

A NEW COUNCIL MEMBER OF THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION



Belinda Mortell
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Belinda attended her first BDA Council meeting back in September 2015 and tells us what was involved, who attended and what was discussed...

I currently work in the NHS as an Acute Dietitian, but have also worked in private practice and in public health in Ireland and Gibraltar. I have only been working in the NHS a year, but I am very happy with my decision to move into Acute Dietetics. I am PR & Media Committee Member of the North West England and North Wales branch of the British Dietetic Association (BDA) and Chair of the Communications and Marketing Board of the BDA.

I have a background in Higher Education, Business Engagement and Finance and I have worked in management accounting for Unilever Best foods, O2Telefonica and ChevronTexaco.

BDA COUNCIL

As Chair of the Communications and Marketing Board, I also sit on the BDA Council and attended my first meeting back in September 2015. The Council is not only a professional body, it's also a Trade Union too, responsible for strategic leadership, managing the finances and representing the membership. There are approximately 8,500 members.

I had no experience of the workings of a council and faced a steep learning curve, having no idea how it operated. I also didn't know anyone on the BDA Council.

I joined the BDA as a full member on my return to the UK back in 2012, joining the local branch, but not interacting with the office at all. I had only visited the BDA offices once, and had no idea about the set up. I was previously a member of the Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute, being one of only 600 members.

INITIAL MEETING

My first face-to-face council meeting was in November at BDA Offices Birmingham, with 11 members of Council and four members of the BDA office present. Council members come from a diverse range of work areas, including acute dietitians, dietitians working in industry and freelance/media specialists. There is also a dietetic support worker representative, a student representative and Trade Union lead.

The room was full of immensely experienced and skilled dietitians, which made me feel very excited and honoured to be part of the BDA Council and hopeful for the future of the profession.

ON THE AGENDA

As Council has a responsibility for financial control of the association, BDA budgets and results from the previous year were analysed and approved.

We discussed the online resource PEN, an online evidence resource free to access by BDA members. As the BDA is 80-years-old in 2016, we also went through plans for BDA events, which could incorporate this milestone. These included BDA Vision and BDA Live.

HCPC (Health and Care Professions Council) developments which will impact BDA members were included on the agenda. We were asked to consider candidates for the BDA annual awards. New developments such as the launch of the BAPEN self-screening tool and the launch of Eating well, living well, a BDA public facing magazine, were also discussed. ▶

Belinda works for the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, North Wales and is Chair of Marketing and Communications at the BDA.

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF THE ASSOCIATIONS OF DIETITIANS

Anne de Looy (Honorary president) explained the operations of EFAD. She reminded us that all BDA members are entitled to register with EFAD for free. EFAD works to promote the dietetics profession on a global level.

SPORTS AND EXERCISE NUTRITION REGISTER

Rosanna Hudson, BDA Policy Officer, and Louise Sutton of the Sports and Exercise Nutrition Register (SENr), attended to present information concerning the policy for joining this register. The SENr is administered by the BDA and includes dietitians, nutritionists and sports and exercise nutritionists.

COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING BOARD

The Communications and Marketing Board meet three times a year in the Birmingham offices of the BDA. The board is in the process of identifying terms of reference and developing a work plan, with identifiable outcomes,

which includes the BDA 80th birthday, Trust a Dietitian and Dietitians' Week. Key objectives for the board include: promoting the profession, ensuring the BDA engages with all external stakeholders, helping manage external affairs and be a reference point for the BDA office in the context of communications and marketing.

AND FINALLY

The most important thing I have learnt in the last three years since landing back in the UK is that networking is so important for developing your career. You never know who you might meet, so I would encourage anyone to introduce themselves to the person they are sitting next to at the next CPD event or conference they attend.

In addition, I would encourage any dietitian, no matter their job title, NHS grade, age or experience, to engage with their member organisation, be a committee member for a branch or group, member or chair of council boards, offer to speak at events, take part in projects. You never know where it may lead. ■

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