Introduction

1.1 This briefing note explains the role and purpose of Health and Wellbeing Boards in England. It provides advice for Registered Nutritionists attending their local Health and Wellbeing Board, gives suggested questions with accompanying notes and provides a summary of AfN’s action in relation to influencing Health and Wellbeing Board local commissioning programmes.

What are Health and Wellbeing Boards?

2.1 The Health and Social care Act 2012 required every local authority in England, (top tier and unitary authority) to establish, from 1st April 2012, a Health and Wellbeing Board as a local authority Committee. Health and Wellbeing Boards consist, as a minimum, a locally elected representative, a representative of the local Healthwatch, a representative of each local clinical commissioning group and three local authority directors, including the Director of Public Health. Membership can also include representatives from the charity or voluntary sectors. Meetings are open to the public and the agenda should give the opportunity for the public to attend, observe and ask questions of the Board.

2.2 The purpose of Health and Wellbeing Boards is to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population and reduce health inequalities. Health and Wellbeing Boards have a responsibility to promote healthy weight and healthy diet and to advise and support individuals and communities in weight management, nutrition and behaviour change.

Why do we wish to influence Health and Wellbeing Boards?

3.1 We have a strategic interest in ensuring locally commissioned programmes in weight management, nutrition and behaviour are effective and grounded in scientific evidence-based nutrition practice. Food and its implication for health is complex. Public health nutrition builds on a foundation of biological and social science, epidemiological evidence and involves the development of programmes to improve and maintain health. As the voluntary regulator for Registered Nutritionists, and building on our standards-setting role across the wider health & social care workforce, (AfN 2011 Workforce Competence Model in Nutrition), we want to ensure everyone who uses or provides nutrition information and advice to individuals and groups has the skill, confidence and capacity to do so safely and effectively, for the protection of the public.

3.2 Together, Certification and Registered Nutritionists offer Health and Wellbeing Boards a workforce competent in nutrition science, skilled in behaviour change and expert in the theory and practice of food based programmes to deliver change.
3.3 We are writing to the Chair of all 103 Health and Wellbeing Boards in England to offer short briefing on AfN and our ongoing work to strengthen the skill base of the wider workforce in nutrition. Already AfN has received positive phone calls or emails requesting further information, or offers to attend Board meetings. Registrants are able to reinforce this message locally by attending their local Health and Wellbeing Board meetings and, by asking questions of the Board, raise awareness of the potential contribution of Registered Nutritionists in the promotion of nutrition, healthy eating and capacity building within the workforce.

**Attending Health & Wellbeing Boards**

4.1 Health & Wellbeing Boards are open to the public. The date, time a location of local Health and Wellbeing Board meetings are published on local authority websites. By attending a local Health and Wellbeing Board and using the opportunity on the agenda for the public to ask questions of the Board, Registered Nutritionists can highlight the role and opportunity to contribute to public health improvement. We have suggested, below, four questions, with accompanying notes, that Registered Nutritionists may wish to consider asking their local Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Question One**

How does the Health and Wellbeing Board intend to improve local health outcomes in relation to healthy weight and healthy diet?

*Notes:* Health & Wellbeing Board are encouraged to engage with local stakeholders and communities in developing the JSNA and health and wellbeing strategies. Local Authorities will need to identify key stakeholders and build relationships; they will also need to gather evidence on which to measure performance and build on best practice. Registered Nutritionists are experts in their field and should be the first point of call for Health & Wellbeing Boards. Registered Nutritionists can provide Health & Wellbeing Boards evidence-based scientific advice and signposting to good practice at a strategic level, helping to identify and improve local health outcomes in relation to healthy weight and healthy diet.

**Question Two**

How will the Health and Wellbeing Board ensure those who are providing nutrition, healthy eating and weight management advice to local individuals or groups are qualified, competent and capable of doing so?

*Notes:* Registered Nutritionists are Associate and Full Registered Nutritionists with the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists, (UKVRN). The AfN governs and maintains the UKVRN. All registrants on the UKVRN have a degree in nutritional science or substantial peer-recognised professional nutrition experience and must adhere to our Code of Ethics and Statement of Professional Conduct.

Funded by the Department of Health’s Third Sector Investment Programme and building on our role as the voluntary regulator for Registered Nutritionists, we have developed AfN Certification to assess, maintain and enhance the nutrition competence of those who give nutrition advice to the public, including online assessment of nutrition skills leading to AfN Certificate of Nutrition Competence. AfN Certificate of Nutrition Competence at Level 5 is specifically designed for Health Professionals, including Pharmacists and GPs, to demonstrate and provide external
recognition of nutrition knowledge and competence. The assessments at the lower levels, 3 & 4, may well be suitable for those Health and Wellbeing Boards commission or employ to deliver healthy eating/weight management programmes at a local level. AfN also quality assures the nutrition content of in-house and external training so that employer and the public can be confident course content is appropriate and evidence-based.

**Question Three**

How will the Health and Wellbeing Board ensure its locally commissioned programmes to provide healthy eating and weight management advice are effective and grounded in scientific evidence-based nutrition practice?

**Notes;** Evidence based nutrition practice protects the public from unsafe advice and ensures locally commissioned programmes are effective. Registered Nutritionists are experts in their field and should be the first point of call for Health & Wellbeing Boards. Registered Nutritionists can provide Health & Wellbeing Boards evidence-based scientific advice and signposting to good practice at a strategic level in identifying and improving local health outcomes in relation to healthy weight and healthy diet.

**Question Four**

How can local Registered Nutritionists help the Health and Wellbeing Board improve local health outcomes in relation to healthy weight and healthy diet?

**Notes;** Registered Nutritionists can offer expertise either by offering to sit on their local Health and Wellbeing Board, or by engaging in public participation events to help shape Board strategy and outcomes. Registered Nutritionists can also offer briefings to Health and Wellbeing Board members on key drivers on public health nutrition, and can assist with local workforce training and education. (AfN also quality assures the nutrition content of in-house and external training so that employer and the public can be confident course content is appropriate and evidence-based.)

Registered Nutritionists can also offer commercially valuable skills in delivering locally based programmes or workforce training. Enquire about Health and Wellbeing Board commissioning programmes; tender processes and pre-qualification requirements. AfN view is that only Registered Nutritionists or AfN Certification are an appropriate qualifications for those Health and Wellbeing Boards commission or employ to deliver healthy eating/weight management programmes at a local level.
Further Information

Further information can be obtained from;

Department of Health

http://healthandcare.dh.gov.uk/hwb-guide/

Local Government Association

http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/health/-/journal_content/56/10171/3510973/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

RSPH

http://www.google.co.uk/aclk?sa=l&ai=Cm8CScmnJUYDhLJO_0AWUy4E4__3VhQKvh82lpmc
hraIAQqAEAlAoA1CMklyZ____8BYLu-roPQCqAB-YuW4gPIAQGqBBxP0P-
SmYneAY8ugJmnSXCODvi1uX4e2BdA1kigAfY8-
kd&sig=AOD64_2o9zp6MyyyQODcDqwx2dMr3nzQ&ved=0CDkQ0Qw&adurl=http://www.rsph.org.uk/en/courses-conferences-and-events/rsph-training-solutions.cfm

London Councils

http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/healthadultservices/healthandwellbeingboards/