

Saffron Bedside drives food reduction at Chesterfield Royal Hospital

Digital bedside ordering solution provides £180,000 annual cost saving

When the Independent Review of NHS Hospital Food in England was published in October 2020, it put forward eight recommendations for system-level change to help improve standards in hospital catering. One of those was enhanced use of technology, highlighting the role of digital solutions in helping healthcare teams to collate food choices, manage allergies and diets, and minimise waste.

And the Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is doing just that, with the support of Civica's Saffron Bedside – an interactive and personal solution, using tablets to input patient choices at their bedside.

Instant savings

When Saffron was first introduced at Chesterfield Royal Hospital back in 2015 in a joint implementation by the Trust and on-site contract caterer Sodexo, it delivered near-instant cost savings of £180,000 per year - a

34% reduction in total food costs across the hospital. This was made possible by streamlining the catering service, improving efficiency and enabling ordering per bed - removing waste from 'just in case' ordering.

Noting the Hospital Food Review recommendation that every hospital should implement an electronic digital meal ordering system by 2022, the Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Trust now delivers a best-practice solution that continues to drive visibility, efficiency and sustainability across the patient catering operation.

A partnership approach

Saffron Bedside is deployed at Chesterfield Royal Hospital under a partnership approach between the NHS Trust and its contract service provider, Sodexo.

Sodexo manages back of house operations including picking of menu items, food regeneration and despatch from the kitchen,

- 1 34% reduction in total food costs
- 2 50% reduction in service time
- 3 Improved patient satisfaction

"Switching to Saffron enabled us to drive efficiencies, cut costs and improve the quality of catering provision across the hospital. And those benefits are still being achieved today, in line with raising standards and recommendations set by PLACE and the Hospital Food Review."

Kim Beevers, Facilities Manager, Chesterfield Royal Hospital

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while NHS ward staff take orders at the bed side and serve food to patients. Sodexo's team are on hand to assist and train ward staff if needed.

"The cost savings are significant, but they're not the only benefit. The quality of the food has increased and perception of quality to patients rocketed. Before Saffron, catering was regularly highlighted as an area for improvement on patient satisfaction surveys, but not anymore."

Caron Bromley, General Manager, Sodexo

This was the first Sodexo contract to introduce the partnership approach, which has since been successfully rolled out at other hospitals including Birmingham Children's Hospital, North Devon District Hospital and Royal Stoke University Hospital. Although it remains rare for the healthcare sector, the NHS Trust manages front of house operations in around 40% of Sodexo's hospital estate.

By using tablets on the ward, staff can reduce the time between meal ordering and delivery, automatically map food choices to patients' care plans and dietary needs, all whilst improving the

patient experience in line with PLACE (Patient-led Assessments of the Care Environment) guidance. In total, 26 tablets are used at Chesterfield Royal Hospital.

Donna Jones, system mobilisation & support manager at Sodexo, said: "Using paper-based ordering before Saffron meant that the Trust were taking orders up to 36 hours in advance. With Saffron Bedside, patients can order for their next meal understanding their appetite – and staff can feed people, not beds, linked to patient data."

Reducing food waste

"All of this has dramatically reduced the number of 'just in case' scenarios where food was going up to the bed, but the patient's appetite may have changed, they may have gone for surgery or even been discharged. Often patients were left confused because they were receiving meals they ordered the day before, not that same morning."

Saffron Bedside also enables staff to capture a wealth of information around uptake at ward level, supporting cost management for patient feeding, predicted uptake and other analyses.

However, the most startling benefit was the instant reduction in the number of meals served.

Before Saffron Bedside was introduced, figures showed that

staff served 18,650 lunch meals and 19,181 supper meals each month. Just one month after implementation, monthly figures reduced to 15,512 at lunch and 15,826 at supper – a 17% reduction across each mealtime and a significant reduction in food waste.

This enabled an annual cost saving of nearly £143,000 – or a 44% reduction on pre-Saffron figures – which continues to be the case today. Together with almost £37,000 in savings through additional ward issues (including sandwiches, snack boxes and other items to feed patients at ward level), the new system saw annual cost savings of almost £180,000. From this aspect alone, the system investment was already cost negative whilst improving the Trusts' sustainability credentials

Improving patient satisfaction

Caron Bromley, general manager for Sodexo, adds: "The cost savings are significant, but they're not the only benefit. The quality of the food has increased and perception of quality to patients rocketed."

"Reducing the amount of food being prepared and served means that the catering team has been able to move away from overloading regeneration trolleys. They function better, the food looks better because it has been



reheated correctly, it is more appetising to patients and served at the right temperature. All of this will have reduced plate wastage too.

"Service time also reduced from over an hour down to around half an hour to serve three courses, because the Saffron system provides all the information ward staff need to deliver food efficiently to each bed."

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Raising standards

Kim Beevers, facilities manager at Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Trust, said: "Switching to Saffron enabled us to drive efficiencies, cut costs and improve the quality of catering provision across the hospital. And those benefits are still being achieved today, in line with raising standards and recommendations set by PLACE and the Hospital Food Review."

The Hospital Food Review's recommendation that all hospitals should implement a digital ordering system was put forward to drive four key benefits; safe ordering and mapping to patients' care plans; better tailored menus to dietary needs and personal preferences; minimum time between ordering and meal service; and a reduction in food waste.

The partnership between Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Trust and Sodexo using Saffron Bedside is evidence that all four are possible with an effective system in place.

Andrew Pond, business development director at Civica, which owns and operates the Saffron software, said: "This is a best-in-class example of how Saffron Bedside, using tablets for electronic bedside ordering, has delivered tangible benefits over an extended period of time for a busy NHS Trust.

"We continue to work with our partners to update and enhance the Saffron system. It's fantastic to see examples like this where significant cost savings and food wastage reductions have been achieved."

Enabling flexible service

Donna Jones from Sodexo adds: "We haven't looked back since we first deployed Saffron and it is absolutely our platform of choice for patient catering management and electronic patient ordering.

"We have a great relationship with the team and it's used in 16 Sodexo hospital sites now, including private hospitals where

we have the flexibility using a thermal printer to provide orders when the patients wants it – rather than set service times in the rigid NHS model."

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