



STATEMENT FROM THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

BRIEF RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S FOOD AND HEALTH ACTION PLAN

The British Dietetic Association welcomes the Department of Health's Food and Health Action Plan, 'Choosing a Better Diet', published today. Finally, there is a multi-agency plan that outlines key steps and timelines towards helping to improve the nation's diet, and so the nation's health.

Registered dietitians in the UK hold the only legally recognised graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics and work to promote nutritional well-being, treat disease and prevent nutrition-related health problems. Their unique skill is to interpret and translate the science of nutrition into practical, impartial and safe information about food and health.

Registered Dietitians work in the NHS, community settings, the food industry, education, the media and private healthcare. Therefore they have long been contributing to many of the areas outlined in this action plan¹, and have a key role to play in the implementation of its key steps, including training and advising communicators, industry, health trainers, health professionals and other community support mentors.

The British Dietetic Association is pleased to see that the action plan addresses:

- Health inequalities
- The importance of good nutrition in the early years
- School meals, food skills on the curriculum and food promoted to children
- A social marketing strategy to best influence behaviour change
- Development of clear, consistent public messages on choosing a balanced diet, nutritional labelling, obesity prevention and healthy weight management
- Healthy eating in communities, building on '5 a day' initiatives
- Co-ordinated activity on obesity prevention and management in each PCT, recognising that each PCT area needs a specialist obesity service, with access to a dietitian
- Promotion of healthy eating in the workplace
- A plan for monitoring and evaluation

However, we also hope that enough action is taken to ensure delivery of targets, for example:

- Ensure messages and action about nutrition and health are consistent across government
- Introduce legislation to regulate food advertising to children, if voluntary measures fail
- Bring in nutrient-based standards for school meals, if required
- Develop a signposting system for food labelling that has taken into account the overall balance of a meal as well as a whole day's eating and is consistent with other messages about choosing a balanced diet e.g. The Balance of Good Health

¹ For example, the BDA ran a 3 year national campaign to promote the '5 a day' message, and W8Wise@Work 2005 will be the fourth year of its 'Weight Wise' campaign tackling rising obesity rates.

- Ensure messages about the importance of the overall balance of the diet, including the provision of key nutrients, are not lost to too much emphasis on the '5 a day' message
- Provide appropriate levels of dietetic expertise, resources and training for the NHS to improve obesity management and prevention services.

Lyndel Costain, a Registered Dietitian, speaking on behalf of the British Dietetic Association, said today:

“At last, there is a multi-agency action plan that outlines much-needed key steps that will help to improve the nation's diet and, consequently, health. Registered Dietitians have a key role to play in delivering its targets to help ensure the best results, and the British Dietetic Association looks forward to supporting its members in this.”

9 March 2005

Notes

1. The full report is accessible from the Department of health website at <http://www.bda.uk.com/Downloads/ChoosingBetterDiet.pdf>
2. The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation for food and nutrition professionals with over 5,000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance.
3. Registered dietitians hold the only legally-recognised graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the prevention of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence.
4. Registration awarded by the Health Professions Council is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct.
5. For further details about the British Dietetic association, please visit our website: www.bda.uk.com
6. Also, see our Weight Wise website with some great information put together by registered dietitians specifically for consumers at www.bdaweightwise.com