



Eat Well Age Well – Preventing Malnutrition In Older People Living at Home

Event Launch Report

“Keep things simple to tackle malnutrition and work together for solutions”

Held on 16th May 2018
Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation
www.eatwellagewell.org.uk

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Introduction

[Eat Well Age Well](#) is a new national project funded by the Big Lottery and as part of award winning Scottish Charity [Food Train](#), with the overall aim of contributing to the prevention, detection and treatment of malnutrition and dehydration among older adults living at home in Scotland. Eat Well Age Well will be working in collaboration across all sectors to develop initiatives that make a difference to older people. The launch of Eat Well Age Well was held on Wednesday 16th May at the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation.

68 delegates attended the event from a wide variety of organisations, including representatives from NHS, Scottish Government, Third/Voluntary Sector, Local Councils, Housing Association and Academia.

The event was an opportunity to bring together individuals who work with, care for, and were interested in improving the nutrition, hydration and health of older people living at home in Scotland.

The launch aimed to:

- raise awareness of the Eat Well Age Well project and provide an opportunity to meet the team
- share information on the development of Eat Well Age Well online website and hub resource
- provide information about the funding available through the small grants scheme
- to identify opportunities for collaboration between delegates and the Eat Well Age Well team

Delegates were also given the opportunity to network, share examples of good practice and discuss topics in relation to supporting older people to eat well, live well and age well.

“What brought Food Train to life was the feeling that we could do more, and should do more to support older people”

“We have heard sad stories from older people where they are no longer able to eat the foods they usually enjoy”.

Speakers

Michelle Carruthers MBE, Chief Executive of the Food Train, welcomed everyone to the launch of the project and thanked them for coming, recognising that their presence at the event indicates the importance of addressing malnutrition in older people.

Michelle went on to describe the journey to Eat Well Age Well and how Food Train has been instrumental for over 20 years in supporting older people access food, as well as the vital contribution they have made in reducing social isolation through their many services.

Michelle also highlighted that food is a universal theme which affects us all. Food has the power to engage, support, and bring people together across from various age groups, incomes and cultures.

Bill Gray – Organisational Lead for Health Equity for Community Food and Health (Scotland) spoke about the vital contribution that communities and volunteers have to play in supporting, planning and delivering projects which enable older people to remain well at home for longer. Bill stressed the simplicity of connecting people through food, yet the vital impact that this has on individuals lives.

Professor Wendy Wills – from the University of Hertfordshire spoke of her involvement with the ‘Food Provision in Later Life’ project, which aims to show how older people from different household types acquire food, what they buy and where they acquire food from. Wendy also discussed her proposed work around encouraging supermarkets to introduce practical measures to improve the shopping experience of older people (e.g. encouraging more extensive seating, rest points and introducing ‘slow’ checkout lanes at set times).

Finally, Laura Cairns, Project Manager for Eat Well Age Well gave an overview of the current landscape regarding malnutrition in Scotland. Laura described the scope of the project including the key strands: testing change ideas, research and evaluation, policy into practice, capacity building and collaborative relationships.

Laura also highlighted current plans including development of a research project which will identify the prevalence of malnutrition within Food Train customers and identify best ways to measure malnutrition. This may influence how malnutrition is measured in community settings and will help inform tests of change project ideas.

“What struck us was the grief and loss from older people who were unable to eat the foods they enjoy, and the simple solutions it would take to make the change”

“Keep things simple but effective, recognise the contribution of volunteers, appreciate multi-sectoral responsibilities”

“Supermarkets need to improve the shopping experience of older people”

“The reality of the statistics today is that 1 in 10 older people are estimated to be at risk or suffering from malnutrition. This is unacceptable in the 21st century”

Group Discussions

Group discussions focused on exploring ideas and solutions for addressing malnutrition and dehydration in older people both a local and national level. Tables were facilitated by the Eat Well Age Well project team and Food Train staff.

QUESTION ONE: what needs to change in our communities to reduce malnutrition in older people?

Delegates identified the key actions which need to be made at a local level to help combat malnutrition:

- Reduce social isolation**
- Tackle poor oral health**
- Support access to food**
- Raise awareness and increase knowledge of the signs of malnutrition**
- Intergenerational food work**
- Supported cooking at home**
- Partnership work (e.g. fire, carers, volunteers)**
- More lunch clubs and other opportunities to eat together**
- Targeted support for individuals on discharge from hospital**
- Knowledge, skills and access re: technology**

QUESTION TWO: who is key at a local level in driving this change

Delegates identified the key players at a local level to help combat malnutrition:

- Community councils, volunteers, community members**
- Carers**
- Community planning partnerships**
- Local authorities**
- Community based social care organisations**
- NHS: GPs, dieticians, district nurses, link workers, pharmacists, hospital discharge staff**
- Third sector: volunteer organisations, church groups, lunch clubs**
- Schools and education**

“Older people & malnutrition & older people’s health is back on the agenda, let’s do something about it.”

“Carers are so vital they need more time to spend with older people to support them to eat well”.

QUESTION THREE: what does the government need to do to identify and improve malnutrition in older people?

Delegates identified the key actions which need to be made at a national level to help combat malnutrition:

More investment into prevention and care
A focus on welfare reform and older people
Strategies should focus more on older people in the community
In acute settings the need for consistent screening and quality food

QUESTION FOUR: where would you currently go to access information on malnutrition?

Delegates identified the key sources of information they use to access information on malnutrition:

NHS websites and professionals
National websites e.g. British Dietetic Association, Community Food and Health Scotland
Family and neighbours
Academic resources

QUESTION FIVE: What information would you find useful from an online resource on Malnutrition

Delegates identified the information they would like to see on an online resource on Malnutrition:

Signs of malnutrition, statistics
Easy to cook recipe ideas
Case studies
Sharing best practice
Links to other related issues (e.g. loneliness, physical activity, mental wellbeing)

“Working together can lead to solutions.”

“We want to challenge the myth that it’s normal to lose weight in later life”

“Raising awareness amongst older people is everyone’s responsibility.”

QUESTION SIX: What opportunities do you see for joint working between dietetics and the third sector?

A roundtable discussion with dietetic colleagues and others, who were interested in discussing collaboration between the dietetics community and Eat Well Age Well was also held. This also explored the concept of undertaking tests of change with Food Train volunteers undertaking screening for malnutrition in the community and linked with dietetics. This session was facilitated by a British Dietetic Association Scotland Board representative along with Eat Well Age Well project manager and project dietician.

Delegates identified the following themes:

Malnutrition screening in the community involving the 3rd sector would be helpful as would leave the need most urgent cases for Dieticians

Anticipatory care is need to identify those at risk

There are a range of screening tools that could be used by the 3rd sector (e.g. Salford Armbands)

There is a need for public facing literature on Food First approach

Following these initial discussions, partnership work with the dietetic community will be further explored through a scoping paper and further meetings with dietetics colleagues across Scotland.

Summary and Next Steps

Keep things simple

A key thread throughout the event and the evaluation feedback post event was the mantra to *keep things simple*. This resonates and is congruent with the original set up and aims today of the Food Train and will be taken forward throughout the journey of Eat Well Age Well.

Eat Well Age Well is grounded in the need to try out and test innovative practical solutions to tackle malnutrition, to contribute to a body of evidence around prevention, detection and treatment of malnutrition, to raise awareness and to work in partnership with others to influence policy change to make a real difference to older people in Scotland.

“There is great potential and positivity for partnership work with Eat Well Age Well and the dietetics community”

“Promote Eat Well Age Well and ongoing work through Scottish Dietetic Leadership Network”

“There is a need for simple things to be done to tackle the issue. We need to work together for practical solutions”

Ideas for action

Delegates at the event identified key changes which need to be made at a local level to help combat malnutrition such as social isolation, poor oral health, and supporting access to food.

In particular, delegates ideas such as encouraging intergenerational food work, supporting cooking at home, increasing knowledge around spotting signs of malnutrition, having more opportunities to eat together and targeted support for individuals on discharge from hospital were suggested as potential solutions to some of the issues and problems that need to be addressed.

Working together

Collaboration, working together and sharing information were seen as vital in the third sector and this was stressed at the event. Delegates welcomed the opportunity to be informed about Eat Well Age Well progress. Many signed up to be part of our Eat Well Age Well network to receive monthly e-news letters informing them about project updates and to hear first about any project events/seminars.

Carers are so important

Delegates highlighted the importance of and more investment into nutrition education for carers. Specifically, the introduction of food visits as a separate care provision to allow time for meal preparation was identified as key priorities for government to address.

Investment

Delegates emphasised the need for continuation of financial resource and support for community groups/organisations working with older people.

“At last a focus on malnutrition and older people”

Evaluation and sharing the learning

Delegates stressed the lack of evidence on preventative initiatives. Creating a critical body of evidence will help improve the argument for change and help malnutrition in older people become a national priority.

In summary, the Eat Well Age Well launch was a great success in raising awareness of the project, engaging with stakeholders, building key contacts and helping shape the projects priorities over the coming years through informative groups discussions. The themes and project ideas included in this report have been recorded and will be taken forward in our project plans and in our discussions with stakeholders to address our outcomes.

Thank you to all who attended and participated in making the day a success.

The Eat Well Age Well Team

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