



**Launch of Kingston Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust's
New Menu for In-patients**

**Food Tasting Event Report
Thursday 15th January 2015**

Kingston Hospital Food Tasting Event Report – 15/01/2015

On Thursday 15th January 2015, Healthwatch Affiliates representing the Hospital Services Task Group: Marianne Vennegoor, Graham Goldspring and Maurice McCullough attended the launch of Kingston Hospital's new menu for patients. As a part of this event, the attendees were invited to sample the food that is to be made newly available to in-patients. It is understood that the implementation of the new menu will be carried out very shortly.

As a part of the changes, The Good Food Company is acting as supplier. Food and meals will be supplied ready prepared, but cooked on Kingston Hospital premises and served to patients. With regards the new food service available to Kingston Hospital patients, a 1-week choice menu plan has been developed. This has been produced with the help and collaboration of the Trust's Catering Staff, the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Medical and Nursing Staff, Speech Therapists as well as other members of staff groups, patients and carers. National Department of Health guidelines pertaining to food sources, production and safety measures, were adhered to throughout the development of the new menu. As such, nutritional dietary requirements for patients, as set by the British Dietary Standards, will be met over a 24-hour period rather than calculations broken down per meal. This allows for a degree of flexibility in the distribution of carbohydrates, fat, protein etc in meals.

Healthwatch Affiliates fed back their views on the impressive presentation of the new menu. Each individual patient is provided with a laminated booklet for perusal. The menu also comes with an introduction and a guide as to how to select meals. Assistance is also offered to patients who require translations, are unable to read or who may struggle to comprehend the menu alone. A coding system is also a benefit; highlighting options suitable for patients with special dietary requirements or allergies, those that require certain textures such as the elderly or those who have difficulty swallowing. Options are made available for patients with religious beliefs (i.e. Halal, kosher etc.) and different cultural eating habits (i.e. Asian, Chinese). The coding also helped to identify foods that are healthier, high in fibre and softer in texture etc. Thus it was felt that the new menu has embraced diversification well.

Our Affiliates found the return of a cooked breakfast to the menu, a pleasing improvement. Bacon and sausage has been introduced for breakfasts at the weekend which allows for extra protein should patients desire low protein foods later in the day. In addition, items such as; porridge, cereals and healthy options are also available. Our Healthwatch Affiliates noted that snacks were available during the day and items such as snack boxes could be had should a patient miss a meal. Bedtime snacks are also offered and it was reported that a much wider variety of vegetables, fresh food, sandwiches and salads could now be opted for.

With regards to tasting the food on offer, Healthwatch Affiliate and Chair of the Hospital Services Task Group Graham Goldspring sampled items including pea and ham soup, cream of chicken soup, beef lasagne, cheese and onion pie, creamed and sauté potatoes, scrambled egg, quiche, varieties of sandwich, sausage roll, hot apple sponge, custard and sponge cake. He reported that all were of high quality, were flavoured well, tasted good and were not over or under seasoned. He did however find problems with the custard, stating that it was watery and tasted synthetic. This was reported back and it was assured that the issue would be addressed. Our Affiliates were also told that it was hoped to introduce toast to the new menu in the near future. At the present time, practical considerations such as avoiding setting off fire alarms and getting it to the patients still warm are still in the process of being worked through.

In essence, patients are now able to choose a 3-course 'restaurant type' meal that succeeds in offering plenty of choice, tastes good, is of the right temperature and looks appetising. The two primary meals each day are 'Main Lunch' and 'Light Supper' which can flexibly be interchanged so patients can have their main meal at either the middle of the day or in the evening. All meals and drinks are served on the wards by specially trained hostesses who utilise trolleys that are heated or chilled as appropriate. The food is all displayed to aid selection and to enable smaller or larger portions to be easily chosen.

Furthermore, the other most significant change as a result of the food service changes at Kingston Hospital has been the development of that which operates 24 hours from the new Maternity Unit. Frozen meals to accommodate patients in Maternity are supplied by Anglia Crown and are now heated by specially designed microwave units that recognise codes on pre packed meals. This ensures that there is no possibility of error since meals are heated for the correct period of time according to their codes. Soon, ovens are to be installed where the shelves are set to designated temperatures so that separate components of meals can be heated differently.

Overall, the Healthwatch Affiliates that attended the Food Tasting Event felt that the quality and delivery of meals to patients has dramatically improved. As a retired Dietician Healthwatch Affiliate Marianne Vennegoor noted that optimal food intake in hospitals is vital for recovery and reduces the incidence of complications related to malnutrition that subsequently impact on length of hospital stay. The results of introducing this new menu initiative for the Trust should be noticeable in the future. Financially there should be less need for expensive nutritional supplements and in terms of patient's satisfaction and Hospital Ratings after Inspections, Kingston Hospital should reap rewards for its efforts to improve.

A letter has been sent to the team at Kingston Hospital from Healthwatch Kingston, congratulating them on enhancing the food service and for actively listening to and responding to patient and staff comments.

With thanks to Marianne Vennegoor and Graham Goldspring for their reports

Edited by Healthwatch Kingston office volunteer Emma Gittus