

26 March 2012

Improving mealtimes for patients

The RUH has been commended on how it is improving the mealtime service it offers to patients during their hospital stay.

The hospital recently invited the Patient's Association to undertake an independent review of the patient experience of mealtimes, in support of the work the Trust is doing to improve patient nutrition and hydration.

The review involved a member of the Patient's Association observing mealtimes and they also conducted a series of interviews with patients, volunteers, and staff across three wards. The questions asked focused on what assistance is being provided to patients at mealtimes, the food quality and range of choice.

There were many positive comments from patients about their meals and mealtime experience, and the majority of patients expressed their satisfaction with both.

Theresa Hegarty, Head of Patient Experience at the RUH, said: "The results of the Patient's Association review are really encouraging. The report acknowledges the staff commitment and hard work to put measures in place to ensure patients are getting the food and drink they need, as we all recognise this is such an essential part of care for inpatients. The report also makes some helpful recommendations for improvements, which are being taken forward."

Joanna Parker, Project Manager, from the Patient's Association said: "The RUH continuously strives to improve the patient experience of mealtimes and is fortunate to have a group of dedicated and caring mealtime volunteers, who see the potential for doing more to support nursing staff, and thus improve the patient mealtime experience.

"We were impressed to see how staff found simple and effective solutions for any suggested changes to practice, and how the learning was shared more widely across the Trust. The staff are to be congratulated on the work they are doing to improve patient's experience at mealtimes.

"The project did not identify any major issues of concern, indeed, there is much to commend, but we did make some suggestions for small changes which the Trust may wish to consider."

Based on the findings of the review, some recommendations were made which included the possible use of larger day rooms as a dining room for one mealtime, encourage more volunteers to assist patients at meal times, to improve the system for monitoring waste, which would assist in recording food intake, and to consider offering additional times when food might be available.

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