# Are school lunchtime stay-on-site policies sustainable?
# A follow-up study

## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- School lunchtime stay-on-site policies offer multiple benefits for junior secondary pupils including increased safety, healthy eating, support with the transition from primary to secondary school, and the establishment of good relationships between school staff and pupils and between pupils themselves.

- School staff support the continuation and extension of lunchtime stay-on-site policies although pupil views are more mixed.

- More work needs to be done to manage junior secondary pupils' expectations regarding lunchtime practices in secondary school to help build more widespread acceptance of stay-on-site policies and generate culture change in relation to attitudes to healthy eating. School lunchtime policies in primary schools should complement rather than contradict secondary school policies.

- Encouragement rather than enforcement models of implementation appear to be most popular with school pupils.

- The provision of lunchtime activities for pupils is integral to the success of stay-on-site policies.  Support mechanisms and necessary resources (human and financial) should be considered if lunchtime activities in schools are to be meaningfully sustained.

- Staff and parents/carers in the original pilot study are very concerned about the presence of food outlets in the vicinity of schools which successfully utilisemarketing/promotional strategies to encourage pupils to buy unhealthy, convenience food and drinks. School canteens struggle to compete with these marketing strategies and prices.  Highlighting the poor nutritional quality of these meals may be an effective way of winning over the hearts and minds of key stakeholders, including parents, carers and possibly pupils themselves.

- Communication with parents/carers regarding the rationale for stay-on-site policies and greater parental involvement in school-based healthy eating initiatives and policies would increase the probability of successful, sustainable approaches.

- School lunchtime stay-on-site policies 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 pupils, parents/carers and staff.

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## INTRODUCTION

There is wide agreement that school food policy can play an important role in provision and promotion of a healthy diet among Scottish children and young people.[1,2]  During the 2009/2010 academic year, Glasgow City Council (GCC) Education Services, in collaboration with other stakeholders, implemented a pilot initiative (Glasgow's Big Eat In) in eight secondary schools in Glasgow. The aim of Glasgow's Big Eat In (BEI) was to encourage junior secondary (S1) pupils to stay within the school grounds at lunchtime to eat a healthy lunch and participate in a lunchtime activity.

An accompanying evaluation was conducted by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) and ScotCen Social Research (ScotCen) 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.  The evaluation concluded that the pilot had been successful in encouraging S1 pupils to stay within school at lunchtime and school meal uptake rates among S1 pupils remained higher than the previous year.  S1 pupils were positive about their experience as were the majority of other respondents (staff and parents/carers) and were in favour of continuation of lunchtime stay-on-site policies for S1 pupils.[3,4]

At the beginning of the 2010/2011 academic session, the eight pilot schools continued with S1 stay-on-site lunchtime policies and a number of other Glasgow secondary schools introduced their own stay-on-site policies.  Additional research was commissioned by GCPH and conducted by ScotCen Social Research (ScotCen) to explore factors involved in successful, sustainable lunchtime stay-on-site policies.

## RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the research was *to explore facilitators and barriers to successful, sustainable lunchtime stay-on-site policies for junior secondary school pupils.*

Objectives were:

1. To investigate the practical implementation of stay-on-site policies and programmes underway in Glasgow secondary schools.
2. To explore views of junior secondary pupils regarding existing and new stay-on-site policies and explore nutritional attitudes and behaviour.
3. To explore staff views regarding barriers and facilitators to stay-on-site policies.
4. To gauge staff and pupil views regarding the future of stay-on-site policies.

## APPROACH AND METHOD

Four schools were invited to participate in the research study: two schools who participated in the BEI and have subsequently maintained a lunchtime stay-on-site policy for S1 pupils; and two schools who introduced a new lunchtime stay-on-site policy in August 2010. Ten interviews were carried out with members of school staff (two to three interviewees per school). Interviewees included teaching staff who were members of the senior management team or year heads, catering staff, and individuals running lunchtime activities.

Nine focus groups were convened in total: six with S1 pupils, and three with S2 pupils.

## RESULTS

### 1. Practical implementation of stay-on-site policies and programmes

#### Staff views regarding rationale

Staff respondents from existing BEI schools noted that there had been some changes to the lunchtime policy since the operation of the original pilot. They felt that the activities programme had become more limited and the focus had also changed slightly with healthy eating being promoted more actively.

*… the first year we did it, there probably wasn't a huge emphasis on the healthy eating as there should have been, and we've made sure that this is the case this year, you know? … nobody's been able to walk about with fattening juice or foods of any sort, you know, so there's been a bigger emphasis on the healthy eating this year.*

Staff respondents from the two 'new' stay-on-site schools cited concerns over the type of food being consumed from external outlets, pupil safety and a reported decrease in pupil numbers attending the canteen.

*… we were … very quickly ending up with a fairly quiet canteen. We had a lot of pupils who were hanging about at the local [supermarket] and some other chip shops … and we also then had a van … which was selling … 'Koka Noodles'; … which we actually reckon was really, really poor quality. So we decided, after consulting the Parent Council and basically informing the parents, but looking to make sure that we had support, that our intention was to try to encourage the pupils to stay in school … partly for safety, partly because they'd be getting a better diet …*

#### Promotion of policies

Staff felt that it was important to manage the pupils' expectations and to make Primary 7 (P7) pupils aware of the stay-on-site policy in place in the school as some primary schools still allow pupils to leave the premises at lunchtime. P7 pupils visiting the school as part of the induction were informed about the stay-on-site policy at the school, and a 'buddy system' aimed to encourage the new S1s to eat in the school canteen.

*We've branched out a wee bit, in terms of the new primary sevens that are coming up they will be introduced to us all before they even come to the school, so they'll know what to expect.*

The stay-on-site policy was promoted to pupils and parents in various ways. For example, pupils were informed about the activities and food on offer in the schools at assemblies, through tannoy announcements and on plasma screens around the schools. Parents were informed through letters and leaflets and were asked to support the initiative by encouraging their child(ren) to eat in school and take part in activities.

*Now and then, we perhaps send out a letter to parents simply reminding them that we are operating this, and looking for their support in encouraging their sons or daughters to stay in.*

*We certainly push it quite heavy at the start … and sometimes we talk to parents about encouraging pupils to, but we can't force them to stay in school.*

The food and drinks on offer in school were similar to that of previous years. Catering staff were making an effort to develop meals that would appeal to young people (such as pot noodles and pasta) while conforming to the strict nutritional criteria in place.

*I've got posters up outside. 'Pick up a pasta'. We do that at lunchtime, but we've cut it down to just doing the six a day the now. It's quite quiet. We're trying to … do this instead of the pot noodles. So you can either use noodles or pasta. And we put Bolognese … pasta Bolognese in these tubs that they can take away into the social area if they if they want to go … We do Thai chicken, cheese sauce, or spicy tomato. So things like that, just … something different.*

In addition, new initiatives were evident such as vending machines, a mobile unit and a coffee shop. These initiatives aspired to provide an alternative, attractive in-school dining experience, offering different types of food/drinks such as raisins, milkshakes, hot chocolate and fizzy drinks (all adhering to nutritional guidelines). Catering staff argued that it was not just the food in schools that had to appeal to young people but also the atmosphere and the manner in which food was served. For example, the coffee shop was designed to look different from the rest of the canteen; it had bar stools and although it was sited in the school canteen, it had its own unique atmosphere and appearance. Staff were acutely aware that they were in 'competition' with food outlets on the outside, and that they needed to be innovative in what food they offered pupils in school as well as how it was presented.

*Kids want to get away at lunchtime. I mean you maybe do … the same yourself when you're at work. You want to get out and get a bit o' fresh air and just get away from the whole scene, so you understand that. So it's not just the food. We've got to look at everything.*

### Operation of policies

Each school took a slightly different approach to the operation of the stay-on-site lunchtime policy, which ranged from enforcement to encouragement. Existing BEI schools had already adopted an encouragement model, preferring to educate pupils about the benefits of staying on site (healthier food, safety etc) accompanied by the provision of activities. Whilst some pupils did stay in school and take advantage of lunchtime activities, it was felt that the message was not always getting across to pupils as respondents were aware of S1s 'voting with their feet'. Nevertheless, this encouragement approach was proposed as the best approach by these schools.

*… the whole ethos of the programme was about encouragement and education of the young people rather than enforcement, so that's been the case again this year.*

*And again, over there, there's been one  or two occasions when they've brought in the cans of Coke an' all that, and they've been spoken to about the reason behind the club, and the philosophy of the Big Eat In is pushed regularly at assemblies as well, and I encourage all the pupils – you know, even if they've never been in the past – to come along and try it out.*

At the other end of the spectrum, the two new stay-on-site schools had enforced the policy more strictly. This included measures such as staff patrolling the neighbourhood outside the schools during the lunch break, bringing back pupils who were found outside the school grounds. Some of these pupils were then punished with detention or tasks such as litter pick-up. Staff respondents stated that although punishments were not usually applied in the first instance, if there was evidence of repeat offences, pupils were punished as staff wanted to make it clear to them that they would not be allowed out in the longer term.

*It is enforced but quite gently in the beginning (but) ... miscreants that keep doing it get into trouble.*

As might be expected, pupils expressed a preference to be encouraged rather than coerced to stay in school, and this was almost certainly because it allowed them more latitude to leave the school grounds at lunchtime. Some pupils indicated that if the strict enforcement regime had not been in place they would have left school at lunchtime. However, some S2 pupils who had previously been 'forced' to stay in school in S1 suggested that such a draconian policy may be counterproductive and that a ban on going out made pupils more determined to leave the school grounds at lunchtime as soon as possible.

### Lunchtime activities

A diverse range of extra-curricular activities were being run by school staff, Glasgow Life colleagues, external professionals and older pupils. Many of these activities were reserved exclusively for S1s, but in some instances, older pupils were able to participate. In one school, there were no formally organised activities, although on occasion members of staff would organise football games for pupils of all years. Overall, there appeared to be fewer activities on offer for S1s than had been the case during the BEI. Changes to and reductions in staff numbers meant that some activities had ceased.  Existing staff (already under greater pressure due to increased workload) appeared to be less willing to become involved in extra-curricular activities during the school session.

*... our drop in the number of staff who are involved in lunchtime activities, and a wee bit more pressure that the rest o' them are under, so that unfortunately there is not the same willingness to get involved now for that reason. People are under a bit more pressure than they've been before.*

### Staff views regarding impacts of stay-on-site policies on school meal uptake

Many staff members felt that they did not really know what the overall impact of the stay-on-site policies on pupil numbers had been, although a few felt that more secondary pupils were staying inside school and also that packed lunches appeared to be more popular.  The school with the most restrictive policy seemed to have generated an increase in overall pupil numbers at lunchtime.

*It's had a massive uptake in terms of the ... number of pupils who take school meals. Certainly, two years ago, we were in the situation where certainly the staff in the canteen were worried that there would be a reduction in the number o' staff working in it, or a possibility that in actual fact the ... food that was dispensed from the ... our Fuel Zone would come from another Fuel Zone, but in actual fact that ... there's no fear of that now. I mean the canteen is ... the Fuel Zone is busy essentially all of lunchtime.  There's no doubt at all.  A lot of pupils purchase the meals in there.*

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## 2. Reactions of junior secondary pupils to existing and new stay-on-site policies

### Expectations and reactions

Some S1 pupils expressed disappointment that they were not allowed off-site during their first year, as they had expected that they would be able to leave the school grounds at lunchtime (this was especially the case in the school with the strictest ban on going outside at lunchtime).

*Yeah I was really looking forward to going out but then was really disappointed when I heard that we had to stay in. My school was right across from (X) and we never got to go out so I was looking forward to getting out at high school.*

A few pupils also stated that the lunchtime activities were boring, as there were not enough activities or events for pupils, or indeed time to participate in such activities. In addition, some pupils who stayed in school indicated that it was their choice to stay in and they did so regardless of any ban (if in place) or any activities being run, as they enjoyed sitting, chatting and relaxing with friends during the lunch break. Pupils taking a packed lunch often did so because they felt that there was little on offer in the canteen that they liked or that they had allergies to certain foods. A minority of pupil respondents also indicated that they like to vary their eating practice; on some days they liked to eat in the school canteen, whilst on other days they preferred to go outside school. What they did depended on how they felt, the availability of sufficient money or time, what the weather was like, the type of food on offer at school and if any activities were being run.

*I eat here, but sometimes I go out to the van if I can be bothered.*

*I get my lunch in here, and if I have money I go out to the van and go up to the game club up the stair.*

### Positive views

Pupils reported positive impacts of the stay-on-site policy. Some considered school food to be healthy; they felt it was more convenient to eat within the school canteen; and a few respondents commented that school lunches were inexpensive. A number of S1 respondents also raised safety as an issue, considering the school environment to be safer than the surrounding area. Pupils seemed to prefer the 'encouragement' model, and reported that it was good that they were given the choice as to whether to eat in school or not.

*The good points are you get ... you know you're gonna get a lunch, and you know it's gonna be cheap, and it's healthy as well ...Yeah. But it'd be better to just encourage it and not make you stay in, coz I think more people would o' stayed in that way.*

*It's convenient. You just go down the stairs and there's your lunch, so ... And now you don't have to queue up for ages to get in for lunch, coz o' the rotas.*

A few pupils liked the fact that their friends would all be in one place, in particular, when the schools had adopted a more restrictive approach. The stay-on-site policy was also appreciated when the weather was poor.

*It means that like some o' your pals ... Like if you were allowed oot, some o' your pals might go out and some o' them might stay in, and you don't know what to do, but if we're all like told to stay in, then we can all just like be in the one big group.*

### Negative views

As well as perceived positive impacts, pupils reported negative factors. They criticised the food available within the canteen at times for its poor quality, lack of variety and the fact that hot food was occasionally served cold.

*Aye. It's freezing. It's freezing, and they don't make enough chicken burgers ... It's disgusting, the chicken burgers ... They don't heat the stuff up properly ...*

*I think it should be proper meat and like proper stuff. No this frozen crap. Coz sometimes you find that there's quite ... It's frozen in the middle still ... and the fish doesn't even taste like anything. It's just like you're eating water or something.*

Pupils also wanted more variety in what was currently being offered although this seemed to mean allowing unhealthy options back on the menu.

*If they'd sell chocolate!*

The canteen environment was also regarded as crowded and unwelcoming at times, with a lack of seating and pupils complained that senior pupils and staff members skipped the queue.

*And it's very crowded in the school ... You get crushed ... by the fourth years an' that.*

One of the most frustrating elements of the Fuel Zone for pupils was long queues. Pupils would go outside for lunch, bring in packed lunches or forgo lunch altogether just to avoid the queues; this was a substantial barrier to the success of the stay-on-site policy. By the time pupils got to the front of the queue there often was not enough time to take part in an activity (in schools that still provided lunchtime activities) nor were any of their preferred menu choices available. S1s believed the only way to access preferred menu options was to leave their class early in order to be at the front of the queue. Of course, it must be acknowledged that schools did run rota systems too, or had introduced incentives which allowed those taking part in activities to go to the front of the queue.

*Probably coz it's very busy. I mean there's like six queues and there's like 500 people.*

*There's ... The only way you could get your lunch is wait ten minutes before the bell, if you're staying in ... And the only way you get it quick is if like you leave class early.*

### Influence of peers

Peer pressure was viewed variably. Some pupils claimed that they went out for lunch in order to avoid being teased for staying in school at lunchtime, although it was also acknowledged that pupils wanted to go outside because that was what their friends were doing.

*Because if your pals an' that go out for lunch, like obviously you're no being peer-pressured are you, but like if your pals are going out, obviously you'll go out with, you know ... Coz you don't want to be left in yourself.*

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The pupils who did leave the school at lunchtime were also considered to have made it more difficult for the stay-on-site policy to work. Even with primary and secondary school staff trying to discourage the idea, pupils saw going out at lunchtime in secondary school as a rite of passage and part of growing up. S2 pupils who had stayed in school during their first year, stated that it was now their turn to go outside for lunch.

*Cos when you go out, you can dae what you want. You've no got everyone … somebody watching you all the time …*

*… coz like last year you had to stay in, so like this year you just want to go oot.*

### Cost

Pupil respondents discussed various issues related to cost. One view was that the relatively low cost of food in the canteen encouraged pupils to eat their lunch there. It was also argued that the choice depended upon how much money a pupil had to spend on a particular day, and if this amount was low the pupil would either eat in the Fuel Zone or from a local shop that was offering a special deal.

*And you get more for your money here (the canteen) … If we're low on money then we'll go to Greggs and get something cheaper … or stay in … and if we've got more money we'll go to Subway. Yeah. Or we won't go out.*

*The good points are that the Fuel Zone is healthier, it's quite cheap to go buy lunch from there.*

However, in schools with the Q-card system pupils were unhappy with the way it operated, for example, the machines did not take bank notes or give change. Also, pupils who forgot their Q-cards usually had to go to the back of the queue, with the result that some ended up going outside for lunch. There were calls for a till in the canteen which accepted cash.

### 3. Staff views regarding barriers and facilitators to stay-on-site policies

### Barriers

Staff respondents presented a number of barriers to the operation of stay-on-site policies. These included: the quality of food available in school canteens and their environment; the cost of food and drinks; the presence of food outlets near schools; the influence of others, and the attitudes and behaviours of pupils themselves.

Staff believed that pupils' reluctance to try school meals centred on a misconception about the food – that it would be tasteless – and that it was not what they were used to eating at home. Another staff view was that the schools had got it wrong, by trying to sell 'unconvincing copies' of food available outside the school from popular outlets and thus were actually hindering the stay-on-site policy.

*But the truth o' the matter is the food is not really very good, and if you were … if you were asking staff or pupils to remain on site based on the food in the canteen … it would be very few, very few.*

It was argued by a few staff members and pupils that at £1.15, the cost of school meals was perceived to be too expensive and could not compete commercially with some of the lunchtime deals local outlets offered.

*I think they compare quite favourably I'm afraid, you know, because they get meal deals and things ... that are fairly economical, and I don't know that the diner here would be able to match them.*

The close proximity of food outlets to schools was a big concern to staff. These were seen as providing a wealth of alternative places for pupils to eat instead of in the school canteen, all competing with each other by putting on special deals for school pupils, while new shops provided novelty. However, one of the schools did not have any outlets within five to ten minutes walk from the school which staff felt facilitated the stay-on-site policy as pupils were less willing to go further afield to buy lunch. Staff called for more regulation of the establishment of food outlets near schools.

*And there's eight, nine, shops all within half a mile chasing after the sales of the kids.*

In the schools with an encouragement rather than enforcement policy, individual pupils could decide what to do at lunchtime. Therefore, the influence of others could be very important. However, the influence, or lack of influence from others (e.g. staff, other pupils and parents) was considered a barrier to the stay-on-site policies in a number of ways. Partly due to increased workloads, staff were less involved with the policy this year and as a result, fewer lunchtime activities were being offered, contrary to the previous school year where activities had been seen as key to the success of the BEI. Senior staff admitted that there had not been the same level of 'buy-in' to the stay-on-site policy from staff as there had been previously and felt that the momentum from the BEI had been diminished to an extent.

*... Some things have made it more difficult this year, and I would say, if anything, slightly less successful than it was last year, but I don't see that as a long term trend, and I don't see it that we would then turn round and say, "Well, let's not do it next year.*

Staff felt that parents needed to take on more responsibility to encourage their child(ren) to have school meals.

This was particularly the case in relation to the amount of money parents gave their child(ren) for lunch – staff felt that this was counterproductive to the school's stay-on-site policy. When discussing pupils who were entitled to a free school meal, one opinion was that if parents did not give their children money every week to spend, the pupils would be quite happy to use their free school meal entitlement.

*I mean the amount o'kids that maybe get a free meal, and they're not using it ... I think the parents have to take on a wee bit more responsibility.*

*Facilitators*

Two main types of facilitators were identified: existing factors already operating within schools; and those which were proposed as having the potential to assist the stay-on-site policies. As might be expected, there was overlap between perceived barriers and facilitators, with respondents often expressing diametrically opposed views, for example, in relation to the quality of school food. The main facilitators cited by staff were the variety and attractiveness of the food available within school, its cost, incentives and lunchtime activities, the influence of others, the canteen environment, the promotion of the policy and the policy itself.

In contrast to some pupil respondents, staff complimented the wide variety of meals available and catering staff considered the food to be good quality.

*Obviously the variety of meals that's on offer, and things that pupils want to eat at lunchtime. I mean we do do burgers downstairs and, so rather than go to all the local shops that are within five minutes walk of here, it's … we need to give them stuff that they would go out and buy, and make it as good as they would buy outside.*

Rewards and incentives were given to pupils who stayed on site. Rewards included prizes or trips (e.g. to Glasgow Science Centre, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and the City Chambers) for those who had school meals regularly. Incentives included lunchtime activities (e.g. music and movie-making clubs) sometimes accompanied by assistance to avoid queues. Staff spoke of factors that had enhanced lunchtime activities. These included funding received from Glasgow Life which had allowed schools to buy equipment that was still in use, and the positive relationship between school staff and those running activities (from Glasgow Life or from the local community).

The influence of others, either externally (parents) or internally (peers, senior pupils, staff), was considered by staff respondents to assist the stay-on-site policy (although interestingly, pupils tended to talk about the influence of others as being a barrier to staying in school at lunchtime). Staff felt it was important to communicate with parents about what the schools were trying to do, and to increase parents' knowledge about the food sold in school.

*It's a good thing to get parents on site from the start; let them know what's happening, what you're trying to do, why you're trying to do it, and ask for their support.*

*… it's trying to get over these preconceived ideas about school lunch is no very good.*

Staff thought that an emphasis on the safety benefits of staying in school at lunchtime was also a good way to garner parental support. Hosting taster sessions for parents was suggested as a way in which parents could sample the food on offer in school – an initiative that had been tried successfully in other schools previously.

Staff in one school advocated involving pupils more by actively taking on board pupils' ideas and opinions about what food should be served in the canteen and by involving them in producing healthy menus. In fact, although not part of the stay-on-site initiative, home economics staff in one school, as part of a hospitality project, had asked a number of pupils to devise their own menu from scratch. They then had to make the food, advertise it and serve it to the rest of the school.

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*I don't know that it's specifically to do wi' the Big Eat In, but it's involving the children, and they're getting them into the kitchen, and it does create interest.*

As has already been discussed, the influence of peers was highlighted as important and staff suggested that this could be channelled positively. If pupils encouraged their friends to stay in school with them at lunchtime, the number of pupils in school at lunchtime would increase.

*If some are doing it, more will be doing it ... A groundswell of pupils being involved will definitely impinge on others because of peer pressure.*

Another way in which pupils were encouraged to stay in school was through senior pupils acting as positive role models. For example, one school operated a buddy system which involved senior pupils encouraging S1s to have school meals and involving them in activities. Despite fewer staff members apparently able or willing to be involved in stay-on-site policies, there were still ways in which staff supported the initiative – by being accessible, communicating with the pupils and on occasion getting involved in activities. Staff also appeared to be continuing to encourage pupils to stay in at lunchtime, bringing pupils who should not be out at lunchtime back to school, and giving up some of their time to run lunchtime activities.

*I think the school's got a relatively good atmosphere, and there's ... there's quite a good rapport, for the most part, between most o' the teachers, most o' the kids, most o' the time.*

Catering staff praised improvements that had been made to the canteen environment. As has already been mentioned, a coffee shop with a distinctive look had been established in one school which sold coffee, hot chocolate and other hot drinks. This initiative seemed to be popular among the pupils. Another initiative was a 'mobile unit' which served alternatives to those on offer in the main canteen. It was hoped that these new developments would change pupils' perceptions regarding eating within school as they had been well received.

*It's out of the diner. So it's in the social area, and it's so the children'll maybe see this as they're heading towards the door, and maybe think twice. And it looks trendy, and it's different food to what they would get in the diner.*

Various methods were utilised in order to promote the stay-on-site policy to pupils and parents, such as parent newsletters, assemblies as well as encouragement by staff.

*... and we do encourage them: 'Remember the Big Eat In'? You can come here, and we tell them there's classes on, you know? Go and see what activities are on today.*

### 4. Staff and pupil views regarding the future of stay-on-site policies

*Staff views*

Staff respondents were mostly very supportive of the continuation of a stay-on-site policy and felt there had been a number of positive impacts. The healthy eating agenda, the increased safety of S1 pupils at a time of transition and the development of better relationships between S1s as well as between S1s and staff members were all cited as reasons why the policy was working and should continue.

*Because I think it's been a great success, I think it has improved the lifestyle of our young people and certainly delayed that rush into chips and pizza for a year, ... I think it's improved the way the school presents itself to the community, ... and I think it's what parents want. Out of that our (S1) numbers have gone up by ten per cent ...*

There was broad support for the extension of stay-on-site policies to other secondary schools in Glasgow, and beyond. Staff members of all types, representing senior staff, catering staff and those involved in running activities stated that the benefits (previously discussed) outweighed the drawbacks and difficulties.

*Yes. I think it's worthwhile having it. It does help their diet. I've complained a lot about the food, but I think it does help their diet. It encourages some pupils to bring packed lunches which I think is no bad thing, and, as I say, in terms of behaviour ... We've got limited evidence about overall behaviour. The contribution of pupils being in and ready to start at the very end of lunchtime together, it's a definite positive.*

There was no consensus amongst staff as to whether an encouragement model or enforcement model should be adopted in schools. There was some evidence to suggest that staff in the schools with the new policy, and School B in particular, not only promoted a more restrictive approach, but also favoured the enforcement model.

*Encouragement ... it didn't seem to work ... I think we all tried to encourage them, and we even tried encouraging them to come in, "Come on. Come in. Use up your lunch money", ... and trying my best to get them to come in, but – no. Just not working. I think definitely the enforcement was better.*

However, the encouragement model was still favoured by respondents from the existing BEI schools, as was the case in the evaluation of the pilot project.

Neither was there consensus amongst staff respondents as to which school years the lunchtime restriction should cover. There was some support within schools to extend the policy to cover S2 pupils as well as S1s, and a few respondents argued that the ideal would be for S1 to S4 pupils to stay within school, and then when pupils were aged 16 years or over they should be allowed to make their own choices.

*I would like to see it move into second year, I think its been really good, ... the less our students are seen on the street and sometimes the local community that's what they see, they see ... it still can be 700 kids pouring out of the door and pouring into these shops and then pouring back. And I think if we could extend it, it would be good for the students and it would be very good for the school ... I think we'd have to rethink the dining room.*

*I think the whole school should be kept in, but never mind. I don't see that happening, but the first and second years definitely. I think for their own safety. Being a mother myself, I appreciate that. I think they're safer.*

It was acknowledged that the canteen might struggle with an increase of pupil numbers if the stay-on-site policy was extended and that, for example, staggered lunchtimes would be necessary. Also, S5 and S6 pupils were thought to be regular attendees in the Fuel Zone, which would add to the general pressure of numbers. However, other staff respondents argued that the S1 year group was the ideal age to target, that a stay-on-site policy had many benefits including safety and helping with primary/secondary transition, and that there would be little benefit in extending the policy to other year groups.

### Pupils' views

Pupils' views were more varied. Many group participants from Schools A, C and D supported the continuation of stay-on-site policies in contrast to S1 pupils in School B and S2 pupils in School C who were the most negative. These respondents argued that the policy was unfair, it impinged on their personal freedom and S1 pupil respondents, in particular, said that being allowed out of the school at lunchtime would be more enjoyable. S1 pupils in the schools with the 'new' stay-on-site lunchtime policy were especially liable to argue that they should be allowed to leave the school, and that the policy was unfair. They also suggested that if they were to be restricted at lunchtime they should be allowed out on a partial basis, either on a few days per week or after the first term.

*Aye. To let you oot ... Yeah. That's what I would change ... Like maybe they should let you have your lunch like somewhere else, where we want to eat it, without giving you a hard time or that ... See even if we werenae allowed oot like the full week, I think they should maybe let us oot two days a week or something.*

Pupils were generally unsupportive of extending the policy to cover years other than S1. Those that did propose this tended to be S1 pupils who perceived that the initiative was grossly unfair and wanted older pupils to experience this unfairness too.

*They should stop every single other year group ...*

*Aha. If they're stopping us, stop them.*

### Suggestions for the future

There were a number of suggestions regarding the future of stay-on-site policies such as increased funding, both to cover school lunches and to facilitate more activities. Pupils also asked for access to other areas of the school at lunchtime, including computer rooms and libraries. As has been discussed, lunchtime activities appeared to have decreased since the pilot evaluation.

More support and involvement from parents was felt to be important. Respondents acknowledged that many parents were already supportive of the initiative, but this was clearly not consistent and there were a number of suggestions regarding how to promote the initiative more widely, and increase parental involvement. For example, it was suggested that parents could be employed as volunteers to assist with the delivery of aspects of the lunchtime policy.

*I think parental support always makes anything more likely, you know?  It's not always easy to get that support, and some parents are not maybe that willing to get involved, or maybe not that able to get involved ... so it's a difficult thing to secure ... Part of it was that we did letter parents to highlight lunchtime activities, and to highlight the lunchtime initiative, so we do consult and involve parents as much as possible in any positive development because that kind of support is absolutely vital to try and drive anything forward.*

The extension of a community litter pick-up scheme was proposed as a future initiative as this was viewed as having been very successful, facilitating positive links between the school and the local community.  One respondent suggested the canteen might provide similar (but more nutritious) foods popular with pupils from outlets outside school, in order that the canteen could then provide similar items in a more nutritious way.

*Funding, and ... find out what they are going over to X and what they are buying, and if they are buying ... snackpots and these kind of things, then I think maybe what we should do is go down the road of trying to introduce these into the salad bar, where ... if they want to have cold pasta salad, then that's absolutely fine, as long as we make sure it's reduced fat in every way.*

However, a counter-argument was that pupils would not like 'cheap copies' of food available from fast food outlets.

*Let's say for example the Subway sandwich becomes the latest fashion.  The Fuel Zone concept tries to copy it.  It's a cheap copy.  Noodles become the in thing – Fuel Zone try to copy it.  It's a cheap ... it's not a decent copy.  The kids aren't convinced by it, so ... They have to accept that they can't do that sort o' thing, and they'd maybe be better trying to do basics better.*

Other suggestions included reduction of prices of drinks items in vending machines and changes to the canteen environment, such as the screening of programmes and films on available plasma TV screens.

## CONCLUSION

Stay-on-site lunchtime policies were reported to be a success by school staff and were seen to offer multiple benefits for pupils including increased safety, healthy eating, support with the transition from primary to secondary school, and better relations between staff and pupils.  Staff were very supportive of a continuation of the stay-on-site policy in their school, and for extension of the scheme to other secondary schools in Glasgow. Pupil views were more mixed – some pupils supported the continuation of the stay-on-site policy and others objected to what was perceived to be an infringement of their rights.

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusion as to the most successful stay-on-site model. If it is to be measured solely in terms of the numbers of S1 pupils staying in, then the enforcement model (with consequences for leaving the school at lunchtime) appeared to be the most successful. However, if success is also measured in terms of instilling a greater awareness and willingness to adopt a healthy diet and lifestyle amongst pupils, it may not be the most successful model to adopt. It appears that those pupils who felt 'forced' to stay in school at lunchtime, were more dissatisfied and arguably more inclined to go outside at lunchtime in future years.

The encouragement model, in tandem with the provision of activities, was very popular. Nonetheless, although this model was successful in encouraging some pupils to stay-on-site, others still left school at lunchtime. More work could be done to manage junior secondary pupils' expectations of what is expected and/or allowed at secondary school to stimulate culture change.  It could be argued that if stay-on-site policies were to become the norm across a greater number of schools, younger secondary school pupils would be more likely to accept the policy. Monitoring school meal uptake within and across year groups in secondary schools using contrasting approaches may well answer which model is the most successful in the longer term.

Although there was less concern expressed amongst staff about vans near the schools in this research study than there had been previously, staff respondents expressed concerns about the numerous food outlets in the vicinity of their schools. It was thought that pupils were generally buying unhealthy, convenience food and that many of these outlets were offering special meal deals to pupils with which the school canteen struggled to compete. Research is underway to investigate in more detail the type of food and drinks pupils are buying at lunchtime from external outlets and, in particular, to conduct a nutritional analysis of these foods. This research will provide more concrete evidence in relation to the nutritional quality and calorie content of lunchtime options available from these outlets. Highlighting the nutritional content of these meals may be an effective way of winning over the hearts and minds of key stakeholders, including parents and carers and possibly even some of the pupils themselves.

Staff respondents felt that more consistent support and involvement from parents was important. It was recognised that better communication with parents/carers regarding the rationale for stay-on-site policies and greater parental involvement in school-based healthy eating initiatives and lunchtime activities would increase chances of success.

Lunchtime activities were one of the major successes of the BEI during the 2009/2010 academic session. However, at the time, concerns were expressed over the sustainability of these activities as they were mostly run by staff and other colleagues, often on a voluntary basis. Indeed, in 2010/2011 there appeared to be fewer activities on offer due to decreased staff members and greater pressure on existing staff who, in turn, were less willing (and indeed less able) to run activities. Due to perceived lack of funding, some staff felt that they were limited in the number and type of activities they could offer. Support and funding seem, therefore, to be key to the sustainability of lunchtime activities. Also, stay-on-site policies could be seriously undermined if lunchtime activities are not an integral part of the programme.

It should also be recognised that schools have made considerable efforts to cater for pupils' tastes both in terms of the food on offer, the dining environment and the activities in place. New mobile units and a coffee-style bar in one school were very well-received, and would seem worth promoting in other schools, if funding permits.

In conclusion, the stay-on-site policies evaluated in this study were perceived as successful, with the benefits conferred by the initiatives outweighing any drawbacks. The Scottish Government's 'Route Map Towards Healthy Weight' has called for policy responses that go beyond individual initiatives, to those that require systemic and far-reaching change in infrastructure, environments, culture and social norms.[5]  These initiatives 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 pupils, parents/carers and staff. However, if these initiatives are to continue, care must be taken so that important elements, such as lunchtime activities, continue to be supported. If these initiatives were to operate in tandem with progressive urban planning policy that is able to encourage the establishment of healthy rather than unhealthy food retail outlets, as well as educate the suppliers and traders of food, the chances of success would be all the greater.

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