



# EAT WELL AGE WELL – PREVENTING MALNUTRITION IN OLDER PEOPLE LIVING AT HOME

## BRIEF

### Overview

Eat Well Age Well (EWA) is a national project funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and part of the award-winning Scottish Charity, Food Train<sup>1</sup> with the overall aim of contributing to the prevention, detection and treatment of malnutrition and dehydration amongst older adults living at home in Scotland. Eat Well Age Well works in collaboration across all sectors to develop initiatives that support older people, across Scotland, to Eat Well, Live Well and Age Well.

This brief aims to raise awareness of the project and support the engagement process with key partners. This brief describes the background and context to the development of the project and outlines the scope and activities planned and conducted to date.

### Key Points

- Malnutrition is one of the key issues affecting the health of older people in Scotland.<sup>2</sup>
- The UK Malnutrition Task Force estimates that 1 in 10 people older people over the age of 65 are malnourished or at risk of being malnourished in the UK<sup>3</sup>. Across Scotland we can estimate figures similar to rest of UK so this equates to approx. 103,000 older people<sup>4</sup>.
- Most malnutrition occurs in the community (93% in the community, 5% in care homes and 2% in hospitals<sup>5</sup>)
- The health and social care costs are far reaching and are only going to worsen with an ageing population. The cost to the health service being estimated to be £11.9 billion in 2011-2012 in England alone<sup>6</sup>.
- Malnutrition can have a devastating effect on physical health, emotional wellbeing and quality of life. Those that are malnourished are twice as likely to visit their GP, are more likely to require hospital admissions with longer lengths of stay, have a greater number of health issues (co-morbidities) and higher consequent social care needs.
- There is clear evidence that we can prevent malnutrition through early intervention and screening<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Food Train (Available from <http://www.thefoodtrain.co.uk/>)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-older-people-framework-action/>

<sup>3</sup> Malnutrition Task Force (2013) [A review and summary of the impact of malnutrition in older people and the reported costs and benefits of interventions](#)

<sup>4</sup> National Records Scotland (2015) Infographic Report (Available from <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/nrs-visual/rqar-2015-infog-booklet.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> Elia, M. & Russell, C.A. (Eds) (2009) 'Combating Malnutrition: recommendations for action: Report from the advisory group on malnutrition, led by BAPEN cited in Malnutrition Task Force (2013) [A review and summary of the impact of malnutrition in older people and the reported costs and benefits of interventions](#)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition-undernutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition?start=5>  
<https://ilcuk.org.uk/a-review-and-summary-of-the-impact-of-malnutrition-in-older-people-and-the-reported-costs-and-benefits-of-interventions/>

<sup>7</sup> NICE (2012) Quality Standard for Nutrition Support in Adults, NICE Quality Standard 24, (Available online at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs24>)



## Background to Food Train

Food Train is a registered charity, voluntary organisation and social enterprise which has been in operation since 1995. Food Train works to proactively assist older people at their time and point of need. Food Train provides vital services to older people who are no longer able to manage independently, through age, ill health, frailty or disability. Food Train services are available across 9 local authority areas, supporting 2823 older people with around 828 volunteers drawn from the local community. For more information see <http://www.thefoodtrain.co.uk/>

Food Train provides 5 services, all developed in co-production with Food Train members:

1. *Food Train*: Weekly grocery shopping and delivery (main service)
2. *Food Train EXTRA*: monthly home support visits. Tasks may include window cleaning, freezer defrosting, changing bedding etc
3. *Food Train FRIENDS*: befriending service, including telephone calls, home visits and group outings.
4. *Food Train LIBRARY*: library outreach service for housebound older people.
5. *Meal Makers*<sup>8</sup>: neighbourhood meal sharing. Local people cook and share extra portions of their own home-cooked food with an older person living nearby who could benefit from warm meals and increased social interaction.

## Background to Eat Well Age Well

Since 2013 Food Train has been at the forefront of meetings and events around malnutrition and has been involved in nutrition and hydration advocacy alongside the larger national associations and charities. Food Train was therefore well placed to lead a submission to the Big Lottery (now called National Lottery Community Fund), with the support from partners, to deliver on a project focused on preventing, detecting and reducing malnutrition amongst Older People in Scotland.

The rationale for the development of the Eat Well Age Well project is as follows:

1. In recent years it has become more and more apparent to Food Train volunteers and staff that there is a gap between the lived experience of older people living at home with under nutrition or who may be at risk of malnutrition and the clinical care available. Where there are concerns about the nutritional wellbeing of our older members, there is no platform to raise those, other than an emergency social work referral. Similarly, when new members begin using Food Train services, Food Train is not party to any nutritional care plan in place, despite staff and volunteers being well placed to help, guide and advise our members in line with the plan. The wider Third Sector offers an untapped opportunity to support the work of hospital and community dieticians in

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<sup>8</sup> Food Train (2014) Meal Makers (Available from <https://www.mealmakers.org.uk/>)



supporting nutritional care, reducing the risk and incidence of malnutrition and improving the wellbeing of older people.

2. Malnutrition is prevalent across the UK. (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence defines a person as being malnourished if they have: a Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 18.5kg/m<sup>2</sup>; Unintentional weight loss greater than 10 percent within the past 3-6 months; a BMI of less than 20kg/m<sup>2</sup> and unintentional weight loss greater than 5 percent within the past 3-6 months.<sup>9</sup>) The latest community-based data estimates 1 in 10 people over 65 are at risk of or suffering from preventable malnutrition. In a modern western nation this is unacceptable and a huge financial burden<sup>10</sup>. We can estimate similar to the rest of the UK that 10% of Scotland's older people will be impacted by malnutrition, which constitutes over 96,000 people. However, these are estimates and the true extent of the problem is therefore unknown.
3. Malnutrition is one of the key issues affecting the health of older people in Scotland<sup>11</sup>. Malnutrition is largely preventable and treatable, meaning there is great potential to ensure better health and wellbeing for older people. Screening, early intervention, improving food access along with awareness raising and working together with all sectors is required to support better outcomes for older people<sup>12</sup>.
4. The population is ageing, with people aged 75 and over projected to be the fastest growing group, and with risk increasing in over 75s this means a significant number of people in our population could be affected by malnutrition<sup>13</sup>
5. There are many risk factors for the development of malnutrition in the community, including: social isolation, loneliness, depression, food poverty, underlying ill health or disease, poor oral health including problems with dentition<sup>14</sup>. In particular, social isolation and loneliness are inextricably linked to malnutrition. Estimates suggest that in this population older people are social isolated and 1 in 10 suffer through loneliness<sup>15</sup>. The Scottish Government are committed to tackling social isolation and this will be addressed through the forthcoming Social Isolation strategy.
6. By supporting independence in old age, as well as accessing the right support, outcomes for older people in Scotland can be improved. Our work is set firmly within and supportive of several Scottish Government policy and planning priorities including, Health and Social Care Delivery Plan<sup>16</sup>, National Outcome 15 around improving the

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<sup>9</sup> National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. (2006) Nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition. Available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG32>

<sup>10</sup> Malnutrition Task force (2017). State of the Nation Report: Older people and malnutrition in the UK today. Online. Available from: [http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/AW-5625-Age-UK-MTF\\_Report.pdf](http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/AW-5625-Age-UK-MTF_Report.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> As above

<sup>12</sup> Malnutrition Task Force (2013): Malnutrition in Later Life: Prevention and Early Intervention (available from [http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/Prevention\\_Early\\_Intervention\\_Of\\_Malnutrition\\_in\\_Later\\_Life\\_Local\\_community.pdf](http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/Prevention_Early_Intervention_Of_Malnutrition_in_Later_Life_Local_community.pdf))

<sup>13</sup> As above

<sup>14</sup> Malnutrition Task Force (2017) State of the Nation (available from [http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/AW-5625-Age-UK-MTF\\_Report.pdf](http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/AW-5625-Age-UK-MTF_Report.pdf))

<sup>15</sup> Campaign to end loneliness (2011) Loneliness factsheet (available from <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>)

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government (2016) Health and Social Care Delivery Plan (available from <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511950.pdf>)



quality of later life<sup>17</sup>, Reshaping Care for older people initiative, Good Food Nation<sup>18</sup>, the Social Isolation Strategy<sup>19</sup> and A Fairer Scotland for Older People- A Framework for Action<sup>20</sup>.

- Finally, findings from research commissioned by the Food Train with older people in Scotland<sup>21</sup> highlighted the need for Food Train services which have helped to reduce social isolation and improve food access. For example, customers report reduced appetite and motivation to cook through loneliness and inactivity. They also reported ongoing challenges such as poorly fitting dentures, poor access to dental services, bereavement, no-one to eat with, difficulty preparing and chopping food so listening to and responding to these barriers is at the heart of the Eat Well Age Well project.

## Eat Well Age Well Background

The Eat Well Age Well project proposal was based on a collaborative and participative process with older people and the services supporting them. We have used our knowledge and learning from the Food Train commissioned research and we have built on the momentum felt at the 2015 Scottish Malnutrition Summit, the 2016 Cross Party Group on Food and the UK Malnutrition Task Force work as shown in the timeline and key milestones below:



## Eat Well Age Well Project Scope

Our mission is to help older people living at home *eat well, live well and age well*. Our focus is on prevention and interventions, working with older people in their own homes. It is out-with the scope of the project to work with older people in care homes. There are five project strands, these are led and delivered by a team of six core staff who are employed by The Food Train Ltd and are based in Edinburgh but work across Scotland.

The five project delivery strands are as follows:

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Government (2016) National Performance Framework (available from <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497339.pdf>)

<sup>18</sup> Scottish Government (2014) Recipe for Success: Scotland's national food and drink policy, becoming a Good Food Nation (available from <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/recipe-success-scotlands-national-food-drink-policy-becoming-good-food/>)

<sup>19</sup> Scottish Government (2017) Reducing loneliness and social isolation (available from <https://beta.gov.scot/news/reducing-loneliness-and-isolation/>)

<sup>20</sup> Scottish Government (2019) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-older-people-framework-action/>

<sup>21</sup> Food Train (2017) 21 years of conversation with older people in Scotland (available from <http://eatwellagewell.org.uk/images/documents/21-year-report.pdf>)



1. **Testing change ideas and Small Ideas Big Impact Fund** – seed funding for communities and local projects and testing our own innovations in the community.
2. **Research & evaluation** – malnutrition in older people in the community starts to be measured; contribute to a body of evidence, learning & sharing.
3. **Policy into practice** – influencing policy on the prevention, detection and treatment of malnutrition in the community.
4. **Capacity building** – training staff, carers and wider workforce on spotting signs of malnutrition early and taking action.
5. **Collaborative relationships** – working with older people and range of national and local partners.

### For further information

For further information about this work please contact the Eat Well Age Well team  
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Follow us on Twitter @EatWellScot and @FoodTrainScot or at [www.thefoodtrain.co.uk](http://www.thefoodtrain.co.uk)