Updated Nutritional Standards launched for staff and visitors in Health and Social Care settings

The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland (FSA) has joined with the Public Health Agency (PHA), safefood and Health and Social Care (HSC) colleagues to jointly develop and review the standards. The overall aim is to help address overweight and obesity and improve staff and visitor health and wellbeing.

The standards, first introduced in 2017, are food-based and modelled on the Eatwell Guide. Work and support to implement them has been ongoing over the past five years.

The Standards have been updated by an expert panel, taking into account the latest evidence and guidance. This has led to, for example, a recommendation to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables and wholegrains available while decreasing the amount of saturated fat, salt and processed meats.

In addition to specific guidance for each food group, the standards also address, for the first time, the food sold in vending machines. The vending guidelines include recommendations for snacks and confectionery items and ensure all beverages on offer are sugar-free.

There are recommendations for fresh tap water to be freely available and no salt or sugar to be displayed at tables. The immediate environment food is sold in is also considered; for example, it is recommended all confectionary be removed from the till area.

Sharon Gilmore, Head of Standards and Dietary Health, said: "The FSA in partnership with our colleagues in the Public Health Agency, safefood and Health and Social Care are delighted to launch revised nutritional standards so that healthier food choices are available for staff and visitors in Health and Social Care settings. They build on the current valuable work that is underway within HSC to encourage healthier eating amongst staff and visitors. The standards are an important step in improving the health and wellbeing of our population."

Read the full Nutritional Standards for Health and Social Care settings document for more information.