

NUTRITION AND CATERING REFLECTIONS ON 2023 AND ASPIRATIONS FOR 2024

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2023 has been a year of great achievement for Nellsar's Care Home Nutrition and Catering department.

Nutrition and Hydration Lead success

We started the year strong with the **Nutrition and Hydration Lead role developing** into a more established position within our Homes. As the year has gone on, we have welcomed a wealth of learning on how to make the nutrition and hydration support in our Homes ever more centred around resident well-being, colleague knowledge, working with external professionals and responding to the needs of those around us in a positive and holistic way.

This year I am pleased to announce that our Nutrition and Hydration Leads, **Katja, Allann, Adelina and Eddi** each completed their **Level 3 Diplomas in Diet and Nutrition**. This is a wonderful achievement and shows how dedicated they are to their work.

Nutrition & Hydration Week

In March our Homes embraced Nutrition & Hydration Week which was a delightful display of **celebrating and acknowledging the importance of food and drink for health and wellbeing**. Our fantastic Recreation and Well-Being Teams took the lead in making the week a colourful and engaging success.

Nellsar Care and Cookery Book

This summer, who can forget the launch of the '**Nellsar Care and Cookery Book**' which showcased Head Chef Cosmin's skill and techniques for creating delicious dishes for residents. I am so happy to have been involved in this project by giving tips and advice on the benefits of the dishes. The book also contained articles from me on Nutritional Therapy at Nellsar – how I have worked to benefit our Homes, the importance of hydration, digestive health and how to improve it, nutrition for the elderly and important food groups, and a piece on Dementia supportive dining.



Person-centred Care Catering

Tailored nutritional care

Person-centred care is at the heart of everything we do and this extends to our catering and dining provision across all our Nellsar Care Homes.

The operation of food production in a care home, 'Care Catering', is very different from a standard kitchen – a more diverse and meticulous job than in a commercial setting. There has to be detailed consideration of the needs of elderly residents and how to provide and cater meal plans carefully for each individual – to ensure each resident enjoys personalised food at breakfast, lunch and dinner, with variety in each and every day.

We have to be knowledgeable in all aspects of Care Catering, as our residents have multiple needs; these may include clinical factors (such as dementia, diabetes, food allergies), health and well-being factors (for example the need to put on weight), plus social and cultural nuances (relating to family background or religion for example).

Further, we are well aware that diet and appetite can change as we age and there are many subtleties to consider when catering for the elderly, including loss of appetite, difficulties swallowing and keeping hydrated.

There are many rules to follow, though fundamentally, our residents' happiness and

well-being remain at the forefront of all of our policies. We constantly strive to ensure each of our Homes deliver the highest quality of Care Catering to their residents, focusing on three main objectives:

- **Ensuring residents are well-nourished** – with regular mealtimes, including plentiful snacks and refreshments throughout the day, and nutritionally-balanced diets. This extends to how we plan both our 4-week and a la carte menus, as well as individual meal plans.
- **Keeping residents safe** – addressing any clinical needs, allergies or intolerances and preparing modified food textures for those on soft food diets.
- **Making residents happy** – bringing joy to our residents through food and tailoring diets around individual preferences.

When a resident moves in to one of our Homes, we ask them in detail about their tastes and food preferences and establish their nutritional and clinical needs. Menu planning then follows to make sure we cover all aspects of safe nutrition and serve what our resident enjoys. Within this, we cater for a range of special and sometimes complex diets, including diabetic, coeliac and texture modified for example (or combinations of these) all the while ensuring all our food looks and tastes delicious!



Nutritional Therapy at Nellsar

Establishing Leni Wood and her pioneering role

Nutritional Therapy aims to promote an individual's health through tailored nutrition and lifestyle changes, and Nutritional Therapists work with individuals to help ease symptoms and support health through dietary recommendations. This is achieved by championing the benefits of whole foods and hydration, as well as recognising the scientifically researched therapeutic effects of certain foods for specific health conditions.



Joining Nellsar in June 2017, Leni cemented the company as one of the first UK Care Providers to recognise the value of having a Nutritional Therapist onboard. Leni

dedicates her vast array of knowledge to both staff and residents alike.

As an advocate for better nutrition in healthcare, it is Leni's dream to see a shift in the approach to food and well-being in social care; she's passionate about the kitchen being used to its full potential when providing sustenance to vulnerable people in compromised states of health.

Eating well, staying as active as possible and learning how to relax are important throughout a lifetime, but as we age, our bodies have different needs, so certain nutrients become

particularly important. From protein, calcium and vitamin D to fibre and healthy fats, understanding the foundations of nutrition remains key to good health.

Leni has pioneered a nutritional training programme for our Care and Catering Staff that ensures person-centred care around our residents' diet and mealtimes. The Nutrition Lead project includes:

- A broad awareness of special diets including allergies and intolerances, diabetes, vegetarian, vegan and the various religious and cultural needs of residents.
- Knowledge of how dementia affects a person's appetite and dining experience.
- An understanding of the textured diets to support dysphagia and other factors that can affect people later on in life.
- Enhancing mealtimes for all residents to ensure they are enjoyable.

Leni also studies the links between the dining environment and the appetites of our residents. By providing personalised assessments and meal plans for individuals, she is simultaneously raising nutritional standards across our group of Care Homes. Since 2018, Leni has progressed to Head of Nutrition and Wellness Services – further reinforcing the nutritional therapy provided.

Nutritional articles and speaking opportunities

Speaking of articles, this year I was delighted to have two articles published; one in **The Carer Magazine** on the importance of empowering carers to tackle dehydration and malnutrition through awareness and education and the other in the **Caring Times** on how to manage diabetes in a social

care setting.

In June I was very fortunate to be asked to be a **guest speaker at The Care Home and Hospital & Catering Forum** in London where I spoke about improving appetite through presentation and dining environments.

Menopause awareness

As the year flew into the autumn and made its way to October, Nellsar made its first steps to becoming a Menopause friendly organisation by celebrating **World Menopause Day**. There is much more to come on this next year but for now I am very pleased to say that it is a topic which is very much embraced by our teams. We have exciting times ahead so *'watch this space'* for more regarding peri and menopause support.



**“CHANGING HEARTS
AND MINDS AROUND
THE MENOPAUSE”**

**Wear Pink for WORLD
MEN[♀]PAUSE DAY**

18 October

End of life care

My role of nutrition and wellbeing is varied and reaches all life stages, including end of life. For the last six months I have been **involved in a course with the GSF – the Gold Standard Framework – and learning how to support our Homes with end of life care.**

This is a delicate but crucial part of our care; making life as comfortable as possible if a person is at the end stages of life is of the utmost importance to us at Nellsar, and I've been gaining knowledge on how nutrition, hydration and wellbeing can be woven into helping residents, loved ones and

teams feel supported and comfortable in this time.

Aspirations for 2024

Looking ahead, plans are already in place for further **peri and menopause support** throughout 2024.

March will see the return of **Nutrition & Hydration Week** raising awareness of malnutrition and dehydration in the elderly. You will also see me contributing to **The Gold Standard Framework End of Life Care support** which is a valuable and worthy accreditation.

I have exciting plans with the **East and West Kent SLT and Dietetics teams** to incorporate Nellsar into their work helping to develop their services for care homes across Kent. Not to mention my work with our **Care Home Chefs and Catering Teams** – I love to support and help their development to meet best practice for person-centred nutrition and hydration.

Next year I also look forward to inviting Nellsar's Nutrition and Hydration Leads to join me in the **Regional NACC Seminars** to further their knowledge in care home nutrition and care home catering.

....2023 has been a full and vibrant year and my feeling is this is going to continue into 2024!