

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – part of a countywide food policy framework

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust consists of two acute hospitals 9 miles apart with a total of 1,000 beds. Meals at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital are cooked on site whilst Cheltenham General Hospital uses frozen ready meals from Wiltshire based company Apetito. The trust believes that it is important to support local producers, suppliers and jobs if possible – and knows that its patients agree. So the trust worked with a range of local and regional partnerships, including Gloucestershire Food Vision and South West Food & Drink to increase the proportion of local food used. These organisations have helped the trust to increase awareness of sustainable procurement but are also invaluable in helping the catering team to identify local suppliers and producers. The trust has also worked with NHS Supply Chain because it has a number of high value National Framework Contracts to use local accredited suppliers as far as possible.

For example, milk comes under a national contract from Dairy Crest's Stonehouse dairy collecting milk from farms within a 50 mile radius of the dairy. Similarly, bread, rolls and cakes come under national contract from Halls Bakery in Stroud and Emma's Cakes in Lydney. Fresh meat and poultry comes from John Sheppard's Catering Butchers in Bristol, who will source meat locally if possible – last year 35% of meat came from Gloucestershire and Somerset, with pork coming from local producers in the Forest of Dean. Similarly the fruit and vegetable suppliers in Hereford purchase from their local area in the Vale of Evesham, Worcestershire and Herefordshire. The national supplier 3663, which provide frozen and chilled foods, identified a local supplier of fishcakes (Green Gourmet of Stroud) using MSC sustainable sources for the trust. Smaller suppliers are also used if they can meet the accreditation needs of the trust; for example ice-cream comes from a local supplier, Marshfield Farm, following recommendations from the North Bristol Trust. As a result, the trust has increased the proportion of food purchased from local suppliers from 18% to over 30% over the last 3 years.

The trust as a whole has a detailed strategy to reduce its carbon footprint and be more sustainable. Catering has played its part by cutting the number of deliveries by careful planning of menus, recycling waste cooking oil and food packaging and replacing equipment with more energy and water efficient devices. Free range eggs are now used and battered cod has been replaced by sustainable pollock. The trust also uses Rainforest Alliance products in the Gloucester Royal and sells a range of fair trade juices, flapjacks and confectionary in its retail outlets.

The overall cost impact was neutral – some higher costs were balanced by savings elsewhere. Although the trust does not think it is possible to use significantly more local and sustainable food without increasing the current budget of £2.95 per adult patient per day, it is planning some changes. Gloucestershire Royal hospital currently produces some vegetables and potato products for Cheltenham's frozen meal system and the trust is looking at extending this to improve special diet provision and reduce costs. The trust has recently moved to a one week menu which may give more time to look at other measures, such as offering more seasonal menus.