



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

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Description

NSFL is a programme of nutrition training for health, social care and third sector workers, developed and co-ordinated by dietitians working in the NHS in Wales. Working with local communities and partner organisations, **NSFL** aims to build community capacity to access a healthy balanced diet, a major determinant of health, wellbeing and quality of life.

NSFL trains frontline workers, volunteers and peer leaders to promote healthy eating by incorporating evidence-based food and nutrition messages into their work. There are two key aspects to the programme;

1. Accredited nutrition skills training for community workers to help them to competently cascade nutrition messages and to support those working in community settings to provide healthy/nourishing food and drink options e.g. in nurseries, play groups, after school clubs, residential homes and care settings for older adults.
2. Co-production of healthy eating initiatives with community groups. This can include offering accredited practical cooking skills, nutrition skills or weight management courses depending upon identified need. All courses are accredited by the Welsh awarding organisation, Agored Cymru, enabling people to gain credit for learning; a potential route into further learning and employment opportunities.

Context

Launched in 2006, funded by Welsh Government and evaluated by Glyndwr University¹, **Nutrition Skills for Life®** operates in all seven NHS Health Boards in Wales.

Nutrition Skills for Life® aims to build capacity of communities to support healthy eating and prevent malnutrition.

The objectives are to:

- Increase the capacity of the community workforce in Wales to inform and support communities in healthy eating and prevention of malnutrition

- Develop a standardised approach for accredited nutrition training across Wales, promoting consistent nutrition messages and contributing to preventing nutrition related disease
- Support the development of healthier environments and improved access to nutritious foods through training and professional advice
- Support local action e.g. supporting development of local community food initiatives ensuring they are evidence based
- Support local partnerships to raise the profile of nutrition and help to achieve better outcomes in relation to nutrition and health for their population
- Focus on lower socioeconomic/hard to reach groups
- Focus on 0-25's and vulnerable older people

Poor diet is a risk factor for obesity and other chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases including heart disease and stroke, respiratory problems, joint problems, lower back pain, and some cancers e.g. breast and colon cancer. In Wales 61% of adults are overweight or obese, including 25% obese². More than a quarter of 4-5 year olds are classified as overweight or obese (26.4%) including 12% obese³. Obesity is steadily increasing with greater prevalence among lower socio-economic groups. Prevalence of obesity in 4-5 year olds is 6% higher in those living in the most deprived areas. This rises to a 13% difference in adults. High Body Mass Index (BMI) is the leading risk factor for Years Lived with Disability (YLD). The top 3 risk factors are directly linked to diet and obesity⁴.

Method

Dietetic services in Wales experienced increasing demand from partner organisations for quality assured nutrition training. The development of the health care support worker role and national programmes in Wales including Flying Startⁱ and Families Firstⁱⁱ, provided significant opportunities to train the wider workforce in nutrition. The development of a national nutrition skills training programme would provide a standardised, consistent, evidence-based approach to meet this increasing demand. Utilising dietetic expertise to train and support community workers to cascade evidence-based nutrition messages would reach more people than the dietetic service would be able to do alone.

During 2005, Public Health Dietitians in NHS Wales worked in partnership with Welsh Government, Agored Cymru and community workers to plan, develop, deliver and evaluate an accredited nutrition skills training programme. Since launching in 2006 a range of standardised learning, teaching and assessment resources including tutor facilitation manuals, learner workbooks and evaluation tools have been developed for all courses. This 'once for Wales' approach avoids duplication and benefits from economies of scale in line with prudent health care principles. The training model successfully supports implementation of nutrition elements of national schemes including the Healthy and Sustainable Pre School Scheme, Designed to Smile oral health projects, Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme, Corporate Health Standard and the implementation of the Best Practice Guidance for Food and Nutrition for Childcare Settings⁵ and in Care Homes for Older People⁶. *NSFL* has achieved recognition as a model of good practice at local, national and UK wide level*. It has been successfully embedded into national programmes in some areas e.g. Flying Start and Families First and is firmly embedded in Welsh Government strategic priorities e.g. digitalisation of *NSFL* is a commitment within the Welsh Government's renewed priorities for ***Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales 2020-2022***⁷.

Outcomes

External evaluation was undertaken by Glyndwr University from 2006-2010. Since then annual reports are submitted to Welsh Government. The Results Based Accountability approach to programme performance monitoring is used to monitor the extent to which **NSFL** programme objectives are being met and to ensure a standard all Wales approach.

Performance measures have been identified by Public Health Dietitians in Wales and data is collected using standard evaluation questionnaires and databases.

Evidence of impact between April 2018 and March 2019 includes:

- **91** Level 2 accredited courses were accessed by **902** staff
- **174** Level 1 nutrition skills courses were accessed by **1150** members of the community
- **157** non accredited training sessions were accessed by **2839**
- **100%** staff attending Level 2 courses rated the course as good (**16%**) or excellent (**84%**)
- **100%** staff attending Level 2 courses reported they would recommend the course to others
- **99%** individuals attending Level 1 courses rated the course as good (**13%**) or excellent (**86%**)
- **97%** staff accessing Level 2 courses gained credit for learning
- **84%** individuals accessing Level 1 courses gained credit for learning
- **99%** staff completing Level 2 CFNS training reported feeling confident (**72%**) or very confident (**27%**) to deliver the Level 1 accredited course
- **91%** reported learning something new about food and nutrition as a result of attending Level 1 course
- **88%** reported making changes to what they eat as a result of attending Level 1 course
- **94%** reported making changes to what their family eat as a result of attending Level 1 course
- **79%** reported eating more fruit and **70%** eating more vegetables as a result of attending Level 1 course
- **83%** reported eating less fatty /fried foods and **84%** less sugar/sweet foods as a result of attending Level 1 course

Key learning points

- We have worked nationally as a profession, avoiding duplication, sharing good practice, and collaborating to continually update and develop standardised, national nutrition learning and teaching resources.
- Working in partnership with an awarding body -Agored Cymru- enables learners to gain credit for learning and has ensured the quality and integrity of the programme is maintained.
- Continued to develop to support new initiatives e.g. the infrastructure has supported the roll out of other programmes utilising the same model i.e. 'Foodwise for Life' structured weight management programme and the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP).
- Maximised opportunities for partnership working with other organisations and initiatives to strengthen the nutrition component e.g. Flying Start, Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Scheme, Healthy and Sustainable Pre School Scheme.

The programme stalled during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With physical distancing requirements likely to continue for some time we needed to transform our accredited traditional face-to-face training to online teaching and virtual face-to-face delivery to continue to reach communities to support healthy eating.

The Welsh Government has committed to 'Invest in fully digitalising the all Wales **Nutrition Skills for Life**® programme, enabling continuation, through virtual delivery, of all community-based initiatives including Foodwise for Life, Foodwise in Pregnancy and Community Food and Nutrition Skills programmes'.

Our future priorities are:

- Ensure every child has the best start in life by optimising nutrition in the first 1000 days.
- Ensure the early years and childcare workforce and those caring for older people have the knowledge and skills to be able to improve nutrition and hydration for those they care for.
- Embed healthy eating into the school curriculum by training others to deliver nutrition and food skills training for children and young people, including the School Holiday Enrichment Programme.
- Widen access to accredited Level 1 nutrition, practical cooking skills and weight management course enabling more people to gain credit for learning.

The programme is on track to be fully digitalised by April 2021. This will provide renewed opportunities to further integrate nutrition skills training into local and national initiatives in Wales and to have far wider population reach.

References

1. Carnwell, R., Baker, S., Parry, O. and Kennedy, L. (2009). *An Evaluation of the All-Wales Dietetic Capacity Grant Scheme: Final Report*. [online] *An Evaluation of the All-Wales*. Available at: <https://glyndwr.repository.guildhe.ac.uk/id/eprint/2911/1/fulltext.pdf> [Accessed 21 Feb. 2022].
2. National Survey for Wales 2019-20: Adult lifestyle. (2020). Wales: Welsh Government.
3. Child Measurement Programme 2017/18. (2019). Wales: Public Health Wales.
4. Health and its determinants in Wales. Informing strategic planning. (2018). Public Health Wales.
5. Food and Nutrition for Childcare Settings. Best Practice Guidance. (2019). Wales: Welsh Government.
6. Food and Nutrition in Care Homes for Older People. Best Practice Guidance. (2019). Wales: Welsh Government.
7. Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Taking forward the 2020-22 Delivery Plan: Renewed priorities for 2020-21. (2020). Wales: Welsh Government.

* Winners of the UK wide Bevan prize for "Health and Wellbeing 2014"

Winners of an NHS Wales Award in the category of "Promoting Better Health and avoiding disease 2014"
<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/901/news/33500>

Winners of Cwm Taf University Health Board "Health and Wellbeing Award 2013"

Finalist in the Royal Society of Public Health- Health and Wellbeing Awards 2017

<https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/health-wellbeing-awards-2017-shortlist-announced.html>

ⁱ Flying Start is a Welsh Government funded programme and is available in targeted areas supporting all families to give children aged 0-3 year 11 months a Flying Start in life.

ⁱⁱ Families First is a Welsh Government funded programme designed to improve outcomes for families with children & young people aged 0-25 years. It places emphasis on early intervention, prevention and providing support for whole families, rather than individuals helping families become confident, nurturing and resilient.