

WELLNESS

WELLNESS

magazine

AUTUMN 2026

WELLNESS

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HEALTHIER MIND

HEALTHIER FOOD

HEALTHIER BODY

HEALTHIER WORLD

WELLNESS

Welcome to the latest issue of our Wellness Magazine!



I'm pleased to share the autumn edition of our Wellness Magazine. This issue is packed with practical advice, inspiring stories and expert insights designed to support wellbeing both at work and at home as we move into the autumn season.

Inside, you'll find a range of engaging articles covering key health and wellness topics, with helpful tips that can be easily incorporated into everyday routines. Whether you're looking for ideas to improve your physical wellbeing, boost resilience or maintain a healthy work-life balance, there is something for everyone.

The magazine also features thought-provoking perspectives and real-life experiences that highlight the importance of prioritising wellbeing. They offer valuable takeaways and fresh inspiration to help you stay motivated and focused on your personal wellness goals.

I encourage you to take a few moments to explore the magazine and discover the articles that resonate most with you. I hope you find it informative, enjoyable and full of ideas that support your wellbeing throughout the season.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'J' and 'W'.

Jason Webb
Head of HR - ESS Defence, Marine & Aerospace

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Reflections on a Chef's Role

The Changes I Have Witnessed Throughout My Career

CHEF APPRECIATION WEEK: 14TH–18TH SEPTEMBER 2026
WORLD VEGETARIAN DAY: 1ST OCTOBER 2026
NATIONAL BRUNCH WEEKEND: 2ND–3RD OCTOBER 2026
ANAPHYLAXIS AWARENESS WEEK: 1ST–7TH OCTOBER 2026
WORLD FOOD DAY: 16TH OCTOBER 2026
INTERNATIONAL CHEFS DAY: 20TH OCTOBER 2026



Scott Freeman
Culinary Director - ESS

When I first began my career in hospitality in the late 1990s, kitchens were very different places from the ones we work in today. Health and safety was far less prominent, allergen awareness was rarely discussed, recipes lived in notebooks or on scraps of paper and supplier pricing could change daily with a phone call offering a 'special deal'. Menu planning often became a late-evening exercise in recalculating costs and margins. The internet existed, but it certainly wasn't a tool used in most professional kitchens. Social media, online reviews and digital platforms have since transformed how restaurants operate, communicate and respond to customers, and the biggest concern on a quiet lunch service was whether the lone diner who had just walked in might secretly be a restaurant critic.

Thirty years later, the industry has transformed beyond recognition and I'm certain the next three decades will bring even more change. Back then, success was measured differently. Many kitchens operated without formal targets, dashboards or profit reports. The key indicators were repeat customers, full bookings at the weekend and perhaps a few extra sales of wine, brandy or cigars. The focus was simple: create great food and keep guests coming back.

The working environment was also very different. Kitchens were hot, noisy and demanding. Long hours were accepted as part of the job and work-life balance was rarely discussed. Looking back, I sometimes wonder how we did it all for little more than £120 a week. Yet despite the challenges, I loved every minute of it. There was camaraderie and a sense of purpose that made the hard work worthwhile.

Fast forward to 2026 and our kitchens across ESS present a very different picture.





Today's chefs are not simply cooks. They are leaders, planners, coaches, innovators and business professionals. The stereotypical 'shouty chef' has largely been replaced by individuals who understand that successful kitchens depend on teamwork, communication and developing others.

Customer expectations have changed dramatically too. When I became a chef de partie, many classic dishes relied heavily on butter, cream and rich stocks that seemed to simmer endlessly on the stove. While those techniques still have their place, modern diners are much more conscious of nutrition, calories and healthier choices. Chefs now need to balance flavour and indulgence with nutritional awareness and allergen compliance in a way that simply wasn't expected thirty years ago.

Perhaps the biggest shift has been the growing focus on sustainability. The industry has recognised that we cannot continue to consume resources without considering the long-term impact.

Today's chefs are expected to understand food provenance, reduce waste, support sustainable sourcing and create menus that help lower environmental impact. Plant-forward dishes, sustainable seafood and greater use of seasonal ingredients have become part of everyday menu development, and rightly so.

The global food landscape has also become far more complex. In the 1990s, ingredients often felt plentiful and reliable. Supply chain disruption was rarely part of the conversation. Today's chefs must navigate challenges ranging from extreme weather events and crop failures to geopolitical conflicts, labour shortages and changing trade arrangements. These factors directly affect availability, pricing and menu planning.

As a result, modern chefs need to think further ahead than ever before. They must manage budgets, monitor food costs, respond to changing customer preferences and adapt quickly when circumstances change. The ability to remain creative while operating within these constraints is one of the most impressive qualities I see in our teams today.

What continues to inspire me is the resilience and adaptability of chefs across our business. They embrace new technologies, experiment with new ingredients and constantly look for ways to improve the customer experience. Many of the ideas we now take for granted would have seemed unimaginable when I first entered the industry in the 1990s.

So, when I reflect on the evolution of our profession, I am filled with admiration for today's chefs. Their role extends far beyond preparing great food. They are mentors, teachers, accountants, planners, sustainability champions, salespeople and role models. They solve problems, build teams and create experiences that matter to our customers every day. I couldn't be prouder to wear a chef's jacket alongside them.

As we celebrate Chef Appreciation Week in September and International Chefs Day in October, it is worth recognising just how much the profession has evolved and the incredible people who continue to drive it forward.

Chef Q&A



Matt Lord

Regional Executive Chef – ESS

How has your role evolved over the years?

When I first entered the industry, much of the focus was on producing great food consistently, managing kitchens efficiently and ensuring customers left satisfied. Whilst those elements remain fundamental today, the role of a chef has evolved significantly.

In my role developing the menus for ESS Defence, Marine and Aerospace, my focus now extends beyond recipe development and operational delivery. I spend a considerable amount of time supporting teams, driving innovation, improving nutritional standards, reducing environmental impact and ensuring we deliver a food offer that meets the changing needs of our customers.

Technology, sustainability and data now play a much bigger part in decision-making. We are constantly looking at how we can improve menus, enhance the dining experience and make more informed choices that benefit both our consumers and the planet.



How do you increase fibre in recipes without compromising taste?

Increasing fibre to improve gut health is on trend this year and is something we actively consider when developing recipes, but it's important that flavour and customer appeal always come first.

One of the simplest approaches is incorporating more vegetables, pulses, beans and wholegrains into dishes. Ingredients such as lentils, chickpeas, black beans and oats not only increase fibre content but also add texture and nutritional value.

We often look for opportunities to make small changes that have a big impact, such as using wholegrain ingredients where appropriate, adding vegetables to sauces and stews or incorporating legumes into recipes. The key is ensuring these additions enhance the dish rather than feel like a nutritional compromise.

Working closely with our ESS nutrition team is the key to success. They are the experts who guide the culinary team when we are creating new recipes. When done well, customers simply enjoy a great-tasting meal that happens to be higher in fibre.





What are some of your favourite ideas for low-fat recipes?

The perception of low-fat food has changed dramatically over the years. Today's customers expect dishes that are lighter but still deliver on flavour.

Some of my favourite approaches include using bold herbs, spices, citrus, chilli and vinegars to create depth of flavour without relying heavily on fats. Grilled proteins, vibrant grain salads and roasted vegetables can be incredibly satisfying when balanced correctly.

We've also seen great success with globally inspired dishes, where flavour comes from ingredients such as ginger, garlic, fresh herbs and spice blends. These allow us to create exciting meals that are both nutritious and enjoyable.

Nutritional focus has shifted from what we take away to what we add to dishes.

How has awareness of allergens changed during your career?

The increase in allergen awareness has probably been one of the most significant changes I've witnessed throughout my career.

When I started in hospitality, allergen management was often viewed as a specialist requirement for a small number of consumers. Today, it is rightly recognised as a critical aspect of food safety and customer care.

There is now a much greater understanding across the industry regarding allergen risks, food labelling, recipe control, supplier assurance and staff training. Teams are far more aware of the importance of preventing cross-contamination and ensuring accurate information is available to customers.

Most importantly, awareness has helped create a more inclusive dining experience. Customers with food allergies or intolerances should be able to dine with confidence and it's our responsibility to provide them with safe and enjoyable choices.

What excites you most about the future of food in Defence?

What excites me most is the opportunity to continue improving the quality, nutritional value and sustainability of the food we serve.

Today's service personnel expect more variety, greater choice and food that supports both physical and mental wellbeing. We have an exciting opportunity to combine culinary innovation with nutrition, sustainability and operational excellence.

Whether it's introducing new global flavours, increasing plant-forward options, reducing carbon impact or helping customers make healthier choices, the future of Defence catering is incredibly exciting, and I'm proud to be part of that journey.

Fibre First

The Simple Habit Behind Better Blood Pressure and Cholesterol

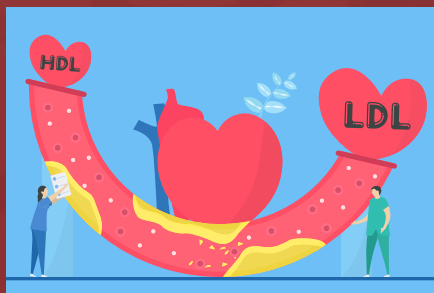
Many people know their phone number, car registration or favourite coffee order by heart, but far fewer know their blood pressure or cholesterol levels.

Yet these are two of the most important numbers when it comes to protecting long-term health. High blood pressure and raised cholesterol are often described as 'silent' risk factors because they usually have no obvious symptoms. You can feel completely well while damage is gradually occurring inside the body.¹

In the UK, cardiovascular disease remains one of the leading causes of death, accounting for around a quarter of all deaths each year.² According to the British Heart Foundation, around 7.6 million people in the UK are living with heart or circulatory disease, while millions more have risk factors such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol without even realising it.² It is estimated that around one in three adults in the UK has high blood pressure and many are undiagnosed.³

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. If this pressure remains too high over time, it can increase the risk of heart attacks, strokes, kidney disease and vascular dementia.¹ Ideally, blood pressure should be around 120/80 mmHg, while consistent readings of 140/90 mmHg or higher are considered high in a clinical setting.¹ One of the concerns with high blood pressure is that symptoms are often absent until complications occur, which is why regular checks are so important.

Cholesterol is another number worth knowing. Cholesterol is a fatty substance carried in the blood and, while the body needs some cholesterol for healthy cells and hormone production, too much low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, often called 'bad' cholesterol, can build up in the arteries and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.⁴ The NHS estimates that around 60% of adults in England have raised cholesterol levels.⁴ Alarming, many people only discover they have high cholesterol after a routine blood test, health check or cardiac event.



The good news is that lifestyle changes can have a significant impact on both blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and one of the most overlooked tools is fibre. Despite its importance, most adults in the UK are not eating enough of it. Government recommendations advise adults to consume around 30 g of fibre per day, yet average daily intake is only around 18–20 g.⁵ This means many people are missing out on one of the simplest ways to support heart health.

Fibre plays an important role in helping to lower cholesterol levels, particularly soluble fibre. This type of fibre binds to cholesterol in the digestive system and helps remove it from the body before it can enter the bloodstream.⁶ Foods rich in soluble fibre include oats, barley, beans, lentils, chickpeas, apples, pears and flaxseeds. Research has shown that regularly consuming oats and other fibre-rich foods can help reduce LDL cholesterol levels over time.⁶

Fibre may also support healthier blood pressure. Diets rich in fibre are linked with improved heart health, better weight management, healthier blood vessels and reduced inflammation.⁷ Fibre-rich foods also tend to be more filling, which can help prevent overeating and support a healthier body weight, another important factor in maintaining healthy blood pressure.

Interestingly, fibre does far more than support heart health. Fibre feeds the beneficial bacteria in the gut, supporting digestion, immunity and even mental wellbeing.⁸ Scientists are increasingly discovering links between gut health and other aspects

of wellbeing, including mood, energy levels and inflammation throughout the body. In many ways, fibre acts as fuel for the 'good' bacteria living in the digestive system.

Increasing fibre intake does not need to be complicated. Small changes can make a meaningful difference over time. Swapping white bread for wholemeal bread, choosing brown rice or wholewheat pasta, adding beans or lentils to meals, leaving potato skins on or having porridge for breakfast are all simple ways to increase fibre intake.⁵ Adding nuts, seeds, fruit and vegetables to meals and snacks can also help gradually boost intake throughout the day.

It is important to increase fibre gradually and drink enough fluids, as suddenly increasing fibre too quickly can cause digestive discomfort for some people.⁵ Consistency is key and small, sustainable changes are often more effective than extreme diets or short-term health kicks.

Knowing your numbers is not about becoming obsessive or anxious about health. It is about awareness and prevention. Many people wait until symptoms appear before making changes, but conditions such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol can develop quietly over many years. Regular checks through your GP, pharmacy or NHS Health Check can provide valuable insight into your health and help identify issues early.¹

Often, it is the small daily habits that have the biggest long-term impact. Eating more fibre, moving regularly, reducing highly processed foods, sleeping well, managing stress and drinking alcohol in moderation can all contribute to healthier cholesterol and blood pressure levels over time.¹

Your future health is shaped not by one meal or one workout, but by the habits you repeat consistently. Increasing fibre may be one of the simplest and most powerful places to start.

1. NHS (2024) High blood pressure (hypertension). Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-blood-pressure-hypertension/> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

2. British Heart Foundation (2025) Heart statistics and facts. Available at: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/our-research/heart-statistics> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

3. Blood Pressure UK (2025) Know your blood pressure. Available at: <https://www.bloodpressureuk.org> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

4. NHS (2024) High cholesterol. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/high-cholesterol/> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

5. British Nutrition Foundation (2024) Fibre. Available at: <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthy-sustainable-diets/fibre/> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

Simple, low-cost ways to increase fibre intake without dramatically changing eating habits:

1 Add beans and lentils to everyday meals

Tinned beans, chickpeas and lentils are inexpensive, versatile and high in fibre. Add them to soups, stews, curries, pasta sauces, salads or casseroles.

2 Choose wholegrains where possible

Swap:

- White bread for wholemeal bread
- White rice for brown rice
- Regular pasta for wholewheat pasta
- Sugary cereals for porridge oats or wholegrain cereals

Even making one swap a day can increase fibre intake significantly.

3 Leave the skin on

Many fruits and vegetables contain much of their fibre in or just beneath the skin. Potatoes, sweet potatoes, apples, pears and cucumbers can all be eaten with the skin on after washing.

4 Add oats to more than breakfast

Oats are an inexpensive source of fibre. Stir them into:

- Smoothies
- Homemade burgers
- Meatballs
- Crumbles
- Pancake batter

5 Sprinkle seeds on food

A tablespoon of chia seeds, flaxseeds or sunflower seeds can be added to yoghurt, porridge, cereal, salads or soups. Ground flaxseed is also an economical option.

6 Include frozen vegetables

Frozen peas, spinach, sweetcorn, and mixed vegetables are affordable, reduce food waste and provide valuable fibre. Peas, in particular, are surprisingly high in fibre.

7 Snack on fruit

Apples, pears, bananas, oranges and berries are convenient fibre-rich snacks. Dried fruit such as raisins, apricots or prunes can also help, although portion sizes should be moderate due to the sugar content.

8 Bulk out meals with vegetables

Add extra vegetables to:

- Bolognese sauces
- Chilli
- Cottage pie
- Curries
- Stir-fries

Grated carrots, courgettes, mushrooms and peppers blend easily into many dishes.

9 Try a 'half and half' approach

Mix:

- White and brown rice
- White and wholewheat pasta
- White and wholemeal flour in baking

This can help people adjust gradually to higher-fibre foods.

10 Add pulses to minced dishes

Replace a portion of mince with lentils or beans in burgers, meatballs, chilli and shepherd's pie. This increases fibre while reducing food costs.



Know your cholesterol levels⁹

Cholesterol levels are usually described using three main measures in a blood test:

Total cholesterol:

This is the overall amount of cholesterol in your blood, including both 'good' and 'bad' types.

- **Healthy/ideal:** below 5 mmol/L
- **Borderline high:** 5–6.4 mmol/L
- **High:** 6.5 mmol/L or above

LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol):

LDL can build up in your arteries and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

- **Optimal:** below 3 mmol/L (lower is better, especially if you have other risk factors)
- **Borderline high:** 3–4.9 mmol/L
- **High:** 5 mmol/L or above

HDL cholesterol (good cholesterol):

HDL helps remove excess cholesterol from the bloodstream.

- **Low (unhealthy):** below 1 mmol/L for men or 1.2 mmol/L for women
- **Good:** 1–1.5 mmol/L
- **High (protective):** above 1.5 mmol/L

Know your blood pressure levels^{10,11}

Healthy range

Generally between 90/60 and 120/80 mmHg

Associated with a lower risk of heart disease and stroke.

Above the ideal range

Between 120/80 and 139/89 mmHg

This does not necessarily mean you have high blood pressure, but it is a good opportunity to review lifestyle factors and monitor your readings.

Stage 1 high blood pressure

Clinic reading: 140/90 to 159/99 mmHg

Home or 24-hour average: 135/85 to 149/94 mmHg.

Stage 2 high blood pressure

Clinic reading: 160/100 mmHg or higher, but below 180/120 mmHg

Home or 24-hour average: 150/95 mmHg or higher.

Severe high blood pressure

Clinic reading of 180 systolic or 120 diastolic or higher. Seek urgent medical advice, particularly if accompanied by chest pain, confusion, breathlessness, weakness, vision changes or other concerning symptoms.

Simple takeaway

- Lower is generally better, within a healthy range.
- Consistently 140/90 or above is considered high.
- One-off readings can vary, so multiple measurements are usually needed for diagnosis.

A single raised reading does not normally confirm hypertension. In the UK, a clinic reading of 140/90 or above is usually followed by home or 24-hour monitoring; hypertension is confirmed at an average of 135/85 or above outside the clinic.

6. HEART UK (2024) Fibre and cholesterol lowering. Available at: <https://www.heartuk.org.uk/healthy-living/cholesterol-lowering-foods> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

7. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (2024) The Nutrition Source: Fibre. Available at: <https://nutritionsource.hsph.harvard.edu/carbohydrates/fiber/> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

8. The Gut Health Doctor (2024) Gut health and fibre. Available at: <https://www.theguthealthdoctor.com> (Accessed: 23 May 2026).

9. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Hypertension in adults: diagnosis and management (NG136). Updated 21 November 2023. Available at: <https://www.heartuk.org.uk/cholesterol/understanding-your-cholesterol-test-results->

10. NHS. Blood pressure test. Reviewed 25 November 2025. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/blood-pressure-test/> (Accessed: 14 August 2026).

11. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng136>

Add One More Plant

How I Get My Family to Eat More Fibre



Rory Bailey
Executive Chef - ESS

When we think about eating more fibre, it's easy to picture swapping everything for wholegrain versions or filling every plate with vegetables. While those changes can certainly help, I've found the best approach is much simpler: don't take anything away, just add more plants to the meals your family already loves.

As a chef, I like to think in layers of flavour. Fibre-rich ingredients such as vegetables, beans and lentils don't just improve nutrition; they also add sweetness, texture and richness when they're cooked well. Grated carrots melt into a Bolognese, mushrooms bring a lovely savoury depth and lentils naturally thicken sauces until they're almost impossible to spot. Even leaving the skins on potatoes adds extra fibre with no extra effort.

One of the simplest habits we've adopted at home is not peeling vegetables unless we really have to. A lot of the fibre is found in or just beneath the skin, so keeping the skins on potatoes, carrots, parsnips and even sweet potatoes helps retain more goodness. Just give them a good scrub before cooking, and you're ready to go. It's a small change that saves time in the kitchen and helps reduce food waste too.

Hidden Fibre Family Bolognese

Serves 4–6

Ingredients

- 400g lean beef mince (or turkey mince or Quorn mince)
- 1 onion, finely diced
- 2 carrots, grated (skins left on)
- 200g mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 courgette, grated
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 400g chopped tomatoes
- 400ml beef or vegetable stock
- 100g dried red lentils, rinsed
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- A splash of Worcestershire sauce
- Olive oil
- Black pepper

Equipment

- Chopping board
- Chopping knife
- Grater
- Measuring jug
- Kettle
- Frying pan
- Tin opener
- Mixing spoon

To serve

- Wholewheat spaghetti or a 50:50 mix of white and wholewheat pasta
- Grated Parmesan
- A green salad or extra vegetables

Method

- 1 Brown the mince in a little olive oil, then add the onion and garlic and cook until softened.
- 2 Stir in the grated carrots, mushrooms and courgette and cook for 8–10 minutes until most of the moisture has evaporated.
- 3 Add the tomato purée and cook for another minute before stirring in the chopped tomatoes, stock, lentils, oregano and Worcestershire sauce.
- 4 Simmer gently for 25–30 minutes until the lentils are tender and have melted into the sauce.
- 5 Season to taste and serve with pasta and Parmesan.

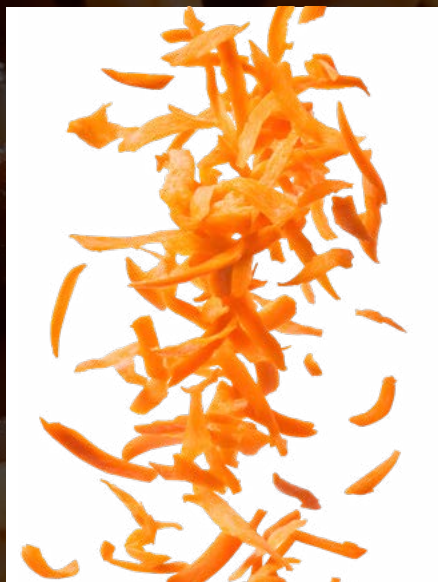
CHEF'S TIP

After a good scrub, leave the skin on the carrots before grating them. They'll disappear into the sauce, adding even more fibre with no one any the wiser.

Another favourite trick is to roast vegetables until they're beautifully caramelised. Roasting brings out their natural sweetness and often wins over even the most reluctant vegetable eaters. I also keep a selection of beans, pulses and seeds in the cupboard, ready to stir into soups, curries, casseroles and salads whenever I can.

The aim isn't to make every meal 'healthy'; it's to make family favourites just a little more nourishing. Small changes soon add up, and before you know it, everyone is eating more fibre without feeling like they're missing out.

My motto is simple: *add one more plant*. Whether it's a handful of lentils in a sauce, a grated vegetable in a family favourite or an extra topping on a jacket potato, those little additions soon make a big difference.



Loaded Jacket Potato Bar

This is one of our favourite family meals because everyone gets to build their own potato while quietly boosting their fibre intake.

Bake large potatoes until the skins are crisp and the inside is fluffy, then set out a selection of toppings such as:

- Mild chilli with kidney beans
- Creamy cannellini beans in tomato sauce
- Tuna and sweetcorn
- Baked beans
- Grated cheese
- Greek yoghurt
- Homemade coleslaw
- Roasted broccoli
- Spring onions
- Toasted pumpkin or sunflower seeds

At home, we've turned jacket potatoes into a bit of a family competition. Everyone creates their own loaded potato, trying to come up with the tastiest combination of toppings, and we vote for the winner at the end of the meal. The prize? The winning chef gets to put their feet up because they don't have to do the washing up! It's amazing how creative everyone becomes when there's a little friendly rivalry involved, and it encourages everyone to try new vegetables, beans and toppings they might not normally choose.

We also have a rule that you can't have the same topping two weeks in a row, which keeps everyone experimenting with new combinations.

I always encourage everyone to include at least a couple of vegetable toppings and finish with a sprinkle of seeds for extra crunch and fibre. Before you know it, a simple jacket potato has become a colourful meal packed with a wonderful variety of plant foods.

Eating more fibre doesn't have to mean changing everything you cook. It's about making small, sustainable changes that fit naturally into family life. Add an extra vegetable, stir in some lentils, keep the skins on your vegetables and potatoes or offer a few more colourful toppings. These simple habits not only help increase fibre intake but also encourage everyone to enjoy a greater variety of vegetables and plant foods.

After all, healthy eating is much easier when it's delicious, fun and something the whole family can enjoy together. It can be as simple as adding one more plant.



Allergen Control



Joseph Docherty
Head of Culinary
Operations - ESS

Over the years, I have seen a much greater focus on managing allergens safely within the hospitality sector.

When I first started 27 years ago, the only allergens regularly mentioned were nuts and gluten. Even then, they were often only discussed if a customer raised a concern. This would usually result in a front-of-house team member rushing to the kitchen to ask the chef which allergens were present in a particular dish.

As awareness increased, allergen management gradually became part of daily briefings. However, it was still largely the responsibility of individual team members to remember which allergens were present and advise customers whether a dish was safe for them to eat.



Fast forward to today, and we have far more robust systems in place that provide clear information to customers and give team members the confidence to serve food safely. Many businesses now use detailed allergen matrices and digital systems that can be updated quickly when recipes or ingredients change.

Kitchen design has also evolved. Many kitchens are now designed with allergen control in mind, including designated storage areas, separate preparation spaces and improved workflow systems that help reduce the movement of allergenic ingredients and minimise the risk of cross-contamination.

The introduction of Natasha's Law in October 2021 was another significant milestone, improving transparency for prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) foods by requiring full ingredient and allergen labelling. This has helped provide customers with greater clarity and confidence in the food they purchase.

Despite the progress that has been made, we should never become complacent when it comes to allergen management. Food allergies can have life-threatening consequences, and there is no such thing as being too cautious when protecting our customers. Continued training, clear communication and a strong food safety culture remain essential to ensuring allergens are managed safely every day.

Upcoming Wellness Webinars



Looking to increase your nutrition and wellbeing knowledge?

Attending our wellness webinars can help improve your knowledge and awareness of lots of different health and wellbeing topics. Previous topics covered include mindfulness, heart health and healthy eating as we get older.

Please join us for the below webinars coming up over the next few months:

What is Nutrient Dense?

Wednesday 2nd SEPTEMBER: 2pm – 2.30pm



Women's Health: Menopause and Breast Cancer Awareness

Wednesday 2nd OCTOBER: 2pm – 2.30pm



The Benefits of Exercise on Stress and Mental Health

Wednesday 4th NOVEMBER: 2pm – 2.30pm



Scan the QR code or send us an email at ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk if you wish to get the links to the webinar directly in your inbox each month.



If you've missed any of our webinars and want to watch them back, check out our YouTube channel @WeAreESS.

More Than a Movement

Understanding Tics, Tourette Syndrome and Thoughtful Support

WORLD MOVEMENT DISORDERS DAY: 29TH NOVEMBER 2026

When we think about wellbeing, conversations often focus on sleep, nutrition, exercise and stress management.

Yet for many people living with neurological conditions that affect movement and body control, wellbeing is also shaped by something much less discussed: how other people respond to them.

Conditions such as tics and Tourette syndrome are widely misunderstood. Popular culture has often reduced Tourette syndrome to swearing or dramatic outbursts, when in reality the condition is far more varied and complex.¹ In fact, only a minority of people with Tourette syndrome experience coprolalia, the involuntary swearing that is so often portrayed in films and television.² Many people instead experience motor or vocal tics such as blinking, throat clearing, facial movements, sniffing, shoulder shrugging or repetitive sounds.¹

Tics are involuntary movements or vocalisations that people cannot simply 'switch off'. While some individuals can temporarily suppress them, doing so is often exhausting and uncomfortable, creating a build-up of tension that may later result in an increase in tic activity.³ Tics can also fluctuate depending on stress, fatigue, excitement, anxiety, illness or overstimulation, which means symptoms may appear more noticeable at certain times than others.¹ This unpredictability can make day-to-day life emotionally draining, particularly in environments where people fear judgement or misunderstanding.



For many individuals, the greatest challenge is not always the neurological condition itself, but the reactions they receive from others. People living with tic disorders or Tourette syndrome often describe feeling watched, scrutinised or unfairly judged in public spaces, workplaces, schools and social situations.⁴ Some worry that their tics may be mistaken for disruptive behaviour, intoxication, nervousness or rudeness. Others become exhausted from constantly trying to mask or suppress their symptoms in professional or social settings in order to fit in with social expectations.³

This emotional strain can have a significant impact on wellbeing over time. Research has shown that people with Tourette syndrome are at increased risk of experiencing anxiety,

low mood, social isolation and reduced self-esteem, often linked to stigma and misunderstanding rather than the condition alone.⁵ Many individuals may also experience co-occurring conditions such as ADHD or OCD, further affecting everyday functioning and mental wellbeing.¹

Despite growing awareness around neurodiversity, many people with visible neurological differences still encounter responses that, although well-intentioned, can feel deeply patronising. Comments such as "Just try to stop", "Everyone has little habits" or "You seem fine today" may minimise the reality of what someone is experiencing. Equally, unwanted sympathy, staring, over-helping or speaking to adults as though they are children can

1. NHS (2024) Tics and Tourette syndrome. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/tics/> (Accessed: 25 May 2026).
2. Tourettes Action (2025) Understanding Tourette syndrome. Accessed: 25 May 2026.

3. Conelea, C.A. et al. (2011) 'The impact of Tourette syndrome in adults: Results from the Tourette Syndrome Impact Survey', *Community Mental Health Journal*, 49(1), pp. 110–120.

leave people feeling uncomfortable or diminished.

Thoughtful support is not about pity. It is about creating environments where people feel respected, included and psychologically safe without being made to feel different or incapable.

One of the most supportive things people can do is avoid drawing unnecessary attention to tics.

Often, continuing a conversation naturally without staring or reacting dramatically can help reduce discomfort and embarrassment. It is also important not to assume that a person's symptoms are always visible or consistent. Tics frequently fluctuate, meaning someone may appear to cope well one day and struggle significantly the next.⁴

Listening without judgement and allowing individuals to guide conversations about their condition can also make a huge difference. Rather than assuming what someone needs, it is often more respectful to ask open questions such as "Is there anything that helps?" or "Would you prefer any adjustments?"

This approach empowers the individual rather than making decisions on their behalf.

Language also matters. Small changes in wording can have a powerful effect on how safe and accepted someone feels. Replacing comments such as "Can you control that?" with "Take your time" or "Let me know if you need anything" helps shift the focus from discomfort to understanding. In many cases, the most supportive response is simply removing the pressure for someone to apologise or explain themselves.

Creating more inclusive environments can benefit wellbeing enormously. In workplaces and educational settings, this may involve providing quiet spaces, reducing unnecessary stressors, being flexible around presentations or meetings and challenging stigma and mocking behaviour when it occurs.⁶

Inclusion is not about treating people as fragile or incapable; it is about recognising that different people may need different forms of support in order to thrive.

Importantly, people with Tourette syndrome and tic disorders are not defined by their condition. They are colleagues, friends, parents, students, athletes, leaders and professionals. Some individuals develop incredible resilience, adaptability, humour, and self-awareness through navigating environments that are not always understanding.

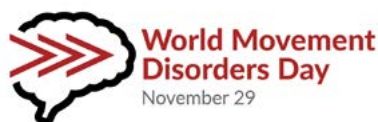
Awareness around neurological conditions is improving, but there is still a long way to go in moving to genuine understanding. Wellbeing is influenced not only by physical or neurological health, but by whether people feel accepted, respected and able to exist without fear of judgement.

Thoughtful support does not require specialist expertise or perfect language. Often, it begins with something much simpler: listening without assumptions, responding without pity and treating people with dignity rather than discomfort.



World Movement Disorders Day

World Movement Disorders Day is an annual awareness day held on 29th November to raise understanding of neurological conditions that affect how people move and control their bodies. This includes conditions such as Parkinson's disease, Tourette syndrome, dystonia, tremor disorders, Huntington's disease and other movement-related neurological conditions.



The day aims to:

- Increase public awareness and reduce stigma
- Highlight the impact movement disorders can have on physical and mental wellbeing
- Promote earlier recognition and diagnosis
- Encourage inclusion, understanding and support for those living with these conditions
- Recognise advances in neurological research and treatment

World Movement Disorders Day also provides an opportunity to share lived experiences and remind people that many neurological conditions are not always visible, consistent or fully understood.

What Are Tics?

Tics are involuntary movements or vocalisations that people cannot easily control.¹ They can be:

- **Motor tics:** such as blinking, head movements, shoulder shrugging or facial movements
- **Vocal tics:** such as throat clearing, sniffing, clicking or repeating sounds or words



4. Tourettes Action – Living with Tourette Syndrome (2025) Accessed: 25 May 2026.

5. Cavanna, A.E. et al. (2013) 'The behavioural, emotional and cognitive profile of Tourette syndrome', *The Neuroscientist*, 19(6), pp. 641–659.

6. ACAS (2024) Neurodiversity at work. Available at: <https://www.acas.org.uk/neurodiversity-at-work> (Accessed: 25 May 2026).

Hygiene Poverty

The Overlooked Barrier to Health, Dignity and Wellbeing

Hygiene is often framed as a matter of personal responsibility or workplace standards, but for many people it is fundamentally shaped by access.

NATIONAL HYGIENE WEEK: 5TH–11TH OCTOBER 2026

Hygiene poverty refers to the inability to afford or access everyday hygiene essentials such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, sanitary products and laundry facilities.¹ While less frequently discussed than food or fuel poverty, its impact on physical health, mental wellbeing and social inclusion can be profound.

At its core, hygiene poverty is not about a lack of awareness, but a lack of resources. When individuals cannot access basic hygiene products or facilities, they face an increased risk of illness, reduced confidence and barriers to participation in work, education and community life.² Even routine activities such as attending school, going to work or engaging socially can become sources of stress or avoidance.



The physical health implications are significant. Inadequate access to hygiene products increases the risk of skin infections, dental problems and the spread of communicable diseases.³ However, the psychological and social consequences are often just as serious. People experiencing hygiene poverty frequently report feelings of shame, embarrassment and anxiety, which can contribute to social withdrawal and reduced self-esteem.⁴ Over time, this can reinforce cycles of isolation and disadvantage.

Mental wellbeing is particularly affected. The inability to meet basic hygiene needs can create a persistent sense of insecurity and loss of control.⁵ This can be especially challenging in workplace or educational settings, where individuals may feel unable to fully participate or fear judgement from others. In this way, hygiene poverty is not only a public health issue but also a social wellbeing issue.

In workplaces, the impact of hygiene poverty may be less visible, but it can still have significant consequences. Employees experiencing hygiene poverty may feel less comfortable in close-contact roles or shared environments. This can affect communication, teamwork and engagement. Without supportive policies, individuals may struggle in silence, potentially impacting both wellbeing and performance.⁶

When viewed in isolation, hygiene can appear technical, focused on rules, standards and procedures. But when viewed through the lens of wellbeing, it becomes something broader and more human.

Clean environments support mental clarity. Structured hygiene systems reduce stress and improve team functioning. Access to hygiene products protects dignity and enables participation in everyday life. Together, these elements form a system that supports not just health, but belonging and confidence.

For workplaces, particularly in public-facing sectors such as hospitality, healthcare and catering, this means recognising that hygiene is not a background task. The way an organisation approaches hygiene affects standards, safety and public trust. A supportive approach to hygiene can also influence how valued and comfortable employees feel within the workplace.

Ultimately, hygiene is about more than preventing illness. It is about creating environments where people can thrive with dignity, stability, and confidence.

Did you know?

Hygiene poverty isn't simply about cleanliness. It's about being unable to afford everyday essentials such as soap, toothpaste, deodorant, menstrual products and laundry facilities.

It can affect physical health, mental wellbeing, confidence and participation at work, school and in the community.



1. The Hygiene Bank. What is hygiene poverty? The Hygiene Bank; 2024.
2. Trussell Trust. State of Hunger and poverty insights report. Trussell Trust; 2023.

How can workplaces help?

Creating an inclusive workplace means recognising that access to hygiene essentials cannot always be taken for granted. Small, practical actions can make a significant difference.

Employers can:

- Ensure toilets are well stocked with soap, toilet paper and hand towels.
- Consider providing free menstrual products and basic hygiene items such as toothpaste, toothbrushes and deodorant in workplace facilities.
- Signpost employees to available wellbeing, financial and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) support.
- Create an environment where employees feel able to raise concerns confidentially and without judgement.
- Work with local charities or community hygiene banks to support colleagues experiencing financial hardship.



Addressing hygiene poverty requires more than awareness. It requires practical action. Community organisations emphasise the importance of accessible hygiene provision, such as workplace access to essential hygiene facilities and supplies, school-based support, food banks that provide hygiene products, hygiene banks and community outreach services.⁷ These interventions help reduce inequality

and ensure that basic dignity is not dependent on income.

From a wellbeing perspective, hygiene poverty highlights a crucial truth: health is not only determined by personal behaviour, but also by access to resources and supportive environments. When people are able to meet their basic hygiene needs, they are more likely to feel confident, included and able to participate fully in society.

If you're struggling with hygiene costs

Many people experience financial pressures at some point in their lives. If you're finding it difficult to afford everyday hygiene essentials, support may be available.

You could:

- Speak confidentially to your manager, HR or Employee Assistance Programme if your organisation offers one.
- Find out whether local hygiene banks, food banks or community organisations provide free toiletries and hygiene products.
- Look for local authority or community support schemes that may be able to help.
- Remember that needing support with hygiene costs is not a reflection of your worth or a personal failing. Everyone deserves access to the basics that protect health and dignity.



Creating a culture of dignity

Supporting hygiene isn't only about providing products. It's about creating an environment where everyone feels respected, included and able to thrive.

Consider whether your workplace:

- Encourages kindness and avoids stigma around financial hardship.
- Makes it easy for employees to access support discreetly.
- Promotes hygiene as part of overall health and wellbeing, rather than a source of stigma or embarrassment.
- Recognises that access to basic hygiene supports confidence, participation and belonging, as well as physical health.
- Regularly communicates available wellbeing and financial support so employees know where to turn if circumstances change.



Ultimately, tackling hygiene poverty is about restoring dignity. It is about recognising that wellbeing begins with the basics and that no one should face barriers to health, wellbeing or opportunity because they cannot afford essential hygiene products.

3. Public Health England (now UK Health Security Agency). Health inequalities and hygiene-related illness. UKHSA; 2023.
4. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Destitution in the UK report. JRF; 2024.

5. World Health Organization. Social determinants of health and wellbeing. WHO; 2024.
6. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. Health and wellbeing at work report. CIPD; 2023.

7. The Hygiene Bank. Community hygiene support programmes. The Hygiene Bank; 2024.

Dyspraxia in the Kitchen

Understanding the Challenges and Recognising the Strengths

DYSPRAXIA AWARENESS WEEK: 12TH–18TH OCTOBER 2026

INTERNATIONAL CHEFS DAY: 20TH OCTOBER 2026

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY: 10TH OCTOBER 2026

When discussing workplace wellbeing and inclusion, neurodiversity is increasingly becoming part of the conversation. While conditions such as autism and ADHD are becoming more widely understood, dyspraxia remains relatively unknown despite affecting an estimated 5–6% of the population.¹ Also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), dyspraxia is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition that affects movement, coordination, planning, organisation and the processing of information.² Although commonly associated with physical coordination difficulties, its impact extends far beyond motor skills and can influence many aspects of daily life and work.

For chefs and food service professionals, dyspraxia can present unique challenges. Professional kitchens are complex environments that require precision, speed, communication, multitasking and physical coordination. During a busy service, chefs may need to manage multiple orders simultaneously, monitor cooking times, communicate effectively with colleagues, maintain food safety standards and navigate a crowded workspace. For an individual with dyspraxia, these demands can require significantly greater cognitive effort.³



One of the most visible challenges can be related to coordination and fine motor skills. Tasks such as knife work, intricate plating, piping or handling delicate ingredients may take longer to learn and require additional concentration. While repeated practice often leads to mastery, the learning process can be more demanding than it is for neurotypical colleagues. Difficulties with spatial awareness may also make it harder to judge distances or move confidently through busy kitchen environments. This potentially increases the likelihood of minor accidents or collisions, particularly during periods of peak service.⁴

1. Dyspraxia Foundation. What is Dyspraxia? Dyspraxia Foundation; 2024.

2. National Health Service (NHS). Developmental Coordination Disorder (Dyspraxia) in Adults. NHS; 2024.

3. Kirby A, Edwards L. The experiences of adults with Developmental Coordination Disorder in employment settings. *Occupational Medicine*. 2021;71(5):230–236.

4. Blank R, Smits-Engelsman B, Polatajko H, Wilson P. European Academy for Childhood Disability recommendations on Developmental Coordination Disorder. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*. 2019;61(3):242–285.

The less visible challenges are often equally significant. Many people with dyspraxia experience difficulties with organisation, sequencing tasks, working memory and processing multiple instructions at once.⁵ In a busy kitchen environment, where priorities can change rapidly and information is frequently communicated verbally, this can create additional pressure. A chef with dyspraxia may find it more difficult to retain several instructions delivered simultaneously or switch quickly between tasks without a structured system in place. The mental effort required to maintain concentration and organisation throughout a long shift can also contribute to increased fatigue.⁶

Despite these challenges, focusing solely on difficulties presents an incomplete picture. Many individuals with dyspraxia develop strengths that can be particularly valuable in hospitality and food service settings. Research suggests that people with dyspraxia often demonstrate high levels of resilience, adaptability, creativity and problem-solving ability.⁷ Having spent much of their lives developing strategies to overcome obstacles, they frequently become skilled at finding alternative approaches and identifying practical solutions. In a profession that values innovation and creativity, these qualities can be significant assets.



Creativity is often cited as a particular strength among neurodivergent individuals. In the culinary world, this may translate into original menu ideas, inventive flavour combinations and fresh approaches to presentation. The determination required to succeed despite ongoing challenges can also foster a strong work ethic and persistence. Many chefs with dyspraxia report developing highly effective routines, checklists and organisational systems that not only support their own performance but can improve efficiency across the wider team.⁸

Creating an inclusive kitchen environment does not require extensive changes. Simple adjustments can have a meaningful impact on performance, confidence and wellbeing. Providing written instructions alongside verbal briefings, breaking complex tasks into smaller stages, using visual prompts and encouraging open communication can help reduce unnecessary cognitive load. Equally important is fostering a culture of psychological safety, where team members feel comfortable discussing their needs and asking for clarification without fear of judgement.⁹ Such practices benefit not only employees with dyspraxia but often improve communication and effectiveness for the entire workforce.



As awareness of neurodiversity continues to grow, organisations have an opportunity to move beyond viewing conditions such as dyspraxia solely through the lens of challenge. Instead, they can recognise the diverse skills, perspectives and experiences that neurodivergent individuals bring



to the workplace. A chef with dyspraxia may approach tasks differently, rely on unique organisational strategies or require alternative methods of communication, but these differences do not limit their potential. In many cases, they contribute to the creativity, resilience and innovation that drive successful teams.

By increasing understanding and making small but meaningful adjustments, the hospitality sector can create environments where every individual can thrive. Supporting neurodiversity is not simply about inclusion; it is about recognising talent in all its forms and ensuring that workplaces enable people to perform at their very best.

5. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR). 5th ed. Washington, DC: APA; 2022.
6. Sumner E, Pratt M, Hill EL. Fatigue and cognitive effort in adults with Developmental Coordination Disorder. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*. 2016;55:84–95.

7. Kirby A, Sugden D, Purcell C. Diagnosing Developmental Coordination Disorders. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. 2014;99(3):292–296.

8. Dyspraxia Foundation. *Dyspraxia in the Workplace*. Dyspraxia Foundation; 2024.

9. International Organization for Standardization. ISO 45003: Psychological Health and Safety at Work – Guidelines for Managing Psychosocial Risks. ISO; 2021.

The Silent Pressures Men Face Today

In today's fast-paced, digitally connected world, men face a complex mix of expectations that can erode wellbeing.

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY: 10TH SEPTEMBER 2026

MOVEMBER: NOVEMBER 2026

WORLD KINDNESS DAY: 13TH NOVEMBER 2026

ODD SOCKS DAY: 16TH NOVEMBER 2026

INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY: 19TH NOVEMBER 2026

Traditional ideals of masculinity, such as stoicism and self-reliance, often clash with modern realities, leaving many men struggling in silence despite growing mental health awareness.

In the UK, around 1 in 7 men experience a common mental health problem.¹ Yet they are far less likely to seek help than women. Stigma, fear of judgement and workplace pressures can make seeking support more difficult, with men making up only around 36% of NHS talking therapy referrals.²

This reluctance to seek help is not simply a personal choice. It is shaped by social norms, workplace cultures and early life experiences that discourage vulnerability. Workplace stress plays a significant role. Long hours, financial pressure and job insecurity can lead to chronic stress, while bullying and toxic cultures further damage mental health. Many men feel pressure to appear resilient, leading them to internalise distress rather than seek support.

Bullying and toxic workplace cultures compound the problem. Studies suggest that around 1 in 4 UK workers have experienced conflict or abuse in the last 12 months.³ This is linked to poor mental health, including anxiety and depression. Social isolation is another key factor. Life transitions and weakened social networks can leave men disconnected, increasing the risk of poor mental health and suicidal behaviour.⁴ Coping mechanisms such as alcohol or drug use may mask distress but often worsen outcomes over time.

Promoting kindness is not about passive niceness; it requires active cultural change:

- Challenging harmful stereotypes about masculinity
- Encouraging inclusive conversations
- Tackling bullying
- Normalising help seeking

When men feel supported, the benefits extend beyond individuals to families, workplaces and communities.



Suicide remains one of the most serious issues. In the UK, men account for around three-quarters of all suicide deaths and it remains the leading cause of death for men under 50.⁵ Suicide is rarely caused by a single factor but by a combination of pressures, including mental illness, financial stress and lack of support.⁴ Suicide prevention cannot be reduced to individual responsibility or blame. It is shaped by wider social and cultural factors.

Kindness and connection play a crucial protective role.⁴ In contrast, bullying, whether in workplaces or online, can significantly increase anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts.³

Messages around respect, inclusion and compassion are not always

reflected in workplace cultures, online spaces or social interactions. Bullying, exclusion and rigid expectations of masculinity still shape how men are expected to think, behave and cope.⁴ Redefining what it means to 'be a man' is therefore critical. Moving away from ideals rooted in dominance, silence or emotional suppression, towards empathy, openness and mutual respect is essential. This can help create environments where people feel psychologically safe and able to seek support. Embedding these values into leadership, education and policy is key to meaningful change.

Rising discrimination, including homophobia and transphobia, alongside shifts in policy and legislation, can create environments where people feel unsafe or excluded. Globally, some individuals still face severe punishment for their identity.

These realities highlight that mental health is deeply connected to inclusion, safety and human rights and requires a collective response.

Awareness alone is not enough. Sustainable change requires accessible, gender-sensitive services, strong workplace wellbeing strategies, early emotional education for boys and young men and community initiatives that foster connection. Men's mental health is a societal issue requiring collective action. By combining awareness with compassion and cultural change, we can create a future where men feel able to speak, seek support and thrive.

If you or someone you know is struggling, support is available. In the UK, Samaritans are available 24/7 on **116 123**.⁴

1. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-facts-and-statistics/>
2. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/men-women-statistics>

3. <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaidcourse.co.uk/blog/workplace-bullying-statistics>
4. <https://www.samaritans.org/>

5. <https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/research-policy/our-latest-work/how-politicians-can-prevent-suicide/>

MINDFUL MOMENTS

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

OCD AWARENESS WEEK: 12TH-18TH OCTOBER 2026

Introduction

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a common mental health condition characterised by a cycle of obsessions and compulsions. Obsessions are intrusive, unwanted thoughts, images, urges or fears, while compulsions are repetitive behaviours or mental rituals carried out to reduce anxiety or prevent a feared outcome.¹

These experiences can be distressing and difficult to control, and symptoms often fluctuate in severity, particularly during periods of stress, such as changes at work or in everyday life. OCD is much more than being tidy or organised. It can have a significant impact on daily life, relationships, work and overall wellbeing if left unsupported.²



How does OCD affect me and my work?

OCD can affect concentration, energy levels and productivity at work, particularly when intrusive thoughts interrupt focus or compulsions take up significant time. Individuals may avoid tasks or environments that trigger anxiety, which can limit participation in meetings, collaboration or everyday responsibilities.²

It can also lead to feelings of exhaustion, shame or isolation, especially if someone feels unable to share their experiences with colleagues. Over time, this may impact confidence and relationships at work, reinforcing stress and potentially worsening symptoms.²

Tips to support others

- Be patient, understanding and non-judgemental.
- Encourage open conversations about OCD.
- Listen without reacting negatively to build trust.
- Avoid repeatedly providing reassurance or helping with compulsions, as this can reinforce the cycle.
- Support the person to seek professional help or treatment.
- Gently encourage healthier coping strategies.
- Take time to learn more about OCD.

How can I help myself?

There are practical strategies that can support managing OCD symptoms. Self-help resources based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can provide strategies for managing OCD symptoms. Exposure and response prevention (ERP), a form of CBT, is an established treatment for OCD that can help people gradually reduce compulsions.³

Building a strong support network, practising stress management techniques such as mindfulness or relaxation and maintaining good physical health through sleep, nutrition and activity are also beneficial. Importantly, seeking professional support can provide access to effective treatments and tailored guidance.⁴

Practical ways to help yourself cope

- The NHS provides access to talking therapies such as CBT and ERP for OCD. Treatment may be accessed through a GP or local NHS mental health service. <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health-services/find-nhs-talking-therapies-for-anxiety-and-depression/>
- Charities such as Mind, OCD Action and OCD-UK offer helplines, peer support groups and online communities. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/useful-contacts/> ocdaction.org.uk or ocduk.org
- Local services, social care and specialist clinics may be available based on individual needs, providing both professional and community support.

Don't forget, you can contact your 'Ask Your ESS Nutrition and Wellbeing' specialist:
ESS.Wellness@compass-group.co.uk

1. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/symptoms/>

2. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/about-ocd/>
3. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/treatment/>

4. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/self-care-for-ocd/>

Balancing the Books and the Mind

As the cost of living continues to rise, many people are feeling the strain, not just in their wallets, but in their overall wellbeing.

WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY: 10TH SEPTEMBER 2026

UK SAVINGS WEEK: 21ST–27TH NOVEMBER 2026

SAFER GAMBLING WEEK: 16TH–22TH NOVEMBER 2026

Energy bills, food prices, rent and everyday essentials have all increased, leaving households searching for ways to cope. In times like these, it's natural to look for quick financial relief or opportunities to 'get ahead'. However, some coping strategies, such as gambling, can carry hidden risks, particularly when money is tight.

Financial stress can have a profound impact on mental health. When budgets are stretched, even small, unexpected expenses can create anxiety. Over time, persistent financial pressure can lead to sleep problems, irritability and feelings of helplessness. One positive step is to revisit spending habits. Simple changes like planning meals, switching energy providers or setting small, realistic savings goals can offer a sense of control. Saving, even in tiny amounts, is less about the size of the fund and more about building resilience and confidence.

Saving money does not have to mean making big sacrifices. Simple techniques can make a real difference over time. For example, the 'save your change' approach involves collecting loose coins in a jar to put them aside for a future goal. Setting up an automatic transfer to a savings account each payday can also help build savings without having to think about it. Some people use the 'no spend' challenge, choosing one day a week



to avoid unnecessary purchases and saving the money they would have spent instead. Even small amounts saved regularly can add up over time, helping to create a financial safety net.

If you or someone you know is struggling, reaching out is a sign of strength. Financial difficulties and mental health challenges are shared experiences, particularly in uncertain times. Support is always within reach.



Practical Steps for Protecting Wellbeing

- **Create a realistic budget:**
Focus on essentials first and build in small, achievable savings where possible.
- **Stay connected:**
Talking openly about financial worries reduces stigma and builds resilience.
- **Check in with yourself:**
Notice when stress or emotions are driving decisions about spending or gambling.
- **Set clear gambling limits:**
Time, money and frequency limits can help maintain control or consider taking a break entirely.
- **Seek support early:**
Financial advice services, mental health charities and gambling support organisations can provide free, confidential help.



Top tips for managing savings:

- Set a savings goal so you know what you're working towards.
- Save regularly, even if it's a small amount.
- Review your savings periodically to track progress and ensure they continue to meet your needs.
- Keep an emergency fund for unexpected expenses.



Financial strain and harmful gambling behaviours are both closely linked to mental health challenges. Feelings of shame, secrecy or loss of control can intensify isolation. In more severe cases, this can contribute to thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

It's vital to remember that support is available and no one has to face these challenges alone. Reaching out to a trusted friend, a support service or a professional can be a powerful first step toward regaining stability.

The cost of living crisis is not just a financial issue. By approaching money management with compassion and awareness and recognising the risks associated with quick-fix solutions like gambling, we can better protect ourselves and those around us.

For some, gambling can seem like a way out, a chance to win back losses, cover bills or ease financial worry. But in reality, gambling rarely solves financial problems and can often deepen them. The stress of chasing losses or relying on unpredictable outcomes can worsen both financial instability and mental health. Safer gambling is about staying in control. This means setting strict limits on time and money, never gambling with funds needed for essentials and recognising when it's no longer enjoyable.

It's also important to be aware of how emotions influence behaviour. Stress, tiredness and low mood can also affect decision-making and increase the temptation to take risks.

Betting every week can add up, so why not save up that money across the year:

- £10 per week = £520 per year
- £20 per week = £1,040 per year
- £50 per week = £2,600 per year



Reducing Gambling Harms

Operating for over 25 years, Breakeven offers free treatment, support and advice for anyone affected by gambling or gambling-related harms.

Break**even**

UK SAVINGS WEEK: 21ST–27TH NOVEMBER 2026

SAFER GAMBLING WEEK: 16TH–22TH NOVEMBER 2026

This includes people who gamble, as well as partners, family members and friends who may be impacted. With no waiting lists for support, anyone living in the East or South East of England can access one-to-one counselling remotely via telephone or video call or in person at one of Breakeven's offices.

In addition to treatment services, Breakeven also runs a variety of programmes to help prevent gambling harms. This includes the Armed Forces Programme, which offers free training to anyone working with the armed forces community, including serving personnel, veterans and charities. The training helps individuals and teams develop their knowledge, skills, understanding and awareness of gambling-related harms. It covers the nature of harmful gambling, its impact on health and wellbeing and how to provide support to people affected by gambling-related harms. Participants also learn how to signpost individuals to appropriate specialist services. With less than 5% of workplaces having a gambling harm policy, Breakeven can help ensure that anyone who needs support can access it.¹

The UK has a large gambling market, with nearly half of UK adults taking part in some form of gambling over the last 12 months.^{2,3} Members of the armed forces community are at a higher risk of experiencing gambling-related harm, with research suggesting veterans are up to eight times more likely to be affected.⁴

Breakeven shares practical tips for safer gambling to support risk reduction and minimise the chance of harm:

- Set a clear budget and stick to it.
- Remember that gambling is not a guaranteed way to make money.
- Take regular breaks and avoid gambling late at night.
- Be aware that online gambling presents a greater risk of harm due to its speed of play and the potential for heavier losses.
- Avoid gambling alone.
- Balance gambling with other hobbies and social activities.

For anyone concerned about gambling, Breakeven offers a safe space to talk, learn and take positive steps forward.

More needs to be done in both the military and the wider civilian population to tackle the 'unseen enemy' of gambling harm, says Andy Stoneley, veteran and Prevention Lead for Breakeven, who experienced severe gambling-related harm while serving in the military.



With the forces community statistically more vulnerable to the problem than the general public, the ex-Royal Logistic Corp, British Army Chef is lending his voice to a campaign calling for greater awareness, prevention measures and early intervention. Having joined the Army in 1998, he began using slot machines before moving on to casinos and bookmakers. His gambling eventually led to him serving time at Colchester's Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC).

After borrowing money from colleagues to fund his habit, he was found guilty of dishonesty and obtaining money by fraudulent means. He was sentenced to just over 12 months' detention and reduced in rank from selected Warrant Officer Class 1 to corporal.

"I lost my liberty, my salary and my purpose, as well as feeling a sense of embarrassment," he said of the experience. "That was my rock bottom, but after 383 days of, effectively, cold turkey, along with therapy, the cycle was broken. I have no temptation to gamble anymore. I never want to let myself or my family down again."

Andy left the Army in October 2022 and now works for Breakeven, the charity that supported him before, during and after his time at the MCTC and throughout recovery.

"Breakeven changed my life. My wife, Amanda and I can't thank them enough for their support during that difficult time and neither can our close family and friends."

Andy is now just over six years gambling-free. He is proud of the role he plays in helping others, sharing his story and using his experiences to raise awareness of gambling-related harms.

Is your own gambling or that of someone else causing you any worries?

Speak with Breakeven today:

E: info@breakeven.org.uk

E: andrew@breakeven.org.uk

breakeven.org.uk

T: 01273 833 722



1. <https://www.projectwellbeing.org.uk/>
2. <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/blog/post/industry-statistics-2025>

3. <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/report/gambling-survey-for-great-britain-annual-report-2025-official-statistics/gsgb-annual-report-2025-gambling-participation-and-experience-of-gambling>

4. <https://cptraininghub.nhs.uk/event/gambling-harms-how-to-support-your-veteran-patients-and-their-families/>

Building a Healthier World Through Culture, Connection and Community

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: OCTOBER 2026

WORLD FOOD DAY: 16TH OCTOBER 2026

WORLD'S BIGGEST COFFEE MORNING: 25TH SEPTEMBER 2026

When we think about health and wellbeing, it is easy to focus on the more visible aspects: what we eat, how much we move or how well we sleep.

While these are all important, a truly healthy life is shaped by something broader: our sense of belonging, our cultural identity and the connections we build with others.^{1,2}

Wellbeing does not exist in isolation. It is influenced by the environments we live and work in, the opportunities we have and how included and supported we feel within our communities. When people feel connected and valued, this has a powerful impact on both mental and physical health.^{1,3}

Culture plays a key role in this. Our backgrounds, traditions and lived experiences shape how we understand health, food and self-care. They influence what we eat, how we gather and how we support one another. Recognising and valuing this diversity helps create a more inclusive and supportive view of wellbeing.^{2,4}

Black History Month offers an opportunity to explore cultural heritage through food, storytelling and shared traditions, highlighting the role culture plays in shaping wellbeing.

It also invites us to reflect on how different communities experience health. Access to services, health outcomes and overall wellbeing are not equal for everyone and these differences are influenced by a range of social and environmental factors.^{1,3} Understanding this is an important step towards building fairer, more supportive systems where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Food is one of the most powerful ways we express culture and connect with others. It is rarely just about nutrition. It carries memory, identity and tradition.^{2,4} Sharing food creates



moments of connection, whether that is at a family table, in a workplace or within a wider community setting.

Around events such as World Food Day, this can be as simple as sharing a meal that brings people together. A pot of soup in the workplace, a communal lunch or dishes inspired by different cultural traditions can turn food into a group experience rather than something individual. Highlighting recipes passed through generations can also help celebrate cultural heritage while fostering connection and conversation among colleagues.

Simple shared experiences, such as gathering over a drink or a meal, can have a meaningful impact on wellbeing. In busy environments, they offer a pause, a chance to reconnect and feel part of something larger than ourselves. These moments encourage conversation, reduce isolation and strengthen relationships.⁵

This is reflected in initiatives such as Macmillan Cancer Support's World's Biggest Coffee Morning, where a simple cup of tea or coffee becomes a moment of connection. These small social moments help create space for conversation, support and community, even in the busiest environments.



Exploring different foods and traditions can also help broaden our understanding of health. Many cultural approaches to eating are naturally balanced, varied and rooted in fresh ingredients and shared meals.^{2,4} Embracing this diversity allows us to move away from a one-size-fits-all view of nutrition and towards something more flexible, realistic and inclusive.

Alongside this, celebrating the contributions of different communities to health, science and society helps to widen our understanding of what leadership and expertise look like.² Representation matters, not only in healthcare and science, but in everyday conversations about wellbeing. It helps people feel seen and understood, which is a key part of good mental health.⁵

Ultimately, building a healthier world is about more than individual choices. It is about the systems, communities and relationships that surround us.^{1,3} It is about creating environments where people feel connected, respected and able to access the support they need. A healthier world is built not just through what we do for ourselves, but through what we create together through connection, understanding and shared humanity.

1. World Health Organization (WHO), Social determinants of health – <https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health>

2. Marmot Review (Institute of Health Equity), Fair Society, Healthy Lives

3. UK Government Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (OHID), Wider determinants of health – <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-health-improvement-and-disparities>

Homemade Chicken Momo Dumplings with Nepali Tomato Chutney

Below is a simple pasty recipe, perfect for sharing with family and friends.



Glyn Greenow
Group Executive Chef - ESS

Equipment

- Large bowl
- Mixing bowl
- Cup
- Chopping board
- Knife
- Blender
- Roasting tray/or saucepan for the tomatoes
- Table spoon
- Rolling pin
- Steamer tray

Ingredients

For the dough:

- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup warm water
- 1/2 tsp salt

For the chicken filling:

- 500g ground chicken
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp ginger, grated
- 2 spring onions, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp fresh coriander (cilantro), chopped
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 small green chilli, finely chopped (optional)

For the momo dipping sauce:

- 2 tomatoes
- 2 dried red chillies
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- Salt to taste
- Juice of 1/2 lemon

Method

Make the dough:

- 1 In a large bowl, mix flour and salt.
- 2 Slowly add warm water while mixing until a soft dough forms.
- 3 Knead for 8–10 minutes until smooth.
- 4 Cover and leave it to rest for 30 minutes.

Prepare the filling:

- 1 In a mixing bowl, combine ground chicken, onion, garlic, ginger, spring onions, coriander, soy sauce, sesame oil, salt, pepper and green chilli.
- 2 Mix thoroughly until evenly combined.
- 3 Keep refrigerated while shaping the dumplings.

Prepare the sauce:

- 1 Roast or boil the tomatoes until soft.
- 2 Soak dried chillies in warm water for 10 minutes.
- 3 Blend tomatoes, chillies, garlic, sesame seeds, soy sauce, lemon juice and salt into a smooth sauce.
- 4 Adjust seasoning to taste.

Shape the momos:

- 1 Divide the dough into 24 small, equal pieces.
- 2 Roll each piece into a thin circle about 3 inches wide.
- 3 Place 1 tablespoon of filling in the centre.
- 4 Fold and pleat the edges to seal tightly.

Steam the momos:

- 1 Lightly oil a steamer tray.
- 2 Arrange momos without touching each other.
- 3 Steam for 12–15 minutes until the dough becomes slightly shiny and the chicken is fully cooked.

Serve hot with the Nepali Tomato Chutney (Tomato Achar).

Tips

- Do not overfill the dumplings or they may burst while steaming.
- Use good-quality flour when making the dough.
- Keep unused dough covered to prevent drying.
- You can also pan-fry steamed momos for crispy 'kothey' style dumplings.

From Bottle to Bench

ZERO WASTE WEEK: 7TH–13TH SEPTEMBER 2026
RECYCLE WEEK: 14TH–20TH SEPTEMBER 2026

In recent years, reverse vending machines have become an increasingly popular way to encourage recycling and reduce waste.



Claire Swift
Group Manager - ESS

Unlike traditional vending machines, where users purchase a drink or snack, reverse vending machines work in reverse by accepting empty drink containers for recycling.

The process is simple. Users insert empty plastic bottles or cans, ensuring they are free of liquid and the machine scans each item to confirm it can be recycled. Accepted containers are then sorted and compacted, making them easier to store and transport for recycling. Many machines also provide instant feedback, showing users what they have recycled and helping to make the experience more engaging than conventional recycling bins.

In November 2024, one of these machines was introduced into our contract through a collaboration with Coca-Cola Europacific Partners and Ecovend. While initially unfamiliar to many people, it quickly became part of everyday recycling activity, demonstrating how accessible this technology can be when introduced into workplaces, hospitality venues, and public spaces.



One of the key advantages of reverse vending systems is their ability to encourage participation through incentives. Many programmes offer rewards for recycling, helping to reinforce positive habits. On site, each recycled container earns a point, with users able to exchange accumulated points for a free coffee once they reach a set target. This simple reward system has proven popular and has encouraged greater involvement from customers and colleagues alike.

However, the benefits extend beyond individual rewards. Reverse vending machines help improve the quality of collected recycling by separating materials at the point of disposal. This can increase the likelihood that bottles and cans are successfully recycled and repurposed into new products, supporting a more circular approach to resource use.

The impact of these small actions can be significant. Once collected, the recycled material is processed and transformed into new items rather than becoming waste.

At our site, the recovered plastic has been combined with other recycled materials and used to create tables and chairs now in use across the location. This provides a visible



example of how everyday recycling can contribute to practical, long-lasting outcomes.

To date, more than 7,000 bottles have been recycled through the machine, preventing valuable materials from being discarded and demonstrating the potential of simple recycling initiatives to drive behavioural change.

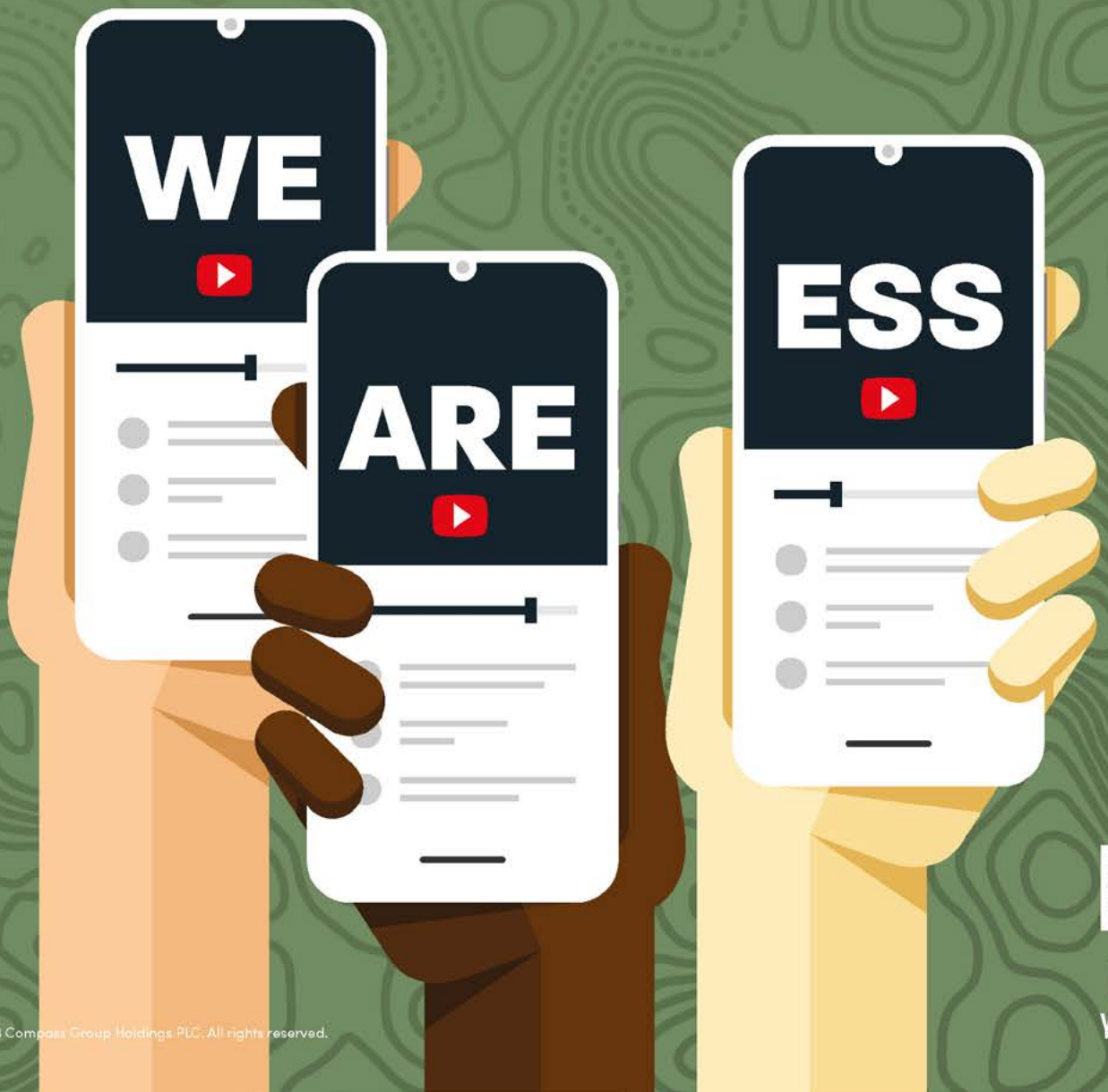
Reverse vending machines are not a standalone solution to environmental challenges, but they are an effective tool for encouraging participation, improving recycling rates and raising awareness about resource recovery. By making recycling easy, engaging and rewarding, they help people see that small individual actions can contribute to much wider environmental benefits.

What began as an unfamiliar piece of technology has become a practical example of how innovation can support sustainability goals, turning everyday waste into valuable resources and helping create more sustainable habits for the future.

WELLNESS

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Nutrition & Wellbeing Team.





From Bumper Crops to Autumn Preparations

Hello from the Defence Academy Organic Market Garden.



Janet Thomas
Head Gardener - ESS

Well, what can I say? What a scorcher this summer has been! It's been almost unbearable at times, literally too hot to go in the greenhouse and polytunnels and a full-time job to keep things alive. But we've had absolutely bumper crops of what would traditionally have been considered more Mediterranean plants. We've had so many aubergines the chefs are groaning as I bring more into the kitchens and the peppers have ripened faster than I have ever known.

On the downside, some other crops have suffered. Lettuce, for one. It is almost impossible to germinate lettuce seeds in this heat and any that I manage to get past that stage go on to bolt very quickly.

I'm also worried about our winter crop of Brussels sprouts, which have been plagued by flea beetles, despite being covered with fine mesh. These tiny little critters absolutely love the dry heat.

On the whole, summer has been pretty phenomenal, including the bees, who have produced a bumper crop of honey this year. Sadly, a 3-gallon bucket of it fell over in the back of my car, leaving rather a mess and me covered in honey on a very hot day. No fun at all! My boot is still refusing to open first time. Dry honey is pretty good at sticking things down, I can tell you! I expect this will be a story that is told for many years to come; poor Luly was left hosing it off the golf club car park as it was attracting so many bees and wasps!

As I write this, I can already feel autumn knocking at the door. The mornings are a little darker and I'm

starting to prepare the garden for the change of season and reflect on the past few months. Always a little sad for me, as I do love summer, but a necessary change as the gardening year moves on.

I have been thinking quite a lot about the warmer summers, particularly in the south of the country. If they persist, we may have to reconsider our main crops and think about growing more drought-resistant and heat-tolerant produce. We need to be savvier about storing water over the winter so it lasts further into the summer and about caring for our soil so that it retains moisture for longer.





This week, as the temperatures drop a little, I will be turning my attention to our compost bins. Here at the garden, we follow the no-dig approach. In a nutshell, we try to disturb the soil as little as possible, beyond transplanting and removing plants. We then add a thin layer of fresh compost to it at least once a year and, in some cases, more often if I have had a longer-term crop that takes up a lot of nutrition from that bed or row. The idea is that you are disturbing the soil structure as little as possible and allowing the mycorrhizal fungi in the soil to flourish and go on to feed the crops. The fresh layer of compost adds nutrition, which encourages the worms to the surface. Along with the other life forms within the soil, they mix up the new compost into the existing soil, creating a nutrient-dense growing bed for our crops.

At this time of year, there is usually quite a bit of finished or nearly finished compost in there. We add all the garden waste, stalks, grass cuttings and leaves that have been collected from the golf course next door, as well as a few trailer loads of manure from the Defence Academy stables. This is done over winter and early spring and by late summer we are able to add our homemade compost to the beds as we harvest the summer crops, leaving them covered and replenished over the winter months.

I don't worry too much if the compost isn't quite ready when I'm leaving the bed over winter. It certainly will be by spring.

A bit of advice if you do plan on making your own compost: it needs a regular turn to aerate it and you should try to avoid adding anything that self-seeds easily, like tomatoes and nettles. Otherwise, there will be a lot of weeding to do next season!

The next late summer/early autumn job on my list is to sow more seeds. More lettuce, some carrots, radish,



cauliflower and purple sprouting broccoli to overwinter. I will keep them covered from the start in case of cabbage white butterflies. I've learnt the hard way. I might see if I can get a late sowing of beetroot in the poly. We can use the leaves if we don't get the warm autumn to produce a full-size crop. I have the seeds and it's better to try. You never know.

If you've been growing over summer, I hope you are enjoying the fruits of your labour. But don't just abandon your plot. Prep for next year, add that layer of compost now, clean and store your tools and next spring will be a far easier start.

Happy gardening!



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Ask anything to do
with nutrition, health
and wellbeing.



Leanne King

BSc (Hons), PGCE, RNutr
ESS Head of Nutrition
and Wellbeing

Drop us an email and
we will get back to you
as soon as possible.



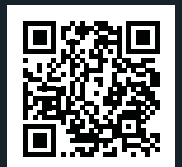
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ESS Nutrition and
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