

# Healthyliving award Scotland – make it your sign of healthier food

***The healthyliving award is managed by Consumer Focus Scotland, the new name for the Scottish Consumer Council, and is funded by the Scottish Government. Here Barbara McDougall explains why Consumer Focus Scotland felt it was important to put healthy living on the consumer agenda***



*Barbara McDougall, Consumer Focus Scotland*

**W**ith health improvement high on the agenda, any action that local authorities can take to improve the health of their communities is to be welcomed.

The healthyliving award is a national award for Scotland, making it easier for us all to eat more healthily when eating out, and the green apple logo is fast becoming recognised as the sign of healthier food.

The healthyliving award rewards caterers in Scotland for providing and promoting healthier food choices for their customers. By using healthier ingredients and preparation methods caterers can provide healthier food right across the menu. In addition, they can go one step further by clearly identifying items on their menus that meet the more rigorous standards of being 'healthyliving choices'. Only establishments committed to working towards achieving the award can display the apple symbol, so that customers can see at a glance where to find healthier meals.

The award is open to most types of catering outlets, and in particular we are keen to work with places where people eat regularly. For local authorities this can include workplace dining rooms, leisure and sports centres, resource and day centres, cultural venues, libraries and museums, mobile services and outside catering. The main exception is schools: local authority run schools in Scotland must meet the nutritional standards for school meals set out in the *Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007*, they are therefore not eligible for the healthyliving award.

Caterers can use the award as a way of meeting the growing demand for healthier food whilst being recognised for the good work that they are doing. Not only that but it's free to register and applicants are given all the information and support required to achieve the award. The award is a good example of one way local authorities can improve services without incurring extra costs.

The healthyliving award is managed by Consumer Focus Scotland, the new name for the Scottish Consumer Council, and is funded by the Scottish Government.

With consumer demand for healthier options growing, a number of initiatives are being developed across the UK to make eating out a healthier experience, and the healthyliving award is leading the way. The healthyliving award was cited as an example of good practice in *"Food Matters – Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century"*; a Cabinet Office report published in July 2008, and similar awards have recently been launched in Wales and in several local authority areas in England.



*Robert Sweet, Liz Wood and Grace Lowe: Aberdeenshire council receiving their healthy living award*

## Criteria

To achieve an award there are certain conditions a caterer must meet. These conditions are based around the principles of a healthy balanced diet and appropriate sales promotion and marketing activity to encourage and support healthier eating. The conditions are:

- Keeping the level of fats and oils to a minimum in the food served, in particular saturated fat;
- Keeping the level of salt to a minimum in the food served;
- Keeping the level of sugar to a minimum in the food served;
- Making fruit and vegetables clearly available;
- Making starchy foods the main part of most meals;
- Providing healthy and nutritious food for children, in places where children are served;
- Making sure that at least 50% of the food served is labelled as healthy living choices, which are prepared using both healthier ingredients and cooking methods; and
- Having an appropriate sales promotion and marketing strategy which works along side the general principles of the healthy living award and supports healthier eating.

Whilst caterers may need to change some of their practices to achieve these conditions, some may already be using healthier catering practices and be well on the way to achieving the 'healthy living' award.

## Uptake

More than 1000 catering outlets have registered with the award and to date more than 500 of these have achieved award holding status.

Some of our recent local authority award winners include the **Town House Café**, Kirkcaldy, **Tollcross Leisure Centre**, Glasgow and Aberdeenshire Council's **Woodhill House**, which was one of the earliest award holders and has just renewed their award for a further 2-year period.

We are keen to encourage greater involvement from Scottish local authorities and leisure trusts. For sports and leisure facilities especially, achieving the award makes sense, as healthy eating and physical activity go hand in hand, and families are increasingly looking for healthier options when eating out.

Feedback from caterers who have achieved the award has been overwhelmingly positive, with those who responded agreeing unanimously that they felt achieving the award was worthwhile, and that they would recommend it to other caterers. The award will reward and recognise your achievements so your customers won't be the only ones to benefit. And crucially it is a way for all catering outlets to reinforce the healthy communities message that local authorities have worked hard to deliver!

Visit: [www.healthylivingaward.co.uk](http://www.healthylivingaward.co.uk)

Email: [enquiries@healthylivingaward.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthylivingaward.co.uk)