

**JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

7<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Food in Hospitals

**1. Introduction**

North Middlesex Hospital use a patient catering system supplied under contract from The Compass Group represented by Medirest. The cooking system is called Steamplicity and has a unique patented cooking process that steams food to a prepared state in just four minutes using designed microwave equipment. The benefits of this system include cost savings, space reduction, fresher, more nutritious food, broader menu choice and the ability to cater for special diets more easily.

**2. How we deal with maintaining high standards of food service**

Options and patient choice is important when selecting a system and we believe that Medirest menus impact on the overall patient meal experience without the complexity of having an onsite production kitchen. Steamplicity meal production is produced off-site in a controlled environment by Medirest. This ensures that every meal provided is of a consistent, high standard and cooking conditions monitored. The audit process checks diligence records, staff training, food handling and transport logistics to ensure compliance within strict temperature controls and quality parameters.

Full patient satisfaction surveys are completed on a quarterly basis and action taken to ensure the desired standards are achieved following any negative feedback. An example of a typical meal postcard survey is attached. There is one question on NHS Patients Choice website relating to hospital catering at NMH which feed in to the KPI information, which is monitored by the Trust Executive Team regularly.

Trust staff undertake food sampling twice a year especially when there is a change in menu design or when our PLACE audits occur. We also meet on a monthly basis with the contractor to ensure their service performance is consistent. A monthly action report is supplied by our contractor that allows a first-hand view of the service provision and other practical issues – an example of this can be made available if required.

**3. Identifying what choice patients are given**

There is daily communication with patients about meal options where each patient is given a choice of starter, main and dessert from the Steamplicity menus provided. Medirest are able to provide a wide range of meal options suitable for a variety of diets or health requirements. A menu example of this is attached.

The Steamplicity menu offers 30 meal options catering for all vegetarians, gluten intolerant, soft textures, low salt, healthy options and high energy meals. Additionally a range of Halal, Afro Caribbean & Kosher meals are available from an alternative menu along with, where requested, a dedicated soft texture menu for those who have difficulty eating solid foods.

Our contract caterer also offers a variety of fruit, soups and snack items which can be served as a supplement and build up option as directed by dieticians for both inpatients and day patients who can further choose from seven sandwich choices.

Tea, coffee or hot chocolate is served through the day along with still water served and refreshed on a regular basis in jugs.

#### **4. Feedback we have received from these patients**

Frequent feedback is supplied at ward level to Medirest. They conduct their own patient satisfaction surveys each quarter with the results being presented to the Trust. These results are reviewed with improvements made where practicable in order to maintain a high standard of service to patients.

The Trust's own patient experience tracker generates weekly and monthly results which are reviewed on a ward by ward basis and again actions taken where necessary and specific improvement considerations given where applicable. With the varied ethnicity of the local area, an attempt, where possible, is made to meet varied ethnicity requirements, i.e. halal, kosher food etc.

#### **5. Food production at NMH**

Medirest's use of technology makes Steamplicity unique. Each meal is 'cooked' in its packaging that contains a patented steam-release valve - like a mini pressure cooker that regulates temperature throughout the cooking process. This maintains the nutritional value within the cooked food rather than it being dispersed by over cooking.

Medirest's menus are approved and are jointly reviewed with on-site dieticians every 6 months or when there is a menu update. Each review consists of sampling new dishes and an assessment of the meal's ingredients and calorific contents is made. These exercises are conducted through the Lead Dietician and include the Trust's Dietician Team who are involved in the food supply chain at NMH.

Medirest assist the Trust dieticians by arranging awareness visits to its Steamplicity Production Centre and conducting training with staff. Medirest arrange nutrition and dementia awareness seminars, which are deemed essential for this illness. The relationship between Medirest, the Trust and the nutritionists is important to monitor how food influences the wellbeing of all patient groups.

#### **6. How we have enhanced our food provision with nutritionists over the past couple of years**

The Trust has increased the variety of fresh fruit to encourage patients to eat healthier. Main meal soups have been added to the menu following requests from patients and nutrition professionals asking for this option. Jacket potatoes have been added alongside a number of fillings and this can be served as a main meal or as an addition to another meal when requested by dieticians.

The beverage trolley round has been enhanced to promote fluid intake. New quality products have been introduced across the site with Nestle Hot Chocolate, Nescafe Coffee and Tetley Tea now being served instead of unknown products.

Electronic Meal Ordering Tablets are being used across the site for patient meal ordering. This provides improved accuracy and eliminates administrative errors. The system provides those involved with a clear record of meals ordered and full traceability throughout a patient's stay allowing dieticians to have visibility of the calorific intake of patients over the period of their hospital admission where that is being closely monitored. The system has future applications such as tracking patient moves and amended meal request provision, satisfaction surveying and allowing nutritional and dietary information to be available at the touch of a button.

With obesity becoming an issue in the UK we also work closely with the Trust's nutritionists to ensure portion sizes of meals are fit for purpose and are adequate to assist a balanced controlled diet following up on the potassium and salt content adjustment and where approved, offer additional build up/energy products.

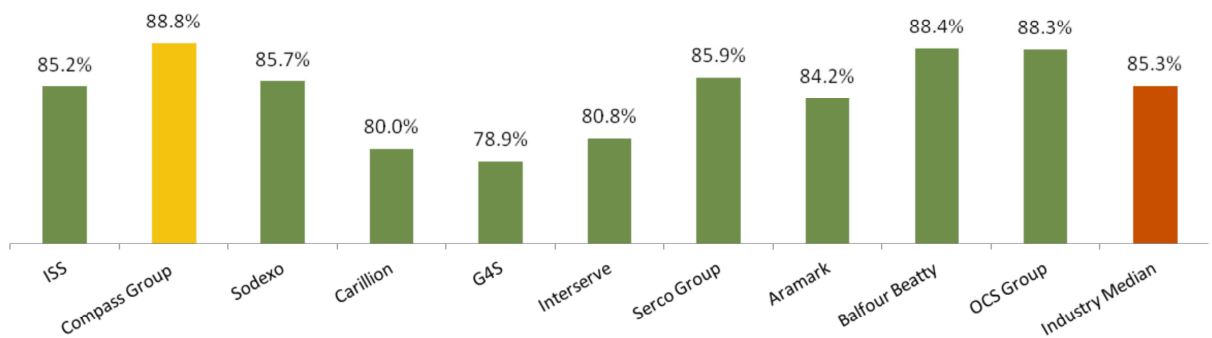
**6. Cost per patient**

Food costs per patient per day = £11.64 which is made up of £6.91 labour and £4.73 food and beverage cost. NMH via this catering contract, provide 20,306 meals a month to inpatients and 4,500 sandwiches to day patients. These are delivered to patients along with condiments by nursing staff who monitor consumption of any vulnerable patients, and reporting this, where necessary, to dieticians.

**7. Overview of NMH food service**

Comparative PLACE (Patient Lead Assessment of Care Environment) information compiled by our current contractor puts the hospital catering system in a strong market position in terms of quality of catering services. It also indicates that contracted supply services are of a higher quality and are better managed than those sites where in-house services exist with contracted services attaining 4.4% higher than self-operated industry median scores (see below).

The graph below gives indicative positioning of our site contractor’s performance across the catering market sector in relation to submitted PLACE scores and is reassuring that the performance range is in the high percentile.



NMH PLACE scores results for 2013 were 91.24% with the Environmental Health Officers evaluation known as ‘scores on the doors’ being graded at 5\* (excellent).

**Kevin Howell**  
**Director of Environment, January 2014**