



The **SNACK PACK**



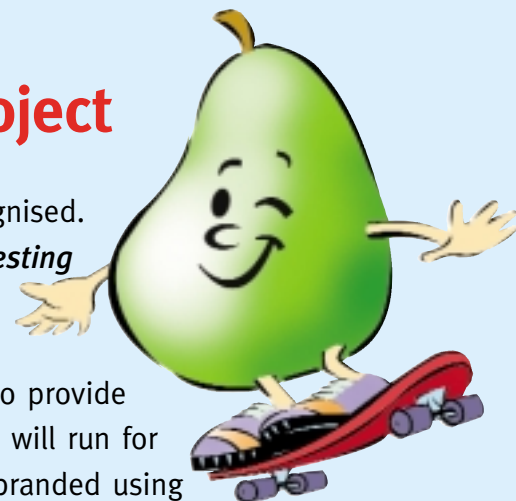
**Fresh Fruit in Schools Pilot Project
Information for schools**

Contents

- 2 The fresh fruit in schools pilot project
- 3 Background
- 5 Practical issues to be considered in schools
- 7 Educational opportunities
- 8 Evaluation
- 9 Introducing Health Action Zones



The fresh fruit in schools pilot project



The health benefits of eating more fruit and vegetables are well recognised. To support the implementation of the new public health strategy, *Investing for Health*, funding has been secured by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety through the Ministerial Group on Public Health, to develop and evaluate an exciting new pilot project to provide fresh fruit to young children in a number of schools. The pilot project will run for three years from autumn 2002 to summer 2005. The scheme will be branded using cartoon characters called *The Snack Pack* to make the project more appealing to young children.

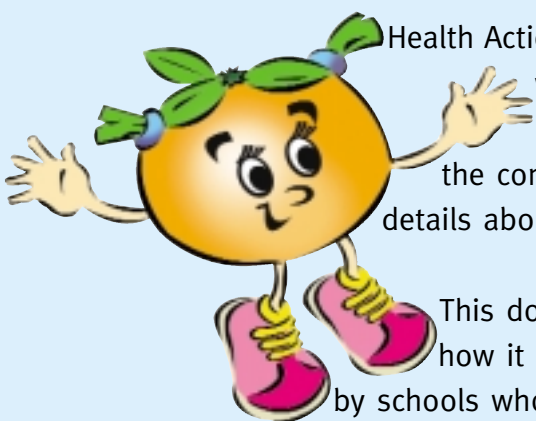
One piece of fruit will be provided each day to all children in Primary 1 and 2 classes (and in some cases Primary 3 classes) in a number of identified schools.

The project aims are as follows:

1. To provide access to fruit for Primary 1 and 2 (and in some cases Primary 3) children, within selected schools.
2. To promote awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and good food hygiene.
3. To encourage children to develop the habit of eating fruit.
4. To encourage children to adopt and sustain healthy eating patterns in school, at home and in the community.

In line with the goal of reducing health inequalities and the New TSN agenda, schools will be selected to participate in the pilot project using a range of indicators, including location within a Health Action Zone, geographic spread and so on. The scheme will be coordinated at local level by the four Health Action Zone teams within the area for which they are responsible:

- Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone;
- North and West Belfast Health Action Zone;
- Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone;
- Western Health Action Zone.



Health Action Zones were created to reduce inequalities in health and social wellbeing and to create a healthier, more prosperous and socially included population, through joint interventions by public agencies, the community, and voluntary and private sector organisations. Additional details about the Health Action Zones are provided on pages 9 to 12.

This document outlines the reasons for the fresh fruit in schools scheme, how it will operate in schools, the issues that will need to be considered by schools who wish to be involved, suggestions for educational opportunities and details of how the scheme will be evaluated.

Background

Why good nutrition is important

Good nutrition is essential during childhood, as it is a time of rapid growth, development and activity. This is also a vital time for healthy tooth development and prevention of decay. General eating habits and patterns are formed in the first few years of life, so it is important that the food and eating patterns to which young children are exposed - both in and outside the home - are based on good nutrition.

The role of fruit and vegetables in a healthy balanced diet is well recognised. They are valuable between-meal snacks as alternatives to confectionery and crisps. They also have an important role in protecting against several major health problems that affect Northern Ireland, including heart disease and cancer. Experts recommend that we eat five or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day.

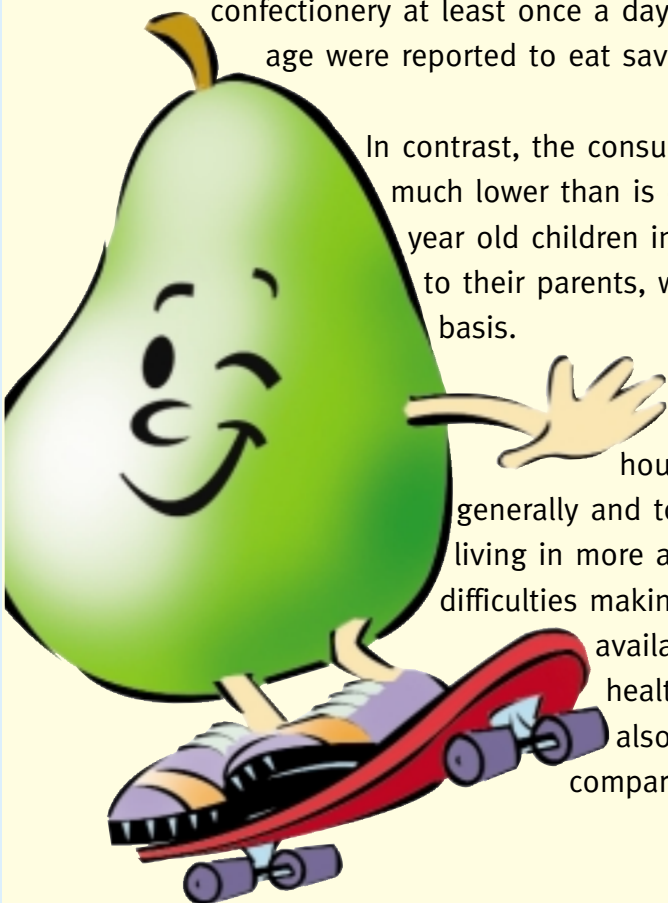
Eating patterns among children in Northern Ireland

Recent research indicates that there is much that can be improved about eating patterns among people of all ages in Northern Ireland.

The Health Promotion Agency's *Eating for Health?* survey published in 2001 highlighted that children here are high consumers of snacks that are high in fat and/or sugar. For example, more than two out of five boys and almost half of girls aged 5-11 years were reported to eat confectionery at least once a day. Also approximately half of boys and girls of the same age were reported to eat savoury snacks such as crisps at least once a day.

In contrast, the consumption of fruit and vegetables in Northern Ireland is much lower than is currently recommended. For example, only 12% of 5-11 year old children in the survey ate five or more portions each day, according to their parents, while 15% do not eat any fruit or vegetables on a daily basis.

This research also indicated that people from low income households tended to have less healthy eating patterns generally and to eat less fruit and vegetables in particular than those living in more affluent circumstances. These groups also reported most difficulties making dietary changes because of issues such as cost, availability and accessibility of fruit, vegetables and other healthy food choices. People from low income households are also known to experience more ill health and to die younger compared with those from higher income households.



Opportunities for change

Encouraging and enabling young children to develop healthy eating patterns offers great potential to invest in public health for generations to come. Research highlights that eating patterns developed during childhood tend to be continued into adulthood. Many of the chronic diseases that occur later in life begin to develop during childhood.

Young people's eating patterns can be shaped through a variety of routes. Schools offer a most important opportunity for educating children on nutritional issues and facilitating and encouraging healthy eating patterns alongside the development of academic and social skills.

A similar scheme, the National School Fruit Scheme, has already been piloted in more than 500 schools in England. The initial evaluation has shown that the scheme is popular with the children, their parents and teachers. The most popular fruit was bananas, followed by apples, satsumas/clementines, plums and pears. The level of consumption was maintained during the period of the pilots, with 44% of schools reporting that the consumption of fruit increased over a six week period.



‘Other benefits of the scheme included improved attention levels, an increased ability to settle down to work and better behaviour generally among the children.’



There is some evidence that the scheme is encouraging children to choose fruit in preference to less healthy choices. In some instances children are reported to have overcome their initial reluctance to eat fruit or to try new fruits, largely as a result of positive peer pressure.

The evaluation also highlighted a number of wider benefits in the school. For example, teachers report that the scheme is a support to teaching and learning about healthy eating and has been used to support science, numeracy and literacy in schools. Other benefits of the scheme included improved attention levels, an increased ability to settle down to work and better behaviour generally among the children.

Practical issues



Participating schools will need to give some consideration to a number of practical issues before the project begins.

• School coordinator

It is recommended that each school identifies one member of staff who will take responsibility for overseeing the practical management of the scheme within the school. The coordinator would be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the scheme, including:

- liaising with the Health Action Zone coordinator;
- ensuring integration with other areas of the school curriculum and educational opportunities;
- liaising with the fruit supplier regarding the amount of fruit to be delivered and the frequency of deliveries;
- receiving the deliveries of fruit and ensuring that it is stored in the allocated area;
- ensuring that appropriate arrangements have been made to distribute and wash the fruit, and to dispose of fruit skins and cores appropriately;
- supporting the evaluation of the scheme.

A number of these issues are addressed under the topics below.

• Links with related school policies and practices

The scheme provides opportunities to link with and reinforce other existing initiatives in the school, eg breakfast clubs, healthy snacking schemes, healthy eating/nutrition policies. Where no such schemes currently exist, the introduction of the Fresh Fruit in Schools scheme could help to create an environment where they would be more readily embraced.

• Delivery of fruit

Fruit will be delivered to schools and arrangements regarding the amount of fruit and the frequency of delivery will be discussed with local suppliers.

• Storage

It will be necessary to store the fruit in cool, hygienic conditions to ensure that it remains in peak condition. Fruit should be taken to the storage area as soon as it is delivered. The storage area should be dry and away from direct sunlight, and where possible maintained at a temperature of between 10-15°C to avoid destruction of the vitamin C and folic acid in the fruit.

As far as possible, the fruit should be placed on racks to ensure adequate air circulation. Bananas must be stored separately from other fruits to ensure that they ripen more slowly. Bananas should not be stored in the fridge as they will blacken.

• Preparation and handling of fruit

The fruit supplied will be the right size for one piece per child, so it will not be necessary to cut the fruit into smaller portions.

Encouraging good food hygiene is an important aspect of this project. All fruit with edible skins must be washed thoroughly before eating. Local arrangements for fruit washing will vary, ie in some schools facilities will be such that children can wash their own fruit, in others it may be necessary to wash fruit centrally before bringing it to each class. Everyone handling the fruit, including the children, should wash their hands first. Schools will also need to decide where the children will wash their hands (and the fruit, if applicable).

Some children may need to be shown how to peel bananas and clementines.



‘Encouraging good food hygiene is an important aspect of this project. All fruit with edible skins must be washed thoroughly before eating.’



- **Selection of fruit**

Each child in Primary 1 and 2 (and in some cases Primary 3) will receive one piece of fruit each day during the period of the pilot project. As far as possible children should be offered a choice. Although there will be an initial 'settling in' period, similar initiatives which have been carried out elsewhere, have found that a regular pattern developed very quickly of the types and amounts of fruit required.

One of the aims of the project is to increase the amount of fruit eaten by the children. It is recommended, therefore, that fruit should be distributed at the mid-morning break, when children are likely to be hungry and most likely to eat it.

- **Litter**

It is important to ensure that children know how and where to dispose of their fruit skins and cores. Some schools may be able to use this opportunity to create a compost heap.

- **Procedures to deal with allergic reactions**

Some children can experience allergic reactions to certain substances. Reactions can include skin rashes, coughing, wheezing, headaches, diarrhoea, vomiting, and a blocked or runny nose. Very occasionally a severe reaction can occur in which the mouth, throat and airways swell and blood pressure falls rapidly. This is known as anaphylaxis. It is very unlikely for this reaction to occur in response to eating fruit, however schools should ask parents to notify them of any known allergies to fruit and put in place procedures for dealing with such cases.

Educational opportunities

This project provides valuable opportunities for classroom activities to support the curriculum. A few suggestions are outlined below, however more detailed suggestions are included in specially prepared teachers' support materials, which will be provided free of charge to schools participating in the scheme. In line with the current proposals for the revised curriculum, suggestions are outlined in the five areas of learning.

Creative, expressive and physical development

- Use fruit as a context to discover colour, texture and shape.
- Paint, draw and construct models of various types of fruit.
- Rhyming games using fruit names and colours.

Language and literacy

- Use fruit as a topic for a variety of descriptive work, for example describing the various shapes, colours, textures, tastes and smells of fruit.
- Talk about the children's experiences during a visit to a local supermarket or greengrocer.
- Match name cards with picture cards of fruit.

Mathematics and numeracy

- Sort various fruits by shape, colour etc and count the objects.
- Copy and continue simple patterns using fruit shapes and colours.
- Use money to buy fruit, either in the context of play or during a class visit to a local supermarket or greengrocer.

Personal development

- Develop ideas about how to keep healthy through diet, for example sort a variety of foods into healthy choices and less healthy choices. Work with children to discuss the benefits of fruit as healthy snacks.
- Talk about the importance of good hygiene, eg hand washing before meals and snacks, the need to wash fruit before it is eaten etc.
- Discuss the importance of good oral health, including regular tooth brushing and visits to the dentist.
- Provide samples of a variety of less familiar fruits for the children to try, then discuss their favourite ones.

The world around us

- Find out why some things decay naturally, for example fruit and leaves, while others, like aluminium cans, do not. Involve children in creating a compost pile using the fruit skins and cores.
- Find out ways in which plants change with the seasons and observe the development of fruit.
- Explore where various types of fruit are grown, the location and characteristics of other countries and how the fruit is transported to their school.
- Find out about the availability, storage and methods of preparation of fruit in the past and present.



Evaluation

As this is a pilot scheme, it will be thoroughly evaluated to assess the following:

1. The best means of delivering the fruit and distributing it in schools.
2. The impact of the scheme on:
 - the diet of children, and other positive effects on the child's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour change;
 - the whole school;
 - parents and the wider community.
3. The sustainability and wider application of the project.



‘The results of the research will be shared with all participating schools at the end of the pilot.’



The research, which will be coordinated by the Health Promotion Agency, will evaluate each of the three phases:

- the distribution from the suppliers to the school;
- the distribution from school gate to the children;
- consumption by the children and any other benefits of the scheme.

The research will therefore involve a variety of qualitative and quantitative assessment tools, including:

- interviews with key school staff and the school coordinator, Health Action Zone coordinators and other health and educational professionals, and with the fruit suppliers;
- questionnaires and interviews/focus group work with teachers;
- an assessment of the children's fruit consumption and their attitudes towards fruit;
- a survey of parents' attitudes and awareness;
- other documentary evidence.

Whilst it is essential that this research is of a high standard, the Health Promotion Agency will work to ensure that it does not become too onerous for schools and other participants.

The results of the research will be shared with all participating schools at the end of the pilot. The results will be used to inform the development of subsequent schemes, should additional funds be made available in the future. As the total number of schools in the pilot is small (approximately 100 schools), responses from all participating schools are vital.

Introducing Health Action Zones

Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone



The aim of the Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone (HAZ) is to “combine the efforts of all our agencies in partnership with local people to measurably improve public health and wellbeing in Armagh and Dungannon”.

Armagh and Dungannon HAZ is committed to building on and extending real and meaningful partnerships for health and wellbeing and, as a result creating new and sustainable ways of working. This requires effective collaboration, coordination and learning between partners in order to make a difference to the health and wellbeing of local people.

The HAZ partners firmly believe that measurable and long-lasting change can only be achieved by involving and engaging local people and communities in the work of the HAZ through community-based action and development methods.

The HAZ is committed to tackling the root causes of ill health and poor wellbeing by addressing the health, social, economic and environmental factors, which impact on and adversely affect local people. Many of the issues which need to be addressed are outside the immediate control of the traditional health and social services - poor housing, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, low self-confidence and self-esteem.

For further information contact:

Shirley Hawkes

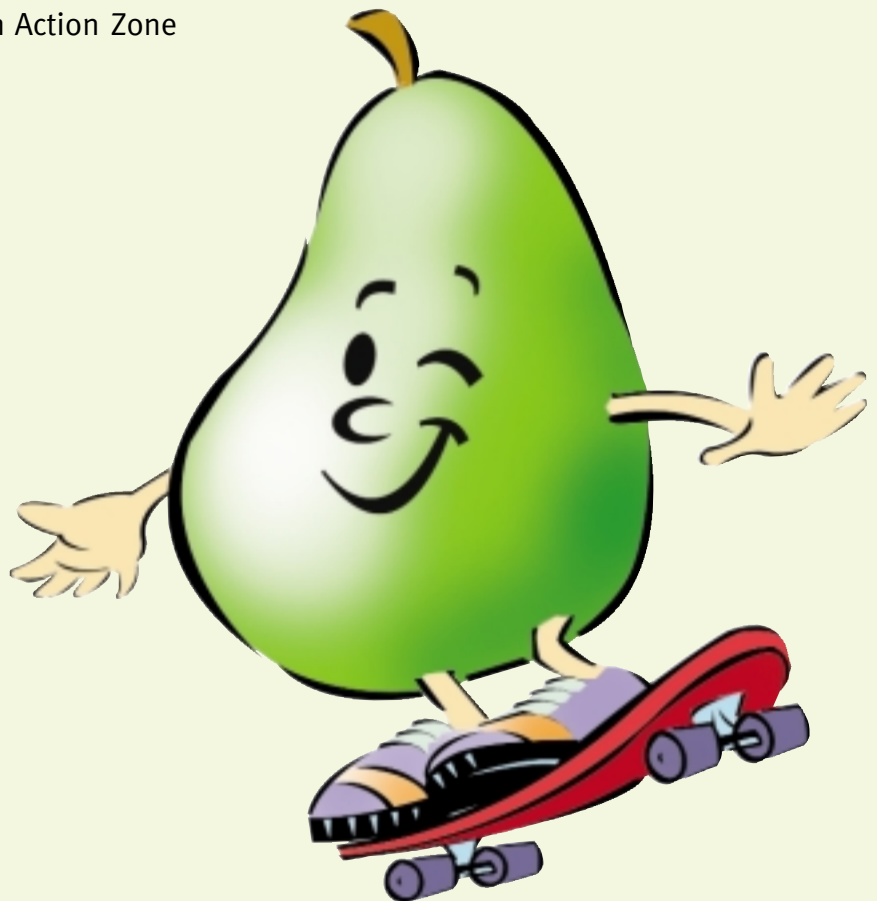
Community Food Coordinator
Armagh and Dungannon Health Action Zone
Unit T4
Dungannon Enterprise Centre
2 Coalisland Road
Dungannon
BT71 6JT

Tel: 028 8772 9698

Fax: 028 8772 7239

Email: shawkes@adhaz.org.uk

Website: www.adhaz.org.uk



North and West Belfast Health Action Zone



The Health Action Zone is a geographical area (North and West Belfast) where there is concerted effort among a range of partners from statutory, community, voluntary and private sector organisations to promote health and wellbeing, and to address inequalities. The Health Action Zone is based on two key pillars: interagency collaboration and community participation.

The concept of Development Pathways has been developed as a means of coordinating interventions by different agencies working together where need is most acute, where change is most feasible, and where opportunities for multi-agency cooperation are greatest. A key tenet of the Health Action Zone is to examine the impact of innovative practice on mainstream services in order to influence policy and increase their effectiveness.

Current Development Pathways include:

- **Schools:** 'Communities in Schools' is an initiative to help pupils in six post-primary schools to improve their own health and wellbeing, education, social skills, career opportunities and to actively involve local communities in their school.
- **Travellers:** A multi-agency action group is working to address accommodation, education, employment and training, health and wellbeing, and prejudice reduction as part of a coordinated approach to addressing the extreme patterns of inequalities in health and wellbeing experienced by Travellers.
- **Long-term unemployed people:** The Futures programme focuses on households with long-term unemployed people and the development of a tailored support programme to enhance their opportunities for employment.
- **Neighbourhood:** A coordinated approach was developed to address the medium-term needs of the Greater Shankill area. It is hoped that this work may model future practice for developing coordinated approaches with local communities in addressing their needs.
- **Integrated development for children and young people:** This is a new and developing pathway to create new ways of meeting the needs of children and young people and delivering services. It will develop a model of closer integrated service delivery, in the first instance among vulnerable young people.
- **Mental health and wellbeing:** This new pathway is exploring how the mental health and wellbeing needs of HAZ residents can be identified and addressed.

In addition to the Fresh Fruit in Schools pilot, several other programmes at different stages of development are actively addressing health and wellbeing issues in the widest sense, including sexual health and wellbeing of young people, community based drug and alcohol approaches, child safety, Active Living, Healthy Living Centres Network, childhood asthma, and enhanced parenting support.

For further information please contact:

Mary Black

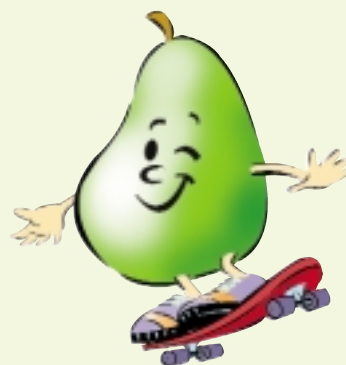
North and West Belfast Health Action Zone
5th Floor, 16 College Street
Belfast BT1 6BT

Tel: 028 9023 7026

Fax: 028 9023 7452

Email: hazadmin@nwb.n-i.nhs.uk

Website: www.haz-nwbelfast.org.uk



Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone



The Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone (NNHAZ) is a community led partnership initiative that aims to improve the health and social wellbeing of people and communities living within the Northern Health and Social Services Board area. The initiative will operate in 14 housing areas initially. More than 32 partners from the community, voluntary and statutory bodies are working together to create stronger, healthier and more prosperous communities that value and include all their citizens.

To achieve these aims NNHAZ brings together relevant agencies, both regional and local, with responsibility for planning and delivering services and encourages them to cooperate in implementing Community Action Plans drawn up in consultation with local community groups.

Health Action Zone Strategy

A key feature of the work of the Health Action Zone is the preparation of targeted Action Plans, tailored to local needs in each partner community and making the best use of local and other resources. Together these Action Plans will provide the foundation for the strategic framework for NNHAZ operations over the next few years.

The strategic aims of the NNHAZ are:

- to target the health and social needs in the partner communities in an integrated way with various partners working together to do this;
- to support partnership working, helping people work better together;
- to recognise, support and build upon ongoing work in each area;
- to promote sustainable or long-term development that builds the skills base of all partners;
- to learn from the work of the NNHAZ, to do things differently based on our experiences and to share the learning with other interested groups.

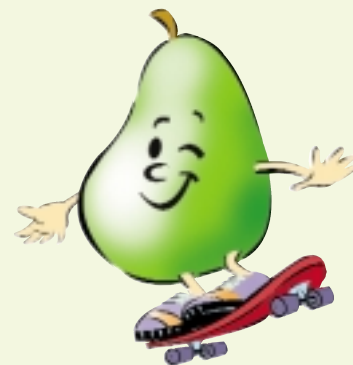
Three themes for the work of the NNHAZ have been agreed and for each theme a number of objectives have been identified.

1. Positive mental health (addressing community safety; environmental improvement; community relations; housing; community networks and social inclusion).
2. Education and empowerment (addressing health promotion; training opportunities; capacity and sustainability of community groups).
3. Access to services and facilities (addressing accessible transport and telecommunications; children's play and community facilities; relocation of services and understanding how services are delivered).

For further information contact:

Andrea McCaw

Northern Neighbourhoods Health Action Zone
The Chalet
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena
BT42 1QB
Tel: 028 2566 2110. Fax: 028 2566 2260
Email: andrea.mccaw@nhssb.n-i.nhs.uk
Website: www.nnhaz.co.uk



Western Health Action Zone



Action on poverty and health

The Western Health Action Zone (HAZ) has been set up to improve the health and wellbeing of older people in need and families living in poverty across the West, developing new ways of working and facilitating partnership action among agencies and organisations committed to relieving poverty and to overcoming social exclusion.

The HAZ Action Plan will develop projects and programmes under its priority themes of 'Older People in Need' and 'Families Living in Poverty' including:

- Review of public and community transport in rural areas.
- A volunteer-based befriending scheme for 50 older people.
- Support for 25 farming families experiencing disadvantage and related stress.
- Home safety and accident prevention initiatives.
- Some practical actions to improve family diet and nutrition on an inadequate family income (including provision of fruit in schools to P1 and P2 classes of selected schools in the Western Area).
- Some practical actions to promote energy efficiency on an inadequate family income.
- A pilot programme to reduce family debt.
- A conference on the connection between consumerism and poverty.
- Identification of gaps in recreational, after-school, diversionary and summer activities for children and young people.
- Two pilot initiatives to develop positive mental health among young people (aged 16-25 years).
- A project to promote healthier lifestyles for parents.
- A parenting programme aimed at 12 fathers.
- A conference on the care of older people.
- Assistance in improving user participation in delivery of family and childcare services.
- A conference on the experiences of service provision in ethnic minority communities.
- Coordination and extension of health and social care services aimed at the local Traveller community.

For more information contact:

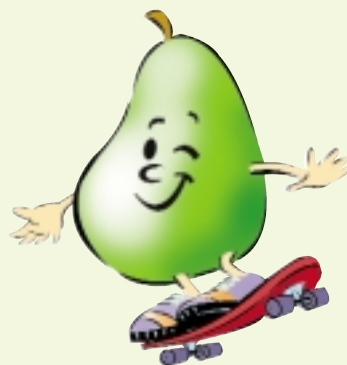
Julie Costello

Western Health Action Zone
Unit 13, Strabane Enterprise Agency
Orchard Road Industrial Estate
Strabane
County Tyrone
BT82 9FR

Tel: 028 7188 0221. Fax: 028 7138 4979.

Email: info@westernhaz.org

Website: www.westernhaz.org



The SNACK PACK



www.thesnackpack.net

www.thesnackpack.net



Designed and produced by the
Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland
18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast BT2 8HS
Tel: 028 9031 1611 (Voice/Minicom)
Fax: 028 9031 1711
www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk