

TRUSTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Period: 1 January – 31 December 2023

Charity Number: 1185514

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The Objects

The objects of the Academy are “to improve public health and well-being by supporting research, education and associated activities which advance the knowledge and application of evidence-based nutrition science.”

Charitable Purposes for Public Benefit

As a charity the Academy must have aims that fall within the descriptions of charitable purposes set out in the Charities Act 2006. The charitable purposes of the Academy in pursuit of its objects are:

- The advancement of health
- The advancement of science
- The advancement of animal welfare

The Trustees have complied with the duty in s.17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission’s published general and relevant sub-sector guidance concerning the operation of the public benefit requirement under that Act. The beneficiaries are considered to be:

- Members of the Academy:
 - Membership of the Academy is open to organisations only. Currently there are 4 members: the Association for Nutrition; British Dietetic Association; the British Nutrition Foundation; The Nutrition Society. The Academy plans to open membership to other organisations who are interested in furthering the Academy’s objects in 2024/5. Through these organisations the Academy can significantly extend its public benefit.
- Humanity:
 - All people benefit from the scientific advice given to government departments, public agencies, the scientific community and the food industry; and from the dissemination of nutritional science. Examples include the Academy publishing position papers, participating in relevant public consultations, and scientific conferences.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Introduction and Foundation

The Academy of Nutrition Sciences is a joint initiative between the Association for Nutrition (AfN), the British Dietetic Association (BDA), the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) and the Nutrition Society, established in October 2019 to: *'Improve public health and wellbeing by supporting excellence in research, education and associated activities to advance the knowledge and application of evidence-based nutrition science.'*

This object will be furthered, in collaboration with both the founding member organisations and additional new member organisations, through common goals and collective activities. The focus will be in four main areas:

Leadership

The Academy will provide a collective voice to engage with stakeholders in the area of nutrition and dietetics, including government and industry. It will also work with partner organisations to ensure publicly available nutrition and diet advice is evidence-based.

Communication, Education and Training

The Academy will champion nutrition science in evidence-based policy making and as a subject in education at all levels. The Academy will also promote education, training, information and guidance and advocate for greater nutrition education for medical students.

Stakeholder Relationships

The Academy will champion research, knowledge transfer and public engagement in the nutrition field. The Academy will champion the public's greater awareness of the importance of properly regulated nutritionists and dietitians with suitable qualifications and experience.

Advancing the Research Agenda

The Academy will develop a concordat for funders and universities about what constitutes rigorous and ethically sound research in the nutrition field.

2023 Activities

Governance and Strategy

Throughout 2023, the fourth year of activities for the Academy, the trustees met on 6 occasions to transact Academy business.

The strategic plan, following consultation with the member organisations, was completed in 2021. It contains the following:

Vision: To be an authoritative voice advancing and promoting evidence-based nutrition science.

Mission: To champion nutrition science, enhancing its impact on policy and health for public benefit.

Three Strategic Priorities:

1. Promoting collaboration and partnerships:

(1.1) Promote collaborations between the ANS member organisations.

(1.2) Promote external collaborations by developing and maintaining working relationships with appropriate partners

(1.3) Establish a collaborative model to enable wider membership of the Academy

2. Influencing science and policy:

(2.1) Influence nutritionally-relevant policies at national and international levels by highlighting issues in nutrition science and encouraging action to address them

(2.2) Promote nutrition science research for the public benefit and actively engage with groups determining nutrition policy

(2.3) Improve the representation of nutrition science on research strategy groups and funding panels, and actively engage in discussions to help shape funding calls

(2.4) Publish position papers that promote and champion evidence- based nutrition science and to make recommendations that inform policy and practice

3. Developing organisational resilience:

(3.1) Determine operational priorities for action and desired outcomes within the strategic plan

(3.2) Develop a financial plan to enable stability and growth

(3.3) Extend membership of ANS to societies and organisations which satisfy the membership criteria

(3.4) Encourage extension of Academy activities through task and finish group

(3.5) Develop and implement a communications strategy to raise the profile of the Academy's work.

Position Papers and Consultations

The Academy's third position paper was accepted for publication by the British Journal of Nutrition in November 2023 (and published in January 2024). The paper was titled 'Evidence for Nutrition Interventions for Individuals'. The paper examined how evidence is used to

guide individualised nutrition interventions. An editorial highlighting the recommendations of the position paper was submitted for publication and plans are in place for publicising this and the previous position papers in 2024.

In April 2023, a short article was published on the Academy's website entitled The Importance of Transparent Frameworks for the Assessment of Evidence. As well as flagging the Academy's own position papers, the article highlighted SACN's framework and methods for evaluation of evidence.

In May 2023 the Academy, commenting in a 'perspective' on its website (titled 'Is the focus on environment sustainability risking delivery of micronutrient adequacy?') on a new analysis led by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, and a new report from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, suggested there is an urgent need to consider human nutrition in tandem with strategies to transform food systems to manage environmental impacts.

In June 2023, a further 'perspective' titled 'Understanding ultra processed foods and human health: a journey without a plan?', was published on the Academy's website. The 'perspective' considered the risk of unintended dietary consequences of premature policy concerning UPFs is high, given that the classification system itself has been widely criticised for failure to discriminate foods that contribute beneficial nutrition from those that do not, and the proposed mechanisms involved are multiple and mostly under-investigated. It suggested the solutions will not be found in repetitive association studies but may require a strategic approach to funding of nutrition research that is currently lacking in the UK.

In July 2023 the Academy welcomed, through a 'perspective' published on its website, the thorough and comprehensive statement on processed foods and health from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN), which concluded that the observed associations between higher consumption of (ultra-) processed foods and adverse health outcomes need to be treated with caution owing to limitations in the NOVA classification system, the potential for confounding, and the possibility that the observed adverse associations are covered by existing dietary recommendations. The SACN statement also highlighted the lack of evidence about the mechanism(s) via which processed foods might adversely affect health and the need for good-quality randomised controlled trials that may help establish potential mechanisms, and establish whether they are independent of energy density or other dietary factors. This recommendation is aligned with the June 2023 'perspective' from the Academy.

In July 2023 the Academy also published a short article on its website highlighting the SACN report on feeding young children aged 1-5 years.

Internal Policy Development

The internal focus of the Academy during 2023 saw the continued development of its communications strategy and capacity. The Academy is extremely grateful for the volunteer assistance provided by a number of individuals and the support from its Member Organisations.

An important policy development saw a revised structure to its communications. Four 'themes' were agreed by the Trustees and Member Organisations to better clarify the communication outputs. The four are:

- 'Outcomes and Activities: The Academy's position papers.
- 'Perspectives': The Academy's comments on work/actions of other organisations and individuals.
- 'Collaborations and Partnerships': Communications which publicise the output/actions of Academy partnerships and collaborations
- 'Opportunities': Publicise nutrition science activities of the Academy's Member Organisations.

In addition, the Academy trustees, in conjunction with its Member Organisations, developed and agreed a policy for the category of 'perspectives' articles that has the aim of encouraging debate or reflection on potentially controversial issues, focusing on the strength of the evidence base underpinning these issues. Unlike its Position Papers, such articles do not necessarily present an official opinion of the Academy or its Member Organisations.

Finally, the Trustees completed its development of the By-Law and processes for the assessment and approval/rejection of applications for new Member Organisations. It is intended to seek new Members in 2024/25.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Income and Expenditure

The seed funding provided by the 4 member organisations in 2020 (total of £20,000) was designed to allow sufficient time for the Academy to develop a member fee structure and annual budget. A methodology for the calculation of annual membership fees was agreed by trustees in 2022, and is based on a combination of the operational fiscal requirements of the Academy, and the relative gross income of the member organisations (to establish a membership band system). In 2023 the Academy recorded membership income of £2,062. In addition, interest was received from the Academy's bank totalling £34. On the expense side administrative costs during 2023 totalled £1,010, primarily the costs of developing an independent cloud-based records system. The resulting total funds for the Academy on 31 December 2023 were recorded as £16,830 (2022 £15,744).

Policy for Holding Reserves

The free reserves are defined as funds that are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees. The Trustees have included in the reserves the cash and bank balances held for the day to day business requirements of the Academy. It is the intention of the Trustees to build a reserve fund sufficient to ensure the Academy can continue to operate, should revenues be reduced, for a minimum period of one year.

Risk Management

The main areas of risk that have been identified by the Trustees are: damage to the Academy's reputation through adverse publicity; significant loss of member organisations; financial losses through fraud or loss of income. In these cases, preventative measures and financial controls have been agreed and established and the Trustees have implemented procedures for the Secretariat reporting internal control failures immediately to the Trustees, together with details of corrective action being taken.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The governing document is the Constitution as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, dated 9 May 2019.

How the Academy is Constituted

The Academy's governing body is the Trustee Board, which has 9 members. Three Trustees undertake the duties of Chair, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

The Trustees exercise all the powers of the Academy, subject to the provisions of the charity laws currently in force and with the assistance and advice of an Operational Support Group and a Secretariat. The Operational Support Group comprises of the CEOs of the 4 founding member organisations. The Secretariat provides administrative services, at no cost, to the Academy. The Secretariat is hosted by the Nutrition Society, one of the founding member organisations. In addition, there are from time-to-time, sub-committees and working groups reporting to the Trustees on specialist areas of the Academy's activities. With these arrangements in place, the Trustees at all times have a detailed knowledge of the business being transacted by the Academy.

Methods Used to Appoint Trustees

Procedures for election for Trustee posts are in place. When nominations are needed they will be sought, as proscribed in the Constitution, from the membership and through advertising on the website to which members' attention is drawn by personal email alerts. Trustees will be elected by decision of the members at the annual general meeting. The Constitution, containing the appointment of trustees' procedure, is available on the Academy's website.

New Trustees receive an induction pack and guidance from the Trustees. An induction meeting is held with the Head of the Secretariat to ensure that the incoming Trustees have the opportunity ask questions about policy and actions of the board so that they can take up their duties with clear understanding of the current position of the Academy. In addition, all new trustees will attend within their first 6 months in post an external governance training workshop.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

The name: The Academy of Nutrition Sciences

Charity registration number: It is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales, number 1185514

Address of the principal office and address of the registered office:

Boyd Orr House, 10 Cambridge Court, 210 Shepherds Bush Road, London W6 7NJ

The Trustees at 31 December 2023

Professor Judy Buttriss – Chair

Professor Christine Williams

Professor Kevin Whelan

Professor Julie Lovegrove

Dr Frank Thies - Honorary Secretary & Treasurer

Dr Fiona McCullough


Dr Margaret Ashwell

Dr Adrian Brown

Dr Tara Coppinger

Bankers: Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). CAF Bank,
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

By Order of the Trustees



Mark Hollingsworth, Secretary

Approved by the Trustees 13 May 2024.