



National press release

NACC LAUNCHED NUTRITION STANDARD TO HELP OLDER PEOPLE RECEIVE THE MEALS SERVICE THEY DESERVE

With one in 10 older people in the UK at risk from malnutrition according to The **'Personalisation, Nutrition and the Role of Community Meals'** report, the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) has, in order to tackle the issues, launched a Nutrition Standard which will provide up to date guidance for those providing community meals services. The NACC are urging the government to support this standard, to help lower the risk of malnutrition for older people.

With figures showing that by 2033 an estimated 23% of the UK population will be aged over 65 and a further 3.2m aged over 80, the number of older people suffering from malnutrition is set to rise even further, highlighting the need to address how older people are supported into older age now before the problem gets even worse.

Single Nutritional Standard

In a bid to improve meal services for the whole of the UK the NACC and the Caroline Walker Trust (CWT) agreed a single Nutrition Standard to be used by all in the sector, helping improve the nutritional content of food. Having two nutritional guidelines (NACC & CWT) led to problems for Local Authorities in regulating services, causing huge variations in nutritional care throughout the UK. The NACC believes the introduction of this new single standard will help ensure all older people have access to food with the correct nutritional content, lowering the risk of malnutrition. The Standard not only provides a clear benchmark for the nutritional content of food, but supporting information provides guidance on hydration, food intolerances, special dietary requirements and food labeling.

Current government guidance

Current government nutrition guidance does not give clear nutritional advice for older people. Recommendations from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) include all ages from 65 upwards, but the needs of older people change with increasing age. There is little guidance available on the risk of being underweight for the elderly. In order to tackle the problem of malnutrition the government must support the Nutrition Standard and recognise the role of good nutrition for the elderly.

At the launch of the standard in October 2010 the then NACC Chairman Derek Johnson, said: "The Nutrition Standard will ensure consistency in the nutritional content of food provided throughout the care catering sector. The launch of the standard builds on the '10 Key Characteristics for Good



Nutritional Care' initiative launched last month. It is however still vital that government support this standard and are committed to providing care for the elderly. Setting this standard should be seen in the context of preventative support, which ultimately should generate saving for the NHS in the years to come."

Referral process for Community Meals should be opened up

Many Local Authorities are reviewing their eligibility criteria for people accessing their services and increasingly those with moderate and low needs will not be eligible for a meals service; that is where a LA meals service still exists. This could mean that those at risk of malnutrition will not receive any preventative support, which potentially could mean longer term, an increase in those deemed at risk.

It must also be acknowledged that low cost preventative intervention is to be preferred against higher costs solutions in response to people's deteriorating condition.

As a result the NACC believe the referral process for community meal provision needs to be opened up to include older people who are at risk, preventing them from falling into the cycle of malnutrition.

It must also be noted that, malnutrition among older people can lead to increased hospital stays, increased readmission rates and increased transfer and admission to care homes, all of which costs the government /public purse money. Investing in the care catering sector rather than cutting community meals services will actually help save money in the long term. For example, research in Australia has shown that spending £1 on good nutrition is likely to save £5 on the health budget as care packages are reduced.

By investing in these recommended changes the NACC believe the government will be securing the care of older people both now and in the future. This, will not only be about providing a Nutrition Standard, (ensuring all food in the care catering sector is of a good nutritional content) but it is also about introducing a joined up approach where the health and well being of older people is paramount.

Ends

For more information and a copy of the report, please contact: Derek Johnson, **Chair NACC** on: 07891271870/ 0870 7480 180 chair@thenacc.co.uk

Notes to editors:

The National Association of Care Catering (NACC) is a progressive organisation representing professionals providing catering to the care industry. They are recognised by Local Authorities, independent providers, the charitable sector and Government departments as a prime source of information and opinion on all aspects of catering within the care sector and whose primary aim is to improve standards.

The NACC has a petition asking for support in raising awareness of this issue, and that of malnutrition to a wider audience. This will be presented to Downing Street on 3rd October 2011 at the start of National Community Meals Week. For more information log on to www.thenacc.co.uk



The NACC's No One Should Go Hungry campaign is an ongoing campaign to raise the profile of malnutrition in the care sector, and demonstrate the benefits to all of good nutrition. Improved quality of life for those at risk, less demands on their carers, health and social care services.

The NACC works with a number of partners to:

- To promote and enrich the standard of catering within the care sector, whether that catering be provided by Social Care Departments or other Caring Agencies
- To provide a forum for debate among individuals, companies and organisations of all kinds involved in catering for the care sector
- To facilitate the exchange of information, experience and expertise
- To promote the development of professional standards among those involved in catering for the care sector
- To commission research into matters relating to catering for the care sector
- To publish guidelines, policy papers and authoritative statements on all aspects of catering for the care sector