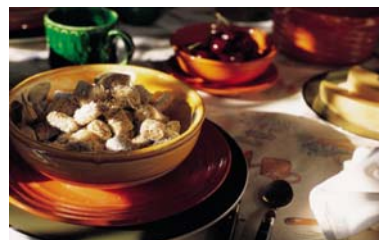


Evaluation of Free School Breakfast Initiative



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Moore, L., K. Tapper, et al. (2005). Extension of Evaluation of Free School Breakfasts Initiative. National Assembly for Wales 2005 - 2007

The Study

The Welsh Assembly Government is working to improve the health and well-being of children and young people in Wales. As part of this strategy they are piloting a Free School Breakfasts Initiative to provide free, healthy breakfasts to primary school children throughout Wales. In September 2004, CISHE researchers were awarded a contract to evaluate the impact of this initiative, with the evaluation to take place in Communities-First primary and junior schools throughout Wales.

It is often said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that for children, eating a healthy breakfast may be associated not only with better nutrition, but also with improved academic performance and behaviour. The CISHE evaluation will help determine the extent to which such benefits can be achieved through the Free Breakfasts Initiative.

[Professor Laurence Moore](#), who led the bid, commented, "We are delighted to have been awarded this contract. CISHE has a strong commitment to the evaluation of new policy initiatives and this project represents an important opportunity to demonstrate the feasibility and value of using cluster randomised trials for this purpose".

A first wave of pilot Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools began the scheme in September 2004 and participated in a preliminary process study. A report on this first wave has been submitted to Welsh Assembly Government. The second wave of LEAs and schools were offered the opportunity to begin the initiative in January 2005 and to participate in a cluster randomised controlled trial of the initiative.

The first phase of the randomised controlled trial was conducted with 58 schools located in 9 different regions including Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. Key outcome measures include diet, breakfast eating habits, cognitive function, classroom behaviour and school attendance. Data were collected at baseline, 4 month and 12-months in all intervention and control schools and data will shortly be prepared for use in final analyses of the effectiveness of the initiative. A process evaluation focusing on the views and experiences of LEAs, school teachers, caterers and pupils and including observation of the scheme's operation has also been conducted and a report based upon these findings has been submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government.

Baseline and 4-month follow up data have so far been used to validate new measures of dietary behaviours and attitudes towards breakfast. Papers describing these findings have been accepted for publication (see below), and further papers have or are currently being prepared, exploring methodological issues and social and psychological correlates of children's breakfast eating behaviours.

In August 2005 CISHE was awarded an extension to its original contract to evaluate the roll out of the Breakfast Scheme as it moved from Community First to Non Community First areas throughout Wales. The extension employed the same design, extending the sample size and allowing wider comparative analyses of the relative effects of the intervention in children from differing social backgrounds. A total of 53 further schools were recruited. Baseline data were collected in the Autumn term 2005 with intervention schools setting up the initiative from January 2006. Four-month and twelve month follow-up data have now been collected and, once coded and entered, will be merged with Communities First data ready for analysis. A nested process evaluation was also carried out, replicating the methodology used in the initial phase of the study.

For further information on the Free School Breakfast Initiative, visit the [Welsh Assembly Government's website](#)

Publications

- Tapper, K., Murphy, S., Lynch, R., Clark, R., Moore, G.F. and Moore, L. (in press). Development of a scale to measure 9-11 year olds' attitudes towards breakfast. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.
- Moore, G.F., Tapper, K., Murphy, S., Lynch, R., Pimm, C., Raisanen, L. and Moore, L. (in press). Associations between deprivation, attitudes towards eating breakfast and breakfast eating behaviours in 9-11 year olds. *Public Health Nutrition*.
- Tapper, K., Murphy, S., Moore, L., Lynch, R. and Clark, R. (in press). Evaluating the Free School Breakfast Initiative in Wales: Methodological issues. *British Food Journal*.
- Moore, G.F., Tapper, K., Murphy, S., Clark, R., Lynch, R. and Moore, L. (2007). Validation of a self-completion measure of breakfast foods, snacks and fruits and vegetables consumed by 9-11 year old schoolchildren. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 61(3). 420-30
- [Preliminary report](#)

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