

Dietetics - Profession specific descriptor for registered professionals and support workers

As experts in nutrition, the dietetic workforce understand that good diet and nutrition plays a significant role in the prevention of many of the long-term conditions that impact on the lives of an ever-increasing number of people and are costly to health and care services. But diet is not the only factor contributing to the increasing prevalence of long-term conditions such as diabetes, obesity, cancer, respiratory disease and malnutrition. The dietetic workforce is already talking to people in their care about other parts of their lifestyle that contribute to the development of ill-health such as physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption and loneliness, and are able to support people where mental health may be impacting their eating habits. Dietitians recognise the role of nutrition and skills relating to food growing and food preparation in social prescribing, which supports the wellbeing, knowledge development of the people accessing services.



Wider Determinants

Dietitians play a key role in addressing the wider determinants of health. The dietetic workforce considers the additional factors that might impact on nutrition from the perspective of an individual or community, including identification of contributory factors impacting on nutritional health, known as the social determinants of health. Dietitians understand that the unjust gap in health equity is caused by the environment in which we are born, grow, live, work and age, leading to an avoidable reduction on quality and length of life. Dietitians are committed to supporting those living in food poverty, identifying and working to reduce barriers to accessing food and empowering individuals to prepare balanced meals including when sourcing food via food banks, as well as undertaking research and advocacy work to tackle the root causes of poverty.

Working strategically to consider environmental factors associated with dietetic practice through the [One Blue Dot](#) campaign through to the development of diet sheets to support dietitians and dietetic support workers to focus on sustainable diets. The dietetic workforce is key to support vulnerable populations, through initiatives such as a Dietitian-led training course for support workers to address the nutritional needs of the people they support when working with adults with a learning disability.

Dietitians also support maternal and infant nutrition. They work with health visiting services, social services, young families' teams, oral health teams and other professionals, and the public to provide information about how to introduce complementary feeding, correct portion sizes for children, safe formula feeding, and wider areas associated with infant nutrition and health. Dietitians also support initiatives to improve breastfeeding rates. Working in partnership with voluntary sector organisations (*The Breastfeeding network*), the community and public health, to provide group sessions for breastfeeding parents and to provide information about the benefits of breastfeeding.

Dietitians play a key role in paediatric health, ensuring children have the best start in life which we know is important when considering the first 4 years of a child's life have a significant impact on future health and life chances. There are many initiatives and good practices relating to dietitians and paediatric health, including work taking place by Dietitians to increase the uptake of universal children's vitamins, particularly for vulnerable or deprived communities.

Dietitians are involved in policy development, critique and implementation, for example tailored food nutrition and hydration policies for organisations such as care or nursing homes and the interpretation of local, regional or national policies pertaining to Nutrition and Dietetics.

The dietetic workforce also has a role associated with the factors affecting food supply and consumption patterns and their health and environmental implications. This includes reducing greenhouse gas emissions and food waste.

Health Improvement

The dietetic workforce integrates Making Every Contact Count (MECC) within their daily practice. This includes using consultation opportunities to talk to service users about smoking cessation, alcohol consumption levels and signpost to other services as needed. Further examples where Dietitians are supporting health improvement through behaviour change includes the role of Dietitians in the delivery of cardiac rehabilitation talks about healthy eating, helping service users who have had a cardiac event learn how to eat healthier to try to prevent further cardiac events in the future. In addition, Dietitians and dietetic support workers signpost people to other services for example, Improving Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT), citizens' advice, and other services, ensuring access to wider support to improve health and mental wellbeing.

Dietitians play an important role within the community, for example leading programmes to provide information on diabetes or food allergies. This can often be undertaken as group sessions, also building a community around people who are newly diagnosed with their condition, establishing a social support network for individuals to help with the social and psychological elements associated with their dietary needs which supports the emotional wellbeing of the populations who attend the sessions. Dietitians also address Health inequalities by working with a diverse range of vulnerable groups to address food insecurity.

Population Healthcare

Dietitians work across the life course supporting maternal health and early feeding through to end-of-life care. Their work can focus on early interventions to prevent health issues, such as working across education teams in local authorities, particularly early years, to provide advice for early years establishments about healthy food and drink practices. Educating on the nutritional requirements for children under 5 years old and why they're different to other age groups, environmental aspects of promoting good health and eating environments and habits can reduce childhood obesity. When considering population level healthy eating, Dietitians work with departments in local authorities including facilities, catering, leisure, community learning and development teams (all-around adult education). They work with planning: involving fast-food outlets in the area, working with them

around licenses; encouraging businesses to adopt healthier cooking practices. They also work with environmental health officers.

The dietetic workforce also supports self-management of groups of people with long term conditions. For example, dietitians and dietetic support workers host support groups to educate and promote the management of long-term conditions: *The Desmond Program* for people with type 2 diabetes, and similar groups for type 1 diabetes, cow's milk allergies and coeliac disease. Group education sessions are hosted in the community for specific populations. These can provide dietary advice and guidance for the groups, for example, culturally specific food models. Dietitians have recently started to work within long COVID-19 clinics, providing nutrition support and supporting other professionals with their care, to support the health and wellbeing of people with long COVID-19.

Dietitians have an important role in support the health and wellbeing of the care home population. Dietetic teams deliver care in care homes to monitor the diet and nutritional needs of the residents. This can prevent avoidable admissions to hospital and prevent possible (long-term) complications associated with malnutrition or as a result of diabetes. Furthermore, dietetic teams train staff in care homes to manage the residents' nutrition and hydration, e.g., the Food First approach and food fortification. Working with people to support their dietary and nutritional needs can prevent secondary conditions and the need for further health care e.g., reducing the risk of falls, and supporting skin integrity. Dietitians use the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tools (MUST), and train care home staff and acute staff to use these tools, to highlight malnutrition and the risk of malnutrition in this population.

Dietitians often work with public health departments within a council or government departments such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs or the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

Health Protection

Dietitians offer food hygiene advice including in cancer services and in pregnancy to prevent foodborne infections. Dietitians have a role in the media, ensuring accurate evidenced based messages regarding health and nutrition are shared with the public on media platforms reaching a wide audience.

Dietetics - Wider Reading and Case Study Examples

Health Protection	Wider Determinants <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eating Well for Adults with a Learning Disability – a dietitian-led training course for support workers in addressing the nutritional needs of the people they support• Disease Prevention in South Asian Community Through Healthy Eating Awareness via social media• A Nutrition Education and Cooking Intervention in a UK Foodbank• Nutrition Skills for Life®(NSFL): Providing quality assured nutrition skills training for community workers and support for the development of community food and health initiatives• Slow cooking for communities
Population Healthcare <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing a Foodtalk Game as a nutrition and health training tool for early years staff• An Impact Evaluation Report on the 'Healthy Little Eaters' nutrition education cooking programme in Children's Centres in Brent	Health Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dietitian-led intensive lifestyle intervention programme for children identified as overweight or obese by NCMP in the London Borough of Brent: an overview• Impact and retained behaviour change following participation in Cook and Eat Well courses in Southwark Children's Centres• Preparing patients to recover more quickly - "Prehabilitation" for major abdominal cancer surgery• Dietetics – Refer to a link worker Social Prescribing