

Nutrition North – Regional Nutrition Research Collaborative

Wednesday 15th October 2025

3.30pm – 5.00pm

Via Teams

Chair: Prof Bernard Corfe

Meeting Notes and Actions

In Attendance:

Bernard Corfe (BC), Newcastle University

Heather Brown (HB), Lancaster University

Iain Brownlee (IB), Northumbria University

Wendy Burton (WB), University of York

Samantha Caton (SC), University of Sheffield

Margaret Charnley (MC), Liverpool Hope University

Frances Hillier-Brown (FHB), Newcastle University

Amelia Lake (AL), Teesside University

Nicola Lowe (NL), University of Lancashire

Ben Martyn (BMA), The NHSA

John McLaughlin (JM), University of Manchester

Lucie Nield (LN), University of Sheffield

Kieran Tuohy (KT), University of Leeds

Liz Williams (LW), University of Sheffield

Jonathan Rand (JR), Centre for Process Innovation (CPI)

Sarah Hill (SH), The NHSA

1. Welcome and Introductions

BC opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies were noted.

The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed:

- *KT: to explore potential funding opportunities related to NACIP and alternative protein industries.*
- *SH: Add NAPIC funding opportunities and alternative protein industry partnerships to the agenda for the next Nutrition North Council meeting*
- *SH: to send the final report to the nutrition north group when it is released*
- *SH: to check with Ruth Boston that the final Nutrition North report will be sent to Kim McGuinness's office (Mayor of the North east) and other mayoral offices.*
- *SH: to coordinate with Charlotte Thompson to design and host a Nutrition North webinar in September/October 2025 to publicize the Nutrition North report.*
- *ALL: to inform the group of any applications to the NIHR "Three Schools" Prevention Research Programme*
- *BM: to contact Professor Ilaria Bellantuono from Sheffield for more information about Sheffield University EPSRC applications and the Sheffield EPSRC meeting.*

- *BM: to contact BC for more information about the Newcastle EPSRC meeting and potential Newcastle University EPSRC applications.*

The group acknowledged that the actions were either completed or would be addressed during the course of the meeting and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2. Updates from Workstreams:

2.1. Nutrition Reports

Nutrition in the North NHTA Report

SH reported on the successful publication of the Nutrition North report (<https://www.thenhsa.co.uk/app/uploads/2025/07/NUTRITION-NORTH-REPORT-6.pdf>), its wide media coverage, and subsequent engagement with stakeholders such as the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee.

Media Engagement: SH referred to the impact report that Charlotte Thompson (NHTA Communications Manager) had compiled, detailing media coverage, radio interviews by Amelia Lake (AL) and Ruth Boocock (RBo), and significant engagement on social media and in the press.

House of Commons Inquiry Submission: Following the report's release, Nutrition North was invited to submit evidence to the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee inquiry on food and weight management, with the executive team quickly preparing a submission focused on prevention and early intervention.

Industry and Trade Association Interest: BM reported discussions with the Food and Drink Federation at the Labour Party conference, indicating openness to future collaboration, particularly around nutritional information on packaging.

- ***Action (BMA): to follow up with the Food and Drink Federation to explore brokering a conversation between Nutrition North and the trade association regarding nutritional information on packaging.***

Internal Feedback and Lessons Learned: LW raised the need for earlier access to future reports for press officers and group members. AL and SH agreed that releasing the report had been a learning process and the team would be better prepared for future publications.

Progress on accompanying article for Nutrition Bulletin: IB updated the group on the complementary academic paper to accompany the NHTA Nutrition North report. A short editorial was submitted to Nutrition Bulletin but the journal wrote back to request a more detailed "News and Views" article instead so the manuscript is being revised. IB noted that this was an opportunity to include more of the case study data that couldn't be included in the Nutrition North report.

- **Action (IB): to contact contributors of case studies included in the NHSA Nutrition North report to obtain more specific details for the expanded Nutrition Bulletin article.**
- **Action (BC/AL/IB): to identify and consider including additional case studies that were not featured in the Nutrition North report for the Nutrition Bulletin article.**

2.2. School Nutrition

With apologies from Suzanne Spence (SS) and Greta Defeyter (GD) for absence, BC introduced Sam Caton (SC) and discussed the coordination of the school nutrition work stream.

Work Stream Leadership and Coordination: SC will meet with SS, GD and also Wendy Burton (WB) to develop the school nutrition workstream. WB confirmed Maria Bryant's support as a contributor but not as a workstream lead due to limited capacity.

Data Challenges: IB highlighted the lack of comprehensive national and regional data on school food provision.

Future Planning and Collaboration: BC, SC and the group discussed the potential for a future report focusing on food provision in pre-school, school, and wrap-around care, identifying key challenges and opportunities. IB emphasized the considerable expertise within the group and in the north in general. BC noted the importance of distributing workload and learning from the previous report.

- **Action (SC): to connect with Suzanne Spence (SS), Greta Defeyter (GD) and Wendy Burton (WB) to develop the school nutrition workstream regarding work in children's centres, schools and preschools and consider a future report.**

2.3. Nutrition Webinars

With apologies from Sohail Mushtaq (SM) for absence, BC reported on the current status of the webinar program and asked the group for opinions on the best approach going forward.

Webinar Planning and Challenges: SH updated everyone on recent attempts to organize webinars, including discussions with the NHSA and the Nutrition Society. The group debated whether to maintain a standalone webinar series or to align webinars with report releases and existing events.

LW commented that webinars are good to raise awareness and create impact but wouldn't need to be regular and could just be done around relevant activity. LW further suggested that webinars wouldn't always need to be live, a recorded webinar would also be of value.

IB added that the group has lots of expertise on call to create webinars and that it would be best to maintain momentum after each report.

Target Audiences and Formats: LN asked about the target audience for the webinars and the group discussed the importance of targeting both policymakers and researchers.

KT suggested creating multimedia montages to showcase regional expertise.

BMa and SH offered to discuss possibilities with the NHSA Comms team. BMa also invited the group to submit any articles, blogs or opinion pieces around activity in the space for inclusion into existing NHSA comms.

- **Action (BMa/SH): to have a conversation with the NHSA comms and PA team about webinars and complementary comms possibilities.**
- **Action (BC): to discuss with the Nutrition North executive team where the group can map into existing NHSA comms plans and add value.**
- **Action (NN Exec): to further explore the idea of a research montage piece aimed at elevating investment in north (as suggested by KT).**

2.4. Nutrition and Cancer

The group discussed collaborative projects on fibre and breast cancer, the anticipated National Cancer Plan, and the potential for a regional report on nutrition and cancer survivorship.

Fibre and Breast Cancer Project: KT updated the group on efforts to coordinate a multi-university project on fibre and breast cancer, involving colleagues from Leeds and Manchester, and discussed strategies for building a collaborative network and targeting appropriate funding streams.

National Cancer Plan Preparation: BMa reported on the forthcoming government National Cancer Plan, noting uncertainty around its release date (possibly Autumn 2025) and content, but confirmed that nutrition would be included, particularly regarding weight management and survivorship. There was discussion on the need for prevention of obesity rather than rapid weight loss due to concerns over carcinogenic toxin release during break down of adipose tissue. The Nutrition North report also highlighted the poor cancer risk and outcomes in north of England.

HB commented that Wes Streeting (Secretary of State for Health and Social Care) talked about food for prevention in the NHS 10-year plan.

BMa noted that feedback from the Macmillan Cancer Support charity was that the provision for neighbourhood care in the National Cancer Plan is poor so is currently being revised. This could be another area of interest for Nutrition North.

The group discussed the opportunity to respond the release of the National Cancer Plan and highlight expertise in the North.

Rapid Response Planning: BC and IB proposed assembling a team to prepare a rapid response to the cancer plan, leveraging recent data on regional disparities in cancer outcomes and using available datasets to highlight northern England's needs.

- **Action (BC/SH):** *to reach out to people who would be willing to respond to cancer plan on speedy basis so that we have a group ready.*
- **Action (IB):** *to have fingertips data primed on cancer outcomes.*
- **Action (BMa/SH):** *to chat to the NHSA comms team about coordinating a nutrition north response to the National Cancer Plan once it is released.*

Future Report on Cancer Survivorship: The group agreed to consider a dedicated report on nutrition and cancer survivorship. JM emphasized the importance of focusing on treatment and post-treatment phases, and BC suggested potential collaboration with the NHSA Head and Neck cancer network (the Northern Head & Neck Alliance - NHNA).

2.5. Food Innovation North

With apologies from Deepan Shah (DS) and Claire Trippet (CT), BT introduced Jonathan Rand (JR) from CPI.

CPI and NFIC Overview: Jonathan Rand gave an overview of CPI's capabilities, including its innovation facilities across three sites in the North East, work with SMEs, Start-ups and Spin outs, international partnerships, and its Novel Food Innovation Centre (NFIC). NFIC enables companies to develop and manufacture products in a food grade environment and supports food-grade innovation and industry engagement. BC commented on the international reach of CPI and how they reinforce the nutrition strength and depth across the region.

3. Update on Funding Opportunities

3.1. NIHR “Three Schools” Prevention Research Programme

<https://sphr.nihr.ac.uk/research/prevention-programme/nihr-three-research-schools-prevention-programme-research-projects-call-2/>

LN and AL reported on two recent submissions to the Three Schools Prevention Research call, including projects on the impact of the digital food environment on care leavers and food insecurity and diabetes.

- **Action (ALL):** *to contact Sarah Hill (sarah.hill@thenhsa.co.uk) to inform the group of any other applications submitted to the NIHR “Three Schools” Prevention Research Programme.*

3.2. EPSRC Research and partnership hubs for a healthy society

https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/research-and-partnership-hubs-for-a-healthy-society/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

BMa described the NHTSA's support for EPSRC Research and Partnership Hub bids and clarified the focus of current Newcastle submissions. Bids are also going in from Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool.

Although none of the current bids have a specific nutrition focus, BMa expanded on the support the NHTSA was willing to offer including network engagement, PA and comms support, project management, stakeholder mapping, government contacts and political events. This support can be written into any future grants the Nutrition North group may be considering.

3.3. NAPIC Funding Opportunities

[National Alternative Protein Innovation Centre \(NAPIC\) - NAPIC](#)

KT shared a presentation and detailed the NAPIC scheme, which funds academic-industry partnerships in alternative proteins. KT described the types of projects supported, funding mechanisms, and the upcoming call for proposals, with an emphasis on consumer acceptability and nutritional adequacy.

- £4M to give out over next 4 years
- Good contribution from SMEs
- More “people centred” applications would be welcomed.
- Next call coming in December 2025, opening date January 2026, closing date April 2026, funding results announced in July 2026

BC and KT encouraged group members to prepare for the next funding round, and the group discussed the importance of aligning academic research with industry needs.

- **Action (BMa): to contact Kieran Tuohy (KT) and the NAPIC team for more information about work and funding.**
- **Action (KT/SH): KT to share his NAPIC presentation slides with Sarah Hill (SH) for distribution to the Nutrition North network.**

4. Ideas for new programmes and reports

BC gave an overview of the current suggestions for future Nutrition North Reports:

School Nutrition: To be explored by SC, SS, GD and WB as discussed earlier.

Nutrition for improving cancer outcomes and survivorship: BC suggested that this could be worked on together with the proposed response to the National Cancer plan. JM emphasised the role of nutrition in the treatment phase of cancer, and the influence the group could have on getting people into better shape for treatment. Survivorship starts the moment you get a diagnosis.

BC noted again the potential for collaboration with the NHSA Head and Neck Cancer group.

GLP-1 Agonists and Regional Inequalities: The group discussed the potential for a regional project or report on GLP-1 agonists, focusing on access inequalities, nutritional impacts, and ongoing research in the North.

LN described her involvement in a study evaluating access to GLP-1 agonists in weight clinics and highlighting postcode-based inequalities. LN commented on the potential for sharing emerging data with the group and that she would be keen to be involved with a future publication.

IB spoke about a current PhD research project at Northumbria University looking at people buying GLP1 from internet and their dietary habits and appetite responses. No data is available from this at the moment but could be useful future information.

KT remarked that it would be interesting to look at nutrient deficiencies in GLP-1 agonist users. A current PhD project in Leeds is looking at microbiome interactions in people on GLP-1A.

The group discussed the value of mapping regional research activity and perhaps bringing together postgraduate students and early-career researchers.

- **Action (ALL): to reach out to identify people involved in GLP-1 agonist research who would be interested in collaborating at regional level and mapping current activity.**

5. Any other business

With no other business, BC thanked everyone for joining the call and the meeting was closed.

List of Actions:

1. Action (BMa): to follow up with the Food and Drink Federation to explore brokering a conversation between Nutrition North and the trade association regarding nutritional information on packaging.
2. Action (IB): to contact contributors of case studies included in the NHSA Nutrition North report to obtain more specific details for the expanded Nutrition Bulletin article.
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6. Action (BC): to discuss with the Nutrition North executive team where the group can map into existing NHSA comms plans and add value.
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