

Focus on Hospital Food

An overview of the issues raised by patients about hospital food in East Kent



Every year we review the feedback we have heard from the public. Back in 2015 this highlighted issues about food and hydration at East Kent Hospitals. We heard about the quality of food and the lack of support for patients who needed help to eat or drink. At the time The Trust already had an established Nutrition and Oral Hydration Steering Group and set about making plans to implement a sub-project entitled "Mealtime Matters".

In 2018, during visits to all three main hospitals in East Kent we talked to 48 patients about food and hydration. This is what they told us:

The not so good experiences

- One patient told us they had missed a mealtime because they weren't on the ward at the time.
- 24% of patients felt they hadn't always got the support they needed.

The positives

- The majority of people (42) told us that they had been given enough to eat and drink.
- All bar one person felt they could get a drink when they needed one.
- 76% of people who told us they needed support to eat and drink felt they had got it.

What have we done about it?

We've shared the feedback we have heard from patients directly with the Trust. They are planning to:

- Continue with the education and awareness raising 'Mealtime Matters' project. This includes increasing the number of staff and volunteers available to support patients at mealtimes.
- Continue to embed the standards of mealtime care with all staff.

- Ensure that if patients need to leave the ward for investigations or procedures during a mealtime then they will still get a hot meal on their return.

We have also reviewed other sources of patient feedback which shows the following results:

- The Trust received fewer complaints about mealtime concerns than previously.

- 2017 PLACE inspection results have shown improvements in quality of food from previous years.
- The 2017 national inpatient survey shows small improvements in food rating and choice of food but a small decline in people getting enough help from staff to eat and drink compared to 2016.
- We continue to meet regularly with the Trust to discuss feedback and improvements.