

Embedding food and health activities and policies across learning disability services – what are the barriers and successes?’



Friday 4 December 2015.

Roundtable meeting notes

Twelve people (specialist dietitians, voluntary sector and NHS staff) from across seven NHS board areas attended the Roundtable discussion, including representatives from the Scottish Commission for Learning Disability (SCLD) and the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS).

The group included discussion on national training available for the sector: The [REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability](#) and the SCLD [Healthy eating, healthy living](#) training pack.

The group undertook a rough mapping exercise to find out what type of food activities, and if physical activities are, were or will be available for adults with learning disabilities in their area. There seemed to be a lot happening but not always in a very joined-up or comprehensive way, but a wide range of activities are already, or will be available for people with learning disabilities. These included cooking skills courses, weight management groups, gardening projects, walking groups, individual advice provision, support to plan menus and food shopping. Most of the groups had provided or planned to provide one or both of the REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability and the SCLD Healthy eating, healthy living training pack. Those attending the meeting were more likely to be providing support by working with learning disability services, but some were also working with individuals with learning disabilities or their families, and a few were working with local community initiatives.

The group were asked:

What's going well and why? Comments included:

- The SCLD Healthy eating, healthy living pack is a good training resource (although it is daunting for some people) [it is a large very comprehensive pack, but it is possible to dip into the pack and use single sections]
- The REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability receives good feedback from those that complete it.
- One organisation had developed a four-hour nutrition course and this helps increase understanding about nutrition quickly. [across services]
- The Scottish learning disability health policy - The Keys to Life – can provide momentum
- The SCLD Healthy eating, healthy living pack works well with individuals with a learning disability

- Attracting people with learning disabilities to attend food and health activities by providing these as social activities, being more holistic, or by offering other activities such as IT, personal safety and avoiding the term 'weight management'
- Working with existing support groups or day centres was an easier way to reach some people with learning disabilities
- One group that had training kitchens available found that these successfully attracted groups working with people with learning disabilities to develop cooking skills activities.
- Working with local area co-ordinators or physiotherapists worked well for a couple of organisations
- Working in a co-productive way
- Work across a few areas is co-ordinated well

What is going less well? Comments included:

- There can be a lack of co-ordination across areas
- Engaging with people with learning disabilities who are not within a service or group already
- There is a need for some requirement to do training on health and nutrition to be able to use the Healthy eating, healthy living pack effectively
- Anything client specific is labour intensive
- [mainstream] weight management service are less accessible to people with Learning disabilities
- Accessing mainstream services for people with learning disabilities
- It can be difficult for learning disability services to commit to releasing staff to attend food and health training due to other training taking priority and issues around high turn-over of staff / low wages.
- Getting the 'right' people to attend training – i.e. those who have the skills, commitment and support required to implement learning within their service/ organisation
- No nutrition element within SSSC registration in April 2017 / SVQ level 2 or 3
- Time pressures on unpaid and family carers [to get involved in activities]
- continuity of funding
- Lack of public transport [for people with learning disabilities to take part in activities in rural areas]

How to address these challenges. Comments included:

- The Keys to Life action plan needs specific and measurable actions.
- Local networks and co-ordination and meeting up are really important; eg joining up with public health; learning disability services and community and voluntary sector.

- Heads of service need to flag up responsibilities and 'duty of care' [in order to stress the importance of food and health work.
- Service providers reporting on what they're doing to the care commission is powerful
- Some people are changing practices as a result of being asked about what they're doing
- Offer a flexible approach to supporting services so they can pick and choose activities relevant to their services and those they support.
- Work with leisure services and health centres
- One area has found working with supermarkets useful. Some have community link workers that will do sessions for free or give money for local groups. Need to raise awareness of what's available
- There is a need for local level impetus and energy
- [dietetic and other] students are sometime available for dietetic work, make use of them
- Highlight how food and health activities might avoid raising a 'service concern'
- Service level agreement / contract with: service providers (package of care) and with those taking part in training.
- Integrated care fund
- Menu planning with services

The group discussed the [REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability](#) and the a training pack resource available from the SCLD [Healthy eating, healthy living pack](#)

Healthy eating healthy living pack:

The group asked if might be possible to have another print run of the Healthy eating, healthy living resource. Some groups have had it printed locally.

REHIS Elementary Food and Health course for carers of adults with a learning disability:

Positive feedback:

- There is positive feedback from staff that attend this course
- The training and timing of the course (minimum of 9 hours) is suitable for its aims
- Some areas add on other activities – such as practical food work, work with occupational therapy, physical activity
- It is best to encourage both managers and staff to attend the course
- One organisation at the roundtable meeting had used the course as part of a 'train the trainer' course

Challenges:

- Getting staff getting released to attend training (a suggestion included – plan ahead as far as possible, some services plan their rotas 3 months in advance)
- Capacity of dietitians/ trainers to support delivery of training locally
- People not turning up (suggest: threaten to charge for non-attendees)
- People hear the 'REHIS' and think they are attending a food hygiene course
- The course is too long for some people

Ideas to address these challenges:

- Provide guidance / implementation expectations for those attending
- charge a nominal fee

Other food and health resources highlighted at the roundtable discussion:

Other resources were displayed at the meeting, these included pictorial recipe books, which are available in the [resources section](#) of the CFHS website and the CHANGE resources suitable for parents with a learning disability (covers wider issues on health and pregnancy as well as some food issues)