

Welsh Food Alliance

Volume 3

Issue 2

Autumn 2003

Older People's Food Campaign

How can the 'Meals on Wheels' service, lunch clubs, fresh fruit access, and community transport be developed to support these sadly neglected aspects of community care, with the contribution they make to reducing NHS delayed transfers of care? These services are provided, in the main, by the local authorities. You may wish to lobby your local councillor, before the 2004 local elections.

WFA are making a simple Older Person's food needs questionnaire available to enable older people's organisations, and others, to present evidence to local authorities and Local Health Boards. To support, or to become involved, our second annual survey can be found at pages 3 and 4, or at our web site. Pass this onto older friends and relatives.

Please return, if possible, by early December 2003. Information will be collated, analysed, and sent to local Health Boards, local authorities, and Assembly Health, Social Care and Well-Being planners, to support local action. The information will also be presented to the next Assembly National Health and Well Being Council meeting, on March 25th 2004, when it considers public participation. Contact details at page 4.

Third National Youth Food Assembly

Do we seek the views of young people? Often we don't. It is becoming clear to us that young people need to express their views directly to those who supply, or influence the food they eat. The theme of our third Assembly, in December 2003, endeavour's to make this a reality with the theme of '**Imagine - good food and health**'. Thirty pupil's from ten schools will meet with thirty decision-makers, including government, caterers, and retailers, to put questions of relevance to them. This should make for an interesting meeting for all concerned. A report to be agreed with pupils will be sent to all participants. (See our March 2004 edition). For further information: J Sullivan, 3 Roberts Close, Rogerstone, Newport NP10 0BA (01633) 663114/0845 3304926, or email info@welshfoodalliance.org.uk

Positive Preventive Action

At last we welcome local planning guidance on food aspects of Health, Social Care, and Well Being Strategies, issued in September 2003. This provides the first local framework for many issues championed by WFA, over the past five years. What positive, preventive action is missing?

Culture of citizenship required

Public participation is vital if we are to realise our objectives of improved health. This needs to be nurtured and supported. That is why we seek the views of people through the third *National Youth Food Assembly*, the *Older People's Food Campaign*, and the proposed *Healthcare Policy Forum*.

Improve school meals

Despite large public subsidies, nutrient standards in school meals are poor. The nutritional quality of purchased processed food continues to decline, and increasing numbers of pupils suffer from obesity, and diabetes. As in Scotland, *the Assembly should establish an Expert Panel to prepare a National School Meals Action Plan, to support local action.*

Healthy food procurement policies

'Healthy catering guidelines (should be) written into catering contracts'. The key issue is a holistic 'supply side' approach. Once *poor, cheap processed food* arrives in the local kitchen, options are very limited, even to the best caterer. Local public procurement is important, but will this alone provide better meals? Improved nutritional standards should be specified.

Provide Skills for Health

WFA has long campaigned for *practical cookery lessons*, as part of the national curriculum, as an elementary aspect of improving public health. *When will a simple amendment to the relevant national curriculum order take place? When will teacher training courses train food teachers?* The number of overweight children has doubled over the past 10 years. Many health experts attribute this to lack of nutrition and practical cookery skills.

Before and after Hospital Care

Nutritional needs of prospective patients and those discharged is a serious cost to the NHS, yet this continues to be ignored. Increasing numbers of patients admitted to hospital are likely to get infections and have to stay longer at higher cost, because they are malnourished. *Despite the serious consequences, both for the patient and the NHS, malnutrition is often not spotted when a patient is admitted to hospital, and not mentioned in medical records. Without evidence, public policy action to support 'Meals on Wheels', lunch clubs, fresh fruit access, and community transport to assist with shopping, is not taken. We need evidence based policies to bring improvement in this vital area.*

Cheap meat and poultry

Government's 'Swann Report' (1969) recommended that no agent used in human medicine should be used for growth promotion in animals. *Half the antibiotics dispensed in Britain every year are used in our food amounting to 463 tonnes used on farm animals.* What amount can be found within cheap sausages, burgers, chicken dishes, or in school and hospital food? Who is responsible for action? Can Welsh public sector procurement reverse this trend? Co-ordinated action is required by the Education Minister - who is responsible for regulating school meal standards, NHS Trusts, councillors, head teachers, the Chief Medical Officer, the Welsh Development Agency, the Assembly Sustainable Development Scheme, UK and European government.

Public Participation

How inclusive is the decision making process in Wales? We have complaints from people who are concerned about food and health policy, that meetings are held in private, at a time when with work commitments, they cannot attend. This added to the time and cost of attending meetings, is quite beyond the scope of many interested individuals, community groups, and small organisations. This leaves a gap in information and views that are never heard.

This is contrary to numerous National Assembly statements, which endorse a 'socially inclusive approach'. Please let it be noted that WFA have consistently held very low, or no cost events. If we as a small organisation, with little funding can do this, why not everyone else? Let us not forget the least to be consulted, and those that are most vulnerable, are not computer literate.

To alleviate this problem, and in response to the Assembly initiated Wanless 'Health and Social Care Review, *WFA propose the National Assembly investigate establishing a Healthcare Policy Forum. This would also help to integrate health, social care, and well being issues.* This could be a method of communication, *in supporting wider public participation, that could help in developing future services.* We hope this policy can be accepted.

Dignity and independence

The National Assembly are seeking views, by 1st November 2003, on the proposed National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales. Copies from (02920 823206). At WFA we believe in dignity and independence, and *propose that this be a Forum with (and not for) Older People.* They should play a significant part in developing this Forum. Recommendations have been included in many reports over the past thirty years. We hope this Forum ensures action. What has been required is political will, and the necessary resources, to turn proposals into reality. We urge you to respond.

WFA Membership

A form can be found at our web site, or write for details to Secretary, 13 Cefn Coch, Radyr, Cardiff, CF 8BJ. www.welshfoodalliance.org.uk WFA is a non-profit making knowledge based policy development and promotion network. It brings together multi-disciplinary expertise to link all aspects of food policy in an integrated way, which is disseminated in its quarterly newsletter. We aim to provide a new perspective on food policy founded on the principle of informed public participation in the policy development process.

WFA Annual Meeting

At our May AGM, new officers were elected: Jean Sullivan (chair), Elinor Plow (secretary), and Hilda Smith (treasurer). David Smith retired as WFA's secretary and Food Adviser, and he was thanked for his enormous voluntary effort over the past five years.

Further information

We hope readers enjoy our quick easy to read, two-page newsletter. Our members have the benefit of more detailed information. We welcome contributions from our readers. Acknowledgements to Word Up Design, A Print, and our skilled volunteers who wrote and distributed this edition.



TIME TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Help us to help our senior citizens

The National Assembly is developing its policies for older people. The Welsh Food Alliance has already submitted evidence about the importance of people being able to afford, carry and prepare the food required to enable them to live independently in their own homes.

The purpose of this survey is to capture the experiences of a larger number of people, and what improvements have occurred since our June 2002 survey. Our May 2004 newsletter will report your views. In using the information no person will be named. Data will not be stored in a computer. Thank you for your help.

Please tick as appropriate:

We are sure that you know what a healthy diet is in old age, and that there is a lot of information to help if you are unsure. Do you have other difficulties in obtaining a healthy diet?

(1) Is a Healthy Diet difficult to afford? YES [] NO []
If so what do you find is most expensive?

(2) Do you have any of the following difficulties:

(a) Do you have difficulties - Going out shopping?

Always [] When the weather is bad [] When you are not well []

Please comment:

(b) Do you have difficulties - Reading labels? YES [] NO []

Please offer examples:

(c) Do you have difficulties - Obtaining the right sizes for certain food items?

(Small loaves, small packs of butter, flour, sugar, etc.) YES [] NO []

Please offer examples:

(d) Do you have difficulties - Using facilities inside the food shop? YES [] NO []

Please offer examples:

(e) Difficulties - Carrying home heavy items ie. potatoes & tins, or opening containers?

Please explain:

YES [] NO []

(f) Is distance from the food shop a problem?

YES [] NO []

(g) Do you have to use public transport for shopping?

YES [] NO []

Any problems experienced?

(h) Do you have other difficulties in shopping, preparing and cooking food, or carrying cooking equipment, due to infirmity?

YES [] NO []

Please explain?

(i) Other difficulties, or solutions to problems?

(3) Do you ever use 'Meals on Wheels', and if so do you like them?

Please explain

(4) During inclement weather, or illness, would you order 'Meals on Wheels' if available?

YES [] NO []

Please explain:

(5) What is your experience of trying to manage the home delivery of food and or prepared meals? Please explain:

(6) Do you enjoy any other community activity that includes a meal, such as a church group, or lunch club?

(7) Do you still enjoy cooking these days?

Please explain

(8) Have you any comments about food provided in hospitals?

(9) Do you live in a rural [] urban semi [] urban area []. Please tick one box.

(10) What is your local authority? _____

If possible, please reply by early December 2003. Forms should be returned to Hilda Smith, WFA, 216 Stow Hill, Newport NP20 4HA. You can contact us by phone for the cost of a BT local call from anywhere in Wales on 0845 3304926.