



The
Nutrition
Society

The New All-Party Parliamentary Group on Nutrition: Science and Health

Mark Hollingsworth, CEO, The Nutrition Society

There have only been a few times as CEO of the Nutrition Society when I can say history was made. I think of the 75th Anniversary of the Society in 2016, hosting the FENS 2019 Conference, major financial decisions made during the COVID pandemic, creating the new *Gut Microbiome* journal and the naming of Boyd Orr House as the home of the Society. I can now add to that list 6 June 2023, when the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Nutrition: Science and Health was formed in the House of Commons.

The APPG had been planned for many years, but political uncertainty and instability had made it difficult to move beyond an aspiration to a reality. However, in late 2022 recruitment of founding members was complete, with Tracey Crouch CBE MP as Chair, Andy Slaughter MP, Chi Onwurah MP, Baroness Boycott, Baroness Ritchie and Lord Brooke.

The objective of hosting the APPG is to examine the evidence for the vital role of nutrition in tackling major health problems in the UK.

The APPG will conduct, in its first year, an expert inquiry into malnutrition, cognitive ageing and empowering front line health workers with a focus on nutrition science. Taking evidence from leading UK and Irish academics, the inquiry will examine how implementing cutting-edge nutrition science can make a difference to health and support the work of the NHS.

The first meeting on the 6 June, in Committee Room 13 in the House of Commons, considered *'The dual health burden of malnutrition and obesity in the UK'*, focusing on the costs and burdens of poor diet, hidden hunger and malnutrition.

We were delighted to have three expert guest speakers attend to discuss these issues.

Professor Charlotte Hardman discussed *'Food Insecurity and Obesity – Understanding the lived experience to inform interventions'*.

Her presentation took a lived experience perspective to address potential explanations for the association between food insecurity and obesity. She provided insight into individual-level factors such as mental health, and wider systemic issues including affordability of healthier foods and access within local food environments, and how these could be tackled to create a healthier and fairer food system for all.

Professor Greta Defeyter then discussed *'School meals and the Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF): A nutritional safety net?'*.

In her presentation data was presented that compared the dietary intake from children attending HAF versus a non-attending day, and findings regarding the nutritional quality of food provision at HAF holiday clubs, particularly hot/cold and vegetarian/non-vegetarian meals. These findings highlighted areas for improvement in HAF holiday clubs with a tendency for food provision to appear less ideal for attendees for those aged 11–18. She concluded that children from low-income households having access to a healthy diet is crucial to reduce UK health inequalities.

Professor Ian MacDonald completed the presentations by discussing *'Malnutrition and Obesity – health consequences of unbalanced diets.'*

His presentation addressed the development of obesity and energy overconsumption relative to dietary requirements and associated risks. In addition, the lack of nutritional balance and inadequate intakes of important vitamins and minerals, increase the risk of disturbed metabolism and physiological processes, contributing further to ill-health. He explored the benefits of dietary interventions for people with obesity and a high risk of type 2 diabetes and the associated improvements in diet composition and physical activity following an initial period of weight reduction on a low energy diet.

The APPG will provide parliamentarians and policy makers with the latest evidence-based information and guidance and will provide a much-needed voice for nutrition in the UK at the highest political levels – one of the key strategic priorities for the Society. An historic moment!
Originally published in the Nutrition Society Gazette.

Updates and Events Calendar

- **5-6 December 2023** – Winter Conference: Diet and lifestyle strategies for prevention and management of multimorbidity, The Royal Society, London
- **26-27 March 2024** – Scottish Section Conference: Circadian rhythms in health and disease, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

Nutrition Society Academy

Continue your professional development around your busy schedule with the new Nutrition Society Academy – a new subscription-based platform providing the latest evidence-based nutritional science from world leading experts. Subscribe today:
<https://nutritionandsociety.academy>

ALL Nutrition Society Events are CPD endorsed by the Association for Nutrition.

