

# Think Healthy Vending

## Guidance on vending in schools

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### **Audience:**

Healthy schools officers; dietitians, school caterers; headteachers, teachers and governors of secondary schools in Wales.

### **Overview:**

This document provides advice regarding the use of refrigerated vending machines in schools as part of a whole school approach to food and nutrition.

### **Action required:**

To take note of the guidance offered.

### **Enquiries:**

Enquiries about this document should be directed to Mrs Sue Bowker Telephone 029 2082 6105 Fax 029 2082 5971, or in writing to the address below.

### **Additional copies:**

Can be obtained from the Assembly website [www.healthschool.org.uk](http://www.healthschool.org.uk)

Health Promotion Division  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Think Healthy Vending**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this guidance is to help schools establish healthy food and drink vending as an attractive, useful, and financially viable element of the whole school food service. It is based on recent studies undertaken in Welsh schools by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and managed by the Health Education Trust.

This guidance deals with refrigerated food and drink vending controlled by the school and managed by the school caterers, rather than the use of commercial vending machines. If schools are using commercial vending machines then it is good practice to use unbranded machines and to limit the unhealthy options available, for example, ask commercial drink vendors to provide juice and water products only in unbranded machines.

**Vending should not be looked at in isolation, but as part of the planning for the whole school food service. That service should reflect the objectives of the school 'food and nutrition policy'. The health and welfare of pupils should be at the heart of school policy.**

### **Benefits of healthy vending**

- **To offer an alternative service at catering 'pinch points' during break and lunchtime;**
- **To supply a service when catering is not available – breakfast and after school (for pupils and adults);**
- **To alleviate the problems of queuing at busy times of the day;**
- **To offer a 'grab and go' opportunity to busy pupils and staff;**
- **To give a healthier balance and variety than traditional vending.**

### **Whole School Planning and Involvement**

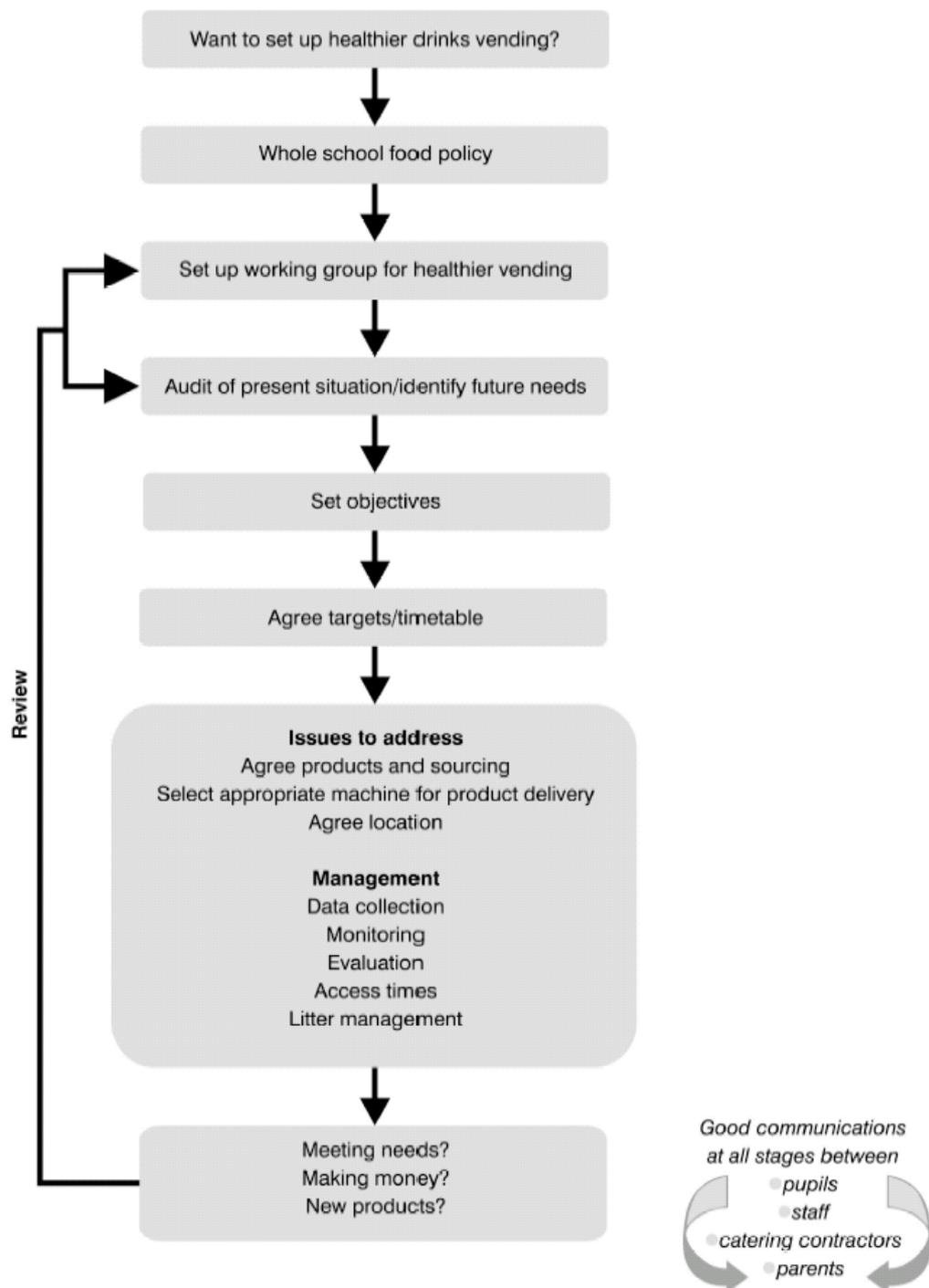
Set up a group which includes:

- Member of the senior management team;
- Pupil representatives from the school council;
- School cook supervisor;
- Representative of teaching staff from appropriate curriculum area;
- Parent and/or governor;
- Area catering manager;
- Leisure centre managers, if school has on-site leisure centre.

It will be helpful to liaise with or include the local Healthy Schools Co-ordinator and community dietitian.

# A process flow chart

## Quick guide to setting up a healthier drinks vending operation



(Reproduced with kind permission of the Food Standards Agency's - Vending Healthy Drinks. A Guide for Schools. Food Standards Agency, 2004)

## **Key factors for success**

- Bear in mind the need to discuss and plan vending as a part of a whole school approach that is consistent with the school's food and nutrition policy.
- It is strongly advised that schools audit their food service in order to determine the type and extent of vending that will enhance both the overall quality and accessibility of the school's catering service.
- Encourage discussion by pupil representatives in school and class councils on all the relevant issues.

These key factors for success have been developed from the pilot project in which the vending machines were the responsibility of the school caterer. The general principles will apply even if the contract for management of the vending machines is held by someone other than the school caterer.

## Feasibility

Healthy vending can offer great benefits to caterers and pupils alike but requires careful planning and good management. Planning is particularly important when vending fresh food or drinks with a relatively short shelf life.

## Product mix and price

Product should not be difficult to source because the majority of it is already on sale over the counter in schools. Where a new product is required it can generally be obtained through the usual suppliers to the catering contractor in place at the school.

However, the following general rules apply:

- Discuss and plan product mix with pupils and catering staff to ensure the product mix meets the requirements of healthy eating and the tastes of the customers – (see appendix 1 for guidance);
- Involve pupils in the research and collation of suitable products;
- Look to offer opportunities to local suppliers/producers to supply their products;
- Ensure the range of products on offer is affordable.

## Machine selection

- Take care to ensure compatibility between the machine and the product.
- As demand for fresh food vending grows, the standard 'carousel' machine is being replaced by more sophisticated models. In addition, more fresh

fruit and vegetable products are being pre-prepared with this market in mind.

- Generally speaking, machines are designed with a type of product in mind. A good many milk and juice products come in Tetra and Prisma packaging and until recently it has been difficult to vend these products as effectively as cans and bottles. New high capacity machines are now coming onto the market specifically designed for the purpose.

Check regularly on the websites of key players such as the Automatic Vending Association (AVA), the Health Education Trust, and the FSA – (see Appendix 2).

### Machine location

Good locations are in the dining area or a place very close by to make filling/maintaining/supervising as easy as possible and will ensure service continuity. Machines placed away from the dining area may increase access but will require increased diligence to maintain.

Ask these questions:

- Where can it be placed to offer pupils a quick service and a chance to avoid queues?
- Where can it go to give service if/or when the dining room is closed or not serving food?
- Will it be accessible for evening and weekend use?
- Where can it be placed to offer the caterer the fastest, most convenient daily filling and maintenance operation?
- Will its location help to increase the quality of supervision and reduce vandalism?

### Access to vending machines

- Consider with the planning group how to ensure maximum access to the vending machine without compromising the usual practices and administration of the school – see ‘benefits of vending’ above.
- If access is heavily constrained it will constrain usage and this will have an impact on the machine’s usefulness and its commercial viability will be affected.

### Machine management and administration

- Nominate and train key personnel to take responsibility for duties specifically related to vending machines.
- Encourage catering staff to see vending as a part of their overall service and recognise that there are substantial benefits to be gained from healthy vending.
- Check that the electrical supply is safe, secure and ‘pupil proof’.

- Establish a comprehensive maintenance and repair contract for the machine(s).
- Ensure that common or recurring problems are understood and addressed to prevent a lack of confidence in the machine by users. Active and efficient management of the machine is needed to keep waste figures low.

### Litter

- Provide large, secure, attractive litter bins for each vending machine.
- Encourage appropriate pupil behaviour through the existing school policy and personal and social education in the curriculum.
- Involve pupils in discussions regarding the management of litter around the school campus.

### Marketing and promotion

Discuss and agree a marketing and promotion strategy to popularise the scheme and ensure that pupils are involved in this process.

- Promote through morning assemblies.
- Market through posters and newsletters.
- Discuss in class councils and tutorials.
- Include as newsletter items to parents and governors.

### Monitoring, evaluation and review

Regular and reliable data collection is essential to manage both choice and profitability of machines.

- Nominate and train specific personnel to collect and collate data in order to monitor the use and commercial success of the machine.
- Consider using or adapting the pro-forma – supplied in Appendix 3
- Include the review of machines and products in school and class council meetings

### Leisure Centres linked with school sites

It is very important that schools with leisure centres on site work closely with centre managers to ensure consistent approaches to vending and deliver a 'whole campus' policy. Ensure that the centre managers are included in the membership of the working group

### **Common concerns**

#### Commercial viability

Research has shown that pupils will use healthy vending machines and that good margins can be achieved if the product and machine are compatible, the operation is managed efficiently and the machine is located sympathetically. There is no doubt that drinks vending offers less danger of wastage and food vending needs to be integrated into the overall catering provision for the school.

#### Staffing

Attracting and keeping staff in school catering can be difficult but vending should be seen as part of the whole food service and staffed accordingly. Well managed vending will cover all extra staff wage costs and show a profit.

#### Product

Product can be relatively easily sourced as most is already sold over the counter and much of the food can be freshly prepared on site. Additional items can be sourced through the caterers existing supplier or through local businesses.

#### Litter

Litter is always a key concern to head teachers who are sensitive to an untidy site. Litter bins should be supplied with each machine and the school should address the whole issue of litter through the school policy and Personal and Social Education (PSE).

## **Appendix 1**

### **Healthy food products suggestion list – for use in a refrigerated vending machine.**

Use this list as a starter for discussion with the school based working group

- Fresh fruit, prepared fruit salads;
- Filled rolls;
- Sandwiches;
- Baguettes;
- Wraps;
- Bread sticks and crudités (vegetable sticks);
- Crackers and cheese;
- Salads;
- Pasta mixes;
- Yogurts;
- Fromage frais;
- Semi-skimmed milk and flavoured milks;
- Pure fruit juices or smoothies;
- Plain still or carbonated water.

This list is not exhaustive but gives a framework for pupil/staff/caterer consultation. Suggested drinks allow for the food machine to be a one stop shop for the pupils. Different types and styles of breads can be used to give variety.

FSA are currently looking at profiling the nutrient content of foods. The project has developed an approach for children aged 11-15 based on the balance of selected micro and macro nutrients in individual foods, and which takes account of the positive contribution to the diet of foods such as cheese and dried fruit, as well as their fat, salt and sugar content. The outcome of the nutrient profiles research could help identify healthier options for use in school vending machines. See FSA website, address at annex 2, for further information.

### **Healthy drinks products suggestions list – for use in an appropriate refrigerated vending machine.**

- Semi skimmed fresh milk
- Fresh flavoured milk with 5 per cent or less sugar
- Pure fruit juices
- Fruit smoothies
- Plain still or sparkling water

Take care to ensure that machine and product to be vended are compatible and give the best combination of capacity, reliability and cost – see AVA and Health Education Trust websites at Appendix 2 for further information.

## Appendix 2 Key Organisations

Food Standards Agency

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

Wales office

11<sup>th</sup> Floor

Southgate House

Wood St

Cardiff

CF10 1EW

Telephone (Wales): 029 2067 8999

Or FSA London office on 020 7276 8934

Automatic Vending Association

[www.ava-vending.org](http://www.ava-vending.org)

Automatic Vending Association,

1 Villiers Court

40 Upper Mulgrave Road

Cheam

Surrey

SM2 7AJ

Telephone: 0208 661112

Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA)

[www.laca.co.uk](http://www.laca.co.uk)

Local Authority Caterers Association

Bourne House

Horzell Park

Woking

Surrey GU21 4LY

Telephone: 01438 766777

Welsh region contact

Tel. 01443 735410

The Dairy Council

[www.milk.co.uk](http://www.milk.co.uk)

164 Shaftesbury Avenue

London WC2H 8HL

Telephone: 0207 3954030

Health Education Trust

[www.healthedtrust.com](http://www.healthedtrust.com)

18 High Street

Broom

Alcester  
Warwickshire B50 4HJ



<b>Weekly Totals</b>	Machine 1 sited at _____	Machine 2 sited at _____		Please specify nature of products
	<b>Net Profit</b>  £ _____	<b>Net Profit</b>  £ _____	<u>Gross Takings</u>  £ _____	<b>Machine 1</b> ..... £..... <b>Machine 2</b> ..... £..... <b>Machine 3</b> ..... £..... <b>Machine 4</b> ..... £.....

