



## **Going to Gothenburg: reflections on a study visit**

**A short report by Fiona Crawford, Bruce Whyte and Andrea Crawford**

### **Introduction**

Healthy school food policy is recognised as important in promoting children and young people's nutritional health. National policies and legislation have been introduced over a number of years to strengthen school-based provision and promotion of healthy food and drinks. Glasgow City Council has made concerted efforts to provide and promote healthy food and drinks in school and to improve pupils' school lunch time experiences. These efforts have attracted interest from organisations and individuals within and beyond the UK.

In December 2011, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH), Glasgow City Council (GCC) Education Services and Cordia (who are responsible for school meal provision in Glasgow City) hosted a two day study visit for a group of Swedish professionals working on a EU funded project (Project MEDEL, **Måltiden – En DEL i lärandet** which translates as 'the school meal is part of education'), based in West Sweden.



Project MEDEL's aim is to increase integration and co-operation between teaching and catering staff in order to encourage good eating habits among children/young people and embed healthy eating into the learning curriculum. The project involves 11 pre-schools and 12 elementary schools. Funding for the project comprises 5.5 million krona (£550,000) over two years.

The purpose of the Gothenburg group's study visit to Glasgow was to gather information regarding Glasgow's approach to school meal provision in the city, as part of a scoping exercise regarding different models of school meal provision in Europe. Following this visit, GCPH and Gothenburg colleagues maintained a dialogue in relation to school food policies and programmes. Collaborative work was also underway involving Bruce Whyte (GCPH) and Andrew Lyon (International Futures Forum) and a group of public health professionals in Gothenburg to develop comparative indicators for Glasgow and Gothenburg. A short film, *Miniature Cities*<sup>1</sup>, has recently been produced as one of the outputs of this collaboration.

<sup>1</sup> *Miniature Cities: Glasgow & Gothenburg* [www.europeinminiature.com](http://www.europeinminiature.com)

In late September 2012, following an invitation from our colleagues to visit Sweden, we travelled to Gothenburg for a two day study visit, part-funded and organised by project MEDEL.



The aim of our visit was to gather information across a broad agenda and learn about the Swedish education curriculum, healthy school food policies/programmes, provision of physical education and activity in the curriculum, active sustainable transport policies and initiatives, and healthy urban planning. We were also keen to meet with politicians and decision-makers to hear their thoughts on these issues, and learn how resources are allocated.

### **The study visit**

Our study group comprised Bruce Whyte and Fiona Crawford (Public Health Programme Managers, GCPH) and Andrea Crawford (Primary Physical Education and Music Manager, GCC Education Services). Anne-Gebbie Dibben (Health Improvement Lead, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde) also participated in the study visit. Since she is Swedish, and grew up in Gothenburg, she was able to provide additional insights and commentary as well as help with translation on occasion. Although an invitation was extended to Cordia for a member of catering staff to be represented on the study group, unfortunately, no one was able to accompany us.

Lisa Bragee (Co-ordinator), Emilia Aman (Coach) from MEDEL and Gun Stigelius (Majorna-Linné District, Gothenburg) accompanied us during our visit, providing helpful background information and observations during our stay.

Our itinerary included site visits to two primary schools in contrasting neighbourhoods of Gothenburg.



We met with MEDEL's advisory group to present the work of our respective organisations and to reflect on our experiences of school meal provision in Glasgow and Gothenburg. We also met with the Deputy Mayor of Gothenburg and with a transport planner from the traffic office.

The following short report provides an account of our visit, reflections on our experiences and some suggestions for potential actions in Scotland that we think would contribute towards improved population health and wellbeing and reduced inequalities.

### **Local policy**

The City of Gothenburg's current food programme<sup>2</sup> (Goteborgs Stad), which was first introduced in 2004, clearly defines how meals are provided in Gothenburg's schools. The programme emphasises the role of a good meal in sustaining body and mind and includes schools, pre-schools, residential units and home delivered food. In each setting, the programme identifies and emphasises the following key elements: nutritional recommendations; meal composition; meal schedule; meal environment (and educational elements in schools and pre-schools); food hygiene; staff competence and evaluation (quality assurance). Ninety million meals are served in the city each year. The City of Gothenburg aims to produce ecological, sustainable food (i.e. organic, locally produced, and seasonal). The schools provide one menu option at each meal time with a range of salads, i.e. there is no choice as is the case in Scottish schools.

The two primary schools we visited were: Oscar Fredriksskolan School (with a school roll of 450) and Hammarkull School (with a school roll of 270).

### ***Oscar Fredriksskolan school***



We spent most of the first day in Oscar Fredriksskolan School, starting off with lunch which comprised herring in batter with mashed potato, cooked vegetables and salad. The food was delicious and freshly prepared in the school's kitchens that had been renovated two years ago.

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<sup>2</sup> Goteborgs Stad. *Meal Programme for the City of Gothenburg*. Gothenburg: Goteborgs Stad; 2012.



Salad was a major feature of meals in both schools that we visited, and we were told that a range of salads are routinely provided with all meals. School meals have been free for over 50 years to all pupils from pre-school until they leave secondary school. When asked, the Swedes could not say when this policy had been introduced or why – it is clearly so engrained in Swedish culture and their way of life now!



The chefs in Oscar Fredrik's were very friendly and smartly uniformed. From the age of ten, primary school pupils assist the chefs in the preparation and serving of school lunches. The chefs had detailed and individualised menus for pupils with special dietary needs. Their kitchens were spacious and well designed with ovens, dishwashing machines, large walk-in fridges, a salad preparation room, and so on.

During meal times, pupils and teachers sit and eat together at tables, clearing up together afterwards. The cutlery and crockery are of good quality and not designed to be thrown away after a meal. The waste from meals is separated and recycled or composted. No packed lunches or unhealthy snacks are brought in by any pupils, although pupils are allowed to bring in one piece of fruit as a snack on a daily basis. Further information regarding Oscar Fredrik's holistic approach to the provision of school meals can be found in their policy document (The Swedish School Kitchen System According to Oscar Fredriksskolan) in Appendix 1.



The Head Teacher emphasised the common goal for everyone working in the school was to make it easy for children to grow and flourish. The school ethos involves collaboration and co-operation where, although different individuals have different roles, they all know they are working towards the same goal.

## ***Hammarkull school***



During our second day we visited Hammarkull School where we had lunch with the Head Teacher and catering manager, and were shown round the kitchens.

In contrast to Oscar Fredrik's School which is located in a relatively affluent inner city area, Hammarkull's School is situated in a deprived neighbourhood in the south of Gothenburg. The composition of the pupil roll is ethnically diverse with over 20 different nationalities represented. There is a degree of pupil turnover in the school as a proportion of pupils are from refugee and asylum seeking families who often relocate if granted refugee status.



The school canteen was spacious with large tables set out for dining. We had leek and potato soup for lunch followed by lasagne and salad. As we had arrived a little later in the day, school lunch time had finished so unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to observe the pupils eating lunch. Cutlery and crockery were of a good standard and food waste was recycled.



Although not as recently refurbished as Oscar Fredrik's, the kitchens were also spacious and well-equipped with designated areas for dishwashers, preparation of meat and salads, large walk-in fridges and so on.

## ***El Sistema Sweden***



We were privileged to witness a music session with young pupils in Hammarkull School which participates in the *El Sistema* project. This is a publicly financed voluntary sector music education programme which originated in Venezuela and was founded in 1975 by economist and musician José Antonio Abreu under the name of *Social Action for Music*. Abreu believes that "Music has to be recognised as an agent of social development, in the highest

sense because it transmits the highest values – solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion. And it has the ability to unite an entire community, and to express sublime feelings." *El Sistema's* aim is to normalise music education and to promote the collective practice of music through symphony orchestras and choruses, in order to help children and young people achieve their full potential and gain values that help them grow and mature in a positive way. Access to this programme appears to be improving the lives of many children and young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, through allowing them to develop musical skills, self confidence and healthy relationships with others. The programme now operates in many countries including Scotland. The young violinists we met gave us a short impromptu concert, which was an absolute treat.

### ***Physical education and physical activity in school***

In the two primary schools we visited, there was the equivalent of one full-time PE teacher working in the school – in Oscar Fredrik's School, the figure was slightly more than 1.0.

This contrasts to Glasgow's model. Glasgow has the equivalent of 12 full-time primary PE specialists (PE teachers). Glasgow operates a buy-in service whereby Head Teachers buy in PE specialists. Currently Andrea's team works in 22/23 of the 141 primary schools and six Special Needs schools in Glasgow. At maximum capacity, this team could cover around 50 schools. Glasgow also has a scheme whereby class primary teachers can access extra training in PE, to date 120 have taken this up and 60 are practising teachers in the city.

Glasgow also has a network of 29 Physical Activity Co-ordinators across the city who provide after-school activities and work with associated clubs. This group covers the 141 primary and 30 secondary schools in the city as well as 27 Additional Support for Learning establishments. In recognition of the importance of physical education and physical activity for children and young people, the Scottish Government has committed £5.8 million over the next two years to improve the delivery of physical education in primary and secondary schools across Scotland, and to provide greater opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport within schools and in the wider community.

In Oscar Fredrik's School, Morten (a PE coach) emphasised that they tried to focus on individuals and to offer a choice of different sports. He thought most children walked to school and that most primary schools have a PE teacher. Both schools we visited had a fully equipped gymnasium.





It was pointed out to us by more than one person in Gothenburg that there was “no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothes”. This came up in conversation when we compared what happens when there is rain or snow in the two cities. In Gothenburg, children are expected to go out in all weather including heavy rain or snow while in Glasgow this will vary from school to school.

### ***Travel and transport in Gothenburg***



During our meeting with Petter Kjellgren, a transport planner who works for Gothenburg City traffic office, we were briefed regarding travel patterns and transport policy in Gothenburg.

The City controls most roads but larger trunk roads and motorways are run by the national Government agency. Congestion charging will be introduced in January 2013. The National Government will impose charges and the revenue will then be given back to improve infrastructure in Gothenburg. Gothenburg has traditionally been a car-based town and is where the Volvo factory is based. In the 1960s, more housing was built further out of the city, promoting car use. Today, Gothenburg aspires towards better connectivity for public transport and improved rail capacity is being planned. There is pressure from the public and politicians to promote more cycling. Following a research study to explore who cycles in the city and who does not and why, a new cycling plan is to be drawn up and infrastructure further developed and improved.

Ten percent of commuting journeys are by bicycle and the city has 400 kilometres of bicycle lanes. Petter said they wanted to increase the proportion of the population who cycle and compared the city to Copenhagen in Denmark which has 200 kilometres of cycling infrastructure but where 40% of commuting is by bike. Measurement of cycling prevalence is acknowledged to be difficult and is carried out in many different ways.



Gothenburg operates a local cycle hire scheme which is popular with tourists and locals. It costs 250 krona (about £25) to hire a bike for a six month period; the cost for a three day hire is the equivalent of £1. There are 700 bicycles available in 56 stations and a plan to have 1,000 bikes available from 72 stations by the end of next year. The project is sponsored by a company (JC DeCaux) that gets free advertising on billboards in exchange for sponsoring the scheme. The current agreement is until 2017. There is some frustration that this arrangement means there is a lack of flexibility, for instance to build in growth.

There is also a plan for the development of electric cars in partnership with Volvo. Ninety percent of the city authority's cars have lower emissions. They are considering lower speed limits from 50 kilometres per hour to 30 kilometres per hour in the city. In relation to public transport, integrated travel cards for travel by train, bus, tram and river ferry are widely used and appear to be very good value for money (similar to Oyster cards used in London).

### ***Meeting with Marina Johansson, Deputy Mayor***



Gothenburg is governed by a coalition of Greens, Social Democrats and Socialists. Gothenburg aspires to be a more sustainable city – *Sustainable Gothenburg* – which encompasses social, ecological and economic elements. There is a focus on children's health, listening to children, and hearing their perspective. City budgets are allocated using a formula that takes account of population and social circumstances, with local districts then deciding how money is spent.

Marina also referred to the congestion charging scheduled to be introduced in January 2013. The Swedish Government is offering a funding deal whereby 4 billion Euros will come to Gothenburg with congestion charging to fund improvements to public and active sustainable transport – more buses, trains, trams and cycling infrastructure.



This is not a popular measure with the local populace and there has been extensive negative media coverage. Gothenburg operates two policies to promote active, sustainable travel: firstly, 500 kronas per annum (~£50) is provided by Gothenburg State to support employees who cycle; and, secondly, all school pupils can travel free on public transport, primary pupils up until 5pm, secondary pupils up until 10pm. Anyone aged 65 years or over can also travel on public transport for free.

Other issues such as a growing elderly population are concerns for decision-makers in Gothenburg (as in Scotland). Loneliness is known to be an issue for elderly people living alone, so thought is being given to how best to engineer opportunities for social contact. For instance, elderly people want to live where they have always lived but it may not always be possible to adapt their homes (most people own their own homes).

### **Reflections on our visit and recommendations for action**

Glasgow and Gothenburg share certain features: each city has an industrial heritage and is located on the banks of a river; populations are of similar size; the structural design of both city centres is based on a grid system. During our joint discussions and debate, Gun also highlighted public health issues common to both cities such as rising obesity in children and young people, inequalities in dental caries and child poverty. However there are some notable differences, discussed more fully below.

#### ***Healthy school food policies and programmes***

There are differences in the provision of school meals between Glasgow and Gothenburg both in terms of the universality of free school meals and the ethos of how they are provided. The involvement of school pupils in preparing and serving the meals was particularly interesting. We were also impressed with the obvious commitment to recycling.

Andrea, Bruce and I discussed the possibility of testing out an approach such as this in a Glasgow school and, in fact, following our visit, Andrea successfully negotiated the establishment of a pilot project in Caledonia Primary School in the East End of Glasgow to try out a lunch time approach within the school that aims to emulate a Swedish model:

- Tables within the school canteen have been rearranged into more social seating and lunch time has been extended by 15 minutes
- Pupils are sitting in 'School Houses' with an adult at each table who engages the children in conversation
- Lunch time is being treated as a learning experience addressing healthy eating choices and good manners
- School House Captains award points for healthy food choices in lunch bags
- Lunch staff award points for Houses with the tidiest tables.

This has been a collaborative effort supported by the Head Teacher and Cordia and involving teachers, catering staff, and janitorial staff. Initial feedback is very positive. Pupils seem to be enjoying the opportunity to chat with staff and fellow pupils over lunch. They also appear to be transferring listening and talking skills to the classroom; staff are seeing less wastage of food as children are spending more time sitting round the table eating; noise levels at lunch time have reduced; and there is less clearing up to do afterwards. School staff plan to continue with this lunch time

approach and develop it further, particularly in relation to the promotion of healthy eating.

#### *Recommendation*

*We propose that the lunch time approach initiated by Caledonia Primary School be considered for introduction in other primary (and potentially secondary) schools in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley region and further afield.*

#### **School based physical education policies and programmes**

Although we only got a brief overview of the provision of physical education in two of Gothenburg's primary schools, the clear impression we gained was that there is a much higher proportion of qualified PE teachers working in Swedish primary schools and that their facilities are better – albeit this was based on a sample of two schools with purpose-built gyms. The emphasis on outdoor play was also stronger in Gothenburg. Pupils are expected to wrap up and go outside during morning and lunch time breaks whatever the weather. We wonder whether in Glasgow our concerns over health and safety (and the weather) have led to us providing less opportunity for pupils to be active during the school day.

#### *Recommendation*

*We propose that primary school based policies be revised with a view to increasing opportunities for outdoor play whatever the weather during mid-morning and lunch time breaks.*

#### **Getting around Gothenburg**

Investment and priority given to active and public transport infrastructure is much more prominent in Gothenburg than Glasgow.



The public transport system in general is integrated and very easy to use. In contrast to Glasgow, much of the on-road cycling in Gothenburg is separated from other traffic via dedicated cycle lanes, which are in turn separated from pedestrian paths. The generally spacious avenues and roads in the city facilitate the separation of motorised traffic, cyclists and pedestrians. Clearly also, there has been political commitment (and public demand) for good quality, integrated transport routes over a long period. Glasgow has started to build segregated 'Copenhagen style' cycling lanes over short distances in the west and the east of the city. Further development of safe cycling infrastructure in the city would help Glasgow to get more of its citizens cycling and increase their levels of moderate physical activity.

*Potential for action*

*We propose that more priority should be given to the identification of financial and human resources in order to extend safe, good quality, cycling infrastructure in Glasgow and surrounding urban areas, involving, wherever possible, cycle routes that are physically separated from vehicular traffic.*

It is notable how successful Gothenburg's cycle hire scheme appears to be in a city which already has quite high levels of cycling. The funding model is similar to that in other cities and this is something that Glasgow could look at again – particularly as we know that levels of cycling have risen quite significantly in recent years<sup>3</sup>.

*Potential for action*

*We propose that the possibility of introducing a cycle hire scheme in Glasgow should be explored again particularly in light of the fact that the city is hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014. This would boost levels of active travel and reduce the City's carbon footprint.*



Gothenburg's port and riverside area is a vibrant part of the city. The river and port are very well developed in relation to housing, businesses and as part of the transit system. Regular passenger ferries provide cheap public transport up and down the river. Building on the Glasgow riverside regeneration, could the river Clyde become a defined transit route connecting the city centre to the south side as well as the east end to the west?

*Potential for action*

*We propose that consideration be given to establishing the river Clyde as a more significant part of the urban transit system.*

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<sup>3</sup> City cordon counts of cyclists have been conducted since 2007.



# The Swedish school kitchen system

## According to Oscar Fredriksskolan



*By Martina Aronsson, Marica Gimdal, Tuy Vi Huynh, Eva Widne and Gina Åvall.*

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## The Swedish way

The school lunch in Sweden has been served since the 1940s. In accordance with the school curriculum from 1997, the state districts are obliged to offer the students free meals in school. The costs for the meals are 9,23kr per student and are financed by the state district. As an assurance that the children are served high quality meals, the Swedish National Food Agency has been ordered by the government to create guidelines. These are the guidelines that the chefs in the school kitchens need to follow in order to certify that the children eat nutritious meals. The guidelines are based on the children's needs of nutriment, the content of nutriments in different provisions and the eating habits of children in Sweden. We believe that the school environment has enormous possibilities to encourage a healthy lifestyle.





## How we do it

We are very proud of our school restaurant. Every day we serve 450 children and 30 adults a balanced, nutritious meal. Mostly we serve Swedish food such as boiled potatoes with fish or meat and a cold sauce. A couple of days per week we serve stews or casseroles with rice or pasta.

We are particularly proud of our extensive meal options. Every day, next to the main dish, we serve a vegetarian meal, hypo allergen meals for the kids with allergies, and quite an impressive salad buffet.

Furthermore we offer Swedish hard bread and butter throughout the day. The milk machines are always full and available too.

We make sure that the doors to our restaurant are ALWAYS open to EVERYBODY.

Sometimes a child hasn't had the chance to eat breakfast. We welcome them with open arms to eat a sandwich or yoghurt together with us at our daily breakfast meetings. Older children that eat later at lunch are given the option to come down to the restaurant to eat knäckebröd (a Swedish hard bread) and drinks at around 10am.

We believe that good food and physical activity are essential for children to develop social skills.

We strive for social coherence in our restaurant. We wear the same uniforms and call each other by our first name. We are on a first name basis with all the children. We don't want to be those scary lunch ladies, we want them to feel welcome and happy when they are in the restaurant.

We are a creative bunch, and always brainstorm about cooking and new, cool recipes we can try out at work. After all, cooking is our greatest passion, and the children are the best critics one can have. As you know, children always tell you their honest opinion.

If the social goal is to make everybody feel safe and welcome, our culinary goal is to challenge ourselves every day. We always try out new combinations, and we present salads and the hot vegetable dishes differently as often as possible. One day we offer grated carrots, the other they are diced, the third day we offer them as sticks with a yoghurt sauce.

Every day the green buffet consists of at least seven cold salads and three warm options.

We order seasonal vegetables twice a week and ALWAYS order as many organic options as possible.

The same goes for all fish and meat. We take care to order fish that is not near extinction and try to follow the Maritime Council recommendations. All our meats are from Sweden and as locally bred as possible.

**And our thinking is paying off: the teachers and the school nurse all say the same: the children are healthier than ever!**

**Who could have guessed: Some TLC and biological food actually make children healthy.**

Besides working hard on a day to day basis, we are always thinking about organising fun theme days and what to do with all the holidays during the year.

For instance, on the 6th of June when Sweden celebrates its National Flag Day, we decorated the restaurant with the Swedish flag and placed yellow

and blue tablecloths on the salad table. All the children were pleasantly surprised. Such a simple thing really makes a big difference.

We have some great ideas for the coming Halloween too: we want to make that day into a fancy dress party, complete with some spooky salads and scary snacks.



*The school staff are swingin' it in the canteen.*



## Co-operation between staff and pupils

We are all very dedicated to our work around the restaurant. We are especially proud of the co-operation between us, the school staff and pupils.

On the last Friday of every month we have a 'food meeting' where two representatives from each class, the principal, a member of our staff and from this year, the school nurse gather to talk about everything that involves the kitchen and the environment of the canteen. We listen to what the pupils have to say because it's for their sake that we're here. Involving children in conversation is very useful for our work. We also talk about what to improve and evaluate the last month's happenings.

We are always up to date and percipient for our guests.

Another example is that we ask two 'helpers', from our older classes, to come down and assist us in the kitchen during lunch. That way the pupils learn how the kitchen works and they get to know us better and vice versa.



In addition to the normal school subjects, we also offer lessons in the kitchen. The lessons include both theory and practical work all according to the standards written in the curriculum for elementary school.

**The main key to our success is: open doors, and open arms!**

## **The School Menu**

The school menu is also presented as an app for the mobile phone available for students and staff.

### **Week 38**

**Monday, September 17**

Study, recreational open

**Tuesday, September 18**

Spicy sausage casserole with rice

The spicy soy sausage casserole with rice

**Wednesday, September 19**

Fried fish with cold herb sauce and boiled potatoes

Vegetable beef with cold herb sauce and boiled potatoes

**Thursday, September 20**

Spaghetti with meat sauce

Spaghetti with linssås

**Friday, September 21**

Meat hash with pickled beets

Vegetable beef with pickled beets

### **Week 39**

**Monday, September 24**

Cheese and broccoli soup with bread and cheese

**Tuesday, September 25**

Beef stroganoff with rice

Soy stroganoff with rice

**Wednesday, September 26**

Fried herring with mashed potatoes

Squash boats with mashed potatoes

**Thursday**, September 27

Pasta carbonara

Vegetarian carbonara

**Friday**, September 28

Caribbean beef with cold yoghurt sauce and bulgur

## **Week 40**

Theme Food Health Environment

**Monday**, October 1

Pasta with creamy sauce and autumn root vegetables

**Tuesday**, October 2

Nice fish with mashed potatoes

**Wednesday**, October 3

Mince stew with Swedish flavours served with bulgur

**Thursday**, October 4

City soup with sting served with breaking bread

**Friday**, October 5

Fried Saithe fillet served with carrot tzatziki and potatoes

Subject to any changes.

## **Waste management**

When we throw out our waste we use a system called pre-separation at source. The leftovers, wellpapp, aluminum cans and plastic are thrown into separate bins at our recycling station outside the school building. The leftover food is thrown into a green bin and is later biologically broken down through compost.

# Contact

Contact us if you have any inquiries.

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