

# **Free Healthy School Meals: what can we learn from the Hull experience?**

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# Today's presentation

- Background to the study
- Research methods
- Issues
- Findings after two years
- What else can we say?
- Unintended consequences
- Heed the warning!

# Background to the Study

## 'Eat Well Do Well'

- Began in Spring 2004 – 'Power to Innovate'
- Involves all primary schools and special schools in Hull (71 schools - @22,000 children)
- 3 year pilot
- Established to address educational, health and welfare issues
- Free healthy breakfast, dinner, after school snack and free fruit to KS2
- Highly political context

# Research Methods

- Years 4, 5, 6
- Annual Health related behaviour questionnaire (for Children)
- Annual Readiness to Learn (for Teachers)
- Actual Nutritional Intake (in and out of school), food composition, also comparing school dinners to packed lunch; and, intakes at more affluent school and more deprived school
- City and school data- 'whole of system' change
- BMI % body fat

# Research Methods cont'd

- Letter recognition test
- Parent survey
- Focus groups with parents
- Parents' Advisory Group (PAG) and International Advisory Group
- PSHE co-ordinator interviews
- Area supervisors focus groups
- Headteacher interviews
- LTS interviews/focus groups
- Interviews with Caterers (Hull Catering)
- 9 case study schools and 'case study' children

# Case Studies and the Whole School Approach

- Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
- School Ethos and Environment
- Partnerships and Services

# Some issues in relation to our evaluation

## ■ Complexity

- Different schools/communities
- Different starting points
- Different types of 'intervention'
- Large range of issues (measures) we are investigating
- Vibrant policy context

# What are we finding after two years?

- Sustained high uptake of school dinners - @65%
- Increased number of breakfast clubs - >60
- School dinners are more nutritious...nb iron...up 15% on last year
- Children are eating more...

# What are we finding...cont'd

- Hunger is not such an important issue according to headteachers and teachers but still is according to the children
- More teachers are having school dinners...89% of those surveyed thought that the EWDW Programme was a good idea.
- Very complex environment...simple and traditional research designs won't work

# What are we finding...cont'd

- Over 90% of parents support EWDW
- <30% of parents said they would be willing to pay for school dinners if fees were re-introduced
- @30% of parents said they were trying healthier food at home as a result of EWDW

# What are we finding...cont'd

- Children are more relaxed in school as a result of the scheme. Breakfast clubs are having an impact on settling children to work in the morning and there are reports of improved behaviour...schools are CALMER
- Significant gender issues in relation to healthy eating.
- Finally, there is a degree of homogeneity now between those children who are eligible and those who are not ...

What else can we say about our experience?

- **Quality assurance is needed with school meals...mash...frozen veggies...sausages less than 42% meat**

**and...**

# What else can we say about our experience?

- Ofsted...“Pupils show their commitment to healthy lifestyles by choosing healthy eating options such as vegetables or fruit at lunch and break times” Personal development and wellbeing Grade 1
- “Pupils develop a good understanding of what to do to keep themselves healthy and safe”...Grade 2
- “The school’s efforts to raise children’s awareness of healthy lifestyles are well rewarded by their understanding of healthy eating”...Grade 3

# What else can we say about our experience?...cont'd

- **Partnership working and the big picture**
- **The language of education...and health...ECM...etc**
- **Councillors and their (lack of) understanding**
- **Politics!**

**Important unintended  
consequences...**

**“I can now actually spend  
lunchtimes talking to staff about  
educational issues rather than  
dealing with problems of  
behaviour on the playground.”**

**a Hull Headteacher**

We need to heed the warning...



# The Future...!

- Very real outcome – a LTS training programme which will be an accredited University qualification for all 500 LTS's in the city...and national roll out...

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- Second Annual School Meals Conference  
University of Hull, November, 2007  
"The Hull School Meals Experience"

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