

Catering for Frimley Park Hospital and the Army With Kevan Wallace and Colin Alborough

The topic of catering for large numbers of people with complex requirements provided a lively and entertaining evening, not least because our guest speakers joined forces to prepare and serve us Army rations, a novel experience for all of us.

Kevan began by introducing himself as the Assistant Hotel Services Manager—Catering for



Frimley Health Catering Team

Frimley Health, in which capacity he is responsible for catering at Frimley Park Hospital, Wexham Park and Heatherwood. The aim of the Catering Team is to support clinical services by providing an efficient, value for money and quality assured service that is safe and customer focused. The team of 85 consists of chefs, kitchen staff, menu collators, café and restaurant staff, who between them cater for the Trust's 4,500 staff, bed capacity of around 700, plus the 210,941 annual

admissions and 52,012 Day Cases. FPH is one of the busiest hospitals in the south east, outside of London.

With 28 wards to provide tray service to, bulk meals service to Woodlands Day Nursery, F1 Children's and Teenage Unit, the Cystic Fibrosis Unit, Parkside and the Private Patient Suite, that means around 2,500 meals a day. And that's just for patients. In addition, the Catering Department supplies Pinetrees Restaurant, Café Glad Coffee Shop and the Baquette Shop.

Patients are served breakfast, lunch and dinner, on a fourteen-day cycle, which can be from the Standard Main Menu, the Fortified Menu or the Puree Menu. Mealtimes are protected so that patients are not interrupted, and a coloured tray system ensures that particularly vulnerable patients can be monitored. As well as nutrition, hydration is a very important part of the catering service.



Award-winning Food

In line with the 'hotel service' aspect of catering at FPH, the patient is treated as a valued customer and the entire enterprise is customer-based, which drives standards up. Regular surveys monitor customer satisfaction and encourage suggestions for improvement. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that FPH was awarded a national standard for service and business excellence by the Institute of Hospitality, only the second NHS Trust to achieved this prestigious award.

Naturally, food hygiene is paramount and FPH consistently scores highly in the HACCP Standards for Food Business. Surrey Heath BC Food Hygiene Awards judged them Excellent, and they score 5 stars for the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Thus FPH's standards are higher than required on all measures, national and local.



*Wessex Salon Culinaire
Winners*

FPH chefs Bilan Gurung and Bobby Womersley won the Wessex Salon Culinaire Competition in 2015, creating a two-course meal consisting of main course and dessert for less than £2.10 per head. The pair will now represent Wessex in the national finals in 2016.

Kevan handed over to Colin Alborough, Environmental Health Manager for Rushmoor Borough Council, who began by explaining that the Council's purpose is "to improved the quality of life for our local residents and businesses, and that his team's aim it 'to safeguards the health, safety and welfare of the community and the environment in which people work and live and, wherever possible, to promote and secure improvements in the quality of life.'" Thus Colin's work is absolutely fundamental to the work of the Council, not least in fulfilling its statutory duty to enforce food safety legislation.

Colin showed a sequence of photos showing some of the most egregious safety violations he has encountered at food premises in Rushmoor, and gave the example of a pub whose staff we sentenced to prison because their poor hygiene standards resulted in the death of a customer due to food poisoning, to illustrate why Rushmoor takes its responsibility so seriously.

He explained the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and urged us to check the rating of any shop, restaurant or takeaway when deciding where to purchase food.

Since Aldershot is the 'Home of the British Army', Rushmoor has been designated the Primary Authority and, as such, is responsible for all the Army's main kitchens, messes, Group catering premises, the Army slaughter house, Army School of Catering etc. Rushmoor's role is to offer advice, help develop policy, liaise with other authorities, and provide mediation.

Some of the larger high street businesses also enjoy Primary Authority status, for example, Tesco, ASDA, Boots, Morrison's, B&Q, Iceland and Wetherspoons, in which case their nominated local authority will deal with any issues raised.

Although Colin's team has powers to close a business down immediately for serious breaches where public safety is at risk, they generally adopt a very supportive position, helping businesses put right their violations and establish good practice. They see themselves as working in partnership with businesses to the benefit of business and public alike.

The knowledge and experience that the team acquire is shared with other authorities, cutting costs and driving efficiencies. As a result, Rushmoor's Environmental Health Team now supports 1500 businesses with 120 local authorities.

Our guest speaker from the Army, SSgt Sue MacFarlane of the Royal Army Medical Corps, was unable to join us, having been posted abroad on active service. In her absence, Colin gamely undertook to tell us about Army catering.

Every year, 1.6 million 24-hour ration packs are issued by the MOD for our soldiers, who are currently serving in 20 different countries, ranging from UK training areas to the Middle East and Africa. There are a variety of menus including vegetarian and halal.

To compensate for any lack of facilities, each ration pack contains sufficient nutrition for one individual for 24 hours, including three main meals plus energy drinks and snacks. They can be eaten hot or cold, and provide an average 3800-4200 Kcal per ration, 10% from protein, 55% carbohydrate and a maximum 35% fat. Rations can sustain soldiers for 15 days, though ideally for no longer than 30 days.

The Army also issues 10-man Operational Ration Packs, to feed 10 people for 24 hours. These can be used by a chef with central feeding facilities (field kitchen) but also with minimal equipment such as mess tins and Hexi cookers. These rations can also serve as second stage established feeding if supplemented with bread, fresh fruit and vegetables when available.

Kevan and Colin exhibited their culinary skills to prepare a range of meals for us to taste. It was easy to be critical of the food on offer, which was certainly variable, but we should not forget that the lives of service personnel could very well depend on these ration packs, and it is clear that the Army tries very hard to provide interesting, varied and nutritious food that can go anywhere in the world. That is quite an achievement.