



Scoping study for Healthy Food for All on Breakfast Clubs

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1.0 INTRODUCTION TO SCOPING STUDY

This report outlines the outcomes of a scoping study examining the need for an expanded pilot demonstration programme of school breakfast clubs. The study was commissioned by Healthy Food for All (HFFA) and funded by Kellogg's Ireland.

At a national level, the government of Ireland has committed to realising seven service outcomes¹ concerning children. These are;

- healthy, both physically and mentally
- supported in active learning
- safe from accidental and intentional harm
- economically secure
- secure in the immediate and wider physical environment
- part of positive networks of family, friends, neighbours and the community
- included and participating in society

These seven service outcomes will inform all current and future directions concerning children's services. Food and adequate nutrition are core to these goals – good nutrition aids physical and mental health. Most home environments provide safety, security, comfort and importantly a routine for children to learn about food and participate in family life including meal times. The home is linked to the school where children through our education system area for opportunities to learn and participate in social activities.

Yet for many children their life is not secure and they live on the borders of society – their home life does not provide the economic stability, physical and emotional safety and security they need. Their health is impacted by poor diets and irregular supply of food and hunger is a regular feature. These factors impact their capacity to participate in school and the wider community with the result that they are left at the margins of society and cannot reach their full potential. Providing food, particularly a breakfast within the school setting can help alleviate some of the challenges faced by these children – they are provided with a safe and secure space to eat a nutritious meal and link into a warm and supportive environment.

This scoping study explores the potential for further development of breakfast clubs.

¹ Office of the Minister for Children. Department of Health and Children (2007) The 7 National Service Outcomes for Children in Ireland. (2007) Source: The Agenda for Children's Services: A Policy Handbook. www.dohc.ie

1.1 About Healthy Food for All

Healthy Food for All (HFfA) is an all-island multi-agency initiative seeking to address food poverty by promoting access, availability and affordability of healthy food for low-income groups. HFfA has three main objectives, which are;

- To support community and sectoral initiatives that promote availability and access to healthy and affordable food for low-income groups, with a focus on community food initiatives and direct food provision, including school meals
- To develop an all-island network to identify best practice on promoting healthy food for low-income groups and to develop links with similar organisations in the UK and Europe
- To promote awareness of food poverty across all aspects of public policy, with a focus on availability, access and affordability of food.

The core work of HFfA is funded by the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs, HSE and *safefood*. Other organisations fund separate elements of their work plan. Crosscare currently houses Healthy Food for All, as well as providing administration, accounting and HR resources to help run the initiative.

Healthy Food for All's prime interest is in alleviating food poverty within Ireland. Of particular concern is the link between food poverty, child poverty and social inclusion particularly in an educational context. Over time, the organisation has become increasingly aware of the link between food poverty and education attainment within the school setting. Whilst educational disadvantage can be manifested through a number of routes such as home support, parental support etc., it is becoming increasingly clear that food poverty directly impacts on a child's capacity to access educational opportunities. Schools are also a key setting for instilling healthy eating practices for life. HFfA believes:

- Food and nutrition are central to the physical and cognitive development of children which is essential for educational success
- Schools provide a social environment where children can access, enjoy and experiment with food as well as learn about social skills associated with meal sharing, table manners etc.
- A positive experience of food in schools can filter through to children's homes and also shape their attitudes to food and consumption patterns in later life
- Schools are a cost-effective medium to deliver the expanding range of public policy objectives in relation to food consumption, from obesity to food poverty

As will be explored later in the study, recent research by the health behaviours in school children (HBSC) survey found that almost one in five school children report going to school or bed hungry, because there is not enough food at home. These children invariably are hungry in class and most likely unable to concentrate or participate in school activities.

As part of their work to highlight the role that the school plays in providing nutrition to children, HFfA published [A Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives](#) (June 2009) which specifically examined the

role of breakfast clubs as part of a range of school food initiatives. The guide also provides an introduction to parents or schools wishing to establish a breakfast club in their school.

As part of their broader agenda to raise awareness of the impact of food poverty, HfFA, working in partnership with Kellogg's, have commissioned this scoping study into the development of a healthy breakfast club programme in Ireland. This scoping study set out to explore current activity in Ireland and provide background information on breakfast clubs as well as exploring the possibilities for an enhanced school breakfast scheme in Ireland.

"Every child has a right to breakfast"

Quote from Corporate Services Manager, Kellogg's.

1.2 Background to Kellogg's CSR function

This research is being conducted by Healthy Food for All and funded by Kellogg's.

Kellogg's Ireland through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme, has a strong interest in the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity. The work of Kellogg's is underpinned by a strong belief in the **right** of each child to have a breakfast every day and the need to promote the culture of breakfast. Their CSR programme supports a number of initiatives including the provision of school breakfast clubs in the UK through their partner organisation ContinYou. In the UK, they have supported the establishment of over 500 breakfast clubs primarily by working through ContinYou to provide start up grants and assistance in training for breakfast clubs. Within Ireland they directly provide support to one breakfast club in Inchicore, Dublin.

Their interest in supporting the scoping study is to ascertain whether there is a need for further support for breakfast clubs in Ireland and, if so, what type of model should be developed. A prime interest of Kellogg's is to identify the most sustainable model of development of breakfast clubs within schools. While initially both HfFA and Kellogg's anticipated that a pilot breakfast school scheme would be launched with a number of schools, both agencies were very open to hearing about suggestions and recommendations on alternative ways to support breakfast club provision in Ireland.

1.3 What are breakfast clubs?

Breakfast clubs are initiatives established in the school or community setting which support parents and families by providing a safe and secure place for children to attend prior to school and where they can access a breakfast. Breakfast may be either hot or cold food.

They originally arose out of a need to address abject poverty and malnourishment and began primarily in the USA. However they have since become established across the world. They have evolved to strive to meet a number of needs, some of which are cited in literature and which include:

- To meet the nutritional needs of children who are not provided with a meal at breakfast time and who are at direct risk of food poverty
- To meet the needs of children who, for a variety of reasons (lack of appetite, early travel, family strife etc.), are not choosing to eat breakfast at home and who are at risk of poor nutrition.
- To provide a secure place for children to attend prior to school for parents who need to drop children off early
- To relieve family pressures and stress through the provision of an alternative approach to providing breakfast
- To provide a space for children to socialize and become 'calm' before school through activities, interaction with care staff and their peers.
- To provide a space for families with a poor relationship with their school to experience a positive intervention which welcomes families within the school setting.
- To meet the food needs of children who generally purchase food en route to school as it is usually difficult to purchase a range of healthy foods if purchasing from the local shop.
- To provide a fun and safe place to meet friends before school – this is especially important for children who find school challenging and have difficulties socializing.

In essence they offer a mix of family and social support and direct nutritional support to children and families. This study looks at breakfast clubs and their potential to play a role in addressing food poverty and educational disadvantage in Ireland.

1.4 Purpose of scoping study

The aim of the scoping study is to explore the potential of for an expanded breakfast club scheme in Ireland. HfFA raised specific questions for the scoping study, which included;

- Is there a need for breakfast clubs in school/community settings?
- Is there a need for stronger support at national level for breakfast clubs?
- What are the models of operation?
- What are set up and revenue costs for breakfast schemes models?
- Who are the key statutory agencies who should be involved?

- Who are the potential food manufacturers who could be involved?
- How can a Breakfast Club 'programme' add value to the existing School Food Programme?

However it was recognized that the consultation process would evolve and generate new directions of inquiry as the study progressed. Four objectives (with sub objectives) emerged as;

- To ascertain current provision
 - o To explore current models and the impact of breakfast clubs in operation in Ireland and beyond
 - o To try to gather information on current school food schemes in Ireland which provide support to breakfast clubs and where gaps are emerging at a local level
- To ascertain needs /gaps around the provision of breakfast clubs at a national level
 - o To consult with key stakeholder groups on the current gaps in provision and support and the most feasible vision, purpose and challenges for an expanded breakfast club scheme/pilot project in Ireland
 - o To facilitate joint discussion through a roundtable event
- To establish a likely shape and direction for an pilot project which will meet identified gaps in the field of breakfast clubs
 - o To make recommendation towards future development
 - o To chart key partners and the strategic framework for an pilot project

The initial concept discussed between HfFA and Kellogg's was that both agencies would work together to establish a pilot six-month Breakfast Club Programme which would target a small number of schools within a geographical region. A small scale pilot programme approach was suggested in order to provide technical support to schools; to provide opportunities for networking and shared learning, especially in a context where the template for School Food Initiatives in Ireland is under-developed. The pilot would be launched in the second half of 2011. However both partners welcomed a fresh look at what was needed and were open to arrange of suggestions towards future directions.

1.5 Methodology

The scoping report starts by looking at the evidence around breakfast and how breakfast impacts on learning and educational attainment. It then explores available literature on current evaluations of existing breakfast club schemes and the lessons that have emerged from evaluations to date. The literature search was conducted via the internet with follow up emails sent to authors of particularly relevant publication where these publications were not available freely over the internet. Search terms such as

- Effectiveness/impacts/ outcomes of breakfast clubs
- Impacts / benefits of breakfast on children
- Evaluation of breakfast clubs
- Breakfast and educational disadvantage

were used to source relevant papers on breakfasts or breakfast clubs. Website of agencies such as ContinYou, British Nutrition Foundation, Department of Health and Children, Department of Education and Skills, Centre for effective Services, Scottish Health Agency, Department of Agriculture, Scottish community food and Nutrition, safefood, Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute, IUNA, HBSC, HFfA etc. were also searched for articles or information of interest.

From an Irish context the study explores some recent research concerning nutrition in school children, the prevalence of eating breakfast or skipping breakfast in Ireland, the prevalence of child poverty and the core concerns regarding children and breakfast.

The following people were consulted, either through a telephone interview or a separate interview for this research:

- Mr Bruce Learner and Ms Louise O’Sullivan, corporate communications manager, Kellogg’s Corporate Social Responsibility Divisions, UK and Ireland
- Mr Tony Apicella, ContinYou – providers of the breakfast plus scheme in the UK
- Ms Karen Byrne, School Meals Programme, Department of Social Protection
- Ms Ursula Dwyer, Consultant Dietician, Department of Health and Children
- Mr Jim Walsh, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
- Mr Pat Bennett, CEO, Family Support Agency
- Dr. Cliona Ni Mhurchu, lead researcher on breakfast club research New Zealand
- Ms Audrey Deane, St Vincent De Paul Ireland
- Ms Catherine Kelly and Ms Anne Gavigan, Mercy Secondary School, Inchicore
- Ms Audrey O’Reilly & Doreen Conroy, Mountmellick Development Association, providers of breakfast club in local school
- Ms Julie Anne Tighe, Project Worker, Barnardos, provider of breakfast club in Barnardos schools, Mulhuddart
- Ms Aine Lynch, CEO National Parents Council
- Ms Martina Naughton, Business in the Community
- Mr Donagh Kelly, Social Inclusion Unit, Department of Education and Skills
- Staff and Management Committee of Healthy Food for All

In addition to the interviews conducted, HFfA hosted a roundtable event with both practitioners and policy makers to explore the potential for breakfast clubs in Ireland. A list of attendees is attached in Appendix 1.

A special focus group comprising of persons already running breakfast clubs was convened to look at how added value could be provided to clubs already in existence and support for new clubs under consideration.

2.0 CAPTURING THE EVIDENCE FOR BREAKFAST

In advance of exploring the viability of breakfast clubs schemes it is worth reviewing some recent research on the primary reasons for investing in children and breakfast.

Long since cited as ‘the most important meal of the day’, parents, nutritionists and schools usually agree that eating breakfast is beneficial for children, particularly when attending school. In theory, children awake hungry and in effect ‘break’ their night time ‘fast’ through this first meal of the day. Put simply, breakfast provides fuel to perform within a school setting.

The Department of Health and Children state in its nutrition guidelines for primary schools²

“Research has shown that children benefit both nutritionally and behaviourally by eating breakfast. Many children come to school without having breakfast. These children will inevitably be hungry in class and therefore unable to concentrate or participate in school activities. Many others arrive having eaten less healthy food that has been purchased on the way to school. All children need a healthy breakfast to grow, learn and play. A nourishing breakfast is a good start to the child’s day and gives them the energy they need to concentrate and learn.”

If breakfast is seen to be a positive contributor towards nutritional intake, it is fair to assume that of most concern are the children or adolescents who do not eat breakfast or who frequently miss breakfast. These are often termed ‘breakfast skippers’ and are of concern not only from a nutritional perspective but also in relation to their learning outcomes.

2.1 What are the benefits of breakfast?

Many of the studies which look at breakfast compare those who eat breakfast with breakfast ‘skippers’ whereas other studies look at quality of nutritional intake. In spite of the methodological difficulties, studies overall do suggest that there are real benefits associated with breakfasts with three main benefits most frequently cited in research studies. These benefits are;

Positive impact in nutritional intake. At a very simple level, breakfast provides energy for everyday tasks. In developing countries researchers are keen to prevent basic malnutrition and starvation and most frequently look at impacts of regular breakfast on growth in height and weight³. Many studies have shown definitive positive effects on malnutrition, especially marked for those children who already have a compromised nutritional status.⁴ In more developed countries, where food supply is less of a concern, researchers look to focus on the quality of

² Department of Health and Children (2003) Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools. www.dohc.ie

³ Uma Chitra and C Radha Reddy (2007). The role of breakfast in nutrient intake of urban schoolchildren. Public Health Nutrition, 10, pp 55-58 doi:10.1017

⁴ Santiago Cueto (2001). Breakfast and performance. Public Health Nutrition, 4, pp 1429-1431 doi:10.1079/PHN2001233

nutritional intake and optimal micronutrient status. The nutritional benefits associated with breakfast do depend on the choice of food eaten and depending on this choice, the nutritional benefits associated with breakfast are

- higher fibre intakes (if a high fibre food choice is eaten),
- improved micronutrient intake (particularly associated with fortified cereals consumption),
- reduced percentage of energy from fat and
- potentially beneficial impacts towards preventing obesity.

Clearly, where breakfasts are in line with high fibre, reduced fat and salt healthy eating guidelines, they hold the most potential for contributing positively towards nutrition. A number of studies conclude that amongst children, breakfast eaters are more likely to meet daily nutrient intake guidelines compared with children who eat breakfast infrequently or skip breakfast. Moreover, those who skip breakfast are more likely to consume snacks later in the day – these snacks are more likely to be energy dense (high fat/high sugar) than what is often consumed at breakfast contributing to an overall decline in nutritional intake.⁶

Positive impact in preventing or mediating against obesity. Increasingly studies are citing the relationship between obesity and overweight in young people and those who regularly skip breakfast. Perhaps one of the most powerful of these research studies is the UK Millennium study⁵. In the third ‘sweep’ of this longitudinal study, 15,460 children aged 5 were surveyed in 2006/07, following up on two previous studies which took place at earlier years. Even at age 5, children are beginning to demonstrate health related outcomes related to poor nutrition. About 15% were defined as overweight (but not obese) and 5% as obese. Of critical concern was the link seen between BMI and eating breakfast. Obese children were about twice as likely to fail to eat breakfast daily as the normal-weight children. This effect has also been found to exist among pre-school children⁶ suggesting two things; firstly there is a very real relationship between breakfast consumption and obesity and secondly breakfast skipping patterns start at very young ages.

Improved cognitive performance and mental and cognitive health. The brain relies on glucose for energy which is stored as glycogen in the liver. After a long fast these stores are depleted and breakfast serves to provide energy to the brain. This is often called the ‘kick start’ needed to boost metabolism. Children have a lower capacity to store glucose (as glycogen) in their liver and their brains consume relatively more energy than adults.⁸ It therefore makes sense

⁵ Hansen K & Joshi H (2008) Millennium Cohort Study Third Survey: A User’s Guide to Initial Findings, p. 162. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies, Institute of Education.

⁶ Bois L, Girard M, Potvin Kent M, Farmer A, Tatone-Tokuda F (2009). Breakfast skipping is associated with differences in meal patterns, macronutrient intakes and overweight among pre-school children. Public Health Nutrition. 12 pp19-28..

therefore to assume that breakfast is good for cognitive function, particularly amongst children. There is a growing body of evidence regarding the cognitive benefits of eating breakfast.⁷ In a systematic review of such studies, Hoyland, Dye and Lawton⁸, while acknowledging the flaws in each of the 45 studies examined, was able to conclude that breakfast appears to positively benefit cognitive performance. They conclude “evidence suggests that breakfast consumption has generally positive effects on cognitive performance in comparison with breakfast omission. This effect appears to be pervasive in both acute studies and longer-term school breakfast programmes”. Similar to other studies, they note that the effects of breakfast on cognitive function are more easily demonstrable in “nutritionally vulnerable children.” Once again, studies are difficult to design and demonstrate results in real life settings.

Further to the concept of good cognitive functioning is the concept of better mental health. In a cross sectional population study amongst 836 adolescents in Australia, researchers, while acknowledging the complex relationship between lifestyle factors and mental health, nonetheless found that on a number of mental health assessments, that as the quality of breakfast improved (from no breakfast to a varied high quality breakfast), so too did mental health. This research supported earlier research showing a link between mental health and breakfast but more importantly demonstrated a new finding – nutritionally higher quality breakfasts are associated with improved mental health.⁹

Of long term interest is the impact which the consumption of breakfast may have on improved lifelong nutrition – we would hope that dietary habits formed in childhood have the potential to carry through into adulthood. Whether this happens or not is debatable but it is highly likely that poor nutritional habits formed in childhood will persist into adulthood unless there is positive nutrition health promotion acting to counteract habitual dietary patterns.

Finally there may be many other family, social, behavioural and perhaps even spiritual benefits to children eating breakfast – these are too wide to capture within this review of evidence. What are of interest to this project are the benefits associated with the provision of breakfast in a school/community setting and how this supports both the individual child and the family.

⁷ Welsh Assembly Government; Health Promotion Division (2004) Breakfast and breakfast clubs for primary school children. UK literature and lessons to be learned.

⁸ Hoyland A, Dye L and Lawton C.L. (2009). A systematic review of the effect of breakfast on the cognitive performance of children and adolescents. *Nutrition Research Reviews*, 22, pp 220-243 doi:10.1017/S0954422409990175

⁹ O’Sullivan T.A , Robinson M., Kendall G.E , Miller M, Jacoby P, Silburn S.R. and Oddy W.H. (2009). A good-quality breakfast is associated with better mental health in adolescence. *Public Health Nutrition*, 12, pp 249-258 doi:10.1017/S1368980008003935

2.2 What are the patterns of breakfast 'skipping' in Ireland?

The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC Ireland)¹⁰ 2006 survey captured health data from 10,334 students aged 10-18 and 3,404 students in 3rd and 4th class. . The survey is the third time that data of this kind has been collected from young people across the Republic of Ireland with previous surveys were conducted in 2002 and 1998. In the 10-18 year old sample, 14% of children report that they never have breakfast during weekdays, with clear age and gender differences. Similar to previous years, the rates increase with age and a greater proportion of girls than boys report not having breakfast on school days. Children from the highest social classes are least likely to report never having breakfast on weekdays. However among younger age groups, (3rd and 4th class – 8-10 years approx.), the rates fell sharply with, only 2% of 3rd and 4th class student report not having breakfast on any day of the week.

Recent research using data from The National Children's Food Survey (2005) and The National Teens' Food survey (2008)¹¹ which survey 441 teenagers and 584 children aged 5-12 years we see that on school days, breakfast was consumed by almost all children on most days. In older years, 97% of teenagers ate breakfast at least once during the recording week. In the same survey, 76.2 % of teenagers reported habitual breakfast use when asked 'Do you usually eat a breakfast?' with a further 16.2% reporting that they eat breakfast 'sometimes'. In total 7.6% of teenagers reported that they do not eat breakfast.

The mean contribution of energy at breakfast to MDI of energy of the overall school day diet was 16%. On average, breakfast on school days was a nutrient-dense meal, low in fat (26% TE), high in carbohydrate (60% TE) and compared to the overall school day diet, was relatively high in micronutrients such as iron, calcium, vitamin C, folate and other B vitamins. For the most part, breakfast was made up of only a small number of foods, 'ready to eat breakfast cereals (RTEBCs)', 'whole milk', 'white bread' and 'fruit juice'.

As pointed out by Dr. Janette Walton, one of the researchers working on these surveys in UCC (personal communication), one of the difficulties in the research available, is that there are a number of ways to define breakfast such as 'something to eat before school'. Much use a definition of breakfast which is a 'self-definition', therefore children or adolescents who purchase foods from a local shop may also report in nutritional surveys that they have eaten breakfast. From a nutritional perspective many nutritionists and teachers would have concerns about the nutritional quality of these foods purchased on the way to school as many are high in fat and sugar.

Most Irish research indicates that there is a gradual increase in breakfast skipping as children grow older. Research from the HBSC data show that in the 10 to 18 year old sample, 14% of children report that they never have breakfast during weekdays with clear age and gender differences. This indicates that a significant proportion of children at a primary school age are skipping breakfast. For example in a

¹⁰ Nic Gabhainn S., Molcho M., (2007) The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) Study 2006. Health Promotion Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway. www.nuigalway.ie/hbsc

¹¹ National Teen Food Survey (2008) www.iuna.net & National Children's Food Survey (2005) www.iuna.net. Information provided by Dr. Janette Walton, UCC.

secondary school of 700 pupils, about 140 may have skipped breakfast - in reality it is likely that a much higher proportion have eaten a poor or nutritionally inadequate breakfast. This pattern of increasing breakfast skipping among older groups is replicated in other research and appears to be common among adolescents.^[3]

In developing a project for the future it seems likely that breakfast clubs will need to be targeted at all ages within the primary school setting but particularly at older age groups (5th / 6th classes). Any future project should also consider whether breakfast clubs can be clearly established in a secondary school setting. The breakfast club in the Mercy school in Inchicore demonstrate that these clubs can work well and increase educational participation. From a methodological perspective it should be noted that statistics will often hide a small number of children at all ages including younger age groups who are not receiving an adequate breakfast in the morning. For example one or two children in each class of 30 may skip breakfast but this statistic might not be reflected in the results of a survey that is administered by children or their parents. Such children who skip breakfast may either not be in school or parents may not be motivated to complete a questionnaire. It is often through qualitative interviews with children that greater detail and information on patterns of breakfast eating emerge.

2.3 Why do some children not eat breakfast?

In the interviews with the stakeholders and reading the reports of breakfast clubs it appears that children skip breakfast for a variety of reasons. This is in keeping with the experience of breakfast clubs throughout the world. For many the absence of consistency and routine at home is a key reason why breakfast is skipped or inadequate.

From the literature available and interviews conducted within this study, the range of reasons children do not eat breakfast at home include;

- **Lack of food:** No consistent provision of food in the home setting, with children arriving to school hungry. Children often are not able to be confident there will be a regular supply of breakfast food at home.
- **Lack of routine:** Poor routines at home meaning that children are rising too late to be able to eat breakfast and get to school on time. For many children, poor bedtime routines at home contribute to poor routines in the morning.
- **Poor appetite in early morning:** some children arrive to school without breakfast because they were not hungry when at home – for some children they have little appetite first thing in the morning and won't eat at home. Others have to rise early and undergo a long journey to school.
- **Family tension and stress at breakfast time:** Most families strive to ensure their children eat breakfast, but many parents report extreme frustration and family friction caused by 'picky' children or children who simply will not eat at breakfast time. This adds to the friction in a family and

contributes to a stressful home and environment at this time. This is exacerbated in families who have more serious dysfunction with breakfast routine becoming non-existent.

- **Working parents who need to drop children:** Many working families need to leave home early and drop children to childcare - increasingly there is a need for breakfast to be provided within the before-school childcare setting.

There is one Irish study which was completed by students of the Mercy Inchicore School on about 90 secondary level students. Although this survey is much smaller than IUNA survey, it is interesting to note that of the 90 students were interviewed in 2009 and 2010 regarding their breakfast habits, the percentage not eating breakfast was alarming – almost 75% did not eat breakfast regularly.

Table 1: Response to ‘Do you usually eat breakfast at home before coming to school?’ : Source Inchicore Mercy School

	2009, N=86	2010, N=98
Yes	27%	24%
No	73%	76%

The reasons given by those interviewed within the study are outlined in the table below and illustrate that eating breakfast at home does not suit many of the girls due to appetite and time issues.

Table 2: Reasons why breakfast was not eaten: Source Inchicore Mercy School

	2009, N=86	2010, N=98
Not enough time	17%	18%
Too early to eat	28%	35%
Not hungry	22%	20%
Feel sick	28%	20%
Don't like food choice at home	5%	7%

2.4 Breakfast and food poverty

Food poverty is defined as the “inability to have a socially adequate and nutritious diet due to cost and access problems”¹² A seminal study on food poverty by Dr Sharon Freil, Orla Walsh and Catherine Conlon in 2004¹³ illustrated some basic facts concerning food poverty and raised awareness about the importance of food and nutrition from a low-income perspective. The main findings of the study were

¹² Friel, Walsh and McCarthy for the Combat Poverty Agency (2004) The Financial Cost of Healthy Eating in Ireland. Combat Poverty Agency. Working Paper 04/01

¹³ *ibid*

that many households but particularly those managing on a tight income, when compared to more affluent households;

- eat less well and have inferior food intake and lower compliance with dietary recommendations and nutrient intake
- spend a relatively higher share of income on food but have difficulties accessing a variety of good quality, affordable food
- know what are healthy food options, but are restricted by financial and physical constraints in accessing these choices

So in simple terms, food poverty is influenced from factors both within and outside the home with the result that those experiencing food poverty have less choice and flexibility when it comes to food. Of course children are most at risk, as they have the least capacity to purchase food for the home, as this role is normally undertaken by parents.

Of interest to this project is the percentage of children reporting food poverty. In the HBSC study referenced above children were asked to report how often they go to school or to bed hungry because there was not enough food at home. The report states *“Children reporting that they always, often or sometimes go to school or to bed hungry were identified as experiencing food poverty. Overall, 17% of children report ever experiencing food poverty. There is no clear evidence of gender, age or social class effects, except for some elevated rates amongst the youngest boys.”* The absence of a clear link to social class is interesting, indicating that food poverty for children is more widely dispersed among all social groupings.

In the UK millennium study referenced earlier, breakfasting was strongly related to parents’ work status, with workless households far less likely to report that the child ate breakfast (94.9% for both parents working versus 87.4% for both parents not working). They concluded that *“this may be due to the lack of a daily routine of rising early enough to eat breakfast”*

This finding is replicated in a study among 4,315 children from 111 primary schools in Wales where an association was found between breakfast skipping and social deprivation¹⁴. The research by Moore et al reported that consistent with previous research deprivation is related to increased breakfast skipping and consumption of ‘unhealthy’ items (i.e. sweet snacks, crisps) for breakfast. In addition, deprivation was significantly inversely associated with attitudes towards eating breakfast, with a strong social gradient in attitudes towards eating breakfast observed suggesting social inequalities in breakfast eating behaviours at an early age.

¹⁴ Moore GF, Tapper K, Murphy S, Lynch R, Raisanen L, Pimm C and Moore L(2007). Associations between deprivation, attitudes towards eating breakfast and breakfast eating behaviours in 9–11-year-olds. Public Health Nutrition, 10, pp 582-589 doi:10.1017/S1368980007699558

2.4.1 What children are most at risk?

Information from the new 2009 Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)¹⁵ survey compiled by the CSO indicates that from an age perspective children aged 0 to 17 years remain the most vulnerable age group to poverty. This survey found that 18.6% of children are defined as at risk of poverty and 8.7% of children aged 0 to 17 years remain in consistent poverty. This figure is up from the 6.3% recorded in 2008 indicating that child poverty is increasing in Ireland alongside the current economic decline. The survey also showed that lone parents and those living in rented accommodation are at the highest risk of poverty. This survey data is considered to be highly reliable, taking data from over 12,000 persons in Ireland. These findings augment those found by the HBSC study, which stated that 17% of children had reported going to school hungry because there was not enough food at home. Moreover, the HBSC survey did not see any clear evidence of gender differences or age or social class effects which may indicate that food poverty for children is more widely dispersed among all social groups and is not just confined to those at the lowest incomes.

For families struggling on low incomes the provision of a healthy diet remains a constant challenge to these families. The findings of a recent Healthy Food for All pre-budget submission on the cost of a healthy diet¹⁶, examined current income support provisions and how families could provide healthy nutrition. They highlighted that

- ▶ Low-income families spend a **higher proportion of their income** (23-25%) on food compared to other socio-economic groups (17%)
- ▶ In order to obtain a healthy diet, families dependent on social welfare would have to spend **one third** of their weekly budget on food
- ▶ For a teenager, the cost of healthy eating is €32.90 per week using a multiple supermarket, as compared with €17 for a younger child. This represents more **than half of the total child income support for a teenager**.

It is highly likely giving these financial struggles that meals are missed or inadequate. For many children one of these missed meals is breakfast. If food poverty is defined as “the inability to have a socially adequate and nutritious diet due to cost and access problems” then these children can be classified as experiencing food poverty.

2.4.2 Breakfast skipping as a contributor towards educational disadvantage

Educational disadvantage is closely linked to social exclusion – often those most at risk of social exclusion are those who have left school early, may have literacy problems or low skills levels. Educational disadvantage means that some children are unable to get the same benefits from the education system as other children – this may be for a variety of reasons such as disability, literacy difficulties, health problems, poor family supports etc. The Education Act 1998 defines educational

¹⁵ Central Statistics office (2009) Survey on Income and Living Conditions. Source www.cso.ie

¹⁶ Healthy Food for All, Pre budget submission, 2010: The Cost of a Healthy Diet:

disadvantage as *“the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools”*. Educational disadvantage is demonstrated in many ways, most often in poor levels of participation and achievement in the formal education system¹⁷.

For those children where family income adequacy is threatened or, where for other reasons, breakfast is not possible within the home setting, they are often receiving insufficient nutrition to sustain them through the mornings learning at school. This may contribute towards educational disadvantage.

From a teacher’s perspective, education is more easily transferred if children are ready for school. Indeed, qualitative research indicates that teachers believe that eating breakfast is part of the preparation for school and ensuring children are ready to begin learning.⁷ The findings in this scoping study, but one which is also reflected in breakfast club literature, was that many schools report behavioural difficulties which they attribute to a lack of breakfast. In one school interviewed, they could map this ‘dip in behaviour’ to a time in the morning when they felt blood sugars were particularly low in those children who had missed breakfast. As a consequence of inadequate nutrition, many teachers and others interested in educational attainment, feel that the children lacking adequate nutrition prior to school are falling behind and are unable to fully participate in the educational opportunities offered to them¹⁸.

In interviews, teachers often report that when children arrive late to school, their poor punctuality impacts on the overall class as well as the individual child. One of the primary drivers for breakfast clubs is to ensure that these children with poor punctuality are engaged with so that they are ready to start school on time and are able to sustain learning until break time. Thus all children in the class benefit.

As can be seen in the government schemes to address educational disadvantage, detailed below, many schools find that provision of breakfast through a breakfast club is an important in-school and out-of-school support to children at risk of educational disadvantage.

“It’s the same as reading supports– we put them in place for children who are falling behind or don’t have the necessary supports at home or to help them with reading – this brings all children to the same level of opportunity. Breakfast does the same thing – it means all children are ready to learn and have equal opportunity”

Quote from policy maker, consultation process

¹⁷ Source: www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system

¹⁸ Sourced from a number of sources – interviews and roundtable event as well as reflected in a range of literature.

3.0 STATE POLICY TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE AND SCHOOL FOOD

Running through the literature on breakfasts are the policy concerns regarding educational disadvantage and whether this is amplified for children who do not eat breakfast. As part of this study, we met with

- The Family Support Agency
- The Social inclusion Unit, Department of Education and Skills
- Social Inclusion Division, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

We also met with a number of teachers and educationalists through the roundtable event. Educational disadvantage is a key concern of government policy with increasing emphasis on the need to address literacy and numeracy among those who experience educational disadvantage.

3.1 State schemes to tackle educational disadvantage

A number of schemes are in operation to tackle educational disadvantage. The main schemes are

3.1.1 Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) ¹⁹

DEIS is the government response to educational disadvantage. The DEIS action plan for educational inclusion, is being rolled out on a phased basis over the period 2005-10, and focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years). Schools with DEIS status, receive specific funding to try to ensure *“that the resources, both human and financial, being made available under the DEIS action plan and under pre-existing schemes to address educational disadvantage are directed to support children at risk of underachievement and early school leaving, maximise the benefit to the children concerned and help tackle those impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage.”*²⁰

DEIS provides for:

- A standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage and
- A new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which will bring together and build upon the following existing schemes and programmes.

At present, there are no less than 8 separate schemes to tackle educational disadvantage put in place over the year, with some schools benefiting from just one or two of these and others benefiting from more. The DEIS initiative is designed to ensure that the most disadvantaged schools benefit from a

¹⁹ Source: <http://www.education.ie/home>. Detailed under social inclusion.

²⁰ Department of Education and Skills. Guidelines on the appropriate use of DEIS funding School Support Programme supported by additional conversations with DEIS staff

comprehensive package of supports, while ensuring that others continue to get support in line with the level of disadvantage among their pupils.

While there are benefits in individual interventions and programmes, a more integrated and joined up response to the issue of educational inclusion was required by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). As a planning objective, DES have integrated the following existing programmes into the School Support Programme under DEIS on a phased basis over the five year implementation plan 2005/2006 - 2009/2010

- Home School Community Liaison Scheme
- School Completion Programme (see below)
- Support Teachers Project
- Giving Children an Even Break
- Breaking the Cycle
- Disadvantaged Area Scheme
- Literacy and Numeracy Schemes

Some of the DEIS schools have breakfast clubs in place and forthcoming research from DEIS will provide more accurate information on the current state of provision.

3.1.2 The School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a Department of Education and Skills programme that aims to have a significant positive impact on levels of young people's retention in primary and second level schools and on numbers of pupils who successfully complete the senior cycle, or equivalent.

SCP is integrated into the new School Support Programme, as outlined in the Department's strategy Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). Schools are organised into local 'clusters' and each cluster has established a Local Management Committee that develops a retention plan targeting children and young people most at risk of early school leaving. The main aims of the School Completion Programme are:

- To retain young people in the formal education system to completion of the Senior Cycle, or equivalent.
- To improve the quality of participation and educational attainment of targeted children and young people in the educational process.
- To bring together all relevant local stakeholders (home, school, youth, community, statutory and voluntary) to tackle early school leaving.
- To offer positive supports in primary and post-primary schools towards the prevention of educational disadvantage.
- To encourage young people who have left mainstream education to return to school.

- To influence in a positive way policies relating to the prevention of early school leaving in the education system.²¹

There are currently 124 School Completion projects (including clusters) in operation nationwide, encompassing 464 primary schools and 227 post-primary schools. The projects in operation deliver a range of in-school, after school, out of- school and holiday supports to young people identified at risk of early school leaving. SCP projects, through their annual Retention Plans, continue to implement a range of flexible, age appropriate interventions grounded in experience and best practice. The most common in-school supports delivered by SCP projects include attendance tracking and monitoring programmes, transfer programmes, literacy / reading programmes / learning support / maths support, lunch clubs, therapeutic interventions, breakfast clubs, counselling services and mentoring programmes. Consultation with the national school completion team and its national researcher for this study showed that among the SCP national team;

- there is a perception that breakfast clubs are running successfully at primary level, but more difficult to engage children at post-primary level
- There is a lack of finance from the School Meals Programme for some DEIS schools
- It is getting more difficult with cutbacks for SCP projects to afford the part-time staff necessary to run breakfast clubs
- There is a need to look at the facilities available for food preparation. Some health and safety audits have demanded state-of-the-art kitchens
- there should be training in HACCP for all staff
- Those projects who do not get School Meals Programme funding pay out for food from the SCP budget
- Schools as well as SCP projects can apply for funding for School Meals Programme. SCP might use the funding at lunchtime or after school instead of breakfast club which may already be set up in the school.

²¹ Source: School Completion Programme. Aims and principles of the school completion programme leaflet. Available from the DES or School Completion Programme.

3.2 State schemes to provide food in schools

The impact of food on educational attainment and access to educational opportunities has long been recognised under Ireland's welfare schemes with the following schemes are in operation.

3.2.1 School Meals Scheme²²

The School Meals Programme operated by the Department of Social Protection provides funding towards provision of food services for disadvantaged school child through two schemes:

- The statutory **Urban School Meals Scheme** for primary schools is operated by Local Authorities and part-financed by the Department of Social Protection.
- The non-statutory **School Meals Local Projects Scheme** provides funding directly from the Department of Social Protection to primary schools, secondary schools and local groups and voluntary organisations which operate their own school meals projects. It is this scheme which provides most of the funding from breakfast clubs and other school meals and is discussed in further detail below.

The School Meals Local Projects Scheme provides funding directly to primary schools, secondary schools, local groups and voluntary organisations, in both urban and rural areas, which operate their own school meals projects. The Scheme was established to assist school meals projects operating outside the statutory Urban School Meals Scheme. Their website states "*Projects must be targeted at areas of disadvantage or at children with special needs. Priority for funding is currently given to schools which are part of the Department of Education & Skills' initiative for disadvantaged schools, 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS). However, there is no automatic entitlement to funding and all applications are considered in light of the available budget for the Scheme. Funding will be provided only to existing projects that have shown on-going viability.*" Because in the different timing of these schemes, not all DEIS schools have breakfast clubs and not all the projects funded under the DSP are designated disadvantaged (the DEIS designation came after many schools had received funding)

The school meals website state *'The School Meals Programme aims to provide regular, nutritious food to children who are unable, by reason of lack of good quality food, to take full advantage of the education provided for them. Research has shown that inadequate nutrition impacts negatively on children's ability to learn and benefit from education. Proper nutrition can improve children's ability to concentrate, improve disruptive behaviour and encourage children to attend school. The School Meals Programme is an important component of policies to encourage school attendance and extra educational achievement by children, particularly those from the most disadvantaged background.'*

Statistics provided by the Department of Social Protection to this scoping study show that nearly €35 million is being spent annually on school meals. In total 534 schools are providing breakfast clubs. Schools receive funding for food only with a breakfast attracting a charge of €0.60 per child.

²² Source: <http://www.welfare.ie> with additional interviews with the school meals section

Table 3: School Meal provision, 2010. Source: School Meals Programme, DSP, Sligo.

Expenditure	35m in 2010
Urban School Meal's Scheme:	€ 788,015
School Meals (Local Projects) Scheme [SMLPS]:	€ 34,169,691
Schools benefitting (no of pupils in brackets)	2,081 (206,182)
Urban School Meal's Scheme – School's Benefiting:	324 (57,473 pupils)
School Meals (Local Projects) School's – School's & pre-schools Benefiting:	1,757 (148,709 pupils) 1513 schools
Number of Organisation's who Provide Breakfast in 2010:	534
Number of Organisation's who Provide Dinner in 2010:	199
Number of Organisation's who Provide Light Meal in 2010:	749
Number of Organisation's who Provide Snack in 2010:	298
Total number of schools	4,025 (3,285 primary, 730 secondary)

3.2.2 Local and Community Development Programme

The Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs has, over the past number of years, been pursuing a process of cohesion of local delivery structures in order to simplify and enhance the effectiveness of the delivery of a range of local community development programmes aimed at tackling social exclusion. Following a recent re-organisation, there are now 15 Local Development Companies (LDCs) in urban areas and 37 integrated LEADER/LDC bodies in rural areas. The new programme aimed at tackling social exclusion is called the Local Community Development Programme (LCDP). The aim of the LCDP is to tackle poverty and social exclusion through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities. This work is underpinned by four high level goals:

- To promote awareness, knowledge and uptake of a wide range of statutory, voluntary and community services.
- To increase access to formal and informal educational, recreational and cultural development activities and resources.
- To increase peoples' work readiness and employment prospects.
- To promote engagement with policy, practice and decision making processes on matters affecting local communities.

Some of the LCDPs support breakfast club provision. Examples include the Paul Partnership in Limerick, St. John's Junior National School (JNS) and St. Paul's Senior National School (SNS) Breakfast Club (Drogheda Partnership).

3.2.4 EU School Milk Scheme

The EU School Milk Scheme is operated in Ireland by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (DAFF). The uptake of the scheme is mainly among primary school children. All pupils in regular attendance at primary schools can avail of the scheme during school days but not during holiday camps. When the scheme was re-launched in 2006, it offered a broader range of products including flavoured milk, low-fat milk and yoghurt.

3.2.5 Fruit scheme & Food Dudes Scheme²³

The Food Dudes Healthy Eating Programme is an award winning programme developed by the Food & Activity Research Unit Bangor University, Wales to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables both in school at home. There are two main phases to the programme: Phase 1 is an intensive intervention which lasts 16 days. During this time, fruit and vegetables are delivered to the school, one portion of each per child with accompanying activities. Phase 2 extends the home element of the programme by encouraging children to bring their own fruit and veg to school every day in special Food Dudes containers. The programme is run by An Bord Bia on behalf of the Department of Agriculture. Ireland is participating in the EU School Fruit Scheme and, from September 2009, the fruit and vegetables provided in the Food Dudes Programme are co-funded by the EU through the School Fruit Scheme. This scheme was established to establish a budget to provide free fruit to children in schools.

3.3 Key reflections from consultation process:

There is no doubt that significant state investment is being invested to meet needs concerning school food and educational disadvantage. Feedback from the consultation process and roundtable event concluded that there is a wide range of existing funding and operational supports for a breakfast scheme. These include volunteers, parents and grandparents, community employment schemes and school food programmes. The existing funding stream of €34 million is of vast importance to schools as it not only provides the food to children but it also enables schools to leverage additional supports. Other funding sources include local business, local funding, DEIS funding, private sector. There are opportunities for corporate engagement to source additional resources such as professional expertise, employee placements which would provide training and up-skilling of school staff.

Those at the roundtable event concluded that any new programme of Breakfast Clubs must be incorporated into the current School Food Programme. Any new developments must be an integrated element of the existing scheme and cannot duplicate or derail the existing programme.

A critical challenge is to consolidate the various strands and provide a coherent interface between schools and funding streams with a recommendation coming from this study to further integrate the funding streams both from a policy and operational level. This is not to suggest that funding streams be amalgamated but rather that those agencies with responsibilities in these areas would work more closely to ensure best use of scarce resources.

²³ Source www.fooddudes.ie

The evidence and policy platforms are strengthening over time, as projects such as SCP, build their evidence base. However, inherent in the need for more integrated approach is the need for better collection and sharing of data – at present it is difficult to

- gain an understanding of the total number of schools providing breakfast clubs
- assess needs within schools concerning breakfast clubs and the broader provision of food within a school setting
- understand the models of provision and areas where provision could be improved.
- Find an easy way to access these schools and ascertain their needs.
- Directly access evidence from a practice perspective and feed this into policy at a national level.

The forthcoming research coming from the social inclusion unit of the DES should be a natural starting point to build data needs.

From a policy perspective, those at the roundtable event recommended a central body to provide ‘a one stop shop’ to provide information on funding streams and available grants, to champion and build capacity at local level and to feed lessons from practice into the policy arena. HfFA may have a role in providing a framework for such discussions and by providing research evidence concerning breakfast clubs. At a policy level, there is a need for an innovative policy approach which is framed in a positive manner and which looks to integrate schools food provision with educational objectives. Branding of any new programme will be key to ensure it is family friendly and not perceived solely as an issue of disadvantage.

The added value of a breakfast club programme should be to convey support for all day food within the school setting which support home provision of food. This could be achieved through the integration of food as part of the curriculum in schools. The promotion of breakfast clubs as a model could in turn promote awareness of school food programmes. A national programme could facilitate greater engagement between the Food Dudes, EU Milk Scheme and the School Meals Scheme etc.

An outcomes focused national programme should support existing school food provision but should enable models to be locally adaptable within the national framework.

4.0 BREAKFAST CLUBS AS A BRIDGE TOWARDS ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

This chapter looks at the findings from the consultation process to date on what might be promising areas for development.

4.1 What are the benefits of breakfast clubs on children?

The ContinYou website states that *“Breakfast clubs provide effective environments for promoting healthy eating, for enriching the curriculum through informal learning and for tackling issues of social exclusion and academic underachievement by encouraging children to come to school who might be reluctant to attend otherwise. A breakfast club may involve school staff, children, parents, carers and the wider community. It aims to improve the health and health behaviours of children, staff and volunteers who become involved.”* They go on to state that breakfast clubs can:

- Help meet nutritional needs
- Improve school attendance and punctuality
- Improve concentration in class
- Create positive links between families and the school
- Create a sense of security in the school environment
- Allow for a more positive outlook towards the school, resulting in improved participation
- Improve interaction with adults
- Develop social skills
- Allow participants to have fun
- Improve peer relationships”

(Source www.ContinYou.org.uk)

Their knowledge is based on many years supporting and facilitating the establishment of breakfast clubs and direct observation of the benefits.

4.1.1 Methodological difficulties in evaluations

Despite regular claims regarding the benefits of breakfast clubs, finding evidence of effectiveness is more difficult within the scientific literature. In a more detailed paper to examine the impacts of which ContinYou was part, it is clear that researchers find it difficult to measure and capture, in quantitative terms, the long term impacts of breakfast clubs on children’s health, wellbeing and educational outcomes²⁴. Many international evaluations have looked at impacts in a number of setting – many studies are often completed in developing countries where nutritional issues are different and calorific adequacy would be the main concern. Furthermore there are cultural differences with different populations. These studies cannot be used to support the provision of breakfast clubs in more affluent

²⁴ Defeyter, M. A., Graham, P. L., Walton, J. and Apicella, T. (2010), NEWS AND VIEWS: Breakfast clubs: availability for British schoolchildren and the nutritional, social and academic benefits. *Nutrition Bulletin*, 35: 245–253. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-3010.2010.01843.x

countries. Furthermore, most clubs have been established as a response to a local need and did not capture baseline information which would contribute towards effective evaluation.

In evaluating the long term benefits of breakfast clubs or the impact of breakfast skipping on learning outcomes, we see that children do not lend themselves to acting as 'perfect research subjects'. They may infrequently miss or skip breakfast or show variable outcomes and are not easily characterised into simple 'boxes'. It is difficult, both ethically and practically, to have children or schools randomly assigned to control or experimental samples to fit a 'randomised controlled trial'. Outside of a somewhat controlled setting, it can be difficult to measure the specific impact of a breakfast club. Most researchers have prefaced their research by acknowledging that studies are difficult to design and follow up and are often not sensitive enough to capture the impacts associated with breakfast.^{24, 25}

In many ways controlled trials are inappropriate for such a community setting where schools are primarily interested in assisting the children who attend the school rather than being involved in an experiment or controlled trial. It is interesting to note that this theme is being incorporated into a new study design in New Zealand where an Irish researcher is leading what is called a 'stepped wedge cluster design' to evaluate the impacts of breakfast clubs in New Zealand, this design allows all schools to become involved in the breakfast club but stages their involvement, so that some can act as controls in the early stages of intervention²⁶. It may be interesting in the future to connect HFfA into this study design so that further advice could be sought for the evaluation of a pilot breakfast scheme. A similar model is being developed by the Welsh assembly to evaluate their breakfast schools in Wales (personal information only).

This is not to say there are no benefits associated with breakfast and breakfast clubs just simply that these impacts can be very difficult to quantify.

25 Hoyland A, Louise Dye L and Lawton CL (2009). A systematic review of the effect of breakfast on the cognitive performance of children and adolescents. *Nutrition Research Reviews*, 22, pp 220-243
doi:10.1017/S0954422409990175

26 Ni Mhurchu C, Turley M, Gorton D, Jiang Y, Michie J, Maddison R, Hattie J (2010) Effects of a free school breakfast programme on school attendance, achievement, psychosocial function, and nutrition: study protocol for a stepped wedge cluster randomised trial. *BMC Public Health* 2010, 10:738

4.1.2 International findings

In the previous section we examined the benefits of breakfast on children's performance. We now look at the impacts, where measured of breakfast clubs, on children. Selected themes have been extracted of relevance to this study. As previously described, there are few high quality studies available and various methodological difficulties associated with measurement of outcomes. The most recent studies show the following impacts;

1. Some behavioural improvements can be seen from breakfast clubs but affects are small across large scale studies:

In a large scale evaluation of the UK pilot breakfast scheme in 2004, Shemilt and his colleagues found very little evidence of large impacts of breakfast clubs on children. They reported evidence of reduced truancy and improved fruit consumption amongst those exposed to breakfast clubs. Of interest was an apparent decrease in behavioural outcomes in intervention children – though they felt this may have related to the culture of supervision and controlled activities in some clubs. However he noted that the time frame allowed for both the intervention and the evaluation was more than likely too short to enable a complex evaluation take place and that prior to establishment, interventions such as these need to have considered evaluation issues in advance. He concluded that *“It seems likely that school breakfast clubs need a period of stable operation and development to have a chance of impacting on schools and individuals. This evaluation was complicated by a variable rate of implementation and a lack of continuous breakfast club provision amongst the intervention group.”*²⁷

His evaluation showed that other factors are often also at play – if a school does not adequately supervise children then it may result in higher levels of hyperactivity from children who leave a chaotic breakfast club and then go into school²⁸ This finding has seen elsewhere and shows that breakfast clubs are linked to the culture of a school.²⁴

A recent Cochrane review of school feeding programmes examined 18 studies on school nutrition - nine were performed in higher income countries and nine in lower income countries. A lot of the low income studies looked at metrics such as weight and height. While some benefits were seen in the studies including improvements in school attendance, maths performance and weight metrics, the difficulty in

²⁷ Shemilt, I., Harvey, I., Shepstone, L., Swift, L., Reading, R., Mugford, M., Belderson, P., Norris, N., Thoburn, J. and Robinson, J. (2004), A national evaluation of school breakfast clubs: evidence from a cluster randomized controlled trial and an observational analysis. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 30: 413–427. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2004.00453.x

²⁸ Shemilt I. O'Brien M., Thoburn J.; Harvey I.; Belderson P.; Robinson J.; Camina M. School breakfast clubs, children and family support. *Children & Society*. 17: 100-12 School of Breakfast Clubs Evaluation Group.

measuring consistent outcomes was noted. Moreover, given the lack of consistent comparable data, the authors felt it was difficult to determine the clinical significance of the findings. They recommended that *“recommend that further well-designed studies on the effectiveness of school meals be undertaken, that results should be reported according to the socio-economic status of the children who take part in them, and that researchers gather robust data on outcomes that directly reflect effects on physical, social, and psychological health”*.²⁹

In two evaluations completed for the Welsh government³⁰, Murphy et al found that where a national universally school breakfast scheme was provided;

- Students in intervention schools reported **significantly higher numbers of healthy food items consumed at breakfast and** more positive attitudes towards breakfast eating at 12 months
- The breakfast club intervention **did not reduce breakfast skipping**; rather, pupils substituted breakfast at home for breakfast at school. Parents in intervention schools reported significantly higher rates of consumption of breakfast at school and correspondingly lower rates of breakfast consumption at home.
- There was **no impact on episodic memory or classroom behaviour, which may require targeting breakfast skippers**.
- There were more **positive attitudes to breakfast**, which may have implications for life-course dietary behaviours.

2. Nutritional quality matters:

The nutritional quality of the food provided is important. In one evaluation of three schools who provided different types of food at breakfast, Belderson found that where sausage sandwiches were provided in one school this contributed to a poor nutritional intake. She concluded *“The resultant nutrient content of a typical breakfast, again particularly at [2 schools], was also far from desirable. Thus, these breakfasts have the potential to contribute in a negative way to children’s dietary intake”*³¹. However care must be taken in the quantity of so called ‘healthy foods’ offered – in one evaluation of new healthy eating catering policies in schools in Northern Ireland there was an unacceptable amount of waste associated with some healthier options provided in schools. It seems common sense is required in choosing foods.

²⁹ Kristjansson B, Petticrew M, MacDonald B, Krasevec J, Janzen L, Greenhalgh T, Wells GA, MacGowan J, Farmer AP, Shea B, Mayhew A, Tugwell P, Welch V. School feeding for improving the physical and psychosocial health of disadvantaged students. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2007, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD004676. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD004676.pub2

³⁰ Murphy S, Moore G, Tapper K, Lynch R, Raisanen L, Clark R, Desousa, and Moore L. (2007) An Evaluation of the Welsh Assembly Governments Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative *and* Murphy S, Moore GF, Tapper K, Lynch R, Clarke R, Raisanen L, Desousa C and Moore L. Free healthy breakfasts in primary schools: a cluster randomised controlled trial of a policy intervention in Wales, UK. *Public Health Nutrition*, Available on CJO 06 Jul 2010 doi:10.1017/S1368980010001886

³¹ Belderson P, Harvey I, Kimbell R, O'Neill J, Russell J and E. Barker ME (2003). Does breakfast-club attendance affect schoolchildren's nutrient intake? A study of dietary intake at three schools. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 90, pp 1003-1006 doi:10.1079/BJN20031011

3. There are broader quality of life benefits:

What is of interest in many studies however is that authors have not examined the impact of breakfast club activities on children's performance. These evaluations have primarily looked at the impact of good/better nutrition on children's performance whereas it is likely that the educational impact will result not only from better breakfast but through social and inclusive activities which get children ready and prepared for school. All qualitative interviews and reports report a positive impact from these 'added value' breakfast club activities but it seems this impact is not being captured in research studies. One such study is that carried out by the Greater Glasgow Health Board, in conjunction with the Health Education Board for Scotland³². In this project, an evaluation was conducted on the three different models of breakfast initiative specially established for the project. This evaluation found that the 'food only' model had least impact on behavioural outcomes when compared to a more coordinated approach which includes activities for children. However the authors acknowledged that supervision and play activities are costly to provide.

As discussed earlier, Ian Shemilt and his colleagues in East Anglia were contracted to evaluate a pilot national scheme in the UK.²⁸ In one paper they specifically examined the impacts on the quality of family life and found positive associations with breakfast clubs and reduced pressures within families. Some of the benefits noted were;

- **Relieving hunger:** 18% of parents reports difficulties in getting their child to eat in the morning. The introduction of breakfast clubs into schools had contributed to alleviating parental perceptions of the extent of getting children to eat at breakfast time.
- **Breakfast clubs helped alleviate food poverty.** "Some children were found to face considerable pressure in the degree of responsibility that had fallen onto them for organising family meals.... One parent reported that use of the club had relieved pressure on an inadequate household food budget, unable to provide breakfast foods that were acceptable to the children."
- **Assistance with punctuality:** The paper reported that 16% of families participating in the survey study reported experiencing problems getting their children to school on time sometimes (367 of 2240). The majority of problems were related to pressure within the morning routine (organising several children; friction between siblings; oversleeping; lack of motivation for school). It was often felt that use of the breakfast club had helped to ease the strain.
- **Capacity to add to the parent's employability:** "Many parents of (predominantly) younger children had found that use of a club had been extremely helpful in their ability to retain work or maintain study. It was also highlighted that the availability of a club had afforded some a greater sense of reliability within the labour market."

The authors concluded that *"breakfast clubs as successful in encouraging their children to eat breakfast in the morning as well as reducing pressure within families at a stressful point in the day. School breakfast clubs have also provided peace of mind as an additional source of affordable, trusted childcare*

³² Health Scotland (2000) Evaluation of Breakfast Club initiatives in Greater Glasgow: stages 1 & 2.
Source www.healthscotland.com/publications

amongst working or studying parents and those seeking employment.” Thus we can see that breakfast clubs can be about much more than just the provision of breakfast.

ContinYou breakfast clubs plus offer guidance to school on the types of activities which can add value to a breakfast facilities within the school setting and are very clear on the wide range of social and behavioural impacts which potentially can be gained from a well-run breakfast club with added activities.

4. There are economic costs and benefits to breakfast clubs:

The sustainability of breakfast clubs is raised by many commentators and a recent paper looking at the possible impacts of breakfast from a cost/ benefit perspective – in this analysis the costs associated with poor behaviour, parental malaise, accidents, GP visits were all taken into consideration as well as the cost of promising breakfast clubs. The authors noted that as volunteers often provide support to breakfast clubs this resource should be factored into any cost benefit analysis. The authors concluded that *“Simply measured, the costs of a school breakfast club appear to be associated with some weak benefits (as well as some unmeasured societal benefits linked to employment and family economy) but it was not possible to conclude whether or not this initiative was the best way to use the available funding.”* Whilst this study was an early study and did not demonstrate full economic benefits, it does provide promising directions and thought generation for further work.³³

5. Most countries produce national guidelines to set standards

Many jurisdictions, with a history of providing food in schools, provide legislation to cover the nutritional standards of food provided.²⁴ The standards cover the range of food to be provided with a specific aim of promoting healthier school meals.

The following are some examples of where to source national guidelines

- School Food Trust (UK). This site interprets all the relevant legislation and provides guides for schools. Of relevance to breakfasts is the “A guide to introducing the Government’s new food-based standards for all school food other than lunches (2007). This guide was produced by the School Food Trust to explain the standards for food other than lunch and to offer advice and ideas on how to put them into practice.
- Appetite for Life (Wales). There is a range of documentation on this website to provide guidance to schools.
- Catering for Healthier Lifestyle standards (Northern Ireland). The Health Promotion Agency (now part of the public health agency) produced a series of materials in school food. There is now a NI Food in Schools Forum that has developed a toolkit for schools.³⁴

• ³⁴ The link to their toolkit on school food is http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk/Resources/nutrition/school_food_essential_guide_09.html

- Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland).

In addition initiatives such as ContinYou and the Scottish Community food and health have produced guidance for those working at a local level (see later).

In Ireland the Department of Health and Children produced guidelines in 2003 on school food (Food & Nutrition Guidelines for Primary Schools). This does not specifically focus on school breakfasts.

Conclusions

It is clear from this brief overview of international literature that more careful consideration is needed towards evaluation at the outset of breakfast club interventions. Ideally these evaluations would look to explore the role on in-club activities as well as the range and quality of food provided in any evaluation – it is most likely that a combination of approaches contribute most towards a positive impact on children and the development of better educational outcome through alleviation of food poverty among children.

In looking at the advice available to guide the establishment of clubs and through conversations conducted through the study period, the following *approaches* seem to be consistent within successful breakfast clubs

- a vision whereby the breakfast club objectives include both nutritional objectives and broader social and educational desired outcomes.
- a well-planned and sustained approach towards the initiative which includes a detailed planning phase and which is careful to involve and consult widely
- is sustainable through security of funding.

4.1.3 What is the Irish evidence for the benefits of breakfast clubs on nutrition and educational opportunities?

There is reasonably strong evidence that those providing breakfast clubs value their importance. Many of the schools under the school completion fund have used SCP funding to establish breakfast clubs in the school, thus recognising the role that nutrition plays in educational attainment. In an analysis of school completion projects in 2007/08, 39 of 124 schools had breakfast clubs in place³⁵. In a more recent examination of the essential supports required to underpin the school completion projects, breakfast clubs were listed as the fourth most powerful / effective interventions and the fifth most important interventions SCPs can't do without³⁶. Thus those involved in the SCP clearly believe in the benefits of breakfast.

³⁵ Brattman M (2008). School Completion Programme. Composite report based on Annual Progress Reports 1st September 2007 to 31st August 2008.

³⁶ The School Completion Programme National Co-ordination Team. The Core Elements of The School Completion Programme.

In an Irish context there are very few full scale evaluations of breakfast club initiatives. One such evaluation is that completed in Drogheda.³⁷ This was a qualitative evaluation which showed very positive impacts on children's attendance, retention rates, behavioural problems and schools relationship with parents. Building on this evaluation, this study consulted a number of individuals involved in running breakfast clubs. However the limitation of such a consultation must be borne in mind – it is also likely that other projects may have completed more local evaluations. Within the SCP, clusters of schools are provided with guidance on how to complete local reviews and evaluations. However these are not available to a wider audience or collated to look at overall impacts.

As is the case worldwide most Irish breakfast clubs were not established as pilot projects and therefore are not amenable to a rigorous 'ex-post' evaluation (completed after the event but set in place at the outset). What comes through from the qualitative research on breakfast clubs is that breakfast clubs increase the capacity of children, particularly those at risk of educational underachievement, to interact positively with the education system. The educational benefits are;

- Much improved punctuality. As the breakfast club arranges to get children to school on time, some schools have seen dramatic improvements in punctuality of children arriving to school
- Improvements in behaviours, attitudes and concentration, particularly when compared to previous time when junk food was eaten in lieu of nourishing meals.
- Greater and improved transition to secondary school.
- Creating a positive image of the school and generating a sense of pride. In one evaluation in a school renowned with a negative reputation, the evaluator reports that children want to come to the school now.

At a very basic level, breakfast club do indeed provide nutrition and energy for children so that they can sustain a mornings learning.

In many cases the breakfast clubs are run by trained youth workers or community leaders who have a warm and positive engagement with the children. Many of the breakfast clubs have activities for the children which allows them to get into the mood for school in a more relaxed and informal way.

From our discussions with those running breakfast clubs, the initiative has been proposed to parents and families as somewhere where children can get ready for school rather than interventions to feed hungry children. Within the Drogheda project, parents have reported a more positive association with the school and in the Drogheda evaluation parents reported improved appetites at home and more inclination to eat foods prepared by parents. However not all breakfast clubs report this positive

³⁷ Fitzgerald H (2006) Impact analysis of the St. John's JNS and St. Paul's SNS breakfast Club, Rathmullen, Drogheda (can be sourced on website of Healthy food for all.)

association – in areas characterized by greater family dysfunction and societal problems such as drug or alcohol abuse, there is often little relationship with parents.

Within the discussions with ContinYou and the National Parent’s Council of Ireland, both organizations identified a huge potential for breakfast clubs themselves and for the involvement of parents through breakfast clubs. This is particularly true for parents who may find the school setting daunting but who can be facilitated and supported to participate in preparing breakfasts and engaging with children.

Many of the breakfast clubs visited provide foods which are common enough breakfast food (e.g. toast, cereal, juice and tea). In one example (the Drogheda school) a cooked breakfast is provided but for many, it seems the norm to provide toast and cereal as a model. From a nutritional perspective this is perfectly adequate and indeed there may be some concerns if high fat breakfasts were being provided on a continual basis (though also bearing in mind this is often the only cooked meal for many children). In many cases children are presented with a wider array of foods than would be available at home and become accustomed to choosing a wider variety of foods. This is often prompted by seeing their peers eat unfamiliar foods.

Of most interest is the impact that the breakfast clubs are having on the social skills of the children who attend the breakfast clubs. By being part of the breakfast club children are learning skills about sharing food, using cutlery and interacting with peers and adults in a respectful way.

Many of the impacts described by those involved in breakfast clubs are very qualitative nature. It would be very important that whatever study design is developed would capture these impacts and how they are benefiting the school, their family and most importantly the child.

4.2 Guidance and support for the establishment of breakfast clubs

In 2009, Healthy Food for All launched it’s ‘Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives’ This guide look at all types of school food provision and specifically explores the benefits and suggested ways to establish a breakfast club. The guide states “There is no single or ideal way to set up a breakfast club. What works in one situation may not work in another, but the following toolkit aims to provide an insight into the key aspects that need to be considered”

The toolkit goes on to look at issues to be considered such as;

- Planning the initiative and exploring needs concerning breakfast
- Choosing a suitable venue and getting the room right
- Child safety – getting to venue and supervision
- Children’s activities
- Suggested menu items and guides towards healthy eating
- Suitable types of activities for children
- Set up considerations – equipment, costs
- Staffing
- Staff training

- Co-ordinating the club

The toolkit is a really useful guide towards anyone considering establishing a club. It specifically advises clubs to be very clear on their objectives in advance of establishing a club and suggests ways to measure if these objectives are being met. Setting clear objectives in advance was a point strongly re-iterated by the representative of ContinYou who met with the roundtable attendees and HFfA.

The School Completion Programme (see earlier) produced a *Guidelines Toward Best Practice* in 2005. One section deals specifically with the guidelines for best practice for school breakfast clubs. These are shown in the table below. However in conversations with the author, she noted that the evidence, particularly in an Irish context was hard to find and there is no clear model of ‘best practice’.

Table 4: School Completion Programme (2004) Guidelines Toward Best Practice. Advice regarding breakfast clubs

- Gain parental/guardian consent for inclusion in the Breakfast Club by way of a signed permission form and explain the workings of the club to parents or guardians.
- Deploy personnel to run a Breakfast Club each morning. Volunteers may be an option for some projects.
- Consult with other agencies in the local area that may be already providing Breakfast Clubs. Youth and community services are established providers of Breakfast Clubs.
- Offer Breakfast Clubs on a whole class/whole-school basis as this avoids stigmatisation for young people targeted by SCP. It also offers an opportunity for all students to mix and relax before their first class.
- Provide nutritious food to all students, including hot foods, where possible.
- Breakfast may well be the only hot food a young person receives during the day. Provide additional high-nutrition foods to young people that have difficult and chaotic home lives, if necessary. Ensure that this service is delivered to the young person in a manner that is discreet and respectful.
- Ensure continuity of staff as it allows for good relationships to be built up with students.
- If possible, allocate a specific room for the Breakfast Club so that students always have a familiar environment.
- Aim to involve parents or guardians in the running of Breakfast Clubs, as this is a non-threatening environment for them and a good means to see how their children are getting on.
- Breakfast Clubs can provide an opportunity to supply young people with the equipment they need for class, therefore avoiding embarrassment/disruption in the classroom.
- Provide leadership roles to young people who attend and ensure that tidying up duties are integrated into the programme.
- Involve the wider community in the Breakfast Club. Some local companies may provide food and drink if asked. Other agencies (e.g. Department of Social and Family Affairs) may provide funding for the running of Breakfast Clubs in the local area.
- Ensure a fair and transparent code of conduct.
- Use the Breakfast Club to improve young person’s participation in such activities as signing and drafting a contract, voting activities and serving
- Ensure that the club is promoted widely to improve attendance.
- Ensure that a transparent child protection policy is known and implemented by all stakeholders.
- Ensure that a transparent health and safety policy is known and implemented by all stakeholders.
- Carry out an evaluation of the support on an annual basis with all stakeholders, including the young people.

In Scotland the Scottish Community Diet Project published in 2004 *“Breakfast Clubs... More of a Head Start: a step-by-step guide to the challenges of setting up and running breakfast clubs in Scotland”*³⁸. Once again this is a step by step guide to establishing a breakfast club. Of interest to this study is the reference within this report to the required ethos of a breakfast club. The website of the Scottish community Food and Health states *“A breakfast club should have a ‘club ethos’”*. This means it should:

- encourage the involvement of everyone from pupils to families, carers, teachers, and the wider community
- encourage social interaction in an informal environment among children, peers, parents, carers, volunteers and staff
- be clearly structured and organised with agreed rules, membership and roles and responsibilities for all involved
- be dedicated to non-breakfast activities such as skills-based play (e.g. road safety activities, co-operative games) and health promoting activities (e.g. tooth-brushing, hand-washing, physical activity games)
- be committed to developing and implementing strategies to promote the inclusion and safety of all children
- be committed to developing and implementing strategies related to creating a health promoting school
- encourage reflective practice by all involved to assist in the club’s on-going development and sustainability
- be committed to the capacity building of volunteers and other staff through training, general support and co-ordination
- be joined-up with related initiatives taking place at both policy and practice levels within the school and wider community “

This is interesting as it is this ethos which distinguishes a breakfast club from a mere ‘canteen’ facility and where the added educational benefits are derived.

Finally, ContinYou have produced a wealth of resources for schools to adopt and use in establishing breakfast clubs. One such resources “Breakfast Club Plus: How to set up your own breakfast club and keep it going” provides a range of guidance on establishing breakfast clubs. ContinYou also run Master classes for schools / communities on running breakfast clubs and have offered their services on a consultancy basis to any pilot developed in Ireland.

4.3 Features of successful breakfast clubs

It is difficult, given the range of models, to state definitively the features of successful breakfast clubs. To begin with it is important to define what we mean by success. At a very simple level success means running a breakfast club which is well attended and which is sustainable. If children are not attending,

³⁸ <http://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/plugins/publications/showfile.php?publicationsid=107>

then the club will not thrive. Beyond this simple definition though is a deeper understanding of success. This consultation process seems to suggest that a successful breakfast club moves beyond simple nutrition and is

- designed to provide 'added value' to a child's life by offering food and a place where children get ready to learn' through a warm and welcoming environment. This environment aims to include a range of activities designed to be fun and engaging and through which address social or inclusion issues
- offering a variety of foods with an understanding of healthy eating informing choices
- acting as a bridge between the home and school by being a further positive addition to school life

"In some senses, nutrition is the carrot to provide an opportunity for lots of other activities"

Quote from consultation process

To elaborate on this understanding of success and based on our discussions and reading to date, there are a number of features which emerge from the literature and evaluations of breakfast clubs and which were prompted by discussions with those running breakfast clubs.

- **All clubs who survive and thrive, plan carefully.** In all the guides, authors advise that at a local level is clear on the vision and objective for the club. From an engagement perspective, it would appear that those who will be involved in the club need to work through this vision and objectives together to develop this shared understanding of a broader benefits of a breakfast club – otherwise there may be a danger of mixed understandings of what the club is setting out to achieve
"Strong organisation and planning – where a club defines its objectives in advance and is clear on the needs it is meeting, it appears to have a stronger chance of surviving" (Quote from Director of breakfast Plus, ContinYou)
- **Positive engagement of parents and children** – we have no evidence of why clubs fail but there was a strong consensus coming through the consultation process that families need to feel the club is there to support and engage them and not a targeted measure to provide services for those parents who may have been labelled as 'hard to reach or poor families'. Those with experience of breakfast clubs noted that breakfast clubs can be a way to engage parents by
 - o Offering them an opportunity to volunteer within the club. For parents with a previously poor experience of school, the school environment can raise fears and concerns regarding their competency to 'deal with the system'. The skills required in a breakfast club are different – interaction with children, making food and serving to children'. Most parents do this on a daily basis with their children and could be considered a highly skilled resource to the school breakfast club.
 - o Presenting the breakfast club to parents with an additional support to help their child engage with education. For children who struggle with family and school life, the breakfast club is a regular fixture to encourage routine and readiness for school. Clubs should be presented to parents as a place where children get ready for school.

The findings from practice are supported by research evidence - there is a strong body of evidence to support a policy of early parental involvement in education. In a US review of the research evidence surrounding parental involvement the authors concluded that *“the more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level -- in advocacy, decision-making and oversight roles, as fund-raisers and boosters, as volunteers and para-professionals, and as home teachers -- the better for student achievement.”*³⁹

*“The evidence about the benefits of parents being involved in their children’s education in general, and their children’s literacy activities in particular, is unequivocal. For example, research shows that parental involvement in their children’s learning positively affects the child’s performance at school, both in primary and secondary school”*⁴⁰

National literacy Trust (2007)

“There is no such thing as a ‘hard to reach’ family – most parents want the best for their children and if we are not managing to reach parents with services and supports we need to examine how we are communicating our messages. ”

Quote from CEO of National Parents’ Council

- **Interagency involvement** – clubs who have the support and involvement of many agencies such as local partnership companies, FAS, Boards of management, Department of Social Protection, youth organizations etc. seem to be able to garner the level of support required to support and nurture the breakfast club. Given the range of agencies involved in the initiatives, relationship building is a critical component of successful initiatives. From conversations with those running clubs, maintaining positive relationships with teaching staff, parents, the community and of course the children is the prime indicator of whether a club will survive.
- The presence of a **single driver or visionary individual** – often it is that principal or parent who spots the needs and who has the commitment to drive a development that is responsible especially in the early years for a clubs establishment and continued engagement. These individuals often need support and assistance to help build support in their own community or school. Recent research by Kellogg’s stated that a key insight was that *“Breakfast clubs are not run by organisations or by schools. Breakfast clubs are founded, managed and run by individuals”*⁴¹

³⁹ Michigan Department of Education (2001) What research says about parent involvement in children’s education in Relation to Academic Achievement

⁴⁰ National literacy Trust (2007) Why Families Matter to Literacy. A brief research summary. Christina Clark

⁴¹ Qualitative research completed for Kellogg’s Ireland

- **Trained or experienced staff who engage positively with children** – put simply, coordinators have to be able to engage and motivate the children. They have to enjoy coming to the club and feel a sense of support and understanding from staff. Having a clear method of effective supervision is critical as there is some evidence that poor supervision may lead to even more disruption within the school later.
- **Being part of an overall vision for a school and its community** - in many projects, the breakfast Club is but one part of a wider range of initiative designed to tackle educational disadvantage and behavioural problems.
- **A range of ‘child-friendly’ foods on offer** – while healthy eating is important for children, there needs to be a broad range of foods, which children enjoy, on offer. If not, the food won’t be eaten and attendance at the club will drop. Indeed an evaluation of the implantation of a healthier food menu in schools in Northern Ireland found an unacceptable amount of food wastage associated with more healthy options⁴². This demonstrates that common sense is required in determining that all options need to be attractive to children. For most breakfast clubs, the food is the ‘carrot’ to engage the children and achieve wider social and educational benefits.
- **Targeted versus universal:** from the consultation, most people would seem to recommend that clubs would have an ethos of universal targeting so that no child feels they are stigmatized. However within this universal approach, children who are consistently showing problems concerning punctuality, behavioural problems, lack of school readiness etc. could be approached (through an agreed respectful approach) to join the breakfast club.

4.4 Key reflections from the consultation process:

It is clear from our research and consultation that the provision of breakfast is a well-recognised intervention for children experiencing disadvantage. The attendees at the roundtable event reflected on the societal changes to eating patterns which impact on breakfast consumption, and noted that schools are the only consistent way to engage with vulnerable children. There was consensus that food can serve as the lynchpin of bringing services together. Breakfasts can ensure access to good nutrition in children as well as instilling healthy eating practices in later life. Breakfast is an important meal and children cannot learn on an empty stomach. Other side benefits of breakfast clubs include development of skills such as sitting at the table, interaction with children etc. In summary, there is an opportunity for breakfast clubs to provide a positive structure in children’s lives and to support learning and educational opportunities.

In looking at reflections and considerations for the future, it is clear that breakfast clubs are much more than the simple provision of food – there is a clear belief that with the right approach, attitude and implementation they have the power to make a significant impact on the lives of some young people

⁴² PriceWaterHouseCooper. (2005) Department of Education Evaluation of the pilot of the ‘Catering for Healthier Lifestyles standards’ in schools in NI

and their families. However there is only one evaluation available on breakfast clubs in Ireland. A consistent finding is that the documented evidence for this impact is very weak in Ireland, with little formal evaluation measuring the impact of breakfast on educational attainment, nutritional health or social development. There is a need for the development of evaluation tools to support the continued investment in breakfast clubs. This evidence is available at a project level, but needs a mechanism to enable it to be captured, and to contribute to deeper understanding of the impacts breakfast clubs make in children's lives. Positive findings from evaluation studies will provide further evidence for the continued investment in breakfast clubs and negative findings will provide information for shaping and refining current models.

Policy direction at a national level ought to be grounded in a solid understanding of 'what works' both from an experiential and objective (evaluated) perspective. As a result of limited evaluations and a lack of a centralized forum to gather the experiences of practitioners, policy direction, particularly in an Irish context, is not clearly articulated in an evidenced based and coherent way. Within the roundtable and consultations, the delay in the National Nutrition Policy was strongly criticised. This document could provide a framework for addressing school food provision by

- providing guidelines to support parents and schools with lunch boxes and children's nutrition
- to drive and support school policy at a local level towards good nutrition.
- fostering a culture of parental involvement in children's nutrition.

However others warned of the danger of waiting until such a policy was ready and urged action to begin without a national policy in place. There is no shortage of guides on how to establish breakfast clubs – there may be a role for HfFA to provide a central link to these resources. However the current Good Practice Guide covers a lot of material and could be promoted more widely to schools interested in establishing a breakfast club. It is also doubtful how much time staff at local level have to research other models. All guides pay particular emphasis on consultation and ensuring the stakeholders are involved – this appears to be critical for ensuring support and buy in.

5.0 EXPLORING BREAKFAST CLUBS IN IRELAND

As part of the scoping study, we looked to ascertain the level of current breakfast club provision in Ireland and the gaps in provision.

5.1 *Current extent and models of provision*

5.1.1 Numbers of breakfast clubs in Ireland?

One of the primary aims of this scoping study was to establish gaps in breakfast club provision in Ireland. One of the most surprising findings was the extent of breakfast club provision in Ireland. Information provided by the Department of Social Protection, school meal provision scheme show that in 2010, 534 schools reported providing breakfasts. There are over 4,000 schools in Ireland so this represents about one eighth of all schools. However this may be an underrepresentation as some schools, which cannot access funding under the School Food Scheme, may still establish a breakfast scheme using other funding sources.

The extent to which breakfast clubs are provided in Ireland was a surprise in this study – the initial expectation had been that there would be a shortage of clubs. However there is no central database of breakfast clubs. Information is held by a number of agencies and there is no centralised way to engage these breakfast clubs. At present we have no way of ascertaining their development needs (if any) or how an initiative such as HfFA can support their development. As an addition to this scoping study, we conducted a focus group with those providing breakfast clubs to look at areas for development within this sector.

5.1.2 Drivers towards establishment of breakfast clubs

Deprivation within an area is a key driver for the establishment of breakfast clubs. As documented in one Irish study (Drogheda) but repeated in consultations, the needs identified prior to the establishment of a breakfast clubs were;

- Children arriving late and often hungry to school with subsequent impacts on their attention span and behaviour
- High level of early school leaving and educational under achievement in schools where poor nutrition, as one of many factors, was seen to be contributing to this level of underachievement
- Obvious nutritional deficits in children's lunchbox – the presence of 'junk food' in lunches were clearly contributing to a poor quality diet.
- Schools in deprived suffer when children underachieve and in this example, parents were opting to send their children to other schools. Rectifying nutrition in the school was seen to be paramount to improving the reputation of the school.

5.1.3 Funding provided to breakfast clubs

Successful projects have secured funding from the following sources;

- Department of Social and Family Affairs – now separated into the Department of Social Protection and the Social Inclusion Unit has moved into the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs
- The Office of Minister of Children In Youth Affairs through the national child care investment programme – this is a childcare measure and not particularly related to food provision
- Local Partnership Companies/ LDSIP programmes - now called the local and Community Development Programme within the larger country wide Partnership Companies.
- FAS – used to employ community employment workers and manage the scheme in places.
- The HSE through family support workers, local development partnerships, this is the local community development programme.
- Dormant accounts – a traditional source of funding, the last round of funding was in 2008
- Department of Education and Skills through teaching and special needs assistant staff who lead or staff projects
- Family Resource Centres – many have developed breakfast clubs due to concerns regarding the target group attending the centres.
- Fundraising, often through the school's Parents Council
- Parents Councils – either through the school development fund (funds raised by parents) or as in the case of Drogheda providing access to community employment scheme, school completion funds – more information to be inserted

It is important to remember that support in kind is provided by the Department of Education and Skills, local community development organisations, youth organisations etc.

The HfFA Good Practice Guide advised that there is a range of possible sources of funding and support, including:

- Using the core school budget
- Approaching your school's parent teacher association
- Charging pupils, e.g. healthier tuck shop
- Fundraising at school
- Accepting donated resources
- Applying for corporate sponsorship
- Talking to local businesses through local business networks such as Business in the Community or Women in Business
- Requesting funding, sponsorship or other in-kind support from local businesses
- Contacting local representatives of national bodies, e.g. Rotarians, Round Tables, Lions, Townswomen's and Countrywomen's Guilds.

What emerges from discussions with those running breakfast clubs is that

- There is a need to source funding from a variety of sources. Very often clubs are developed as part of a series of initiatives to tackle social exclusion or educational disadvantage and funding is not supplied for breakfast clubs alone.
- The funding provided by the School Meals Scheme can often be used as a leverage to source and secure other forms of funding.
- The policy objectives of the different sources of funding can differ – some are concerned with childcare, others with food provision. Each requires separate supporting evidence and completion of paperwork. As a consequence, the administrative burden is very high for project staff.

5.1.4 Models of breakfast clubs in operation in Ireland

There is no single model of provision in Ireland. However many breakfast clubs have developed at a local or agency level. However there is no formal data regarding the number of breakfast clubs in Ireland, a finding also seen in the UK⁴³. Where clubs/schemes have developed they have been driven at a local or an agency level to response to a need identified locally. In general, there are three main types of breakfast club schemes in operation in Ireland.

- **Add-on service by crèches.** Where crèches provide pre-work/school child-minding services for families, many provide breakfasts as part of this service. This service can be considered private and paid for entirely by parents. Where these services are provided, they could perhaps be improved through the provision of nutritional guidelines to govern the type of food supplied. They may be reaching children who experience food poverty / exposure to unhealthy foods but for the most part are provided to working parents and would not be considered as being primarily targeted at nutritionally deprived children.
- **Breakfast clubs targeted at children at extreme high risk.** Some care organisations, such as Barnardos have established breakfast clubs as part of the outreach programme to children at high risk. Often these children are known to the care system and are receiving other interventions. Families may be experiencing multiple disadvantage and may have problems of abuse, drug/alcohol misuse etc. These services are generally small and staffed by professionally trained staff such as social or family support workers. These would not general be available to a wider group of children and require very skilled workers to meet the emotional and care needs of children.
- **School breakfast clubs targeted within specific disadvantaged areas or towards children within mixed areas who are identified as having problems with punctuality / skipping breakfast etc.** Some community based organisations such as those funded under the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), School Completion Programmes and DEIS schools have worked to establish school breakfast schemes. These clubs operate within the school premises and may or

⁴³ Defeyter, M. A., Graham, P. L., Walton, J. and Apicella, T. (2010), NEWS AND VIEWS: Breakfast clubs: availability for British schoolchildren and the nutritional, social and academic benefits. Nutrition Bulletin, 35: 245–253. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-3010.2010.01843.

may not have a dedicated breakfast area. They can be staff by volunteers or by paid school staff including teachers or special needs assistants (SNAs).

In many clubs breakfast is provided alongside a number of pre-school social or educational activities. It appears from the consultation for this study that where these additional activities are provided, this is where the additional social and emotional benefits can be provided to a wide audience of children including those most in need.

5.1.5 UK models of provision

In the UK, where there is a long tradition of school food provision, there is more widespread development of breakfast clubs. Provision of food in schools is covered by legislation across UK, Scotland and Wales. Some breakfast clubs are provided by charities with perhaps the largest being ContinYou who run the breakfast plus scheme in over 450 schools. They receive funding from Kellogg's and the model of support they operate is to provide start up grants to schools to enable them to purchase equipment, delft and cutlery. More importantly they provide guidance, training for set up clubs and on-going support and mentoring to clubs under the scheme. Schools charge for breakfast clubs and hence recoup their food costs and become sustainable over time. In many case, charges for low income children are waived.

Support to breakfast clubs is also provided through another model where food companies provide direct support to purchase food for the breakfast clubs. In the conversations surrounding this project, this model is not seen to be sustainable as long term funding is not secured.

5.1.6 Types of model based on facilities

The ContinYou website provides a range of support to clubs and outlines the three types of serving models for breakfast clubs (their relevance to Ireland added by author). Using their definition of types of breakfast clubs and adapting from Ireland the following table listed the types of models and their relevance for an Irish context.

Table 5: Types of breakfast clubs in operation (based on description as provided by ContinYou, UK)

Type	Style	Suitable for	Relevance to Ireland
Tea and Toast model	Basic breakfast bar set up where access to catering and cooking equipment is limited and/or impossible. Often in a classroom, library or 'games' room. A makeshift food preparation area is arranged offering a simple breakfast meal such as cereal, fruit and juice and/or hot drink. Sometimes hot toast can also be offered.	Venues without kitchen facilities, small groups or targeted provision	This type of model is widely used in breakfast schemes in Ireland, especially for school without dedicated canteen and kitchen facilities.
Servery model	Servery bar is provided, often using school hall and kitchen facilities but not full kitchen service. Catering personnel may be used or it might be agreed for other staff to have access to sinks and storage facilities. A wider range of foods are able to be stored and served including hot options. Young people eat together as they would at lunchtime and table top games/books may be provided or activities offered in an adjacent venue/space.	Medium sized groups wanting to offer activities and food provision. Those with access to kitchen facilities. All ages.	Needs kitchen and catering facilities. While newer at a primary level may have kitchen facilities, many older schools do not. This models provides cooked school meals so would incur significant skill costs
Canteen model	School canteen/dining hall is used to provide a full breakfast meal service and run by school catering personnel. Often set up as an extension of the school's standard catering contract, but increasingly included in it.	Catering for large numbers of students, where the priority is providing a full hot and cold meal service.	Needs kitchen and catering facilities. Only suitable for schools who provide school meals so would incur significant skill and capital equipment costs.
External company provision (Ireland)	In addition a fourth type of model exists in Ireland; namely through the provision of pre-packed foods to schools in receipt of the funding under the school meals schemes. These is no current data of the number of schools who use external companies to provide food but one such company (Carambola Kidz) supplies over 90,000 children in the country with lunches and is currently supplying one school with breakfasts. Such a model greatly decreases the need for additional staff to support a breakfast club and means there is no need for food preparation facilities or clean up facilities or staff.	Food is pre-packed and brought into the school setting	Very useful for schools. Less opportunity for interaction with staff for children a risk of educational disadvantage unless build into programme. Less control over menu Commercial so a cost and benefit consideration would need to be applied to ensure value for money Potential for high environmental wastage through individual packaging

5.2 Concerns and challenges regarding breakfast clubs

The consultation process reflected a number of recurring themes regarding concerns towards development of breakfast clubs. These are listed below.

1. Inconsistent provision

In some cases breakfast clubs are not provided consistently throughout the week. One respondent within this consultation noted that inconsistent provision may actually be somewhat unethical in that children come to expect food will be provided within a school setting. In an evaluation of school retention programmes across four schools in Blanchardstown, the authors found that approximately 18% of the 6th class pupils attending school on the given day stated that they were either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school. All of the four schools surveyed had breakfast clubs and the authors note “these clubs do not take place every day and therefore a response of feeling hungry often or very often may refer to those days when the clubs are not running” They go on to recommend that “*there is a need to ensure continuity across breakfast clubs so that a regular pattern is established i.e., that they are 4-5 days a week and not 2 days a week*”⁴⁴

2. Disempowering parents

There were some concerns raised in the roundtable as to whether breakfast clubs could further disempower parents. If breakfast clubs are presented to parents as a place to feed children, this could be interpreted as the school encroaching on a parent’s responsibility. However those running breakfast clubs noted that breakfast clubs can be a way to engage parents and further involve them in their child’s education (see earlier). All acknowledged that care is needed in presenting breakfast clubs to parents and promoters should be cognizant of parental fears and possible reactions.

3. Stigmatization

A common fear expressed throughout the consultation was the need to ensure breakfast clubs do not serve to further stigmatize children who are at risk of educational disadvantage. The reality is that clubs, who do stigmatize children, are unlikely to survive, as children will not attend. However in setting up and establishing a club great and long lasting hurt could be inflicted if a clumsy approach was used to attract families. This should be addressed in planning and promotion and a sensitive approach used to engage those families most in need.

On evaluation of a Blanchardstown club found that 6th class students often reported being hungry – this was despite a breakfast club being in place within the school. The authors felt that these students may not have felt the club was for them alerting coordinators of the need to try to appeal to all age groups. Given our knowledge regarding breakfast skipping patterns and older age groups, it is particularly important to reach these children.

⁴⁴ Downes P, Maunsell C. & Hanna Ivers J (2006): A Holistic Approach to Early School Leaving and School Retention in Blanchardstown: Current Issues and Future Steps for Services and Schools. A Study Commissioned by Blanchardstown Area Partnership.

4. State intervention in parental responsibilities

Another angle regarding breakfast clubs is the fear that the state may be taking over what should be parental responsibilities. For the majority of children who are part of a stable and routine-driven family, there is no need for state intervention. However, as we saw earlier, about 17% of children are at risk of food poverty – these children are falling behind due to poor nutrition and breakfast routine.

However, within the allocation of resources for breakfast clubs, there is an understanding that these resources, whilst offered to all children, would be targeted at those most in need. Of interest is the forthcoming results from a prospective evaluation of breakfast clubs in New Zealand – they have found that more affluent children were the most frequent attendees of breakfast clubs. This has implications for the breakfast clubs and the perceptions of who the service is targeted at – there is a natural danger that in promoting the club as a before-school option for parents, it may become overly popular and become a stretch on resources. This stretch on resource may need very careful targeting is required to ensure those who need the service most are reached.

“We were surprised by the children who attended- they were not the children we really wanted and those most at risk didn’t seem to come” Quote from researcher on breakfast clubs in New Zealand (Ni Murchu – cited earlier)

5. Sustainability

Many in the interviews for this study spoke of the need to develop sustainable initiatives and to move away from seemingly endless pilot initiatives. Many noted that in order to engage communities around new initiatives, there needs to be a long term commitment from funders to support developments.

6. Securing funding

Maintaining funding is a challenge for all breakfast clubs. Initial grants may provide equipment and start up supplies but on-going revenue generation remains a challenge. The school meal scheme provides €0.60 per breakfast. For clubs who charge, children might be charged €0.60 - €0.70 per meal but even with 100 children attending a breakfast club (and this would be a sizeable number) this will only generate revenue of €70.00 per day. From this funding, staffing costs, coordination, food and supplies need to be funded. Even from this very simplistic equation, it is clear that on-going grant aid will be required for most clubs.

4.2.1 Operational issues which need to be addressed in establishing a breakfast club

All the guides mentioned earlier identify a number of action areas for a breakfast club to address in advance of providing food. The roundtable event listed these operational issues. The operational issues relating to children are significant and include:

- Child protection
- Supervision is essential
- Garda Clearance for all staff
- Health & Safety regulations
- Insurance
- Parental and teacher interest
- Administration
- Space
- Time
- Targeting all children or those with high needs?
- Embedding healthy eating guidelines especially regarding fruit/veg
- HACCP
- Charging versus all-inclusive delivery?
- Evaluation
- Funding
- Infrastructure – lack of space and storage/distribution issues
- Dependent on varying levels of local support and capacity
- Creating a warm and welcoming environment for children.

Within the roundtable event, there was a strong recommendation that the establishment of a school breakfast club should be informed by a comprehensive local needs assessment. The success of breakfast clubs is contingent upon dialogue and consultation with local stakeholders. At local level it is important to dialogue with stakeholders and to identify key mechanisms for local engagement. The benefit of a local champion to build partnerships was highlighted.

It was suggested that technology and creative websites could be used to raise awareness about the programme, to promote participation and involve children.

In order for the club to be sustainable it is essential to involve the parents. Facilitating parental involvement will be important in ensuring the sustainability of breakfast clubs and activities must be backed up from the home. Parents must be invited to outline what works for them. Parents and staff of breakfast clubs should be skilled to encourage participation.

5.3 Key reflections from the consultation process:

The fact that there are at least 534 clubs means that most schools with an established need are providing a club and this was a welcome surprise in this study. A clear gap which were noted within the consultation was in DEIS school where no school meals funding was available – it may be that these schools are in most need of breakfast clubs and would be the starting point for any further developments.

The necessity to source funds from a variety of sources can often mean that the future of breakfast clubs can be very precarious. However diversifying funding sources means there is less reliance on any

one funder though this benefit is likely to be outweighed by the administrative burden of having to engage with too many funders. It is clear that at a national level there is room for more integration and coordination between the government bodies regarding the funding provided to school to provide food or to tackle educational disadvantage.

Despite there being over 500 breakfast clubs in operation there is no complete picture of the types of models in operation (our analysis was based on a limited number of consultations). We cannot with confidence describe the models in operation and this in turn limited discussion on how best to support and learn from existing clubs. Likewise for any new clubs starting up, there is a necessary learning curve – by not being able to access centralised support and the experience of other clubs, this learning curve is made more difficult. There is a role for HfFA or another national body in acting as a conduit for information exchange regarding clubs and lessons to be learned. It is a challenge to enable them to do this in an effective manner which adds value to current activity.

6.0 WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF BREAKFAST CLUBS IDENTIFIED WITHIN THIS CONSULTATION PROCESS?

As part of the scoping study, interview respondents and attendees at the roundtable event reflected on the gaps in current policy and provision concerning breakfast clubs and the potential for further development.

The roundtable event reported that many breakfast clubs are running successfully despite a lack of centralised support. These clubs tend to be led by a school champion or driver. There was general **agreement that the current School Food Programme works and is of huge importance for those schools receiving the funding.** However, overall the development of breakfast clubs is fragmented and happens in an ad hoc manner. There has been a sense coming through the consultation process that there is a need to pull together best practice and pull together the various fragments to achieve the best outcomes for children. How to do this in a way which truly adds value to current practice and future directions, and which is also manageable for a body such as HfFA which must operate within current limited resources, is the real challenge.

The following outlines the findings/recommendations emerging from the consultation process.

6.1 Findings concerning policy at national level

1. There is a need for more coordination/integration at state level

There are many agencies with a role to play in supporting of school food initiatives. It is clear these supports are essential in the current delivery of breakfast clubs. However, all respondents identified a definite need for a more integrated approach which is focused on achieving better educational outcomes for children within the school setting. Given an investment in excess of €35million (school meals programme alone) it is worth pursuing integrated policy goals.

Policy Integration

Breakfast clubs have been identified as a tool to achieve these policy goals concerning educational disadvantages. Respondents also noted that there is a need for an integrated policy approach concerning breakfast clubs to ensure provision of healthy food and to tie in with the HSE's Healthy Schools Programme and health promotion and protection structures. In essence, the development of a Breakfast Club programme should be supported by a national policy framework and specifically a food and nutrition policy which would accommodate local operation.

There is a consensus on the need for a more integrated policy approach with firm engagement with government stakeholders at national level. As a follow through, any national scheme needs to integrate with local schemes.

Stakeholder dialogue

We can see that from both the individual consultation and the roundtable event, there is room for more dialogue and engagement between state agencies themselves and also at a broader level with external stakeholders.

The attendees at the roundtable event noted that engaging at national level could involve the establishment of a national forum or steering group of key stakeholders to drive forward the programme. There are two elements to this

- Engagement and dialogue between stakeholders at government department level to add further value to work already underway through various state schemes
- Engagement and dialogue for a wider group of stakeholders to document existing work, resources and information, disseminate information and raise awareness of the potential impact of breakfast clubs with other agencies.

It may be that two separate forums might be useful – one for government agencies themselves and one for a broader group of advocates. HFfA could be a key player in initiating or facilitating these forums and ensuring work is progressing.

“I say it again and again, there needs to be more joined up thinking”

“there is no coherence at national policy, there is no joined up outcomes-focused approach at national policy level”

“Clearly with that many players in the field there need to be more coordination of funding”

Survey / interview responses

Stakeholders at Government Department Level

For real engagement at a policy level, this type of engagement work needs to take place in a way that encourages real reflection and progression. In many cases this means the government agencies working together away from a ‘more public eye’ while bearing in mind their responsibility to ensure value if being delivered for public investment .

The School Meals Review Working Group completed a review in 2004. In this review the working group recommended that a dedicated unit be established to lead the school food programme – at present this unit deals on an administrative basis with the school food programme and is very resource limited. Whilst it is very unlikely that this unit would have the capacity to lead an interdepartmental working group to lead and direct school food policy issues, it is possible for the relevant ‘players’ at state department level to come together to discuss

- How funding streams could be made more coherent
- How state provision could be further expanded to include DEIS schools without breakfast schemes
- How information between agencies could be shared and used to inform policy and implementation of school food provision
- How current schemes of provision could be monitored and evaluated within current resources

As part of the scoping study, we met with representatives of the Social Inclusion Unit of the Department of Education and Skills. This Department has recently undertaken specific research regarding the provision of breakfast within DEIS schools. Discussion of this research may be a natural starting point for discussing how to better integrate state intervention into educational disadvantage and school food provision.

HfFA could provide a policy briefing paper (see next recommendation) to this forum and look to agree a timeframe for initial discussions. It is recommended that DEIS working in partnership with HfFA, could initiate the first meeting. The role of HfFA beyond this would need to be clearly established and within their resources.

National Stakeholder Forum

Separate to the state department forum, HfFA could look to build dialogue between stakeholders by establishing a national forum to look to progress the “breakfast club agenda’. There is a role for HfFA to draw together interested stakeholders at a national level to promote the importance of breakfast clubs and deepen understanding of the need for clubs to address food poverty and educational disadvantage.

This group could look to other models of excellence in motivating desire, for example the very successful Green Schools model.

The roundtable event identified a number of critical stakeholders. These included;

- Parents
- National Parents Council
- Children
- School staff
- Local Authorities
- Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP)
- County Development Board
- Family Resource Centres
- HSE
- Public Health Nurse
- Barnardos
- Society of St Vincent de Paul
- NGO’s
- School Completion Programme
- Department of Social Protection
- Department of Health and Children
- Department of Education and Skills
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries
- Office of the Minister for Children
- National Parents Association
- Volunteering Ireland
- Youth Council
- INDI
- Business sector
- Sports Clubs
- Rural Links
- Teachers Unions
- Children’s Rights Alliance

This forum could link to the group at government level mentioned above but this arrangement should be clarified in advance and liaison methods clearly established.

Ideally any new initiative could connect with the children’s services committees currently being rolled out throughout the country.

As part of the scoping study, we also met with Business in the Community, Ireland. They have access to companies (through corporate social responsibility functions) and a wide bank of skills and expertise. In the future they may be able to involve companies or individuals in pilot or demonstration projects.

Equally there are a number of agencies who have expressed an interest in becoming involved with further development of breakfast clubs (IPPN, National Parents Council etc.).

Recommendation 1: Use the results of the scoping study and the forthcoming quantitative research from the DES as a tool to initiate

- engagement and dialogue between stakeholders at government department level to add further value to work already underway through various state schemes
- engagement and dialogue for a wider group of stakeholders to document existing work, resources and information, disseminate information and raise awareness of the potential impact of breakfast clubs with other agencies. HFfA should build on the roundtable event to initiate a national forum of agencies and groups interested in the progression of breakfast clubs.

2. There is a need to draw together the evidence and link practice outputs and impacts with new and emerging policy developments

There was a clear belief from those involved with breakfast clubs that they make a real and significant impact on children's lives. They are considered to be a real tool in tackling educational disadvantage. However the evidence, particularly from an Irish context is very weak. The lessons emerging from practice need to be distilled into a clear and coherent set of policy messages concerning

- State investment
- Policy coherence
- Potential impacts on children's lives and educational outcomes

The evaluation of HFfA showed that the policy briefing note prepared in advance of the budget was an effective tool for engaging both practitioners and policy makers. There is ample room to synthesise the findings of this scoping study to ensure that core messages concerning food poverty and educational attainment are communicated effectively. HFfA should develop a policy briefing note (similar to their pre-budget submission) to capture the evidence and key policy messages concerning the benefits of breakfast clubs.

This should then be followed up by a planned programme of engagement and communication starting with those agencies who attended the roundtable.

Recommendation 2: HFfA should develop a policy briefing note (similar to their pre-budget submission) to capture the evidence and key policy messages concerning the benefits of breakfast clubs. This should then be used to further build engagement with stakeholders.

3. There is a role for HFfA in being a champion for breakfast supports:

As part of the evaluation and through discussions with stakeholders, the role of HFfA was explored. HFfA does not have the resources or the mandate to become a service provider. Instead, most respondents felt the organisation should be about the development and demonstration of good practice and new directions through their work ‘finding new pathways’. Equally HFfA has a clear role in linking the lessons learned from practice on the ground with the ‘thinking’ which informs policy formation at a national level. In essence HFfA can be the conduit for channelling messages and learnings into the policy arena. A number of roles for HFfA were postulated in the evaluation of the roundtable event - in the main respondents feel that HFfA should be the driving force behind new developments, playing a key role in drawing together information, stakeholders and experience, but not necessarily always taking a lead role.

What is the role of HFfA?

- *“Should be central to finding a co-ordinating body to take responsibility for a national programme. Should be the driving force behind this initiative.”*
- *“Engagement of the key players at national level (i.e. Gov Depts. and Statutory agencies) to support local involvement in the pilot schemes. Also ensuring openness to appropriate resources being available to mainstream the recommendations from the programme.”*
- *“Co-ordination. Sharing of information. Organising related events – getting relevant people into the room.*
- *“HFfA should be the ‘pathfinder’ of new directions “*
- *“Importance of inter-agency engagement, need for a forum to bring together key stakeholders to progress programme, need for a lead agency to drive this and to be resourced to do so, need for resources to be drawn from a number of different sources.”*

Survey / interview responses

However, HFfA needs to be clear on its internal capacity to deliver action – without additional resources it is unlikely to be able to do more than the preparation of the policy briefing paper as mentioned above. With some additional resources, it could free up staff time to advocate and drive the issue of breakfast clubs. It would need to be clear to all stakeholders regarding its plans for the coming years.

If possible HFfA should undertake a more detailed examination of current models of provision of breakfast clubs in schools (as outlined in recommendation 4) to establish the evidence base for advocating for further investment in breakfast clubs.

Recommendation 3: HFfA should position itself to take a lead role in advocating for continued state investment by facilitating further development of breakfast clubs within Ireland and building the evidence base for their support.

6.2 Findings concerning the development of a new demonstration programme

The evaluation of the roundtable event coupled with follow on interviews with different stakeholders provides some insight into directions for the future. This chapter examines how a national scheme could be developed.

There is good support for a developmental approach towards further development of breakfast clubs in Ireland. However there are a number of considerations which need to be explored before such a scheme is developed. The critical questions a pilot or demonstration programme, prior to set up, should seek to answer are;

- What is practical under current funding structures and budgets?
- How can we add value to what is there already? Priority actions must deliver real 'added value' to what is there already and any new development must be able to demonstrate this added value
- What is the role for Healthy Food for All? The resources of HFfA are very limited with no additional resources available to drive a national 'movement'
- How can benefits be captured and used as a tool to further advocate for action to address food poverty within the school setting.

For the purposes of the discussion, I have called the new scheme the 'pilot scheme', although its shape is not yet defined. However, such a scheme would be advanced by Healthy Food for All in the first instance and hence must be within its resources.

With this in mind, the following are the observations, coming from the research and consultation to date, for such a scheme;

4. There is a need to draw together further information on existing models and look to strengthen existing provision

The roundtable event and the consultation showed a strong level of support for breakfast clubs nationally but there is little centralised information on models in existence. The methodology chosen for this study did not allow for a large scale examination of breakfast club provision. Whilst further research and investigation of models in existence in Ireland would be desirable, this needs to be carefully designed so as to deliver real added value to current and future provision.

Good or poor practice?

In looking at what clubs have been developed, it is difficult to identify good or bad practice. Clearly those of us interested in addressing food poverty and educational disadvantage would hope that breakfast clubs might address these issues as core objectives. However many clubs do not clearly establish objectives at the outset and a key recommendation from the consultation is to ensure there is a clear planning framework with clarity of objectives established at the outset which seek to impact on educational disadvantage.

It is even more difficult to establish if there is poor practice, but attendance at the breakfast club is an obvious indicator of success – less successful clubs simply do not attract regular enough attendance to indicate success. However, it may be the case that clubs have ceased due to a perception of a lack of interest whereas the real reason might be more closely connected to set up and promotion. Attrition rates and the reasons behind attrition should be included in any further exploration of breakfast clubs.

Critical success drivers at a local level include

- Having a local person who is the primary driver
- Clear objectives
- A supportive School principal
- Having the club as part of an overall school agenda to tackle educational disadvantage
- Effective Supervision.
- Careful communication to parents and targeting those children most in need
- Sustainable funding
- Ensuring the club is a positive reputation and experience for kids – the key worker(s) appears to be an essential element of a good club.
- Having a clear method of effective supervision

What are the starting points for further development?

The consultations and research have shown that there are a number of models in operation. It is not clear at this stage if any one model emerges as ‘best practice’. It is likely that, as is the case in other countries, that different models suit different needs and depend on the resources available. What does emerge however is that current learning and experience is not being captured. Nor is there a centralised source of information on

- current models,
- quality standards for clubs to follow or seek to reach,
- elements to consider in adding value to existing breakfast clubs.

In addition there is no clear pathway to reach clubs already in existence. These factors limit our capacity to comment on the effectiveness of different models. It seems reasonable to suggest that any new demonstration project should look to build on existing practice and learning.

What is clear from the consultations is that any new pilot or demonstration programme must also **add value to existing service provision and** should build on and recognise current practice. It is clear that a substantial number of schools are already delivering school breakfast clubs and any new scheme should

not look to replicate from scratch what has been learned elsewhere. It should acknowledge the work done to date by schools with limited resources – schools may be resentful if a new pilot does not recognise existing areas of practice.

Whatever is developed needs to be presented in a school friendly format. The long-time experience of charities such as ContinYou, show that breakfast club staff or the schools involved, do not have time to read lengthy reports, attend training events or become involved in wider initiatives.

Ideas for development

The establishment of a **register of clubs** was suggested by roundtable attendees as a first step to overcome the existing absence of information and to offer an opportunity to provide a network of support. However there is resource implications of such a development and its purpose would need to be established in advance. From experience, databases and registers require substantial administrative support and need to be updated on a regular basis and gain the support of clubs. It is not clear what added value they would bring to clubs and therefore clubs may show little interest in participating.

The **further promotion of HFFA's A Good Practice Guide to School Food Initiatives** was also cited as a support for the development of breakfast clubs. This has already been distributed to DEIS school but might need further promotion within these schools. Should HFFA be in a position to further develop materials, these can be additional to the current resource.

In the consultations for this project, we looked to see what learning and lessons could be extracted from existing providers. It is clear there are a number of models in operation and through their development lessons have been learned and approaches honed. The starting point for further work should look to distil the

- essential elements of current models
- objectives of models in existence –related to nutrition, educational, social or elements of all
- the drivers for the establishment of the club and needs identified by baseline data and information, where available
- learning and lessons to date
- Successes of the club and perceptions of impacts on educational disadvantage/evidence of impact on educational outcomes
- Challenges
- Good or promising practice elements of current models
- Poor models of practice (if this emerges)
- Need for further development of standards and policies.
- Need of clubs in existence and where further support would add to their work

In addition this project could look to develop **defined outputs**, a series of 'good practice' guides for persons looking to establish or further develop a breakfast club. This might be similar to the standards approach developed by many agencies. Some of the standards or guidance might relate to;

- Defining current models of operation – **capturing current practice/models**
- Exploring the **process to pre-engagement** – what needs to happen prior to gaining agreement for a breakfast club. How did existing clubs achieve wide buy on from stakeholders?
- Building **capacity at a local level** – what skills are needed and how can these skills be sourced or developed?
- **Showcasing existing practice and building a body of evidence** to support breakfast club investment. Essentially this means gathering the evidence that investment in breakfast within a school setting make a difference to children’s lives equity of access to educational opportunities. What evidence is there from an Irish experience?
- Development of **nutritional standards** and **guidelines** for breakfast clubs – this could be an adaptation of existing guidelines mentioned earlier.
- Developing **standards and ensuring clubs are operating to an agreed level of standards** - food hygiene, ideal objectives, supervision standards link to learning etc. there is a clear role for other state agencies here – HIQA, safefood, HSE etc.
- Developing **standards or guidelines on educational/social activities to add value to the provision of breakfast** – similar to those developed by ContinYou etc.
- Development of mechanisms for **sharing of learning in a digestible format** – no time to develop beyond existing provision or to meet other school breakfast schemes. Would need to sense what clubs would use and appreciate
- Developing **evaluation tools** that could be used in future breakfast clubs.
- **Factual information to give children** – add value to breakfast interaction
- What elements might be considered in an awards schemes (using the good standards/quality guidelines developed)

It is neither feasible nor necessary to consult with all breakfast clubs. We are recommending a project with a working title of **‘Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards’**. This project would look to work with, as a starting point, about **20 existing breakfast clubs**. These clubs would work with HFfA on a project which will extract good practice elements from existing projects and look to develop a bank of resources or quality standards for others (as per list above) A larger network may become established over time.

This type of project will need additional resources and would not be feasible within the current workplan of HFfA. It is possible to outsource this work externally or to develop this project as a funded Masters programme – this would spread the project over one year but would provide a high quality output. Should this option be chosen, the following are likely milestones;

- Developing a brief for a masters project and agreeing with 3rd level institute (if this is route chosen– immediate to get a September start date)
- Approaching existing school breakfast clubs to capture existing practice (September 2011)
- Approaching schools for participation in new pilot to establish Breakfast Clubs (to begin January 2012)

- Plan pilot programme with participating schools and steering group

Recommendation 4:

HFfA should look for funding to undertake a more detailed examination of current model of school breakfast schemes. This project is entitled ‘Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards’. Work could begin with a starting number of 20 breakfast clubs. A funded Masters should be explored as a possibility for completing this project.

6. There is support for a national pilot but the exact nature of this pilot is not clear.

As part of the evaluation, respondents were asked if they supported the concept of a national pilot project with over 75% supported the concept. At present at least 534 schools are providing breakfasts in school. A decision to expand significantly beyond this level would need to be on the basis of clearly identified gaps in service provision. Such gaps are not immediately identifiable from this study. It appears from our discussions with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the School Completion Programme (SCP), that certain schools, perhaps in DEIS regions, without breakfast clubs could be supported to research local needs and establish breakfast clubs of required. Regardless, a decision to fill ‘gaps’ in provision would rest with the appropriate Government Departments namely Department of Education and Skills and Department of Social Protection.

Within the question to develop a national pilot schemes, the consultation did not show any great support for a greatly expanded national scheme - in the breakfast club round table event evaluation, only 14% felt a nationally expanded scheme was recommended. There is no apparent need, at this point, to expand significantly beyond the current number of breakfast clubs with **the exception of** DEIS schools without breakfast clubs and who have identified a need for a club.

In the absence of an in-depth knowledge of current provision and evidence from solid evaluations of the benefits of breakfast clubs, there is a need to find new pathways to address food poverty in a school setting and to capture essential learning and impact on children’s lives. This should build on a firm knowledge of current work (see earlier recommendation).

Table 6: Percentage reporting support for different types of models of national pilot schemes form evaluation of breakfast club roundtable event. “What shape could this 'pilot programme' take?”

	Yes - strong recommendation	Not certain - would need more research	No - not recommended	Response Count
A standardised national scheme of breakfast club provision?	14.3% (2)	35.7% (5)	50.0% (7)	14
A pilot scheme of breakfast clubs in particular areas of expected deprivation (centrally driven	53.8% (7)	38.5% (5)	7.7% (1)	13

scheme)				
A pilot scheme in a schools/communities willing to take part in a pilot scheme (response led scheme, driven locally)	82.4% (14)	17.6% (3)	0.0% (0)	17
A model to develop new ways of working to provide adequate nutrition to children?	38.5% (5)	53.8% (7)	7.7% (1)	13

“My concern about a pilot is that it lacks intent at mainstream level to engage in implementing the outcomes. A pilot that is not supported to mainstream can lead to overall negative impact on target audience. We had it but it was taken away attitude leads to individuals being less liked to engage in other relevant projects. A Breakfast club should be a stepping stone to healthy eating in a home environment and not seen as an end in itself.” Quote from evaluation of roundtable event

“There is a danger in expecting one model to fit all needs. My inclination is that the need should be assessed locally, but with resources/support more readily available from a central source, without having to jump through hoops to get it. Within that there would certainly be a need for accountability, but again, not to such an extent that recording/reporting becomes excessive.”

“Anxious also that opportunity for further development of child/family/community/school relationship be developed in tandem with nutrition - healthy body healthy mind platform”

Survey / interview responses

The essential elements of any new pilot should bear in mind the following points;

- **A new pilot should not undermine or replicate existing state support to schools concerning school food:** From discussions with those running breakfast clubs and the findings from the consultation process, there is a real fear of losing existing supports. Clearly schools and community organisations are being very innovative in sourcing funding from many sources. Whilst some clubs felt that sourcing funding from many sources reduced reliance on any one sources, most respondents felt that many clubs would not survive if funding/support was to be reduced or withdrawn. This financial pressure is likely to intensify in the face of broader economic cutbacks in public spending. Any new pilot should add to existing provision but not undermine current schemes.
- **Current school food schemes are critical points of support and could act as a fulcrum for building a pilot.** The school meals support, whilst paying for food only, acts as a critical leverage for other forms of funding elsewhere. Likewise funding sources under other schemes are critical to ensuring staffing and other costs are met. However even within current support, there is room for building good practice and providing support to exiting schemes.

- **A pilot should use a 'bottom up approach'.** The most promising direction is to provide a pilot scheme in schools/communities willing to take part in a pilot scheme. This is a response led scheme, driven locally by key stakeholders interested in becoming involved. This repeats what emerged in the stakeholder interviews of the need for a pilot which has strong support from the communities involved.
- **A new pilot has to be sustainable.** This feature emerged again and again in discussions with many feeling that there have been a series of health pilots with little commitment to long term funding and service change. There is also an ethical question – if a short term pilot is established then the ethics of providing food to children and then withdrawing the service needs to be considered.
- **Evaluation data and tools are needed to measure real impacts, particularly on educational participation.** There is a real sense coming from the research and consultation process that much good work is being done and real value is being delivered from existing breakfast clubs at a school level. However very little concrete data is being captured which would inform policy and support state investment in breakfast clubs. Even in the UK, where there is extensive investment in breakfast clubs, measurement of impacts is weak. This 'hard evaluation data; is essential to build the evidence base for the further investment in breakfast clubs. A clear learning is that evaluation models are very difficult to design and the pilot should learn from other models and perhaps develop a series of evaluation tools for breakfast clubs. The evaluations to date have largely relied on traditional randomised controlled trails (RCTS). These RCTS are not suitable for large multi-variate community interventions for a variety of reasons and do not capture the qualitative evidence at a school level on impacts. However robust evaluations do need reliable statistical data. A new design, called the 'wedge cluster' design, provides a promising direction in the evaluation of breakfast clubs and other community interventions. It allows some schools to act as control schools in the early stages of interventions, hence providing the control data required to compare impacts. This is currently being developed in Wales and New Zealand to evaluate the impacts of breakfast clubs. Contact has been established with some of the researchers involved (The New Zealand trial is being led by an Irish researcher)

“New directions are not necessarily about gap filling – they are about HFfA discovering new pathways and forging new thinking”

“There was definitely a recognition from some people at my table that in many areas there is already a range of school meals projects in place and that in the current climate where additional funding may be scarce, there would still be scope for 'doing things better'. The current funding ensures that a large number of children are fed, but to progress that to a model where needs other than basic nutrition are met would require additional supports. Depending on the projects involved, the extra support and funding required may be minimal, once the food costs are being met “

Quotes from evaluation of roundtable event

The model should incorporate a number of elements and approaches

In terms of new directions and a possible new demonstration programme respondents throughout the consultation noted a number of areas for exploration. These included;

- **Exploring breakfast clubs in a number of settings** – primary, secondary, urban, rural, DEIS, educate together etc.
- Establishing a **steering group to debate** and shape a new model for testing and to provide on-going support and advice
- Linking, where possible, a **Breakfast Club programme with HfFA's Demonstration Programme of Community Food Initiatives (CFIs)** to promote a culture of breakfast, for example supporting intergenerational involvement or regeneration programmes in areas where a CFI has been established. Involving parents can support a culture of eating a meal at the table.
- Looking at the potential for an **Awards Scheme** to be developed – this would use the standards or quality guidelines developed in the earlier work with existing clubs and further promote good practice. A corporate partner such as Kellogg's' might be interested in sponsoring an awards scheme, similar to the ContinYou programme.
- **Linking the programme to the CES or emerging TUS employment schemes.** The Community Employment Scheme has worked well in many schools, providing a vital role in facilitating relationships between schools and the local community.
- **Developing a network of Breakfast Clubs** which could be used as a hook to engage with vulnerable children. It could be also used as the lynchpin under which the aims of other government departments (e.g. social exclusion, educational disadvantage, community childcare etc.) are achieved.
- Where possible the **model should link in with the children's services committees.** Ten of these have already been established with a further tranche to be rolled out. These essentially will draw together children's services at a local level and are being afforded a high level of visibility within the future development of children's services. As there is now a full Ministry of Children at government level, it will be very opportune to link breakfast clubs with children's services.
- **Measuring the impact of breakfasts in secondary schools.** In the Drogheda experience there was a high transfer of pupils from primary to secondary school. Breakfast was initially served to the secondary schools and the secondary school now has its own breakfast club. (note attendees at secondary school tend to 'skip' breakfast more frequently)
- Ensuring in the design that **consideration must be given to the newly unemployed or 'new poor'.** One respondent noted that 15% of middle class children reported missing breakfast (HBSC).
- **Exploring the impact of the timing of food supports.** There was some discussion as to the timing of the provision of food and a question was raised about the need to support the provision of food at little break at 11am. It was felt that the best impact could be achieved through the provision of breakfast as children need food early in the day.
- Ensuring that the initiative is **tied into other whole school policy approaches.** Healthy-eating guidelines could be linked to the curriculum to further educate children on eating a healthy diet. Linking the Healthy Schools Policy to the school inspection would ensure buy-in from Department of Education. Guidelines could also be developed on child participation in school food policy. Equally

the model could link in with the health promoting schools initiative and other health promotion developments.

These elements could be incorporated into any new pilot.

“there are many initiatives operating country wide, sustainability being the big challenge. Strong sense of joined up thinking and practice from event. Tremendous passion from all there for the development of systematic approach to meeting children's food poverty needs.”

“Schools will not get involved if a pilot does not look sustainable – in the current climate, agencies and staff will not engage in on-going pilots with no commitment to mainstream

“The worry with heavily funded pilots is that they are not sustainable in the long run but raise expectations”

Survey / interview responses

In the roundtable event and interviews and discussions with stakeholders, it emerges that there is room for a pilot with a number of critical and equally important elements. There is room for a novel design which incorporates a number of elements. The following has emerged as an overall framework for development but it is likely that the final option chosen will be contingent on funding and longer term support from key agencies/government departments.

Recommendation 5: Development of a demonstration programme

HFfA should look to develop a demonstration project based on one of the options presented within the scoping study.

Three different options are presented for discussion.

Option 1 – Steering group & Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards’

This option would see HFfA establish a national steering group for breakfast clubs – If funding is secured, this group would

- oversee the ‘**Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards’** project which would seek to capture good practice at a local level and capturing the promising practice within existing breakfast clubs (see recommendation 3)
- advocate and if needed **facilitate dialogue at a state agency level** (see recommendation 1)
- facilitate better sharing of information between interested parties
- advocate for further investment in breakfast clubs using the policy paper developed by HFfA

Option 2: Steering group & Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards’ and Awards scheme

This option would see HfFA establish a national steering group for breakfast clubs as above and if funding is secured, this group would develop an awards scheme for existing clubs using the quality standards developed

Option 3: Steering group & Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards' and development of a new pilot initiative

This option would see HfFA establish a national steering group for breakfast clubs as in option 1 above and if funding is secured, this group would

- oversee the '**Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards'** project which would seek to capture good practice at a local level and capturing the promising practice within existing breakfast clubs (see recommendation 3)
- advocate and if needed facilitate dialogue at a state agency level (see recommendation 1)
- Developing a **pilot scheme with a clearly established framework**, which has the following elements
 - o A clearly outlined route to central state funding
 - o An agreement to establish an agreed number (about 5 is suggested) of new clubs though this will depend on resources available.
 - o Maps the process and key steps in establishment (using the lessons from existing clubs)
 - o Provides a structure to easily accessible support and advice to new and existing clubs
 - o Involves other state agencies at both a regional and national level
 - o Links into initiatives concerning children at a regional level – such as children's services committees
 - o Captures the impacts on nutritional, behavioural and educational outcomes in a realistic evaluation model that then feeds into policy at a state level.
 - o Establishes a sustainable programme with long term funding
 - o Sees a final evaluation completed with widespread dissemination of learnings.

6.3 Summary of recommendations

The following is a summary of the recommendations and potential outputs provided by the scoping study.

Recommendation	Output	Description
<p>Recommendation 1: Use the results of the scoping study and the forthcoming quantitative research from the DES as a tool to initiate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>engagement and dialogue between stakeholders at government department level to add further value to work already underway through various state schemes</i> - <i>engagement and dialogue for a wider group of stakeholders to document existing work, resources and information, disseminate information and raise awareness of the potential impact of breakfast clubs with other agencies. HFfA should build on the roundtable event to initiate a national forum of agencies and groups interested in the progression of breakfast clubs.</i> 	<p>1. Forum of Statutory Policymakers</p> <p>2. Steering Group</p>	<p>To include DES, DSP, DOHC, DAFF</p> <p>Working Group of relevant players (e.g. IPPN, SCP, NPC, CRA, Barnardos) to design a Demonstration Programme of Breakfast Clubs</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: HFfA should develop a policy briefing to capture the evidence and key policy messages concerning the benefits of breakfast clubs. This should then be used to further build engagement with stakeholders.</p>	<p>3. HFfA Policy Briefing</p>	<p>Establishing the case for investment in Breakfast Clubs and highlighting their added value</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: HFfA should position itself to take a lead role in advocating for continued state investment by facilitating further development of breakfast clubs within Ireland and building the evidence base for their support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>essential elements of current models</i> - <i>objectives of models in existence –related to nutrition, educational, social or elements of all</i> 	<p>4. Clearly established role and profile for HFfA</p>	<p>Link food poverty to broader policy goals</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: HFfA should look for funding to undertake a more detailed examination of current model of school breakfast schemes. This project is entitled ‘Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards’. Work could begin with a starting number of 20 breakfast clubs. A funded Masters should be explored as a possibility for completing this project.</p>	<p>5. Research & Standards Programme of 20 existing Breakfast Clubs</p>	<p>Promotion of HFfA Good Practice Guide for SFIs, further development of chapter on Breakfast Clubs as a resource for schools to include more detail on set up phase</p>

<p><i>Recommendation 5: Development of a Demonstration Programme.</i></p> <p><i>HFfA should look to develop a demonstration project based on one of the options presented within the scoping study.</i></p>	<p>and to include section on quality standards. To include evaluation design</p> <p>Identify DEIS schools and approach 5 schools for inclusion in pilot programme with representation of urban/rural and primary/secondary schools.</p> <p>6. Pilot Programme to establish 5 Breakfast Clubs</p>
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6.4 Charting a new Direction

The following is a sequential step by step process which could be used as a framework for next steps. It is presented as a draft at this stage with an understanding that it will be discussed by the management team and with Kellogg's.

Within current resources

1. **Discuss report** as a management team and agree next steps
2. **Action recommendation 1** HFfA should develop a policy briefing note (similar to their pre-budget submission) to capture the evidence and key policy messages concerning the benefits of breakfast clubs. This should then be followed up by a planned programme of engagement and communication starting with those agencies who attended the roundtable.

Action point: HFfA to draft a policy position paper based on scoping study. The development of the policy paper / briefing note could be done with existing resources. However dissemination and promotion will require some resources and should be discussed within the context of the workplan.

3. **Discuss with Kellogg's** the possibility of financial and corporate support for the options as presented under recommendations 4 (*'Capturing Existing Good Practice & Development of Quality Standards'*) and 5 (*Demonstration Project*).

Resources costs will need to include centralised support for HFfA to enable it undertake this work.

4. **Meet again with Department of Education and Skills Department of Social Protection, School Meals Section** to agree elements from their perspective regarding the establishment of a national forum on relevant government departments and state agencies.

If additional resources are secured

5. **Arrange a series of further meetings with critical stakeholders.** The scoping study and the roundtable event undertaken to communicate with a number of key stakeholders. As the study progressed, some new stakeholders emerged. These include Children's rights alliance, OMCYA, Barnardos, Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), INTO, HSE community dieticians forum (See list of stakeholders earlier). These meetings could tie into the development of a national steering group to build a foundation for further work.

6. **Plan in detail the** sequencing of work and process to be undertaken
 - Steering group and terms of reference (depending on options chosen)
 - Developed detailed roadmap for 1-3 years