

Healthy Catering Pilot (Stonehouse)

Food Safety Officers in Stroud District Council's Environmental Health Service will soon be approaching caterers in Stonehouse to help them improve the nutritional content of the dishes on their menus and identify the healthier options. The work is part of a pilot project to determine the best ways to persuade local caterers to make changes that would have an impact on what has been described as an obesity epidemic.

Europe's Obesity League puts the UK top with 24.9% of adults being classified as obese (Body Mass Index of 30+). It is estimated that 50%+ of the UK population will be obese by 2050. This is putting a great strain on NHS resources with increases in many serious illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Health and Well Being is one of 5 key priorities in Stroud District Council's Corporate Delivery plan. Moreover, tackling obesity is a key priority of the Gloucestershire health and well-being board over the next 3 years.

The Council's food safety team are well placed to influence caterers as they regularly visit businesses to carryout food hygiene inspections. There is the potential, therefore, for the project to be scaled up across the District with minimal resource implications.

Stonehouse was chosen for the pilot as it has a discrete commercial centre, a wide choice of catering outlets and is classified as an area within the most deprived 20% of England. It also represents a significant area for childhood obesity within the Stroud District. Between 2011 and 2014, 9.5% of 4/5 year olds and 18.5% of 10/11 year olds in Stonehouse were found to be obese and obese children often make obese adults.

Officers will use a nutrition calculator to demonstrate to caterers how small changes to recipes can result in lower sugar, salt, saturated fat and calories and help them inform customers about the healthier options on the menu. Businesses will also be asked to consider reducing the portion sizes of particularly calorific dishes. We will also explore the potential value of an award scheme as an incentive to caterers to offer healthier foods.

The pilot project will be carried out using existing staff resources and a sum of £1000 provided by Gloucestershire County Council Public Health. We aim to complete the pilot project by the end of 2015.

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