



New links between food insecurity and older Scots becoming malnourished

New research has highlighted that food insecurity is putting older people in Scotland at risk of becoming underweight and malnourished. The ongoing study from the University of Glasgow¹ and Scottish charity Food Train² is focused on the current issues facing older adults and food. The research has revealed that barriers such as loneliness and the changing nature of the high street is restricting older people's access to nutritious food which is having a detrimental impact on physical health.

Malnutrition or under-nutrition rates for older adults are reported to be as high as 1 in 10³. Whilst malnutrition in older people is preventable, it has often been overlooked in response to more dominant public health messages surrounding diet and obesity. The research has called for a re-think of how we understand food insecurity, particularly in relation to older adults, as access to food is not simply down to financial means. Cooking at home was found to be a particular issue with many older adults reporting that they are more likely to opt for ready meals, snacks or cold convenience food such as sandwiches.

University of Glasgow Psychologists and Lecturers, Drs Kate Reid and Catherine Lido said: "The reasons for food insecurity and malnutrition amongst older adults living in their own home are complex and span across physical, psychological and social factors. It reflects a changing society where families live further away, where you may not always know your neighbour and where your high street may no longer look familiar or stock the basic food items that sustain health and wellbeing."

The research findings have been timed to coincide with UK Malnutrition Awareness Week 14th – 20th October 2019⁴. The Eat Well Age Well⁵ project from Food Train is leading the campaign in Scotland and aims to destigmatise views around malnutrition by encouraging better communication with older people about eating well in later life.

Eat Well Age Well Project Manager, Laura Cairns said: "Malnutrition can be an off-putting word but by starting general conversations about food, appetite, and cooking with the older people in our lives we can help identify and address the issues that are preventing good nutrition. It's clear that older people's wellbeing is linked with both food security and social support and as a country we can do better than this."

¹ <https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/education/>

² www.thefoodtrain.co.uk

³ <https://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition-undernutrition/combating-malnutrition/malnutrition-awareness-week>

⁵ www.eatwellagewell.org.uk

Eat Well Age Well, 111 Oxfangs Road North, Edinburgh, EH14 1ED

Tel: 0131 447 8151 **Email:** hello@eatwellagewell.org.uk **URL:** www.eatwellagewell.org.uk

