



Spare a little thought for food – how Dorset is tackling malnutrition

**Malnutrition is a serious condition affecting many older people. In Dorset, a number of agencies have come together to tackle the issue. Health programme advisor Michelle Smith told the story to BBC Breakfast in Dorset this week.**

By Michelle Smith

Media reports this week about the worrying rising demands of treating malnutrition nationally gave us an opportunity to show how a good piece of work in Dorset is really making a difference.

Despite the very early start on a wet Monday morning, it proved to be an exciting beginning to the week for me, as I headed to the BBC Dorset studio for my live radio interview on the [BBC Breakfast in Dorset](#) show.

The launch of a [new report](#) into the additional health and social care costs associated with malnutrition resulted in my invitation from BBC Radio Solent last week.

The BAPEN report provides new evidence that malnutrition is costing the NHS £20bn and calls for work on the prevention of the condition to be a key health priority both nationally and locally.

As such it gave us, at Public Health Dorset, a fantastic platform from which to promote the pioneering work we are already doing locally with health and social care teams around improving nutritional care and preventing malnutrition in our community.

Dorset's malnutrition prevention programme has been running in Purbeck for a year now and delivers directly on the call to action from BAPEN that recommends local health professionals are trained in nutritional screening and assessment.

To date the pilot has screened almost 400 people across Purbeck with about a third being identified as at risk of malnutrition – above the national average quoted of 14%. About 70% of those identified as at risk of malnutrition were screened by members of staff who were not screening before, so without the intervention being in place their risk level could have been missed and as such their condition worsened.

So it was a real feel good factor to hear the BBC describe the work we are doing in Dorset as ahead of the game.

If you would like to hear more about our innovative work, you can [listen again](#) (we're on at 0:37 and 1:37).



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**Michelle Smith is a health programme advisor for Public Health Dorset.**