

Welsh Food Alliance

Volume 1

Issue 4

Special Summer 2001

The National Youth Food Assembly-18th July 2001

The National Assembly for Wales hosts an event aimed at encouraging young people to take action to improve their health and well being. The National Youth Food Assembly is an innovative concept that is being co-ordinated by the Alliance.

The Alliance, following its public consultations on World Health Organisation Europe proposals for food and nutrition action planning, wishes to see how young people could be more effectively involved. How it works and involves young people will be the ultimate test of its viability.

70 pupils from 17 Welsh schools debate these issues. Lord Elis-Thomas

AM the National Assembly Presiding Officer will welcome participants to this and the National Food Teachers Symposium. Jane Hutt AM, the Health and Social Services Minister will join with Neil Fowler, the Western Mail Editor; Dr B. Jones, former HMI; and Mrs M Davies, of the Co-operative Group Ltd; in adjudicating school food, health and environment projects.

Neil Wooding, vice chair Welsh Food Alliance, and Voirrey Manson, Director Wales NHS Equalities Unit, will facilitate two separate sessions. Angela Gray - TV chef will demonstrate food and evaluate

outcomes with participants. Creative Visions will capture Assembly highlights on video. Dr John Marek AM, the Assembly Deputy Presiding Officer will present awards to participating pupils and schools.

Participation holds the key to a healthier future, and young people need a voice in food issues facing tomorrow. We especially thank the Co-operative Group, Environment Wales, NAFW, the WDA, and all the pupils and teachers for their support. It is hoped that this will become an annual event. Further details at: <http://www.hospitalitywales.demon.co.uk/nyfaweb/>

National Food Teachers Symposium for Wales

The Symposium's theme will be 'Public Health Through Partnership'. Globalisation of food standards and food education will be at the heart of this agenda. Teachers need timely, accurate and relevant information, in order to improve the quality of food education / food technology.

Participants will be enabled to:

- Understand the role of CODEX and European Union Food Law reform in relation to UK food standards
- Explore the concept of professional food manager

licensing as a response to mandatory HACCP.

- Analyse changes in the national curriculum and food education from a health inequalities perspective.
- Share with political party education representatives their shared vision for the future direction of food education as part of the NAFW's public health plan.

Contributors include: Inger Furmyr, Norwegian - Brussels based Food Secretary of the European Federation of Foodworkers; Regan Scott, an experienced European lobbyist; Ms. Jenny Jupes, DATA's Deputy Chief Executive; Dr Richard Edwards, AM, and other Assembly members. Contact Jean Sullivan (01633) 663114.

About the Welsh Food Alliance

The Welsh Food Alliance is a non-profit making knowledge based policy development and promotion network comprising members in Wales, the UK and Europe. It brings together multi-disciplinary expertise to link all aspects of food policy in a holistic and integrated way which is disseminated in its quarterly newsletter. The Alliance aims to provide a new perspective on food policy founded on the principle of informed public participation in the policy development process. It uses an extensive network of local, national and international contacts to help stimulate positive action at all levels of government. Join us today and help us in this crucial enterprise.

Get In Touch...

Contact David Smith
Tel/Fax; 01633 266781.

Email David Smith at;
wfa@hospitalitywales.demon.co.uk

www.hospitalitywales.demon.co.uk

Democratising Public Health in Wales

Why is it necessary? How do we do it?

In our last edition we considered the location of public health within local authorities. But PHA Cymru propose that there exists another issue about public health that is more important and relates to the shortfall of public participation in the determination of policies pursued by Local Health Alliances (LHAs).

According to their terms of reference, LHAs are supposed to be open to all sections of society. But in practice they are generally governed by a small cross section of decision-makers. Consequently there exists a shortfall of public participation, one that is so pronounced as to constitute a democratic deficit.

PHA Cymru proposes that this democratic deficit can be remedied in three stages. First, it is unhealthy that statutory bodies dominate LHAs. Local public bodies need to identify and resource an independent voluntary body to take forward the participation agenda. This requires immediate attention by the NHS Plan Public Health Review Task and Finish Group.

Second, LHAs should be democratised by enlarging their constituencies of involvement by actively soliciting participation in decision making structures from the communities that they exist to serve.

Third, an annual Public Health Congress for Wales could be created which could collate local experiences about public health, discuss them and use them to construct a knowledge base for making prioritised recommendations, for example, to the NAFW's Health and Well-being Council, and the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council.

The new role envisaged for citizens, as intended beneficiaries, is clearly set out in the Wales NHS Plan. The creation of such a Congress would facilitate a continuing public dialogue within and between LHAs that is based upon a comprehensive public participation programme. One based upon an organisational design and procedures refined by the former Congress Advisory Committee of the UK National Consumer Council (NCC).

The NCC successfully promoted consumer participation by dedicating resources specifically for this purpose. Whilst a limited number of its own NCC members were involved in the Congress, NCC did not select or appoint those asked to advise them.

Those elected had expertise in specified areas, and this in turn guided the selection of workshop themes, who would research, plan, organise, and manage the following years Congress. PHA Cymru advocates the creation of a Public Health Congress for Wales because it would build upon and reinforce the democratisation of LHAs and begin to fill the democratic deficit.

But its contribution to the promotion of public health would not be confined to this achievement. By promoting public participation, it would inevitably focus attention upon the need to ensure that public health is fully accountable. The importance of this achievement may be appreciated when it is understood that, in the absence of accountability, participation would be merely symbolic. (See diary).

Alliance / PHAC Consultation: 22 June 2001

Children's Nutrition Action Plan and Community Nutrition Services

The Alliance / PHAC held its second 'think tank' with a wide range of disciplines to consider these issues in Wales. This follows a presentation to the National Assembly Health and Social Services Minister last March (see our last edition). The Alliance chair Dr Paul Walker set the scene in agreeing with participants that we should focus upon children and older people, where we as a group can influence change.

A well paced discussion included: nutrition for babies and pre school children, nutrition in school age children, food manufacturing, retailing and marketing. In 'keeping

people out of hospital' we considered how to reduce the pressure on hospital beds and the size of waiting lists through a comprehensive community nutrition service.

We agreed that the National Assembly needs to explore its use of wide ranging powers and resources in linking food consumption, citizenship, sustainable agriculture, human health, rural regeneration, and institutional catering policies, as multi faceted aspects of Welsh based anti-poverty strategy. The government should holistically address food security issues. The possibilities of community development and local

projects will then be enhanced.

This requires resources to enable citizen based action, and to demonstrate clear linkages and concerted action between different tiers of government which is essential for successful citizen's involvement in public decision making programmes.

Broad based Local Health Alliances are potentially very powerful vehicles for the public health agenda, but a strategic framework was required at National, UK and EU levels to fully involve the private sector. The meeting then developed a draft Plan with the group identifying key areas for action.

We welcome comments.

Future of Agriculture

In evidence to the National Assembly the Alliance suggested that a stronger case could be made for agriculture and horticulture by relating production to public health, and child poverty in particular by looking at the provision of school meals.

Researchers monitoring 'food groups', or analysing menu's will not uncover the fact that as a result of driving down meal prices during the Compulsory Competitive Tendering years, pre-formed and mechanically recovered meat products with the lowest possible cost go into school meals in the form of battered and bread crumbed meat shapes and sausages etc. 'Best value' arrangements now allow Local Authorities to challenge and improve the quality of the protein item of the meal, harnessing fresh local produce.

Therefore our agriculture and public procurement system needs to be better organised to provide quality food in schools within each food group and, school kitchens and meals needs to be adequately funded. We welcome comments on EU procurement policy and domestic 'best value' legislation and guidance for the school meals industry.

Free school meals for all.

School meals are provided during the years when governments can have a once in a life time opportunity to feed their population, to influence eating habits and to teach the importance of good food for good health. This is the ideal opportunity to safeguard the nutritional status of the young women who will one day bear the country's children. (Which thanks to the National Diet Survey we know to be grossly deficient in numerous essential vitamins and minerals). National standards covering all food, snacks and beverages provided by schools and an exacting monitoring service are needed and would require extension of the current minimum nutritional standards legislation. Adequate school meals which are valued by children in an ambient

setting which is especially acceptable to older school pupils should form part of the policy programme.

The flow of pupils into our schools is predictable. It is also a constant source of demand. A new approach could provide opportunities for integrating a Welsh national school meals menu and public sector procurement requirements of schools (and hospitals), so that farmers can confidently plan investment in production and management systems over a five year cycle. The Alliance is currently preparing evidence for the review of British agriculture.

Commercial Pressures

We require action on the perverse sponsorship in schools that undermine a consistent holistic approach to nutritious food and drink. This includes influential advertising used by some vending machine suppliers, marketing of savoury snacks and chip vans, which may pay into school funds for access to school premises.

Nutrition & Health in the Community

Health and Social Care partnership mechanisms for seamless care and health are required. Evidence shows that well nourished individuals spend less time in hospital and recover faster. Nutrition is not, but should be on their agenda. In Care Homes we need to regulate food nutritional standards, with a national minimum standard such as that provided in the CORA software by the Caroline Walker Trust for older people in residential homes. Given growing demand for the supply of pre prepared food at home, a Kite Mark system was proposed for public and private sector caterers supplying such 'Meals on Wheels' services at home.

NHS Catering

Government recognises the importance of ensuring that the environment in which patients are treated is high quality. There is some good practice, with many very committed staff, and their experience must be used to make improvements in the future. To support Trusts we

require a national framework and standards to which all Trusts should work, to support what is intended at page 56 of the NHS Plan - 'Improving Health in Wales'. Can we benefit from the 'Better Hospital Food' programme that has been developed by the English NHS Menu group and team? Is further action required where patients need help with eating?

Review Bread & Flour Regulations?

Our high levels of heart disease in the UK may be due to our low intake of potassium and magnesium. Veteran campaigners Margaret and Arthur Wynn believe it is time to put the minerals back in our bread. We agree that the evidence on the association of cardiovascular disease and deficiency of essential nutrients is enough to justify a review of the Bread and Flour regulations to ensure that white flour and bread contain all the essential nutrients found in natural wheat.

Food Education

As we recognise the public health significance of food education four immediate problems remain. The School Curriculum in Wales' guidance document: should address whether food education / technology should be mandatory, with a revision to the 2000 National Curriculum Orders. Secondly, food should be relevant and taught in context. This means the acquisition of practical food skills. Food should be an essential component within Design and Technology, and be mandatory at key stage 1- 4.

Teachers also need timely, accurate and relevant information, in order to improve the quality of food education / food technology. They should have the opportunity to discuss issues, ask questions and share development such as Computer Aided Design and Computer Aided Manufacture. All these aspect of food education need to be fully appreciated by LEA advisers. Should food education (and school meals) be an essential aspect of the Local Health Alliances remit?

Who Guards the Guardians?

Who today initiates, advises, enforces, and evaluates the effectiveness of public policy with an assessment of its impact upon health? Education is one method of ensuring the transfer of core values, both in the classroom and in the management and ethos of a school.

Should we therefore consider the impact that Design and Technology has upon the value we place upon the role of food education within the national curriculum? An issue that goes to the heart of children's future health, and that of future generations.

If we give food education low priority in our schools then pupils themselves will feel that it is of little value. Yet the knowledge of nutrition, the ability to make value judgements and the development of practical skills can be the most valuable lesson they learn and will remain with them throughout their lives.

This appears to point to the need for change in the attitude and values that permeates some important areas within the education service in Wales. How do we change this? Go to our web site for the questions that need to be asked, and make certain that you ask them.

Tom Burn's - pioneer

We salute the passing of Professor Tom Burns, eminent sociologist of international distinction. Tom provided new insights into the hidden working of organisations. His first book, 'Management of Innovation' showed how innovative organisations depended on informal often-horizontal linkages which did not figure in the formal structures and organisational charts of hierarchically vertically organised firms. They were frequently discouraged to their long-term detriment and of society. These insights have affected organisational theory ever since.

This way of working is we hope the hallmark of the work we undertake at the Alliance. Tom's book was written in 1961. Can we hope that by 2001 we have learnt the lesson of innovative research conducted in an egalitarian manner?

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Co-operative Group Ltd Member Relations Committee, Public Health Alliance Cymru, Word Up Design, Anderley Associates, A Print for newsletter production, and all other contributors.

Thanks are due to John Desmond for his work as Alliance Secretary. We will be electing new officers and a committee at our August AGM. Readers are welcome to join.

Dates for your diary

National Public Health Congress - Saturday 6th October 2001

An inaugural steering group meeting takes place 10-30am-12.30pm, at Department of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff. Further details from either PHAC, or the Alliance (see below).

Public health is at last being given more attention due to the demise of Health Authorities. But not as much as it ought to have. It has had a democratic deficit, which needs to be rekindled. It is coming back into the public domain but will require focused attention if it is to recapture public interest and involvement.

We invite different strands of public health to put forward what their contribution could be to the series of parallel events that would be part of the first Congress in March 2002. At our first meeting participants would vote in six members who would act as the steering group, plus the four strand leaders. Each of the latter will produce a paper and invite speakers / evidence, and then submit proposals that will go direct to the first Congress to be organised by this steering group.

Themes suggested so far: What drugs should we decriminalise if any? Ethnic Communities & Diabetes. Free school meals for all pupils. NHS / Community Nutrition Services. Sustainable agriculture. Complementary therapies. Women's health. Preventive care. What are your ideas? Worker, consumer, health, and community groups especially welcome.

IMPROVING HEALTH IN WALES - CONFERENCE FRIDAY 12th OCTOBER 2001

Will the proposals for reforming the NHS in Wales deliver the public health agenda? A Conference jointly sponsored by PHA Cymru and the Welsh Food Alliance is to be held on **Friday, 12th October 2001** in Cardiff with the objective of putting together a coherent and comprehensive response to the NHS Plan on behalf of the broad public health community in Wales. For further details and a booking form please contact either: Paul Walker, Secretary, PHA Cymru, on 0117 968 2205, 07774 885855 or paul@crawfordwalker.freeserve.co.uk or; David Smith, Welsh Food Alliance, Anderley Lodge 216 Stow Hill, Newport, NP20 4HA Tel/Fax: (01633) 266781 Email wfa@hospitalitywales.demon.co.uk or visit www.hospitalitywales.demon.co.uk

Welsh Food Alliance



Cynghrair Bwyd Cymru

Membership Application

Name: _____
Tel. no: _____ Fax no: _____
Email: _____
Address: _____

Please let us know if you wish to contribute in specific ways Email: _____

Send to WFA, 216 Stow Hill, Newport, NP20 4HA
with £5 for individual membership or £40 for corporate membership.