



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

## BRIEF

### Overview

Eat Well Age Well (EWA) is a new national project funded by the Big Lottery and part of 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 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. This brief describes the background and context to the development of the project and outlines the scope and activities planned to date.

### Key Points

- Malnutrition defined by the World Health Organisation refers to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in a person's intake of energy<sup>2</sup>. This includes both 'under' or 'overweight' individuals. Eat Well Age Well project focus is on undernutrition.
- The UK Malnutrition Task Force estimates that 1 in 10 people living in the community are malnourished or at risk of being malnourished<sup>3</sup>. Across Scotland we can estimate figures similar to rest of UK so this equates to approx. 103,00 older people<sup>4</sup>.
- Evidence suggest most malnutrition is in the community (93%<sup>5</sup>, 5% in care homes and 2% in hospitals<sup>6</sup>).
- The problem and associated healthcare costs<sup>7</sup> are only going to worsen with an ageing population.
- The evidence clearly shows that people who 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.
- Malnutrition is not an inevitable consequence of ageing and can largely be prevented through early intervention and screening<sup>8,9</sup>
- Prevention is a core part of the Eat Well Age Well project alongside detection and treatment.

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

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation. Malnutrition Fact Sheet <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/malnutrition/en/> (Available from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/malnutrition/en/>).

<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/news/2018/scotlands-population-2017>)

<sup>5</sup> BAPEN (2018) Introduction to Malnutrition <https://www.bapen.org.uk/malnutrition-undernutrition/introduction-to-malnutrition?showall=&start=4>

<sup>6</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>7</sup> The cost of malnutrition in England and potential cost savings from nutritional interventions (full report). Retrieved from <http://www.bapen.org.uk/resources-and-education/publications-and-reports/malnutrition>

<sup>8</sup> NICE (2012) Quality Standard for Nutrition Support in Adults, NICE Quality Standard 24, (Available online at <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs24>)

<sup>9</sup> BAPEN (2011) Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool. Retrieved from [https://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/must/must\\_full.pdf](https://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/must/must_full.pdf)



## Background to Food Train

Food Train is a registered charity, voluntary organisation and social enterprise which has been in operation since 1995. 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 7 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 the 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>10</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, with the support from partners, to deliver on a project focused on preventing, detecting and reducing malnutrition.

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 supporting nutritional care, reducing the risk and incidence of malnutrition and improving the wellbeing of older people.
2. Malnutrition is common in the UK. The latest community based data estimates 1 in 10 people over 65 are at risk of or suffering from preventable malnutrition. In a modern

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<sup>10</sup> Food Train (2014) Meal Makers (Available from <https://www.mealmakers.org.uk/>)



western nation this is unacceptable and a huge financial burden<sup>11</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>12</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>13</sup>.
4. The population is aging, 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>14</sup>
5. There are many risk factors for the development of malnutrition<sup>11</sup> in the community, including: social isolation, loneliness, depression, food poverty, underlying ill health or disease, poor oral health including problems with dentition<sup>15</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>16</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>17</sup>, National Outcome 15 around improving the quality of later life<sup>18</sup>, Reshaping Care for older people initiative, Good Food Nation<sup>19</sup> and the Forthcoming Social Isolation Strategy<sup>20</sup>.
7. 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.

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<sup>11</sup> See reference 1

<sup>12</sup> As above

<sup>13</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>14</sup> As above

<sup>15</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>16</sup> Campaign to end loneliness (2011) Loneliness factsheet (available from <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/>)

<sup>17</sup> Scottish Government (2016) Health and Social Care Delivery Plan (available from <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00511950.pdf>)

<sup>18</sup> Scottish Government (2016) National Performance Framework (available from <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00497339.pdf>)

<sup>19</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>20</sup> Scottish Government (2017) Reducing loneliness and social isolation (available from <https://beta.gov.scot/news/reducing-loneliness-and-isolation/>)

<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>)



## Project Proposal

The Eat Well Age Well project proposal was based on a collaborative and participative process with older people and the services supporting them. The knowledge and learning from Food Train commissioned research and the momentum felt at the 2015 Scottish Malnutrition Summit, the 2016 Cross Party Group on Food and the UK Malnutrition Task Force were key milestones in Eat Well Age Well project proposal development.

### ***Eat Well Age Well Project Scope***

Eat Well Age Well will be delivered over 3.5 years. Our mission is to help older people living at home to *eat well and age well*. Our focus is on prevention and interventions with older people in their own homes as this is where the majority of malnutrition occurs. We will work with and through professionals and staff who work with and have routine contact with adults over 65s. It is out-with the scope of the project to work with older people in care homes or hospitals. There are five project strands as shown below and these will be 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.

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Main areas of work</b>
<b>1. Testing change ideas</b>	-Co-ordinate <a href="#">Small ideas, Big Impact fund</a> -Test practical innovations internal and external to Food Train
<b>2. Research and evaluation</b>	-Review and map current data, evidence and statistics to highlight the extent of malnutrition and gaps in service provision.
<b>3. Policy into practice</b>	-Translate the evidence and learning from the small grants, capacity building and learning from Eat Well Age Well into policy briefings, learning events and work with stakeholders to strengthen the argument for policy change.
<b>4. Capacity building</b>	-Capacity building work with health and social care professionals -Online <a href="#">website</a> , hub and e-network for professionals.
<b>5. Collaborative relationships</b>	-Involve older people and collaborate with a range of national and local organisations to inform the project throughout.

These strands, described below have informed the development of project outcomes. A logic model which visually represent the project outcomes (what we want to achieve) and our activities (how we are going to get there) has been developed.

### **For further information**

For further information about this work please contact the Eat Well Age Well team on 0131 447 8151 or email [hello@eatwellagewell.org.uk](mailto:hello@eatwellagewell.org.uk) or visit our website for more information [www.eatwellagewell.org.uk](http://www.eatwellagewell.org.uk)

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