pupils with opportunities to play after eating breakfast
- ensuring that issues concerning healthy lifestyles were discussed with pupils, including matters such as the dangers of obesity.

6.3 Challenges to effective delivery of the Welsh Assembly Government initiative

A number of respondents considered that the level of supervisory staff was lower when compared to other supervisory levels in schools and called for an increase in supervisory staff in order to provide more activities for pupils after eating.

Some respondents questioned whether the initiative was reaching those pupils who LAs and schools felt would benefit the most from the provision.

The hour provided for catering staff to prepare, serve, and clear the breakfast provision was considered to be too limited by a number of respondents with operational experience of delivering school breakfasts

Some LAs reported that the pay levels for catering staff were below those used for catering staff during other school meal provision and this generated problems when recruiting and retaining staff.

The pay levels offered to supervisors and the limited hours they were contracted to work meant that it was hard to recruit and retain such staff in some areas.

Schools found it difficult to measure the impact of the breakfast on pupils in a quantifiable way, due to the qualitative nature of much of the evidence. Eating breakfast in school generated a range of outcomes but it was sometimes difficult to separate the influence of breakfast from other factors.

6.4 Breakfast provision other than that by the Welsh Assembly Government

Most of the clubs established outside the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative had been inspired by a similar philosophy, namely a concern to ensure pupils eat breakfast, an awareness of the academic and social benefits, and the need to promote healthier lifestyles.

Schools outside the Welsh Assembly Government's initiative had linked the breakfast to other health-promotion initiatives, mirroring those in the pilot programme.

Because of limited funding, clubs outside the breakfast pilot programme had to charge a fee; this was not seen as a major barrier by most of those involved in these breakfast clubs.

Breakfast clubs could be part of a much broader effort to extend school-based provision for children; although the clubs were situated on school premises the ambience was relaxed and informal.

There was a strong feeling that the food provided should be healthy and that the opportunity should be used to reinforce the messages which schools promoted about healthy lifestyles; this mirrored an important aspect of the guidelines laid down by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The qualitative evidence indicated that the range of pupils reached by the free breakfast was similar to that reached by schools included in the pilot project; however the lack of firm evidence about pupils' background meant that it was impossible to quantify this and the evidence was impressionistic.

Qualitative evidence indicated that the impact of breakfast on issues such as pupil concentration, social interaction and awareness of nutrition, were the same in all schools which provided breakfast, whether or not they were part of the Welsh Assembly Government's pilot.

6.5 Future roll-out of the Welsh Assembly Government initiative

There is a need to examine whether the role of local suppliers could be increased in order to ensure that the food provided is as fresh as possible.

Transport issues for rural, faith and Welsh-medium schools need to be addressed in order to respond to the wider catchment areas of these schools in comparison to the pilot schools.

There could be difficulty recruiting and retaining supervisory and catering staff if the number of schools taking part increases substantially.

The range of foods that can be afforded within the funding provided to LAs should be reviewed.

There is a need to examine whether pupils could be provided with a range of activities after they have eaten breakfast in school; although this is outside the remit of the Welsh Assembly Government's school breakfast initiative, it could be linked to other strands of policy, such as extended schools.

LAs need funding to administer the scheme and to collect data e.g. on attendance, participation, and impact. LAs and the Welsh Assembly Government should examine how the data collected could be used to the maximum effect; the outcomes of such discussions should inform detailed guidance to LAs.

The challenges of delivering the initiative in schools without dedicated kitchen facilities, need to be considered within the broader context of school catering/school meals provision.

LAs and other stakeholders such as Local Health Boards, need to build on their good practice in developing a broad range of strategies to promote awareness of the relationship between health, wellbeing, and nutrition, within schools and the wider community.

Good practice on how school breakfasts can link into other health-related structures/ projects in schools and LAs should be disseminated as widely as possible.

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