

Lisa Williams, All Wales Nutrition  
Training Facilitator, Cardiff and Vale UHB

Andrea Basu, Service Lead for Public Health  
Dietetics, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB

Caroline Bovey, Lead Public Health Dietitian,  
Aneurin Bevan UHB



Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee

9 February 2026

Dear Jenny Rathbone,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

Dietitians are the only nutrition professionals to be regulated by an independent *statutory* regulator. Dietitians' practice must meet professional standards of proficiency, and practice is governed by an ethical code to ensure that all practitioners work to the highest standard in protecting both individuals and the public. Dietitians use the most up-to-date public health and scientific research on food, health and disease, and translate this into practical guidance to enable people to make appropriate lifestyle and food and dietary decisions. We work with governments, policy makers, organisations, communities and individuals so that the public are protected and can access trusted, credible, evidence-based information and professional support.

Further to the focus group discussion on 2 February 2026, we ask the Senedd and Welsh Government to:

1. uphold the priority themes and action outlined in the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales delivery plan 2025-27 (supporting babies, children and young people / reducing health inequalities) by widening dietetic coverage and involvement for all Flying Start areas across Wales building on good practice from Cardiff and Blaenau Gwent
2. embed nutrition into cross sector food provision, policy and strategy by involving dietitians in the development, design and implementation of food policy and regulations e.g., the Community Food Strategy and the network of Local Food Partnerships.

In relation to the committee's questions about the provision of healthy and nutritious school meals, Wales is leading the way in the UK in providing Universal Primary Free Schools Meals (UPFSM). This is a vital step towards prioritising children's health. The provision of UPFSM in Wales supports wide ranging goals including easing the immense pressure on household budgets, reducing inequalities and effectively and independently supporting a reduction in the impact of the harder to tackle, wider determinants of health.

The revised Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations, coming into force in October 2026, will reflect the latest Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition recommendations, another crucial step to ensure food in schools is healthy and nourishing for our youngest citizens.

Dietitians in Wales are stakeholders in the development and implementation of the revised regulations. We support a whole school approach to nutrition through the following:

1. Accredited food and nutrition training for school governors, senior leaders, parent-teacher associations, healthy schools' teams, school caterers, school meal

- supervisors, teachers, teaching assistants and Estyn inspectors. This increases nutrition knowledge and confidence to interpret the new regulations, lead on action and compliance, and galvanise nutrition action across the whole school community,
2. Food and Fun programme - nutrition education sessions and opportunities for children and parents to enjoy a school meal together. This can raise parents' confidence that children enjoy new foods and encourage uptake of free school meals,
  3. School-based food preparation skills sessions for parents and children to make nutritious, affordable meals together, learning from the positive impact of regional programmes. As examples,
    - a. Come and Cook with your Child in Betsi Cadwaladr UHB has demonstrated greater parental engagement and improved family and children's eating habits,
    - b. The Food Hour programme in Cardiff and Vale UHB brings together food, nutrition, growing and sustainability in participating schools,
  4. Expert nutrition advice and guidance to school catering teams on medically prescribed diets and nutritional analysis of school menus ensuring compliance with the revised regulations.

To maximise the benefits of UPFSM for children in Wales the following actions must be prioritised by the Senedd and Welsh Government:

1. Commit long term, sustainable funding for UPFSM and the Food and Fun programme,
2. Communicate the benefits of UPFSM for children and families to all stakeholders and provide clear guidance for implementation, monitoring and compliance with the new regulations through training, promotional materials and assessment tools,
3. Credible, evidence informed nutrition training, delivered by qualified dietitians, and guidance for Estyn Inspectors to facilitate accurate assessment of compliance with the regulations and any sanctions for non-compliance,
4. Strengthen schools' focus on addressing diet related inequalities by reinstating food and nutrition as a core component of the Health and Well-being Promoting Schools Scheme. Furthermore, reward schools that are fully compliant with the regulations through schemes such as the National Quality Award,
5. Experiential learning opportunities, from farm to fork, for children to develop their food and nutrition knowledge and skills (food literacy) as highlighted within the Future Generations 2025 report (pg 24),

*'Welsh Government should scale up the Nutrition Skills for Life programme across all schools in Wales, ensuring that every child leaves school food literate, with the skills and knowledge to maintain a healthy and sustainable diet'*

6. Food available in schools must visibly align with national dietary guidelines, i.e., the Eatwell Guide. Failure to align to the national model can undermine nutrition education, create confusing and mixed messages, and allow space for non-evidence informed information to be circulated, which will ultimately limit effectiveness.

We thank you again for inviting us to contribute to the inquiry. If you would like any further information about our programmes of work, do get in touch.

Yours sincerely

**Lisa Williams, RD**  
All Wales Nutrition Training  
Facilitator

**Andrea Basu, RD, RPHNutr**  
Service Lead for Public  
Health Dietetics

**Caroline Bovey, BEM, FBDA**  
Lead Public Health Dietitian