



We're just doing our bit

Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust has backed its in-house catering team to deliver both customer satisfaction and a financial contribution to the cost of patient care.

Whilst the trend in many NHS establishments in England and Wales has been to invite national brands to install 'coffee-shops' on the premises, the team with the hands-on responsibility for delivering catering at Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust saw a different opportunity.

"On the face of it, it's a simple solution to bring in a third-party to take over a hospital's coffee shop," says Angela Wakefield, Catering Manager at Ormskirk Hospital. "There's minimal outlay because the third party picks up the cost of acquiring the machines and provides all your coffee and consumables. The hospital then gets a cut of the income. There's no work involved for the hospital, other than keeping the machines topped up with milk."

However Angela, together with Tracy Potter who is the Catering Manager at Southport Hospital, thought they could deliver a better service to customers – and a better deal to the Trust – by making the most of the experienced, well-trained and highly motivated catering

staff they had at their disposal. "Our team are capable of a lot more than just topping up the milk and they're excited at the prospect of using modern coffee machines and providing a high-quality cup of coffee," says Tracy.

"The 'Big Boys' are interested in coming into hospitals for one simple reason and that's because they can make a lot of money," adds Angela. "The thing is, our in-house team knows exactly what it takes to create a consumer experience that's equal to any in the high street. All we needed to add to be a viable alternative to third-party involvement was the ability to source quality ingredients and, if possible, elicit the support of a quality brand."

Angela and Tracy called in coffee experts Coffee 1652 and, with the help of the St Helens-based company, a deal was done to bring in Kimbo, the famous Neapolitan brand. This approach means the Trust can provide the convenience and comfort of an on-site coffee shop without surrendering a proportion of the income to a third party. The Trust can give staff, patients and visitors



a facility they want and appreciate and they can keep any well-earned profits in house.

Another important benefit of keeping the shop in-house is that all the food and snacks on offer to accompany the coffee can be hand picked by hospital staff. "Seventy to eighty per cent of products we offer for sale comply with CQUIN requirements in terms of ingredients, nutrients, sugar content and more," continues Tracy. "We're doing our bit to offer a quality service, whilst at the same time keeping both staff and visitors healthy."

The first Kimbo outlet opened in Ormskirk Hospital in 2013 and in subsequent months the concept was proved. Consequently, a decision was taken to expand the offer to Southport Hospital. As you'd expect, many of the regular customers are NHS staff. "I thought I might get some stick from regulars because the cost of a cup of coffee went up when we introduced Kimbo," says Tracy. "But I didn't get a single complaint. At £1.50, people see it as a bargain in comparison to the prices charged by the high street chains."

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