



East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust Stakeholder Bulletin – 12 November 2021

CEO Guest Blog – Tim Radcliffe, Catering Manager



For as long as I can remember, there has always been a stigma around hospital food - misconceptions such as “it’s not fresh”, “it’s made off-site”, “there’s not much choice”... the list goes on.

It’s always been my passion and ambition to break this stigma, because here at ELHT not only do we provide fresh, varied and delicious food to both our patients and colleagues, but we’re multi-award winners too.

I’ve never been prouder of our ELHT catering team than I have this week, when two of our amazing Chefs were crowned national winners of the first ever NHS Chef of the Year competition. It not only proves what we already know, that our food is the best in the NHS, but it also proves that hospital catering is a valued and exciting way

to start and build your career in the hospitality and culinary industry.

The NHS Chef of the Year competition was created to demonstrate the extent of knowledge our Chefs must possess to meet the specific requirements of patient catering within the health service. The challenges set by the judges replicated our real-life conundrums including creating vegan and energy-dense dishes, as well as allergen menus, children’s menu options and showcasing a conscious awareness of ethical, cultural and lifestyle choices. Our two worthy winners, Sinto Mulavarickal and Sanish Thomas, took each task in their stride, beating off the seven remaining competitors in each knock-out round until they reached the final day with only three teams.

There was never a doubt in my mind that they would win, I knew the amazing creations they were capable of cooking. But what did come as a shock was the reaction from the judges, which included Nick Vardis, Culinary Director at Compass Group UK and Ambassador to the NHS Supply Chain, Phil Shelley, Chair of the NHS Food Review, Harry Lomas, Head of Culinary at Wembley Stadium and Prue Leith, Restaurateur and judge on the Great British

Bake Off. They were in awe of what our Chefs were able to produce and couldn't believe that everything we provide at ELHT for our patients and colleagues only comes from the freshest of ingredients. Prue was shocked when we told her Venison was on the menu and she had to taste our winning sticky toffee pudding three times as she loved it so much!

Although this competition was won by Sinto and Sanish, it goes without saying that this was a whole team effort and I couldn't be prouder of our ELHT catering team. Without their mentors, suggestions for dishes on the menu and our amazing colleagues who kept the kitchens running back on site when they were competing, this win wouldn't have been possible and so for that, I want to thank each one of them. If you want to find out more about the competition and our win, you can [click here](#).

Over the last eighteen months our Catering department has gone from strength to strength, winning the Hospital Catering Service of the Year award as well as Best British Food 2021. We procure the best food, we have the best service and now we cook the best food too - we've won it all.

Our department is also one of only eight NHS catering teams nationally to have joined the NHS Exemplary Trusts Programme and Hospital Food Network. We were chosen for our innovation, high food standards and consistent service providing food for patients, colleagues and visitors across the hospital sites. The Network was set-up to host discussions and pilots on topics like menu choices, staff training, food safety management, food waste controls and more. It is a collaborative approach to share ideas and best practice, to improve food standards in the NHS nationwide.

We're currently experiencing a lot of pressure across the Trust as we deal with the oncoming winter period and restoration following the pandemic, so it's more important than ever to provide an excellent service to not just our patients but our colleagues as well. I'm so proud of my team for being able to deliver them hot, fresh and nutritious meals which can keep them going during their long shifts and continuous and relentless pressure.

I'd like to finish by reiterating my first statement – our hospital food is just as good as the food you would receive in a restaurant or hotel and our awards prove it. I want us and the NHS to be recognised as a great place to work for aspiring Chefs and other roles in the culinary industry – you can learn and be innovative all whilst providing a service for our patients that helps them when they are at their most vulnerable.

The only way is up for our catering department now, we've won the awards so who knows what's next, maybe a Michelin Star?



In this week's Stakeholder Bulletin:

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SAFE

Help us to help you – a statement from our Interim Chief Executive, Martin Hodgson



Our Interim Chief Executive Martin Hodgson confirmed this week that we have been taking additional action to manage severe pressures and demand to ensure patients who need care continue to receive it.

He said: "The demand on services on Wednesday morning was three times higher than usual for this time of year and the strain is being felt acutely by colleagues across the Trust, not just in our urgent or emergency pathways where it is so visible, but on teams and departments right across all hospital settings and our community services too. This also clearly impacts on patients, who are experiencing some very long waits to be seen and admitted if they need to be.

The teamwork we have seen throughout the last few days from colleagues and our system partners has been truly amazing and we want to thank everyone for their help throughout this challenging period.

However, we know that winter is still ahead and sadly these pressures will not go away. Please do help us by continuing to do all you can to encourage people to use health services appropriately. We would especially like to remind people they can help themselves by:

- Considering the most appropriate option for their care and visiting NHS 111 online first
- Making every effort to protect themselves by getting vaccinated against Covid-19 and taking up the flu jab if eligible
- Practising good hand hygiene
- Wearing face coverings
- Maintaining social distancing
- Stocking up on everyday essential medicines.

Covid-19 information

Adding to our pressures is the rising number of Covid-19 cases we are seeing. We are currently caring for 78 inpatients who have tested positive for Covid-19. Of those, nine are receiving critical care.

This means that the risk of hospital-acquired infections within the Trust is higher also, which could potentially create immense additional pressure on our services should we have to close areas to admissions due to an outbreak. If visiting our hospitals, please continue to do all you can to reduce the risk of infection such as:

- Sanitising or washing hands on entry to the building
- Wearing face masks
- Remaining at least 2 metres away from other people or wearing the appropriate PPE where this is not possible
- Ensure areas are well-ventilated with doors and windows open where possible and appropriate

Civility and respect – the importance of looking out for each other

All of our colleagues are working to the maximum as the Trust pressures continue to rise. Bearing this in mind, we are reminding our colleagues, patients and visitors of the importance of being kind to and looking out for each other – a small act of kindness goes a long way on a difficult day.

As part of our ongoing work to encourage civility and respect in the work place, we wanted to [share this video](#) featuring some of our colleagues explaining what civility and respect means to them.

Reopening of Blackburn Birth Centre

We are pleased to announce that Blackburn Birth Centre will reopen for women and people in labour to attend and give birth from Monday, 15 November, 2021. This service was closed temporarily in July to allow us to utilise our resources most efficiently.

The birth centre is run by midwives who will be able to provide one to one support to help pregnant women and people give birth naturally in one of the four birth rooms and is recommended for low-risk pregnancies.

If you are considering having your baby at Blackburn Birth Centre then please discuss this with your team midwife or call the centre. For more information, [click here](#).

PERSONAL

A recipe for success! ELHT Chefs win top NHS cooking competition

As you'll have read from Tim's blog above, two chefs at the Trust have been crowned National NHS Chef of the Year at the first ever NHS cooking competition. Here we are going to dig a little deeper into what the two award winning chefs had to endure before being handed the title.

After a gruelling six-day final round held at Warminster Cookery School, Sanish Thomas and Sinto Mulavarickal scooped first place in the final by wowing judges with a delicious four-course menu.



The competition launched for the first time ever in July with a round of regional heats held throughout England to showcase the skills of NHS chefs. It was a great opportunity to demonstrate the extent of the knowledge they must possess to meet the specific challenges of patient catering within the health service.

Following their win at the Regional heats in Newcastle in August, Sanish and Sinto competed against seven other teams over two weeks and were presented with a range of challenges specific to hospital catering. These included a breakfast challenge, following a set recipe, children's menu options, plant-based meals, energy-dense, allergen menus, ethnic, cultural and lifestyle choices, sweet and savoury snacks, and light options menus. The second week of the competition moved into a knock-out phase which saw teams gradually eliminated until just three were left standing for the final day.

Talking about the competition and their win, Sanish said: "I couldn't believe it when they announced we had won. I thought we were going to come second, maybe third, so we never expected to get the first prize. It was a tough competition and the pressure was really on, all the teams who competed were fantastic."

He added: "It was a whole team effort from ELHT though, we were just the ones who cooked it. We had the whole team behind us who helped with the planning and organising of the ingredients and our manager Tim [Radcliffe] was there with us for support. I remember saying to him, 'Tim, this duck breast is too small, can we get a 240gram breast?' and he replied, 'Don't worry, I will get you a 320gram one instead!'"

Sinto was also overjoyed at the win. He said: "My wife and I are due to have a baby soon so this couldn't have come at a better time. It was such a great experience to be a part of and I'm so happy that we won".

The pair were supported by Tim Radcliffe, Facilities Manager at the Trust and Jijo Mathew, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Manager, who helped them create the winning menu and act as a mentor throughout the competition.

Talking after the competition Tim said:

"The atmosphere of the final was incredibly focussed but the excitement from all the teams and judges was great to see. The perception of hospital catering is that it's the same old fair and that it's not very good. What we've shown here is that you can do incredible things. I've been here to see the whole department grow and without the support and backing from the rest of the catering team this win wouldn't have been possible, so this is a win for everyone here".

The judging team of Nick Vadis, Craig Smith, Emma Brooke and Phil Shelley were joined on the final day by Bake Off celebrity, Prue Leith.

Talking to the finalists she said: "I have never been involved in judging a competition that has made me so emotional. The standard of food you have produced with the restrictions you face has been remarkable.

"I hope that this competition is the start of helping to make a career as a chef in the NHS as something that catering college students will aspire to in the future".

Sanish echoed Prue's comments when he spoke after the competition, saying: "When I first started as an NHS Chef my wife said to me that all I would be making would be porridge, but that couldn't be further from the truth. We make everything fresh just like hotels and restaurants do. If you cook and then seal food it makes it very dry, so everything we produce and cook is sent out to patients fresh, nothing is reheated or frozen."

“I’d say to anyone wanting to get into catering that the NHS is a great place to work, it’s a great opportunity and we create some amazing dishes here at ELHT”.

Both Sanish and Sinto will return to the competition next year as mentors, advising and guiding the next team of ELHT chefs to a hopeful similar success.

The win also comes alongside a host of other accolades for the catering team, including winners of Best British Food 2021 and Hospital Catering Service of the Year. When asked what’s next for the ELHT Catering team, Tim said: “Who knows, maybe a Michelin star!”

The winning menu was a starter of vegetable samosas with tamarind chutney, followed by roulade of seabass with bouillabaisse, a main course of duck breast with apple and mushroom stuffing and duchess potato, braised red cabbage and orange sauce and a desert of sticky toffee pudding.

EFFECTIVE

Pancreatic Cancer Rapid Diagnostic Service wins top Macmillan award

ELHT’s Pancreatic Cancer Rapid Diagnostic Service (RDS) kickstarted November’s Pancreatic Cancer Awareness month with a win at the Macmillan Professionals Excellence Awards, as recognition of their outstanding contribution to cancer services.



The service is part of a Lancashire and South Cumbria wide initiative designed to support earlier diagnosis in pancreatic cancer and came out top in the ‘Integration Excellence’ category. The award recognises teams who have improved the coordination of services and enabled integration across settings such as acute, primary, social and voluntary services to provide a seamless experience for people living with cancer.

The ELHT Cancer Services Team was nominated for their collaborative working with colleagues including diagnostic specialists, biomedical scientists and clinicians. They also work closely with representatives from the Lancashire and South Cumbria Cancer Alliance, Primary Care Networks and third sector organisations, Pancreatic Cancer Action and Pancreatic Cancer UK.

The successful collaborative work has meant that an average wait time for a patient to be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer has reduced considerably following GP referral.

Vicki-Stevenson Hornby, a Pancreatic Specialist Nurse within the team, was overjoyed to win the award with the team. She said: “For me, the ‘win’ here is for patients and families affected by pancreatic cancer as this gives a platform to the whole Rapid Diagnostic Process and the impact which that can have. This National award and recognition gives a national platform and therefore the possibility of more patients and families receiving earlier diagnosis

and enhanced support throughout the investigations. For this award to be received during pancreatic awareness month really elevates the whole awareness process.”

In England, 79% of pancreatic cancer patients are diagnosed at a late stage meaning one in four who are diagnosed with the disease sadly die within 28 days due to late stage diagnosis.

Caroline Rogers, Macmillan Assistant Director of Nursing for Cancer Services at the Trust, said: “I am delighted that the team have received recognition for their hard work in creating this new patient pathway despite the challenges of the last 18 months. I have seen the core team members strive to achieve excellence driven by a desire to change the story of the previous 50 years of little to no improvement in survivability of pancreatic cancer. This is the beginning of the new story and has already improved the quality of life for many newly diagnosed patients.”

The team are now exceeding national targets for diagnosis waiting times, with NHS England and Improvement setting a national expectation that patients will wait no more than 28 days for a fast diagnosis.

Daren Subar, Clinical Lead for the Pancreatic Cancer Rapid Diagnostic Service, said: “The Rapid Diagnostic Service shows the importance of team working across primary and secondary care. We are seeing clear improvements for patients through the effective collaborative working. Receiving this excellence award raises the profile of this important and effective initiative which, in turn, raises awareness of pancreatic cancer which is vital in terms of achieving earlier diagnosis.”

eLancs Planning Praised by NHS England

A team from NHS England paid a visit to the eLancs programme team in Blackburn to gain a thorough overview of the work that has taken place ahead of the go live of the Electronic Patient Record (ePR) system in November 2022.

Janet King, Ginnette Nursey and Daniel Hallen from NHS England and Improvement and NHS Digital visited the Hub to look at how the eLancs team were running the programme for delivering the new ePR at East Lancashire Hospitals Trust.

Daniel said: “It was a comprehensive and honest reflection of the work carried out and we were very impressed with the planning and forethought that has gone into the preparation.

“We think the team is doing an excellent job under the challenging circumstances we face in the NHS.

We particularly liked the open and collaborative team ethos and look forward to coming back again soon to see how things are progressing.”

