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Institute of Public Health in Ireland



State provision of school meals across the island

Innovation in policies, pilots & politics

Dr. Helen McAvoy

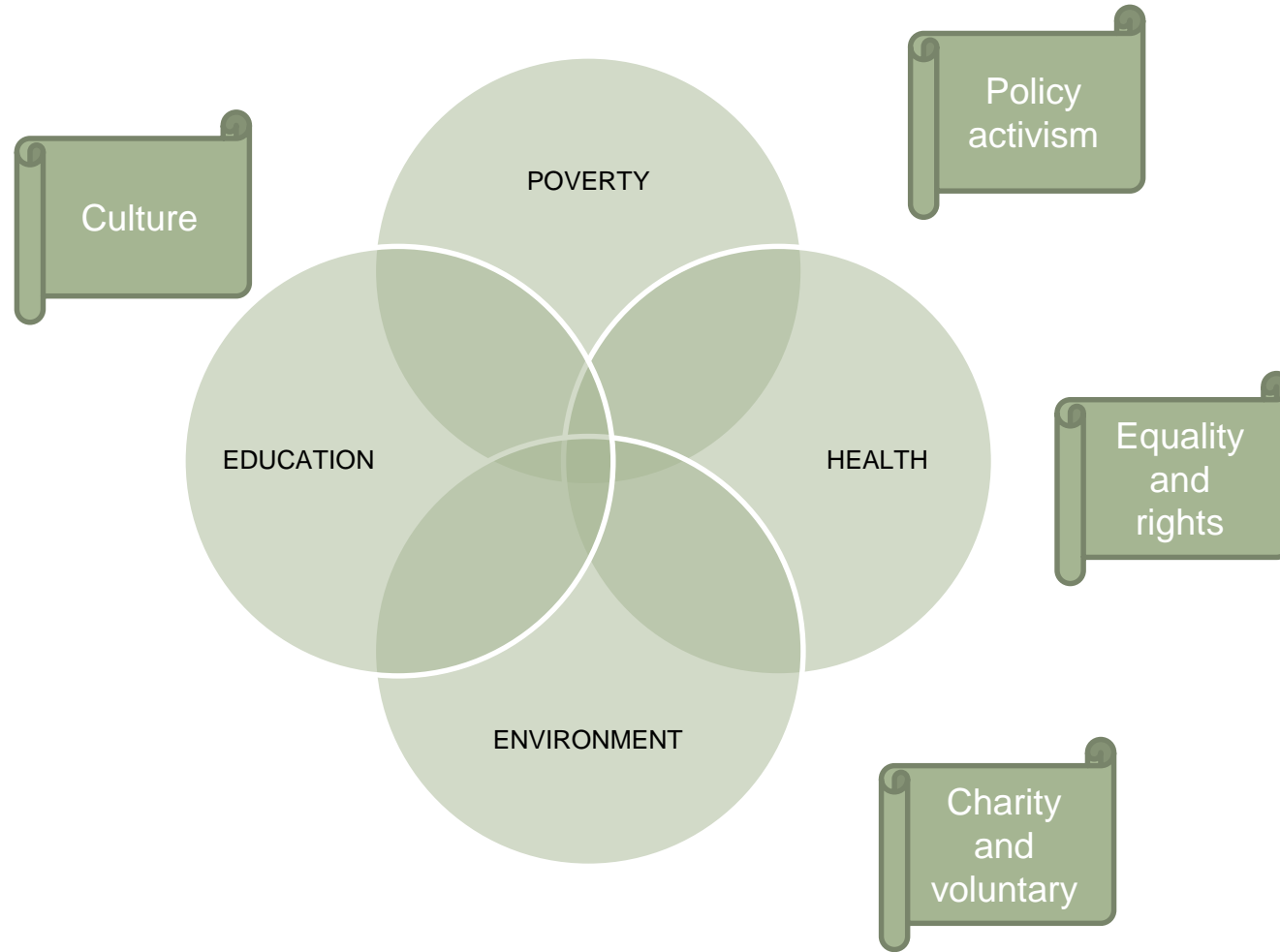
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Overview

1. **Why** should governments provide schools meals?
2. **How** have governments moved on provision?
3. **What** do they provide?
4. **What** next?

1. Why?



1.1 Why? Poverty

- ☐ Child poverty
- ☐ Food poverty
- ☐ Social inclusion
- ☐ Economic downturn
- ☐ Food prices



SUMMER HUNGER

WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS DURING JULY & AUGUST?



Compiled using data from Department of Education (school census) and Trussell Trust

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Census

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1.2 Why? Education

Attend
Participate
Learn
Achieve



1.3. Why? Health

Hunger
Nutrition
Obesity
Eating habits
Mental health



1.4. Why? Environment

Packaging

Food waste

Sustainability

Local Teachers to tell children to eat less meat in controversial climate change document



2. How?

- ☐ Provide a meal free for all schoolchildren
- ☐ Provide a meal for everyone subsidized
- ☐ Provide a meal for everyone – with no cost to consumer for some (NI)
- ☐ Regulate school meal standards (NI/RoI)
- ☐ Regulate/ guide consumption of foods eaten as part of the school day (meals provided, vending and/or lunches from home) (NI/RoI)

2. How?

- ☐ Law
- ☐ Policy/ strategy – integrated or dispersed
- ☐ Resourcing – leadership, infrastructure, food, transport, administration
- ☐ Evaluation and compliance systems

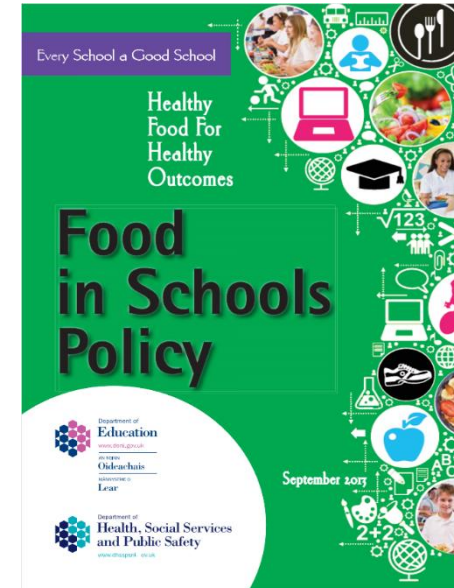
Law



- Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act (2010)
- Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson

What? Northern Ireland

- ❑ Food in Schools Policy
- ❑ Food in Schools Co-ordinator
- ❑ Food in Schools Forum
- ❑ Monitoring and evaluation



- Department of Education and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2013) Food in Schools Policy.
- Gilmore G, Gossrau-Breen D, MacDonald L, Taylor L and McGowan L. School food: top marks. A summary report on food in schools research in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Public Health Agency, 2010.

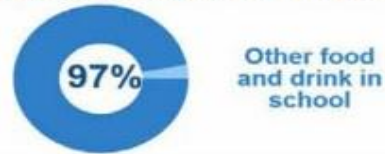
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Food in Schools



Key results from the 2015 Food in Schools monitoring survey

Schools reporting that they are either fully compliant with Nutritional Standards or making good progress towards compliance with them.



4 in 5 schools specifically encourage pupils to bring only healthy options for lunch



Almost 7 in 10 schools reported not using sweets as a reward for pupils

95% of pupils have easy access to free, fresh drinking water at all times



83% of schools have a written school food /healthy eating policy

The Food in Schools policy, which applies to all grant-aided schools, came into effect from 24 September 2013. The monitoring survey was carried out in September 2015. The results are based on 492 schools that responded to the survey.



- Department of Education
- Bite Magazine No. 7 (April 2018)

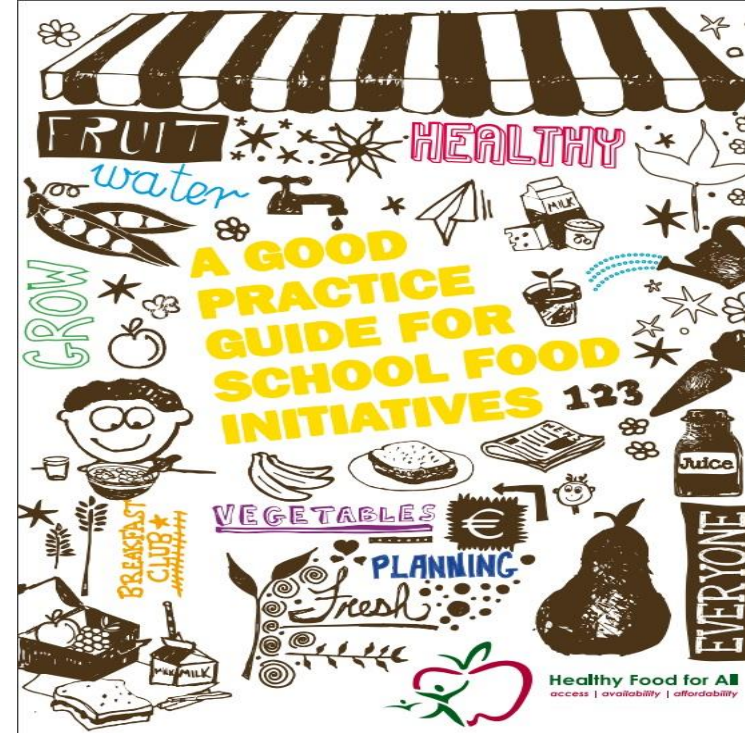
What? Republic of Ireland

School Meals Programme

- ☐ Urban School Meals Scheme (statutory)
- ☐ School Meals Local Projects Scheme (non-statutory)
- ☐ Hot School Meals Project



- Healthy Ireland (2017) Nutrition Standards for School Meals developed with the assistance of safefood and the Health Service Executive in cooperation with members of the School Meals Programme in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and Department of Education and Skills.



- Healthy Food for All (2009) A Good Practice Guide for School Food Initiatives developed for the Combat Poverty Agency and Department of Health and Children.

Political milieu

- ☐ Political arguments
- ☐ Religious perspectives
- ☐ Attribution of 'blame'
- ☐ Personal versus state responsibility
- ☐ 'Free feeders'
- ☐ Role of mothers (families)
- ☐ 'not effective' and/or wasteful

What next?

- ☐ Political sphere
- ☐ Health inequalities role?
- ☐ Satisfying multi-agenda outcomes frameworks





Acknowledgements

- Miller, I. (2013) Addressing food poverty in Ireland: historical perspectives. Policy Paper in *History and Policy*.
- Finch, A. (2019) The provision of school meals since 1906 – a recipe for disaster? Policy Paper in *History and Policy*.
- Oostindjer, M et al (2017) Are school meals a viable and sustainable tool to improve the healthiness and sustainability of children's diet and consumption? A cross-national comparative perspective. *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition*, 57:18, 3942-3958
- Holley, C. and Mason, C (2019) A systematic review of the evaluation of interventions to tackle children's food insecurity . *Current Nutrition Reports* (2019) 8:11-27/

Thank you

Any questions?

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