

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Dr Shireen Kassam

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Your Ref:

Our Ref: INV-1960-2024

Date: 31 October 2024

Dear

Dr Kassam,

Thank you for your correspondence of 16 October 2024 and request to meet to discuss further how Plants First Healthcare and plant-based catering can help to improve the health of patients and staff, reduce harm to the planet, and save money.

As you may be aware, The Public Health Agency (PHA) leads on the non-departmental actions of the "Fitter Future for All" 10-year Obesity Prevention framework 2012 - 22. A new obesity prevention strategy is currently in development.

The PHA invests in a number of obesity prevention programmes and continues to work with a range of other partners such as Department of Health (DoH), Department of Education (DE), Department for Communities (DfC), Department for Infrastructure (DfI), Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts, Primary Care, Local Government, Safefood, Food Standards Agency and many non-statutory partners to promote activities that will encourage healthy lifestyles that contribute to obesity prevention.

The Nutritional Standards in HSC also ensures that food served to staff and visitors in HSC settings meets standards.

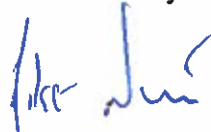
The implementation of Nutritional Standards in health and social care for staff and visitors is one of the framework outcomes of the Northern Ireland (NI) obesity strategy "A fitter future for all". The Public Health Agency, Food Standards Agency and safefood have worked in partnership with the HSC, (dietetics, catering and procurement), to create a set of standards for procurement and catering which were first implemented in 2017. The standards were revised and republished in 2022. The revision of the standards in 2022 included nutrition standards for vending as outlined in the link below;

[Nutritional standards for catering in health and social care for staff and visitors | HSC Public Health Agency.](#)

Nutritional standards in HSC for staff and visitors are based on the Eatwell Guide which has an emphasis on sustainability and promotes plant-based protein options. There is always a vegetarian option available at every meal service.

Unfortunately, due to a busy schedule I am unable to meet you to learn more about Plants First Healthcare. I would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment in supporting this important work to help improve the health of patients and staff in healthcare settings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', is positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely'.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health