



Case Study – Review of Catering Provider

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ACHIEVING QUALITY, SUSTAINABILITY & SOCIAL VALUE IN A CATERING CONTRACT

Reviewing our catering provider in order to achieve new primary drivers for change

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) has almost 7,000 staff providing integrated healthcare to a third of London's population, Milton Keynes, Surrey and areas beyond. CNWL provides a wide range of services to treat people with a variety of health needs, including common physical health problems, long-term conditions, mental health, learning disabilities, eating disorders, addictions, dental, community nursing and sexual health.

Quality Trusted Solutions LLP (QTS) are a wholly owned subsidiary company of CNWL responsible for providing Estates and Facilities services to the Trust. The services provided by QTS includes Soft FM services such as Cleaning, Catering, Front of House, Waste, Linen & Laundry and Pest Control. OCS Group UK Ltd operationally provides the vast majority of the Soft FM services under contract to QTS, with some of the services provided directly by OCS and some of the services being sub-contracted.

Aim

QTS and CNWL were looking to expand the dietary options for patients with special requirements, particularly finger foods, dysphagia options and texture modified food options. QTS also wanted to have a provider who were more sustainable, environmentally friendly, socially responsible and invested in their local community.

Acting as an intelligent customer and contract manager, we worked with our Total Soft Facilities Management (TSFM) provider OCS, to identify a new supplier who met our goals on sustainability and social values. With an existing high quality and well-established provision it was vital that the new provider could also sustain and improve on the catering experience.

Working with OCS we established a trial process, which included tasting and feedback sessions with patients and staff, and engaged with dieticians within the Trust as well as our OCS contract dietician. The feedback was so positive we moved straight from trial to implementation.

Below is a summary of our primary drivers for change:

- Sustainability – higher storage capacity to reduce journeys, packaging recycling and reduction, logistics and transport. Matching the Trusts ambition to achieve the NHS Plastics Pledge targets
- Social Values – a company who displays social responsibility and family values
- Sourcing – UK sourcing, local sourcing, ethical sourcing
- Special Diets – dementia menu, improved cultural options, dysphagia options, texture modified options
- Finger Foods – more creative and flexible options
- Menu and Option Flexibility – improved choice and variety

Challenge

As part of the joint contract management between QTS and OCS we identified limitations with the special diet options being provided to our patients. QTS also identified that catering and food service could play a large role in the social value and sustainability agenda for the Trust. We were keen to work with a provider who demonstrated family values and a focus on corporate responsibility.

We weren't dissatisfied with the service we were receiving from the incumbent and PLACE and audit scores supported the existing high standards, but we did know that there was a chance to do more. In mental health services there are definite risks in making changes to suppliers, as patients who are "long stay" can value stability and continuity. This meant that matching or improving the provision was absolutely vital. Food quality can be a very subjective issue, so wide engagement was also necessary.

Solution

We had looked at working with Apetito in 2019. They had provided food to one of our sites previously, so there was institutional knowledge in CNWL and QTS about their quality. We had visited their factory, reviewed the manufacturing and logistics process, conducted sampling and spent time with management and experts at the firm. We came away very impressed, but at the time there were constraints on making the change because of fitting the delivery and logistics schedule with our requirement.

QTS and OCS maintained an active overview of the market throughout the life of our contracts, considering how new or growing suppliers could service our existing and emerging needs. As we began to think about changing our approach, we revisited the work we had done with Apetito and concluded it might be time to make a switch.

A key risk in changing catering is that it is a large change to make which cannot be easily rolled back. In partnership with OCS we conducted significant preparation, using our contract dietician to plan menus and ensure quality would be high and patient needs would be met. Tasting sessions and feedback gave us input that the change was likely to be well received. During the trials we shared with sites the Apetito data and information relating to social values and sustainability and this was universally well received as a positive move and decision-making factor.

Results

We completed trials at each of the sites and in each case the success and feedback led to immediate formal implementation within every area.

Catering audit scores and patient survey results which were already high have further improved with the latest scores averaging 99% and 98% respectively. In addition to the audit and survey results we have seen a reduction in wastage since the move to Apetito, with the current average sitting at 6.8%, significantly below the NHS average.

The special diet options and variety has been improved, particularly with more diverse and higher quality finger foods, dysphagia and texture modified meal options, a wider selection of standard dietary options and improvements in options to meet other cultural and religious needs.

The sustainability of the provision has improved, and we are benefiting from Apetito's significant green agenda and achievements:

- Queens Award winner for Enterprise in Sustainable Development
- Committed to the 'Step Up To The Plate' Challenge
- Target to halve UK Food Wastage by 2030
- Achieved food waste 'Zero to Landfill'
- Signed up to the NHS Plastics Pledge
- Signed up to the UK Plastics Pact
- Ambitious targets to eliminate all unnecessary single use plastics
- Plastic Recycling Targets - Plastic packaging recycled & made From 100% Green Energy
- Aim to make aluminum packaging 100% recyclable

- Logistics - Euro 6 Fleet
- CO2 Reductions achieved 20% in 5 years
- 52% Increase in Orders Per Delivery in Last 5 Years

We are also benefitting from the sustainable sourcing practices of Apetito, including:

- Focus on buying British & Irish Ingredients – Including 100% of Beef Products
- Marine Conservation Society ‘Good Fish Guide’ Compliance
- Sustainable Stocks initiative
- Marine Environment Protection compliance
- Marine Stewardship Council compliance
- Fishery Traceability and Compliance
- Independent Assessment of practices – Fish Populations & Protection of Ecosystems

The social values of Apetito have been well received, including:

- Living Wage Employer and Accredited ‘Real Living Wage Employer’ status
- Ethical Trading Initiative – Only Catering or Food Services Provider signed Up
- Local recruitment initiatives in Wiltshire
- Malnutrition Task Force Founder Member and Board Members – independent group across health, social care and local government – informing, acting and promoting good practice
- Community Sunday Lunch Club Initiative – 100+ volunteers, 50 guests per month
- Alzheimers Society Charity Partnership – over 150k raised
- Staff Foundation – volunteering and charity donations – 227k donated since formed

We consider this project to be a significant success story in all areas. All of the drivers for change we wanted to achieve have been met with no additional cost for the service changes and with improvements in quality, performance and patient feedback. We are seeing the benefit short and long term in working with a partner provider who displays and acts on values relating to social responsibility and sustainability, whilst continually showing ambition and looking to learn and improve on these critical areas.