A letter to explain…

**RE: Adoption of the** [**International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative**](http://iddsi.org/) **Framework**

This letter aims to inform you of an impending change to the way in which dysphagia diets are categorised in the future. It is planned that this change will take place from April 2019 and the details are outlined below. There is no need to do anything at the moment but please expect further information from me in due course.

**The rationale - to improve patient care**

The vast majority of care settings in the UK currently use the UK Dysphagia Diet Food Texture Descriptors to describe the consistency of foods for people diagnosed with dysphagia.

In 2015 the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative ( [IDDSI](http://iddsi.org) ) framework was developed. This framework contains definitions for texture modified foods and thickened liquids for people with dysphagia.  It consists of a continuum of eight levels (0-7) covering both food and fluid textures and includes descriptors, testing methods and the evidence base for these recommendations.

Many countries across the world including the USA, Australia and Canada have adopted the IDDSI framework so far.

An Expert Reference Group (ERG) looking at the appropriateness of implementing the IDDSI framework in this country was set up in 2015. Dr Liz Boaden, from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and I co-chair the group, and group members represent many health care disciplines and organisations who work with people with dysphagia. The group has spent over a year gathering evidence to determine whether or not to adopt the IDDSI framework and this work has included literature reviews, pilots, a pros and cons exercise and surveys of healthcare professionals.

Following the comprehensive analysis of this evidence, both the RCSLT and BDA have independently and formally announced that they support the adoption of the IDDSI framework.

The BDA, RCSLT and the ERG see the adoption of the IDDSI framework as of great benefit to patients and carers alike for the following reasons:

* Improvement of patient safety (e.g. when patients, carers and /or healthcare professionals travel from one country to another there will be common international terminology which should mean that patients continue to receive the correct textures and hence remain safe; product labels will also be international)
* Greater opportunities to collect and evaluate treatment outcomes (due to international standardised terminologies, larger cohorts of patients can be compared in research to evaluate the effects of existing and new treatments)
* The combination, within one framework or continuum, of descriptors for both texture modified food and fluids – the latter are not currently addressed by the UK descriptors
* IDDSI is based on a clinical evidence base - the current UK Descriptors are based on expert consensus

Manufacturers on the ERG have already agreed to update the labels on their products from April 2018 with a goal of completion of adoption by April 2019.

**Next Steps**

The ERG plan to communicate and work with all major stakeholders (including healthcare professional groups, dysphagia product manufacturers and groups representing caterers, care organisations) to enable the implementation of the IDDSI framework in all care settings over the next 18 months.

We recognise that this is a significant change to everyone’s practice, and so the ERG has committed to develop an ‘Implementation Toolkit’ to assist stakeholders to make this change.

If you have any comments / queries please do contact me on: [j.instone@bda.uk.com](mailto:j.instone@bda.uk.com).

Yours sincerely



Joanna Instone

Head of External Affairs

British Dietetic Association