HEALTHY VENDING – THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

The HSE has just adopted an important new national Policy on Healthy Vending Services in our hospitals and health facilities nationwide.

According to Adrienne Lynam, National Project Manager for Obesity, the HSE is committed to maintaining and promoting the good health of the population of Ireland and this policy aims to reflect that in the food and drinks vended to patients, staff and visitors in HSE facilities.

“The fundamental purpose of this policy is to ensure that when our patients, visitors and staff use vending machines in our facilities, that they will always have healthy choices available and that we will assist them so that they can make a more informed, hopefully healthier snack choice,” she said.

The Health and Wellbeing division established an expert group to develop this policy for Healthy Vending (Cold Soft Drinks, Confectionary and Snack Vending Machines) across the HSE in 2013.

“We worked with Procurement, Facilities and Catering Management, Dietitians, Estates, and Dental Health to develop the policy. Our aim was to use our purchasing and contractual power to influence the range and type of products that are available in vending machines around the country in hospitals and health facilities,” said Ms Lynam.

“Until now, we haven’t had an influence on this. As part of our wide ranging work to improve health and wellbeing, we wanted to ensure that patients, visitors and our staff have options over and above the traditional high-calorie, fat, salt and sugar offerings with little or no nutritional value which have, until now been the only options available from vending machines.

“We’re delighted to say that the policy was approved and adopted nationally in 2014, and work completed on awarding a national procurement contract earlier in 2015. This policy is now live and it’s very important that all HSE facilities operate within the new procurement framework.”

Initially all vending machines will stock, as a minimum, 60pc healthier options and 40pc other products. Some machines may have a higher percentage of healthier option, but it cannot drop below 60pc. The new machines will also give the customer more information to aid an informed choice by posting the calorie content of each item, and green will be used to highlight signs to mark out the healthier choices to the customer.

“Key to ensure a smooth transition to the new policy and contract, and to maximise the HSE’s purchasing power, it’s essential that managers that have Vending Services supplied to their facilities/properties are aware of and operating within this contract,” she said.

“There is a short-term exception for current formal contracts which pre-date this contract. It is essential that all HSE service managers ensure that this contract is adhered to, as failure to do so will put the HSE at risk of litigation and means that our staff, visitors and patients cannot access healthy choices as part of this policy.”

For a copy of the policy please see www.hse.ie/healthyvending.

For information regarding the procurement process, please email hotel.services@hse.ie