

## Water for Health Alliance Members Briefing – December 2006

- 1. Consumer Council for Water join Alliance** – CCWater, the statutory water consumer body for England and Wales, has joined the Water for Health Alliance and is active in helping to develop drinking water guidance to inform consumers. CC Water operates as a non-departmental public body reporting to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Welsh Assembly Government. On joining the Alliance they advise *“Water is a valuable and precious health resource for society, and having water on tap – a safe, secure, reliable supply of water - is absolutely essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and a wholesome diet. Helping consumers to recognise the important health benefits of their water supply, and promoting the significance of remaining well hydrated throughout the day is central to our work”*. [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk)
- 2. Waterwatch Scotland join Alliance** – The statutory water consumer body for Scotland has joined the Water for Health Alliance and is working in partnership with Water UK, Scottish Water and health stakeholders to inform the public on the safety and quality of tap water. *“We believe that customer’s having improved access to fresh, clean, safe drinking water is of valuable health benefit to the sustainable development of Scotland and to helping reduce health and social inequalities.”* In 2009, Scotland’s consumers will become the first in the UK to be able to receive fresh drinking water on request in licensed premises. [www.waterwatchscotland.org](http://www.waterwatchscotland.org)
- 3. New ‘Water for Health’ resources area** – Members of the Water for Health Alliance, and its supporting stakeholders, can now access increased ranges of free resources at the web site [www.waterforhealth.org.uk](http://www.waterforhealth.org.uk). The information contains easier access to the ‘Ask About’ medical evidence fact sheets, the ‘Care Homes Hydration Best Practice Toolkit’, conference reports and new downloads including free water posters and royalty free images.
- 4. Anglian Water launches hydration initiatives** – Anglian Water has launched its new hydration campaign for primary and secondary schools, and a unique pilot initiative for care homes. Using their school friendly mascot, Captain Splosh, the Anglian team is bringing the messages of good hydration to regional schools, along with the opportunity to acquire smart new mains fed water coolers. Anglian is also working closely with representative body ECCA and the care sector, on a pilot trial to understand potential interventions for water related malnutrition. [www.anglianwater.co.uk](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)
- 5. EU Nutrition Day in European Hospitals** - 25 January 2007 is the day when EU states will focus on good hospital nutrition. Water UK will be highlighting the importance of good hydration alongside members of the

Alliance, and will also link the day to its work as an associate member of the European Commission's Nutri Senex project on malnutrition in older people. More details on the initiative can be seen by clicking on these links - Home Page <http://www.nutritionday.org/index.php?id=10> PDF outlining objectives

[http://www.nutritionday.org/uploads/media/nutritionday\\_international\\_version3.pdf](http://www.nutritionday.org/uploads/media/nutritionday_international_version3.pdf)

6. **World Water Day announced** - International World Water Day is an initiative that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the next event will take place on 22 March 2007. The specific theme of next year's event will be "Coping with water scarcity". UN-Water will promote this as part of their strategic issues and priority plan. They advise that *"The theme highlights the significance of cooperation and importance of an integrated approach to water resource management of water at international, national and local levels. Equity and rights, cultural and ethical issues are essential to be addressed when dealing with limited water resources. Imbalances between availability and demand, the degradation of groundwater and surface water quality, intersectoral competition, interregional and international disputes, all centre on the question of how to cope with scarce water resources"*. <http://www.worldwaterday.org/page/707>
7. **Water@Work** – Water for Health Alliance members UNISON have developed an initiative to improve the hydration of employees in the workplace. The campaign, which is in partnership with WaterAid, Northumbrian Water, Thames Water, Chartered Institute for Environmental Health, The European Point of Use Drinking Water Association, WRAS and Water UK, will commence in early 2007, directly complementing Government health objectives and the work of the new National Director for Health and Workplace, Carol Black. [www.wateratwork.org.uk](http://www.wateratwork.org.uk)
8. **Scottish Water support public health objectives** – Scottish Water has increased its commitment to its water for health initiative, by approaching Scotland's dentists, hospitals and care home community. Every dentist in Scotland has been provided with bright and appealing 'good oral health' posters, and the Scottish Water team has been speaking at diet and health conferences in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The team is keen to work closely with their community, and would welcome requests for information to [Lorna.Hamilton@scottishwater.co.uk](mailto:Lorna.Hamilton@scottishwater.co.uk) . Posters and other supporting materials are available as free downloads from [www.scottishwater.co.uk](http://www.scottishwater.co.uk)
9. **Nutri-Senex to prevent malnutrition in older people** – The three year European Commission led project to reduce malnutrition in older people has been completed, with water and hydration now included in four of the

seven resulting work packages. Following the final report and recommendations to the EC, it is expected that a new project will start to disseminate nutrition best practice across the EU. Water UK is an Associate Member of the project, and has requested that members of the Water for Health Alliance are directly consulted. [www.nutri-senex.com](http://www.nutri-senex.com)

10. **Care Nutritional Standards don't hold water** – A big disappointment came in the form of the recent Food Standards Agency Nutrient and Food Based Guidelines "Food Served to Older People in Residential Care". Following wide consultation, the guidance had been expected to take on board the concerns and feedback of stakeholders within the care sector. However, despite assurances that water would be included in the guidelines themselves, FSA simply put a small statement in the supplementary menu guidance to say that *"it is assumed that other drinks including water and low sugar squash will be made available at meals and at other times during the day as required"*. Surprisingly, extensive and detailed advice was given on food manufacturer's retail products, such as tea and coffee. Members of the Alliance, associated health stakeholders, House of Commons and House of Lords will now be working together to help older people gain basic access to fresh water in care.
11. **Care Minister 'water is implicit in care'** – In a response to a Parliamentary question from Sutton and Cheam Lib Dem MP, Paul Burstow, the Minister for Social Care has confirmed the views of the Water for Health Alliance, and advised that it is *"implicit that care homes should be making water freely available throughout the day"*. In his full statement, he advised *"Government advice is that we need to drink six to eight glasses of fluid every day. It is therefore implicit that care homes should be making water freely available throughout the day"*. Based on the Minister's expectations, Water UK is calling for drinking water to be automatically included in the developing Care Standards.
12. **Dignity in Care for older people** - The Minister for Care Services, Ivan Lewis MP has launched a 'Dignity in Care' campaign, which aims to stimulate a national debate and create a care system where there is zero tolerance of abuse and disrespect of older people. At the National Care Association Conference the Minister assured the audience that his review would also include nutrition. As well as running a series of events for people to give their views, Government are also keen to find out how consumers feel about the services they use. Action on Elder Abuse has previously stated that a lack of access to fresh water is basic neglect, and on the Dignity in Care website the DH advises *"Unfortunately, older people are not always treated with the respect they deserve. Several people told us of times where people had been left without food or water or not being helped to eat"*.  
<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/So>

[cialCare/DignityInCare/DignityInCareArticle/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4136217&chk=ngTngg](http://www.caredirections.co.uk/frame_comment_50.htm)

13. **Care Directions Hydration Poll** – Many hundreds of visitors to the Care Directions web site recently completed a 'Water for Health' survey, presented by Northumbrian Water. One of the key findings of the survey was that older people are not keeping hydrated enough, with only 23% of respondents drinking the recommended eight glasses or more a day. 75% of respondents said that they would be drinking more water after reading the article. Care Directions advise that “For older people in particular, drinking sufficient water is vital – as it can help with ulcers, constipation, urinary infections, incontinence ..... and so much more. The full article can be seen at [http://www.caredirections.co.uk/frame\\_comment\\_50.htm](http://www.caredirections.co.uk/frame_comment_50.htm).
  
14. **ECCA Care Home Hydration poll** – Water for Health Alliance members, The English Community Care Association (ECCA), has published the results of its poll on hydration in care homes showing positive results and an awareness of the importance of hydration, but also the need for a clearer understanding of hydration policies. Martin Green, Chief Executive of ECCA says: *"Good hydration, particularly in care homes, is vital as it can help with ulcers, constipation, urinary infections and incontinence. The results of the poll demonstrate that many care homes know the benefits of good hydration; however some homes still need to take the key messages and benefits on board. The best practice toolkit that was produced by the Water for Health Alliance, of which ECCA is a member, is a very useful tool that will help care homes see the benefits of hydration for their residents and staff. The tool is easy to comprehend and includes practical information, including top tips on how best to encourage residents to drink tap water."*

Members of ECCA and the public were asked how fresh drinking water was made available in their care home. The results were as follows:

Water is available throughout all communal rooms 32%

Fresh water jugs placed throughout the building, including bedrooms 31.1%

Water only available when requested 24%

Water only provided at meal times 15.5%

ECCA is involved with several water companies looking at hydration in care homes and if you would be interested in taking part in pilot schemes please get in touch with Louisa Stevens [Louisa.Stevens@ecca.org.uk](mailto:Louisa.Stevens@ecca.org.uk) or Deborah Underdown [Deborah.underdown@ecca.org.uk](mailto:Deborah.underdown@ecca.org.uk)

15. **South Staffordshire Water Care** – Midlands water company South Staffs, are working directly with local care homes and the staff at Cannock Chase hospital, to improve older residents/patients well being through

good hydration. In coordination with care home representative body ECCA, South Staffs will be introducing mains fed water coolers alongside the Hydration Best Practice Toolkit. At the Cannock Chase installation, South Staffs advise that the provision of fresh, well presented water has *“been very effective both for patients and nurses”*.

16. **Tap water quality supports the work to improve hydration** - The Consumer Council for Water has congratulated the water companies in England and Wales on maintaining an excellent quality of drinking water during 2005. Dame Yve Buckland, Chair of the Consumer Council for Water, has said: *“It reflects well on both the water companies and the DWI that standards are so high...consumers should have confidence in the safety and quality of drinking water from the tap, which is far cheaper than the bottled variety. It also creates less waste and uses less energy to transport than bottled water”*.
17. **Water is better health says PHS survey** - Better health, the 12<sup>th</sup> survey undertaken by water cooler providers PHS, looked at the drinks vending and dispensing facilities currently being made available in UK organisations. Its findings revealed encouragingly high awareness of the health and performance benefits to be gained from upping water intake amongst employees, as well as good levels of consumption and drinking water provision. Of the sample of 200 facilities professionals interviewed (half in the public and half in the private sector) 77% said they recognised better day to day health as a benefit of drinking more water, 73% recognised better long term health, 53% recognised improved concentration and 46% recognised reduced irritability.
18. **Ethics of bottled water questioned** – Glasgow SNP member Sandra White, recently challenged the Scottish Executive to reveal whether it had contracts with the Eden Springs water company and, if so, whether it was aware of reports that *“Eden Springs is in violation of international law by exploiting the water resources of the Golan Heights and, if so, whether it will reconsider its contracts on that basis and, if not, whether it will reconsider its contract should it become aware of any such allegations”*. For the Scottish Executive, Tom McCabe responded that *“The Scottish Executive has a contract for the provision of bottled water with Eden Springs (UK) Ltd. Eden Springs (UK) Ltd is a UK registered company and has not, to the best of our knowledge, committed any offences under national or international laws. Water supplied to the Executive under its contract with Eden Springs (UK) Ltd is sourced in Scotland”*.
19. **Take water with a pinch of salt in France** – Reuters report that cases of over hydration were announced in older people in Lyon as an unexpected consequence of this year’s heat wave. *“The old people perspire little, they eliminate less, the kidneys are solicited also too much. That involves a*

*dilution of rock salt in the organization which causes these disorders”, explained Dr. Pierre Achache, Chief of Service within French Hospital Edouard Herriot. He continued “to take showers is even more important than to drink.....rock salt should be given again to them....but that is not enough....It is necessary for then réharmoniser the patient, but that is not enough to give again its autonomy to him”. Professor Tissot also denounces the care homes operations “quasi-soldiers” who insist that the older people drink in a systematic way, and sip water every hour.*

20. **British Dietetic Association on fluid** – Dietetic specialists the BDA gave additional advice to the media following this year’s hot weather. BDA say *“Levels of body fluid are tightly controlled, and very small changes in fluid balance can lead to feeling unwell and illness. Fluid intake is influenced predominantly by drinking upon the sensation of thirst. Some fluids come from foods, such as fruits and vegetables/salads, and small amounts are also produced by metabolic reactions in the body. The kidneys mainly control fluid output from the body as urine, but fluid losses also come from losses in faeces and also breathing and from the skin by sweat; amounts can be considerable during fever or during physical activity, especially in heat. Tap water is the ideal beverage to support fluid requirements. However many other drinks regularly consumed all support hydration: milk, fruit (and vegetable) juices, squash, fizzy drinks and sports drinks.....Alcohol, like caffeine, is a diuretic, so drinks containing high proportions of alcohol make no helpful contribution to hydration, and moreover result in temporary dehydration of the body. Drinks low in alcohol, such as many beers or wine spritzers can support hydration, but clearly they should be counted as occasional pleasures rather than quenching beverages”.*
21. **Minister announces physical activity role towards 2012** - Public Health Minister Caroline Flint is working across government on a new strategy to increase the public's fitness and activity levels. The Prime Minister asked Caroline Flint to develop a strategy building on and developing existing work to transform the population into a fitter and more active nation in the run up to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Minister will report to Patricia Hewitt, Secretary of State for Health and Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and Olympics Minister. She said: *"By taking the 'Small Change Big Difference' approach we will look at ways we can support the public to make minor changes that will make a long term difference to their health".* Water UK will be approaching the Minister to raise awareness of the health benefits of good hydration in exercise, and highlighting the zero calorie, zero caffeine, and zero sugar advantages of using water over alleged “sports drinks”.
22. **BBC and ‘Tea for Health’** - The BBC ran an item on their website advising the public that tea is healthier than water

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/5281046.stm?> . The research was part funded by the Tea Council as part of their campaign called 'tea for health' and it offers selective advice about the benefits, without mentioning the downsides. The BBC are also planning a TV item promoting tea and coffee as part of daily hydration, and will be challenging the 2 litres a day message through their 'Facts about Food' series, hosted by Lisa Tarbuck next January. Surprisingly, in previous articles the BBC has given a different perspective, and their latest BBC health advice *advises "Tea contains antioxidant substances called flavonoids. These have been shown to help slow or inhibit the chemical reactions thought to take place during the development of coronary heart disease. So sup up! But remember that drinking [water](#) is still the best way of rehydrating our bodies, so for every cuppa you have, try to drink a glass of water too"*  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/healthy\\_living/nutrition/drinks\\_caff.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/healthy_living/nutrition/drinks_caff.shtml)

**23. No to Zam Zam** - Westminster City Council's Food Team is warning people not to buy Zam Zam water if they see it on sale. Zam Zam Water is said to come from the Well of Zam Zam, a well located within the Masjid al Haram in Mecca. During last year's Ramadan the Food Team found a number of premises trying to exploit buyers by selling the water. Upon testing it, the Food Team discovered high levels of nitrate and arsenic, exceeding the legal levels permitted in Schedule 3 of the Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water Regulations 1999. Cllr Audrey Lewis, Cabinet Member for Community Protection, said *"I would urge people not to buy bottles of Zam Zam water if they see it on sale as there is a strong possibility it will have high levels of nitrate and arsenic."* *If you do see Zam Zam water on sale anywhere please inform your local Environmental Health team."*

**24. Water in Westminster** - Parliamentary Questions are currently being asked in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the ongoing lack of fresh water within care home care standards and nutritional guidance. Listed below is a summary of the recently asked questions:

**Paul Burstow MP** - To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures have been taken since October 2005 to ensure that free, fresh, chilled drinking water is available to all care home residents throughout the day.

**The Minister for Social Care, Ivan Lewis**, responded : The Care Homes Regulations state that homes must provide, in adequate quantities, suitable, wholesome and nutritious food which is varied and properly prepared and available at such time as may reasonably be required by service users. Food, in the regulations, includes drink. The review of the national minimum standards for care homes, which the Commission for Social Care Inspection must take into account when inspecting care homes, is ongoing and will be

subject to public consultation in due course. The issue of availability of drinking water to residents is being considered as part of the review. As part of the “Heatwave Plan for England 2006”, the Department has issued “Supporting Vulnerable People before and during a heatwave—advice for care home managers and staff”. This is a fact-sheet, containing advice on preparation for and dealing with the effects of a heat wave on care home residents. It includes guidance on identifying those most at risk, monitoring residents’ fluid intake, particularly if they are unable to drink unaided and ensuring that water and ice are widely available.

**Baroness Sue Miller** has asked Her Majesty’s Government: whether care standards require that fresh drinking water is available to care residents throughout the day and that it is offered to them regularly; whether they will take further steps to ensure that fresh water is a required element of the nutritional standards for older people in care.

**Paul Burstow** then continued “To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will set a new health care standard in the national minimum standards for adult social care to ensure that care home residents receive adequate access to fresh drinking water; and if she will make a statement; [106041]

(2) if she will make representations to the Food Standards Agency to redraft its nutritional guidance for institutions providing residential care to older people so that it explicitly addresses the provision of fresh drinking water on demand. [106042]

**Minister for Social Care, Ivan Lewis**, advised: Regulation 16 of the care homes regulations requires care homes to provide, in adequate, quantities, suitable, wholesome and nutritious food which is varied and properly prepared and available at such time as may reasonably be required by service users. Food, in the regulations, includes drink.

Standard 15 of the national minimum standards (NMS) for care homes for older people includes the requirements that: service users receive a varied, appealing, wholesome and nutritious diet, which is suited to individual assessed and recorded requirements, and that meals are taken in a congenial setting and at flexible times; and hot and cold drinks and snacks are available at all times and offered regularly.

The review of the NMS, which the Commission for Social Care Inspection must take into account when inspecting care homes, is ongoing and will be subject to public consultation in due course. The issue of the availability of drinking water to residents is being considered as part of the review.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) published nutrient and food based advice for those providing food in care homes on 19 October 2006. This advice includes example menus, which include making water available at all eating

occasions. Government advice is that we need to drink six to eight glasses of fluid every day. It is therefore implicit that care homes should be making water freely available throughout the day.

The nutrient and food-based guidance for those providing residential care for older people is the first part in a series of guidance documents for United Kingdom institutions. The FSA expects to produce guidance for other institutions, including the NHS and prisons, in early 2007.

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**5.12.2006**  
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