

# Plastic - not a trifling matter



## Catering Team

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## AIMS

- To prevent plastic waste in hospital catering
- To decrease the carbon footprint of meals by introducing more vegetarian meals

## APPROACH

- **Project choice:** 200 plastic containers per day were used to serve dessert portions to patients, 200,000 individual milk portions were used annually at the Wonford, plastic cups were available beside the water cooler in the canteen. Vegetarian meals have a lower carbon footprint than those containing meat and form part of the daily recommended intake of vegetables required for a healthy diet.
- **Measurement:** Baseline data gathered on the number, cost, weight and delivery details of dessert containers, milk portions and plastic cups. Data compared with the suggested alternatives of using stainless steel containers (gastronorms) to make up desserts and china bowls for serving, large milk cartons and jugs and paper cups. The number of servings sold was measured when a second vegetarian hot food option was introduced on Mondays.
- **Engagement methods:** Comm Cells, the Patient Meals Service Team Leader liaised with the ward staff, poster campaign in the Oasis, updates posted on 'The Hub'. The initial consultation phase was followed by several improvement Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles where feedback was used to amend the project as it went forward.

## EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

- **Carbon and cost savings** were achieved by eliminating or reducing single-use plastics used in desserts and milk containers. The number of deliveries were also reduced.
- On average, an extra 40 vegetarian meals were served each 'Veggie Monday'; these meals had a **lower carbon footprint** than meat alternatives, **saved money** and may be **more healthy**.
- **Social benefits included:**
  - **Reduced workload for catering staff:** it is easier to make up the desserts in the gastronorms. The admin team/storeman no longer have to order and store plastic pots weekly.
  - **Patient experience:** the weight of the bowl makes it easier for patients to eat their dessert and the quantity can be tailored to their appetite.
- Replacing plastic with paper cups did not overall reduce the carbon footprint or cost. Replacement with reusable cups would be better option.

## ANNUAL SAVINGS FORECAST

### Dessert pot and lid:

 2,250 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e  
£2,701

### Milk containers:

 1,240 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e  
£4,537

### Vegetarian menu option:

 3,109 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e  
£380

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