

CASE STUDY

UNDERSTANDING AND REDUCING FOOD WASTE IN HOSPITALS

WORKSHOP AND AUDIT & CASE STUDY



What is the problem with food waste?

The scale of food waste in hospitals is a largely hidden problem. While many hospitals record levels of under 10%, research shows that over 60% can be wasted¹. Avoidable food waste in the UK healthcare sector is costed at £230 million annually², averaging £0.22p per meal³. The nutritional implications of this are also clear: food left uneaten on the plate represents a lost nutritional opportunity, with undernutrition directly linked to longer recovery times and longer hospital stays, and a particular concern for older vulnerable patients

Reducing food waste in hospitals brings multiple benefits: cost savings; a reduced environmental footprint; and food eaten rather than left on the plate supports patient recovery and a positive patient experience.

How can Food for Life help?

Food waste in hospitals is a multi-disciplinary issue with caterers, nursing staff, dieticians, sustainability managers and more forming the team that can put effective change in place to reduce waste. Our support, designed by Hospital Leaders Programme Manager and food waste expert Dr Susannah McWilliam is tailored to hospital needs, offering the following:

- **Workshop** for multi-disciplinary teams on understanding the impact and causes of food waste, the scale of food waste in your trust, and exploring ways to monitor and minimise food waste.
- **On-site ward level food waste audit**, teaching new waste auditing methods
- **Bespoke food waste report** with feedback from the audit and recommendations
- **Follow up meeting** designed to support the team once they have put changes in place

What are the outcomes for hospital teams?

Working with Food for Life will bring the following benefits to your Trust:

- Increased multidisciplinary engagement in food waste
- Increased understanding of the impact of food waste across the sector & beyond
- Increased understanding of scale and causes of food waste in your hospital
- Increased skills to monitor and report food waste fully
- Agreed commitments and next steps to minimise food waste, leading to cost saving and reduced environmental impact

"It was an excellent session and I have received really good feedback from many of those who attended. The research findings certainly challenged many preconceptions which led to some interesting discussion, which I intend to share with Senior Ward Managers"

Claire Hinds, Associate Director of Support Services – South Warwickshire NHS

¹ Sonnino and McWilliam, 2011. Food waste, catering practices and public procurement: A case study of hospital food systems in Wales. Food Policy (36), pp. 823–829.

² This figure includes food procurement, labour, utilities and waste management costs

³ WRAP, 2013. Overview of Waste in the UK Hospitality and Food Service Sector

UNDERSTANDING AND REDUCING FOOD WASTE AT SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

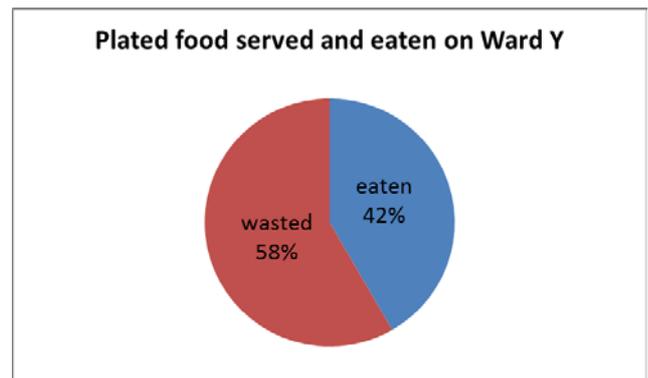
Karen Newman, Hotel Services Operational Manager, South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust shares why reducing food waste is important at SWFT and how Food for Life's support has helped:

Why was having FFL's 'understanding and reducing food waste' support a priority for SWFT?

Reducing food waste should be of prime importance for any healthcare provider. A reduction in food wastage helps reduce costs and supporting patients to eat their food can also lead to better clinical outcomes through improved nutritional care. It provided an opportunity to educate and discuss Food Hygiene law and Infection Prevention rules.

Why was it important to involve multi-disciplinary teams?

It is difficult to work in isolation and when a process needs involvement from different teams you have to work together to ensure the end outcome is what all the teams want. Each team has different priorities that they want to tackle and working together helps to achieve all goals.



What impact did the workshop have?

The workshop really raised awareness within all the teams: we continued thinking about how we could reduce food waste within our remit after the workshop. Having a working sub-group soon after the workshop helped channel the enthusiasm around planning future waste audits at ward level. It also provided a good platform for learning and discussion on how to reduce food waste and why it is so important.



What impact did the ward level audit and following report have?

It was useful to have guidance on how to carry out the audit: I've done these before but not in this way and Susannah's method was far easier! The audit raised a lot of awareness within lots of teams, and also a lot of interest. The report highlighted other reasons for food waste that would need discussion at other forums, for example size of portion for certain patient groups



What have you done as a result & what has changed?

Food waste audits have been undertaken to compare trolley waste and plate waste on seven wards at Warwick Hospital and a food waste audit tool was used to check and record findings. The purpose of the audits was to reduce food waste and to ensure delivery of best practice food service.

As a result of the audits changes have been made: 'picking and packing' systems have been redeveloped, more small trays of food are available and ward communications have improved to ensure new patient food orders and discharges are sent to the kitchen in timely way. Dieticians are working on a portion control guide and our caterers are reporting waste levels back to wards on a weekly basis. We are still working on how we can audit the changes and what impact the changes have had in monetary and nutritional terms.

What do you think the long term effect of having had this support will be for SWFT?

Continuing support means that the team continues to focus on food waste and that food waste remains high on the agenda. New reporting formats that have been introduced as part of this workshop will remain as good practice.

Would you recommend this support to others? If yes, give up to 3 reasons why you would recommend it!

- Yes, the support given drives home why monitoring and reducing food waste is important and brings together the multi-disciplinary teams to work together to reduce food waste.
- The subject matter opens up discussions in lots of different areas and this information sharing develops good communications and understanding within the MDTs leading to sub-groups picking up on related issues, such as communal dining and adapted cutlery.
- Attendees learnt a lot from the session, which was then incorporated into daily duties: the theory became operational. Processes were developed which have now become the norm.

Find out more:

If you are interested in finding out more about how Food for Life can support your Trust to understand and reduce food waste please email leahy@soilassociation.org or phone the Food for Life office on 0117 314 5180.

Or you can visit www.foodforlife.org.uk/hospitals