

School and Nursery Milk Alliance - Toolkit for World School Milk Day 27th September 2017

Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to help schools which are part of the School and Nursery Milk Alliance take part in World School Milk Day 2017

World School Milk Day is an annual day, which celebrates the health benefits of school milk. Initially held in 2000, it is now held on the last Wednesday of each September.

This toolkit provides you with information on how to take part in the day, in particular to invite your local MP to your school to celebrate the day with the children in your schools.

We would be grateful if you could keep the School and Nursery Milk Alliance informed of any visits which you arrange, as well as any discussions you hold with your MP.

Approaching parliamentarians – a step-by-step guide

Background

An elected MP will have a significant interest in the health and education of their constituents, and as such should take an interest in World School Milk Day within the local area.

If your school is in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland then this toolkit could also be used to contact your MSP or assembly member.

If your MP is not available on the day itself, it is still worth inviting them in for a visit on a different date. In particular, it is worth noting that Labour Party conference is taking place on 27th September, so it may be difficult for Labour MPs to make this date. When Parliament is sitting, Fridays tend to be the best days for MPs.

Identifying your MP

You can find out who your MP is by going to the 'Write to Them' website at www.writetothem.com and entering your postcode. If the 'Write to Them' website does not work, then you can also find out who your MP is by typing your postcode into a similar website, www.theyworkforyou.com.

If you have any problems or are unsure about how to find out who your representatives are, then please email info@snma.org.uk.

Sending out an invitation letter

We suggest that in the first instance, you should email your MP rather than call. We have included a standard email at the end of this toolkit which you should feel free to customise as you see fit. You should ensure that you include the school's name and address so that they are clear that it is in their constituency. Also include a phone number and email address to make it as easy as possible for their office to contact you.

Generally for constituency issues it is best to write to the constituency office; the contact details should be available on their website. If you have any problems locating this, then please contact info@snma.org.uk

Chasing up an invitation letter

Your MP's office will usually contact you to either acknowledge receipt of your invitation or confirm whether they will be able to attend, and if so, what time. However, they do receive a large number of requests, so if you have not heard back after a few days it is worth putting in a call to the office to follow up.

If your MP can visit

If your MP confirms that they would like to do a visit, then please contact Rowan Allport at the School and Nursery Milk Alliance Secretary, who will answer any questions you have. The Alliance will also be able to provide you with a template press release for use in local media and to follow up with your local MP.

Contact details

Rowan Allport, info@snma.org.uk, 020 7061 6355

Annex 1 - Draft invitation letter or email to your local MP

MP'S NAME
ADDRESS OR EMAIL ADDRESS

DATE

Dear NAME OF MP,

I am writing on behalf of SCHOOL at ADDRESS.

27th September 2017 is World School Milk Day, which promotes the benefits of children drinking milk at school. It was established in 2000 by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and is celebrated in over 30 countries.

Milk is a natural and healthy option for children. It contains the vitamins and minerals vital for good dental health and bone development, and it also plays a key role in a healthy diet, helping efforts against childhood obesity.

Since the introduction of the School Food Standards, all maintained schools and many academies are required to provide children with milk at least once during the school day. Under-fives in early years settings receive free milk through the Department of Health-funded Nursery Milk Scheme. Over-fives in schools can currently receive subsidised milk through the European School Milk Scheme, and this World School Milk Day we are asking the Government to commit to a UK specific scheme after we leave the EU in 2019.

[Add details here about how milk is provided in your school]

We would like to invite you to visit our school World School Milk Day, or another suitable day in the near future. You will have the chance to act as the "milk monitor" and talk to the children about the benefits of milk. We will also take some pictures for use on your website and in the local press.

We would be most grateful if you were able to visit. If you are able to do so, please do get in touch by contacting [YOUR TELEPHONE/EMAIL ADDRESS.]

Yours sincerely,

NAME

Ensuring access to milk for children in educational settings

A briefing note for parliamentarians from the School and Nursery Milk Alliance

The School and Nursery Milk Alliance is the leading body representing organisations from the dairy, health and education sectors to support school and nursery milk. This briefing highlights the importance of milk to the health of British children, includes background on how children receive milk in schools and other educational settings, and outlines the ways in which the Alliance wants to ensure all children have access to the milk that they are entitled to.

Why milk?

Milk is the natural and healthy option for children. It contains the vitamins and minerals vital for good dental health and bone development, and it also plays a key role in a healthy diet, helping efforts against childhood obesity. Milk can be delivered to children in schools and nurseries cost effectively, in convenient packaging. The benefits of milk make its provision to children essential, especially in light of increasing rates of dental decay and childhood obesity.

Both Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt and NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens have identified childhood obesity as a public health priority. The high satiety value of milk helps contribute to reduced childhood obesity (it is filling and so makes an ideal mid-morning snack). Research shows that children who drink milk are more likely to have a lower body mass than those who do not. Fat content is also low, with semi-skimmed milk containing just 1.7% fat and whole milk containing 3.9% fat.

The latest data from the Health and Social Care Information Centre shows that 34% of 12-year olds and 46% of 15-year olds exhibit tooth decay. As well as being unpleasant for children, treating tooth decay also has significant costs for the NHS. Cow's milk contains micronutrients, such as calcium, vitamin B₃ (niacin), and vitamin B₁₂ and B₂ (riboflavin), which reduce the risk of tooth decay, bleeding gums and mouth sores.

The British countryside and British farmers benefit also from the provision of milk to children. School and nursery milk supports the livelihood of many dairy farmers and provides a much-needed market for those who are struggling with ongoing global trends affecting milk prices, allowing them to continue to make a valued contribution to the economy and rural society.

Key political issues - school and nursery milk

The School and Nursery Milk Alliance aims to ensure that as many children as possible have access to fresh milk. Our current key issues are as follows:

- **EU School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme** – worth €4,219,008 to the UK in 2017/18, this is a European Union aid scheme, administered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), through which children over the age of five receive a subsidised portion of milk. The programme was known as the EU School Milk Scheme until August 2017, when it was merged with the School Fruit and Vegetables Scheme.

Following the Brexit vote, Defra has committed to remaining in the scheme until we depart the EU, and have told us that they are keen to develop a post-Brexit national programme. We are enthusiastic to ensure that an effective replacement is developed.

- **Eatwell Guide** – in March, Public Health England published a new Eatwell Guide with a reduced role for milk and dairy products in the content of a recommended daily diet. The revised guidance lowered the content of milk and dairy products from 15 percent of the recommended daily diet to 8 percent. While the guidance includes recommendations of healthier drinks for the first time, the reduced role of milk and dairy products could limit alternatives for children and young people unwilling to drink water or unsweetened beverages.

It does not seem that the dairy industry was properly consulted during the development of the guide, and we are keen to ensure that children are not discouraged from drinking milk by the new guide.

- **Nursery Milk Scheme** – this is a Department of Health funded scheme through which all children under five years old, who attend an early years setting for two or more hours a day, are entitled to a free daily one-third of a pint portion of milk. In 2010, the Department of Health attempted to make the scheme more cost effective by proposing that a single large company or consortium of companies provide milk to all settings across the country. After consultation with the industry, the Department of Health subsequently decided this proposal was unworkable and went back to the drawing board.

The Alliance wants to ensure that any future plans to revise the scheme strengthen it and encourage increased participation, so that all children who are entitled to milk are able to receive the many health, educational and social benefits that it brings.

- **School Food Standards** – all maintained schools and new academies are required to provide children with milk at least once during the school day as part of the School Food Standards introduced in January 2015. A lack of clear accountability measures could result in schools not offering milk at all, or offering milk in a way that does not encourage children to drink it, for example through providing a jug of warm milk at lunch times. We have produced a briefing for school governors – who are responsible for ensuring compliance – with advice on ensuring milk is provided.

We want to ensure that schools are made aware of their statutory duties to provide milk under the School Food Standards, and wish to work with the Department for Education, schools and local authorities to make this a reality. The Standards are also to be revised as part of the Childhood Obesity Plan, and we wish to ensure that milk provision requirements are sustained.

What is the School and Nursery Milk Alliance?

The School and Nursery Milk Alliance is a coalition of organisations from the dairy, health and education sectors, which seeks to highlight the benefits of milk to children and encourage its increased consumption. As a membership organisation, the Alliance represents over 90% of the suppliers of milk to educational settings, and has ambitions to extend its membership to include the voices of up to 28,000 educational settings in receipt of milk. The Alliance is also engaging with the government and public health organisations to ensure the best outcomes for the health of children across the country.

Contact

For further information on any of the issues raised in this briefing, please do not hesitate to contact the School and Nursery Milk Alliance at snma@snma.org.uk or on 020 7089 2607.