Nutrition Champions

**Background**

Malnutrition and dehydration are both a cause and consequence of illness costing the NHS and Social Care billions of pounds annually. Good nutrition and hydration care should therefore underpin safe, quality care in all community, social and healthcare settings, yet the standards of such care are often poor.

Low awarenessof malnutrition and dehydration amongst service users, carers and health and care professionals in the city is still widespread. Nutrition and hydration education of frontline professionals is still fragmented and at worse non-existent for some groups of staff despite training session being available. This means that early detection and treatment of malnutrition and dehydration are still not the norm and there is still an issue in providing good nutritional care and meeting the CQC requirements of Outcome 5 Meeting Nutritional Needs.

The benefitsof appropriate nutrition and hydration care for every individual are immense but must be more clearly stated and promoted. High standards can both maintain quality of life and prevent unnecessary illness and injury, and improved outcomes are seen in those with both acute problems and long term conditions.

Better nutrition and hydration will also result in substantial cost savings in social and health care.

**Nutrition Champions**

The aims of Nutrition Champions would be to improve nutritional & hydration care in community, social and healthcare settings through learning from experts and each other.

The principal aims of the development of Nutrition Champions role are –

* To embed the principles of the 10 Key characteristics for Good Nutritional Care in the workplace
* To improve people’s ability to access healthy food and fluids which meet their nutritional requirements and are appropriate for their stage of life.

The objectives for the Nutrition Champions would be:

1. To provide staff with the tools to develop and enhance their establishment’s practices on nutrition, hydration and eating.
2. To help staff find ways to change the habits & practices where required and further develop good practices.
3. To share practices and ideas, and encourage partnership working.
4. To provide evidence of the practical impact of their role in their workplace.
5. To improve their colleagues understanding of the benefits of food and drink in their own well being.

The Champions would be responsible for:

1. Being a point of contact for colleagues who have questions about nutrition;
2. Sharing knowledge with colleagues about the importance of nutrition to

customers health and well-being;

1. Ensuring that nutrition is a priority for their care setting;
2. Taking the lead in involving colleagues, customers, family and community

members in the unit’s work in nutrition and hydration;

1. Taking the lead in a project to develop the unit’s practice in nutrition and hydration.
2. Being the link with any Nutrition and Hydration Week activities.

Who will be the Nutrition Champions?

The invitation to become a Champion will not stipulate a staff role that would be preferred; it would however request that the Champion should be in a position to bring about change in the organisation. There would need to be a time commitment to the project in the workplace and in attending nutrition champion training and project meetings. The Champion’s manager would need to have an outline understanding of the role and sign up to the person’s role within their organisation.

Once identified, each Champion will need to be trained to underpin the knowledge and understanding they require to plan a small project to improve nutrition in their unit; develop the skills and confidence they need to implement and evaluate their project; and enable nutrition champion to identify ways of supporting one another.

Key areas for the Nutrition Champions to improve, and develop their own plans for implementing in their organisation would be, but not limited to -

* Improving the dining (room) experience (including introducing protected

meal times when all non-urgent activity stops allowing the resident / customer to eat without being interrupted and staff are available to assist / support where identified in the care plan). Making Mealtimes Matter.

* Introducing nutritional screening. This is a way of assessing a person’s nutritional needs
* Improving menus according to nutritional value, choice, preferences to meet the new industry standard of calorific intake (2200 Kcals as a minimum for a vulnerable adult)
* Sharing knowledge with staff on issues regarding nutrition and health, and

residents’/ customers’ well-being

* Making food more attractive and accessible
* Improving levels of intake of water and other drinks
* Supporting the planning of food related activity i.e. lunch clubs/cooking
* Delivering activities to support national campaigns i.e. Nutrition and Hydration Week, Thirsty Thursday, Mealtimes Matter Month ( October)

Already some of the above will already be in place but by targeting these key area we will then have a coordinated approach to nutritional care.

The introduction of the Nutrition Champions will support the organisation achieving the desired standards for the 10 Key Characteristics for Good Nutritional Care which in turn will support adherence to regulatory standards.