

Welsh Food Alliance

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It's been a busy year

We have been taking stock about how we work more effectively to use our scarce self-financed resources. We are glad that others are being involved with food for children and young people. We have therefore refocused our efforts on vulnerable older people, and 'how we think and work differently' through public participation.

Assembly Beecham Review

We submitted evidence to this review, which influenced our evidence to the Assembly 'Food in Schools' Working Group. If there is to be a transformation in school meals there needs to be a co-ordinated approach and co-operation through an *All Wales Catering Advisory Service* – which we proposed four years ago. Our evidence included: children and young people, the national curriculum, growing malnutrition in an ageing population and food policy.

We proposed a Food and Health Policy Council, with public engagement for which changed attitudes and behaviour is required. This could improve food consumption and co-ordination between different services – the responsibility of different tiers and functions of government. The extent of change will require some extra finance and a public sector catering co-ordinator located inside the Assembly Government.

This requires leadership to drive change and Wales wide collaboration in developing common *computerised management information systems*, economies of scale, food safety compliance, workforce planning and training, avoidance of duplication, and common performance criteria. This could help ensure the provision of equitable and efficient public sector catering service across Wales that will provide better value for money.

'The New Public Service'

In recent months WFA ran six timely and free public workshops on the theme of 'Innovation and the New Public Service'. Many thanks to the Open University in Wales and all participants who created this learning resource, which included *inviting the elder's experience, what matters most to them and their practical solutions*. We hope these events supported responses to various government consultations.

Food Policy: A New Agenda for Wales

As we go to press, this meeting, on 18th October, is jointly organised by the Welsh Food Alliance and the Regeneration Institute, Cardiff University. The main speaker is Dr Martin Carahar, Reader in Food and Health Policy, City University, London. A 'Food Question Time' will follow with a panel chaired by Prof Kevin Morgan, including Glyn Davies AM, Dr Brian Gibbons AM, Rhodri Griffiths - Green Party, Helen Mary Jones AM, and Jenny Randerson AM. Prior to the Welsh Assembly elections, it is hoped that practical public health measures will be included in the manifestos of all Welsh political parties

Consumer or Citizen Engagement?

The Beecham Review 'Beyond the Boundaries' established common principles for citizen centred, efficient and accountable services. At the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) July Board meeting in Cardiff, we asked FSA to respond to the Beecham Review. In October UK FSA proposed ten consumer panels. How will the Welsh Panel be selected? We hope this relates well to the Assembly Government policy of public participation.

Questions for FSA and future panel members. **Role:** *how can I represent the views of the public?* What am I doing here? Why do they want me? **Contribution:** what authority, expertise and experience - if any - do I bring? **Representation** who am I representing when I speak – just myself or, does this include engagement with local groups? **Accountability:** how can we as consumers be confident that it is working? And so... How can people be empowered to engage in this deliberative democracy?

Welsh Food Alliance

WFA is an independent, self financed organisation. It brings together expertise, and citizens, in all aspects of food policy. We aim to provide a new perspective based on informed public participation. All our work is done by volunteers. To them our grateful thanks and acknowledgement, especially to Word Up Design. Write for details to Secretary, 13 Cefn Coch, Radyr, Cardiff, CF 8BJ. info@welshfoodalliance.org.uk Tel: (01633) 266781 http://www.welshfoodalliance.org.uk Tel: (01633) 663114

Is the Jamie Phenomenon Working?

All credit is due to Jamie Oliver for raising the issue of food in schools and the effect of low-grade food from a nutritional standpoint to school pupils. This has been driven by changes in legislation and cost cutting over the past twenty-five years.

However, is it a step too far to move from there to the immediate wholesale catering changes advocated? This is bound to have some repercussions. We see it in the withdrawal of pupils from school meals whose parents take on board TV messages about unwholesome food provided without properly checking out what is provided locally.

The result is a lower take up of school meals until the service becomes overwhelmed with overhead costs. Some schools working on the principle of gradually providing wholesome freshly cooked food find that hard work over many years are undermined. Or we find strong minded women concerned that their children are opting out of their new diet (probably very different to that provided at home) and deciding to provide food passed through the railings of schools.

If this is the feeling does it not show that we are working against the principles advocated in the Assembly policy 'Making the Connections' (and Beecham) about participation in decision making - that any project requires the early involvement of those concerned that will eventually bring about success? We hope WFA have contributed to this through four National Youth Food Assemblies.

Does it also point to the role that education plays in the whole process? Pupils need to know practical skills, with underpinning knowledge and understanding of the importance of nutrition for health within the national curriculum. This will then last a lifetime.

This was one of the first major issues championed by the Welsh Food Alliance in 1999, following questions posed by food teachers. A working group was set up, met within days with redrafted national curriculum orders that could easily have been accepted by government six years ago. We were not successful, but have since made it a cardinal principle of our strategy.

The opportunity arises again for the National Assembly for Wales to vote for necessary change in future Welsh legislation, to take effect in September 2008, or do we wait until 2014? By empowering pupils with knowledge from pre-school to A level they will then be able to decide for themselves and we hope make the right choices.

Jamie Oliver certainly raised the profile of school meals, but success demands involvement, adequate finance from central and local government, parent and pupil support, workforce training, an All Wales Catering Advisory Service, local and national Food Policy Councils and a lasting awareness of how today's action brings about the necessary changes within the national curriculum.

Food Education Update

It is likely that the Welsh national curriculum review will strengthen skills. In anticipation of draft Assembly legislation to be consulted on January 2007, we have written to the Assembly making these points:

Can the review promote practical skills such as choosing, preparing and cooking food? It is essential that a framework exists to progress knowledge through each of the key stages to ensure that young people, and subsequently throughout life, understand the concept of eating healthily and have the ability to feed themselves and their future families.

If this initiative is to be successful it is essential that the following points are taken into consideration:

- Although the module may be short, the sessions should be long enough to cover preparing, cooking, clearing and evaluating thoroughly work undertaken
- That framework and resources are in place to promote the correct nutritional messages and the content of the course, including workforce education, planning and development
- This is an ideal opportunity for Wales to be innovative and lead the nation to a healthier lifestyle and in later years support people wishing to remain independent in their own homes

With the removal of such skills from the curriculum since 1992, parents may no longer have practical skills to transfer to their children. The state has a duty to intervene. This will require more than outside school activities. If uncertainty exists, we propose the Health, Finance and Education Ministers initiate a Health Impact Assessment.

'Food Technology in Schools'

In a damning report by the English Inspectorate Ofsted, published in March 2006, one of their many robust criticisms was that: "there is a fundamental and so far unresolved dichotomy between teaching about food to develop skills for living and using food as a means to teach the objectives of design and technology". A strong business lobby seeks to preserve 'food technology'. The difficulty is the impossibility of increasing the time required to deliver 'skills for living' within the constraint of delivering Design & Technology.

What do others say?

Council of Europe

Again their policy statement states that governments should take measures aimed at:

(a) Reviewing the curriculum relating to healthy eating to ensure that all young people leave school with the necessary knowledge and skills concerning the production, purchasing, preparation, cooking and enjoyment of healthy food.

(b) Reviewing the in-service training needs of all those involved in food production and food preparation and the associated curricula in schools (Council of Europe Appendix to ResAP 2005).

'Food miles and fair trade'

Following our very successful Jamie Oliver 'Feed Me Better' theme in 2005, we did not formally run our 5th National Youth Food Assembly in 2006. Of the entrants received on this theme we awarded the Smith/Sullivan Cup to Brecon High School. Many thanks to the Co-operative Group for their continued support.

School Meals & the Workforce

What happens in England may well influence what happens in Wales, therefore WFA responded to two 2005 DfES 'Turning the Tables' consultations. Key weaknesses were: the cost of workforce education, planning and development, and the extra staff time and effort required. As a recent Assembly consultation states, "Without well trained and supported teachers, lecturers, and support staff none of our ambitions for learners in Wales will become a reality. (6.1) 'Learning Country (June 2006) http://new.wales.gov.uk/docrepos/40382/4038232/403821/the_learning_country_2/Learning_Country2_English.pdf?lang=en

'Appetite for Life'

WFA's secretary has been an active member of the Assembly 'Food in Schools' working group. Detailed evidence was contributed by WFA and we are pleased that many of our suggestions are included in the final document. We particularly welcome the introduction of nutrient standards for school meals, for which we have

campaigning since 1999. It remains to be seen whether the draft for consultation is hampered by weaknesses in English policy. The 'Food in Schools' working group wholeheartedly agreed that we need to improve food education to children and young people, but is the action proposed strong enough to change the National Curriculum in 2008 or will we have to wait another seven years? WFA also recommended a public sector catering co-ordinator, directly accountable to the Assembly, to use lessons learnt in feeding younger people correctly to influence catering for other vulnerable population groups, in care homes and other public settings. We feel that it is essential to ensure 'resource transfer' across training and management systems relevant to all vulnerable groups. Instead it is proposed that WLGA are asked to appoint a school meals co-ordinator. Will this carry sufficient weight to drive essential change for children, let alone other population groups? Closing date for responses to the consultation is 31 October 2006.

Older People Update

Growing Malnutrition

Building upon our 'Older People's Food Surveys' (2002/2003), and our 'Older People's Food Inquiry' (2004/2005), we ran four public consultations in North and South Wales in the latter half of 2005. This activity allowed us to provide three sets of evidence to the National Service Framework for Older People (NSF). Our key theme was that the Assembly 'Appetite for Life' for pupils held many lessons, which would be of benefit to other vulnerable population groups.

Detailed amendments were submitted to the NSF, which now provides an excellent analysis, evidencing growing malnutrition, which requires local and national action. 'Robust data capture' is required to measure this issue. This has been raised with the Assembly and the FSA, and action requested in the interim review of 'Food and Well Being'.

In 2005, when we electronically checked local Health, Social Care and Wellbeing strategies, we found very little reference to the needs of older people (or other vulnerable population groups). Either local strategies are incomplete, or these needs are not understood. This NSF offers detailed references and analysis, and provides the levers for people to drive this issue forward at local levels. We hope that everyone will seize this opportunity for local action.

Hospital Food

Are you being fed?

Following our 'Innovation and the New Public Service'

nutrition workshop (June 2006), Age Concern England released survey results which showed that nine out of ten nurses didn't have the time to help the elderly and vulnerable at meal times. We challenge the view that insufficient resources are available to allow nurses to have adequate time to provide the necessary nutrition, fluids and nutritional care. We observe good practice in some and not other NHS hospitals. This could possibly point to the need for different priorities and better time management focused upon the patient's needs and circumstances. Let us know your views.

Our Older Peoples Food Survey found a mixed picture. Patient dissatisfaction could arise between different systems, such as cook freeze, cook chill, or prime production for 'on site' consumption, poor investment in food service and staff training. We want to know about the good and the bad, the beacons of excellence as well as the sloughs of despair. How could it be improved? Is this an issue being raised by your CHC or a Hospital Patients Panel? Do let us know.

Hospital and Residential Care

The Scottish Executive is currently implementing 'NHS Clinical Standards for Food, Fluid and Nutritional Care in Hospitals'. This is taking time to bed down. How will this be approached in Wales? Would a Health Impact Assessment by each Trust help drive improvements? We are requesting the Assembly to adopt a fresh Wales-wide approach to be reflected in 'developmental standards' used in the performance management of Welsh NHS Trusts. How can Health Inspectorate Wales and other Welsh Concordat signatories help take this forward?

Nutrition Network for Wales (NNW)

Networks are a getting together of people already involved. In 2004 we asked how will NNW strengthen the public engagement work that is required? With estimated costs of up to £100,000 pa. we have three concerns:

- We understood that NNW would engage with people. Currently it is only an electronic network and this is quite different from Scotland.
- How open and transparent is the management of NNW? How compliant is NNW with Assembly Beecham recommendations and FSA policy on public engagement?
- What criteria will be used when deciding to locate other activities within their remit?

'Food & Wellbeing' strategy?

Do we have a Food Policy in Wales? We have lots of Strategies and Action Plans, but are these adequately linked with sound WAG policy? Dr Tim Lang and Dr Elizabeth Dowler have recently evaluated Scottish

Nutrition Policy. They are now part of a team undertaking an interim review of the Wales 'Food and Wellbeing' strategy. Further details from L.Davis.1@warwick.ac.uk

In its evidence WFA will (i) urge a Food Policy for Wales, (ii) a strategy that addresses growing malnutrition in an ageing population and food education in our schools, (iii) present evidence given to the UK Food Standards Agency Dean Inquiry in 2004 and (iv) propose the separation of responsibilities for implementing and then monitoring food policy. This will be essential in ensuring progress and delivery.

WFA Consultation responses

- The Learning Country 2: Delivering the Promise
- UK Food Preparation & Cooking NVQ occupational standards
- 'Appetite for Life'
- Older Peoples Strategy Beyond 2008,
- 'Fulfilled Lives, Supportive Communities' (Social Services Strategy)
- Making the Connections – improved public services
- Building Better Customer Service – Core Principles for Public Services
- Beecham Review
- Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007/2013 - Strategic Plan
- Wales NHS Workforce education, development and contracting unit
- UK Health Care Support Workers - employer and employee codes of practice and standards.
- National Framework for Education and Training of Health Care Support Workers in Wales
- 'Food & Wellbeing' – 'interim review'
- Older Peoples Commissioner Regulations
- Draft Government of Wales Act
- Evaluation of Food Education Provision in Wales
- EU REACH chemical regulation
- Social Care Sector (Staff in Direct Care Settings) Skills Review
- Social Services Inspectorate Wales Review Programme, 2006 onwards
- National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People
- Medicines for Older People NSF
- Health Promotion Action Plan for Older People

Future responses

- Healthcare standards
- National Occupational Standards for inspectors, regulators and auditors of public services
- Nursing and Midwifery Council, review of the Core Curriculum Skills (likely to make nutrition its highest priority).
- Food Education - National Curriculum Orders

A busy programme entered into with the continuing hope of a Food & Health Policy Council in Wales taking up these issues.