

British Medical Association  
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**Private & Confidential**

Ruth Hatton  
Deputy Committee Clerk  
Legislation Office  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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Our Ref: RL/SW

11 February 2008

Dear *Ms. Hatton*

**Consultation – Proposal for Healthy Eating in Schools Measure**

Thank you for your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> January and for the opportunity for the British Medical Association (BMA Cymru Wales) to comment on Jenny Randerson AM's proposal for a Healthy Eating in Schools Measure.

I am the Welsh Secretary of the British Medical Association and I am responding on behalf of the Association.

General Comments

BMA Cymru Wales has long been concerned with the health of the public and believes that the significant increase in the levels of obesity, in childhood particularly, is a cause of great concern.

At the BMA's annual representative meeting in 2004 it was decided that the health behaviour of the nation's children needs to be addressed immediately in order to ameliorate the long-term effects of poor nutrition.

Ensuring healthier eating in schools was part of the BMA's solution. In our report *Preventing childhood obesity*<sup>1</sup>, we made a series of recommendations which are included in this Measure – namely,

- Schools should provide food that conforms to nutritional guidelines. Maximum/minimum levels should be set for fat, sugar, vitamins and minerals;
- There should be a mandatory nutrient and compositional standard for school meals;
- The sale of unhealthy food and drink products from school vending machines should be banned;
- Free fruit and vegetable schemes should be expanded to all primary and secondary school children;
- All schools should make free water available.

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<sup>1</sup> BMA report (2005) Preventing childhood obesity is available at: <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/ChildhoodObesity>.



### Consultation Questions

- 1 BMA Cymru Wales believes that the Measure will help establish a holistic 'all school' approach. We welcome the fact that the Measure will impose new duties on Welsh Ministers, local education authorities (LEAs), school governing bodies of maintained schools and their head teachers.

However, we are concerned that there is little, if any engagement, with pupils. As the explanatory paper alludes, attempts to change the content of school meals in England without sufficient consultation with pupils resulted in a negative response. The Measure could be further improved by placing a duty to consult with student representatives through school Councils or through Wales' youth representative body 'Funky Dragon'.

- 2 BMA Cymru Wales welcomes the fact the Measure provides for Regulations that will specify nutritional standards. We accept that Regulation is the best way to do this as this will allow consultation with key stakeholders and allow Regulations to be adapted, as nutritional requirements and guidelines change.
- 3 BMA Cymru Wales does not believe that there is a need for additional powers to be added to the proposed Measure.

However, as part of the holistic approach, the BMA Cymru Wales believes that the Measure should be accompanied by:

- A sustained and consistent public education campaign to improve parents' and children's understanding of the benefits of health living;
- Food education and the acquisition of related practical skills should be made compulsory;
- Funding to establish and sustain training programmes for those involved in the care of children with obesity;
- Increased funding and improved access to sport and recreation facilities within schools and communities;
- The protection offered to playing fields should be strengthened.

- 4 BMA Cymru Wales believes that the Measure does promote the principles of sustainable development in the provision of healthy school food.
- 5 BMA Cymru Wales agrees with the duties, responsibilities and reporting requirements for headteachers and governors. However, BMA Cymru Wales does recognise that this duty will place an additional burden, which will need to be fully recognised.
- 6 BMA Cymru Wales welcomes the duties, responsibilities and reporting requirements on Assembly Ministers, LEAs and the Chief Inspector of Schools and believe that they are sufficient enough to have on implementation.
- 7 There will be no financial costs incurred on BMA Cymru Wales or the medical profession as a consequence of this Measure.

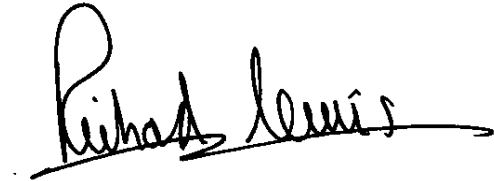
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Conclusion

BMA Cymru Wales welcomes this Measure. I am happy for this response to be published and would be happy to give oral evidence to a future Committee, if required. I am also happy for this response to be made public.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Richard Lewis  
Welsh Secretary

Copy to:

Ms Jenny Randerson AM, National Assembly for Wales