

# GOING ANIMAL FREE IN VEGANUARY

*Posted on January 10, 2024*



This month is Veganuary – an awareness month which encourages people to try veganism for the whole of January. Many people also see it as an opportunity to go meat-free for a month to help regain some healthful habits after an indulgent December.

*By definition, a vegetarian is 'a person who does not eat meat or fish, and sometimes other animal products, especially for moral, religious, or health reasons' and a vegan is 'a person who does not eat any food derived from animals and who typically does not use other animal products.'*

## Being vegetarian or vegan in a Care Home

It can be a daunting time for a person who is **vegetarian or vegan and looking to live in Care**. The question of whether they will be well supported in line with how they have always eaten is an important consideration. It is every Care Home's responsibility to provide for all diets; my work with Nellsar to develop this area has been my focus over the years and I know that it isn't always easy to shift mindsets. I have found the best approach is through team training and development, aimed at empowering Care and Catering Teams to **provide inclusive menus and dining experiences**.

## New Guidance

Given the theme for this month it seemed the perfect opportunity to write about the **new guidance** from **Vegetarian for Life (VfL)** – [vegetarianforlife.org.uk](http://vegetarianforlife.org.uk) – who are a charity organisation supporting vegetarians and vegans in later life, living in Care and in the community. In October 2023 VfL worked with the Care Inspectorate Scotland to put together a **self-evaluation tool for Care Homes** to use to assess whether they are supporting their vegetarian and vegan residents appropriately.

The evaluation tool named '**Good Care For Vegetarians and Vegans**' collaborated with the Care Inspectorate, which is Scotland's version of the CQC. The guidance is simple to follow and is a useful reference for any Care Home wishing to maintain or improve their support for those choosing to be vegetarian or vegan.

## Dignity, variety and choice in dining

**Inclusion and dignity** is everything in a good quality caring environment. Nellsar's aim is to provide variety and choice based on **individual preferences** as much as we possibly can. As vegetarians and vegans enter our care, we have developed our menu recommendations to reflect meat-free options, and our 'alternative menus' will always be updated to include further vegetarian and vegan options based on people's needs and wishes.

**The VfL's evaluation tool illustrates how to be inclusive, prompting Homes to look at how care plans are written, how personalised preferences are gathered and how to include individuals in the planning of their choices and dietary support.** It also talks about cosmetic products and personal care products for those who are vegan and asks about future care planning in the event of a person losing capacity to make decisions, or requiring vegan fortification. Fortification is a term used to describe adding extra calories to a person's diet who could be losing weight or at risk of malnutrition due to an illness or loss of appetite; it is common for dairy to be used as a high-calorie ingredient as it is easily added to meals to boost the calories.

*I have sent the evaluation tool out to all our Nellsar Homes to use and will certainly be referring to it as I work with our Care Homes in 2024.*

You can access '**Good Care For Vegetarians and Vegans**' at: [vegetarianforlife.org.uk/shop](http://vegetarianforlife.org.uk/shop)