



**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**For immediate release**

**CHILDREN IN SCOTLAND ENDORSES  
FREE SCHOOL MEALS PILOT AND CALLS FOR  
COMPARISON WITH NORWEGIAN PROGRAMME**

Children in Scotland strongly endorses the Scottish government's pilot programme to provide free school meals to all P1-P3 pupils and calls for comparisons to be made with Norway's free school meals pilot programme.

In testimony before the Scottish Parliament's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, Children in Scotland warmly welcomed the universal approach of the Scottish Government's Free School Meals pilot.

Paula Evans, Children in Scotland's policy and parliamentary information officer, said:

"This is essential to promoting healthier childhoods and enhancing children's experiences at school. Children in Scotland does not believe that a targeted approach can be as effective in teaching about nutrition, healthy eating habits and the food production system as one that involves all children as a normal and natural part of their school experience. A universal approach with P1 to P3 students can establish a firm foundation of common knowledge and shared experience that advances the public health agenda in relation to obesity, nutrition and food."

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, said:

"Many of the Nordic nations have significantly higher levels of child wellbeing than Scotland — and free school meals is a key element of these models. Sweden, for example, has provided free school meals universally for many years. Norway, which has not previously had a school meals programme, is now piloting free school meals in some areas. The Scottish pilot programme might benefit from comparing terms of reference and results with the Norwegian pilots."

Children in Scotland's new publication Northern Lights features additional information on Norway's approach. Email [npay@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:npay@childreninscotland.org.uk) or go to [www.childreninscotland.org.uk/publications](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/publications) for more information.

Children in Scotland looks forward to the outcomes of this pilot. If proven successful, Children in Scotland hopes to see it universally expanded beyond the current six month time span to all P1 to P3s in Scotland — and to also examine ways in which this can be extended to pre-school children. Children in Scotland has called for a review of pre-school services similar to that established through the highly regarded Hungry for Success initiative.

#### Key points and recommendations:

- A universal approach to free school meals with P1 through P3 pupils is the best way to address the public health and education needs of these children.
- An understanding of 'choice' that fully engages children in menu planning is an appropriate and efficient approach.
- The pilot school meals programme should include a requirement for participating schools to include parental involvement during the 6-month pilot period to encourage a complementary, positive and supportive environment in the home.
- A short-life expert panel should be formed to look at improving meals in pre-school centres. This would be similar to the Expert Panel on School Meals that produced Hungry for Success.
- This Scottish pilot project would benefit from assessing the terms of reference of the Nordic pilots — and from comparing the results from both nations at the end of the trial.

#### **Notes for editors:**

- Paula Evans is available to be interviewed at 0131-222 2435
- Her testimony will be available as a transcript prepared by the Scottish Parliament
- Children in Scotland's position was misrepresented in some media reports today (20.9.07)