

Welsh Food Alliance

Volume 4

Issue 1

Summer 2005

Welcome to all our readers. Our thanks to those who continue to return survey forms and interesting letters in this our sixth year. This is our first newsletter this year.

To increase public participation and our effectiveness, WFA has initiated a more open and direct method of working with others through our public events programme. This to influence the policy development process at local and national levels, which we hope will bring results. Comments and contributions regarding future inquiry themes in collaborative inquiry are welcomed.

Public participation means getting and using information before important policy decisions are made behind closed doors, not after. We believe that participation by academics, citizens and professionals contributing to events, someone filling in a survey form at a club, or sending a letter from home, or pupils participating in their Schools Council, are all important strands to getting our food policy right in Wales and achieving better value in public service delivery.

Let us emulate other small countries such as Finland and Scotland by adopting public participation to get results.

A new venture - a 'School Citizens Jury' - is introduced at our 4th Welsh Youth Food Assembly. We hope that this will develop and grow. Any schools, parents, governors and others wishing to get involved please contact us.

An older venture from 1999 was, and is seeking change in the National Curriculum on which we can report no progress. The National Curriculum is being currently reviewed. If you are as concerned as we are, take action now by raising this issue with Assembly Members. To make a reality of informed choice we need to empower pupils with knowledge from pre-school to A level.

Public Events

(1) 'Feed Me Better'

6th July 2005 Welsh Youth Food Assembly, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay. With well over a hundred entrants, and more coming in by the day, 60 pupils from 15 schools express their views on Jamie Oliver's controversial programme by writing a letter to Jamie saying what impact they think it will have on school meals and also on the health of pupils.

(2) Future of Welsh Food Policy

8th July 2005, 2 - 4pm. Implications of 'fast-track' Welsh legislation White Paper on future governance of Wales - a Joint Cardiff Law School/ Welsh Food Alliance Seminar.

'Are You Being Served' -

Nutrition for the over 65s in Wales - Food Inquiry

(3) 2nd September 2005, 10 am - 1pm, Cardiff.

(4) 23rd September 2005, 10 am - 1pm, Colwyn Bay.

School Nutrition: Round Table discussion

(5) 2nd September 2005, 1.30 - 4.15 pm, Cardiff.

(6) 23rd September 2005, 1.30 - 4.15 pm, Colwyn Bay.

All are no cost events. More details inside.

Write to WFA - see address below.

www.Welshfoodalliance.org.uk or e-mail

events@Welshfoodalliance.org.uk quoting the

bracket number of the event to reserve your place.

Priority given to reservations. We thank the

National Assembly for Wales, the Wales Centre for

Health, the Open University and Colwyn Bay Town

Council for providing free accommodation that has

enabled us to carry out our work.

Welsh Food Alliance

WFA is a non profit making organisation. It brings together expertise, and citizens, in all aspects of food policy. Volunteers do all our work and when we receive a grant to carry forward an activity we publicly acknowledge this. Write for details to Secretary, 13 Cefn Coch, Radyr, Cardiff, CF 8BJ.

info@welshfoodalliance.org.uk

<http://www.welshfoodalliance.org.uk>

Tel: 0845 3304926 (local call rate), or 01633 663114

Education for the 21st Century

School meals alone are important but they are not the whole story. Knowledge is. We empower pupils with knowledge from pre-school to A level. They will then be able to decide for themselves how food and fitness can be achieved.

The Assembly Food and Fitness 'Action Plan for Children and Young People' is to be published after we go to print (see page 4). If as previously they consider that healthy living and food can be contained and fragmented across 'Design and Technology', 'Personal Social Education', and 'Science' then they are completely wrong*. It was wrong in 2001, and we believe it is increasingly wrong with the growing obesity epidemic.

This limited view is also reflected in the approach to choice and healthy food options elsewhere (see Children, Young People and Maternity Services report at page 4). Healthy food needs to be mainstreamed and viewed as a 'good option'. There appears to be a lack of urgency and understanding about how we tackle the growing obesity epidemic - vividly captured in a recent House of Commons Health Select Committee Report.

In contrast, following the August 2004 Food Education Inquiry, we are aware that the Association of Directors of Education in Wales Quality Assurance Group wholeheartedly supports the introduction of a new compulsory stand alone subject area for Key Stages 1 - 3. This will deliver nutrition, healthy eating and food safety, and reintroduce basic food handling skills in a domestic context using raw ingredients, rather than train pupils to assemble already processed food in an industrial context.

In 2004 an International Obesity Taskforce report emphasised that obesity requires multi faceted solutions from all sectors of society. Education has a key role. In the 21st century what better way to meet the needs of learners whilst preparing pupils for the responsibilities, opportunities, and experiences of adult life? We have made this case for over six years. Do we need to await another review in 2013 to bring about this change?

* 'Review of the school curriculum and assessment arrangements 5 -16', April 2004, ACCAC.

'Feed Me Better' **4th Welsh Youth Food Assembly**

We have had a huge response from pupils expressing their views on Jamie Oliver's controversial programme, by writing a letter to Jamie saying what *impact they think it will have on school meals and also on the health of pupils.*

To get pupils started we asked:

- * What was your reaction to the programmes?
- * Why did they have so much publicity and media coverage?
- * Is this the way to change school meals?
- * Could Jamie have achieved better results in some other way?

- * If you were organising the 'school meals experience' what would you include and what results would you expect?
- * Will the behaviour of pupils be affected? Why?
- * Was Jamie's project a good idea and do you think it has affected what people eat at home?

Pupils are to be *welcomed by Lord Elis - Thomas, AM* Presiding officer, National Assembly for Wales. *Jane Hutt, AM Minister for Children and Young People will speak and answer questions* on the Food and Fitness 'Action Plan for Children and Young People'. Many thanks to the *Co-operative Group* for again sponsoring this overall event.

'School Citizens Jury'

At the Youth Food Assembly National Public Health Service registered Public Health Nutritionist: *Teresa Owen, will set the scene for a 'School Citizens Jury' and get small groups of pupils working on their activities in commenting on the 'Action Plan'.* Pupils will provide feedback to the Assembly on the 'youth' edition of the 'Action Plan' which the Assembly will then distribute to 10% of selected Welsh schools in September 2005. (See page 4)

Career Opportunities in Food 'Any Questions' - This Youth Food Assembly session takes place in the afternoon, and includes brief presentations from a *dietician, hotelier, and environmental health and procurement officers.*

Public Events Programme

School Nutrition: Round Table discussion

Friday 2nd September 2005, Open University, Cathedral Road, Cardiff.

23rd September 2005, Town Hall, Rhiw Road, Colwyn Bay.

Aims: *to raise the profile and awareness of school nutrition issues, and to harness the experience and expertise of interested parties, including pupils, in improving the nutrition of children, young people and families* Further details on separate leaflet from WFA, local CVCs, Children in Wales or www.Welshfoodalliance.org.uk

Future Welsh Food Policy

Friday 8th July 2005, 2 – 4pm. *Implications of 'fast-track' Welsh legislation White Paper on future governance of Wales are considered alongside proposed Bills for 'Food Justice Strategy and 'Childrens Food'.* Joint Cardiff Law School/ Welsh Food Alliance Seminar. Venue: Cardiff Law School, Museum Place, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

Contributors include: David Lambert, a former Legal Adviser to the Presiding officer of the National Assembly for Wales. Marie Navarro, the editor of the Assembly funded Cardiff Law School website which sets out the powers of and the laws made by the National Assembly - www.waleslegislation.org.uk. David Smith, NGO Food Policy Adviser. Please pre-book with WFA events@Welshfoodalliance.org.uk

'Are You Being Served'? **Continuation of 'Nutrition for the** **over 65s in Wales – Food Inquiry'**

Friday 2nd September 2005, Open University, Cathedral Road, Cardiff.

Friday 23rd September 2005, Town Hall, Rhiw Road, Colwyn Bay.

Aims: *an updating and discussion opportunity to develop and promote a nutrition strategy for older people in Wales.*

Further details on separate leaflet from the Age Alliance, Age Concern, CVCs, WFA, or www.Welshfoodalliance.org.uk

The contributors on 2nd and 23rd September 2005 include: Lindsey Richardson, the Assembly Older Peoples National Service Framework manager attending both older people events. Teresa Owen National Public Health Service registered Public Health Nutritionist will be an expert witness for all events on 2nd and 23rd September, which will be facilitated by NGO food policy adviser David Smith.

Report of recent events

2004 Welsh Youth Food Assembly

The third Youth Food Assembly took place at the National Assembly for Wales, on 7th July. The aim was to find out 'what action pupils have taken to improve the uptake of healthy food and drink in their schools, and to make practical recommendations to the Assembly Health Challenge Wales project'. *Whitchurch High School, Cardiff, was awarded the 'Food School of Wales Smith – Sullivan' cup*, and 60 pupils received individual participation certificates. *Ysgol y Castell, Kidwelly Primary School* pupils received a prize cup for performing an excellent Healthy Eating "Rap".

Older People's Food Survey

On July 7th July 2004, at the National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay, Hilda Smith presented findings and recommendations arising from 466 people who responded to our second older people's food survey. The audience included older people, older people's organisations, central and local government officials, the NHS and caterers. Dr Neil Wooding, Equal Opportunities Commissioner for Wales facilitated the session.

'Future of Food Education in Wales' **27th August 2004.**

This was a timely discussion with knowledgeable and experienced practitioners producing an interim report and subsequently a detailed proposal setting out the case for a *new compulsory stand alone subject area for Key Stages 1 – 3*. This was a bold decision, supported by much evidence on the future impact of obesity on health, substantial avoidable NHS costs, the quality of life and the economy. The danger of further delay is that we will soon lose capacity to train new specialist food teachers.

Putting Nutrition into National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) 27th August 2004.

This was the only UK public consultation on 'Food Preparation and Cooking' National Occupational Standards, with *the aim of improving public health/public protection in all aspects of catering*. The consultation concluded that *nutrition should be a mandatory stand alone unit at basic, craft, supervisory and management levels*. A detailed submission was sent to People 1st.

NVQ Hansard Postscript

The sector skills body (People 1st) had a further private consultation with industry personnel. The majority consulted (essentially large companies) opposed our recommendations "because a knowledge-based unit would not be easily assessable in the work place and because it would not reflect current work practices" (Hansard 4th April 2005).

Health workers in disguise

The NVQ approach to delivering nutritional standards is clearly relevant to public funding of all college and employer based catering education in Wales, including hospitals, leisure centres, schools, prisons, further and higher education, home care settings, residential and nursing homes.

The NVQ approach to improved service is a more robust way of demonstrating staff competence in a realistic work environment, as opposed to Vocational Qualifications (VQs) which are classroom based assessments. We are surprised at England's VQ approach. Commenting on the Assembly Government's three year spending plans (2005-06 to 2007-08), WFA recommend prioritising expenditure where nutrition is included within the NVQ 'Food Preparation and Cooking' programmes.

'Nutrition for the over 65s in Wales – Food Inquiry' 18th March 2005.

Twenty- two participants enjoyed a stimulating round table discussion. They considered six themes identified in a detailed WFA briefing paper. The outcome has been fed into various government consultations. Issues have been raised with food retailers, statutory inspectorates and audit bodies. A final report is nearing completion and will include the outcome of the *'Are You Being Served' events, and detailed evidence previously submitted in response to the Older People's Health Promotion Action Plan (see page 4)*.

Older People Food Inquiry Questions

In January 2005 we wrote to Chief Executives of local authorities, NHS Trusts, local Health Boards, Directors of Social Services, Older Peoples Champions and Older Peoples Strategy Co-ordinators, with several key strategy and policy questions. *We look forward to receiving responses.*

Action Plan for Children and Young People: Food & Fitness

WFA made two separate detailed submissions around maternal nutrition, national curriculum and school meals, and requested a full public consultation. An 'adult' edition will be issued for consultation on 3rd July 2005. The Youth Food Assembly on 6th July will provide feedback on an Assembly pre-design 'youth' edition. The latter will then be issued for consultation to 10% of Welsh Schools from September. Contact the Assembly Health Promotion Department for both copies via (02920) 825111. WFA will pass on evidence gleaned from the *Feed Me Better Welsh Youth Food Assembly* and the two *School Nutrition: Round Table discussion* events.

Welsh Assembly Government Older People's Health Promotion Action Plan

Detailed evidence was submitted making the case for a holistic citizen centred approach to the needs of older people. A key point is that the approach to meeting the *nutritional needs of older people should be along the same lines as Assembly Health Promotion Divisions approach to children and young people*. A letter was sent to the Minister on this issue. The Action Plan agreed by the Assembly in February 2005 has yet to be printed, and apparently differs little in substance from the original version.

Welsh Procurement Initiative

There is always a danger that some priorities will dominate over others, partly because some lobbies are more powerful than others. WFA concerns are fully acknowledged in the Cardiff University report 'School Meals: Healthy Eating and Sustainable Food Chains' where the authors state "in particular (WFA) asks the Assembly to demonstrate 'how local sourcing will improve the nutrient quality of food'" (2003). This point equally applies to all public sector catering.

Sustainable Development Action Plan

The consultation document lacked focus on improving health and avoiding diet related disease. The Action Plan 2004 – 2007, (November 2004) indicates change, but in considering food procurement, fails to connect the necessity of relating specific nutrient standards required by citizens in hospitals and schools, according to age and circumstances. We look forward to commenting on work being undertaken by the Assembly Education Department, the NHS Estates Department and NHS Trusts (see issue Vol 2 issue 2, April 2002).

Children, Young People & Maternity Services

Nutrition aspects of this National Service Framework consultation document were most disappointing. One memorable phrase states: "where schools are still providing school meals and *commercial considerations* permit, improving the content of school meals and promoting *healthy options*" (page 33). WFA provided the Assembly with a copy of our evidence to the Commons Health Select Committee Report on Obesity. We await the outcome of pilot work being undertaken by selected local authorities with interest.

Westminster Debate

The Welsh Food Alliance, alongside the Caroline Walker Trust, and the Soil Association are recognised as having long campaigned to restore statutory minimum standards of nutrition in the provision of school food in a debate initiated by David Taylor MP (23 May 2005). See the WFA web site.

Obesity Health Select Committee Inquiry

Welsh Food Alliance evidence submitted in June 2003 was published by the House of Commons Health Select Committee in 2004. They were particularly interested in WFA research, which revealed that English private schools spend twice as much as the state sector on food ingredients for school lunch. They did not comment on concerns if free meal cash allowances, which local authorities allow pupils to spend, were being wasted on individual products high in salt, sugar and fat.

News items

NHS Catering

"Two thirds of acute hospital beds are occupied by people over 65. Hospitals need to ensure their services focus on the particular needs of older people. Recent NHS research found that 40% of people arriving in hospital were malnourished, and of those 70% became further malnourished during their stay in hospital. English trials, by a US led Evercare programme, in 2004 suggested 3% of the over 65's in the areas covered by the trials accounted for over 35% of hospital admissions for that age group" (see Vol. 3 issue 3, 2004).

No reference is made to a real need to tackle malnutrition and its impact on clinical status of inpatients or older people discharged from hospital. (See the Assembly vision 'Designed for Life: Creating world class Health and Social Care in the 21st Century' May 2005). The key issue is defining Wales wide standards, otherwise a post code lottery occurs between NHS Trusts.

NHS Catering England

"More than 17 million meals are being thrown away in England's hospitals every year – an increase of almost 50% over the past three years. ... Officials admit... there remains a real need to tackle under nourishment and its impact on clinical status" (Times, 3 June 2005).

Food and Well Being Strategy

The Food Standards Agency / Assembly Nutrition Strategy was launched by the Health and Social Services Minister in early 2003. With recent developments is it time to take stock, and add further targets and milestones emanating from all parts of the Assembly Government, especially in terms of sustainable agriculture, older people, children and young people?

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