



FOOD AND NUTRITION





Welcome

Consuming a healthy diet throughout the life course is pivotal to good health and wellbeing. A nutritious diet supports optimal growth and development, helps prevent malnutrition and non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain cancers, and contributes to achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight.

This e-bulletin includes a range of projects and initiatives that address diet-related inequalities which are driven by factors including income, education, environment, ethnicity and culture, and they play a key role in driving unfair and avoidable health outcomes.

4 Articles

Promoting Health and Family Engagement Through a Community Focused Schools Initiative

Carly Geake, Community and Family Engagement Officer, Community Focused Schools – Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Increasing access to Healthy Start Vitamins across North Wales

Andrea Basu on behalf of the Public Health Dietetics Team, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Fuelling Future Generations: The Role of Nutrition-Focused Community Hubs in Tackling Food Insecurity

Bethan Cook, Marketing and Communication Lead, FareShare Cymru

Small changes to a healthier you: Tackling levels of overweight and obesity in Wales

Iiona Johnson, Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Wales

Jessica Rayner, Campaigns & Communications Manager, Public Health Wales

Daniel Evans, Programme Lead Social Marketing, Public Health Wales

Rachel Cooke, Principle Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales

Reducing Inequalities in School food Environments (RISE): Supporting provision, uptake and consumption of Free School Meals in primary schools

Dr Sara Long, Research Fellow, Cardiff University; Research and Evaluation Lead, Public Health Wales

Dr Kelly Morgan, Co-lead, Population Health theme; Director, The School Health Research Network, Cardiff University

Dr Rochelle Embling, Senior Research & Evaluation Officer, Public Health Wales

Judith Gregory, Education Catering Business Manager, Cardiff Council; National Chair, LACA Lucy Jayne, Senior Public Health Nutritionist, Public Health Wales

Prof John McKendrick, Professor in Social Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University; Co-Director, Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit

Dr Jemma Hawkins; Assistant Director & Lead for Stakeholder Engagement, Cardiff University

Prof Kevin Morgan, Professor of Governance and Development, Cardiff University

Dr Suzanne Spence, Lecturer, Human Nutrition and Exercise Research Centre, Newcastle University

Prof Jayne Woodside, Centre Director, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, Institute for Global Food Security, Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast

Gathering Lived Experiences to Promote Healthy Diets in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM)

Claire Turbutt, Principal PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Libby McIntosh, PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Helen Walters, Senior PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Rachel Reed PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

UPF and HFSS - different labels, same foods? Nesta analysis of where ultra-processed foods meet those high in fat, sugar and salt

Sara Elias, Policy Advisor, Nesta

Tipping the balance towards a healthier out of home food environment: a collaborative systems working event

Sophia Bird, Principal Public Health Practitioner, Health Improvement Division, Public Health Wales

Xanthe Bevis, Public Health Practitioner, Health Improvement Division, Public Health Wales

A milestone for food policy in Wales

Katie Palmer, Head of Food Sense Wales

24 Grapevine

Ros's Rainbow Woodland

Bryony Rees, Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools Co-ordinator, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

28 Videos

30 News & Resources

32 Next Issue

Articles





Practice

Promoting Health and Family Engagement Through a Community Focused Schools Initiative

Carly Geake,

Community and Family Engagement
Officer, Community Focused Schools –
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

In Merthyr Tydfil, 25.5% of children are classified as overweight or obese, according to the 2023/2024 National Child Measurement Programme. Recognising the urgency of addressing childhood obesity, Gwaunfarren Primary School, in partnership with Community Focused Schools (CFS), piloted a project using the TastEd programme to support healthy eating habits in Reception pupils. This initiative links to the Healthy Schools journey and aims to create positive experiences with fruit and vegetables, while promoting parental engagement. By targeting early years, the project supports long-term behaviour change

and contributes to the wider goal of reducing health inequalities across Wales.

This pilot was informed by evidence in the 'Healthy Promoting Schools' bulletin, which underlined schools as critical environments for shaping pupils' health behaviours. With children spending 40% of their waking hours in school, initiatives that promote wellbeing through diet and lifestyle education are essential.

In response, a CFS officer proposed a pilot with Reception pupils at Gwaunfarren, a school beginning its Healthy Schools journey. The TastEd

programme was chosen for its sensory-based, non-pressured approach to exploring fruit and vegetables. With free access granted by TastEd following a project proposal, a tailored six-week programme was developed using their online resources.

Each session explored a different sense, helping pupils become familiar and comfortable with healthy foods. The final session will see parents/carers join their children to prepare a simple healthy meal—pizza pittas or sandwiches—using Pipyn recipe booklets. This shared experience will conclude with a 'teddy bears picnic' in the school's nature area, also

supporting a goal from the school's 'Gwaunfarren 100' experience list. The initiative promotes early intervention, whole-school engagement, and a multi-agency response aligned with national policy and curriculum aims.

Pupils have shown increased confidence in trying new foods and greater understanding of the importance of healthy eating. Teachers have noted improved engagement in classroom discussions around food, health, and wellbeing. The upcoming parental session will offer a valuable opportunity to strengthen relationships between school and home, supporting consistent health messaging. The project has also helped Gwaunfarren progress in its Healthy Schools Award journey. Most significantly, it demonstrates how early intervention, combined with positive sensory experiences and family participation, can support healthier lifestyles and contribute to tackling childhood obesity within local communities.

Early intervention works. Projects like this demonstrate that supporting children to explore healthy food in a safe, engaging environment has a lasting impact. Schools are vital to shaping lifelong habits, but collaboration is key—between education, health, families, and communities. Programmes like TastEd provide a simple yet powerful tool to embed healthy

behaviours from an early age. Our call to action: invest in and prioritise school-based, family-focused wellbeing initiatives. By doing so, we not only improve current outcomes but also build a healthier, more resilient generation across Wales.

Welsh Government. *Healthy Eating in Schools*. Accessed July 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/healthy-eating-schools-html>

Public Health Wales. *Child Measurement Programme for Wales 2023/24: Report for Merthyr Tydfil*. Public Health Wales NHS Trust, 2024.

TastEd - Taste Education. *Teaching Children to Explore Fruit and Vegetables Using Their Senses*. Accessed July 2025. Available at: <https://www.tasteeducation.com>

Curriculum for Wales. *The Four Purposes of the Curriculum for Wales*. Welsh Government, 2022. <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/developing-a-vision-for-curriculum-design/#curriculum-design-and-the-four-purposes>

Public Health Wales. *Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes: National Quality Award*. Accessed July 2025. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/schools-and-early-years/healthy-schools/>

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board. *Pipyn Recipe Booklet: Simple, Healthy Recipes for Families*. Accessed July 2025. Available at: <https://cwmtafmorgannwg.wales>



Increasing access to Healthy Start Vitamins across North Wales

Andrea Basu

on behalf of the Public Health Dietetics Team, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

The **Healthy Start scheme**¹ helps provide a nutritional safety net for low-income, pregnant women and families with children under 4. This includes providing free vitamins to align with current public health recommendations for folic acid and vitamin D supplementation. In Wales, health boards hold responsibility for distributing Healthy Start vitamins via midwifery and health visiting teams. However, it is widely acknowledged that uptake of the vitamins is low in comparison to uptake of the wider scheme ².

As part of a 2025 evidence review³, NICE highlight the importance of healthcare professionals including information about what the

Healthy Start supplements contain when discussing the scheme with women and families. Such discussions are integral to securing increased knowledge and confidence to aid uptake, as part of a behaviour change approach. An E-Learning package for health care professionals working with pregnant women and families with children under 4 years has been mandated by Welsh Government⁴ with access via ESR and Learning@Wales.

Initially developed as a Bevan Exemplar project within Wrexham and Flintshire, the public health dietetics team work collaboratively with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) community pharmacy and selected independent

pharmacies to widen access to the Healthy Start vitamins across the region. We have now successfully engaged 32 pharmacies across the 6 North Wales counties to act as additional collection points and complement existing provision within midwifery and health visiting services. We've welcomed the support of community pharmacies who agreed to work with us as part of their core public health responsibility to promote healthy lifestyles. To minimise impact on their time, dietetics currently order, deliver and restock the vitamins. This is made possible through some additional dietetic capacity provided via the Prevention and Early Years grant. Additionally, we have provided brief training for pharmacy counter staff, and maintain

fortnightly contact to support ongoing participation. We also encourage their staff to access the Healthy Start E-Learning package to gain a rounded knowledge of the scheme.

As a team we actively promote access to the vitamins via the BCUHB Best Start Hub pages [Community Pharmacies Collection Points - Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board](#) and within all our community facing engagement sessions and courses that are facilitated directly by ourselves, or via community workers we have trained.

Informal feedback from families indicates they value the added convenience of the pickup points, especially when needing a new supply:

'I'm really glad I can pick them up from here now, it makes it a lot easier for me' [Parent receiving Healthy Start](#)

Pharmacy staff feel their engagement is worthwhile: *'Parents who have come in with their card say it is great to know where they can now come to get their vitamins, it has made it a lot easier for them. They are telling their friends too'* [Pharmacy counter – staff member](#)

Now we have established participating pharmacies across the region, we plan to review uptake during 2025/26 and implement some enhanced promotional activities within communities

surrounding the pharmacies to help boost awareness and uptake.

References

Healthy Start Scheme webpage [Get help to buy food and milk \(Healthy Start\)](#)

Moonan et al (2022). An exploration of the statutory Healthy Start vitamin supplementation scheme in North West England. BMC Public Health 22:392.

Accessible from: [An exploration of the statutory Healthy Start vitamin supplementation scheme in North West England | BMC Public Health | Full Text](#)

NICE (2025) Maternal and child nutrition: evidence reviews for interventions to increase uptake of vitamin supplements (including Healthy Start vitamins) in line with government advice.

Accessible from: [NG247 Maternal and child nutrition: Evidence review E 15/01/2025](#)

Welsh Government (2023).

Healthy Start E-Learning course (WHC/ 2023/038).

Accessible from: [Healthy Start eLearning course \(WHC/2023/038\) \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#) and [Instructions for accessing the Healthy Start eLearning resource FINAL.pdf](#)



Practice

Fuelling Future Generations: The Role of Nutrition-Focused Community Hubs in Tackling Food Insecurity

Bethan Cook,

Marketing and Communication Lead,
FareShare Cymru



Food insecurity is one of the most urgent public health challenges facing Wales today. The latest figures reveal a **concerning reality**: 14% of households sometimes or often go without enough to meet basic needs, and a quarter have been forced to skip or reduce meals due to financial pressures. Even more concerning, 21% of parents say they've had to cut down their children's meals. Among Universal Credit recipients, that figure rises to 44%. These are not just statistics—they represent real people facing daily, painful choices between food and other essentials.

Children and young people are bearing the brunt of this crisis. Nearly half (45%) of children aged 7–11 worry about having enough to eat, and over half of those aged 7–18 worry about their family's ability to afford basic necessities. When children grow up in households marked by food insecurity, the impact is not only nutritional but emotional, developmental, and long-lasting.

In response to this growing crisis, community food hubs have emerged as lifelines. These local initiatives provide

more than just food—they offer dignity, connection, and empowerment. By supplying fresh, nutritious ingredients in welcoming environments, food hubs reduce the stigma of receiving help while building the foundations for better health and stronger communities.

FareShare Cymru is at the forefront of this movement. Partnering with over 250 community organisations across Wales, they redistribute surplus food to where it's most needed—supplying more than 45 schools and school-based pantries in the process. But

demand is growing rapidly: 190 charities remain on the waiting list, reflecting the scale of need across the country.

The impact of FareShare Cymru's work can be seen in initiatives like Community Volunteers Wales (CVW) in Rhymney. Using redistributed food, CVW runs a community kitchen where residents come together to cook, learn, and share. Tara, a CVW team member, describes it beautifully: "Cooking with my family brings joy and teaches numeracy, communication, and problem-solving." Here, nutrition is not just about calories—it's about connection, confidence, and life skills.

Community food hubs also serve as gateways to broader support. Many offer workshops on budgeting, signposting to health and social services, and opportunities to socialise—helping to combat loneliness and isolation. In doing so, they nurture not only physical wellbeing but also emotional resilience and community spirit.

Why does this matter for public health? Because access to nutritious food is a basic prerequisite for good nutrition and health. Community food hubs improve dietary quality by providing fresh produce and balanced meals, while helping people develop the skills and confidence to cook

from scratch. They align closely with public health nutrition goals, offering scalable, locally grounded solutions to a national issue.

Children and young people in particular need consistent, nutritious diets to thrive—physically, mentally, and socially. Malnutrition during formative years can have long-term consequences on academic performance, behaviour, and health outcomes. Food insecurity threatens not just their present, but their future.

At FareShare Cymru, we believe that food is more than fuel. It is a source of dignity, a driver of community, and a foundation for long-term wellbeing. By redistributing good food to schools, pantries, and hubs, we ensure that no edible surplus goes to waste while also tackling hunger head-on. Our partners build more than meals—they build confidence, resilience, and lasting change.

Tackling food insecurity demands a coordinated response involving policy change, community leadership, and investment in education. Community food hubs offer a powerful model of what's possible when we combine compassion with action. To truly fuel future generations, we must ensure that every child, family, and

community in Wales has reliable access to nutritious food—and the skills, support, and connection that come with it.

For more information, contact: info@fareshare.cymru

Sources

Community Housing Cymru – *Food Poverty in Wales: Exposing the Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Social Housing Tenants*

<https://chcymru.org.uk/news-and-blog/food-poverty-in-wales-exposing-the-impact-of-the-cost-of-living-crisis-on-social-housing-tenants>

Children's Commissioner for Wales – *Policy Position: Obesity and Healthy Weight (Child-led research on poverty, weight, and wellbeing)*

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/policy-positions/obesity-healthy-weight/>

FareShare Cymru – *Official Website*

<https://fareshare.cymru/>
Cardiff Journalism – *Charities under pressure following food insecurity increase in Wales*
<https://cardiffjournalism.co.uk/altcardiff/2024/11/20/charities-under-pressure-following-food-insecurity-increase-wales/>



Practice

Small changes to a healthier you: Tackling levels of overweight and obesity in Wales

Ilona Johnson,

Consultant in Public Health, Public Health Wales

Daniel Evans,

Programme Lead Social Marketing, Public Health Wales

Rachel Cooke,

Principle Public Health Practitioner, Public Health Wales

Jessica Rayner,

Campaigns & Communications Manager, Public Health Wales

In Wales, over 60% of adults are living with overweight or obesity, which is one of the single most significant risk factors for poor health and health inequalities. With this increasing year on year, Public Health Wales (PHW) established an authoritative, evidence-based, level one offer to support adults in Wales to achieve and maintain a healthy weight in a sustainable way. Healthy Weight Healthy You is a first of its kind, bilingual resource offering self-directed support for adults looking to shape their future health,

which was launched and communicated across Wales with a mass awareness social marketing campaign.

As part of the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales (HWHW) strategy, PHW were commissioned by Welsh Government to develop a weight management service to deliver Level one of the All-Wales Weight Management Pathway.

The digital offer was established as an evidence-based, Level 1 intervention to

provide a web-based, once for Wales resource. Level 1 Weight Management is defined as for: “Those with a BMI of 25-30 kg/m² without co-morbidities, or 22.5-27.5kg/m² for people from black African, African-Caribbean and Asian groups.” Level 1 is a universal intervention that focuses on self-management and professional brief advice, often termed as early-intervention, to enable the maintenance or attainment of a healthy weight.

Alongside the digital programme, a social marketing

campaign was established to raise awareness of the brands 'Healthy Weight Healthy You' and 'Pwysau Iach Byw'n Iach' along with supporting adults to achieve and maintain weight in a healthy and sustainable way. The campaign strategy was informed by evidence from the Obesity Evidence Hub's 'hierarchy of effects model'. This systematic review of obesity prevention mass media campaigns found the approach to be effective at changing population health behaviours and influencing knowledge, attitudes, and intentions.

Overweight and associated ill-health is not evenly distributed across Wales. Excess weight and obesity are drivers and driven by inequalities, with more of those experiencing obesity and health inequalities coming from disadvantaged communities and black African, Caribbean and Asian backgrounds. Research led

to establishment of priority groups, a focus for the campaign.

The campaign promoted free access to the expert led resource with over 250,000 users having now accessed the website.

The baseline for brand awareness and knowledge of actions to be taken to maintain a healthy weight both showed positive increase, which is an indicator of public behaviour change.

Evidence and insight were pivotal in establishing messages that resonated with priority audiences, with research undertaken to glean insight into how the people of Wales assess current weight, barriers, and intentions.

Everybody's weight management journey is unique, audiences were segmented, and personas created and tested with the

target audience. Focus groups informed messaging.

Research uncovered messaging needed to be tailored to the individual, be non-stigmatising, inclusive, featuring people 'like me' leading to our core message 'Healthy Weight' is essential for a 'Healthy You' encouraging the people of Wales to take stock of their weight empowering them to take control.

[For more information visit the Healthy Weight Healthy You website here.](#)



Research

Reducing Inequalities in School food Environments (RISE): Supporting provision, uptake and consumption of Free School Meals in primary schools

Dr Sara Long, Research Fellow, Cardiff University; Research and Evaluation Lead, Public Health Wales

Dr Kelly Morgan, Co-lead, Population Health theme; Director, The School Health Research Network, Cardiff University

Dr Rochelle Embling, Senior Research & Evaluation Officer, Public Health Wales

Judith Gregory, Education Catering Business Manager, Cardiff Council; National Chair, LACA

Lucy Jayne, Senior Public Health Nutritionist, Public Health Wales

Prof John McKendrick, Professor in Social Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University; Co-Director, Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit

Dr Jemma Hawkins; Assistant Director & Lead for Stakeholder Engagement, Cardiff University

Prof Kevin Morgan, Professor of Governance and Development, Cardiff University

Dr Suzanne Spence, Lecturer, Human Nutrition and Exercise Research Centre, Newcastle University

Prof Jayne Woodside, Centre Director, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences, Institute for Global Food Security, Centre for Public Health, Queen's University Belfast

Many families are struggling with the cost of living **(1)**. Prices have risen, and often, less healthy food is cheaper and easier to access **(2)**. Children living in the poorest areas often do not eat enough fruits, vegetables, and other foods that make up a healthy balanced diet **(3)**.

Local councils and schools can help by providing affordable and healthy school meals **(4)**. Some areas are going one step further and making school meals free for all children, with the aim of improving take

up of school food and access to a healthy diet.

The provision, uptake and consumption of school meals will be investigated in a study led by academics at Cardiff University.

The three-year £1.6m study is funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of its work to create opportunities and improve outcomes **(5)**. It is being carried out in partnership with Public Health Wales, LACA – the School Food People,

Newcastle University, Queen's University Belfast, Glasgow Caledonian University, and with advice from the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Access to Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) – where school meals are offered to a child regardless of financial status – varies across the UK **(4)**. UFSM are available in some parts of England. In Scotland, they are available up to year five, with some local authorities extending provision beyond that year

group. Wales is the first UK nation to roll-out the policy to all primary-aged children.

The more commonplace policy of Free School Meals (FSM) is means-tested (4).

For this study, researchers will work with school staff, local councils, caterers, public health experts and politicians across the four parts of the UK, to explore what food is provided and eaten at school.

The team will study the nutritional content of school menus and investigate what is actually consumed by children in two Welsh local authorities. This will create an understanding of whether one of the intentions of the UFSM policy - consumption of a healthy, nutritionally balanced meal at primary school - is being realised.

The researchers will also interview school staff, parents/carers and children to find out what influences provision, uptake and consumption of school meals. Annual school surveys will ask further

questions about school food choices, so that longer-term trends can be monitored. Together, this data will be used to provide recommendations for improvements to school food provision and uptake, as well as inform strategies to promote healthier choices among children and families.

This research provides a unique opportunity to explore provision across the UK, so that lessons can be learned about how children and young people can be given the best foundations for healthy and happy lives.

References

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/food-and-you-2-wave-1.pdf>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpql53p9w140#:~:text=28%20January%202025,have%20cut%20down%20on%20vegetables>
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/e22340f0b61704aec504/NDNS_UK_Y1-9_report.pdf
https://phwwhocc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/ENGLISH-PHW-IntHorizonScan_Report-44_June2023_FINAL-DRAFT.pdf
<https://www.ukri.org/news/projects-spanning-the-uk-to-tackle-food-inequality-unveiled/>



Practice

Gathering Lived Experiences to Promote Healthy Diets in Cwm Taf Morgannwg (CTM)

Claire Turbutt,

Principal PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Helen Walters,

Senior PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Rachel Reed

PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Libby McIntosh,

PH Practitioner, Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

At CTMUHB, we are dedicated to making it easier for our communities to access good quality and affordable food throughout their life course (1).

A key initiative is gathering the lived experiences of residents in the towns and villages of CTM. By listening to the voices of our community members, we gain valuable insights into the challenges they face in accessing healthy food. This information is crucial for developing targeted interventions that make

healthy food more accessible to all residents.

Our work with the Treherbert Initiative and Merthyr Community Groups has provided us with strong evidence of why people find it difficult to access healthy food (2). These insights are used to inform our senior power holders across the region who can make better decisions about the design of the food environment (3).

Resident Story:
The Merthyr Housing Team

worked with the Healthy Weights Team throughout 2024 to embed appreciative enquiry (AE) into their roles. AE is a narrative-based qualitative research tool designed to allow the person being interviewed to share insight from outside the interviewer's usual sphere of knowledge.

The team has integrated AE questions into their tenancy packs for each new household. This refocuses these initial conversations on building a relationship with the

tenant rather than it being a transactional interaction.

From the AE conversations in 2024, the community development officers discovered tenants were finding it difficult to walk to the nearby high street due to how the area felt, with litter making them feel unsafe; also, that many tenants struggled to access good-quality food. Karl, from Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association, supported the tenants in carrying out litter picks around their site and found a tenant in Dowlais who was a keen gardener. Karl linked in with the Community Development Team at RCT Council, who sourced support from Keep Wales Tidy. They provided funding and guidance to support the tenants and staff in creating a space to grow fruit and vegetables.

Karl (Community Development Officer) said:

“It has been magnificent to see the transformation of the garden at Dowlais Stables, and it has been fantastic to watch everything come to life. It has been a pleasure to be a part of the project, and it is wonderful to see our Contract Holders enjoying the garden. Mark from Keep Wales Tidy has been absolutely incredible.”

The garden has become very popular, with all the tenants enjoying fresh lettuce from the garden, and summer BBQs now held there. The project has helped tenants learn new skills, increase their access to good-quality food, boost their daily movement, and improve their well-being. It has provided opportunities for tenants to socialise, reducing isolation and loneliness. Recently, bat boxes, bird feeders, a hedgehog house, and a giant bug hotel have been added to the garden by Ieuan, from the Biodiversity Team at MCBC.

Julie, a resident who uses the garden, said: “I absolutely love the garden, and I cannot wait for everything to start growing again.”

Claire, Lead for The Whole Systems Approach to a Healthy Weight at CTM UHB, said: “I am so pleased to see the change in Karl and his team, from supporting him to use appreciative enquiry within his role to listening to the amazing things the community in Dowlais have achieved. It lets us know how important it is to listen to our communities before we act. Creating spaces like this is key to supporting healthier lives. The Community Garden has not only provided fresh food but has also encouraged movement, connection, and a sense of pride in the local environment. Seeing how the tenants have embraced this space is truly inspiring.”



Policy

UPF and HFSS - different labels, same foods? Nesta analysis of where ultra-processed foods meet those high in fat, sugar and salt

Sara Elias,

Policy Advisor, Nesta

Recent debates have placed ultra-processed foods (UPFs) at the forefront of discussion on our food environment. However, our analysis suggests that focusing on the existing regulatory framework based on foods high in fat, sugar, or salt (HFSS) remains the most pragmatic path forward to improve public health.

What's what?

The UK currently defines 'healthy' foods for policy purposes using a Nutrient Profiling Model, classifying products as HFSS if its nutrient score balances positive nutrients (like protein and fibre) against negative ones (like sugar and fat) and breaches the 'unhealthy'

threshold. Meanwhile, UPFs (industrially manufactured foods reliant on novel processes and chemical additives) now [make up over half of what we eat](#).

What does the evidence say?

While there's growing evidence of a correlation between [high UPF consumption and diet-related diseases](#) such as obesity, hypertension, and diabetes, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) cautions that there [isn't strong evidence that processing itself causes harm](#).

Nesta set out to explore which ultra-processed products

fall under the existing HFSS classification, analysing over 3.3 million transactions for a major UK supermarket. Our analysis found that there is [a significant overlap between these two categories](#):

Almost two-thirds of UPF calories purchased (64%) come from HFSS products, the analysis finds. This proportion increases to almost four-fifths (78%) when two staple foods – bread and yoghurt – which are typically UPF but not strongly linked to negative health outcomes, are excluded. For UPF drinks, only one in five (21%) are classified as HFSS, but these HFSS drinks – such as high-sugar fizzy and energy drinks – account for

over half (56%) of calories consumed from UPF drinks.

What does this mean for policymakers?

This substantial overlap is critical for policymakers. It suggests that the possible benefits of switching from an NPM-based to a UPF-based policy approach may be marginal. The NPM is [well-established in law](#) and familiar to manufacturers, retailers, and policymakers. As a result, there are substantial barriers to a UPF-focused paradigm shift, which could only be justified if harmful products were being overlooked.

This isn't to reject concerns surrounding UPF. As research evolves, policymakers should consider refining the NPM to reflect new evidence on what may actually drive harm in certain UPFs. We know this is a viable option, with a [US study](#) demonstrating that by adding elements to the HFSS

definition – such as flavour enhancers, colours, and emulsifiers – all UPFs could be captured.



Policy

Tipping the balance towards a healthier out of home food environment: a collaborative systems working event

Sophia Bird,

Principal Public Health Practitioner, Health Improvement Division, Public Health Wales

Xanthe Bevis,

Public Health Practitioner, Health Improvement Division, Public Health Wales

Out of home food consumption in the UK has changed over time with around 25% of our total energy intake from eaten out of the home. Portion sizes have increased and food prepared and eaten out of the home most often contains more energy and is nutritionally poorer than food prepared from fresh at home.

Easy access to takeaway food, which is energy-dense (high in calories) nutrient-poor food is associated with overweight and obesity, particularly in areas of deprivation. Obesity rates amongst children and young people are often higher in areas where hot food retail outlets are within easy walking distance of schools.

The number and density of hot food takeaway food outlets has increased in Wales, particularly in areas of deprivation with a 40% increase in some areas over the past 5 years.

Out of home food consumption is influenced by local food environments. The system that shapes out of home food environments includes planning, licensing and enforcement with many opportunities to support healthier options.

Tipping the Balance brought together over 30 professionals with expertise in planning and health from

local authorities; health boards; public health; general practitioners, and Welsh Government in Sept 2024. The event focussed on current regulations, policies, and processes and how they operate nationally and locally.

The aim was to promote discussion and the development of a shared vision and developing recommendations healthier out of home food environments using existing and new approaches.

Workshops focussed on the vision and ambition for change. Workshops also examined case studies and further developed maps

identifying the environmental factors that influence behaviours (causal maps) to explore relationships between factors influencing healthier out of home food. These helped colleagues together identify processes within the current system that were supportive and challenging and opportunities and principles for change.

The shared vision and ambition for change:

To reduce the number and density of out of home food outlets offering energy dense, nutrient poor food in areas of deprivation and/or areas with high levels of overweight and obesity.

To improve the balance of food offered in out of home food outlets in favour of healthier options.

The event confirmed that there is no single solution and a broad range of policy tools and practices are needed across the planning system.

Together colleagues identified opportunities for the creation of new levers at national, regional and local level to build on and enhance current initiatives.

These include plans to review current planning system use class orders and opportunities to strengthen national technical planning guidance and frameworks to enable the planning system to support healthier food environments.

The use of policy tools, alongside, financial incentives, community engagement, and education, are pivotal for addressing the health impacts of hot food takeaways. Multi-faceted system-level approaches need to be developed to support change and prioritise long-term sustainability and the interests of future generations. These approaches need to consider opportunities for healthier, more sustainable food environments and tackling the

unintended consequences of current practices.



A milestone for food policy in Wales

Katie Palmer,

Head of Food Sense Wales

This year has felt like a significant year for food policy in Wales. The [Sustainable Farming Scheme](#) has just been announced; there's a consultation on [Healthy Eating and Drinking in Maintained Schools in Wales](#), and earlier this year, we saw the publication of two important reports – the [Future Generations Commissioner's Annual Report](#) and the [Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy](#). Both these documents lay the groundwork for catalysing and enabling the growing good food movement in Wales, helping to progress the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of Wales through food. They also emphasise the pivotal role of [Local](#)

[Food Partnerships](#) in shaping Wales' food future, and highlight the way that innovative initiatives like [Welsh Veg in Schools](#), can harness the potential of public procurement in creating a more sustainable food system.

[Food Sense Wales](#) has long been at the forefront of nurturing local food partnerships across Wales as part of Sustainable Food Places and in collaboration with communities, and with Welsh Government, we've developed a network of strong and robust partnerships. Our [Local Food Partnerships status report](#) offers a snapshot of the current landscape.

In 2023, Wales' Future Generations Commissioner published [Cymru Can](#) outlining his long-term vision and announcing the food system as his first area of focus. The Commissioner has since been working with Food Sense Wales, Public Service Boards and Public Bodies to integrate sustainable food policies into their well-being plans, with a particular emphasis on community food plans that foster change at a local level.

It's encouraging to see the Future Generations Commissioner's report advocating for a host of food related actions, including the development of a National Food Resilience Plan; the

continued support for Food Partnerships as well as further support for horticulture and Food Literacy. The Office of the Future Generations Commissioner has put significant energy into food and we are aligning our work on Food Partnerships to support them as they develop advice to Public Bodies on Food. This work has been triangulated with Welsh Government's Community Food Strategy, which was also published in April.

[Local Food Partnerships](#) were recognised in both the Commissioner's report and the Community Food Strategy as a vital force for bringing together stakeholders, policies and initiatives, enabling local actors to work collaboratively to create and deliver a shared vision and strategy for a more sustainable, just, and resilient food system. They're also referenced in the Sustainable Farming Scheme and we're delighted to see this important work recognised and look forward to seeing how their

further development can positively impact our food system in Wales. Ultimately, the Community Food Strategy will be an opportunity for stakeholders to work together to strengthen local food systems and to build back much needed diversity and resilience into our food system in a way in which supports the cultural, economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people in Wales.

Food Sense Wales also coordinates the pioneering [Welsh Veg in Schools](#) initiative, a participatory action research project aimed at increasing the use of organic Welsh-grown produce in schools. In the Spring, a [report](#) was published detailing the project's impact and highlighting the potential for **25% of all vegetables** used in primary school meals in Wales to be locally grown and organic by 2030.

By leveraging the market opportunity created by the

Welsh Government's Universal Free school meal policy, and by supporting public bodies to meet their statutory requirements, [Welsh Veg in Schools](#) is catalysing organic veg production in Wales and building resilience for the future. This work is crucial if public bodies are serious about meeting their obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act whilst supporting local communities and building resilience against future shocks and climate change.

Read the [Community Food Strategy here](#).

Read the [Future Generations Commissioner's Report here](#).

Read the Local Food Partnerships Status

Report [here](#) and watch the associated films [here](#).

And read the Welsh Veg in Schools report [here](#).

Grapevine





Ros's Rainbow Woodland

Bryony Rees,

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools Co-ordinator, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools (PODS) has been delivering Coetir Enfys Ros (Ros' Rainbow Woodland), an initiative which aims to create a "dispersed woodland" across selected school and community sites in Pembrokeshire.

The project was set up in memory of the former Director of Public Health and Hywel Dda University Health Board, Ros Jervis. As well as providing a boost for biodiversity and carbon capture in the County, Coetir Enfys Ros seeks to encourage pupils to enjoy the outdoors, improve health and well-being and provide an ongoing resource for learning.

Secondary Schools were the

focus for the first year of the scheme with Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi in St Davids, planting over 800 trees in March 2024 around the rear playing field at the schools Dewi Campus secondary school. All of year 7 and 8s, 156 students planted the trees and volunteers from the local area, the army base, and Eco Dewi also joined.

In December 2024, over 300 native trees were planted at the entrance to the campus of Greenhill School in Tenby. Every pupil in year 7 and 8 planted a tree as part of their enrichment week, with a focus on making an impact in their 'Cynefin'. In addition, each class in year 7 planted a fruit tree in a new orchard on a small area of open space

within the grounds.

In February 2025, Bryony worked closely with a small group at Neyland Pupil Referral Unit to plan and then plant a hedgerow to create a wellbeing area within their school grounds. The students were engaged and successfully planted a mix of native tree species such as hazel, hawthorn, elder and apple trees.

The background of the initiative was shared with the students, who were touched by Ros's aims and generosity. Having returned recently to the schools, the trees are budding and flowering, adding a glorious entrance drive to the school in Tenby which the students pass each day

on their walk into school. In St Davids, the trees are blossoming around the playing fields and already providing colour and privacy in Neyland for the wellbeing area. The project has had an immense impact on students, where they were able to be a part of action towards improving their outdoor spaces, supporting nature recovery and really make a difference.

“It has been a wonderful, very touching project to deliver and be a part of, I recently shared the outcome with Ros’ family and colleagues at Public Health Wales, who say Ros would be delighted with the outcomes. Ros’ legacy lives on, in the most beautiful way.” Bryony Rees, Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools Co-ordinator.

“We would like to further thank Ros’s family and friends for raising money to fund this initiative. The opportunity has certainly encouraged our pupils to enjoy the outdoors, boosted biodiversity our

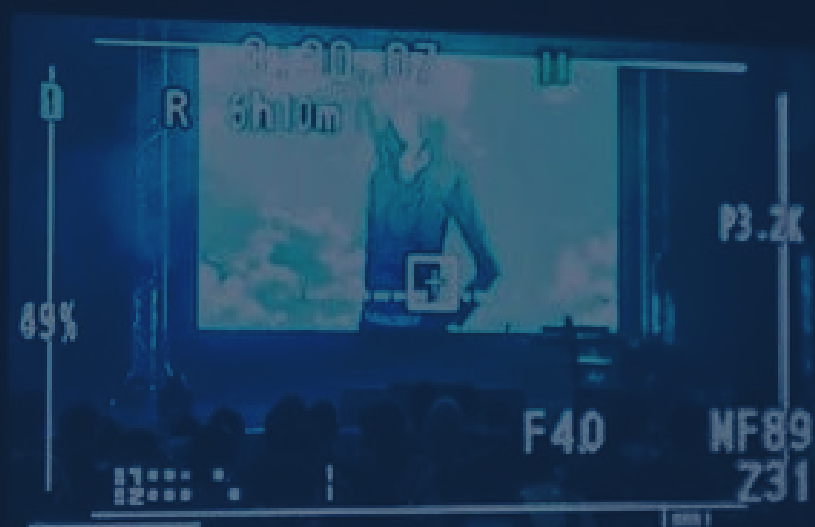
school grounds offer, and will improve pupil’s health and wellbeing for years to come. Diolch pawb!” Ysgol Greenhill, Tenby.

Website: [Pembrokeshire Outdoor Schools](#)

Links: [Facebook post 1](#)
[Facebook post 2](#)

Video of the trees planted in Ysgol Penrhyn Dewi:
<https://www.facebook.com/EcoDewiGroup/videos/729199699334314>

Videos



BARS

EVF DTL

ZEBRA

LCD

WFM

COUNTER-RESET/TC SE

FUNCTION SHTR/F



Brain Health and Dementia Risk Reduction – How can we affect change?

There is limited public awareness of the risk factors that contribute to dementia, despite growing evidence that around 45% of cases are linked to modifiable factors such as hearing loss, smoking, inactivity, and cardiovascular health.

Watch



Building Strong Foundations | Cardiff Highlights

The conference aligned with the PHNC objectives of sharing knowledge, facilitating the developments of solutions and approaches and connecting members and building a community.

Watch



Building Strong Foundations | Llandudno Highlights

The conference aligned with the PHNC objectives of sharing knowledge, facilitating the developments of solutions and approaches and connecting members and building a community.

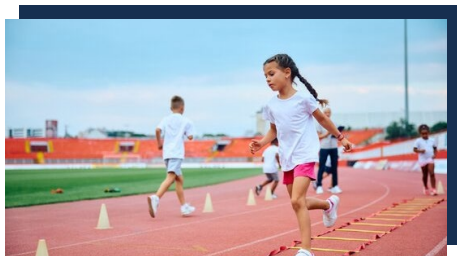
Watch

Explore our video library
on our website

**View all
our videos**

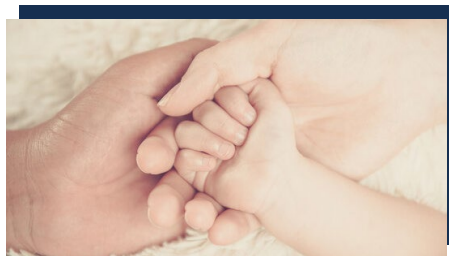
News & Resources





[How sport in Wales is creating better environments for women and girls](#)

29-07-2025



[Parents' Voices at the Heart of new Early Years Framework for Action](#)

01-07-2025



[National lung cancer screening programme for Wales will save lives, say health experts](#)

01-07-2025

[All News](#)

[The Vision for the Sport and Physical Activity Workforce in Wales](#)

CIMSPA

[Prevention-Based Health and Care A framework to embed prevention in the health and care system in Wales](#)

Public Health Wales

[All Resources](#)

Next Issue

BRAIN HEALTH AND DEMENTIA RISK REDUCTION



There is limited public awareness of the risk factors that contribute to dementia, despite growing evidence that around 45% of cases are linked to modifiable factors such as hearing loss, smoking, inactivity, and cardiovascular health. Prevention is both possible and powerful and targeted outreach is needed while addressing stigma and fear around diagnosis. Although dementia is one of our greatest health challenges, it remains low on the public agenda—underscoring the need for urgent, equitable, and prevention-focused action across the system.

For our upcoming e-bulletin we are inviting contributions from projects and initiatives which focus on prevention and help limit the risk factors that can contribute to dementia. These can be national, regional or local initiatives, policies or programmes. Our article submission form will provide you with further information on word count, layout of your article and guidance for images.

Please send articles to publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk by 21st August 2025.

Contribute