

## **Joint Healthy Food Policy**

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### ***Executive Summary***

*This report sets out the framework for a joint food policy and guidance for the Local Authority. The adoption of this policy and guidance will support Wirral's Taste for Health which is one of the key themes within Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework which aims to improve health and reduce health inequalities on Wirral through addressing food, smoking, alcohol misuse, employment and safety. It also supports Corporate Plan and Local Area Agreement targets for childhood obesity and life expectancy (for which obesity is a risk factor).*

*The framework and guidance has been developed jointly with NHS Wirral, Wirral University Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust, Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust and Wirral Voluntary and Community Sector Network, who will also be looking to their organisations to adopt this as policy and guidance*

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 A healthy diet is a vital part of a healthy lifestyle. Healthy food has been proved to contribute to better health by helping to reduce coronary heart disease, cancers, obesity, diabetes, tooth decay and malnourishment. For example, obesity is responsible for an estimated 9,000 premature deaths per year in England – 6% of all deaths compared to 10% for smoking.
- 1.2 The Department of Health's 'Choosing a Better Diet: a Food and Health Action Plan', DoH (2005) stated that, "*the public sector has a Corporate Social Responsibility to offer healthy nutritious food and lead by example, in improving the diets of staff, patients and clients.*"
- 1.3 Improving health through healthier eating will reduce the need for more intensive health and social care services. It will contribute to the economic wellbeing of people of Wirral through reduced staff absence, improved productivity, and greater employability.
- 1.4 The importance of healthy food is increasingly recognised in national policy. Recent examples include NICE guidance on childhood obesity, health promoting schools, and guidance on food in hospitals.
- 1.5 Locally, Wirral Borough Council, NHS Wirral (Primary Care Trust), Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Wirral Voluntary and Community Sector Network and the independent sector have a key role in promoting healthy food and providing opportunities for the people of Wirral to access healthy food.

1.6 Wirral's Taste for Health is one of the key themes within Wirral's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework which aims to improve health and reduce health inequalities on Wirral through addressing food, smoking, alcohol misuse, employment and safety.

1.7 The organisations involved in development of the Wirral Food Policy are large employers or networks and therefore this Food Policy has the potential to raise awareness of healthy eating for many individuals:

- Wirral Primary Care Trust 1,200 employees
- Wirral Borough Council 13,000 employees
- Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust 6,000 employees
- Cheshire & Wirral Partnership Trust 2,700 employees
- Wirral Voluntary & Community Sector 400 member organisations across borough

In addition as large local purchasers of food, this offers an opportunity to influence the provision of affordable healthy food to Wirral residents. Environmental Health Officers incorporate healthy food advice to local food providers which would complement this policy.

1.8 The development of the Healthy Food Policy has been driven through a Food Policy Steering Group comprising of senior management from each of the organisations listed above. In 2008 the group decided that the best way forward would be to go through the processes of getting the Food Policy established as a PCT policy and then roll out to other organisations.

## **2 A Joint Healthy Food Policy**

2.1 Growing national debates about healthy food shows that this is a complex issue which requires different approaches in relation to different settings and groups of people, and about which there can be different views. This means that in a policy framework, one size will not fit all. For example, schools are subject to detailed mandatory requirements, most other areas are not, and reducing obesity will generally involve different approaches from tackling malnourishment in the older population. With adults there are clear issues about the right for personal choice, particularly in settings where they live. In light of this, the Policy Framework takes the following approach:

- i) The Framework identifies overarching principles which apply across all organisations, groups and settings, and which represent the commitment to healthy food from all participating organisations.
- ii) The Framework includes a range of specific policies, procedures (must do), guidelines (should do), standards and tools which are either already in place, or will be produced, to support healthy food in settings, organisations or groups.



2.2 By adopting this Framework, the profile of healthy food will be raised, leading to increased awareness and improved outcomes in healthy food.

2.3 The guidance is based on the food groups of the Food Standards Agency's Eat Well Plate (*Food Standards Agency, Balance of Good Health, (2001) & Eatwell Plate (2007)*) and the North West Food & Health Task Force's 'Commissioning Healthier Catering', (*North West Food & Health Task Force (2006) 'Commissioning Healthier Catering and Hospitality, North West Development Agency*).

2.4 The Framework also sets the policy context for Wirral's Healthy Food Strategy, and Wirral's Obesity Strategy. Specific actions arising from this policy will be included in the action plans in these strategies.

### 3 Overarching Principles for Healthy Food – Our Commitment

3.1 We will:

- Encourage people to eat healthy food.
- Acknowledge that food is a matter of choice for adults and that the type of food depends on the context e.g. a social event is different from everyday mealtimes.
- Provide healthy food wherever possible through commissioning, procurement and provider services.
- Ensure that healthy options are always available, and that these options are promoted.
- Ensure that food is cooked in healthy ways, e.g. using low-fat and low sugar options.
- Promote food hygiene as the basis for safe and healthy food.
- Increase opportunities for people to access healthy food, particularly people who may be in danger of exclusion, such as older people, people

with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities, and people living in deprived areas.

- Regularly provide information to people who use services and the general public to promote healthy food, including general information and sign-posting to specialist support.
- Provide training to staff who are involved in providing information and sign-posting, particularly focusing on training for admin staff around ordering food.
- Ensure that we involve and consult with a wide range of people and organisations, including seldom heard groups, about healthier food.
- Identify champions across all sectors who are enthusiastic about and skilled in promoting healthy food
- Participate in monitoring performance against the food policy as requested by Wirral's Healthy Food Strategy Group.

#### **4 Consultation - Consultations to date – 18/9/2008**

##### 4.1 Consultation on the Food Policy

- Wirral PCT - Workplace Health & Wellbeing Group, Staff Side Group, Joint Forum
- Wirral Borough Council - Corporate Health Group,
- Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust– Choosing Health Group (through Consultant Nurse, Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)
- Food & Health Steering Group (Joint Director of Public Health, Wirral Primary Care Trust; Head of Catering & Administration, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; Consultant Nurse, Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust; Chief Executive, Age Concern; Human Resources Operations Manager, Wirral Primary Care Trust)
- Health & Wellbeing Partnership Co-ordination Group
- Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust - Head of Catering & Administration

##### 4.2 Consultation on the Guidance Documents

Policy authors must send the draft policy to the appropriate review group to ensure all stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the policy.

###### 4.2.1 Workplace (Staff)

Formal Consultation with staff from NHS Wirral, Wirral Borough Council, Wirral Voluntary & Community Sector Network, Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for 4 weeks Feb – March 2008. Through respective intranet, staff bulletins and the Cheshire & Merseyside Public Health Network Bulletin

#### 4.2.2 Schools

Consultation has been carried out in previous years with schools, caterers, NHS Wirral and other partners.

#### 4.2.3 Early Years

Consultation has been carried out in previous years with early years settings, caterers, NHS Wirral and other partners.

#### 4.2.4 Public Venues

- Performance & Catering Officer, (Wirral Borough Council)
- Catering Lead (Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust)
- Parks & Gardens lead, (Wirral Borough Council)

#### 4.2.5 Residential Settings (inc. Hospital Meals, Homes for Adults, Homes for Children)

- Active Age Centre, Lifestyle Project Officer (Age Concern)
- Catering Lead (Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust)
- Lead for Residential Homes, (adults) Wirral Borough Council
- Feltree House Residential Home for Older People
- Seven other LA Residential Homes for Older People – (through Contracts Officer, Wirral Borough Council)

#### 4.2.6 Social Care in the Community (incl. Meals On Wheels, Lunch Clubs, Home Care & Enablement Services)

Active Age Centre, Lifestyle Project Officer (Age Concern)

### **5 Case Studies**

5.1 Although still in a draft format, the Healthy Food Policy has already played a role in the provision of healthier foods in organisations.

5.2 The principles and guidance in the Healthy Food Policy have been incorporated by Corporate Procurement in Wirral Borough Council into the i-procurement system for all new catering contracts.

5.3 As part of a large NHS relocation project the Healthy Food Policy has guided the planning of such provisions including a café type area in a patient waiting room which will supply hot and cold drinks and possibly food from a vending machine. This will affect food and drinks provided to staff and the public.

5.4 The Victoria Central Hospital (VCH) User Group has used the Healthy Food Policy to direct discussions around the café proposals for VCH. This will affect provision of food for staff, public and patients.

5.5 The Healthy Food Policy has been referenced on several occasions by staff in NHS Wirral providing food for meetings, conferences and the like. One example of this was at the recent AGM, where the Joint Director of Public Health's keynote speech was on Obesity. As a result the Healthy Food Policy was used to ensure a range of healthy food was provided, to support the key messages.

## **6 Implementation**

- 6.1 The Corporate Health Group, which is chaired by the Joint Director of Public Health and has representation from each of the Departments within the Local Authority has, as its purpose, to co-ordinate efforts by Departments within Wirral Council to reduce the inequality gap in Wirral by improving health and wellbeing. This group will be responsible for developing an action plan and monitoring the implementation of the policy and guidance if approved by Cabinet. It will complement the current action plan which was developed as a result of the I&DeA Healthy Communities Peer Review in 2008.

## **7 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 Healthy food options do not necessarily have to cost more than those offered as standard, often it will be removing a range of products to be replaced with a healthier option. Any additional costs would be challenged.

## **8 Staffing Implications**

- 8.1 The adoption of this framework would support the health and wellbeing of Local Authority staff through the implementation of the workplace guidance as part of the current health and wellbeing agenda for the workforce.

## **9 Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 9.1 None identified.

## **10 Community Safety Implications**

- 10.1 None Identified.

## **11 Local Agenda 21 Implications**

- 11.1 The guidance supports the use of locally produced food.

## **12 Planning Implications**

- 12.1 None identified.

## **13 Anti Poverty Implications**

- 13.1 None identified.

## **14 Social Inclusion Implications**

- 14.1 The framework aims, as part of Wirral Taste for Health to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

## **15 Local Member Support Implications**

- 15.1 The report has no implications for specific wards.

## **16 Health Implications**

- 16.1 The framework aims, as part of Wirral taste for health to improve health and reduce health inequalities.

## **17 Background Papers**

Wirral Healthy Food Policy Framework  
Workplace Guidance  
Schools Guidance  
Early Years Guidance  
Public Venues Guidance  
Social Care and Community Guidance  
Residential Settings Guidance

## **18 Recommendations**

- 18.1 That Cabinet agrees the adoption of the Wirral Healthy Food Policy Framework and Guidance.

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