



The Association
of UK Dietitians

Northern Ireland Board

Dietitians in Northern Ireland Manifesto 2020

Food and nutrition is part of everyday life. Dietitians apply the science of nutrition focusing on prevention, early intervention and supporting independence and wellbeing, to enable people in making food choices throughout life that will maximise their health.

Dietitians are the only nutrition professionals regulated by law. This means people are protected and can be assured that they will get the latest credible evidence-based information. You can trust a dietitian to know about nutrition!

The Northern Ireland Department of Health Dietetic Workforce Review makes it clear that dietitians play a crucial role in delivering better health outcomes and many of the reforms that we know are a priority for the Northern Ireland Government. Furthermore, the COVID19 pandemic has shown the capacity of dietitians locally to embrace service redesign and relocation, embed the appropriate use of virtual platforms for patient treatment, and ensure that the timely enteral feeding of critically ill patients contributed towards saving lives.

Dietitians call on the government to:

1

Ensure people in Northern Ireland, regardless of background or circumstances, can access the necessary dietetic expertise to support them to make healthier & better-informed food choices.

2

Recognise the role of good nutrition in providing the best start in life and in prevention of obesity, diabetes, cancer and other chronic conditions.

3

Guarantee everyone living with chronic conditions can access dietetic support to improve self-management and promote independence.

4

Recognise the transformative potential of dietitians as leaders and professionals in delivering the outcomes and reforms outlined in the Northern Ireland Programme for Government.

5

Put in place a food system that delivers better health outcomes for all.

How can we make this happen?

1 Ensure people in Northern Ireland – regardless of their background or circumstances - can access the necessary dietetic expertise to support them to make healthier and better-informed food choices

- Utilise dietetic expertise to empower the population with the knowledge and skills necessary to buy, prepare and cook healthy food.
- Address food poverty and health inequalities by advancing dietetic-led practical and accessible nutrition education and food skills programmes.
- Engage dietetic expertise to train, advise and support others in health, social care, local government, public and third sector organisations to promote safe, sustainable and healthy nutrition.
- Ensure dietitians lead on improving provision of nutritious food in the public sector including hospitals, early years, schools, leisure and all care settings.

2 Recognise the role of good nutrition in providing the best start in life and in prevention of obesity, diabetes, cancer and other chronic conditions

- Build the capacity of dietitians to deliver 'A Fitter Future for All' and subsequent health strategies, including access to evidence-based and family-centred services for children and young people who are overweight or obese.
- Apply dietetic expertise to address recommendations for vitamin supplementation across the population and make Healthy Start vitamins easily accessible to all children under 5.
- Maximise dietetic capacity to ensure patient access to nutrition support and to deliver better health outcomes across all community and acute settings.

3 Guarantee everyone living with chronic conditions can access dietetic support to improve self-management and promote independence

- Equip multidisciplinary teams and primary care with the dietetic expertise required to keep people well in chronic disease, reduce hospital admissions and risks of complications, rehabilitate patients and shorten recovery times.
- Use dietitians to develop and deliver structured group education, dietetic led clinics and advanced practice dietetic roles that will promote self-management of chronic conditions and enhance quality of life.
- Engage dietetic skills in collaborative working to promote optimum nutrition and care for older people in the community, reducing the risk of malnutrition and unplanned hospital admission.

4 Recognise the transformative potential of dietitians as leaders and professionals in delivering the outcomes and reforms outlined in the Northern Ireland Programme for Government

- Realise and use public health/ health improvement dietetic leadership to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce health inequalities.
- Increase awareness of the crucial function of nutrition and dietetics in improving:
 - Health in pregnancy
 - Child development
 - Mental health
 - Support for children and adults with particular care needs
- Recognise the benefits of dietitians working alongside the Agri-food and Education sectors to offer advice, training and practical guidance, compatible with a sustainable and healthier food environment in Northern Ireland.

5 Put in place a food system that delivers better health outcomes for all

- Tackle the obesogenic environment - including all promotion of unhealthy foods - and shape our living and working spaces, to make access to nutritious food and increased activity everyday normality.
- Minimise any negative impacts of Brexit on the price, quality and availability of food and drink, including specialist nutritional products, in Northern Ireland.
- Provide children and young people with evidence-based nutrition knowledge and opportunities to develop practical food skills across the national curriculum.
- Utilise the knowledge of dietitians and their expertise in the development of future strategies and legislation to improve the health of the nation.

For further information about our manifesto "asks" and to learn more about the impact of dietetic services for individuals and communities, please contact:
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