

## Going back to Gothenburg: what else can we learn from Sweden?

### Introduction

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) has established a collaborative relationship with an EU-funded project (Project MEDEL, **M**åltiden – **E**n **DEL** i lärandet which translates as ‘the school meal – part of the education’), based in west Sweden.



Project MEDEL’s aim is to develop further integration and co-operation between teaching and catering staff in order to encourage good eating habits among children/young people and extend and embed healthy eating beyond the basic school curriculum. The project involves 11 nurseries and 12 elementary schools. Project funding comprises 5.5 million krona (£550,000) and, although the project was due to finish in August 2013, an extension to the funding period has been granted allowing activity to continue until January 2014.

Previously, in September 2012, a small group of professionals from Glasgow visited Sweden, to gather information and learning across a broad agenda that included the Swedish education curriculum, healthy school food policies/programmes, provision of physical education and activity in the curriculum, and transport policies and programmes. The study visit was part-funded and organised by Project MEDEL. A short report describing the visit and recommendations for action drawing on our learning and experience is available on the GCPH website<sup>1</sup>.

Following this initial visit, our Swedish colleagues invited us back to Gothenburg, for a second time between the 10th and 12th of June, 2013 with a more specific purpose of providing us with information and insights regarding school meal policy in secondary schools, as well as the management of other public health priorities. Given ongoing national concerns regarding poor nutrition among Scottish children and young people, finding out about successful approaches to promoting healthy eating among this group remains a key area of interest and we were happy to accept this invitation. Again, our study visit was part-funded and organised by Project MEDEL staff with help from public health colleagues in Gothenburg.

<sup>1</sup> Crawford F, Whyte B, Crawford A. Going to Gothenburg: Reflections on a study visit. Glasgow: GCPH; 2012. Available at: [http://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/393\\_going\\_to\\_gothenburg\\_reflections\\_on\\_a\\_study\\_visit](http://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/393_going_to_gothenburg_reflections_on_a_study_visit)

## The study visit

Our study group comprised the following individuals:



**Fiona Crawford (Public Health Programme Manager, GCPH).**

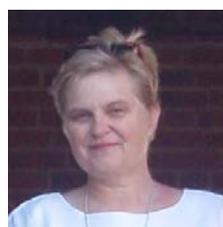
Fiona has been leading a collaborative programme of research and evaluation exploring the health impacts of eating in and out of school and has been working closely with Glasgow City Council on measures to improve pupils' school lunchtime experiences and the nutritional quality of popular lunchtime food and drinks beyond the school gate. She was also interested in hearing more about

Gothenburg's sustainable travel policies and programmes.

**Morag Gunion (Head of curriculum, learning and teaching, Glasgow City Council Education Services).** Morag has responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum in Glasgow schools, including the development of the health and wellbeing curriculum. She has an interest in school meals in Glasgow and links with colleagues in Cordia with regard to this.



**Heather Cunningham (Health Improvement and Inequalities Manager, Renfrewshire CHP, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC)).** Heather has an interest in food policy in particular what agencies can do together to create and support a sustainable food policy.



**Anne Gebbie-Diben (Health Improvement Lead, NHSGGC).**

Anne is a native Swede from Gothenburg with previous experience of strategic planning of school meal provision at a regional level in Sweden. Anne is NHSGGC's lead for nutrition, physical activity and weight management across all settings and age groups.

**Lisa Bragé and Anna Strand (Coordinators), and Emilia Åman (Coach)** from MEDEL accompanied us during our visit, introducing us to their colleagues and young people involved in the project, as well as providing background information and observations during our stay. Gun Stigelius (Majorna-Linne District, Gothenburg) facilitated our meeting with the school nurses.

Our itinerary (see Appendix 1) included site visits to two secondary schools in Gothenburg and meetings with a number of Swedish professionals:

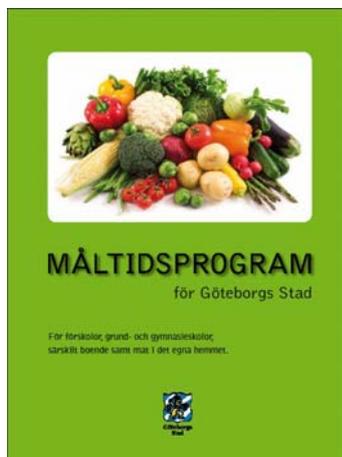
- Petter Kjellgren, a transport planner from the traffic office with whom we had met during our first trip, to hear an update regarding transport programmes.
- Agneta Carlqvist Naddi and Elisabeth Berg, two school nurses, who explained how some of their school-based public health programmes for young people are organised and delivered.
- Kristina Magnusson, the regional food policy co-ordinator, responsible for the creation and delivery of the Gothenburg food policy.

- Bernt Nielsen, a transport policy adviser.

The following short report provides an account of our visit; reflections on our experiences; and additional learning we consider could be applied in the west of Scotland.

## Meeting with Regional Food Policy Co-ordinator

Kristina Magnusson, Gothenburg's Regional Food Policy Co-ordinator, provided us with a personal overview of the city's approach to its meal programme<sup>2</sup>. This involves over 600 kitchens in the procurement, production and delivery of meals to nurseries, schools, care homes, sheltered housing, day centres and as well as home-delivered meals.



Gothenburg city's vision for public meals is that "the meal will be good, useful and enjoyable – cooked and served by knowledgeable and service-orientated staff. Ideally it should exceed expectation".

Strategic co-ordination of the Gothenburg meal programme is managed by a city-wide strategic group comprising area managers from each neighbourhood in the city, representatives from education and environmental departments, and if necessary, from the procurement company involved.

The strategic group's remit is to:

- Increase control over the procurement process.
- Promote the production of environmentally-friendly meals.
- Normalise language and use of vocabulary to make it understandable and accessible to all professionals involved.
- Facilitate appropriate training and career development for all employees.
- Ensure premises are maintained to a high standard of security and hygiene.
- Supervise marketing and promotional activities.

Kristina's 'recipe for success' includes good internal and external communication, clear strategic management, co-operation at all levels in the city, and a recognition that all employees are important in the meal programme. A clear link is also made between public meals, public health and educational goals. Surveys are conducted twice a year to obtain feedback from service users and employees.

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



A central theme of the regional food policy is the importance of the procurement process which has a number of stipulations. Food purchased should be seasonal and have been produced, transported and prepared with as low an environmental impact as possible. Fifty percent of food procured should be organic and all meat should be organically produced; fish should be obtained from sustainable sources. Meat consumption should be reduced in favour of an increased vegetable and legume consumption and 90% of food should be cooked from scratch. The importance of cutting down on food waste is also seen as very important.

The total budget for food procurement for Gothenburg's meal programme is in the region of £30 million (with £5 million earmarked for local food sources). Kristina indicated that the average cost of a school meal in Gothenburg is approximately 93p per head in comparison to 98p per head elsewhere in Sweden.

In 2013, Sweden produced the 'White Guide Junior', an adaptation of the 'White Guide', a leading Swedish restaurant guide providing a list of the best restaurants in Sweden. The purpose of the White Guide Junior is to promote good practice in the school meals service and to highlight particularly high-achieving school canteens across a number of dimensions including the quality, taste and variety of the food and drinks provided on school premises, environmentally-friendly practices, multi-agency co-operation, and commitment to service improvement. In 2013, Gothenburg was identified in the White Guide Junior as the best school meal municipality in Sweden.

### **School visits**

We visited two secondary schools: Hvitfeldtska High School on day one and Nordhemsskolans Junior High School on day two.

## Hvitfeldtska High School



Hvitfeldtska High School is a senior secondary school, situated in central Gothenburg near the university. It was originally founded in 1647, subsequently becoming a boys' school in 1917 assisted by a legacy which provided scholarships for poorer pupils from the north of Sweden. Today, the school is a large public secondary school with approximately 1,800 students from all over Gothenburg. Some students come from other regions in Sweden with a small number from abroad. The school caters for senior students aged 15 to 19 years who study a range of specialist courses including the International Baccalaureate. There is a co-located junior secondary school catering for 11 to 15 year old pupils.



All pupils in the junior secondary years follow a broad curriculum which includes one lesson per week of home economics and consumer education. Home economics lessons have a strong focus on teaching young people to cook and on making meals from scratch rather than relying on processed food. Central to the home economics curriculum is enjoyment of good, well-made food. Pupils also learn about how to make consumer choices and their consumer rights as well as the

importance of environmental issues and sustainable development. They learn skills for life during home economics and after-school sessions including how to manage a household budget (such as planning meals and purchasing food).

The school has a large well-equipped gymnasium. All junior secondary pupils have a one hour physical education lesson twice per week. The school curriculum makes explicit connection between fitness and health.



School meals are free for all students and the school lunch is viewed as an integral component of the school day. Lunches are available in the school canteen (named 'Bamba') between 11am and 2pm. On the day of our visit we had lunch with the students. This was an enjoyable experience in a spacious, attractive and busy dining area.



One of the most prominent features of the canteen is the salad bar which has a wide choice of salads and pulses. It was explained to us that the positioning of the salad bar at the entrance encourages pupils to select from this first. The meal of the day was pasta with either a meat or vegetarian sauce. There is no choice in the daily main menu apart from a vegetarian option. In addition to the hot meal and salad options, students can augment their lunch with a variety of local breads. Cold water and milk dispensers are located in the canteen allowing students access to as much water or milk as they wish to drink. The school website contains easily accessible

information about the weekly menu in the Bamba canteen. This helpfully allows students and their parents to avoid clashes between what is eaten at school and at home.

After eating lunch, we met with Marlene, one of the senior students. She was very positive about the quality of the lunches served in school and said that she and her friends enjoyed eating in Bamba. She explained that she almost always ate in the canteen and would not really consider going elsewhere during lunchtime particularly as school meals were free. Marlene told us that the student council was involved in some elements of decision-making regarding the lunch menus. She expected this involvement to increase further with the recently convened 'food council' which meets twice in the school year.



We were given a tour of the kitchens and met with catering staff. The school kitchens were very well-equipped with state of the art appliances and food preparation areas. The senior chef explained that there was an excellent take-up of school meals and around 90% of students ate in the canteen. She told us that all meals were made on the premises from ingredients which were in season and sourced as locally as possible.



The school meal policy is decided by the municipal council which has been responsible for school meals since they became mandatory after the second world war. The cost of producing a school meal for secondary students is currently around 93p per student. The cost is around 60p per pupil at primary stages.

## ***Nordhemsskolans Junior High School***



Nordhemsskolans Junior High School has a school roll of 750 catering for pupils between the ages of 6 and 15 years. It is a state school situated in a relatively affluent suburb of the city although school catchment boundaries extend to less affluent areas. We met with Mikael Hallberg, the Deputy Head Teacher, who provided us with information regarding the Swedish education curriculum and the management of the school. There is a well-run parent council who contribute

to discussions around the school environment, food and so on. The school meal service is managed separately from education. A student council is being established which will meet twice per school term with a view to increasing communication between students and catering staff.

In line with national policy, school meals are free to all pupils. The majority of pupils eat on the premises and do not leave school at lunchtime although Mikael thought that a small number (up to around 5%) do leave to purchase food from external outlets. Unhealthy snacks and sugared drinks are not permitted on the school premises in any shape or form.

The education curriculum was revised two years ago and appears to have similarities with the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence in terms of its integrated approach and overarching aims such as economic and health literacy across subject areas. Consumer issues and the environment are also seen as important elements.

Physical education classes are taken by all students twice per week for 60 minutes per session. Class size comprises approximately 30 pupils. The new curriculum has made explicit connections with health and lifestyle. Topics discussed during class include definitions of good health, body image, and personal goals towards health and fitness.



Home economics classes (120 minutes per session) are delivered once per week for pupils aged 10, 14 and 15 years. Key learning objectives in the home economics curriculum make a clear connection with developing practical cooking skills at home, household budgeting, and the environmental impact of consumer choices as well as healthy eating.



We had lunch in the school canteen which was spacious and attractively decorated with numerous large tables set out for dining. On the day of our visit, lunch consisted of one main dish of pasta with meat or vegetarian bolognese sauce (served by catering staff), accompanied by self-service for numerous salads of different types as well as roast potatoes.

As in Hvitfeldtska, refrigerated water and semi-skimmed milk dispensers were present so that pupils could help themselves to drinks during lunch. The food was freshly prepared with no pre-packaging of any items and the diversity of salad dishes, which included pulses, was impressive. The canteen was very busy while we were there but queues moved swiftly and smoothly (without staff supervision) and there were plenty of available tables.



Following lunch, we met with the catering team who showed us round their kitchens and explained how the canteen is operated. As far as possible, food is locally sourced and organic. As with the primary schools we visited in September 2012, the kitchens were very well-equipped with state of the art cookers, walk-in fridges, dishwashers, food preparation areas and extensive storage facilities for different foods.



The head chef has supervised meal production in the canteen for 35 years. Every day, 1,200 meals are produced with 400 of these distributed to nine kindergartens on a daily basis. The catering team aspire to have 'happy guests' through carefully prepared/cooked food served in a high quality environment. The school canteen has received several national awards relating to its school meal provision based on criteria such as sourcing, preparation, quality and taste which have attracted national media coverage. Two pupils (aged 13-14 years) help serve food and clear up on a daily basis. All waste is recycled and sorted and we were able to witness leftover food (of which there was very little) being weighed. In Sweden, general recycling and waste disposal is incentivised by the Swedish government through reductions in tax if households and institutions reduce waste.

### ***Travel and transport in Gothenburg – an update***

We met once again with Petter Kjellgren, a transport planner who works for Gothenburg City traffic office, who provided an update on the city's aspirations and progress towards active, sustainable travel. He also briefed us regarding congestion charging which had been discussed during our previous visit. In addition, Bernt Nielson provided further insights and information regarding current developments in transport policies and programmes.



A regional west Sweden agreement, running until 2027, is guiding a series of transport initiatives in the area at a total projected cost of approximately £3.4 billion. State funding will meet 50% of costs while the remainder will be met by Gothenburg city and two other adjoining regions along with income gathered from the congestion charge.

Immediate priorities for action include:

- An additional 55km of new bus lanes (in addition to the current 35km).
- A new commuter railway station, more commuter trains and lengthened platforms to increase rail capacity.
- Additional bicycle paths and bicycle parking.
- Increased frequency of rail, bus and tram services.

There are also major infrastructural projects planned on a longer timescale including a new river bridge, road tunnel and major rail link.

Gothenburg city has ambitious targets in relation to carbon emissions. By 2020, it aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% from a 1990 baseline. In relation to greener vehicles, by 2015, it is aiming for an increase from 90% to 95% of vehicles in the city's fleet of cars, light trucks and light buses to meet emissions targets.

Congestion charging was introduced in January 2013 as planned (despite public and media opposition) as a means of controlling car traffic and protecting the environment. Following the introduction of congestion charging, traffic levels initially dropped by 20% although at the time of our visit, levels had risen slightly to a 14% reduction from baseline. Gothenburg's population is expected to increase and so it is seen as very important to reduce levels of car traffic in the city as this will allow more space to be taken from road infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists. Congestion charges are graduated with highest costs incurred during peak hours of 7am to 8.30am and 4.30pm to 6pm. During these periods, cost per car for each journey is SEK18 (about £1.80). Revenue gained from congestion charges will be ring fenced for uses associated with new infrastructure and improved public transport services. There is still public dissatisfaction and negative media coverage regarding congestion charging. Following debate in the local parliament, a decision has been taken to conduct a public referendum for all Gothenburg residents on their views – it is not clear at present what actions will be taken in response to referendum results.



It is obvious that cycling is seen as a major priority in Gothenburg. At present, there are 770km of total cycle paths, 470km of segregated cycle paths and 7,400 spaces for cycle parking in the city centre. There are additional plans to redevelop the city centre in the autumn to give even greater priority to bicycles and to reduce the traffic speed. These initiatives are part of a wider city strategy which is to be debated in national parliament during the summer.

## **Meeting with school nurses**



Agneta Carlqvist Naddi and Elisabeth Berg work with 16-22 year old students in two upper secondary schools which provide professional education for students who are undertaking training in nutrition and catering. The nurses are employed by Gothenburg city rather than the health service and report to the school Principal. A school public health nursing service is seen as very important in Sweden and it is mandatory for a school nurse to be present in every school. Each student has an entrance interview with the school nurse on enrolment. Agneta and Elizabeth were of the view that young Swedish people, in general, have a high awareness and knowledge of factors impacting on health. All Swedish children keep a journal from birth known as a 'health story' which is held by the school the child attends. This journal is currently being computerised. As well as providing one-to-one support, nurses assist with vaccinations.

Obesity prevalence at a population level is lower in Sweden than Scotland. According to recent data, adult obesity prevalence in Sweden is 10.7%, less than half of that of Scotland which is 26.5%<sup>3</sup>. School nurses approach the issue of healthy weight with an awareness of body image and pressures amongst young people in this age group. The nurses do not provide any weight management consultations unless a pupil expresses concern and is actively seeking support. General issues around maintenance of healthy weight are briefly covered during points of contact. Any pupils who seem to require specialist support will be referred to specialist services.

Although generic child health and wellbeing programmes have been historically seen as very important in Sweden the system is changing to 'increase choice'. Agneta expressed concerns that this might lead to disadvantaged children and young people who are less able to opt in to programmes like this missing out.

### **Reflections on our visit**

The insights that we gained during this visit provided further evidence that decision-makers in Gothenburg (and Sweden) place a very high priority on measures to protect and enhance the environment and to promote sustainability. This is not only seen as important in improving the health and quality of life for Gothenburg residents but is regarded as vital for future generations and for wider planetary health.

Swedes seem to have a heightened awareness and understanding of the importance of food for health (in its widest sense). Different stakeholders in food-related arenas seem to actively align their activities to ensure a joined-up approach. There is a tangible commitment within public settings to pursue environmentally responsible food production, procurement and consumption. Regional and local food policies and programmes aim for organic, locally produced and seasonal food as far as possible.

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<sup>3</sup> National Obesity Observatory. International Comparisons of Obesity Prevalence; 2009.  
[http://www.noo.org.uk/uploads/doc799\\_2\\_International\\_Comparisons\\_Obesity\\_Prevalence2.pdf](http://www.noo.org.uk/uploads/doc799_2_International_Comparisons_Obesity_Prevalence2.pdf)

With regard to school meals, secondary school meal provision follows a very similar model to primary provision – free school meals of very high quality are provided for all students by well-trained staff in spacious, attractive canteens. Canteen staff take great pride in the quality and taste of their menus and good practice in the school meals service is promoted at a national level through the development of a number of prestigious awards which attract national media coverage. Negligible numbers of secondary school students leave school at lunchtime and unhealthy snacks and sugared drinks are not permitted on the school premises in any shape or form. As in primary schools, students are involved in the preparation and serving of meals and are able to influence menus and school meal delivery through collaborative food councils. The home economics education curriculum includes consumer education and household budgeting as these are seen as important skills for life that students should acquire.

The current regional environmental policy, ‘Heading for a Greener Region’ challenges local authorities to put ‘words into deeds’ in tackling environmental challenges. There is evidence that this is happening in relation to active, sustainable travel with significant investment being made in public transport services and further development of segregated cycle infrastructure and cycle parking. Gothenburg city leaders proceeded with the introduction of congestion charging in January 2013 despite the fact that it was an unpopular measure. Revenue gained is helping to fund improvements to public transport services.

## Recommendations for action

### Food policies and programmes

#### At school level:

We recommend that the pilot school lunchtime initiative that was established in Caledonia Primary School in 2012<sup>1</sup>, following our first study visit to Gothenburg, be extended and tested out in other primary schools in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley region. We propose that possibilities for lunchtime initiatives within secondary schools could also be explored as it is clear that these work well in Sweden.

We think it would be very helpful to evaluate the impact of any Swedish-style lunchtime initiatives on pupils’ nutritional attitudes and behaviour and to explore school staff views on other impacts. This learning could inform future school-based policies and programmes. GCPH is well-placed to facilitate an evaluation in this arena.





Our trip to Sweden drove home the 'art of the possible' in relation to recycling and waste management. We challenge school staff and pupils to ensure that recycling of waste and other appropriate materials takes place consistently and comprehensively across all primary and secondary schools in Glasgow and the Clyde Valley. We know that school pupils have identified this as an important priority but we believe that recycling practice is variable from school to school.

We were impressed that there is zero tolerance of pupils consuming unhealthy snacks and sugared drinks within secondary school premises in Gothenburg. We believe that more can be done in primary and secondary schools

in the Glasgow and Clyde Valley region to reduce the consumption of externally purchased unhealthy foods and drinks by pupils on school premises during the school day.



Swedish schools provide all their pupils with unlimited access to free, fresh water and semi-skimmed milk during the lunchtime period. We recommend that schools across the Glasgow and Clyde Valley region ensure that all primary and secondary school pupils have access to free, fresh water during lunchtime and, if possible, during the school day.

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence already emphasises an integrated approach to learning that can inform and enhance a pupil's health and wellbeing throughout the life-course. In common with Sweden, home economics lessons in secondary schools include

dimensions such as consumer choices, consumer rights, and household budgeting that help build skills for life. We recommend that secondary schools should develop schemes where pupils are given access to experiential learning such as working with catering staff in the school kitchen in producing and serving school lunches.

#### *At local authority level:*

In collaboration with partners and stakeholders, we recommend the development of an integrated food policy at a local authority level that can help to create a healthier, more equitable, sustainable food system. This work should build on and refresh earlier policies with a strong focus on access, affordability, sustainability, procurement and planning.

We recommend that Glasgow joins the recently launched UK Sustainable Food Cities Network as a means of building relationships with others in cities around the UK, sharing challenges, exploring practical solutions and developing best practice.

We commend Renfrewshire's commitment to developing a sustainable food policy that will be progressed through the Council's Community Plan making clear linkages across outcomes such as reduction in food poverty, improved support for community-led food and growing initiatives, and increased training and job

opportunities. We recommend that other local authorities consider using a similar approach.

There is clear evidence that Gothenburg is continuing to invest significant resources in sustainable transport infrastructure. We consider there should be a more cohesive approach to new infrastructure and public transport in Glasgow and surrounding areas including better alignment of agendas and policy in relation to walking, cycling, transport, health and planning.

Low-cost initiatives to create better conditions for pedestrians and cyclists could also be introduced, particularly in the run up to the Commonwealth Games. However, there are other important opportunities through the TSB Smart City Demonstrator Project to improve safety through technology by enforcing 20mph speed limits, installing speed caps on public sector vehicles and by installing sensors on large vehicles which alert drivers to nearby cyclists.

In relation to cleaner, greener transport, Gothenburg has a target for 95% of its city fleet of cars, trucks and buses to be clean vehicles by 2015. In addition, it will have at least 100 electric battery powered and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. Local authorities should increase their efforts to ensure that their vehicles are cleaner and greener as well as introducing further measures to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport by improving pedestrian and cycle infrastructure and safety, lowering vehicle speeds, discouraging single occupant car use and by incentivising the use of public transport.



This study visit once again highlighted some insightful and inspiring initiatives in action in Gothenburg. We hope that our reflections and recommendations will be carefully considered and acted upon by decision-makers.

Fiona Crawford, Heather Cunningham, Anne Gebbie-Dibben, Morag Gunion  
September 2013

## Appendix 1: Study visit itinerary



Göteborgs  
Stad



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### Transnational study visit in Gothenburg the 10th - 12th of June 2013

<b>Day 1: 10/6</b>	
10.30	Landing in Gothenburg City
11.15	Taxi to Hvitfeldska High school; address Rektorsgatan 2 in the City center. You can find a taxi outside the airport, Taxi Göteborg, Taxi Kurir and Minitaxi are good companies.
11.45 -	We will meet you at Hvitfeldska High school.
12.00 – 12.45	Lunch at Hvitfeldska High school.
12.45 - 13.15	Welcome Meeting: - Emilia Åman and Lisa Bragée present the EU-project "School meal – a part of education".
13.15 -	Hvitfeldska High school presents their working methodic.
15.00 -	Trafficoffice
19.00 -	Dinner

<b>Day 2: 11/6</b>	
9.00	<b>Nordhemsskolan junior high school; address Nordhemsgatan 51</b>
9.00 – 10.00	- The principal Mikael Hallberg presents the schools working methodic.
10.00 - 10.45	- Nordhemsskolans food staff presents their work around the school meal.
10.45 – 11.20	- Round tour of the school where we will visit the home economics and sports hall.
11.30 – 12.00	- Lunch
13.15 – 14.15	- Kristina Magnusson, Coordinator Meals and Service in City of Gothenburg
15.00 -16.00	Meeting with Agneta Naddi Esters and Anna Camén at coordinating school nurses at Stadsledningskontoret room Valö. They have contact with schools and have good data on the children in Gothenburg regarding overweight and obesity.