

Nutrition Skills for Life™

Delivering Quality Assured Nutrition Training Initiatives in Wales. Public Health Dietitians in Wales

Background

Diet is a key modifiable risk factor in the prevention and risk reduction of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (CVD), and some cancers all of which disproportionately affect those in lower socioeconomic groups¹. Nutritional deficiencies are prevalent amongst vulnerable population groups². Increasing the nutrition knowledge and skills of frontline workers enables them to cascade consistent, evidence based nutrition messages to communities they work with thereby contributing to reducing nutrition –related inequalities in health³.

Aims

NUTRITION SKILLS FOR LIFE™ is a programme of quality assured nutrition training and initiatives developed by dietitians working in the NHS in Wales. Accredited by Agored Cymru, Level 2 Community Food and Nutrition Skills courses have been designed to develop the nutrition knowledge and skills of a wide range of community workers including health, social care and third sector staff, volunteers and peer educators to enable them to support communities in healthy eating and prevent malnutrition.

Dietitians support staff to implement community food and nutrition initiatives including Agored Cymru Level 1 accredited courses. Providing opportunities for people to gain accreditation and skills can lead to further lifelong learning and employment opportunities.

Method

Evaluation of the programme uses impact and formative process evaluation and a case study design based on the external evaluation⁴ and more recently incorporates the Results Base Accountability (RBA) approach⁵. Each health board completes a minimum data set template for project activity including

- participant characteristics
- number of courses delivered
- partnerships developed
- activities delivered
- behaviour and attitudinal change
- course evaluations

Results

Nutrition training has been accessed by substance misuse practitioners, care home staff, youth offending officers, foster carers, Communities First workers, housing association, homelessness and family support workers.

Between April 2011-March 2012 the programme achieved the following outcomes

- 3971 people accessed nutrition training (2004 community workers and 1967 members of the general public).
- 1655 learners gained Agored Cymru accreditation (1515 Level 2 and 140 level 1).
- 125 Agored Cymru Level 2 accredited nutrition skills courses were delivered.
- 22 Agored Cymru Level 1 accredited nutrition skills courses were delivered by Level 2 trained workers to community groups.
- 83% of workers attending Level 2 Agored Cymru Community Food and Nutrition Skills courses gained accreditation.
- 100% of people attending Level 1 nutrition skills courses gained accreditation.
- 489 workers and 1827 members of the general public attended non accredited nutrition training courses delivered by a dietitian.

In addition the external evaluation showed 94% of learners reported acquiring new learning including the importance of a balanced diet and how to understand food labels⁴. 85% of learners intended to make, or had made changes to their own eating behaviour including increased fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease in fat, sugar and salt, snacks and carbonated drinks⁴.

Further impact is illustrated in figure 1. Participants of training reported using the nutrition information they learnt as indicated in figure 2, resulting in significant changes in food provision in community settings e.g. early years, schools, leisure

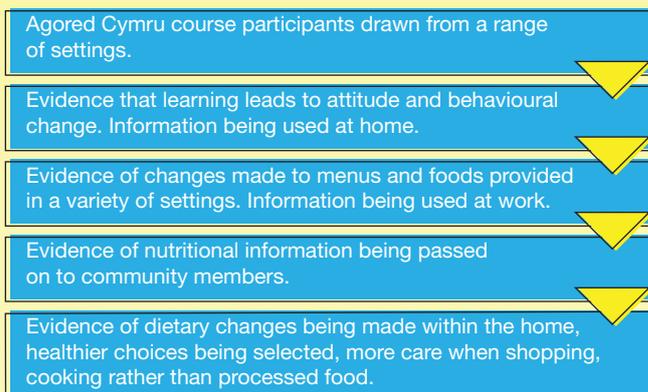


Figure 1. The cascading of food and nutrition knowledge and its impact on course participants and community members⁴

centres and community settings. For those caring for older adults participants reported improved food provision in care settings.

Partnership working was considered key to the success of projects by facilitating recruitment to nutrition training initiatives, integrating nutrition training into strategic plans and supporting other initiatives e.g. Welsh Network of Healthy School Scheme, Healthy and Sustainable Pre School Scheme, Appetite for Life Implementation and oral health projects. This all helps to ensure broad impact and long term sustainability of the all Wales programme.

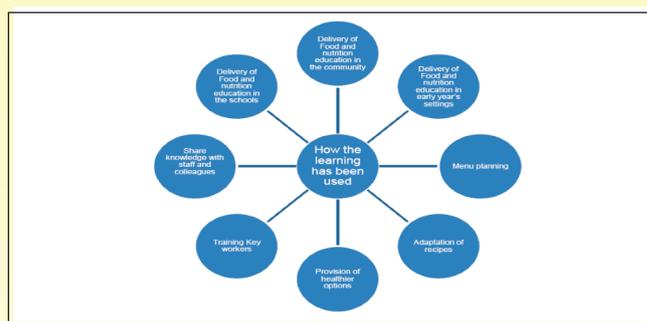


Figure 2. Use of nutrition training information in the workplace⁴

Conclusion and recommendations

Nutrition training has resulted in

- An increase in the number of trained staff delivering food and nutrition messages to groups they work with.
- Increased confidence of a wide range of workers to deliver nutrition messages to population groups.
- Effective local implementation of the nutrition elements of national programmes including the Healthy and Sustainable Pre School Scheme.
- Opportunities to develop personal skills and knowledge of healthy eating, a key priority at Level 1 of the All Wales Obesity Pathway⁶.
- The development of environments that support health e.g. improved provision of healthy food and drinks in early years settings, schools, leisure centres, community venues and care settings.

It is recommended that the RBA approach to data collection and programme evaluation, developed and piloted in 2012, continues to explore ways to measure the impact nutrition training has on changes in people's eating habits. Ongoing support for Level 2 learners to enable them to deliver the Level 1 accredited courses will increase the number of Level 1 courses delivered in 2013-2014.

There continues to be demand for nutrition skills training and projects are reaching a wide range of community groups. There is evidence of dramatic changes in eating habits of project participants and in the culture of food provision in community settings⁴. The **NUTRITION SKILLS FOR LIFE™** programme will continue to be evaluated on a national basis to demonstrate outcomes across Wales.

References.

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