**Healthier and Resilient Food Systems - Case Study**

The YH Healthier and Resilient Food Systems Network is creating a repository of case studies from different local authorities and organisations to showcase how they have approached development of a local sustainable food system, or any single aspect of one, including tackling food insecurity. In creating and promoting the repository, we want to give local authorities and wider stakeholders the opportunity to learn from each other by sharing good practice and lessons learned in relation to developing a sustainable food system.

Please use the case study template below and return to [Nicola.smith@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:Nicola.smith@dhsc.gov.uk)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Your Details** | |
| **Organisation** | North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) |
| **Name** | Helen Ingle |
| **Job Title** | Public Health Manager |
| **Contact details**  **(if happy to be contacted by other organisations)** | Helen.ingle@northyorks.gov.uk |
| **Case Study**  All case studies should be written with a view to share learning that would benefit any organisation looking to carry out something similar. | |
| **Background/Context**  What was the current situation? What is the problem/issue? What is the reason for the change? | |
| [North Yorkshire Healthy Packed Lunch Guidance](https://healthyschoolsnorthyorks.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Healthy-Packed-Lunch-leaflet.pdf)  *Why did we develop the guidance?*  National school food standards focus mainly on school dinners.  Lack of county-wide guidance for schools / families around healthy packed lunches.  Schools had requested NYCC policy / guidance that they can share with parents / carers – they wanted to improve standards of packed lunches and snacks whilst feeling supported to do so by county guidance.  Schools had noticed a deterioration in the quality of packed lunches and snacks in schools (things had got worse during Covid). | |
| **Solution: how does it work? What was involved?**  Please explain what changes you have implemented, core activities and who is involved. | |
| *How did we develop the guidance?*  Discussions with partners (NYCC catering, Public Health, Healthy Schools etc)  Consulted schools on what they wanted in terms of wording and strictness of messaging (especially around breaktime snacks).  Presented to partnership groups.  Reviewed national school food standards.  Reviewed examples from other regions.  Developed and designed draft leaflet.  Piloted it with parents, carers, school staff etc and amended it after feedback. | |
| **What has been the impact of this work?**  Please summarise any outcomes/outputs or the intended objective of this work. | |
| The leaflet has been disseminated digitally (during 2022) to all primary schools in North Yorkshire. To ensure inclusivity, we also offered all primary schools the option to order printed copies to disseminate to their families (e.g. in book bags).  Between February and December 2022, we had disseminated 8,700 copies of the leaflet to schools.  While we consulted schools during the development of the leaflet (to ask about format and content) we are yet to conduct an evaluation of the leaflet to ascertain impact. This will be looked at in 2023. | |
| **What has helped this work to be successful?**  Please highlight any success factors relevant to an organisation looking to implement something similar. | |
| We spent a long time consulting key partners, schools and families during the development of the leaflet. This included presenting proposals to partnership groups and management boards and doing an online survey with school staff.  Once the leaflet was in draft format, we visited a primary school in a low-income area to consult families about its format, content, design etc.  It was very useful looking at other examples of healthy packed lunch guidance – from the UK and internationally too – to give us ideas about what we wanted to include in ours.  We had a ‘Healthy Catering’ steering group to oversee the work, including Public Health, Healthy Schools, Catering, Trading Standards, Early Years etc. | |
| **Were there any challenges? If yes, how were these mitigated?**  Please highlight any challenges and ways to overcome, minimise these or avoid from the outset. | |
| There were challenges around differing views (from schools and from partners on the steering group) around what should be included and how ‘strict’ the guidance should be. For example, there were numerous discussions about whether or not to ‘allow’ crisps. The group felt it was important to provide guidance that adhered to national school food standards, but to also be realistic – our focus was about trying to ‘nudge’ families towards including healthier food and drink options.  Another dilemma was about what drinks to suggest – initially we had water, a small carton of fresh juice, and milk, but many schools told us that they had a ‘water only’ policy, and that they wouldn’t be able to disseminate the guidance to their families, and so we changed that section to recommend only water.  We also had lots of discussions around breaktime snacks – some schools wanted the ‘fruit and veg only’ advice but for others they wanted to allow a broader range of options so in the end we ‘recommended fruit and veg only’ but left that section of the leaflet editable so schools could change this part of the leaflet to reflect their own needs. | |
| **Any other advice or information?**  Is there anything else you would like to share that others might learn from? | |
| *Key points*  We wanted the leaflet to be realistic and appropriate, especially for those living on a very low budget or with few food preparation skills.  We wanted to help packed lunches to move towards being healthier (not necessarily to being perfect - we wanted to ‘nudge’ families back to including healthier options in their packed lunches).  We wanted to have a positive (not too dictatorial) and friendly approach.  We have promoted (free) school meals alongside this and have encouraged families to take up a school lunch in preference to a packed lunch, but we recognise that many pupils do bring prefer to bring packed lunches  Schools wanted an electronic format, and with some flexibility e.g. the option to add their own logo, a link to their own policy/website etc.  Schools wanted us to include guidance on snacks and drinks too, and allergy info e.g. no nuts.  Schools wanted it to be very visual/colourful. | |