

Note of Meeting with Cordia on 1 November 2018

Present: Linda Quinn, Food Safety & Nutritionist (Cordia) (LQ)
David Kelly, Area Manager (Cordia) (DK)
Alisdair Matheson (KPPC) (ASM)
Natalie McEwan (KPPC) (NM)
Brian Walker (KPPC) (BW)

We met with DK and LQ. DK explained that he was the area manager for catering and dealt with schools from Patrick to Drumchapel.

LQ introduced herself as the individual primarily responsible for ensuring that catering for Glasgow Schools met the relevant regulations and largely contained in the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2008.

DK explained that Carol Munro at Broomhill Primary managed the preparation of food there which was then served in Kelvindale Primary. They would only reheat items when they drop below the relevant temperature. Otherwise they were served straight from the storage containers that they had arrived in.

LQ explained that all school meals were cooked and then frozen in a central location. They tended to have a 6 month shelf life although on average no more than 2 months would elapse between their preparation and being used. The preparation kitchens were then used to reheat (LQ described it as refreshing) the products. Most kitchens simply reheat and add any fresh elements to these prepared meals although some catering managers do cook some recipes that are fresh. However, all menus still require to meet the requisite standards and specifications and relevant budgets. In addition to Broomhill and Kelvindale Primaries, Broomhill supplies meals to two nursery schools.

LQ explained that not only does each dish require to meet minimum specifications but the menu overall requires to meet the relevant legislation. This means that very little can be changed and even where some catering managers cook their own recipes, very often macaroni cheese, this requires to fill the same gap as the food they have decided not to take in order to balance the menu.

ASM noted that he was certain all relevant regulations were being complied with. However, some items appeared on the menu which parents would prefer not to, perhaps emphasising quality and nutritional value over choice. For example, pizza appears regularly on the menu as do such items such as hotdogs. LQ explained that while she could imagine peoples in Kelvindale Primary, for example, being willing to eat healthier options, she required to prepare a menu Glasgow-wide. When the menu criteria were first introduced, there were instances of parents providing unhealthy food options at primary school gates and Kelvindale is unusual in that very few pupils do leave the school to buy their lunch elsewhere. She felt she had to include some of these items on the menu. She explained that each of these items complies with the specification set out by the Scottish Government for them and they have worked with suppliers to reduce the salt and sugar content, for example, of all these recipes.

LQ noted that the “Think Fresh Menu Group” would begin consideration of the new menu being introduced in April in around January 2019. This group involve feedback from various catering managers who were chosen in rotation to sit on the group. ASM asked whether there was any external role or whether this was simply an internal catering group. On being pressed, LQ confirmed that it was indeed an internal group.

LQ added that there could be feedback from the SNAG group. This was intended to be made up of staff, pupils and catering staff in each school. ASM asked what input parents could have in the food provided to their children. Again on being pressed, LQ conceded that the only route would be for the Parent Councils to interact with the staff at the school to be put to the SNAG group. ASM noted that this did not seem terribly representative. LQ noted that in her view her customers were pupils rather than parents.

ASM asked whether, given food was no longer prepared in Kelvindale’s kitchen, it would be possible to have locally produced organic vegetables from the school organic garden, for example. LQ was concerned about the possibility of contamination of any locally grown food, either by the application of the wrong fertiliser or more generally the possibility for upset stomachs. Caroline Rickart was the person to speak to in that respect.

AM asked about the “tuck shop”. LQ did not recognise that term and considered it as instead an “additional sales outlet”. What was sold there was limited and it had to be included in the menu analysis. It was likely that this may be done away with but, again, all the products and drinks were in compliance with the Scottish Government regulations and specifications.

ASM noted that the Scottish Government had engaged in a consultation exercise which closed in August 2018 in respect of reform of the regulations and school catering provision. He noted with some disappointment that the Parent Council did not appear to have been informed of the open consultation. If this was reflected across Scotland, a great deal of input from Parent Councils representing the various parent fora had been missed.

[We moved on to the dining room to consider some of the catering options]

ASM noted that the fish fingers appeared to count as the minimum 3 weekly portion of oily fish. LQ explained that the fish had to be fresh and accordingly, normal fish fingers would not do. These were salmon fish fingers but because some pupils did not like the taste, there was a good deal of batter. ASM found them somewhat unpalatable despite liking salmon. They were mostly batter and LQ advised this was to effectively hide the taste of the salmon as some children did not like its taste.

LQ also noted specific provision for diabetics. NM flagged that parents may not be aware of the availability of this menu. Increasing awareness may help include other children.

ASM tried to impress upon LQ the need for parents’ involvement in the Think Fresh Menu Group but to no avail.