









How Healthy is 'Out of School' Lunchtime Food?

Wednesday 13th June 2012, St. Andrew's in the Square, Glasgow



Seminar Report

Introduction

Poor nutrition and increasing prevalence of obesity are major public health challenges in Scotland today and there have been repeated calls for action at a number of levels to improve healthy eating and reduce obesity among Scottish children and young people. Healthy school food policy can play an important role in provision and promotion of a healthy diet among children and young people. The Scottish Government's Route Map Towards Healthy Weight recommends specific measures in the school setting including: "supporting schools to make remaining in school for lunch more attractive to secondary school pupils through a range of innovative measures"; and "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 school."

Over the last decade, the school lunchtime environment and school meal standards have steadily improved through policy, legislation, and school-based healthy eating programmes and initiatives. ^{4,5,6} However, despite these efforts, it is clear that challenges remain in successfully promoting healthy eating among Scottish children and young people both within school and beyond the school gate. ⁷

Since its inception, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH), in collaboration with Glasgow City Council (GCC) and other partners, has facilitated a programme of research and evaluation one the impact of healthy school food policy on pupils' health and wellbeing in order to inform ongoing policy and practice. Key findings from this portfolio of research have highlighted the importance of the physical/social environment within school in promoting healthy eating behaviour among primary pupils. This research has also highlighted the multiple benefits of initiatives such as lunchtime stay-on-site policies for junior secondary school pupils.

On a less positive note and in line with other data, our research has found that food and drinks brought into school from home are often unhealthy – the majority of primary school pupils bring crisps, sweets or chocolate into school to eat during morning and lunchtime breaks.⁶ At secondary school level, despite the provision of healthy school lunches in refurbished school canteens, many secondary pupils leave

school at lunchtime and purchase food and drinks of poor nutritional quality from nearby commercial outlets. ¹⁰ We know that secondary pupils leave school during lunchtime for a number of reasons including getting out of the school environment, fresh air, being with their friends etc. ¹¹ In relation to food choices on the high street, we also know that children and young people are susceptible to marketing strategies and promotions that encourage them to buy foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt. ¹² In addition, parenting practices in the home environment exert an important influence on family eating behaviour and attitudes towards healthy eating. ¹³ So, why, how and where our children and young people eat and drink during the school day and at home is a complex issue dictated by multiple influences which need to be further explored and understood if healthy eating is to become commonplace throughout childhood and adolescence.

Research seminar format

During 2011, GCPH facilitated two research studies: firstly, to explore ingredients for success in sustaining school lunchtime stay-on-site policies for junior secondary pupils; and secondly, to assess the external commercial environment and the quality of popular 'off-site' food consumed by pupils from food outlets in the vicinity of schools. A research seminar was held on the morning of Wednesday 13th June 2012 to present and discuss findings from these two research studies and to debate and agree priorities for future action. The format of the morning consisted of presentations, followed by a 'question-time' discussion session with a panel of experts/decision-makers (see Appendix 1 for programme). Carol Tannahill, Director of GCPH, chaired the morning's proceedings, facilitating questions, discussion and debate.

The seminar attracted almost 100 delegates from diverse backgrounds including pupils, teachers, parents/carers, catering staff, academics, local politicians and public health professionals (see Appendix 2 for delegate list).

Presentations

The event commenced with a keynote presentation from Councillor Stephen Curran, GCC's Executive Member for Education and Young People. During his presentation Councillor Curran reaffirmed the council's commitment to making Glasgow a 'child-

friendly' city and his support for greater use of licensing powers to tackle over provision of fast food outlets in communities. He concluded by applauding the success of initiatives such as school stay-on-site policies for junior secondary pupils but agreed that more needed to be done to encourage healthy eating among all young people.

Councillor Curran's input was followed by a presentation from Linda de Caestecker (Joint Director of Public Health for NHSGGC and GCC) who painted a compelling picture of the health implications of poor nutrition and growing levels of obesity among Scottish children and young people. She also emphasised the need for more effective action to encourage healthier eating among this population group. A copy of Linda's presentation is available on the GCPH website at http://www.gcph.co.uk/healthyschoolfoodpolicy.

Key points from Linda's presentation are:

- Poor nutrition is a continuing public health challenge in the Scottish population and is known to contribute to increased risk of overweight and obesity.
- Scotland has one of the highest rates of child obesity and overweight in the world and levels are rising. Increased consumption of energy dense food outside the home is a recognised driver of the obesity epidemic.
- Obesity is a major risk factor for high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, diabetes and other diseases. It also has significant adverse effects on mental health and wellbeing.
- Robust school-based policies and legislation have placed health promotion and healthy eating at the heart of school activities. Although school meal standards have improved, uptake is declining in secondary schools.
- We need a much stronger approach making better use of regulation and legislation to encourage the uptake of healthier food outside school. There are examples of successful action by local authorities elsewhere in the UK.
- Our priority should be to have more comprehensive planning and policy initiatives
 if we are to be successful in encouraging our children and young people to eat
 more healthily beyond the school gate.

Following Linda's overview, Fiona Crawford, Programme Manager at the GCPH and Dionne Mackison, Public Health Nutritionist at the University of Stirling, presented the research findings from the two related studies. The first study involved qualitative research conducted by ScotCen Social Research on behalf of GCPH to explore factors involved in successful, sustainable lunchtime stay-on-site policies.

Conclusions from this study were that secondary school stay-on-site policies for S1 pupils have positive impacts on pupils' health and well-being that extend beyond healthy eating including social benefits, less exposure to road traffic, reduced risk of bullying and better pupil/teacher relations. Approaches that use encouragement to stay-on-site during school lunchtime are much more popular with pupils than enforcement. Lunchtime activities are very popular and can contribute to the sustainability of stay-on-site policies.

The second collaborative study* compared the quality of popular foods purchased by secondary pupils from outlets near five Glasgow secondary schools with Scottish nutrient standards for school lunches. Conclusions were that eating out at lunchtime is very popular among secondary pupils. Many commercial outlets use targeted marketing strategies to encourage pupils to buy food and drinks including lunchtime offers, meal deals and price promotions. 'Out of school' savoury foods, popular with secondary pupils are high in energy, fat and salt and are of very poor nutritional quality.

Recommended school-based measures to promote healthy eating among secondary school pupils include:

- Continuation of lunchtime stay-on-site policies for junior secondary pupils.
- Education and awareness raising through the school curriculum.

Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, and the University of Stirling.

- Further development of innovative approaches such as the introduction of food kiosks in school grounds.
- Greater parental/carer involvement in school-based healthy eating initiatives.

* The research was funded by GCPH and the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP) and undertaken as a collaboration between GCPH, SCPHRP, Glasgow City Council, the MRC/CSO

5

Regulatory measures that could be applied by local authorities in neighbourhoods near schools include:

- Utilisation of licensing and planning powers to control number and concentrations of commercial outlets selling take-away food in neighbourhoods near schools.
- Extension of the role of environmental health departments in licensing, food safety/hygiene and nutritional regulations to improve the nutritional quality of commonly available take-away foods.

A copy of Fiona and Dionne's presentation is available on the GCPH website at http://www.gcph.co.uk/healthyschoolfoodpolicy.

Panel session

The panel comprised the following individuals:

- Alastair Brown (Head of Environmental Health, Glasgow City Council)
- Fiona Crawford (Public Health Programme Manager, GCPH)
- John Frank (Director, MRC Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy)
- Ross Kerr (Director, Healthy Living Programme, Scottish Grocers' Federation)
- Maureen McKenna (Director of Education Services, Glasgow City Council)
- David Melvin (Managing Director, Cordia (Services) LLP)

At the beginning of the panel session, members of the panel (who had not already presented) were invited to provide brief individual responses to the presentations. The following is a synopsis of panel members' main points:

David Melvin

David commented that secondary school meal uptake rates in Glasgow had now risen to 47%, from a low of 40% in 2009, when the Nutrition Act was implemented. He reminded the audience that Glasgow school meal prices were the lowest in Scotland, but that pupils' choices around what they eat are influenced by many other factors such as advertising/branding, peer pressure, and habits. He pointed out that the unhealthy 'out of school' foods on sale were not subject to the same level of legislation as school meals. He emphasised that Cordia does its best, within the

legislation, to make sure the food supplied on school premises is attractive and well presented, and that the amount of time pupils spend queuing is minimised. However, as long as the pupils can purchase what they want off-site, he proposed that decisions around lunchtime food will come down to individual choice. He added that the Scottish Government has quite rightly limited unhealthy choices within schools through legislation but that we must make sure that this continues beyond the school gate.

John Frank

John was very struck by the nutritional quality of the foods analysed. He described them as 'borderline toxic', likening the potential effects of prolonged intake of these foods to progressive arsenic poisoning. He also reminded the audience of the stress placed on the gastro-intestinal tract following ingestion of levels of fat present in some of the savoury food items analysed. He argued that on child protection grounds, something must be done. He was also interested to see if the audience felt that a good option would be to regulate the zones around the schools and extend environmental health powers to help tackle this issue. He stated that he thought it was important to target unhealthy foods, rather than businesses.

Ross Kerr

Ross outlined his work in helping convenience stores to promote the sale of healthier products. Retailers, when supported, are often keen to be involved in offering healthier produce to customers including school pupils, although this can be difficult if there are fast food outlets nearby. He noted that the Scottish Grocers' Federation are planning to produce a 'gold standard' for convenience retailers to help them to provide a healthier option for pupils who purchase food during school lunchtime. Ross also mentioned the Healthy Living Award which promoted healthy food provision by caterers and fast food outlets and he encouraged more collaboration between everyone involved in food related projects and initiatives.

Alastair Brown

Alastair explained that GCC's environmental health department has a statutory duty to monitor premises that sell hot food and apply appropriate legislation as necessary. This scrutiny could relate to food safety and hygiene or be due to other reasons such

as condition of commercial premises. He emphasised that the environmental health department in Glasgow already applies current legislation through Scottish Parliament statute or through the licensing regime using an open and consistent approach. He proposed that if new legislation is to be successfully introduced, it needs political support, it should be consistently applied, it must be reasonable and it should achieve its aim. Alastair's feeling as a regulator was that regulation of business premises should be the end point when all other options have been exhausted.

Maureen McKenna

Maureen reminded the audience that the original pilot lunchtime stay-on-site policies focused on encouraging S1 pupils to stay in school through the provision of a range of lunchtime activities. However, sustainability is an issue as the provision of lunchtime activities depends on what can be organised by individual schools within their own resources. Maureen commented that she favoured a 'menu' of options for young people to encourage them to stay in school with the provision of activities where possible, but that 'off site' outlets could be established and promoted that sold healthy food so that young people could leave the school premises at lunchtime and still have access to a healthy lunch. She also commented that she felt there was more to do in relation to more comprehensive stay-on-site policies in primary schools as P7 pupils in a number of primary schools leave school at lunchtime in anticipation of the opportunity to do so in secondary school. Parents can be an important influence if they insist that their children should have the choice of leaving school at lunchtime. It is important to remember that there are a range of factors and pressures that schools have to deal with.

A 'question-time' plenary session followed panel members' inputs. A range of questions and comments were aired relating to influences on healthy eating both within school and beyond the school gate. Regulatory issues, cost, taste and the school meal environment featured as popular themes for discussion.

Licensing and regulation

Clarity was sought from the floor regarding whether the external food outlets studied in neighbourhoods around schools were required to obtain a food license and what

potential existed for better policing/control of foods and drinks on sale through the use of licensing. One delegate proposed that outlets around schools should not be allowed to operate until after 4pm to restrict access to them by school pupils during the school day. Alastair Brown responded to these questions and comments from an environmental health perspective explaining that some fixed premises such as shops, retails units etc. are covered by the Civic Government Act and will be licensed by the Local Licensing Authority. However, although a food business is obliged to register with its local authority, a license may not be required unless, for example, catering after 11pm is being sought. Therefore, many food retail outlets in Glasgow will not be covered by the licensing regime although mobile street traders (vans) are licensed. For any license that applies to either a fixed premises or a street trader there will be a raft of conditions applied by the licensing authority such as the 300 metre exclusion zone for street traders operating near schools (introduced by Glasgow City Council Licensing Authority in 2009). All in all, Alastair's view was that there is a limit to what can be achieved by a licensing regime in relation to improving the nutritional quality of food and drinks on sale in food retail premises.

This issue was picked up in subsequent debate and discussion. Alastair's final comment supported John Frank's previous suggestion that regulating foods rather than businesses made more sense and might be more achievable. Alastair cited recent tobacco legislation as an example. Fiscal taxation of tobacco is used to try and discourage smoking at a population level. In addition, smoking has been banned in public places and new legislation has been introduced which will restrict the display and promotion of tobacco. Both measures are examples of targeted legislation aiming to act on a health damaging product rather than an outlet. An example directly relating to nutrition is that of foods containing trans fats which have been banned at a city (New York) and country level (Denmark) elsewhere. So it is possible to regulate the nutritional content of specific foods if there is good public health evidence that they damage health. Regulation of this sort would require fiscal policy change and action by the Scottish Government.

Cost and taste of school meals in comparison to 'out of school' food

A number of delegates posed questions and comments regarding the influence of cost and taste in relation to pupils' decision making around lunchtime food.

David Melvin provided an initial response to these issues. His view was that cost was not a major influence as school meals in Glasgow at £1.15 per meal (for paying customers) are the cheapest in Scotland. David felt that taste was a major influence on pupils' decisions as to whether to eat on or off site. The sudden drop in school meal uptake following the introduction of the Schools Nutrition and Health Promotion Act (and accompanying nutritional regulations) in 2009 could be explained by the changes made to food available within school - reduction of sugar, fat and salt in all foods, removal of carbonated drinks, chocolate, and limited availability of crisps. When pupils' palates are used to a salt or sugar driven diet, he proposed that it was very difficult for them to accept lower fat and salt in school meal menus. Linda de Caestecker suggested that there were other ways of flavouring food without salt and that different menus could be considered. David agreed with Linda's points and stated that Cordia review and change menus regularly in consultation with pupils. In addition, he noted that some of Cordia's suppliers are now beginning to adjust their products to accommodate nutritional regulations while optimising flavour. There was a further comment from a pupil on the issue of taste, requesting that Cordia explore different methods of cooking some foods (such as grilling rather than oven cooking burgers) to improve taste. David agreed that Cordia should consider new cooking methods and appropriate equipment to enhance flavour where possible.

Lastly, a senior secondary pupil commented that the S1 stay-on-site policy operating in her school had had a negative effect on other pupils. In this pupil's school, the school roll was large but the dining area was small. She commented that the presence of over 200 S1 pupils in the school canteen meant that there was little space for anyone else and resulted in an unpleasant, noisy, overcrowded environment. Fiona Crawford responded to this point advising that practical issues such as lack of space had previously been identified during the earlier evaluation of stay-on-site policies. She commented that potential solutions to this issue would involve adapting the physical environment of school canteens to create more, better quality space which, given current economic constraints seemed unlikely. Fiona added that many schools in other European countries operate staggered lunch breaks to overcome this problem.

Following the panel session, delegates and panel members were invited to provide their main recommendations for next steps.

A number of delegates agreed with previous proposals for tighter regulations in neighbourhoods near schools to improve the external commercial food environment for pupils and the wider community. It was felt that regulation (whether licensing or legislation) should be carefully thought through, be well drafted and it should be remembered that it would have resource implications in terms of implementation. As well as regulation, it was suggested that work should be undertaken with local food outlets to encourage food retailers to provide and promote healthier options.

David Melvin, on behalf of Cordia, undertook to consult more widely with secondary pupils regarding school meal menu options to cater more effectively for pupils' tastes and preferences. In addition, David stated that it would be helpful to continue to discuss the nutritional regulations with the Scottish Government with a view to exploring options for making the regulations less stringent.

Maureen McKenna emphasised the value of early intervention, positive parenting, school nutrition action groups and more general health promotion initiatives such as the Scottish Government's Cooking Bus in promoting healthy eating among children and young people. She also voiced doubt if it would be possible to persuade the Scottish Government to relax the nutritional guidelines given the calls to tighten regulation beyond the school gate.

Ross Kerr reminded the audience of the differences between different types of food outlets. He cautioned against attempting to use licensing to restrict fast food sales between 9am and 4pm as he felt that this would not tackle the issue of accessibility of unhealthy food outwith the school day. He proposed that regulation of particular foods rather than outlets was a more sensible approach. He informed delegates that the Healthy Living Programme which now has involvement from 1,126 convenience stores has been successful in encouraging retailers to sell healthier options such as fruit and vegetables.

John Frank considered that if a society has had a problem developing for 50 years, the solution cannot be visited upon young people between the ages of 11 and 15 years old. In addition, he reminded the audience that a reliance on individual behaviour change through personal motivation increased health inequalities. He proposed that Scotland could lead a move towards healthy eating at a societal level, if it could find a way to change economic and other incentives that promote consumption of certain kinds of foods, including their availability to children and young people under a certain age. This strategy has been successfully applied to the availability, sale and consumption of cigarettes. John felt that if some of these incentives could be changed, Scotland could lead the way towards trying to turn the tide of poor nutrition and obesity among the Scottish population.

Fiona Crawford's view was that if healthy nutrition in neighbourhoods around schools was to become a reality, a range of factors and influences at local, regional, national and global level need to be considered and addressed. She commented that food is important to everyone, so schools cannot address this alone; neither should they be asked to. Individuals, families, communities, local and national government all have an important role to play. There are good examples of effective use of regulation of tobacco and alcohol minimum pricing that could be drawn upon in relation to consideration of the regulation of specific foods and drinks that are known to be health damaging.

Conclusions

Carol Tannahill, as Chair, provided some closing remarks. Carol agreed that there were multiple layers of influence at play in relation to policies and programmes to promote healthy eating among school pupils during the school day. She felt that there was no doubt that approaches needed to have sufficient scale to have an impact, but on the other hand, there was also evidence that incremental action and culture change, through a range of different approaches, could make a difference. She recommended that we should not only be ambitious about tackling challenges such as poor nutrition and obesity, but also be prepared to undertake actions within our control at the moment that will help to change our food culture over time and bring wider benefits to public health.

Acknowledgements

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- Delegates for their attendance and participation
- Speakers and panel members for presentations and contributions
- Members of the research advisory group for their support and involvement in planning and delivery of the seminar

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How Healthy is 'Out of School' Lunchtime Food? Research Seminar

Wednesday 13th June 2012, 0930 – 1300 St. Andrew's in the Square, 1 St. Andrew's Square, Glasgow G1 5PP

Programme

9.30	Coffee and registration		
10.00	Welcome and introduction – Carol Tannahill, Chair (Director, Glasgow Centre for Population Health)		
10.05	Opening address by Councillor Stephen Curran (Executive Member for Education and Young People, Glasgow City Council)		
10.20	A public health perspective on the importance of good nutrition within and beyond school – Linda de Caestecker (Director of Public Health, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde)		
10.40	Presentation of research findings – Fiona Crawford (Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Centre for Population Health) and Dionne Mackison (Public Health Nutritionist, University of Stirling)		
11.10	Refreshment break		
11.30	 Brief response to findings from panel members as follows: Alastair Brown (Head of Environmental Health, Glasgow City Council) Fiona Crawford (Public Health Programme Manager, GCPH) John Frank (Director, MRC Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy) Ross Kerr (Director, Healthy Living Programme, Scottish Grocers' Federation) Maureen McKenna (Director of Education Services, Glasgow City Council) David Melvin (Managing Director, Cordia (Services) LLP) 		
11.40	Group discussion and formulation of questions for panel		
12.10	'Question Time' panel session		
12.50	Summing up and next steps - Carol Tannahill, Chair (Director, Glasgow Centre for Population Health)		
1.00	Lunch		

Appendix 2 – Delegate List

First Name	Surname	Organisation
Brooklyn	Adkins	Pupil, St. Paul's High School
Sarah	Archibald	Queen Margaret University
Nina	Baker	Glasgow City Council
Frances	Birch	NHS Health Scotland
Paul	Birkin	Glasgow City Council
Siobhan	Boyle	Glasgow City CHP - South Sector
Claire	Brown	Consumer Focus Scotland
Alastair	Brown	Glasgow City Council
Alicia	Bryce	Queen Margaret University
Dominika	Bugajska-Brown	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Jane	Bunting	Independent
Martin	Caraher	London City University
Liam	Carleton	Shawlands Academy
Robert	Carroll	All Saints Secondary School
Stephanie	Chambers	University of Dundee
Helen	Clark	Glasgow City Council
Patricia	Collins	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Eilidh		
	Colquhoun	Pupil, Bannerman High School
Philip	Conaglen	NHS Fife
Michael	Craig	NHS Health Scotland
Fiona	Crawford	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Stephen	Curran	Glasgow City Council
Sarah	Darroch	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Linda	De Caestecker	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Margaret	Dorward	Holyrood Secondary School
Sandra	Drummond	Queen Margaret University
Leigh	Edwardson	Scottish Government
Anne	Ellaway	Medical Research Council
Peter	Faassen Der Heer	Scottish Government
Kathryn	Farrow	Glasgow City Council
Lyndsey	Fogg	Scottish Government
Richard	Forsyth	British Heart Foundation
Carol	Frame	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
John	Frank	MRC SCPHRP
Irene	Friel	Knightwood Secondary School
Reece	Glackin	Pupil, All Saints Secondary
Julie	Gordon	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Norma	Greenwood	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
James	Grubb	Pupil, All Saints Secondary
Alison	Guthrie	Pirie Park & Hydland Parent Councils
Helena	Hailstone	Cordia (Services) LLP
Laura	Hainan	Glasgow City CHP - North East Sector
Anthony	Hamilton	All Saints Secondary
Kayleigh	Henry	Pupil, St. Paul's High School
Lisa	Jones	Pupil, Shawlands Academy
Russell	Jones	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Ross	Kerr	Scottish Grocers Federation
Lesley	Kirkwood	Education Scotland
Nicola	Lockhart	Springburn Academy
Nancy	Loftus	Cardonald Primary & Rosshall Parent Member
Andy	MacGregor	Scottish Centre for Social Research
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Dionne	Mackison	The University of Stirling
Sarah	McChristie	East Dunbartonshire CHP
John	Mackay	St. Paul's High School
Maureen	McKenna	Glasgow City Council
Morgan	Maclachlan	Pupil, St. Paul's High School
Kelda	McLean	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Paul	McLean	Glasgow Life
Carol	McNamara	Pupil, Shawlands Academy
Karen	McNee	Scottish Government
Suzanne	McShane	Glasgow City Council
Fiona	Malcolm	Glasgow Life
Joanne	Martin	Pupil, Springburn Academy
David	Melvin	Cordia (Services) LLP
Jean	Miller	Cordia (Services) LLP
Jodi	Millott	East Renfrewshire CHCP
Suzanne	Moffatt	St. Mungo's Academy
John	Mooney	(SCPHRP) MRC Human Genetics Unit
Linda	Morris	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Anne	Muir	East Dunbartonshire CHP
Lesley	Mullholland	Bannerman High School
Lynn	Naven	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Wendy	Onabule	Pupil, Springburn Academy
Sharon	O'Neil	Glasgow City CHP - North West Sector
Gillian	Paulie	Pupil, Bannerman High School
Richard	Porter	Pupil, Springburn Academy
Gillian	Purdon	Food Standard Agency in Scotland
Connor	Quail	Pupil, All Saints Secondary
Angelica	Quatela	Queen Margaret University
Rosalind	Ramage	Glasgow City CHP - North East Sector
Elizabeth	Robertson	Inverclyde Council
Karen	Scott	Healthier Eating Royston Experience (HERE)
Carol	Tannahill	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Martin	Taulbut	NHS Health Scotland
Julie	Truman	NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Bruce	Whyte	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
Christine	Wilson	Langside Primary School
Jonathan	Wright	Scottish Government



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