

Nutrition and hydration strategy

2025-2028

Our commitment to providing safe, nutritious and healthy food and drink, in a sustainable way, which meets the nutrition and hydration needs of staff, patients and visitors.

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Foreword

Welcome to Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT) and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) first group nutrition and hydration strategy which outlines our ambitions for providing high quality nutritious food for our patients, staff and visitors across all of our sites over the next three years.

This strategy has been developed by our multi-professional Nutrition & Hydration Steering groups in both organisations, working closely together to set out a shared vision that meets the recommendations of the National Standards for Healthcare Food & Drink 2022.

We recognise the importance of food and hydration in our patients physical and mental health journey and through this strategy we highlight our commitment to deliver outstanding care for our communities.



Introduction

This strategy has been developed jointly by NHFT and LPT. It has been produced by the Nutrition, Hydration and Safety Leads and their multi-disciplinary Nutrition and Hydration Steering Groups, in consultation with members and key stakeholders. This is the first jointly developed Nutrition and Hydration Strategy and it is in place to ensure we deliver safe, effective nutrition and hydration care and services. This Strategy is designed to reinforce our commitment to providing the best care and opportunities for good nutrition and hydration for patients and staff. The strategy details our vision to improve the quality of food and drink available across all settings in both Trusts so that everyone has a healthier food experience, delivered in a sustainable way that meets their nutritional needs.

NHS Trusts have a role as beacons of good practice, supporting staff, visitors and the wider public to make healthier choices.

We recognise the need for patients to have continuous high quality nutritional support to aid their recovery. We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of our population.

We recognise the proven link between good nutrition and hydration with health and wellbeing and aim to ensure this is delivered through the food and drink services we provide.

We prioritise and promote a positive staff health and wellbeing culture in line with NHS England's priorities and operational planning guidance. We want to make sure our staff feel valued and supported regarding good nutrition and hydration. The wellbeing of our staff health is pivotal to the success of our strategy.

We will ensure that our plans and objectives have minimal environmental impact and work in partnership with clinical, catering and retail teams to make sure we are meeting our nutrition and hydration objectives without compromising on sustainability principles.

The Strategy will be available on each organisation's website.

Developing Our Strategy

This Nutrition and Hydration Strategy aims to ensure the recommendations contained within the Report of the Independent Review of NHS Hospital Food (2022) are implemented, together with the updated recommendations of 'National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink' (November 2022).

The National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink (2022) aims to improve food and drink across the NHS, and identified eight food standards required of hospitals, which are captured in our strategy.

These are:

1. Organisations must have a designated board director responsible for food (nutrition and safety) and report on compliance with the healthcare food and drink standards at board level as a standing agenda item.
2. Organisations must have a food and drink strategy.
3. Organisations must consider the level of input from a named food service dietitian to ensure choices are appropriate.
4. Organisations must nominate a food safety specialist.
5. Organisations must invest in a high caliber workforce, improved staffing and recognise the complex knowledge and skills required by chefs and food service teams in the provision of safe food and drink services.
6. Organisations must be able to demonstrate that they have an established training matrix and a learning and development program for all staff involved in healthcare food and drink services.
7. Organisations must monitor, manage, and actively reduce their food waste from production waste, plate waste and unserved meals.
8. NHS organisations must be able to demonstrate that they have suitable 24/7 food service provision, which is appropriate for their demographic.

The Strategy considers the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Regulation 14: Meeting nutritional and hydration needs (2008).

It is also informed by feedback from patients and staff, results of surveys, visits and learning from incidents.

Leadership And Governance

Our key priorities and three strategic aims provide a foundation for nutrition and hydration provision and support, providing guidance and direction for enabling clinical services and healthcare professionals.

Both LPT and NHFT have Nutrition and Hydration Steering Groups which are multi-professional, with a purpose to oversee the delivery of nutrition and hydration care to patients, staff and visitors. It provides the over-arching leadership on all aspects of nutrition and hydration and is responsible in providing assurance that best practice standards for nutrition and hydration care are being met in line with local governance; national standards such as NICE and CQC guidelines and regulatory frameworks.

This will be underpinned by nutrition and hydration policies and procedures specific for each Trust that are centered on the needs of our patients and ensuring food, drink and other nutrition and hydration care is delivered safely.

Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment (PLACE) are undertaken annually and feature a section on food and nutritional assessment. These results are published nationally providing a benchmark of performance in relation to other Trusts with comparable services and identifies areas for improvement.

This Nutrition and Hydration Strategy sets out the vision, priorities and strategic aims for the NHFT and LPT Trusts for the period 2024 to 2027. The strategic aims will be incorporated into three detailed improvement plans developed by individual Nutrition and Hydration Steering Groups for each organisation.

The individual Trust's Nutrition and Hydration Steering Group will monitor the improvement plan, including measurement of success through the governance process for reporting and escalations.

This will ensure the uniqueness of each organisation and the needs of the population it serves is taken into consideration.



Our Priorities

1. Meet and maintain hospital food and catering standards supporting our patients, staff, visitors, the local community, and the environment.
2. Optimise nutrition and hydration care and patient experience throughout their journey/pathway.
3. To make nutrition and hydration a key part of health and wellbeing for staff.
4. To make sure staff receive regular, high-quality training in nutritional and hydration care and patient support.
5. Ensure that our plans and objectives have a minimal environmental impact and promote sustainability.

Our nutrition strategy 2024-2027 sets out our strategic ambition for the next 3 years with three strategic aims to support these priorities to help us to achieve our vision to deliver excellence in nutrition and hydration care for our patients and staff.

Strategic Aim 1: Our Patients

Optimise nutrition and hydration care and patient experience throughout their journey/pathway.

Strategic Aim 2: Our staff

Support the health and wellbeing of staff and to deliver excellence in nutrition and hydration care.

Strategic Aim 3: Sustainability

Supporting the importance of sustainability of our procurement, food and catering services.

Strategic Aim 1: Our Patients

Optimise nutrition and hydration care and patient experience throughout their journey/pathway.

Goal

Our goal is to provide high quality, safe nutrition and hydration care through a multidisciplinary approach for all our patients. We will ensure the provision of nutritious food and drink as a fundamental health requirement to maximise individual health outcomes. We will reinforce the importance of nutrition and hydration as an integral part of holistic care, supporting patients to ensure they are able to eat and drink to maintain or improve their health.

Aim	Objectives
To support our patients to maintain good nutrition and hydration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- For staff to be equipped to provide advice, signposting and support proactively.- Ensure patients have easy access to information required to make informed decisions around nutrition and hydration (e.g., menus with coding, snack menus, accessible menus, etc.).
To have a suite of assessment tools to support staff to identify nutritional risk of our patients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To scope all nutrition and hydration screening tools available within Trusts and identify any gaps.- Consistent completion of nutritional screening with a validated screening tool on inpatient admission and/or with patients in their own homes/community settings and first line action steps put in place.- Timely review of nutritional screening.- Appropriate and timely referrals to dietitian, and if appropriate to other members of the MDT, for example for patients with eating disorders.- Ensure accurate auditing of the above to ensure it is being implemented and acted on appropriately.
Ensuring we meet the nutrition and hydration needs of patients within our care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Monitor food intake via food and drink charts at admission and when concerned about nutritional intake.- Implement appropriate nutrition care plans according to assessed nutritional risk.- Care plans to be reviewed during care and treatment and any changes in people's needs should be responded to in suitable time.- Ensure all patients have access to appropriate, nutritious meals, snacks and drinks to meet their individual health and therapeutic care needs and their likes and preferences.- Water is always accessible to patients and a range of hot and cold drinks are offered regularly throughout the day.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure menus are analysed by a dietitian to ensure they meet Nutrition and Hydration Digest recommendations. - Provide therapeutic diets for patients who require dietary modification to achieve better clinical outcomes and long-term wellbeing. - Ensure a range of food choices are available for patients on a therapeutic diet to prevent menu fatigue. - Provide menu choices that meet cultural and religious needs and keep pace with societal changes e.g., more plant-based choices. - Ensure appropriate food portions are available. - Consider nutrition and hydration related outcome measures for patients and how these can be monitored and reported. - Ensure nutrition and hydration advice is provided to meet the needs of patients based in the community. - Provide appropriate MDT support for people with eating disorders.
Consistent and positive patient experience of nutrition and hydration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop a food and fluid refusal policy which aims to support staff and the patient with an individualised approach to mitigate the risks associated with refusal.
Consistent and positive patient experience of nutrition and hydration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5-star rating achieved from Environmental Health inspections. - Implement nutrition and hydration link staff/ambassadors on each ward and have regular food forum/group meetings (consisting of dietitians, caterers, nurses and speech and language therapists) to drive local improvement and collaborative working. - To ensure protected mealtimes are in place and designed to make sure patients are not unnecessarily interrupted during meal service. - Provide an environment conducive to eating and drinking, advocating good patient nutrition and hydration. - Offer support with handwashing prior to meals and support patients into a good position for their meal/fluids as needed. Ensure support with oral care is offered if required. - Provide patients with the support and assistance they need, to maximise nutritional intake. This may include, but not be limited to, ensuring the patient has dentures in, glasses and hearing aids on. - Food must be served and maintained at the right temperature for the whole mealtime.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People should be encouraged to eat and drink independently. They should receive appropriate support, which may include encouragement as well as physical support, when they need it. This may involve ward staff or volunteers help with feeding patients. - People must have appropriate equipment or tools to help them eat and drink independently. - They should receive appropriate support, which may include encouragement as well as physical support, when they need it. - There should be enough staff to assist patients to eat and drink which may include ward staff or volunteers. - People must have appropriate equipment or tools to help them eat and drink independently. - Provide patients with access to a range of methods to provide comments, suggestions and feedback on all aspects of nutrition and hydration care. - Provide feedback and learning from patient surveys and audits to ensure continual improvement.
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Strategic Aim 2

Our Staff

Support the health and wellbeing of staff to deliver excellence in nutrition and hydration care.

Goal

Our staff need healthy and nutritious food and adequate hydration to support them to deliver the best clinical care. Our goal is to give them access to nutritious food and drink, with adequate breaks to support their health and wellbeing, nutrition and hydration needs. Both staff and visitors need food services which encourage them to make healthier food choices which are affordable, tasty and healthy, aligned with public health guidance.

To offer a suite of training to support staff to have the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies to deliver safe nutritional care.

Aim	Objectives
To improve the provision of high-quality affordable food and drink to staff and visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To scope out catering facilities available for staff and visitors.- To scope out vending machine service availability to staff and visitors.- To produce a map/communication of current availability, so staff and visitors are aware of food and drink outlets/access points.- To produce a report and recommendations to address gaps.
Support staff health and wellbeing related to nutrition and hydration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To promote the importance and provide the opportunity for staff to have adequate breaks and ensure regular fluid intake throughout the day.- To link in with the health and wellbeing offer available.- Ensure conducive environments and equipment to enable staff to have a break.
To provide staff with training to have the appropriate skills, knowledge and competencies to support patients with nutrition, hydration and food safety.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To scope the current training offer and analyse this against the requirements of the standards and patient need.- Develop a training matrix for all staff involved in nutrition and hydration care to understand what is available and to who.- To identify any gaps in training, completing report to take through governance routes for consideration.- To ensure all staff in contact with patients' food and drink have the correct training in accordance with their role.- To promote dysphagia awareness and MDT recommendations in relation to safe eating and drinking.

Strategic Aim 3

Sustainability

Supporting the importance of sustainability of our procurement, food and catering services.

Goal

We will make our catering services more sustainable to achieve Net Zero by 2030 and influence healthcare food supply chains. Our aim is to build on work already undertaken within catering services to reduce plastic waste, enable lower carbon food choices and support the local economy. By reducing carbon emissions and improving the sustainability of our supply chains, we will help to mitigate the impact the climate emergency has on the food we provide to staff, patients, and visitors.

Aim	Objectives
Work in partnership with procurement to reduce emissions generated within the food and drink supply chain (NHFT and LPT Hospitals Carbon Footprint Plus) aiming for net zero by 2030 with an 80% reduction by 2026-2028.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reduce air pollution and carbon emissions associated with our food and drink supply chain.- Reduce the carbon footprint of the food we provide for our patients, staff and visitors and promote sustainable choices on our menus.- Eliminate fossil fuels from the preparation and delivery of our food, through electrification of equipment and more efficient technologies.- Use our purchasing power to both procure more sustainable food and influence a more sustainable food supply chain.
Reduce food and drink waste generated within the Trust: aiming for circularity by 2030.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Continue to monitor waste streams and develop ways in which we can reduce and use food waste across our hospital sites.- Reduce the amount of food that we waste through improvements in our processes.- To implement and monitor food waste recording at ward level.
Reduce food and drink waste generated within the Trust: aiming for circularity by 2030 continued.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Minimise the amount of single use plastics associated with our food, drink and catering services.
Joint working related to sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure that the nutrition and hydration strategy is linked with Trust sustainability plans as they develop and support delivery of action plan and recommendations

Supporting Policies And Resources

- 10 Key Characteristics of 'Good Nutrition and Hydration Care 2015'
- Age UK (2010) Still hungry to be heard campaign.
- British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
- British Dietetic Association (2023) The Nutrition and Hydration Digest: Improving outcomes through food and beverage services.
- Care Quality Commission Regulations (2023) Regulation 14: Meeting nutritional and hydration needs.
- Council of Europe Resolution Food and Nutritional Care in hospitals (2007) 10 key characteristics of good nutritional care in hospital
- Department of Health (2010) Essence of Care – Benchmarks for food and drink
- Department of Health (2015) Improving Nutritional Care
- Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (DEFRA, 2015).
- Healthier and More Sustainable Catering- Nutrition Principles (for staff and visitor catering) (Public Health England, 2017)
- Hospital Caterers Association (2022) Better Hospital Food
- Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool or equivalent (British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, 2011)
- National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink (2022)
- NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement (2010) High Impact Actions for Nursing and Midwifery – Keeping Nourished, getting better.
- NICE (2012) Clinical Guideline 32 – Nutrition support in adults
- Royal College of Nursing (2007) Hospital hydration best practice toolkit
- Royal College of Psychiatry (2018) Guidelines for the nutritional management of anorexia nervosa
- Supporting People with Eating and Drinking Difficulties - Royal College of Physicians (2021)
- NICE (2020) NG69 Eating disorders: recognition and treatment
- The Independent Review of NHS Hospital Food (2020)