Providing Comment on Government’s Carbohydrates and Health Report and Sugar Reduction Action Plan
Guidance to UKVRN Registrants
June 2014

Introduction

1.1 This briefing note provides guidance to UKVRN registrants providing comment on the Government’s forthcoming Carbohydrates and Health report and Sugar Reduction Action Plan.

1.2 On 26th June the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) publish their draft report Carbohydrates and Health for a 9 week public consultation, to 1st September 2014. The report and the accompanying annexes will be available on the SACN website to download at http://www.sacn.gov.uk/. We have been informed SACN are seeking only scientific comments on their draft report.

1.3 Alongside publication of the SACN draft report on Carbohydrates and Health, Public Health England (PHE) will publish the Sugar Reduction Action Plan for consultation. Included as an annex to the action plan will be an options paper prepared for PHE by the UK Health Forum, on which AfN views were sought at a consultation event on 3rd June 2014.

1.4 We anticipate many UKVRN registrants will be asked to comment on both the report and action plan for a range of stakeholders including employers, clients and colleagues, health improvement teams, food manufacturers, food service providers and industry, local and national current affairs media, and direct to the public. Heightened public and press interest in the report and action plan gives opportunity for UKVRN registrants to demonstrate their scientific credibility, objectivity and advocacy for evidence-based nutrition, and to emphasise the importance of expert advice from Registered Nutritionists as opposed to unqualified individuals.

1.5 For this reason we have prepared the following guidance for use by UKVRN registrants.

Guidance to UKVRN Registrants Providing Comment

2.1 Use your title. It’s often hard when you are being quoted in the press to ensure you are credited with your correct professional title. Do keep reminding those you are advising, to display your professional status clearly and accurately.
   ANutr / Associate Nutritionist or
   RNutr / Registered Nutritionist (specialism)

2.2 Remember your professional obligation to uphold the AfN Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance. Standard 8 requires UKVRN registrants to be objective, fair, balanced and proportionate in professional statements or recommendations. Standard 3 requires UKVRN registrants to work within their scope of practice. Standard 2 requires UKVRN registrants to maintain high levels of scientific integrity. If you are asked to provide comment and you feel unsure, seek further advice from another Registered Nutritionist rather than jeopardise your own registered status, harm the public or bring the profession into disrepute.
2.3 **Ensure your response is accurate, fair, balanced and objective.** Read the report and action plan carefully. Reference the information on which you base your view. Questions to ask are: Is the evidence base complete? Is the evidence base substantial? Are there gaps or weakness in the information contained in the report? Is the action plan appropriate? Where are the key risks? What are the wider implications, for example, in workforce capacity to deliver change in nutrition practice, or to a local economy or a specific employer? Are there obvious omissions, or, if choices are presented, is there evidence to support the efficacy of one approach over another?

2.4 **Declare your interests.** Ensure you are clear and accurate when describing your role and your interests. You are a UKVRN registrant but you will also be employed, or self-employed with a client base. You may have had some involvement in writing the report or action plan, or have received research funding from an organisation with a significant interest in the outcome of the consultation. You might also be an AfN trustee, committee member, assessor or volunteer. Use your professional title (Associate Nutritionist or Registered Nutritionist (specialism)) alongside your job title. Make sure the person you are advising understands the perspective from which you are giving your advice, bearing in mind your obligations under the *Standards* to be objective, fair, balanced and proportionate in your professional statements or recommendations.

2.5 **State AfN will make a separate response.** Please do not speak on behalf of AfN. Our response to the report and action plan will be published on our website and made available to PHE. It is likely AfN comment will be focused on the contribution a well-trained workforce can make to improving nutritional health. The options presented will require significant professional expertise in nutrition at a strategic and operational level within NHS, public health policy, food service, manufacturing and retail sectors, as well as in nutrition research policy and practice. UKVRN registrants are uniquely qualified to provide objective, balanced and evidence-based advice. In addition, the likely requirement for a general improvement in the nutrition competence of the wider health and social care workforce will be dependent on scaling up the Workforce Competence Model in Nutrition (AfN 2012) and AfN Certification of associated wider workforce training.

2.6 **Finally, think about using some of the statements below when providing comment, and let us know of any feedback you receive.**

*Who are UKVRN Registrants?*
UKVRN registrants are Associate Nutritionists and Registered Nutritionists listed on the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists, (UKVRN). 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 Standards of Ethics, Conduct and Performance.

*What is the Workforce Competence Model in Nutrition and AfN Course Certification?*
Funded by the Department of Health Third Sector Investment Programme and building on our role as the voluntary regulator for Registered Nutritionists, we have developed AfN Course Certification to quality assure the nutrition content of training for those who deliver nutrition information as part of their role (at Levels 3 and 4 on the Public Health Skills and Careers Framework), validating course content as appropriate and evidence-based.

*What is Evidence-Based Nutrition Practice?*
Evidence-based nutrition practice is informed by the best available scientific research and protects the public from unsafe advice. Registered Nutritionists are experts in their field and can provide evidence-based advice and signposting to good practice at a strategic level, improving local health outcomes in relation to healthy weight and healthy diet.