

Press Note

Online Nutrition Course Fraudsters Plead Guilty To All Charges

On Monday 25th February 2019, Scott Wolfe and Katie Hope pleaded guilty to multiple offences including forgery, fraudulent trading and money laundering at Norwich Crown Court, in relation to fake online nutrition courses.

The two individuals will be sentenced on 15th April 2019 and this will mark the conclusion of a two-year investigation and successful prosecution by Norfolk County Council Trading Standards. The prosecution's case was supported by the Association for Nutrition (AfN), along with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), Department of Health & Social Care, Public Health England and Nutrition Society. This was in addition to the many victims of their fraud, who inadvertently bought these courses for non-existent qualifications, unfortunately thinking they would qualify them as Registered Nutritionists.

On 15th June 2016, the ASA concluded that it had upheld the Association for Nutrition's complaints about 'The Nutrition School'; specifically noting within their conclusions that *"the British Nutrition Council was not recognised as an accrediting body or that it would be accepted by other third parties as a certificate of achievement within the profession"*.

The investigation by Norfolk County Council Trading Standards discovered around 900 individuals from the UK, Canada, South Africa, Singapore and New Zealand had been scammed to the sum of £225,000. These courses were not written by experts in nutrition and were for qualifications that would simply not have been worth the paper they were written on, if they had even existed.

We are therefore extremely grateful to Norfolk County Council Trading Standards for all their support. We thank them for their hard work in pursuing this two-year long investigation and in producing such a robust case of evidence, that Wolfe and Hope, had no option but to plead guilty to all charges.

This successful prosecution is warmly welcomed by the AfN and our Registrants, as it is a clear indication that action will be taken against those who set out to deceive the public for their own personal gain. The prolonged fraudulent actions of Scott Wolfe and Katie Hope caused considerable stress and concern to AfN staff/trustees, genuine quality assured training providers and Registered Nutritionists, we therefore sincerely thank everyone involved for all their patience during the extended period of this investigation. An investigation which was absolutely necessary in order to protect the public, as well as provide justice for the victims who were duped by the pair and lost money through the purchasing of these fake courses.

For individuals in the UK who are looking to become a Registered Nutritionist, the Association for Nutrition is the regulator for Nutritionists who holds the Register (UKVRN) that is recognised by Public Health England, NHS Careers and NHS Choices.

To become registered with the AfN as a Registered Nutritionist individuals require a minimum of an honours-degree in nutrition science. Degree programmes which have demonstrated they meet the association's high standards have been awarded Accredited Degree status and carry the AfN Quality Assurance Mark.

If you are looking for a course below degree level, either for interest or for working/volunteering in a nutrition support role, we recommend looking for the AfN Quality Assurance Mark on a Certified Course. This will ensure the training, although not to the depth required to become a Registered Nutritionist, has still been assessed as being evidence-based and is delivered by a credible provider.

Notes to editors

Scott Wolfe, has previously used names including Lord Scott Austin, Scott Cameron and Scott McKay. Katie Hope, has previously used names including Katie Gibbs and Katie Layton.

Hope and Wolfe pleaded guilty to two counts of fraudulent trading under s.993 of the Companies Act 2006. One in connection with their conduct in operating International Distance College Ltd trading as The Nutrition School and the other in connection with their conduct in operating British Nutrition Council Ltd.

Wolfe pleaded guilty to one count of forgery, under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981, in connection with a forged email purporting to be from the Department of Health in support of the use of the restricted word 'British' in the name of British Nutrition Council Ltd.

Hope and Wolfe pleaded guilty to money laundering in connection with the use of a bank account in the name of Katie Hope to receive income from International Distance College Ltd

Wolfe pleaded guilty to two additional offences of money laundering in connection with transfers of money from the bank account of International Distance College Ltd to a personal bank account and a second bank account held in Mauritius.

The Association for Nutrition is the UK's independent regulator for Registered Nutritionists. A Registered Charity since 2010, our role is to protect and benefit the public. We hold the UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists (UKVRN), a register of competent, qualified nutrition professionals who meet our rigorously applied standards for scientifically sound evidence-based nutrition and its use in practice. The UK Voluntary Register of Nutritionists is the only register of qualified nutritionists recognised by Public Health England, NHS Choices and NHS Careers.

If you are looking for a qualified nutritionist, always check they have the quality mark post-nominal letters RNutr or ANutr after their name.

We accredit degree programmes that meet the standards required to provide graduates with the knowledge and understanding needed to join the register as a Registered Associate Nutritionist and gain specialist experience to become a Registered Nutritionist after a period of professional practice.

We also define and advance standards of evidence-based practice across the wider field of nutrition at all levels within the workforce. Our standards for the wider workforce in nutrition (in public health, catering, fitness, leisure and social care) were developed with support from Department of Health and Public Health England, and are the benchmark for nutrition competence for all who use, translate or provide nutrition information to the public.

All quality assured training is awarded a uniquely numbered logo as a quality mark as an indication to the public it has met the Association for Nutrition's standards.