



THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

The Professional Association for Registered Dietitians
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Media Release

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Dietitians have a 'heart to Hart' with Minister

Dietitians from Bwrdd Cymru (Welsh Board) of the British Dietetic Association are to meet with Minister for Health and Social Services, Edwina Hart today to request continued investment in the profession if the Welsh Assembly Government is serious about tackling obesity and diet related disease.

The meeting comes just weeks after the Welsh Assembly announced plans to ban unhealthy vending machines from hospitals and promote best practice in providing healthy options.

With almost one in five of 6-13 year-olds, six out of every 10 men and half of women in Wales being overweight or obese, diet and nutrition have come to the top of the Welsh Assembly's agenda. Heart disease is now Wales' biggest killer and rates are substantially higher than in England and many other European countries: and there is a proven link between heart disease and a diet high in sugars and saturated fats. A quarter of deaths caused by cancer – Wales' second most common cause of death – are also attributable to poor diet.

The Minister recently conceded the importance that diet plays in the prevention of obesity and chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and certain cancers.

Registered dietitians are the only qualified health professionals that assess, diagnose and treat diet and nutrition problems at an individual and wider public health level; they also lead in the implementation of improvements to food services across Wales and are key contributors in education and rehabilitation programs.

Speaking before the meeting, Siân Burton, Chair of the Welsh Board, said: "The Assembly has set challenging targets to improve the health of the Welsh population and in order to achieve them we will be highlighting to the minister the importance of long term investment in the profession, not only to help improve the outcomes for people with stroke, diabetes and obesity, but also prevent malnutrition in hospitals and treat eating disorders.

“Dietitians play an important role in improving the health and quality of life of the people in Wales at both a practical and a policy level. However, the current spending regime could result in a shortfall of dietitians to deliver the services required. It is also vital that dietitians are actively engaged in the development, commissioning and implementation of health strategy.”

Media enquiries to The British Dietetic Association should be directed to our media hotline on 0870 850 2517 or pr@bda.uk.com.

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Notes to Editors

1. 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 of food and nutrition professionals with nearly 6,000 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.
2. Registered dietitians hold the only legally-recognisable 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. Registration, awarded by the Health Professionals Council, is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct. For further details about the British Dietetic Association, please visit our website: www.bda.uk.com.