

Campaign for Better Hospital Food
Sustain, Development House
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Dear Jeremy Hunt MP, Health Secretary,

We are writing to show our support for the hospital food standards, to express concern that the great progress made on hospital food should be preserved for the future, and that standards should continue to rise for the benefit of patients, visitors and NHS staff.

Now is a crucial time for hospital food as the responsibility for Hospital Food Standards makes the transition from the Department of Health to its new home as part of NHS Improvement. We would like to use this moment to underline the vital importance of the both the nutritional improvements, and the sustainability standards that have been built into hospital food requirements over the past two decades, invested in by well over £50m of public money and very significant third-sector and Lottery-funded activities; and now enshrined in Government Buying Standards, with a compliance requirement in NHS Standard Contracts.

We would like to stress, on behalf of the Campaign for Better Hospital Food and the signatories below, our strong feeling that the existing commitments to nutrition, food quality, local and British food, sustainable and wildlife-friendly farming, verifiably sustainable fish, fair trade and environmental protection, as outlined in the Government Buying Standards, must continue to be supported in public policy, and kept as a minimum standard for all hospital food, with suitable monitoring and inspections to ensure compliance.

We ask you to give a clear mandate to NHS Improvement that the Hospital Food Standards set out in the NHS Standard Contract, which includes Government Buying Standards, should continue to be applied and improved across every hospital estate throughout the country, for the benefit of patients - that includes groups such as infants, children and the elderly, that are particularly vulnerable to suboptimal nutritional standards - as well as 1.3 million NHS hospital staff, hospital visitors, and the food and farming businesses that work hard to supply them.

Furthermore, we had previously understood from Government statements that Government Buying Standards and the wider Hospital Food Standards set out in the NHS Standard Contract would not be static, but would evolve over time to strengthen national support for British farming, align with the Public Service (Social Value) Act, as well as provide a secure and growing market for local and sustainable food suppliers, small- and medium sized food enterprises, sustainable production methods, higher animal welfare, verifiably sustainable fish, Fairtrade and environmentally friendly products. We are concerned that NHS Improvement may not have the mandate to treat raising standards as a priority.

We would be delighted if the move to NHS Improvement were to mark a positive future for high standards for hospital food. Conversely, we would be very disappointed if the move to NHS Improvement were to result either in the loss or stagnation of such standards. Please could you share with us what steps can be taken to uphold and evolve high hospital food standards, and how our organisations and others can engage with this process.

Many thanks in advance for your attendance to these questions,



Katherine Button, Coordinator, Campaign for Better Hospital Food

List of signatories:

Jo Ralling
Jamie Oliver Food Foundation



Prof Neena Modi
President
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Jo Lewis
Strategy and Policy Director
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