



# Evaluating the Impact of 'The Big Eat In'

## *Final Report*

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# Executive Summary

## **Introduction**

In May 2009, Glasgow Centre for Population Health commissioned the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) to carry out the evaluation of the Big Eat In – a pilot exercise aimed at encouraging Secondary 1 (S1) pupils to stay within school at lunchtime, enjoy a healthy school lunch and have the opportunity to take part in a lunchtime activity.

## **Aim**

To assess the impact of the pilot on secondary pupils' attitudes and behaviour regarding their lunchtime experience, school meals, and healthy eating and elicit views of parents/carers and school staff regarding the pilot.

## **Objectives**

- To explore the impact of the BEI on:
  - School meal uptake;
  - Pupils' attitudes and behaviour relating to school meals and healthy eating;
  - School staff and partners views regarding pupils' attitudes and behaviour; the management of school lunchtime and the sustainability of the approach;
  - Parents/carers responses to stay on site school lunchtime policies
- To identify differences in the approach used by pilot schools
- To ascertain what worked well or less well

## **Results**

The Big Eat In was regarded as a success by the majority of the pupils, school staff, Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG)<sup>1</sup> representatives, parents and volunteers who took part in the evaluation. The general consensus was that it should be continued in the pilot schools, and extended to other secondary schools in Glasgow.

School staff gave up some of their free time at lunchtime to supervise and monitor the canteen and the school gates, as well as taking activities or assisting them to run. The lunchtime activities were perceived as one of the major successes of the Big Eat In. Even the minority of pupils who stated that the Big Eat In should be stopped called for the activities to continue.

School vans and shops in close proximity to the schools were perceived as undermining the Big Eat In. There were calls for an outright ban on vans targeting school pupils at different times of the day, not just at lunchtime.

## **Conclusions**

Initiatives such as the Big Eat In offer a very promising way forward for policy makers and practitioners to develop further approaches to school-based promotion of healthy eating in partnership with children, young people and their parents/carers.

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<sup>1</sup> Culture and Sport Glasgow is now known as Glasgow Life

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Background to 'The Big Eat In' Initiative

Scottish children and young people follow a diet that falls short of national recommendations and is less healthy than that of other European countries.<sup>i</sup> Poor diet can contribute to excessive weight-gain.<sup>ii</sup> Increasing levels of child and adult obesity are already damaging health and well-being – experts have called for greater, concerted, system wide action on what they regard as a 'public health time bomb.'<sup>iii</sup> Scotland, as a country, has the second highest population level of obesity in the world (second only to the US), although it should be recognised that not every country collects these data.<sup>iv</sup>

Much of Scotland's poor health record can be attributed to its unhealthy eating habits. As set out in the 1993 report of the Scottish Office working party on diet, excess consumption of saturated fat, salt, and sugar, and low consumption of fruit and vegetables are all risk factors associated with one or more of cardiovascular disease, cancer, hypertension, type 2 diabetes and obesity.<sup>v</sup> In response, the Scottish Office published the Scottish Diet Action Plan<sup>vi</sup> in 1996. This outlined the Scottish Dietary Targets, a series of targets for dietary improvement to be achieved by 2005. Policy initiatives in support of the Scottish Diet Action Plan were further outlined in the 1999 White Paper *Towards a Healthier Scotland*<sup>vii</sup> and in the Scottish Executive's 2003 health improvement paper *Improving Health in Scotland – the Challenge*.<sup>viii</sup> The latter document included a commitment to continue implementing the recommendations of the Diet Action Plan with the aim of seeing tangible results each year up to 2010. This was followed up in 2004 by *Eating for Health: meeting the challenge*<sup>ix</sup> a framework for implementing the Diet Action Plan. However, an independent review of the Diet Action Plan carried out in 2005 concluded that the rate of progress towards many of the targets was too slow for them to be met by 2010.<sup>x</sup>

The Scottish Government's 2007 *Better Health, Better Care Action Plan*<sup>xi</sup>, sets out a strategy for a healthier Scotland and outlines how funding will be allocated to tackle obesity through dietary and physical activity programmes. The Scottish Government's overall strategy relating to diet, physical activity and obesity is set out in the 2008 publication *Healthy Eating, Active Living: An action plan to improve diet, increase physical activity and tackle obesity (2008-2011)*.<sup>xii</sup> This includes a series of actions aimed at all levels: individuals, schools, care and community settings, workplaces, industry and food producers. The document also contains a commitment to the underlying principles of the original Diet Action Plan while suggesting a need to consider developing a more pragmatic set of longer term dietary goals to replace the existing ones that expire in 2010. The Schools Health Promotion and Nutrition Act (Scotland) has built on earlier policies such as *Hungry for Success*<sup>xiii</sup> to embed school based provision and promotion of healthy food and drinks in legislation.<sup>xiv</sup> The most recent SG publication, 'Preventing Overweight and Obesity in Scotland: A route map towards healthy weight'<sup>xv</sup> states that one of its priorities will be to control exposure to foods that are high in energy. Examples of preventative actions include:

*"Exploring measures to restrict access by children to nutritionally inappropriate meals and high energy and energy-dense foods from businesses located in the vicinity of schools."*

Poor diet is therefore recognised as a significant contributor to Scotland's poor health record. Improving children's diet can have a major impact on the health of children with beneficial outcomes for educational attainment, physical well being and improved health later in life. Healthy eating patterns established in childhood are more likely to lead to healthy eating later in life.

The school environment therefore has a vital role to play in providing healthy food and drinks to pupils. *Hungry for Success* has a number of far-reaching recommendations including the setting of nutrient standards in school meals, improving the social and physical environment within schools and removing any stigma for those receiving free school meals. Glasgow City Council (GCC) has been very active in its efforts to establish healthy eating throughout its schools, with initiatives such as the Big Breakfast, Fruit Plus (this provides fruit more frequently and to a wider range of pupils than the free fruit initiative), Fuel Zones and Glasgow's Refresh (provision of water coolers in schools). Previous evaluations of these initiatives suggest that they have been well received, particularly within the primary school sector, by pupils, parents and school staff.<sup>xvi</sup>

In contrast to the primary school sector, changes to school food policy and practice within secondary schools have been more challenging. Increasing numbers of secondary school pupils are leaving school premises at lunchtime to purchase food and drinks of poor nutritional value from high street food outlets and mobile vans. Nonetheless, qualitative research conducted by the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) with primary and secondary pupils, and parents in 2007, found that, despite their reservations about the changes to school based provision of food and drinks, pupils and parents thought that healthy school food provision and promotion was having a positive influence in school and at home and that it should continue.<sup>xvii</sup> There was also some limited support in response to potential measures to encourage secondary school pupils to remain on the school premises at lunchtime, although partial restriction (i.e. restrictions only applying on a few days per week) seemed to be viewed more favourably than a blanket restriction, and a pilot exercise was suggested as a sensible first step. It is also worth noting that this research also demonstrated that both parents and pupils thought that GCC and schools had to be careful not to be too pro-active, and had to be sensitive to other societal and cultural forces in operation. The GCPH Research Seminar in November 2007, at which ScotCen's research was presented, also discussed the issue of the possible pilot exercise, and references were made to schools within and outwith Scotland that did restrict the movements of pupils at lunchtime.

## **1.2 Implementation of 'The Big Eat In' Initiative**

In December 2008, approval was sought from GCC's Executive Committee to conduct a pilot exercise in eight secondary schools in Glasgow. In this pilot Secondary 1 (S1) pupils were encouraged to stay within the school grounds at lunchtime. This approval was granted and the pilot commenced at the beginning of the school term in August 2009, and ran for the full 2009/2010 academic year.

As part of this 'Big Eat In' initiative, a holistic approach was used to create an enjoyable, healthy, active lunchtime where a healthy lunch featured but did not dominate. A package of initiatives was established in each school to provide a positive incentive for pupils remaining on the school premises. Initiatives varied from school to school but activities included recreational physical activity, sport, lunchtime clubs etc. Partnership working, communication and pupil/parent involvement were

prominent features of each school's approach and each school drew up its own individual implementation plan.

A steering group was established with representation from GCC Education Services, Cordia (formerly GCC Direct and Care Services), Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG)<sup>2</sup>, GCPH and NHSGGC. Preparatory work was conducted with secondary school pupils, parents/carers and school staff in the schools involved in the pilot as well as with upper primary pupils, parents/carers and school staff in feeder primary schools. Publicity accompanied the launch of the pilot at which the Leader of GCC also pledged his support for the initiative. Information leaflets were issued to parents/carers prior to the end of the 2009 summer term. Taster sessions were organised to allow parents/carers to sample menu items offered by the school meals service.

In order to assess the impact of this pilot initiative in the participating schools and to inform future school food policy, GCPH commissioned the Scottish Centre for Social Research (ScotCen) to conduct an evaluation of the 'The Big Eat In'.

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<sup>2</sup> Now known as Glasgow Life

## 2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Aim of the research

The overall aim of the evaluation was to assess the impact of a package of school based measures designed to encourage S1 pupils to stay on the school premises at lunch-time on secondary pupils' attitudes and behaviour regarding food and nutrition during the school day.

### 2.2 Research objectives

The specific objectives of the research were:

#### ***At an individual school level:***

- Impact of the Big Eat In pilot on:
  - ❖ a) school meal uptake by age; b) types of food consumed at lunchtime; c) usage of unhealthy food outlets including mobile vans
  - ❖ pupil safety (including road safety)
  - ❖ attitudes and behaviour relating to school meals and healthy eating within the following groups
    - secondary pupils
    - primary pupils
    - parents/carers
  - ❖ pupils' views of the lunchtime experience in general (including views of activities offered, attractiveness etc)
  - ❖ pupils' views of school lunch and attitudes towards possible future use of the school meals service
- Views of school staff regarding the impact of the pilot on school lunchtime in general.

#### ***At an overall level:***

- Differences in the approaches adopted by individual schools
- What worked well and less well in terms of individual school-based approaches and accompanying initiatives.

The quantitative evaluation involved monitoring school meal uptake by year group during the pilot for each school. Uptake data for 2008/09 were also collated and analysed to allow comparisons with the previous academic year. School meal uptake by year group for two schools who did not participate in the pilot was monitored for 2008/09 and 2009/10 to allow comparisons.

### 3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH DESIGN

ScotCen carried out the following research to answer the aims and objectives of the evaluation:

- Baseline a): Summer term 2008-2009 (June 2009):
  - Meetings/discussion with the project steering group which helped finalise the methodology
  - Telephone/face-to-face interviews with head teachers in secondary schools (n=8): evaluation approaches were discussed; school implementation plans reviewed, etc.
  - Focus 'minigroups' were convened with Primary 7 (P7) pupils in four primary feeder schools (one group per school)
  
- Baseline b): Autumn term 2009-2010 (August-September 2009):
  - Focus 'minigroups' (n=12) with S1 pupils. In four schools two groups were conducted; but only one group was convened in the remaining four schools as a few pupils attending these secondaries had already taken part in focus 'minigroup' research in the feeder primary schools (see above)
  - In-depth interviews with secondary school staff (senior teachers, catering staff etc: (n=16))
  
- Follow-up: Spring/summer term(s) 2009-2010 (March-June 2010):
  - Focus 'minigroups' (n=16) with S1 pupils
  - In-depth interviews (n=17) with secondary school staff (registration teachers/catering staff etc.)
  - Focus groups/in-depth interviews with parents and carers (n=10) of S1 pupils from five of the eight secondary schools
  - Observational work conducted within and outwith the eight schools during the school lunch break (see below)
  - In-depth interviews with Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG) representatives and volunteers involved in running lunchtime activities (n=5)

N.B. The following related work was carried out by GCPH in collaboration with Glasgow City Council staff:

Monitoring data (all research phases): 2009-2010 school year:

- Review of school meal uptake data for 2008-2009 in pilot schools
- Review and analysis of school meal uptake data 2009-2010 (uptake by different year groups)

#### **Observational Research**

Observational research was carried out in all 8 pilot secondary schools in order to gain a picture of the different approaches that were utilised, what had been working particularly well and not so well, and to identify any unexpected consequences of the Big Eat In. Dimensions included in the observation were:

- The presence of burger/ice cream vans in close proximity to the school gates and volume of pupil customers, type of food sold



- The presence of takeaway outlets and other food outlets, etc in close proximity to schools
- How schools approached working with S1 pupils to encourage them to stay on the school premises at lunchtime
- Observation of the spectrum of lunchtime activities
- Management of canteen/queuing system, etc.

Two members of the ScotCen research team visited the eight schools at lunchtime on an agreed date between 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010 and 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010. One researcher covered: (A): the internal school environment (canteen, associated lunchtime activities), whereas the other focused on (B): the external school environment (school gates, burger vans, local shops, possibly playground, etc).

The researchers were briefed, and used a proforma developed by the evaluation team and approved by the Big Eat In steering group and pilot head teachers. They made notes immediately after the observation session, and then typed these up more fully.

#### ***Guide to Codes Used in Respondents' Quotes***

Coding used in respondents' quotes presented in the report comprises:

- Identification code for each school - numbered one to eight
- Respondent or focus group number
- Whether the quote was part of baseline, 'A', or follow up, 'B', data

Some examples of how codes are used are given below:

[Resp 3-1A] corresponds to an interviewee from School 3; Respondent 1 from this school; A = baseline interview

[Resp 8-2A] corresponds to staff interviewee from School 8; Respondent 2 from this school; A = baseline interview

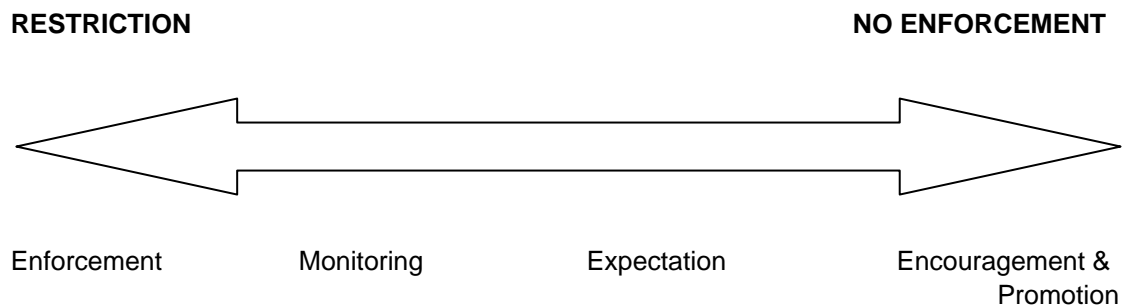
[S1 Group 6-1B] corresponds to Secondary 1 focus group in School 6; Group number 1; B = follow-up focus group

[Parental Group 8-1B] corresponds to a parental focus group in School 8; B: follow-up. N.B. The other parental views were elicited using in-depth interviews; hence [Resp 4-1B] refers to parental respondent 1, School 4 at follow-up.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Views of pupils and school staff

#### 4.1.1 The Models



At baseline, according to the respondents, the models in place for the running of the Big Eat In pilot ran along a spectrum from schools which were strictly enforcing the policy, to those which aimed to encourage S1s to stay in the school grounds through the promotion of nutritious school lunches and extra-curricular activities. Of those schools operating at the more restrictive end of the spectrum, senior staff or campus police officers patrolled the grounds and monitored the gate. In these schools, which were in the minority, pupils were confronted if it was believed they had left the grounds and any food brought in by senior pupils for S1s could be confiscated. The directive presented to S1 pupils in one such school was *'You will not leave'* [Resp 3-1A].

This model contrasted with schools at the other end of the spectrum where a view was expressed that, although schools would promote and encourage S1s to take school meals and stay within school, this should and would not be enforced. In between these two extremes were models with elements of choice and restriction for pupils. For example, pupils could be allowed out of the school grounds with a note from their parents – in some cases this had to be signed off by the head teacher. As the school year progressed though, most of the schools had relaxed their original policy to some extent, and although S1s were still frequently told that they were to stay in at lunchtime the majority of them were allowed outside the school, and there appeared to be few adverse consequences for pupils leaving the school.

#### 4.1.2 Primary 7 Expectations of the Big Eat In

Primary seven pupils (P7s) were interviewed in the summer term of 2009 before starting secondary school in August 2009.

Both positive and negative views were expressed by P7s before the Big Eat In pilot. In a practical sense, P7s thought that staying in school would enable them to get to know their new school more quickly and that they would be punctual for afternoon classes. It was also thought to be a safer environment within the confines of the

school and that the food available would be better. There appeared to be support among P7s for the healthy eating menu:

*A healthy school is a happy school [P7 Grp1-1a].*

*The toasties are well better up there.*

*And the baguettes an' that.*

*You get a much, much wider choice o' the food coz there. You can...*

*You can get a sub if you want as well.*

*You can make your own sandwich or you can get something hot. [P7 Grp4-1a].*

Negative views centred on the lack of freedom in being allowed to leave the school grounds. This was felt to be unfair, as last year's S1s were allowed out, and in one model a relative was obliged to collect the pupil at lunchtime for him/her to be allowed out, which would not always be possible. Pupils were also disappointed not to be able to visit the vans outside the school gates, although it was pointed out that it would be possible to ask older siblings and friends to bring food and drinks back in from such outlets.

#### **4.1.3 Background information – interviewee role and lunchtime practice**

At baseline and follow-up we interviewed staff members who covered the following roles within the pilot schools during the implementation and operation of the Big Eat In:

- Head teachers
- Depute head teachers
- S1 year heads
- PE teachers
- Catering managers and catering staff.

The role of these staff interviewees included having a strategic and operational role in setting up the Big Eat In, attending planning meetings, liaising with primary schools, informing parents, organising extra-curricular lunchtime activities (bidding for funding and working with staff), monitoring the Big Eat In as it progressed and working with CSG and Cordia in terms of how to manage the Big Eat In pilot.

Over the course of the pilot:

- At lunchtime pupils either went to the Fuel Zone, out for lunch, home or to another relative's home for lunch and it was thought that only a small number of pupils brought a packed lunch into school.
- Packed lunches were considered to be either healthy or unhealthy. Healthy packed lunches consisted of sandwiches, fruit and yoghurt, while unhealthy packed lunches consisted of chocolate, crisps, sweets and fizzy drinks.
- Health promotion initiatives in the pilot schools mentioned during interviews and focus groups included: 'Hungry for Success' and the redesign of the Fuel Zone, including menu improvements. This process included a consultation

with the pupils to see what they would like to have in the Fuel Zone. These initiatives were thought to have had varying degrees of success, and a major concern was that they have little influence on pupils' practices outside of school.

*The problem of course is not what we can do in school, but what we can't stop children doing when they leave school... [Resp 3-1A]*

- The view was expressed that free school meal (FSM) entitlement was not taken up fully, even though the use of swipe cards should have eliminated any stigma. However, staff reported that parents were still providing £2-£3 for these pupils to have lunch.

#### **4.1.4 Operation of the Big Eat In**

In the main the extra-curricular activities were being run by school staff, Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG) staff, volunteers and pupils. However, in interview school respondents reported at baseline that CSG had not laid on the activities that they had expected. There did appear to be a mismatch between the activities the schools were expecting to operate and the ability of CSG to run these across the pilot schools at baseline, but interviews with CSG representatives (see Section 4.3) showed that the involvement with CSG prior to and at baseline had been minimal, and much of their budgets had already been allocated.

The types of club/activities that ran in the schools included: physical activities such as football, badminton, netball, basketball, rowing, bike club, aerobics, gymnastics, skipping, hockey and Nintendo Wii fitness board. Other activities mentioned included art classes, circus skills (juggling), a reading and homework club, a chillout zone for relaxation, access to the internet, baking, Highway Code club, enterprise club, science club and drama club.

*At the moment we have got...basketball, dodgeball, badminton, football, and fitness so that's like our five lunchtimes. There is one of them each lunchtime and we are going to add in gymnastics, and a kind of fitness DVD type thing, a more aerobics type thing so there will be two things on a couple of days. So that's what we have got at the moment and then...that's specifically the Big Eat In and then in addition to that there are other things on different days. [Resp 8-2A]*

A staggered lunchtime was in place for the first few weeks of the first term in some pilot schools, which meant that S1 pupils were allowed out for lunch approximately 10-15 minutes before the rest of the school. After that, a rota system was to apply, which would inform the time S1 pupils were to arrive at the canteen. However, in order to allow S1s to have a lunch and participate in an activity, S1s were still allowed out before others in a few schools as the pilot progressed, or systems were in place which enabled them to go to the front of the lunch queue.

Food on offer included: hot meals (macaroni, fish and chips, hotdogs, pizza, curry, steak pie), a burger bar, baked potatoes, a pasta bar, sandwiches, wraps, paninis, a sub zone (where pupils can put anything they like in their roll), soups, yoghurt and a selection of salads, vegetables, sauces and fruit. Drinks on offer included milk and water. A Grab 'n' Go (a packed lunch made by school canteen staff) could be pre-ordered by pupils earlier on in the day in order to save time during the lunch break.

Although these could vary depending on what the pupil ordered, typically they would contain sandwiches, yoghurt, fruit and water.

All of the pilot schools had either a van and/or shops in close proximity (within a 5 minute walk) to the school. The perception was that pupils were consuming very unhealthy fare from these outlets. The types of food that pupils were thought to be buying from these outlets included noodles, chips and curry sauce, rolls with bacon, egg or sausage, burgers, ice cream, sweets, chocolate and fizzy juice.

*Oh, the quality o' food's terrible. Really, really bad. It's a van that provides hot rolls, but he's not got facilities for hot rolls. He makes them in the house and brings them up. I don't know how he keeps them warm. And there's no handwashing facilities or .. so he's takin' money an' servin' food. I've been on to Environmental Health, and so has... the Headteacher... but they're still there. [Resp 6-3A]*

#### **4.1.5 Awareness and Knowledge of the Pilot, and its promotion**

The main reasons for the Big Eat In pilot cited by staff related to the health and safety of the pupils. Increased road safety and the decreased likelihood of getting into altercations with pupils from the same or other schools were seen as positive benefits afforded by the pilot. Staff perceived that the pilot aimed to develop in S1 pupils the habit and routine of staying and eating in school, which would allow them to eat healthy food and develop a healthier lifestyle.

These reasons were supported by the S1 pupils who thought that the reasons for the pilot becoming established were to make them eat more healthily and to increase their well-being. In addition, it was said to be safer inside the school grounds because outside of school they ran the risk of being run over or getting abducted.

Promotional activities for pupils included:

- secondary school staff (head teachers and or depute head teachers) visiting the primary school to outline the operation of the Big Eat In,
- selected pupils from P7 going to a meeting/focus group at the secondary school and then reporting this back to the rest of their class,
- pupils being told about the pilot at their induction days at the secondary school,
- pupils being told at assemblies, through letters and at taster sessions at parents' nights.

The Big Eat In was promoted in a positive manner, and in some cases as a continuation of practice of what had been happening in P7 at lunchtime. Pupils were encouraged to suggest the types of extra-curricular activities they would like to participate in. Pupils' views about the amount of information received varied; some stated that they had been given sufficient information but others claimed that the information provided was not clear. It was also reported that pupils were not given any information by their primary school, and they did not know that the Big Eat In would continue to operate after the first couple of weeks of S1.

*Em when we came we didn't think that it was going to be the full year, we thought it was just going to be a couple of weeks, they didn't really explain that to us  
[S1 Group 7-1A]*

Promotional activities for parents included newsletters (via the primary school) and being sent letters and leaflets about the Big Eat In. Meetings were also convened; these included tasting the food available from the fuel zone and/or specific presentations about the Big Eat In: "...we're trying to involve everybody as ... er ... a partner". In one school 'home/school agreements' were signed by the school, by parents and pupils (which include the pupils eating healthy meals three days a week and taking part in lunchtime activities). However, there was poor attendance at a number of these meetings.

Staff gave conflicting responses to how well they had been informed of the pilot. Some respondents said that the staff had been kept fully informed and updated as to what is going on, but other respondents argued that the information had been very limited, they had heard little or nothing from the council and their only contact had been with senior staff members within schools. Catering staff did have meetings with senior staff to be informed about the Big Eat In.

#### **4.1.6 Impact of the Big Eat In – positive views**

At follow-up, 72 pupils took part in the 16 minigroups in the eight schools. Most pupils took school lunches, but also reported taking packed lunches. At least 20 pupils said that they ate out of school some of the time.

There were mixed opinions on what the pupils would have done if the Big Eat In had not been run in their schools. Some pupils said that would have stayed in to have school lunches, some would have gone out occasionally, and some would have brought in packed lunches.

Most of the pupils tended to praise the food being offered within the schools. School meals were praised for the choice of food on offer (for example, burgers, pizza, fish and chips, baked potatoes, subs, salads and vegetarian options). Pupils enjoyed a good selection and were able to pick what food they wanted, with the option to add additional salad or vegetables to their meal. Others liked that the menu changed daily which meant they were less likely to get bored with the food on offer.

*I thought the really good point was like when you go for something, like you thought "Wait. I'm a bit hungrier", and then there was like the salad. You could get beetroot an' all that, like so you could just go there and take... like think that that could dae me. Like just take your plate up. But I thought that was really good that there was mare to take. [S1 Group 6-1B]*

In addition, school meals were viewed as being good value for money (average price was £1.15), of quite good quality, and healthy. It was noted that there was very little, if any, salt or sugar in the food with healthy options such as salad, baked potatoes and fruit with milk or water to drink. The food on offer encouraged pupils, who might otherwise have eaten outside of school, to get their lunch from the fuel zone.

*F2: Because like a lot of the stuffs like freshly made so like you know what's going into it and there's no anything like extra salt or that in it*

*F1: There's nae salt and nae sugar its just like the juice is like a Apple Squeeze I think that's because its got apples and that in it, there used to be like chocolate bars and that and now its went too, like crisps and that*

**I: So what do you think about that?**

*F1: Its good cause like basically everything's gone by break time*

*F2: And it's like encouraging us to eat more healthily  
[S1 Group 8-1B]*

By having "samples" of new foods which allowed the pupils to have a taste of something they might not have otherwise tasted, one of the schools seemed to have found another way to encourage the pupils to eat healthily and try new foods.

*...in here there is always new stuff for us to try...*

*They sometimes bring out samples. [S1 Group 3-1B]*

*One of my friends was always packed lunch because they didn't really like the school dinners in primary, and they didn't really try anything, then they came up to secondary and they realised that some of the stuff was really quite nice. And now that's got them trying new foods. [S1 Group 3-1B]*

The general consensus was that the activities were considered to be one of the best things about the Big Eat In as they gave the pupils something to do with their friends at lunchtime. There was also a good selection of activities available at most schools that were well attended, and that those attending appeared to enjoy greatly. Many respondents reported that they tended to do activities most of the week and in some cases daily.

***I: Right. Ok. So thinking about then what do you think have been the main good points of the big eat in so far?***

*F2: The activities.*

*M2: Mostly the activities, the sports, and the fun and games and that.*

*M1: We get kind of closer to our friends because we get to know what our friends like to go and do in clubs, club-wise, and everyone going out would probably end up going out with we would go out with our friends but all we would see each other doing is eating.*

*[S1 Group 3-1B]*

*F4: ...you get to have a laugh and all that and you don't need to just go outside in the cold, you can actually do something at lunchtime.*

*F2: You get to choose what you want to do. You can go up to the library, you can go into the gym hall, you can play badminton on a Monday and all that. [S1 Group 2-2B]*

Pupils acknowledged that there were positive effects to staying in school. As many pupils got used to staying in school over the course of the Big Eat In, they stated that they did not have to go out if they didn't want to. It was also added that it made it easier to avoid peer pressure, and also possibly made bullying and teasing of those who wanted to remain within school less likely, as there was at the very least a school policy of encouragement to stay inside school at lunchtime. Pupils who thought the Big Eat In had been successful again credited a lot of that success to the activities. It was the reason why many of the first year pupils stayed in school.

***I: So how successful do you think the Big Eat In has been so far?***

*All: Very. Very.*

*M2: Because every first year has stayed in, and played the computer, played games and they have had fun without having to go outside. [S1 Group 3-1B]*

***I: Okay so what do you think then are the main good points about the Big Eat In so far?***

*F3: There's good food, there's lunchtime clubs so you're not bored and it promotes healthy eating so healthy lifestyle.*

*[S1 Group 7-1B]*

The staff respondents reported that there had been many positive impacts of the Big Eat In throughout the pilot year. They cited the improved safety offered by the pilot, as well as the fact that it reduced the opportunity for lateness and truancy, and allowed the S1s to socialise more. It was also said to allow teachers to engage with pupils more, and monitor the S1 pupils perceived as being most vulnerable. The majority view over the pilot year was that the uptake of school meals had increased; and more S1s in particular had been eating in the dining hall than in previous years. It was also said, though, that it was difficult to gauge uptake accurately as pupils often shared their swipe cards. It should also be noted that uptake of school meals was seen to vary from day to day depending on what the menu was offering: "*some days are busier than others*". Nevertheless, the pupils eating within the school were said to be having a nutritious meal, of good quality. Also, catering staff were said to change the menu as a result of pupil feedback, and this allied with encouragement of staff resulted in increased pupil number in the canteen.

*The positives are that the majority of children have bought into it, and that we have only had a very few cases where we've had to explain to parents that their children were out. [Resp 2-2B]*

*I think far more children are going more for hot foods than they would have in the past, if they would have. We still have hamburgers and so on available there but quite a lot of people are not going for the, the hamburgers and they're going for the hot food, the curries, the stews, the bolognaise and a lot of children are going for the sort of the subs as well so there's a, I think there's a variety of food, its opened their eyes to it and shown them it can be more than edible but actually quite tasty.*

*[Resp 4-1B]*

The lunchtime activities in the majority of pilot schools were reported as being very popular and well attended. Overall, improvements in the links with CSG were noted as the pilot progressed, but a few problems remained, in one school in particular. However, S1s were staying in school to take part in lunchtime activities and have a healthy lunch. In many of the schools the activities were run at the very least with the help of school staff members. It was pointed out that some staff members were happy to give up their lunchtime as the pupils enjoyed the activities. Indeed, in one school about 10 members of staff were involved in running activities. As has been said, links tended to improve with CSG after the problems experienced at baseline, and in addition the schools forged links with volunteers and trainers working in the community, as well as allowing senior pupils to help facilitate sessions. As a result it was thought more likely that the activities would become sustainable over time.

*So we're finding that the children are really quite enthusiastic about the activities, too enthusiastic. We can't meet the demand in some cases, so we've started these rotas, but they really quite committed to coming along. [Resp 2-2B]*

*The positives are... I suppose there's a greater level of engagement of children in lunchtime activities, numbers I think are possibly higher for first years staying on and staying in school. [Resp 7-1B]*



*I feel we had a very positive engagement with them [CSG] from the very start of the pilot. A couple of wee crises which have resolved and moved on. I think that's the nature of the partnership, but they... helped us identify artists to come along and talk to the children which was really successful. They have come along and trained some of our young people to act as leaders... They have helped us set up sustainable activities at lunchtime and also when their staff have committed to running activities for us they have done it. They have done it consistently so our partnership with Culture Sport has worked very well I think. And gives real potential for the future of that partnership as well. [Resp 3-2B]*

#### **4.1.7 Impact of the Big Eat In – negative views**

A minority of pupils said that they liked all aspects of the Big Eat In, and there were no negative points to report. The general consensus was, though, that there were a number of negative factors related to its operation. A number of pupils perceived that there were so many negative issues encountered by the Big Eat In that it could be viewed as a failure overall – arguably this was particularly the case in one group in both Schools 5 and 6.

The long queues in the canteen were a problem for many, although it should be acknowledged that some schools attempted to give S1 pupils priority during the pilot. For example, one school in a bid to combat the queuing problem and reverse this trend, gave the first year pupils a card with the 'Big Eat In' and their name on it. This meant that if they were not first in the queue they could show their card, go get their lunch and then go off to an activity. However, when pupils were last in line, this meant that by the time they got to the counter all the food they liked was gone and so they didn't always get what they wanted to eat. Since the S1s were being actively encouraged to stay in school, eat in the fuel zone and then take part in activities they thought they should always be first in line.

Pupils thought there should be more food stands so the school could make more food and thus cut the queues down. There were also complaints about the unfairness of senior pupils (S5s and S6s) being allowed to jump the queue. The perception was that long waits in queues was resulting in many pupils going outside of the school for lunch or bringing in packed lunches to avoid the Fuel Zone.

*It's quite annoying sometimes cause sometimes when we're last in they always run out of good food and then we have to eat the things that we don't like an that ...well we don't eat it and we go hungry an then when we get hame we finish all that stuff we get in the hoose.  
[S1 Group 7-2B]*

*F8: ...so you wait like 20 minutes in this queue, and by the time you get there there's nothing left you like.*

*F7: And I don't get the fact why we're getting made to stay in, but we're getting forced like... We're no getting 'forced', but all they... all these people go in front o' us, but we're the one that's getting forced tae stay in, so why are we no first in the line?  
[S1 Group 6-2B]*

Negative comments were elicited in relation to the quality of the food served within schools. Again there was evidence that pupils from Schools 5 and 6 tended to be the most critical. These pupils reported that the food on offer was bland and lacked variety as menus tended to repeat every few weeks. The views were far from

consistent though, with the lunches also being criticised for being too healthy or not healthy enough. For example, it was said that not all pupils were used to eating healthy foods and thus the change from unhealthy food such as chocolate and crisps to the “*super healthy stuff*” available in school was problematical. There was also a contradiction reported between the “*healthy*” food offered at lunchtime and the food available at interval, with some pupils being able to buy rolls and sausage and bacon rolls at interval. However even the food sold at lunchtime in a few schools was not thought to be entirely healthy, contrary to what the pupils had been told.

*F2: The taste...*

*M1: There's nae taste in it. It's like... It's... Just tastes like wood...*

*[S1 Group 5-2B]*

*F8: Because I ate in the school for 2 weeks and they're like... er... they're no made, because the mea... See the burgers? See some o' the burgers? The meat it's no... it's no cooked right, and it's pure... it isnae. And...*

*F5: It isnae. It's pure white!*

*F: And see then like sometimes then you look inside the hot dogs, they're pure pink.*

*F5: An' they're burnt!...*

*F7: ... Remember when I used tae go tae primary, I used to have the wee floppy waffles and the wee fish fingers, and noo we don't get them any mare.*

*F2: See Primary School lunches, they're better than here...*

*[S1 Group 6-2B]*

The S1 respondents did not like older pupils being able to leave school, buy take away foods and then consume them within the school canteen as they were eating their school lunches.

*F2 ...all the second years go out and they make us jealous. They make us smell their curry!*

*F3: All of them come in with curries and all that, and you are sitting there trying to eat your lunch and you are sitting there staring at them eating, you just feel jealous of them.*

*[S1 Group 2-2B]*

Those pupils most negative about the Big Eat In tended to report that they disliked the lack of choice, and that they were not being treated like responsible adults. The transition from primary to secondary school was perceived as a rite of passage, and one that the S1s were potentially missing out on if they were not free to explore the environs outside the school at lunchtime.

*M5: They... like they're not trusting us, like... but like in High School they always say, we're gonna treat you like adults... then just like primary you're kept in coz they didnae trust you and they thought you were gonna get knocked down o' whatever... They don't trust us, and then you just thought, “D'you know what? I don't care” and I just walked out...*

*M1: Aye... I mean its High School. It's supposed to be another step in your life... Where's the responsibility if you're no allowed to go oot?*

*[S1 Group 6-1B]*

Overall the activities were viewed positively, but problems had arisen over the course of the school year. For example, pupils wanted a wider range of activities. It was also perceived that many activities were too focused on the boys, and there should be

more activities that also appeal to girls, such as dance classes. Those who did not take part in lunchtime events said that there was a lack of choice, and some claimed that the activities on offer were boring. On the other hand, the success and the popularity of the activities also caused problems as pupils were being turned away, leaving them with nothing to do at lunchtime. Pupils also were not able to attend activities on occasion because there was insufficient time to eat a lunch and participate in an activity (the duration of most lunch breaks was between 40 and 45 minutes). Pupils were occasionally turned away if they were late for an activity, and there was evidence that some S1s would rush or skip their lunch entirely. A few pupils also reported that there could be problems with a lack of equipment, or that the room or space made available for the activities were not ideal. Despite this, the general success of the activities is exemplified by the fact that pupils were concerned that they might not be able to participate in them when they finished their first secondary year.

*M: Like you don't get enough time to like cause see sometimes if you want tae get tae the club you need to pure rush your lunch an that*

*M: An' then you feel sick.*

*M: An then... but see if you take your time an then you only get... you get there and then they say you cannae come in because there's like... say in the club if you're there at quarter past you're probably no allowed back in cause there's a time limit.*

*[S1 Group 7-2B]*

***I: Mhm. I mean what do you think about the activities at lunchtime...***

*M: It's good.*

*M1: It's only... Like next year we won't be allowed to dae it coz like it's meant to be for first years coz they're trying to keep first years in.*

*M2: But they should... they should like do more for second years and that, so you could for both, and 4th, 5th, 6th years...*

*F2: They should do more for lassies an' all.*

*[S1 Group 5-2B]*

A minority of school staff respondents thought that numbers attending the canteen had decreased over the course of the school year, as visiting outlets outside of school and the consumption of packed lunches had become more common. In addition, it was claimed that takings were down within a few schools as a result of this trend, as well as the decreased popularity among pupils of vending machines due to the predominantly healthy fare that was on offer. The consensus, even in schools in which pupils taking lunches was perceived to have increased, was that schools had to deal with larger numbers of S1s eating outside school as the pilot progressed. Disappointment was expressed as a result of this as efforts had been made to encourage S1s to stay in school and also to promote activities and an environment that was appealing to pupils. However, as mentioned previously the schools' lunchtime restriction policies tended to become more lax the longer the pilot was in operation.

In some schools the canteen and the lunchtime environment were thought to be off-putting for pupils. Queues, lack of time and space, a lack of seating, decreased food choice for those towards the end of queues and increased number of younger pupils displacing older pupils were all thought to reduce school meal uptake, as indeed was the fact that not all pupils liked the food on offer. A few catering staff respondents said that supervision could be a problem at lunchtime, with only one teacher being present on occasion. While the pupils' behaviour was generally thought to be good in the canteen, there were reported instances of pupils throwing food, bringing in pot

noodles (which were banned in most schools) and not tidying up after themselves. The Big Eat In may have had a slight impact on this in instances where pupil numbers increased, and thus necessitated increased supervision.

The catering staff members were not always able to provide the types of food that the pupils were asking for, due to the Hungry for Success regulations. This could result in some pupils bringing in their own cans of juice from the van because they didn't like the juice the school supplied, or "voting with their feet" as they found the school food to be bland with its lower fat, salt and sugar content. However, it was said that the attempts to mimic the fast food on offer outside the school did not always work, and that the quality of food was also dependent to some extent on those supplying it.

*...we do do burgers. They're healthy burgers, but they're that healthy they're horrible!  
I mean, you know, you've taken everything out of them. There's no fat in them...  
[Resp 6-3B]*

*I think the quality... depending on the supplier as well, you know? Some...  
sometimes it's good, and other times it's not. You... you've to monitor it all the time,  
you know what I mean? [Resp 8-3B]*

The staff reported that the food outlets, including vans, in close proximity to the school gates undermined the Big Eat In pilot. The consensus was that pupils who ate outside of school almost always chose the unhealthy options. One catering staff respondent renamed the pilot the "Big Eat Out" as a result of the large numbers of pupils from all years leaving the school.

*...They're going out to buy burgers or they're going out to buy those noodles which  
are absolutely horrible [Resp 8-4B]*

*...they would still rather go to the van and buy a cream bun. And the amount o'  
sweets they buy is unbelievable. The amount o' rubbish we clean up... That's all you  
see in this school, is bottles o' Irn Bru, because they're buying it off the van first thing  
in the morning, and that's all we clean up. [Resp 6-3B]*

Although the activities were generally viewed as a success, and the initial problems reported which related to expectations of the CSG role not being fulfilled had been resolved in the main, certain issues were still said to have created problems throughout the pilot. For example, the activities (and other aspects of the pilot that required supervision) relied on the goodwill of staff to operate, although this could be at odds with the recommendations of the "McCrone Report". As has been mentioned, the fact that the lunch period was only about 40 minutes was thought to hinder the ability of S1s to both enjoy a lunch and participate in an activity. On occasion, activities were cancelled due to adverse weather conditions or coaches not turning up to lead sessions. Also, in some schools the funding of activities and links with CSG were still problematical.

*The downside is the, the management of it within the school, everything falls back on  
the teachers and the McCrone Report..., told teachers quite clearly "don't do  
lunchtime duty". That's not your job. It's not my job but of course it is my job, anything  
that has to go smoothly in a school, relies on the staff supervising and managing it.  
[Resp 4-1B]*

*Our agreement with Culture Sport was that if we invested they would provide it. That then changed and they provided us with a list of what we should buy. I don't want to take you into all the ins and outs now, but as with all partnerships that was a crisis, we had to find a resolution to it. It took longer than I would have liked but without the equipment there was no point in the kids being there. [Resp 3-1B]*

#### **4.1.8 Big Eat In – barriers and facilitating factors**

##### **Barriers**

Many of the obstacles to the Big Eat In running have already been addressed in sections above. Therefore, the pupils said that the quality of the food, the presence of vans and fast food outlets in close proximity to the school, the logistical problems related to time pressures and lack of space were all raised as issues which had created problems for the Big Eat In.

There were mixed views about the influence of peer pressure in terms of going outside of school at lunchtime. A few pupils stated that they would follow the lead of their peers if they chose to leave school at lunchtime, whereas others said that this would have no impact on their behaviour at lunchtime. Indeed, peer pressure could also work the other way if friends chose to remain inside school.

It was also argued that the disappointment experienced by S1s when they realised that they would not be able to leave the school at lunchtime in the early phase of the pilot provoked a negative attitude towards the initiative in some pupils.

##### ***I: Right. OK. Does it make a difference whether your friends are going out for lunch or not?***

*M3: No.*

*M2: Maybe.*

*M1: Sometimes when all ma pals go oot, I sometimes stay in, but it... and you like eat your lunch and they're no even back yet. Sometimes I just walk doon and get them and then... They're at the bottom o' the hill, so I just walk back up wi' them...*

*F1: Aye, because if all your pals are going oot then you obviously go oot coz you're no wanting to stay in like a pure Nigel.*

*[S1 Group 5-2B]*

##### ***I: So thinking about what if anything do you think has made it difficult for the Big Eat In to run in your school?***

*M1: The fact that everybody was all looking to coming up here and getting to go out at lunch, all the Primary Sevens were like yes we are going up and we can get to go out now! And then it got closed off to us because we weren't allowed to.*

*[S1 Group 3-1B]*

The staff respondents came up with a number of issues that acted against the successful impact of the Big Eat In. The fact that schools had to adhere to strict nutritional guidelines, yet had to compete with vans and other outlets which had no such restrictions, was said to be a major problem. Also, if pupils did tend to eat from these external outlets, and the food consumed at home had more in common with the fare provided by these shops in terms of its fat, salt and sugar content, it was thought that pupils would find school food bland and unappealing.

*But there is clearly a massive issue about the nutritional value meals, and it is something that the authorities – and by that I mean the Scottish Government – are going to have to face up to. It's either that or there's going to be no dinner in schools shortly.... the negative part's got nothing to do with the programme. It's to do with the implementation of Government policy. Unless they make a policy that covers everybody... There is no point whatsoever in making a policy that covers a school, when you can go 50 yards up the road and do whatever you like. It just does not make sense. [Resp 5-2B]*

*...it's a constant fight because children a, they like eh stuff with lots of salt in it, lots of spice in it and so on and they would naturally go there if we weren't trying to stop them. [Resp 4-1B]*

Schools also had to fight against the pupils' expectations of secondary school and their desire to push boundaries. The view was expressed that S1s saw the transition from primary to secondary school to be a rite of passage, and expected this to involve the perceived increased responsibility that would result from being allowed out of school at lunchtime. As such, it was stated that many S1s asked when they were going to be allowed out of school after the first term. There was also a lack of staff available to monitor the school gates, coupled with an unwillingness to supervise the gates in schools which favoured the 'encouragement' model. It was also reported that parents could undermine the pilot by writing letters requesting that their children be allowed out of school at lunchtime.

A number of staff respondents said that there was a lack of funding or external support for the Big Eat In, its activities and potential staffing, and one interviewee added that more money had been allocated to the evaluation than the actual pilot. The relationship between a minority of the schools, CSG and community groups were still not particularly positive towards the end of the pilot. But it was hoped that this would improve in the future when pupils start to use their community facilities.

School facilities also worked against the successful operation of the Big Eat In. Staff reported that there was a lack of space, particularly in new build schools, to cater for the majority of secondary pupils in one, short lunchtime period. Indeed, some respondents felt that their schools could not cope with 50% of the pupils staying in at lunchtime. The lack of space in the dining halls also had an effect on the provision of food. One school was hoping to set up a Grab 'n' Go counter, but couldn't due to lack of space.

*...if 100% of our children decided to use the Fuel Zone we couldn't do it. If 50% of our children decided to use the Fuel Zone we probably could not do it... There have been suggestions from non-teachers: "why don't you stagger the lunch time?". It's impossible, you cannae have half the school finishing at 12 o'clock and the other half finishing at 1 o'clock. In terms of timetabling and teachers, it cannae be done. [Resp 4-1B]*

### **Facilitators**

The pupils acknowledged that many factors had assisted the Big Eat In to run during the school year. Again, many of these have already been reported in previous sections. Pupils were very positive about the lunchtime activities on the whole, and many positive comments were also elicited in relation to the food and drink on offer within the schools. The role of school staff was also viewed as being of pivotal

importance – it was reported that the staff encouraged pupils to sample the school lunches, to take part in activities and indeed also helped facilitate these sessions on occasion. It was also added that external trainers, volunteers and pupils also helped run the activities. Changes to the menu, such as the addition of pizza, were also said to have assisted the Big Eat In, and it was added that more types of drink (other than water, milk and fruit juice) would further aid its success.

***I: uh huh. So what on the other hand do you think has helped the Big Eat In to run in your school?***

*F1: The teachers, because they have encouraged us to try new things to eat healthier stuff...*

*F1: Because lots of people don't go out anymore and because there is lots more activities that people can do.*

*[S1 Group 2-2B]*

*M2: Teachers and the amount of people that are participating, helping out. Some teachers bought the equipment, the equipment that's used is helped by all the other senior pupils, they come out and help you. Everybody else's like help.*

*[S1 Group 3-1B]*

The staff respondents also acknowledged that many factors had assisted the operation of the pilot. The promotion of the pilot to those then in primary 7, and their parents, and the fact that primary 7 pupils were not allowed to leave school at lunchtime to prepare them for the pilot was seen as very useful groundwork. The activities were viewed positively on the whole, the range on offer tended to be extensive, and they were thought to have been very well received by those who participated in them. However, these activities often relied on staff, volunteers and senior pupils to run successfully. The goodwill of staff was therefore vital to the success of the pilot, as was the exemplar role of staff eating in the canteen, as well as the good relationships perceived to exist between catering staff and pupils.

*It's good for the kids to see that the teachers are willing to give up their time to run these clubs. It's good from the point of view that the relationship thing is building up. It's good from the point of view that we're encouraging young people to eat healthy, so there's loads o' benefits. There's absolutely no question o' that. [Resp 5-1B]*

*A lot of them are happy that the children are in, and a lot of staff are giving up their lunchtime. The pupil support assistants... They're a bit more flexible... Our timetables are kind of fixed then for the year. Staff that give up their lunchtime, you can't give them their time back, but they give it up willingly and are quite happy to do so. So... and the more that volunteer, the less frequently they have to be there.*

*[Resp 2-2B]*

In one school one of the main perceived facilitating factors was the pretence that leaving school at lunchtime was forbidden. This was thought to lead to the vast majority of S1s staying in the school, enjoying a school lunch and taking part in an activity, whereas otherwise many would have left the school at lunchtime.

*I will be perfectly honest... I think my bluff by saying "this is not optional" basically, because I think the minute you offer the option young people are pulled in the direction of "well, we are not buying into this at all." And we would have just ended up with a programme which was delivering activities to young people who would have stayed in the school anyway. [Resp 3-1B]*

## 4.2 Views of parents and carers

### 4.2.1 Impact of the Big Eat In: Positive Views

Parents were mostly positive about the Big Eat In. Above all, parents appeared to value the safety element of the initiative. It was felt that S1s were too young to be let out unsupervised at lunchtime and there were a number of hazards associated with leaving the school such as busy traffic, conflict with pupils from the same or other schools or the possibility of abduction. Knowing that their child was at school during lunchtime was of great reassurance. Parents also thought that the BEI provided an excellent way for children to socialise and make friends. Many parents thought it was beneficial to provide structure and reassurance for children at lunchtime – in order that they had somewhere to go and something to do. In addition, the restriction on pupils leaving school was praised by a couple of parents as they said that their child was happier and felt less peer pressure to go outside at lunchtime.

*Well I know exactly where my daughter is at lunchtime... I'm not kind of left wondering "oh is she at the shops or has she went to a friend's house" or whatever... So from a parent's point of view its peace of mind, the main positive about it that I know where she is at lunchtime... I know that X wanted to stay in at lunchtime anyway but maybe some, some of her other friends might have been going out but the fact that the teachers are encouraging them to stay in its kind of taken the emphasis off her, she's kind of able to say "well the teachers would prefer us to stay in, so this is just what I'm going to do." So its kind of taking a wee bit of the pressure off her [Resp 6-1B]*

*She likes the whole atmosphere of sitting at a table with your friends, having lunch, having a chat and enjoying the food into the bargain. [Resp 4-1B]*

It should be noted that many of the parents did not have great knowledge as to what food was on offer at lunchtime. However, those that were aware generally praised the food on offer and considered it to be good value for money. It was felt that there was a good choice and that the meals were healthy. It was also reported that the Big Eat In was creating greater awareness amongst young people of the importance of eating a healthier diet. Furthermore, the activities were viewed very positively by parents as they were said to give pupils a chance to try out something new as well as providing an environment for them to make friends and socialise at the start of secondary school.

*.. its an opportunity... to maybe speak to people that's not in their class. You know? ... They maybe find that they go to play football and they've seen somebody in the football .. and that's, again, a social aspect I think more than anything else. Its good social opportunity... to do that. [Resp 2-1B]*

### 4.2.2 Impact of the Big Eat In: Negative Views

Whilst parents were generally very positive about the Big Eat In, some negative views were expressed.

A few parents voiced concerns that the food was not of good quality, or was not appropriate for their children, even if it was recognised as being good value for money. For example, it was said that the food was almost too healthy and thereby could alienate pupils if they were not used to foods low in fat, sugar and salt. In



addition, parents thought that there was not enough choice and that the children quickly got bored of the food on offer as menus could be quite repetitive. The interviewees also commented that they were aware that the queues for the school dinners put children off eating in school and that often the most popular food options had run out if you were towards the end of the line. In terms of the activities, a few comments were received that there were not enough activities which appealed directly to girls, such as singing or dancing.

*..that's what we were saying. Like the kids start eating in the dinner school and then they get bored because there's no enough changes. [Parental Group 8-1B]*

#### **4.2.3 Barriers & Facilitating Factors**

The availability of unhealthy food from the vans and shops in close proximity to the school was considered to be a major barrier to children eating in school at lunchtime. In addition, parents recognised that they themselves, either by writing notes to allow their child to go out at lunchtime or by providing additional funds to children to eat outside were undermining the Big Eat In. Furthermore, parents were coming under pressure to provide their children with the same amount of money that their friends were receiving. It was also argued that as the children got older, they would want to go outside of school and have increased freedom and responsibility. One parent said that her son, who had eaten at the Big Eat In all year and had enjoyed the experience, had wanted to go outside at lunchtime towards the end of the pilot. Finally, it was reported that a blanket ban on pupils going out at lunchtime would be much more straightforward to enforce than the more prevalent 'encouragement' model.

*They're doing away wi' the machine. They're no getting sweeties in the machine. They're getting healthy drinks, healthy crisps, but then they just walk 20 yards oot and get to a sweetie van. [Parental Group 8-1B]*

*Well, he's just started it, so now he's pushing 'Can I get oot once a week? Can I get out twice a week? Once a week, let me oot', and I'm gonna eventually have to say 'Yes' to that. [Parental Group 8-1B]*

*If they tell them that they can't go out, there's no exception. You know? They have to take part in the Big Eat In. They have to stay in. But this... saying one thing and meaning another ..... You know? Like if they're told that... the first years can't go out, well why say... 'if you bring a letter in .. so that you can go out.' So I don't agree wi' that. [Resp 7-1B]*

There was major overlap noted between the perceived positive impact of the Big Eat In and the factors that were viewed as assisting its operation. In addition, though, parents appreciated that many of the activities depended on the input and enthusiasm of teachers, and that this had helped the Big Eat In to succeed. The attitude of the parents also seemed to be of paramount importance. Not unexpectedly, those parents who wanted their children to eat school lunches were very much in favour of the Big Eat In and also pupil participation in the lunchtime activities. These respondents indicated that they encouraged their children to stay in school, and in some instances they prohibited them from leaving school at lunchtime and refused to give them money to spend in shops and vans.

It was apparent that some of the parents knew very little about the Big Eat In, with pupils reporting only snippets of information (if at all) back to parents. Many parents felt that if they had been better informed about the pilot (food available, activities), through a letter in the post (not school bag) or finding information on the school's website, they would have encouraged their child to take part more, by suggesting meals that they might like to try or by helping to choose an activity. A leaflet explaining the rationale behind the BEI or asking for parental support would have been warmly received. Parents suggested that this information should be provided in the future. Of course, schools did seek to promote the Big Eat In to parents in these or similar ways, but it suggests that the promotion may have to be on-going if it is to succeed. It was also suggested that more choice should be available and that the strict healthy eating policy should be relaxed now and again. As has been said, a stricter model of enforcement also had its supporters.

*.. There's nothing wrong wi' having cake and custard. [Parental Group 8-1B]*

### **4.3 Views of CSG staff and volunteers**

Five representatives of Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG; now Glasgow Life) and the voluntary sector who were involved in running extracurricular activities in a number of the pilot schools were interviewed in May and June 2010. As a result, those covering both strategic and operational roles in relation to the lunchtime activities gave their views.

The interviewees were, in general, very positive about the way the activities had run in the pilot schools, and had augmented the overall impact of the Big Eat In.

The CSG representatives, though, did state that there had been major problems at the start of the pilot, and although these issues had resolved in the main as the pilot progressed, the situation in one school had scarcely improved since baseline. It was probable that poor communication between a CSG representative and school staff in this pilot school was responsible for the perceived negative outcome. The CSG interviewees reported that they had become involved too late in the planning phase of the Big Eat In, with much of their budgetary allocation having already taken place, and could not possibly meet the expectations of the eight schools in helping to run a long list of activities, as they lacked staff and financial resources. In addition, CSG favoured a model in which school staff, pupils and/or volunteers would help carry out the activities with the pupils, as this was likely to provide a more sustainable model.

*I think there was an expectation as far as the school was concerned that we had a large pot of money and this was our programme to come in and deliver that, but that wasn't necessarily the case... A lot of the discussions, and a lot of the disappointments were around the fact that that wasn't necessarily the case and we were stressing it was a partnership approach and that we could...prepare young people, we could build up their skills and so on so that they could actually deliver some of the programmes. We could do the same with the teaching staff, it wasn't necessarily a case of us actually coming in and... [Resp 2]*

All interviewees were able to give examples of a wide range of activities which were enjoyed by pupils across most of the pilot schools. These lunchtime sessions were run by CSG staff, volunteers, paid coaches, school staff and senior pupils. The activities ranged from drama classes, Wii sports, relaxation classes/chill-out zones,

football, basketball, play pods (playground equipment, library sessions, IT clubs, etc). In many cases these had been well-attended by S1 boys and girls over the course of a number of weeks, and occasionally they had been extended to pupils in other secondary years as they had generated a great deal of interest. A few interviewees had direct experience of running activities such as the chill out zones and drama clubs.

*So...there would be mats there, we had kind of organised that with the first year head... and we would arrive there and there would be young people waiting in the queue to get in! [Laughter] So they would come in and they would just have a talk about stress, relaxation, trying to get them to settle down a bit, play some music and talk them through what we call a visualisation exercise and that can be like a deep relaxation... and just go to that quieter space in themselves. Now generally that's quite difficult because they are just first years and they have come from a class, it's their lunch break they want to like go and let off some steam but...in spite of that they really...they did it really, really well. They achieved quite a deep relaxed state I would say definitely. [Resp 3]*

Apart from the more general problem alluded to by CSG staff above, the major difficulties cited by the respondents were that the school lunchtime was relatively short and it was therefore difficult for S1 pupils to have their lunch and take part in an activity. Also, there had been other functional issues such as the rooms or space for the activities not being ideal initially, or adults who were due to run activities not turning up and as a result sessions being cancelled. However, these issues were seen to resolve as the pilot progressed. School staff also allowed S1 pupils out of classes early in a few pilot schools to enable them to eat their lunch quickly and take part in an activity, and in other schools those taking part in Big Eat In lunchtime classes were allowed to go to the front of the lunch queue. The willingness of school staff (despite the McCrone report) and volunteers to help run classes was also said to be a major facilitating factor in the success of this element of the Big Eat In, as was the general enthusiasm of the pupils. The fact that S1 pupils were also deemed to be in a secure, supervised environment, and not walking the streets around the school at lunchtime, was said to be a positive outcome of the lunchtime classes.

## **4.4 Observational research**

### **4.4.1 External school environment**

Although all schools said that S1 pupils were at the very least encouraged to stay in the school at lunchtime, in practice there were few if any school staff on the school gates and pupils were allowed to leave. The researcher noted that large numbers of pupils left the school at lunchtime, although it was impossible to know which year groups they represented.

Seven of the schools had burger and/or ice cream vans based in close proximity to the school gates at lunchtime, and indeed in some cases these were said to be present as pupils walked to the school in the morning. Some school staff members indicated that they asked the van to park very close to the school for road safety reasons. Others indicated that they had held discussions with the vendor to try to limit their access to pupils, or commented on the Council's lack of joined-up thinking in trying to promote school meals whilst allowing vans to sell their wares in close proximity to school entrance/exit points. The vans which were observed around the

school gates at lunchtime were said to be very popular with pupils, and were all described as selling poor quality fare, such as burgers, pot noodles, sweets and fizzy drinks.

The schools all had local fast food outlets that catered for the school lunchtime market. Indeed, many of the schools had so many outlets in a variety of directions that the researcher was unable to observe all of the different pupil groups over the course of one lunchtime. The fast food outlets were advertising special lunchtime deals for pupils – most of these were more expensive than the actual school meal (ignoring the fact that some of these pupils were most likely entitled to free school meals). Many of these outlets were extremely popular with school pupils, and as a result long queues were reported. Also, pupils at times opted to eat at outlets at least 10-15 minutes from the school, with the result that the entire lunch break was taken up with the journey to and from the shop, eating and drinking the purchases on the way back to school.

The main differences noted by the researcher in relation to the lunches purchased outside school related to the quality of the food (relatively unhealthy food was almost always chosen by the pupils) and the size of the portions. These were said to be much larger than the portions provided in the school canteen. Pupils of all ages were said to be enjoying this fare, often leaving school in friendship groups (often single-sex) of c4-5 pupils. There was perhaps some evidence of a sex difference between lunchtime eating practices outside of school; in a few instances it was thought that more boys than girls were leaving the school, and the tiny minority of pupils gauged to be eating a relatively healthy lunch outside of school tended to be female. Places which had shopping centres which offered shelter were popular choices – it should be noted that on a majority of occasions the observer visited the schools it was raining outside.

Pupils' behaviour outside of school was described as being very good during nearly every period of observation. Due to the numbers leaving the school at one time the streets could be very busy, but this did not cause any problems on the observational days. There was the occasional case of littering, although most pupils seemed to take care to dispose of their litter properly. However, the consensus was that large numbers of pupils were behaving well and appropriately, and good humour tended to predominate even when pupils were queuing outside in the rain. It should be noted, though, that many pupils were reported as negotiating very busy dual carriageways and ignoring pelican crossings as they ran to their shop of choice. This might help explain the reluctance of senior school staff to maintain an exclusion zone for licensed vans in certain schools.

#### **4.4.2 Internal school environment**

The researcher based inside the school spent the majority of the lunch break (typically 40-45 minutes long in the school canteen, and c10 minutes observing any associated lunchtime activities). Due to the fact that the observational sessions did not take place until May in two schools, study leave was in operation and this had an impact on the number of pupils in the school during the observational period.

Many of the schools were quite modern, with bright canteens with flat screens showing menu choices. The most recently built tended to have the canteen as part of a general multi-purpose space. Also, it is evident that most canteens can only seat a proportion of pupils at one time, and in many cases would not be able to

accommodate the whole school roll in such a short lunch period. Most of the canteens were said to be welcoming, with catering staff and other school staff members helping to create a good atmosphere for the pupils. Vending machines and water coolers were present, and top-up facilities for swipe cards were either inside or just outside the canteens.

The Fuel Zone itself was split into a number of zones – the number and type varied slightly by school. For example, there were sub zones, burger bars, bake and take (baked potatoes), hot meals and grab and go facilities. Soup and fresh fruit were also available, with water and milk to drink. Some schools had queuing rotas in operation, with different years having priority depending on the day of the week. In one school S1s were allowed out of class first to ensure they were first in the queue. Most canteens were busy on the day of observation, but of course this may only have constituted a minority of the school roll.

Pupils of all ages appeared to be eating in the school canteen, but perhaps unsurprisingly given the Big Eat In (and indeed study leave in two schools) the younger age groups tended to be present in larger numbers. The most popular choices tended to be burgers, pizza and fish and chips, and there was evidence that girls were eating more healthily than boys. Girls seemed to be more likely to add salad to food (e.g. burgers), eat baked potatoes and vegetables. The behaviour and atmosphere was usually positive, if at times a bit frenetic due to the need to get relatively large numbers of pupils fed and out of the canteen to allow others to take their seats in a short period of time. Pupils tended to be quite good about clearing up after themselves, although occasionally staff supervising would have to ask them to do so or to tidy up items that had been left on the tables. In one school a fight broke out between two older boys during the observation session, but the staff members present said that this was very unusual.

Vending machines and water coolers were used infrequently, if at all, on the day the researcher was present.

The catering staff were described as being helpful and friendly, and knowledgeable of the pupils present (in many cases they knew the pupils' names). Schools also had senior and/or teaching staff supervising at lunchtime, and senior pupils also assisted in one school. Teachers who were not supervising did use the Fuel Zone, but the majority would then take the food away to consume elsewhere. Some of the staff supervising interacted with the pupils actively, others took a more passive role. As has been mentioned, though, the atmosphere was viewed as being positive in the main in all schools.

### **Activities**

Most of the schools had activities taking place at lunchtime on the observational research days, although in some cases these activities were not related to the Big Eat In and would have been in operation in any case. In other schools CSG Glasgow staff, community and voluntary sector workers, staff and senior pupils were observed helping to run activities. These ranged from art, drama and music activities, youth clubs, library and resource rooms, chill-out zones, basketball, football, etc. The attendance varied widely, and some of the non-Big Eat In related activities especially involved different school years, although it appeared as if other school years were also participating at times in the Big Eat In activities for S1 pupils. As was observed during the interview phase, the links with CSG Glasgow were not always viewed as having worked well, and this impacted on the activities laid on for pupils. However,

CSG had laid on playground equipment in other schools, which appeared to be working well. The activities observed briefly by the researcher involved pupil numbers from very few to over 30. All those taking part appeared to be enjoying themselves and appeared to want the session to go on when it was time to go back to class. Both boys and girls took part, although some of the activities were attended by one sex only (e.g. 16 boys taking basketball in School 8).

## 4.5 Future of the Big Eat In

### 4.5.1 Views of pupils and staff

Not surprisingly, suggested modifications to the Big Eat In were given if it were to be continued in the future or rolled out elsewhere.

The negative factors and barriers alluded to above, such as the perceived quality of the food and drink, the queuing systems within schools, the shortage of time, the fact that not every pupil had access to the activities they wanted to participate in, were all the focus of the suggested changes to the pilot.

Nevertheless, the general consensus of the pupils was that the Big Eat In had been successful and should continue in the future, but that the encouragement model rather than the active restriction policy should be followed. The majority view was that it should target S1 pupils only, as there was insufficient space within the school canteen to cater for other secondary years at the same time, and S2 pupils should be allowed to experience the perceived rite of passage of leaving the school at lunchtime. However, as the activities had been particularly well-received it was also argued that these should still be accessible for S2s and possibly other school pupils.

The Big Eat In was thought to confer benefits of safety, health and well-being as a result of allowing adult supervision, provision of healthy food and enjoyable and rewarding activities. According to the pupils, their parents and carers particularly welcomed the safety aspect of the pilot as they were thought to be concerned about the welfare of their children if large numbers of pupils went into the streets outside the school at the same time. The pupils from Schools 5 and 6 seemed to have the most negative views, and one group convened in each of these schools concluded that the Big Eat In should be stopped, although the lunchtime activities should continue. Otherwise the pupils called for the pilot to be extended across Glasgow at the very least. This was mostly due to the perceived benefits as outlined above, although it was also argued that pupils in other schools should share the experiences of those in the pilot schools.

*F: I'm no trying to be cheeky, but I think the school would be bang out o' order if they went and did that to us.*

*F: It's our choice.*

*F: It's no their choice. They don't know what... We might have different... We've got different taste buds fae them. The school teachers stay in, but maybe they're like that to... into their selves, this is pure stinkin'.*

*[S1 Group 6-2B]*

***I: What do the rest of you think, do you think it should be run in other secondary schools in Glasgow or Scotland?***

*ALL: Aye.*

*M: Cause if we have to go through it, they'll have to go through it, if*

*M: And it's for their safety and their health.*

*[S1 Group 7-2B]*

*F2: Because you get the kids into activities and if you do it one week then you get to go and do it the next week, and then the next week, so it's like you have got a wee plan of what you want to do and all that...*

*F4: Just so they can eat healthier food instead of always eating like chips, curries, and noodles and all that...*

*F3: If football is on more boys would be interested.*

*F2: Dancing, the girls are into dancing and they get to go.*

*[S1 Group 2-2B]*

The staff respondents were also mostly positive about the Big Eat In, and saw many benefits with such a model running in schools. There was a bit of conflict expressed between the approaches of active restriction and encouragement of pupils to stay in schools, but the consensus was that pupils could not be forced to stay in at lunchtime, and promotion of the Big Eat In was the way forward. The minority who favoured the restriction model were concerned that numbers would eventually dwindle in the school canteens and catering jobs could be put at risk. However, there was broad agreement that schools faced an uneven playing field in terms of competing with vans and fast-food shops which were able to target school pupils with unhealthy options, usually in very large helpings, and often in very close proximity to the school gates. There were suggestions made to ban the vans, or for legislation to be introduced which could address this in some way, but it was also acknowledged that the food consumed by pupils at home was in all likelihood much less healthy than the food and drink provided within school. As a result, a few respondents suggested that the current approach to meeting nutritional guidelines should be relaxed to some extent.

The school staff therefore argued that the involvement of parents was very important if initiatives like the Big Eat In were to succeed, although this was perceived as being a major challenge. For example, it was suggested that there should be more taster sessions, parent evenings or sessions, and information in the form of letters, leaflets, and newspapers, even if these attempts to engage with parents had been relatively unsuccessful previously. It was added that schools that operated "Grab 'n' Go" facilities or a pre-ordering system in the fuel zone should have promoted these to parents and pupils more actively, as the awareness of this service and the benefits of pre-ordering food would have resulted in greater uptake.

Other suggested changes included the introduction of staggered lunch breaks, in order that S1s would be able to eat their lunch and take part in an activity, as well as reducing the pressure of numbers in the canteen. A number of incentives for pupils staying in school and eating school lunches were also proposed. Continual review of the food on offer within school, and the opportunity for pupils to give their thoughts on changes that could be made, were said to be common practice within schools already but it was a process that was worth persevering with.

Lunchtime activities were said to be an integral part of the Big Eat In, but issues such as staffing, funding and sustainability had to be considered. Schools which reported a difficult relationship with CSG called for improved links to be made, and for more activities to be laid on for pupils. Activities would also arguably only become sustainable if the funding and staffing (including the use of volunteers) issues were

resolved, and importantly if pupils from other years could also take part in these activities in the future.

*I think as well what would help us is if the National Government passed legislation that said to parents that 'you're duty bound to ensure that your child remains inside the school grounds until the end o' 2nd year'. Now I know there's a very small number/small percentage of young people who will directly defy such an announcement from the Government, as they're doing just now with the nutritional value, but the vast majority of parents would actually conform... if there was some way of rewarding young people for doing the right thing, that would be helpful. I'm not saying that offering a reward is gonna get them all back in again, but it might get 10% or so back at the thought of a reward, and actually if we could get the numbers up to 10% I'm sure we'd be delighted. [Resp 5-2B]*

*I think it's all very well for our city to say "this is what we need, this is a great idea", but not (provide) any additional resources. So to run the Eat In with existing resources I think is a bit... not naughty, but it's a... it's a bit difficult for us then to say, Well, ... what activities do young people do? [Resp 6-1B]*

The majority of staff respondents perceived that the Big Eat In had been successful overall, the benefits outweighed the drawbacks, and there was merit in its continuation within the pilot schools and its extension to other secondary schools. As has been mentioned, active restriction of S1s leaving the school gates at lunchtime was deemed as being impractical and inadvisable by most respondents. There was some support for encouraging S2s to stay in school at lunchtime too, but the consensus was that space and time were too limited to target years other than S1. The provision of healthy lunches, the safety agenda and the perceived benefits of the activities were all thought to contribute to the qualified success of the pilot. Respondents from two schools were slightly more negative, and indeed one interviewee from School 6 said that the Big Eat In was unsuccessful, and should not be continued.

*Well I mean some kids it's the way (they are)brought up, they're not taught healthy eating, its just a case o whatever, I mean I know one wee boy myself... I don't think he's ever had meat, potatoes and veg, you know what I mean so I think that, if you get them young for their healthy eating I think aye they'll continue when they get older, I do think that [Resp 4-3B]*

*Frankly, I wouldn't do it again. I honestly wouldn't do it again because it's... it's a significant issue in terms of workload, you know?... because whilst we're fighting against the fast food vans and what Glasgow City need to do... So if Glasgow City are saying, we'll take all these street traders, and there'll be no street traders around Glasgow schools, that would be a better sort of foundation for doing that. Also, one of the things that we're doing with some parents...is showing them how to cook. Now perhaps that's the way to do it... We're trying to head the youngsters off at the pass... but until we can influence the adult group, who see them every day and who are giving them food that may nor may not be healthy, then that's the group we need to get to I believe. [Resp 6-1B]*

*(Big Eat In should continue) because I think if we don't do something, we're letting ourselves in for big, big, big problems later on ... when they get older. And the obesity rate in Scotland and... we're no very healthy as it is. [Resp 6-3B]*



#### **4.5.2 Views of parents, CSG staff and volunteers**

The consensus of the parents was that the Big Eat In should be rolled out to other schools. There was a strong belief that all schools in Scotland should be the same and follow similar policies; it could also make it easier for pupils to accept this new policy if they realised that pupils at other schools were treated in a similar way. On the whole, parents thought that the Big Eat In should only apply to S1s for a number of reasons: S1s are young and need to be protected and supported more to allow them to adapt to secondary school; there is not enough capacity in schools for all pupils to be kept in and parents argued that it was important for children to have responsibility and freedom, and this meant they should be allowed out at lunchtime at some stage in their school careers.

The CSG representatives and volunteers reported that the activities element of the Big Eat In should continue at lunchtime in the pilot schools, even if they were not always able to comment on the school lunch component of the pilot. Ideally, it was also stated that the activities should be offered to other secondary pupils within the same school, as well as to pupils in other secondary schools in Glasgow. However, it was acknowledged that there may not be the resources – both staff or volunteers and finances – to allow such an extension of the activities. The CSG representatives in particular were concerned that the model should be sustainable in the future, and it would send out the wrong message to the S1 pupils if they were no longer permitted to take activities they had enjoyed during the pilot in S2. On the other hand, if the Big Eat In were to be rolled out to other schools, they did not think it would be possible to run activities in S1 in the new schools whilst extending the programme in existing schools.

*I think there has probably been quite a lot of success in it; um...I think there is probably more to come because people now have a much better understanding. I would say there is a number of pupils out there that have engaged in activities that they wouldn't have engaged in or even the side of probably maybe never felt confident in going out of the school and that allowed them to build up their confidence for that first year and get used to the school without it being seen that you are the person that doesn't want to go out. So there is probably those kind of...soft um...indicators there that probably people wouldn't admit to but first year can be pretty frightening so...having things, activities taking place at lunchtime maybe gets your friends and things that you wouldn't maybe have been in a position to do in first year. So there are probably lots of spin-offs from that side for the pupils. [Resp 1]*

*I think you take the model of how we do it in (name of school) and copy it but I think you'd probably would need to have money to provide for the activities, I don't know if every area has like what X's got the voluntary sector that are providing the, the activities, I don't know if every one in Scotland would have that... [Resp 5]*

## 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The general consensus of the pupils, parents, school staff members, CSG representatives and volunteers who took part in the evaluation was that it had been successful, and there was merit in extending it to other schools. According to the respondents, pupil numbers taking school lunches had probably increased, the food and drink provided was healthy and mostly of good quality, S1s were able to adjust to the new school environment and were comparatively safe within the confines of the school and the lunchtime activities were enjoyed by those who participated in them.

The model which the majority of respondents proposed should be continued or extended elsewhere was one in which S1s were encouraged to stay within school, take a school lunch and participate in an activity. Although there were a number of supporters of more restrictive approaches, including a blanket ban on pupils leaving the school, the majority view was that this was inadvisable and impractical. Similarly, the inclusion of other secondary years in future incarnations of the Big Eat In, especially S2 pupils, was suggested by a minority of respondents. However, it was thought to be too difficult to implement this approach as a result of a lack of capacity in the canteen, as well as the additional staffing that would be required to supervise the larger pupil numbers and lead the activities.

There were differences noted between respondents from the eight schools that took part in the pilot. On the whole, the most positive views were elicited from pupils and staff associated with Schools 1 to 4. Interestingly, these schools tended to have slightly more restrictive models at the beginning of the pilot than the other schools, although most schools appeared to have become more relaxed towards S1s leaving the school as the pilot progressed. The most negative views were voiced by pupils and staff of Schools 5 and 6. The one staff respondent who stated that the Big Eat In had not been successful and should be stopped worked in School 6. Similarly, the pupils in one minigroup in each of Schools 5 and 6 argued strongly that the Big Eat In was unfair, it penalised S1s by restricting their personal freedom, and as school lunches were bland and unappealing there was no justification for rolling out such an initiative more widely.

The vans and takeaway outlets targeting the school lunchtime market were a source of great concern to many who took part in the evaluation. The observational research supported the view that there were large numbers of these outlets in close proximity to most of the schools, they were very popular with pupils, they tended to provide large helpings of food described as being of very poor quality and they also cost more than the school lunches provided within schools. However, it was also acknowledged that pupils who were used to consuming these kinds of food and drink in the external school environment would inevitably find the provision of food in schools, adhering to strict nutritional guidelines, to be bland and tasteless. There was widespread support for the vans which set up outside the school to be banned, as they were said to undermine the school's catering service and the exclusion zones around the schools for the vans had not worked. Pupil respondents also called for the banning of food bought outside the school being brought back in to the school canteen or playground, although this already seemed to be in place in a few of the pilot schools.

Research carried out by environmental health observers in London in 2010 demonstrated that the most popular lunch choices among school pupils were very

unhealthy<sup>xviii</sup>. For example, a doner kebab contained 48.7g of saturated fat, 7.4g of salt and almost 1500 calories. Interestingly, many of the unhealthiest items came from single operators; in comparison the food chains such as McDonalds and Subway tended to serve food that was relatively healthy. The views expressed in this project and the observational research would suggest that the same is likely to apply in Glasgow. As such, it is possible that education of those working in outlets in terms of the food and drink they are providing may be necessary in the future, although it may be difficult to achieve positive results in the short term.

The lunchtime activities established and laid on for S1s were undoubtedly one of the major successes of the pilot. At baseline there were numerous problems cited, as covered in the interim report, and these were often related to CSG not meeting the expectations of schools and as a consequence the amount of activities offered to pupils had to be reduced. As the pilot progressed these issues tended to resolve in most schools, links with CSG improved, although many schools had to rely on staff members, volunteers and senior pupils to enable these activities to run.

CSG representatives argued that they had become involved in the planning process of the pilot too late in the day, monies had already been allocated in many areas and they had concerns over the sustainability of a model which relied on CSG staff and other trainers (professional or volunteer) running short courses to S1 pupils only. It was acknowledged that the links between CSG and a minority of pilot schools were still not ideal, but the views of pupils, school staff, CSG staff and volunteers were that a whole range of activities were enjoyed by many S1s and the Big Eat In was greatly strengthened by this component. It should be noted that the pupils that said the Big Eat In should be scrapped both argued for the activities to continue. Of course, the success of this component does have implications for future provision, as if it is to be extended to other schools, or to other school years, there are concomitant staffing and resource issues that arise. The most popular model of overall future provision was to have the 'encouragement' model running in secondary schools, but for S1s only. If this were to be the case it may send out the wrong message in terms of sustainability if pupils are expected to withdraw from activities they enjoyed in S1 when they enter S2.

All informants reported that the school lunch time was short, and it was difficult to combine the consumption of a school lunch and participation in an activity for a large number of S1 pupils. Similarly, it was stated that the canteen area was not large enough to cope with a scenario in which the majority of secondary pupils took school lunches, in particular in new build schools. As a result, various ideas were proposed and indeed in some cases carried out during the pilot. These included S1s being allowed out of class early to have first access to the canteen, priority in the queue given to those who were due to attend an activity, queue rotas and the provision of pre-ordering systems and "grab and go" options. A staggered lunch break was also mooted, which would allow a smaller canteen to have the capacity to cater for larger pupil numbers. However, this idea also had its detractors as it was perceived to cause problems with staffing and timetables. It should be noted that the Big Eat In itself was viewed as increasing pupil punctuality and attendance of post-lunch classes in a few of the pilot schools.

The school lunches themselves provoked a mixed response, although there was evidence of pupils enjoying new dishes and also reporting that they would have in all likelihood left the school at lunchtime if it were not for the pilot and the fact that they were won over by the food and drink on offer. There was perhaps some evidence that more girls than boys were choosing healthy options. Although the majority of

pupils appeared to appreciate the quality of school lunches, they were also criticised strongly by a number of pupils. The vending machines were also said to supply only healthy options, and were reported as being quite unpopular amongst most of the pupils. As a result a minority of pupils and staff said that unhealthy options should be on the menu occasionally, as there was a concern that there was a loss of revenue and that job losses may result if pupil numbers leaving the school at lunchtime continued to increase. Examples were cited, such as 42 cases of juice being thrown out in one school as the pupils did not find it appealing.

The researchers found it difficult to recruit parents to take part in the research project. Indeed, in three schools no parental interviews or focus groups were conducted. Those parents that did take part in the research were quite positive about the Big Eat In and its impact, but it was also clear that they did not always have a great deal of knowledge as to how it was operating in the schools. These respondents gave a number of suggestions in relation to how best to inform parents, but many of these modes had already been attempted in the early stages of the pilot. This might suggest that the promotion of these activities needs to be rethought or at least revisited on more than one occasion. However, it is also possibly the case that as previous research conducted in Glasgow schools has shown parents think that there is a limit to the extent to which their own behaviour, dietary practices and food provision at home can be influenced by the healthy eating agenda promoted by Glasgow City Council via its schools<sup>xix</sup>. As such, perhaps it has to be acknowledged that proactive attempts to involve parents in the healthy eating agenda is likely to be only partially successful at best, and that unless there is a wider cultural shift in attitudes towards food, and issues related to its supply and provision, schools may have to target a minority of parents who are willing to engage with such initiatives in the first instance.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Big Eat In was reported as being a success by the majority of the pupils, school staff members, CSG representatives, parents and volunteers who took part in the evaluation. As a result the general consensus was that it deserved to be continued in the pilot schools, and extended to other secondary schools in Glasgow. It was thought that such an approach would confer health benefits, and would enable the safety of S1s to be monitored more closely. The uptake of school lunches among secondary pupils was seen to increase in the pilot schools.

The most popular model which was thought worthy of wider implementation was one in which S1s were encouraged to stay within school at lunchtime, consume a healthy school lunch and have the opportunity to take part in an activity. Although there were supporters of a model in which S2s were also encouraged to stay within school at lunchtime, the concerns (relating to a lack of space within the school, a lack of time and the difficulty of organising activities for larger numbers of pupils) were thought to outweigh any potential benefits.

School vans and shops in close proximity to the schools were perceived as undermining Hungry for Success as a whole. There were calls for an outright ban on vans targeting school pupils at different times of the day, not just at lunchtime. It is also possible that the outlets that were reported and observed selling huge portions of unhealthy food to pupils could become the focus of future health promotion and education campaigns. Evidence from recent research suggests that fast-food high street chains are now selling food that is much lower in saturated fat and salt than independent takeaway outlets. It may also be worthwhile for Glasgow City Council to analyse some of the most popular lunchtime choices of pupils outside of the school, as has been carried out elsewhere, to demonstrate the levels of fat, salt and calories being consumed in one sitting. Such an approach may be invaluable in winning over the hearts and minds of key stakeholders, including parents and carers.

The lunchtime activities were one of the major successes of the Big Eat In. Initial teething problems reported between schools and CSG had resolved in most cases as the pilot progressed. Even the minority of pupils who stated that the Big Eat In should be stopped wanted the activities to continue. If lunchtime activities are to be sustainable, (particularly if they are extended to cover other secondary years) links between schools and CSG, community groups and volunteers (and possibly senior pupils) should be strengthened in order that there are sufficient trainers able to lead activities.

Schools may have to adopt measures which were reported in the pilot to allow S1s to have sufficient time to eat their lunch and participate in an activity. Examples included queue rotas, priority for those pupils due to take an activity, and the provision of lunch pre-ordering systems. Due to a lack of capacity in school canteens the idea of staggered lunch breaks was proposed, but this idea had its detractors as it was said to be unworkable in practice.

In order for the Big Eat In to be successful, school staff members gave up some of their free time to supervise and monitor the canteen and the school gates, as well as taking and assisting with activities. If schools do implement such a programme it is

likely that this will be necessary, as in the current financial climate specific funding for the initiative will probably not be forthcoming.

In conclusion, the Big Eat In pilot was perceived as being successful, with the benefits conferred by the initiative outweighing any drawbacks. The Scottish Government's "Route Map Towards Healthy Weight" has called for policy responses that "go beyond individual initiatives requiring systemic and far-reaching change in infrastructure, environments, culture and social norms."<sup>xx</sup> Initiatives such as the Big Eat In offer a very promising way forward for policy makers and practitioners to develop further approaches to school-based promotion of healthy eating in partnership with children, young people and their parents/carers. Such initiatives might have an even greater chance of success if conducted in tandem with legislative changes, such as a ban on mobile vans trading outside the schools, and progressive urban planning that is able to promote and encourage the establishment of healthy rather than unhealthy food retail outlets.

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