

NHS West Suffolk's revenue generating catering service

What did they do?

- The Trust board has always considered the catering team as an essential part of the hospital and appreciates the value they deliver.
- The hospital has a cook serve unit.
- The catering team focused on making as much as possible fresh and sourcing that fresh produce locally.
- For the fresh produce contracts they approached only suppliers with catering business in the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. They shared their catering usage and asked for prices. Then they reviewed these submissions and narrowed them down to a shortlist of around three or four suppliers based on references, due diligence, qualifications, health and safety standards, and prices. The shortlisted suppliers were then requested to send samples so that they could do a blind tasting and make the final choice based on quality.

What were the results?

- They source 75% of their food from suppliers within 30 miles of the hospital.
- They have been able to reduce their food waste by working with suppliers that are more flexible on order quantities. They also know that if they find they unexpectedly need more, they can always get it quickly.
- The quality of the food attracts visitors and staff to regularly eat in the hospital.
- They have been able to build on this quality to market special occasion afternoon teas for new grandparents, patients celebrating a birthday while in hospital, and rewards for staff who have done a great job.
- The nurses and porters are able to recommend specific items on the menu they have enjoyed to patients struggling with lack of appetite.
- Patients also recommend dishes to nurses encouraging them to eat in the hospital.
- The catering team are able to work closely with doctors, dieticians, nurses and porters to ensure the nutritional value of the menu and that the food arrives at the bedside in the best condition for patients to enjoy.
- The overall effect is that the catering service has become a revenue generator for the hospital.