

Water for Health Update and Briefing – October 2007

1. **NHS North East joins Alliance** - The North East Strategic Health Authority has joined the Water for Health Alliance. One of 10 strategic health authorities in England, they are responsible for the development of health services in the North East, on behalf of the Department of Health. In joining the Alliance, the SHA advised *“We aim to be a model of excellence in health improvement and health care services, achieving this by helping our community to make the best possible decisions about their health and health care. Encouraging people to drink enough water in their diet, and to stay hydrated, can make an important contribution to illness prevention, and directly supports the health of our population”*. <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/water-for-health-alliance/nhs-ne>
2. **Surrey NHS Primary Care Trust joins Alliance** – The successful team who continue to deliver the Thirst 4 Life hydration initiative across Surrey has joined the Water for Health Alliance. The objectives of their work include educating those working with older people in all environments so they are able to improve care, promoting and maintaining health, reducing A+ E admissions and medication due to dehydration or related conditions, and reducing falls in older people. They advise *“Maintaining hydration is essential to ensure we are able to function at our best both physically and mentally. We hope to be able to improve health as a result of this project...”* <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/water-for-health-alliance/surreypct>
3. **British Dietetic Association joins Alliance** – The professional association for dietitians has joined the Water for Health Alliance. The BDA aims to promote health and well being amongst the population through the science and practice of dietetics. The BDA supports the efforts of the Water for Health Alliance in raising awareness of the importance of good hydration within a healthy life. *They advise that “Tap water is the ideal beverage to support fluid requirements”* <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/water-for-health-alliance/bda>
4. **Consumer Council for Northern Ireland joins Alliance** - The Consumer Council for Northern Ireland represents water and sewerage consumers by speaking up for them and giving them a voice. Independent of government, the water industry and its regulators, they run information and education campaigns, influence the public and private sectors, undertake research and produce publications. In joining the Water for Health Alliance, they advise *“We value working in partnership with other organisations, and are delighted to join the Water for Health Alliance to help raise awareness of the health benefits of good hydration to Northern Ireland. Access to safe, fresh drinking water is vital for everyone in the community, and drinking enough is an important element of public health and wellbeing.”* <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/water-for-health-alliance/ccn-ireland>
5. **British Dental Health Foundation joins Alliance** - The British Dental Health Foundation has joined the Water for Health Alliance. The BDHF has been providing free and impartial dental information to the public for more than 35 years, and runs the annual National Smile Month and Mouth Cancer Awareness Week campaigns. They advise that *“One of the biggest challenges faced by the Foundation is educating people on the dangers of too*

frequent consumption of sugar” Water, along with milk, is the only drink that the Foundation recommends as completely safe for teeth. “It contains no sugar, no calories and no acid and, from a holistic point of view, by guarding against everything from headaches to heart disease, it is massively important to a person’s overall health.” <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/water-for-health-alliance/bdhf>

6. **Water for Health Alliance Forum** – The National Water for Health Forum took place at Unison’s headquarters in London, bringing together nearly 100 health professionals to discuss the latest hydration information from schools, care homes, hospitals, the workplace and for licensed premises. See the full reports and presentations at <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/news-viewpoint/water-for-health-alliance>
7. **New Hospital Hydration Toolkit launched** –The Chief Nursing Officer for Wales has helped the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) to successfully launch the latest hydration best practice guidance at a press and stakeholder event in Cardiff. The resource was initiated as part of the Royal College of Nursing’s commitment to the Water for Health Alliance, and delivering the work involved a voluntary coalition between the RCN, NPSA, Water UK, the Hospital Caterers Association, NHS Supply Chain, the Health Care Commission and The Patients Association. The information will look to provide nurses and other healthcare professionals with all they will need to understand the issues of water related malnutrition and introduce appropriate hydration solutions. <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/healthcare-toolkit>
8. **Thirst 4 Life keeps hydrating patients** - Thirst 4 Life was a campaign originally piloted at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in Buckinghamshire by two nurses. After a routine audit of A+E admissions in over 65’s, it was discovered there was a shocking number of people being admitted to hospital with dehydration related problems, such as UTI’s and confusion. This spurred the nurses to raise awareness of this issue, highlighting a potential for avoiding hospital admissions by putting training into the community. The Buckinghamshire scheme was so successful it led to an amazing 45% drop in the number of care home residents attending A+E. Surrey PCT health promotion teams have adopted the principles and are working in partnership with community nursing teams, borough councils and voluntary organisations to spread the message of the benefits of hydration for health, and the practical ways in which this can be achieved. The project is being extended throughout West Surrey and will include sheltered housing schemes and other groups within the community - even including people within their own homes. Read about the achievements of the Thirst 4 Life team in Surrey (Jackie Marsh Health Promotion Development Worker and Lisa Moore District Nursing Sister). <http://www.woking.nhs.uk/intranet/Woking-PCG/News/April-2006.pdf>
9. **New Water Cooler Guidance for Schools launched** – Water for Health Alliance members, The Health Education Trust have launched their new hydration best practice toolkit through a partnership with Water UK, the European water cooler representative body EPDWA, ERIC and the National Governors Association. Water companies across the UK, and public health professionals all contributed to guidance through a structured consultation process. Everyone is working together to ensure that all schools are able to

start providing free fresh water – preferably chilled – throughout the school day. The work will eventually be developed further through a partnership with the School Food Trust. <http://www.healthedtrust.com/indicates/gdhelthinit.htm>

10. **Hydration for social care** - A Government led joint action plan for social care will be launched in October. It has been developed in response to strong evidence that older people are not receiving hydration and food, whilst being supported by health and social care services. The initiative has been led by the Social Care Minister, Ivan Lewis and produced by the team at the Department of Health. Developed in conjunction with a wide range of stakeholders, the group includes active contributions from the National Patient Safety Agency, Water UK and Water for Health Alliance members the Hospital Caterers Association, National Association of Care Catering, English Community Care Association, the Patients Association and the Royal College of Nursing. Good hydration will be a feature of the Government plan, and Water UK and Alliance members are calling for fresh drinking water to form a standard part of the basic minimum standards for care. Link to [Dignity in Care Campaign](#)

11. **Unison workplace hydration initiative** – The Water@Work hydration in the workplace campaign, developed by Alliance members Unison, has continued to increase its impact. Partners directly supporting the project now include Water UK, Northumbrian Water, Essex and Suffolk Water, Welsh Water, Anglian Water, the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, WaterAid, EPDWA, and water quality specialists WRAS. In addition to the Government level endorsements for the project, the work is promoting the Health and Safety Executive Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations (1992) which places requirements on the employer with respect to the provision of drinking water. The Unison team and Water UK also recently met with the Healthy Workplace Czar, Dame Carol Black, to encourage wider promotion of the role of good hydration in employee health. <http://www.wateratwork.org/>

12. **Water@Work Regional Launches** – Northumbrian Water became the first company to hold a regional launch event for the Water@Work campaign, when it brought together business leaders from across North East to hear more on the health benefits of hydration. The event featured speeches from Sir Derek Wanless, Water UK, Unison and the local Primary Care Trust. A second launch event for Essex and Suffolk Water and involving Anglian Water will take place on 19 October in Chelmsford, Essex <http://www.nwl.co.uk/3485.aspx>

13. **Access to Tap Water in Government Buildings** – The Water for Health Alliance and supporting environmental charities, are challenging the continued promotion of less healthy beverages and expensive mineral water in Government and public agency buildings. Whilst the Home Office and Defra have switched to tap, a Parliamentary Question recently revealed that the Department of Health is spending around £200,000 of public money on mineral water alone every two years. Had they chosen the public water supply, the equivalent cost of tap water would have been £98.60 and the impact on the environment greatly reduced. The Food Standards Agency has made half a switch, transferring to tap but explaining that they use filtration systems for their drinking water. The Parliamentary Estate in London still spends around £50,000 a year on mineral water. If we are to help the public to

understand the quality of their water supply, promote good sustainable hydration, and do it with the environment in mind, then we will need our Governments to lead by example. <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/parliamentary-questions>

14. **Liverpool Council move to tap water** – Thanks to the team at United Utilities for the news that Town Hall staff in Liverpool Council, now has a workplace ban on expensive and environmentally wasteful bottled water. Council staff and politicians in the city are being asked to make the switch to tap water to help save the planet. Last year, the council spent £48,000 buying commercially bottled water for its staff and councillors instead of using its local supplies of high quality tap water in jugs. A spokesman for Liverpool City Council said: *"When council buildings are refurbished, we are installing running water supplies to avoid the use of bottled water."* Cllr Richard Marbrow, the city's executive member for Central Services, said the council's decision-making executive board has already ditched bottled water for tap water. *"If we can replace drinking dispensers with tap water, I am happy to do it. I have no problem at all drinking water straight from the tap"*. United Utilities advise that *"Tap water in the North West is some of the best in the world. We carry out more than 500,000 tests a year to make sure it meets the strictest drinking water standards. It's delivered right to your tap and, at less than a tenth of a penny per litre, it is excellent value too."*
15. **Hydration best practice on the high street** – Alliance members, The Consumer Council for Water, are developing an initiative that will recognise and praise the high street retailers that make fresh tap water available to their customers in trading hours. The hydration best practice certificate is endorsed by the Health initiative of the Welsh Assembly Government and Water UK, and was built in full coordination with Welsh Water. The initiative is further supported by a range of posters that retailers can use to let their customers know that they are happy to hydrate them, and these are now available as free downloads on the Water for Health website. <http://www.water.org.uk/home/water-for-health/resources/hydration-posters>
16. **McDonalds, We're lovin' it** - Following enquiries by Water UK and a group of the Water for Health Alliance members and supporters, McDonalds Customer Services Department has now agreed that *"Tap water should be available free of charge, upon request from our UK restaurants"*. This is welcome news generally for public health in the UK, but is also a useful marker for the future, as McDonalds are one of the lead sponsors of the 2012 Olympic Games. Don't forget to test this water challenge out if you are in a UK McDonalds restaurant, and let their customer services team know if water is not available on request along with your other purchases.
McDonald's Customer Services Department, 11 - 59 High Road, East Finchley, London, N2 8AW
17. **Tap Water in licensed premises** – There is nothing in the English Licensing Act 2003 which requires a licensee to provide drinking water free of charge to his/her customers...it is at the discretion of the landlord or landlady. However, the provision of free tap water is often made a condition of a premises licence, as there are public safety issues surrounding the nature of the entertainment being provided (for example, dehydration from a mix of dancing and the consumption of alcohol and the possibility of the availability of drugs). Water UK is studying the number of local councils that have

imposed this condition, and we have noted more than 50 regional examples already – meaning that a majority of licensed premises are already bound to provide free tap water on request. Public safety is one of the four licensing objectives underpinning the 2003 Act. An interested party such as a local resident or a responsible authority such as the police or environmental health can ask a licensing authority to review a licence at any time based on any of these objectives. You can read more about this on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport website by following this link:

http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/Alcohol_entertainment/advice_and_guidance/residents.htm

18. **Coca Cola move in to health waters** - Thanks to friends at Zenith publishing for the news that the Coca-Cola Company has agreed to acquire Energy Brands Inc, also known as Glaceau, for \$4.1 billion in cash, in a move to boost its presence in the enhanced water and energy drink markets (high sugar and caffeinated soft drinks deliberately dressed as water). The enhanced water market is predicted to make up a large portion of the beverage industry's growth in volume and gross profit through 2010 (in North America). Coca-Cola President and Chief Operating Officer Muhtar Kent advises that the deal *"sharpens even further our existing focus on re-establishing sustainable growth in our home market, strengthening our system, and leveraging acquisition opportunities to gain speed and capabilities in key categories."*
19. **General Medical Council** - The General Medical Council is the regulator of the medical profession, and they recognise the importance of practicing good hydration and giving patients continued access to fluids throughout their day. They advise *"Artificial hydration may provoke incontinence, and over-rapid hydration may lead to fluid within the lungs. It is not always understood that feelings of thirst are not only caused by dehydration, for example many drugs will give a patient a dry mouth while having no effect on the body's hydration status. So it is important to diagnose the reason for thirst in deciding how best to meet the patient's needs. These common eventualities must be taken into consideration when making decisions about artificial nutrition and hydration"*. <http://www.gmcpressoffice.org.uk/apps/news/mediabrief/detail.php?key=76>
20. **Southern Water for Health** – Southern Water has now opened a new area of its website advising customers on the importance of water for their health and hydration. The water company is encouraging communities to make small changes to their lifestyle to stay fit and healthy. They advise *"The best way to top it up is to drink two litres, around eight glasses every day. It sounds a lot but not if you start off the day with one as soon as you wake and spread the rest through the day and with each of your meals. Keeping hydrated is a central part of nutritional care and tap water is the best and cheapest way to achieve it"*. <http://www.southernwater.co.uk/homeAndLeisure/drinkingWater/waterForHealth.asp>

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