# healthier breakfast clubs



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# benefits of healthier breakfast clubs

## welcome

This Healthier Breakfast Clubs guidance offers advice and support for your school whether you are planning to set up a breakfast club that promotes healthier eating, or wanting to change the emphasis of an existing club to promote healthier eating. This guidance has been informed by the Food in Schools Breakfast Clubs project, which was piloted in 41 schools in the West Midlands Region.

The findings from the pilot projects were extremely positive. By creating a positive atmosphere and including new and interesting foods the clubs helped to improve attitudes towards healthy breakfast provision, as well as helping to create a positive rapport between teachers and pupils. Teachers reported that children had improved attendance, attention, behaviour and levels of concentration as a result of healthier foods being provided in the morning. In addition, it has been suggested that this provision can also contribute to improved academic performance.

A healthier breakfast club:

- provides an opportunity for pupils and staff to eat breakfast, in a stimulating environment;
- has a positive effect on pupils' concentration and performance throughout the day;
- engages pupils in making healthier choices about their diet by providing them with encouragement, knowledge and support;
- · can help improve pupil attendance and punctuality;
- can lead to better social interaction and skills between pupils;
- increases the contact between teachers and parents;
- can improve pupils' motivation and self-confidence through relationships with adults other than teachers;
- can benefit low income families by providing no-cost or low-cost breakfast

# what is a healthier breakfast club?

A healthier breakfast club provides a good balance and variety of food and drinks on its menu over a period of time. It ensures that the needs of pupils and staff are being met, and encourages the whole school community to eat breakfast and try something new.

According to the Sodexho School Meals and Lifestyle Survey 2005, 8% of children have nothing to eat before school, and this rises to 12% for 15-16 year olds and 17% for 15-16 year old girls. Breakfast Clubs can help to change these statistics and give children a healthier start to their day.

case study

In a secondary school, situated in a deprived area with high unemployment, a breakfast club was launched to kick-start a whole school approach to healthier eating.

A 'drop in café' was created, called 'Switch on to Breakfast', where pupils could eat breakfast, listen to music and watch TV. The informal environment was liked by pupils and made the club feel less like school.

## getting started

Depending on your school and its local community, you will need to consider whether you are providing a healthier breakfast club and/or before-school childcare. Your community may decide on before-school provision for families where parents or carers work and need to leave home before school begins. Your school may be in an area where there are families with low household incomes whose financial circumstances mean that they have a limited amount of money to spend on food.

You will need to consider, and be aware of, the local Early Years Services and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) strategic approaches to school based child care, Ofsted registration requirements for out-of-school care and the national day care standards.

A useful start could be to review your Whole School Food Policy or develop one by conducting an audit of the school's current provision. If you already have a club, the SNAG or School Council could consider how to make it healthier. Involve the whole school community (pupils, parents, teachers, caterers, governors, Healthy Schools co-ordinator, health professionals), perhaps through a School Council or School Nutrition Action Group (SNAG) to ascertain whether a club is needed and would be used. Working with partners in the local community, e.g. dietitian/dental health team, will also ensure that the school has support to achieve its aims. They can help with menu suggestions. It is essential to involve the school's senior management team from the outset.

By incorporating the club into your Whole School Food Policy you will ensure that it:

- is linked to other health initiatives at school;
- provides consistent information on healthier food and drink choices;
- becomes part of your school's development plan.

  Try to keep it simple. The club can develop in time, but at the early stages it is better to avoid being too ambitious. Visit some established clubs at local schools. Find out what has worked well for them and what has not. They may provide useful information on funding, staffing and resources.

Survey templates can be found on the Food in Schools CD-Rom or website.



# step by step plan

Schools have different ways of operating breakfast clubs, and you will need to review what facilities you have available and select the most appropriate approach to meet the needs of the pupils.

#### what are your aims?

Will the club open to all pupils or will it target specific pupils, e.g. by year group? What do you want to achieve from the club?

This will depend on the needs of your school community and the facilities and budget available. Some clubs invite parents and staff to participate. For example, find out what parents and pupils need and want from a healthier breakfast club, e.g. additional activities/services other than food, send out questionnaires to parents in a newsletter or hold a meeting. Find out what type of food and drink pupils like to eat for breakfast. Pupils could conduct a survey in their classes and report back to a School Council/SNAG. Find out whether there are any restrictions due to cultural, religious or health requirements, e.g. allergies.





## setting up a healthier breakfast club

There are many ways of organising a breakfast club, depending on the individual needs of schools. Important aspects to consider include:

- the type of club which will best suit your school;
- who will run the club;
- where and when the club will run:
- how the club will run;
- whether optional activities will be provided, as well as food, e.g. games, music;
- the name of the club;
- the establishment of rules and procedures;
- the involvement of the school community, e.g. parents and pupils.

# ase study

The deputy head of a Technology
College identified the need for a
Breakfast Club following teachers'
concerns that pupils were not eating
breakfast and were making
unhealthy food choices during the
day.

The local school community officer secured funding for a Breakfast Club for the College and its five feeder primary schools. Being part of a cluster system proved a successful strategy in helping them share best practice and overcome problems. The club acted as a catalyst to changing pupils' attitudes towards healthier eating.

By using young servers, the school has created an informal and relaxed club. Pupils find it appealing as it allows them to socialise with their friends while eating. 'It's sociable to be sitting down and talking, it gives us somewhere to go'.

There are two main approaches to setting up a healthier breakfast club, these are:

	Kettle and toaster style club	Canteen/Servery style club
Summary	This type of club is useful where access to catering facilities is limited as in most primary schools, but where you are able to set up an area for food preparation. It is ideal for serving cereals, toast and juice or hot drinks	These clubs use professional catering staff and resources. In most cases they are staffed by school catering personnel, often as an extension of the school's standard catering contract, as is the case in the majority of secondary schools. These clubs operate either a servery style self-service buffet or a canteen style self-service with staff serving pupils at a counter.
What do you need to think about if you decide to set up this type of club?	<ul> <li>Ensure that club workers have appropriate training and qualifications in basic food hygiene, supervising pupils or healthier catering. You will need to consider whether club workers are paid or volunteers.</li> <li>Ensure that those who run the club, and those who attend it, follow simple food hygiene rules. Display these clearly at the club using posters and signs.</li> <li>Make sure that the facilities include adequate storage and an area for preparing and clearing away food. This includes access to fridges, hot water and rubbish disposal.</li> <li>Provide disposable cloths to cover tables.</li> <li>Limit and control access to sharp knives, hot kettles and toasters, especially with younger pupils.</li> <li>Get agreement from the catering organisation about the use and cleaning of the area and of dishwashing equipment, if you are using a catering area.</li> <li>Check that the school's public liability insurance is in place and that it covers your activities and the out-of-school-hours timing of your club. Check specifically with the LEA insurance officer or the insurer to make sure that you are covered.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>The cost of paying for staff from the catering company may be high. However, you may be able to negotiate a separate agreement for use of the kitchens and employ kitchen staff directly for the breakfast club. You may also be able to negotiate to employ the minimum number of school catering staff and supplement these with alternative staff including lunch-time supervisors, parents and volunteers.</li> <li>Market the club as a more informal setting that offers additional activities. Build in some fun, with weekly events, special themes and breakfast specials to celebrate events.</li> <li>Aim to set prices for a fixed period in agreement with catering companies, in order to establish a stable charging policy.</li> <li>Ensure that the choices available reflect healthy eating messages. Discuss what you will include in your breakfast menus with the caterers, taking advice from health professionals. Integrate the club into the whole school approach. Gain recognition through the Healthy Schools Programme. Engage the School Council and other relevant groups to discuss the planning of breakfast club menu, taking suggestions on board.</li> <li>If the school is large or the club is very popular, think of strategies to reduce queuing and waiting time for pupils.</li> <li>School dining areas often double as the school hall. The club may need to work out ways of enabling the club to run and school life to happen in parallel.</li> <li>Consider the introduction of healthier vending machines that offer healthier breakfast choices.</li> </ul>
Advantages	<ul> <li>You can be flexible in where you hold your club, e.g. a classroom, the school hall.</li> <li>You can create a relaxed atmosphere.</li> <li>You can be more responsive to the needs of pupils with food choices and menu variety.</li> <li>You have greater control over the type of breakfast foods on offer, as you are not tied into the contracts or set menus offered by some catering companies.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Health and safety, along with food ordering, storage, preparation and cleaning are undertaken by the school kitchens and specialist catering staff.</li> <li>The use of a school caterer enables other supervisory staff to fulfil other school duties without delay.</li> <li>There are opportunities to provide a greater variety of foods, including a hot menu.</li> </ul>
How much will it cost?	If the club is not using the school kitchens, equipment may need to be purchased. The minimum is a toaster, a kettle, a fridge, a store cupboard, crockery, cups, cutlery, washing-up equipment – and somewhere to wash up!  The other costs are the food, staffing and any administrative costs/rent. If you are going to charge for the club, you will need to break down these figures so that you can work out how much pupils need to pay to keep the operation sustainable. You could decide to seek funding to run the club as a free enterprise or to subsidise the costs to pupils.	You will need to negotiate a contract with your caterers, off-setting the income from sales against staff wages and ingredient charges.

# case study

A small primary school found that their healthier breakfast club was an effective way of improving punctuality and attendance. They also noticed that pupils' behaviour and table manners improved. The Headteacher noted that successful strategies included starting with a manageable number of targeted pupils, researching the breakfast menu with the pupils and asking staff to volunteer to keep costs to a minimum and help promote a friendly environment.

#### club activities

One of the main aims is to encourage healthier eating. Many clubs find that this, alongside the social aspects of sharing food and chatting, makes for an ideal start to the day. Some schools provide activities to run alongside their breakfast club. This has implications for staffing and opening hours. The pupils need enough time to join in the activities as well as eating breakfast, and supervision for the activities may be required. It will depend on the nature of the activities whether pupils can eat first or breakfast afterwards.

In addition, it is important that the social aspects of eating together are not neglected, as breakfast clubs can be an important way of promoting social and emotional wellbeing at school. For some pupils, it may also be the only meal of the day that is eaten at a table with others while engaging in conversation.

#### top ten activities for breakfast clubs

The breakfast club could also include:

- an area where the pupils can read, make up stories and poems and produce their own books;
- · newspapers for older pupils to read;
- music, where pupils can either listen to music, sing, make their own music or occasionally listen to a live performance from a visitor or school band;
- · board games;
- physical activity, including football, basketball, aerobics and yoga;



- · ICT, developing an Internet café;
- homework, giving time for pupils to catch up on their studies;
- hobbies, where pupils can follow their own interests in school;
- a maths challenge, where maths investigations, puzzles and logical, problem-solving activities are available;
- tapes, where the pupils listen to a story tape for ten minutes as a serial.

The type of school, the style of service and the resources available will dictate the additional activities a healthier breakfast includes. Be realistic and choose what works best for your school.

#### venue

This will depend on the type of club in operation. If the club is run by the school caterer, then the dining room would be the most appropriate place. However, if the club is run by school staff/volunteers, you may choose to find a room which is safe for pupils and workers, preferably with appropriate storage facilities. An area could be partitioned off with posters and the club name on the dividers. In a smaller space, a café or bistro could be set up so that it looks different from other rooms in the school. Involve the pupils in this approach. Aspects of health and safety and food hygiene need to be considered carefully.

#### charging

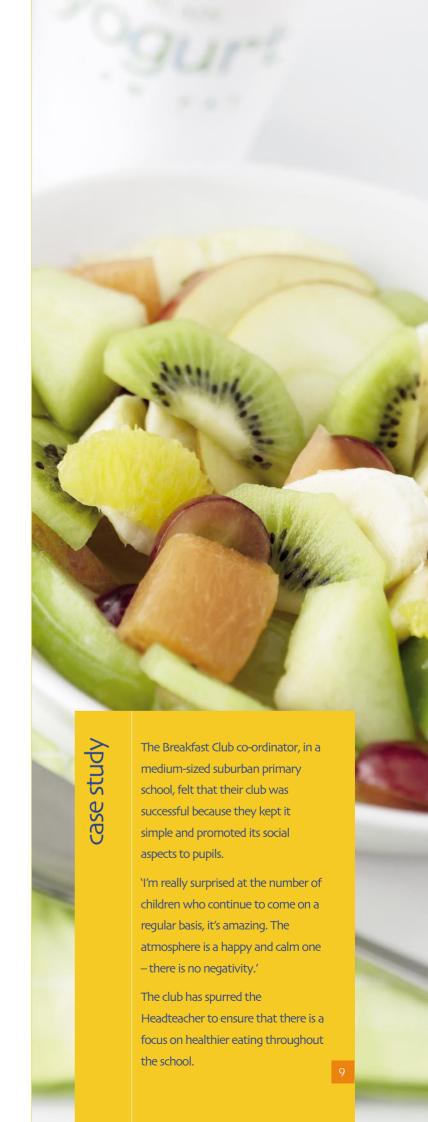
You need to decide whether to charge a set price, variable price or nothing at all. Some pupils may not be able to afford to pay for breakfast and could therefore be excluded, if charged. Try to keep costs to a minimum. Look for sponsorship and ways of raising funds so that you can subsidise prices. Vouchers towards the cost of breakfast could be given as part of a school reward scheme. Research suggests that charging helps to mainstream the service, contribute to its continuation and reduce the stigma and the impression that the clubs are only for the disadvantaged.

#### arrival times

Pupils arrive at school in many different ways. If they come by bus, the control over when they arrive can be variable. Therefore some of the potential customers may be excluded because they arrive too late. Try to include those who come by bus in one-off special events when you can arrange for an earlier arrival on one particular day or negotiate a slightly later start of the school day. You may be able to arrange a special event that combines the start of lessons with a learning activity that looks at healthy eating choices.

### staffing

If the club is run by the school, use existing staff who may not mind coming in earlier. If they have children or grandchildren in school themselves, they can bring them to the club. Make use of volunteers. Check the LEA/school policy on who can work with children in school; this may need to involve Criminal Records Bureau or police checks. Parents and other family members may be able to help on a rota system if they cannot commit themselves to coming in every day. Contact local colleges to find out whether they have any students who would be willing to help with the club in order to gain experience in working with pupils in a community setting.





## deciding what to serve

In light of a parent/pupil survey, consultation with the School Council or SNAG (which includes the school caterer) and reference to healthier eating guidelines, a sample menu should be drawn up. It is important that the menu reflects the needs of the pupils at the school, as the needs of Year 2 pupils are different from those of Year 10 pupils. Work with local health professionals for further advice. Provide clear factual information about the food, perhaps on a menu or as an information sheet. Involve pupils in producing posters and fact sheets to encourage healthier choices. For existing clubs, research indicates that the best approach is to introduce healthier options slowly, in a staged away.

A healthier breakfast provides a good variety and balance of foods, as recommended by the Balance of Good Health. In terms of providing a healthier breakfast, clubs should try to provide each of the following every day:

- a good portion of starchy food, e.g. lower salt/sugar breakfast cereals, bread, toast, sandwich or bagel;
- plenty of fruit and vegetable choices, e.g. orange juice, fruit (fresh, canned or dried), cooked tomatoes or baked beans:
- a portion of milk or dairy food, e.g. semi skimmed milk on cereals or a low fat yogurt;
- a choice of drinks, e.g. water, fruit juice, semi skimmed milk.



One of the great things about a breakfast club, is that it can encourage eating a wide variety of foods by providing a different selection of foods each day, as well as limiting the frequency that certain foods that are offered. For example:

- offer a variety of different fruits and vegetables every day, e.g. fruit pots, fresh fruit and juice;
- limit the number of times that sugar-coated cereals are available to once a week/fortnight;
- use a variety of different types of bread for sandwiches, toast and toasties, including wholegrain varieties:
- · offer porridge when the weather is cold;
- provide different toppings for toast and bread, e.g. low fat spread, reduced sugar jam, low fat cheese spread, cooked tomatoes or beans.

Offering hot food can vary and extend the menu. For example:

- grilled lean bacon or lower fat sausages;
- · a serving of mushrooms, tomatoes or baked beans;
- · poached, scrambled or boiled eggs.

#### issues to consider

Before selecting the foods you provide in the breakfast club, check what cooking and serving facilities you have available. Assess whether there are any cultural and religious issues to be aware of relating to food and if any pupils in the school have any special dietary needs, because of nut allergies. These need to be carefully considered when menu planning. When choosing foods for your healthier breakfast club, you should try to choose those lower in salt, fat and sugar.

# sample breakfast club menus

breakfast cereals provide energy and important vitamins and minerals (as most are fortified e.g. with iron).

- Try to offer a selection of cereals - look for low salt/sugar alternatives
- Encourage the eating of cereals with semi skimmed milk and chopped fruit. (You could have sugar only for those who ask for it.)
- Try mixing sugar coated cereal with plain cereals, to reduce overall sugar content.
- · Look for cereals low in salt.

**fruit** provides a good source of vitamins and minerals.

Try to provide a variety of different fruit each day:

- Fresh fruit, fruit juice, canned fruit and dried fruit all count towards your 5 A DAY.
- Why not try serving canned apricots or pineapple in natural juice, dried fruit (e.g. raisins, sultanas, apricots), apples, bananas and satsumas?
- Why not add fruit instead of sugar to breakfast cereal to sweeten?
- Provide a fruit salad pot, or blend with semi skimmed milk to make a fruit smoothie. Both are great ways to encourage pupils to eat more fruit.

**vegetables** also provide vitamins and minerals.

Servings of cooked tomatoes, mushrooms and baked beans all count towards your 5 A DAY.

#### hot stuff

Lean grilled bacon provides a valuable source of protein and other nutrients to pupils' diets. Toasted bagels topped with mashed banana provide essential nutrients and add variety. Baked beans could be served on multigrain toast to provide plenty of fibre.

### breakfast club menu

#### breakfast cereals

wholewheat biscuits or puffed rice served with semi skimmed milk

#### toast

toast with topping

#### fruit options

banana or apple canned apricots

#### yogurt

#### drinks

orange water

semi skimmed milk

### breakfast club menu

#### breakfast cereals

wholewheat biscuits or puffed rice served with semi skimmed milk and dried apricots or raisins

#### hot stuff

grilled bacon and tomato in a granary bap toasted mashed banana bagel baked beans on toast

#### fruit snackers

fruit pot fruit yogurt smoothie

#### drinks

hot chocolate (low fat option)
water or fruit juice
tea
semi skimmed milk

breads provide a source of fibre and carbohydrates. Provide a choice of breads, and offer different types on different days, such as wholemeal, granary and white bread, rolls, baps, bagels and crispbreads. Try toasted teacakes, fruit buns (without icing) and slices of malt loaf.

#### spreads and toppings

Choose a monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fat spread, or a low fat alternative, and encourage pupils to spread thinly.

Offer a range of different toppings over the week, e.g. low-fat soft cheese, jam and honey.

#### semi skimmed milk and dairy

foods are good sources of protein and a range of vitamins and minerals, especially calcium, which is especially important for healthy bones and teeth. Select semi skimmed milk and low fat dairy foods. Good ways to include milk and dairy foods at breakfast include: adding milk to cereals, yogurt, cheese toasties, milk in smoothies or plain milk.

**drinks** - Starting the day well hydrated can enhance the ability to concentrate and reduce headaches and irritability.





# promoting your healthier breakfast club

Before you begin, publicise the club to pupils, staff, parents and the local community. Make sure that everyone knows when it will start, where it will be held, who can join in, the menu and how much it will cost.

#### Promotion could include:

- displaying posters around the school, perhaps made by pupils;
- · advertising the club on a school notice board;
- keeping parents up to date in the school newsletter or website;
- inviting the local press to cover the opening and to take photographs;
- talking about the opening of the club in assembly or at the School Council/SNAG;
- sending special invitations to parents and pupils for the opening day;
- having a 'countdown-to-opening' calendar prominently displayed in the entrance hall /foyer;
- decorating the club on the opening day to remind people that the club is happening;
- displaying the breakfast club menu prominently at school;
- running a first day raffle for those who attend.

Promotion of the club should be continuous, not just a one-off. Special events, tastings and new menu items add interest and help to sustain the club.

A menu template is available on the Food in Schools CD-Rom or website.

#### top tips

for making your breakfast club appealing

- Have a 'taster bar' as part of your breakfast menu once a week, with bite-size pieces of fruit, vegetables and new foods.
- Have a 'healthier food challenge' to see who can choose the healthiest breakfast.
- Have 'knowledge challenge' days with special games and quizzes.
- Create or adopt a mascot that sits by the healthier options on offer.
- Have theme days at different times of the year or for special events.
- Have a reward system for choosing healthier options.
- Have 'bring-a-friend' days and offer two for the price of one.
- · Have family days when the whole family is invited.
- Call your menu choices for younger children by special or funny names and label them.





## keeping up attendance

If your club is fun and the food is tasty and well presented, you should find that the number of pupils attending stays the same or increases. Attract new customers to the club by:

- setting up a reward scheme linked to regular attendance:
- offering vouchers towards the cost of a breakfast for achievement in other areas of school;
- having an award for the breakfast club member of the week or the month;
- offering free breakfast to any member who brings someone new to the club;
- giving special offers on some items to promote value for money;
- holding celebration days for cultural or school events;
- marketing the club through displays, newsletters, news in assembly, posters and word of mouth from happy customers.

# evaluating success

It is important to review and monitor the club regularly to evaluate its success and establish whether it is meeting its original aims, such as providing healthier alternatives, helping attendance or improving concentration in class. This might include recording attendance numbers, surveying opinions from the school community and discussing the operation at School Council or at a SNAG. Surveys might be carried out by pupils as part of the formal school curriculum, e.g. in food technology or PSHE lessons.

# healthier breakfast clubs checklist



Have you identified the benefits of a healthier breakfast club for your school?



Are you clear about what you want to achieve?



Have you involved the School Council or SNAG?



Is there demand for a healthier breakfast club in your school?



Have you identified sources of funding?



Have you drawn up a list of who will run the club?



Have you found out what pupils, parents and the school community want from their breakfast club?



Are you clear about who will attend the healthier breakfast club?



Do you know how the club will operate, i.e. kettle and toaster, canteen or servery?



Have you decided where and when the club will run?



Have you identified what food and drinks will be served?



Have health and safety issues been addressed?



Have you identified any pupils with allergies?



Have you planned a strategy to promote your healthier breakfast club?



Have you planned how you will monitor and evaluate the impact of your healthier breakfast club?

# integrating food in schools projects

There are many natural links which can be made to other Food in Schools projects, depending on your school. Links to Healthier Breakfast Clubs include:



 Grow items which would be included in the breakfast club. Investigate whether pupils could eat breakfast and tend the garden at the same time. Perhaps breakfast could be served in the school garden.



 Ensure that the breakfast club menu and tuck shop menu complement each other by providing a range of healthy options. Ensure water is freely available and consumption encouraged.



 Make dishes that could be eaten as part of a healthier breakfast, e.g. porridge, beans on toast. Cook different breakfast dishes from around the world.



Discuss the importance of fluid intake.
 Ensure that water is freely available at the breakfast club.



 Display breakfast menus in the dining room to encourage attendance. Make the club welcoming and attractive to enhance the positive social atmosphere.





## curriculum links

Healthier Breakfast Clubs provide a context for a wide variety of curriculum links, including:

#### primary

- English good opportunities for speaking and listening, including group discussions and interaction.
- Mathematics pupils can collect and record financial contributions and calculate charges, e.g. number of servings of cereal in a packet.
- Design and Technology pupils can design and make fruit or cereal based food products to serve at the Healthier Breakfast Club, in order to widen the number of foods on offer.
- PSHE and Citizenship individuals and groups can take and share responsibility; feel positive about themselves; make real choices; meet and talk with other people and ask for help.

#### secondary

- Design and Technology a survey of healthier breakfast club users can provide the stimulus for pupils to design and make a wider range of breakfast options such as traditional breads from around the world (pitta, chapatti, traditional Rye) to help to meet the dietary requirements of 11-14 year olds.
- ICT pupils can record attendance, income and popularity of breakfast options using Excel spreadsheets in order to predict future supply requirements.

For further advice and suggestions, go to: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes3

## sources of further information



#### Food in Schools www.foodinschools.org

The Food in Schools website and CD-Rom contain further materials such as templates, case studies and posters to support you in developing healthier breakfast clubs and other related healthier eating and drinking activities in your school. The most up to date materials can be found on the website.

The following list provides links to further resources and information which may support you in developing your healthier breakfast clubs. Please refer to the Key Themes document for additional important links that relate to all of the project areas.

## Before School Care Guidelines Out of Schools Childcare Association

PO Box 164, Lawrence House, 19-31 Broad Street, Bristol BS99 7NH. Telephone 0117 929 0101.

#### Breakfast Clubs: www.breakfast-club.co.uk

Provides support on setting up a breakfast club, with recommendations for resources, funding and case study examples.

#### Food Standards Agency www.food.gov.uk

Provides information and advice on healthier eating, as well as healthier catering practices.

#### Leeds Breakfast Initiative

#### www.leeds.gov.uk/breakfast

The Leeds Children's Breakfast Initiative (LCBI) is a partnership that includes representatives from Health, Education, Childcare, Play and the Leeds Children's Fund.

#### National Evaluation of School Breakfast Clubs

www.breakfastclubs.net Provides details of an evaluation to develop breakfast club provision in schools across England. The evaluation was conducted on behalf of DH by a multi-disciplinary research team at the University of East Anglia, Norwich.

#### New Policy Institute www.npi.org.uk/reports/

A number of reports concerning breakfast clubs are available to download.

#### **Newham Early Starts Breakfast**

www.teachernet.gov.uk/educationoverview/briefing/ extendedschools/Childcare/casestudies/casestudyfour

A useful case study of one approach in Newham.

#### Sure Start www.surestart.gov.uk

Sure Start is the Government's programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together: early education, childcare, health and family support.

#### acknowledgement

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