Developing a Scope for Dietary Guidelines for Scotland

Technical Appendix B – Write Ups from World Café Conversations

Food Standards Scotland

Contents

Introduction

While the Phase A workshops highlighted a broad consensus in favour of having some form of Dietary Guidelines and began to consider their potential scope, the findings also pointed out that further work on what the guidelines might cover was required.

The purpose of the Phase B follow-up session was, therefore, to probe a range of issues that emerged from Phase A, to gather more detail on these issues, and to check if the consensus among stakeholders for new guidelines that emerged during Phase A still held. The findings from Phase B could also help outline the scope and content of any new Dietary Guidelines

A total of 72 stakeholders were invited to the Phase B workshop and 32 participated in the workshop. The half-day session began by sharing the key findings from Phase A, and highlighting the issues and questions that FSS and the research team were inviting further input on.

The core work was done using a World Café approach. A series of six tables were set out, each with a key question and a few supplementary questions. Participants broke up into small groups and worked at each table in turn, having a high intensity conversation for 15 mins around the key question, using the supplementary questions as prompts to the discussion. There were also three other activities that took place outside of the World Café. These activities allowed participants to post their thoughts and suggestions in response to other questions relating to Dietary Guidelines on a marketplace wall, for example: '*How should we refer to calories*'.

The key questions that provided the focus for the World Café table conversations were:
1. How could Dietary Guidelines help your role in the Food Information Delivery Chain?
2. Should a principles-based approach be taken to Dietary Guidelines?
3. What areas outwith the current TEG should be included in Dietary Guidelines?
4. Which, if any, social and cultural aspects should be included in Dietary Guidelines?
5. Do the Dietary Guidelines need to be segmented?
6. How can Dietary Guidelines help create a positive food culture?

The following Appendix provides a summary write up of each of the table conversations.

World Café Conversation 1:
'The Food Information Supply Chain'

Reflections on how the session went

The first of the six 'table themes' asked the contributors to focus on what, ideally, the dietary guidelines might be like to help them in their professional lives. Specifically, respondents were asked to consider 'what would they need from the dietary guidelines to enable them and or their organisations to deliver healthy eating information more effectively to the public'. As part of this question respondents were asked to think very practically, that is, they were asked to visualise interactions with the general public and, from this, what dietary guidelines might be helpful. Further to this, respondents were asked to consider what information the dietary guidelines might contain and what format or media might best be used to present the dietary guidelines to the end consumers.

Those participants who did not directly interact with members of the public in their professional lives with specific regards to nutrition or diet were asked to think about these questions, as relevant, from:
- The general perspective of experts in the field of health and or nutrition; or
- As individuals with a connected responsibility (e.g. in relation to guiding the population on exercise)

Across the six discussions, five core themes were revealed. Each of these themes is described below.

There needs to be consistency within the content of the information provided in the dietary guidelines and the content needs to be evidence based

Many contributors in the session stated that one of the biggest challenges they face in engaging with their clients is the 'barrier' presented by contradictory information. This contradictory information that often challenges what they are advising their clients has the dual negative effect of reducing their credibility and reducing the willingness of their clients to engage with the advice they are presenting them. The main forms of contradictory information come from mass and social media, but it was also suggested that perhaps healthy eating messages given to the public by professionals and practitioners are not always consistent either.

As a result of this, respondents were clear that within the dietary guidelines there needs to be information that they can present with confidence and without fear that it is going to contradict information that has already been given to their clients, especially by other professionals. Beyond this, it was stated that when, as was felt to be inevitable, contradictory or confusing information is received by their clients they need the dietary guidelines to be wholly evidence based and therefore explainable and defendable.

- "It has to be evidence based….it cannot be based on someone's subjective view of what is the right way to eat"

The dietary guidelines need to be made easy to understand and accessible through the use of a series of core guiding principles

Respondents also stated that one of the core barriers that they face is in trying to explain fairly wide reaching and at times complicated concepts to people who often have a very limited existing understanding of and or little interest in what they are presenting. As such, it was felt that dietary guidelines need to be based around a small number of core principles that can, in simple terms, consolidate the wider and more detailed concepts. The use of core overarching principles was seen as a positive component of the dietary guidelines many had seen from Brazil and Sweden.

> "The simple principles in those ones (re- Brazilian and Swedish Dietary Guidelines) make them much easier to get into"

On further probing on this issue of principles respondents felt that there was scope to introduce two broad sets of principles. One set that are consumer facing (that would help make the dietary guidelines more accessible) and one set for the healthcare and nutrition industry (to ensure that the guidelines are used in a consistent fashion).

- Industry facing principles:
    - It was felt these should concentrate on core areas of guidance for professionals who might use the dietary guidelines in their work and cover such issues as:
    - Focusing on the individual
    - Start where the client is and build from there
    - Be positive
    - Be practical
- Although a limited amount of time was spent discussing the nature of potential consumer facing principles it was broadly accepted that they should focus on a few overarching dietary ideals:
    - Eat more fruit and vegetables
    - Reduce levels of salt and sugar

To help provide a bridge between where consumers are now and where it is desired for them to be (namely eating in a way that is conducive with the Eatwell Guide) dietary guidelines need to clearly start from where consumers are now

A core theme across all the dietary guidelines development research has been the need to accept that many or even most of the people in Scotland are a long way from the ideal of the Eatwell Guide. Beyond this, it was accepted that the dietary guidelines can best start showing the journey that individuals can take to a healthier diet and life by showing where the consumer is starting from.

> "These guidelines will not be any use if they just show what people 'should' be eating. They need to show what they are eating now….all the sugar and salt and fats they are eating…and from this show how they can make small steps to move away from this"

As a result of the need for dietary guidelines to start where consumers are it was felt that two tasks need to be undertaken:

- First, there needs to be a thorough segmentation undertaken to allow core sub groups across the population, who have different starting points, to be identified
- There could be a modular system of dietary guidelines that allow practitioners to start, for different segments of the population, from different starting points

By undertaking segmentation and developing a system of dietary guideline 'modules' it was felt that small steps could be taken in working with clients to help them deal with specific dietary issues in a very relevant way.

The dietary guidelines need to be flexible and adaptable in their design to allow them to be of value when engaging with all relevant consumer groups and to remain useful over time

During discussions about the need for dietary guidelines to be focused on specific segments of the population and the specific issues that they face, it was accepted that it is very unlikely that, especially in the short term, the dietary guidelines that are developed will be relevant to all segments and help face all changes that are relevant in Scotland for all health care practitioners. As such, it was felt that there would ideally be scope within the system of developing dietary guidelines for practitioners to contact FSS to request additional guideline materials specifically for a segment of the population or for a particular challenge being faced. This approach was felt to have the potential to allow the dietary guidelines, over time, to become relevant to as wide a proportion of the population as possible. It would also allow the guidelines to evolve over time, for example, to adapt to any future legislative changes.

- "(As a professional) it would be really useful to be able to get in touch with Food Standards Scotland to ask them to help develop a particular set of tools to deal with a particular issue"

The presentation and the media channels used to deliver the dietary guidelines should be chosen to enhance engagement and usefulness of the core information provided within the guidelines

The final core theme that came out of table 1 related to the need to ensure that the presentation of information and the media channels used for delivering the dietary guidelines should actually help their level of relevance and their usability and not hinder them.

- "We have hundreds of leaflets sitting around (at the office) and they never get looked at"

It was felt that if the wrong media channels are used to present the dietary guidelines, they would never get used. In contrast, if the right media channels are used it was felt that there was far greater scope for the dietary guidelines to be useful to professionals and impactful, relevant and useful for clients.

Within this there were five core themes presented by respondents in the workshop in relation to presentation of information and the media channels that are used:

- Visually impactful so as to engage
    - It was widely stated that the dietary guidelines need to avoid being too text heavy and in contrast they should be visual, bright and simple in their presentation
    - Through this it was felt that the dietary guidelines could be easy to use by professionals and easy to understand by clients and consumers
- Suitable use of technology for the target audience
    - Many participants in the workshops were keen to suggest that technology should be used, when appropriate, to enhance the accessibility and functionality of the dietary guidelines. For example, it was felt that there was great scope to have dietary guidelines presented via an app or central online resource
    - That said, it was acknowledged that not all potential end users of the information in the dietary guidelines will have the relevant hardware or know-how to use digital technology. As a result of this, it was felt that there needs to be a degree of flexibility when considering how technology is used to ensure that it helps when possibly but without excluding any potential beneficiaries of the information
- Practical- to allow the core dietary guideline to be taken away and accessible to consumers at the times they are most needed
    - It was felt to be very important to ensure that the dietary guidelines come in a format that allows them to be used throughout the daily lives of the end users
    - This would mean that there would need to be resources as part of the dietary guidelines that could be kept by end users and from this help them, at the relevant times, with everything from budgeting, to shopping and cooking
- Language that is easily understood
    - It was felt to be vital to have dietary guidelines presented with language that is not going to confuse end users. Examples of where this was felt to be relevant was when presenting issues surrounding the use of 'carbohydrates' and 'fats'
    - At present it was felt that a lot of guidance about diet can be very confusing and as such, this needs to be avoided when developing the dietary guidelines
- Suitable tone to motivate
    - Finally, many respondents felt it was important that dietary guidelines use language that is at all time positive and motivating
    - It was felt vital that the language used should avoid being preachy or patronising
    - In addition, it was felt that the language should be relevant to the end user, as such, it was felt that the language used might need to be adapted for different segments

World Café Conversation 2:
'Should a principles-based approach be taken to Dietary Guidelines?'

Reflections

Engagement with the question was high, although some participants needed some clarification on 'what is meant by principles' before they were able to contribute fully. This reflected that a few of the participants were confusing principles (i.e. foundations and underpinning essence) with key messages (i.e. what is communicated to the public). Overall, the majority opinion was that there could be a useful role for principles, but this view was not a unanimous one.

The case 'for' and 'against' principles

The mains reasons given in support of having a principles-based approach to any new Guidelines centred on a belief that the challenge of impacting the nation's diet is a huge one, not one that will be solved in the short-term, and that some big, guiding statements that everyone can subscribe to and that will guide action would possibly help.

Those who were unconvinced that new guidelines are needed pointed to The Scottish Government's National Outcomes, which set out the kind of Scotland the government would like to see and what it plans to do to help bring that about. Here participants were referring principally to the stated National Outcome that we *'Live longer, healthier lives'*, but also to National Outcomes *'Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed'* and *'We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.'*

Those unconvinced by the need for guidelines were concerned about possible duplication and confusion with the above National Outcomes and were posing the question: *'What would new guidelines bring to the table that is not already there in the National Outcomes?'*

A vision – an alternative to principles?

Those not convinced of the need for guidelines were, however, not rejecting that there was a need for 'something' in addition to TEG. Rather they felt that the challenge was more about encouraging influential organisations involved in delivering information on food and nutrition to find meaningful ways to translate TEG to support healthier eating in the communities and groups that they work with.

What seemed to be being called for here, was a clear statement that in order to build towards a healthier Scotland, a wide range of players need to be actively involved in doing what they can do within their own spheres of influence. Participants suggested that this could be captured in a vision statement that would act as a rallying call appealing to everyone who has a role to play. Indeed, this idea of using a vision statement as a call to action also chimes with one of the issues pointed up by other groups that could be the basis of one of the principles (i.e. engaging everyone potentially involved in encouraging people to eat well – see below).

How many principles do we need?

Across all but one of the six groups, participants were in favour (some strongly so) of basing new dietary guidelines on a platform of fundamental principles. They were also strongly in favour of keeping this list relatively short, so that people would be able to recall what they were and not 'switch off' when faced with a long list. Indeed, for most participants, the ideal number of principles would be around 5 or 6.

What should the principles cover?

When participants considered what the underlying principles might be, there were probably five themes that were voiced with a degree of frequency, each of which could be the basis of a principle:

- Recognising the value of food
- Engaging everyone potentially involved in encouraging people to eat well
- Supporting personal development
- Reducing inequalities
- Pragmatic advice and guidance
- Core messages

Recognising the value of food

Most of the groups argued for one of the principles to be rooted in the need to shift the culture around how food is valued in Scotland: e.g. to help us move away from a position where people often see value in terms of 'two for one' deals or other cheap offers, and towards as situation where healthy food is seen as something that's fun and to be enjoyed. But in doing so, we need to be alert to the needs and opportunities of different cultures and income groups so that subsequent messaging about the value of food is appropriate and makes better food choices possible for all.

Engaging everyone potentially involved in encouraging people to eat well

A recurring theme that has run throughout the process is that 'everyone potentially has a role in helping people eat better'. It was no surprise that this again emerged strongly in discussion about fundamental principles. Indeed, as noted above, it would also find expression in a vision statement that acts as a rallying call to a wide cross section of stakeholders, including many who may not currently see themselves as having a role to play in the food information supply chain. A principle based on recognising and mobilising the many organisational assets that exist links clearly with dietary guidelines that provide core messaging about healthy eating that the food information supply chain can then draw on to communicate (with appropriate tailoring) with the public and its constituent segments.

Supporting personal development

Building from the recognition that people are at different starting points in their food journeys, the theme of enabling and supporting personal development was identified as a potential area of principle. The need for TEG to be communicated to different groups in ways that are meaningful and positive to them is key: people need to be able to make choices and take small steps that move them towards a healthier diet rather than being encouraged to adopt an ideal diet that may be unachievable in the foreseeable future. A principle along these lines that the guidelines could then build on generated fairly broad support.

Reducing inequalities

At every table group discussion, concern about the possible widening of inequalities was voiced, which indicates that if a set of principles are to be established there would be very strong support for taking inequalities into consideration. It was also recognised that this may prove to be very difficult to achieve in practice. A principle linking healthy eating to inequalities would, perhaps helpfully, link the dietary guidelines with the National Outcome *'We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society',* thus reinforcing the importance of stakeholders being mindful of how information they provide on food and nutrition impacts inequalities in Scotland*.*

Pragmatic advice and messaging

Along with the inequalities issue, the importance of ensuring that information and messaging around TEG is suited to the audiences it is communicated to was given very high priority by participants as a potential principle. It was closely connected – indeed, seen as essentially linked - to the above points about avoiding the widening of inequalities and starting from where people are at in their food journey. Advice and messaging rooted in TEG needs to be framed in a person-centred way so that it is understandable and meaningful to different groups of the population.

Core Messages

In response to a widespread recognition that mixed messaging poses a major problem, there was support for a short list of positive key messages that everyone could subscribe to and use to underpin the guidelines.

Summing up – provisional principles

To sum up, in light of the workshop discussion, a provisional list of possible principles would be:

- Everyone can value healthy eating choices and develop a positive relationship with food
- Everyone has a role to play in helping people value and develop a positive relationship with food
- Focus on where people are currently at on their food journey and help them to move - even in small steps - forward
- Encouraging the Scottish population to eat well should seek to reduce – and avoid widening - inequalities wherever possible
- The language used to communicate nutritional information needs to be relevant to the context of individuals' lives and situations

World Café Conversation 3:
'Inclusion of areas outwith the current Eatwell Guide'

Reflections on how the session went
Across all groups there was a lively discussion and debate about which other areas should be included in the dietary guidelines or not. All groups acknowledged that the TEG, in its current form, would benefit from accompanying guidance in a number of areas. To varying degrees, most of the areas put forward were seen as relevant and helpful to have guidance on – the ensuing debate was to what degree they should be included or not.

Across the range of areas put forward and those raised specifically by participants there were certain areas where agreement for their inclusion was universal e.g. for composite and discretionary foods and others where opinions were mixed e.g. food sustainability.

Some areas should be core to the DGs, some need reference to only
Across all the groups, when it came to trying to prioritise/rank areas, the general view was that ranking areas is less important. It was more a question of which areas are core, and therefore should be included, versus which areas may need some form of reference to give context to the guidelines and help make them more relevant, but not require specific guidance.

Inclusion considerations
Across the discussions a number of overarching factors about how the different areas should be included were raised.

Elements should be evidence based
It was felt that any areas included must be backed up by corresponding evidence to help validate the guidance and add credibility. It was felt that for some areas discussed the relevant link to diet and corresponding evidence was lacking/insufficient e.g. regarding sleep and therefore this was put forward as a basis for excluding it from the DGs.

The breadth and depth of guidance needs to be balanced
Everyone acknowledged that the guidance needs to be easy for consumers to take on board and relate to and therefore should be accessible – not too much, avoid being overwhelming. At the same time it felt that this needed to be balanced with having sufficient context and a holistic perspective.

A positive tone is important
Everyone felt that whatever form the dietary guidelines are presented in that they need to be positive in tone to help encourage and empower people to make and sustain healthier food choices.

Areas for inclusion or not

Across the group discussions, three sets of areas emerged: those considered core and must be included; those considered secondary, that a degree of reference to would be useful; and a third set of areas where views were mixed and their inclusion, either as core or secondary, was debateable.

Areas considered core and should be included:
- Discretionary foods
- Composite foods
- Drinks including alcohol
- Guidance covering lifestage transitions in particular early years/children
- Portion sizes
- Food skills – buying ingredients, cooking, making out of home food/eating choices

The call to include discretionary and composite foods and drink in the guidelines was strong and universal. Regarding drinks, alongside alcohol, it was felt that strong messaging/guidelines is required in relation to sugary drinks such as smoothies, energy drinks, and the growing range of coffee shop drinks.

Secondary areas:
- Physical activity
- Emotional wellbeing
- Specific diets and supplements e.g. gluten free, vegan etc.

For these areas it was generally felt that although they have a degree of relevance and are useful for adding context their inclusion could be too much and make the DGs overwhelming – the view was that there is already plenty of specific guidance for these areas that is readily available. The associated evidence base linked to diet was for some areas also considered lacking by a number of participants e.g. around sleep and eating.

Highly debateable areas:
- Food sustainability
- Sleep
- Obesity/weight management

Regarding food sustainability, for which views were most polarised, there was recognition that this is important for a long-term perspective and for certain groups of consumers but not necessarily essential for the core task of moving people closer to TEG. With obesity and weight management the view from some participants was that these emphasise a negative view and can/could reinforce associated stigma

World Café Conversation 4:
'Should the Dietary Guidelines be Segmented?'

Reflections on how the session went
Overall, opinion across all six groups favoured some form of segmentation in the Dietary Guidelines. It was generally recognised that new guidelines should take into account the differences in diet and lifestyle between consumers as the diet presented in The Eatwell Guide is currently very difficult for most people to attain. However, many participants were also wary of over-segmentation. A strong priority was placed upon delivering consistent advice from a range of sources, and it was felt that creating a wide range of micro-targeted resources would risk confusing the core messages.

One participant summed up the importance of segmentation by suggesting that one of the overall aims of the new guidelines should be for people to "Be able to make the best choice for their situation".

Perhaps due to the range of backgrounds present, a wide range of ideas and opinions were put forward on how best to segment the audience for the new guidelines. Discussions could be grouped into those concerning segments of the public and those covering professionals within the Food Information Supply Chain. Generally, discussion focused more on segments of the public.

Segmentation of Consumers
The most widely supported suggestions were segmenting by life stage, by diet category, by socioeconomic group, along cultural lines, or according to lifestyle and priority. Each of these are profiled below.

Life Stage
Segments: Segmenting by life stage would produce segments including adolescents, parents, retired people, or students. People at different life stages typically have different priorities, outlooks on life and levels of control over their food consumption, and guidelines should reflect this.

Point of difference: Advice targeting parents should take into account the fact that they are the primary buyers of their household's food intake and the time pressure associated with supporting and caring for a family. Guidelines for adolescents could place more emphasis on short-term benefits of healthy eating and advice for eating outside the home. Guidelines for older people may need to be framed in the context of a more traditional diet.

Diet Category
Segments: With only a small minority of the population currently eating a diet that would meet TEG, some participants favoured segmenting consumers according to their current dietary habits and producing Guidelines outlining achievable next steps. Possible segments included those eating mainly convenience foods, the "traditional" Scottish diet, or people who exclude certain food groups, e.g. vegans.

Point of difference: Guidelines for these segments will differ depending on the diet in question – those with the least healthy diet could have more suggested swaps within product categories.

Socioeconomic Groups

Segments: Socioeconomic segments could be defined by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles, or by variables such as type of employment (full-time, part-time, unemployed etc). Some participants were critical of segmenting along socioeconomic lines due to the risk of deepening existing inequalities. However, others felt that the most disadvantaged segments of the population should be prioritised – "The less choice you have, the more vital it is that you understand the issue".

Point of difference: The emphasis here is on people's capacity for change. Certain groups, especially those in poverty, are subject to (real or perceived) barriers including fuel poverty, a lack of cooking skills, or the belief that healthier foods represent poor value for money. Guidelines for lower income people could address some of these issues.

Cultural Groups

Segments: Cultural segments would include religious or ethnic groups, particularly those who follow a particular diet due to religious beliefs e.g. halal or kosher.

Point of difference: Some participants pointed out that if advice refers to food groups which they do not consume, people are more likely to feel that it does not apply to them. Another participant outlined the value of a project which produced a version of TEG for Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities – similarly to the "Diet Category" segmentation model it is important to address the context of people's eating habits. Providing portion guides for staple foods popular in some communities but not covered by TEG is important if people from minority backgrounds are to be engaged.

Lifestyle/Priority

Segments: Some participants put forward the idea of defining segments by the priority of the consumer – grouping people into those on a tight budget, people who are already relatively close to TEG, people with very little spare time who value convenience, etc.

Point of difference: The advantage of producing guidelines for these segments is that the content can be tailored to resonate with what is most important to the consumer. This also has the advantage of avoiding some of the stereotyping associated with socioeconomic segmentation while still addressing the same barriers to change.

Segmentation of Professionals/ Practitioners

It was also recognised by some participants that there may be a need for segmentation of guidance intended for those in the Food Information Supply Chain. There was debate over whether professional guidelines should be prioritised over the public. Some participants were in favour of producing one very basic resource for the public and a wider range of more detailed resources to equip potential influencers to deliver targeted messages.

It was this area which generated the most concern about clutter and inconsistency of message. It was strongly emphasised that there would need to be a clear set of "core" guidance available throughout the food information supply chain in order to ensure a consistent message from different sectors.

Professional segments were largely defined by the nature of their interaction with the public, e.g. clinical staff, community workers, teachers. Participants generally felt that these groups would benefit from clearer guidance on delivering nutritional messages to the public and possibly some supplementary materials to aid in making the information digestible.

World Café Conversation 5:
'Which, if any, social and cultural aspects should be included in Dietary Guidelines?'

Reflections on how the session went

Participants engaged with the question well and lots of lively discussion occurred. Overall, it was felt to be challenging to identify specific social or cultural situations that could be included as the scope is too large, but it was felt that social and cultural issues surrounding food choice should be emphasised within any Dietary Guidelines (DGs) as they are central to how we eat. Consequently, as discussion resisted addressing specific social contexts, conversation was general but framed in the context of the social/cultural aspects around eating and food choice.

In every group, the need to position food in a positive manner was highlighted. It was unanimously believed that eating is a very social event and food choice is highly influenced by social and situational factors. It was also a consensus that people, in general, don't make the link between the actual food they are eating and how it frames the social situations they are in - e.g. celebratory events are automatically linked with cake; a trip to the cinema feels incomplete without snacks. If we can encourage the population be aware of this link, we can push a more holistic approach to eating that may be able to change social norms in a positive way.

Cultural factors were discussed in terms of individuals' own personal 'food culture', rather than aspects relating to ethnic cultures – discussion of culture in this way was avoided as it was believed to overlap too much with the 'Segmentation' table, at which participants had been to immediately prior. However, participants were encouraged to voice any relevant thoughts even if there was some overlap, going on the basis that 'overlap is fine, but duplication should be avoided'.

The discussion is broken down into key points below:

It is very important to include cultural and social aspects in the DGs, although it is less clear what these should be and how we could do this

Across the board, it was felt that including cultural and social aspects in DGs is vital as food is a very social thing. Food can define our interactions and how we engage with others, so to exclude this from guidance would be remiss. It was felt that including cultural and social issues encourages the population to view eating and diet in a more 'holistic' manner – it is affects every aspect of our lives, and we should encourage people to think about all the ways in which food features in their lives. In doing so, we can promote the link diet and other factors – e.g. mental health, fun, social inclusion etc.

We should give overarching, general encouragement, but avoid direct advice as everyone's food culture/social situation is different

It was felt to be 'too ambitious' to give advice/guidance relating to specific social situations in DGs as individuals all have their own unique food cultures, influenced by friends, family, food access, eating habits etc. As such, DGs can give general guidance, but need to recognise that everyone is different and prescriptive advice would be limiting.

We also need to be careful to avoid judgement and alienation. Social/cultural message in the DGs should be carefully constructed to ensure they are not 'preachy' or 'judgemental' – e.g. advising that food can be enjoyed by eating as a family may alienate those who do not have a family to eat with. On the basis that it would be impossible to account for every different social context, advice should be light-touch and 'encouraging for all' rather than linked to very specific social contexts.

Food should be positioned as a pleasurable entity, and eating as enjoyment should be emphasised

Across the board, participants felt it was crucial to position food a something to be enjoyed. All messages should be framed positively, suggesting how to implement a good change into diet without being restrictive or negative.

'If people don't feel they can enjoy eating food by following diet advice, they're not going to follow it'

By promoting fresh, nutritious and healthy and food as pleasurable, it is easier to make the link between this and enjoyable social situations, which is key to implementing long-term change. People need to imagine themselves enjoying cooking a healthy meal with friends and family in the same way they imagine ordering a takeaway together.

Encourage the population to have a positive relationship with food, and think about how food can positively impact and influence their relationship with others

Rather than linking healthy eating and diet with weight loss, encouraging people to connect food with community and social interactions creates a positive context for eating. DGs should recognise the long history of sharing meals, which have brought people together throughout history and created social cohesion. One participant, whose job role focuses on physical activity, made a link to physical activity interventions, which have been proven to be most successful when they are part of a larger intervention encouraging social cohesion.

One participant suggested that to create this positive relationship between healthy food and the individual, we need to make healthy eating fun. Participants were unsure how was best to do this, but felt that marketing could play a big part in this.

Additionally, this topic led into some discussion about how the media can negatively impact perception of some healthy foods. The term 'superfood' was cited as problematic, as when the media brand something as a superfood, they inadvertently 'demonise' other healthy foods, which lose reputation with the population.

Eating is emotional – it defines and influences our social interactions, and it is important DGs acknowledge how different food features in different social situations

It was felt vital to ensure DGs take into account that eating emotional, and people are going to eat different things, at different times, for different reasons. Food has the ability to define our interactions and how we engage with others, and DGs should acknowledge that some situations (e.g. celebrations) are going to centre around food that doesn't fit into the Eatwell Guide. Some situations identified specifically as not necessarily fitting with the Eatwell Guide were celebrations, eating on the go, and 'therapeutic' eating (e.g. after a bad day).

Crucially, participants suggested that failing to recognise that the foods we eat are going to be influenced emotionally risks losing consumer's support/interest. Often people have an 'all or nothing approach', and if DGs don't appear to fit within a situation, many will abandon the attempt to eat better in general.

DGs need to acknowledge and account for social norms, but whether or not they should accept them is up for debate

Social norms were a contentious issue, and no consensus was reached on whether or not DGs should accept social norms and advise people within these parameters, or if they should challenge them.

It was agreed that to enact any change we need to start with where people are and how they actually live their life, which includes recognising current social norms e.g. takeaway coffees, shop bought sandwiches etc.

However, there was no consensus on whether DGs should accept social norms as absolute or encourage the population to challenge them.

Some participants felt that we need to be realistic about how much we can accept the individual to change, and therefore DGs should focus on encouraging people to make small, positive changes when in those social situations (e.g. not ordering a cake with your takeaway coffee). Social pressure was also discussed, as in many situations social pressure greatly influences what we eat – e.g. it is much more socially acceptable/ convenient to eat a chocolate bar on a busy train than vegetable sticks and hummus.

Contrastingly, some felt the way forward was to challenge the notion that these things are the norm – 30 years ago drinking a take-away coffee was unheard of, so why shouldn't that become the norm again?

We can encourage the population to make better choices by emphasising the value of food

It was felt that in Scotland there is not a culture of valuing food. In general, the population don't value what they put into their bodies in the same way to place value on, e.g., a new handbag or shoes. It is important to encourage people to realise how valuable the right food can be for overall wellbeing, which may start with encouraging people to value themselves more.

One participant suggested the issue of food value is wrapped up in the *'general culture of self-deprecation in Scotland'* – it is a social norm for us to downplay ourselves and our country (e.g. talking negatively about the weather, or the national football team). As such, many of the population don't currently appreciate the value of *'Scotland's natural larder'*. If we can use DGs to sell pride in what we have, cultural perceptions of the value of food may be able to change, resulting in more care being given to our choice of foods.

Additionally, one participant felt that a big cultural difference between Scotland and some European countries is that in Scotland there is not a culture of taking time over food. The public tend to eat quickly, on-the-go, or at their desks, which fuels the concept that food isn't valuable. Socially, we are encouraged prioritise other things and 'fit in' food as a secondary thing. DGs should inspire people to take time over their food and enjoy it, elevating the status of food as something to be valued/prioritised.

To elevate the personal value of food, we first have to start with empowering the individual

To change people's perspective on eating, you first have to start with empowering them. For many, food is a chore due to a lack of confidence in preparing and cooking a meal. This leads to choices that are quick, easy and convenient – unhealthy processed foods and takeaways.

DGs should aim to make it convenient for people to eat better, and should make cooking a positive experience. Participants felt that DGs should challenge the perception that a healthy meal requires high level cooking skills and lots of time. Healthy meals can be made by a combination of fresh ingredients and such as vegetables and convenience products such as dried pasta and jarred sauces. Similarly to the discussion about emotional eating, this theme touched on the idea that an 'all or nothing' approach is off-putting, so DGs should concentrate on realistic changes. One participant suggested that the population should be advised that using some jarred, canned or packaged ingredients can still produce a healthy meal, but they should be encouraged the read the ingredients and compare similar products to choose the best one.

World Café Conversation 6:
'Positive Food Culture'

Defining a 'positive food culture'

Most of the groups agreed on the importance of a 'positive food culture' and identified a number of common things they would describe as progress towards this. However, one group cautioned on any assumptions on the use of the word 'positive' suggesting this could be interpreted as a commonly agreed thing. In discussion, it was clear this point was more than academic – for some/many people eating a burger and chips every day and drinking regularly may be viewed as a very 'positive'. Thereby, we needed to be cautious on assuming that people think they have a 'problem'. Well-meaning advice from this standpoint could be ineffective.

A better way of phrasing this was therefore suggested as '…a food culture which positively advanced the dietary outcomes we have agreed'.

With this proviso, all of the groups described a fairly set of common factors of this more positive future scenario as a culture where:

- Food was commonly seen as more important and valued than it is now
- The preparation and consumption of food was more commonly viewed as a sociable, family, and fun activity where people spent more time of these activities *because they wanted to.* This was noted as much more the norm in other countries with one participant noting "my partner comes from Mexico where a family spending many hours preparing and eating food was considered a very valued part of the social norm'. It was further recognised that this happened across all socio-economic groups, and was more common in many countries significantly less wealthy than Scotland
- Food and eating is not 'threatening' – based on an over focus on weight and image
- Food is not viewed as 'fuel' – but something much more valuable and enjoyable
- People from all socio-economic and age groups are better skilled and more confident in preparing food
- Eating better was considered as 'tasty, affordable and easy'
- Scots viewed Scotland as a producer of a wide range of local, tasty, healthy and affordable food – 'not as the butt of jokes as the home of deep fried Mars bars etc'

Understanding the nature and scale of the journey

The above list was recognised as being some way from the current reality. It further highlighted the gap from what we know on current eating patterns and The Eatwell Guide – and signalled what future Dietary Guidelines needed to address.

But equally, any future Dietary Guidelines required to recognise their limitations, and that they would only be one element of a much larger package of activities. Central to this is the combination of wider measures to address poverty and inequalities, and supply chain focused statutory/enforcement measures to reduce the availability/convenience of cheap and unhealthy food options.

Overall, we needed to recognise that the cultural transformation aspired to would be a long-term venture – change for most people was likely to be more like coastal erosion than an epiphany.

However, despite the current reality, an important and recurrent message was that moving forward was less likely to be successful from a 'doom and gloom' approach – with a danger that all future guidelines did was 'criticise and make people feel bad'. Rather future approaches needed to be upbeat, positive, and 'encourage rather than lecture' people on eating better in future. Learning from other countries which appeared to be nearer to a 'positive food culture' – and imaginatively communicating these messages – would be of value.

This may include carefully considering terminology – for example the sell may be 'do you want to feel better?' as opposed to 'do you want to eat better?'. On the supply side, small changes from 'all you can eat' to 'all you would like to eat' buffets may be helpful.

Implications and suggestions for future Scottish Dietary Guidelines
The food culture discussions reinforced the view that appropriate dietary guidelines (or something with an equivalent name) did have potential in improving how Scotland eats – but only as a part of a wider package consistently working together towards the same agreed outcomes.

In terms of content and style, the key messages were very similar to those fed back from other groups – guidelines needed to be:
- Integrated with other activities
- Positive in terms of encouraging practical changes that people really felt they could Make – real life cases studies and stories may be helpful here
- Unthreatening – ie not 'don't do this and…' but 'what an opportunity to feel better…'
- Focused on people's starting points, and incremental in focus based on segmenting and understanding these
- Inclusive across all population groups
- Based on good international practice
- Imaginatively presented
- 'Fun'

Individual stakeholder contributions
The discussions did not spend as much time on these issues due to time constraints, but some key points reinforced were:
- many people must be involved – the type of cultural transformation required had to be a 'whole system/society' endeavour
- continually identify, support and communicate good practice and success – small and large scale. This was key to the positive message required – 'maybe in the past too much of this is terrible and too little on look how well this worked'
- Consistent messaging is key
- Maintain engagement with stakeholders throughout the process