



health professionals for a
safer, fairer & better world

Dr Hamish Stedman
St James's House Pendleton Way
Salford
M6 5FW

11th April 2016

Dear Dr Hamish Stedman

We are writing to you as a group of local health professionals concerned about the decision to close the kitchens at Salford Royal Hospital, and outsource the provision of patient meals to a private company that would provide ready prepared chilled/frozen meals.

We have concerns about this decision for two sets of reasons.

First, we feel that this decision fails to recognise the role that kitchens can play in the *holistic* therapeutic service provided by hospitals, runs against the public service ethos of the NHS, and undermines the contribution that hospitals can make to the wider local economy.

The provision of fresh, nourishing and appetising food is an important part of patient care and recovery, particularly for long-stay and elderly patients. Ready-made, chilled/frozen meals (which are commercially mass-produced and then transported into the hospital) raise a number of concerns regarding patient welfare. These include provision of lower-quality food and removing the ability to provide a meal service that is flexible and responsive to patient needs.

Furthermore, even if the hospital makes a financial saving by reducing refurbishment and other costs, closing the kitchens will have wider negative social and economic effects on the local community through the loss of jobs and by precluding the opportunity to procure food locally. In our view, the hospital should not be considered a discrete and isolated economic agent that is detached from the wider local economy, but rather be seen as a vital social, cultural and economic asset that has impacts beyond the NHS.

From an environmental perspective, this decision is also likely to lead to increased waste, both in terms of packaging and food. In addition, it again removes the potential to move to more local and seasonal food procurement practices, which could help reduce the environmental impact of the hospital.

Our second set of concerns relate to the lack of transparency and public consultation in making this decision. According to a 'catering services' consultation document, four alternative catering options were evaluated by the hospital management. However, a full report of the evaluation of these four catering options, including the methodology used to compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses of each of the four options, has not been made publicly available.

From the few documents made available thus far, it would appear that the evaluation was conducted on the basis of very narrow financial criteria, excluding proper and full consideration of a number of social, environmental, economic and health impacts.¹

A letter has been written to the CEO of Salford Royal NHS Trust, Sir David Dalton, requesting that the following documents be made available: a) the full report on the evaluation of the four catering options; b) a list of the public consultation events and activities that were conducted prior to the decision to close the hospital kitchens; and c) the tender document itself and details of the criteria that will be used to choose between alternative bids.

We are writing to inform you about our concerns, and to express our hope that the NHS Salford CCG will support our call for the tender process to be suspended until there has been wider public and clinical consultation.

Closing down the kitchens in Salford Royal Hospital is a big decision and should not be allowed to happen unless there is a convincing case that would be good for patients, the NHS and local community in terms of clinical, social, ecological and economic criteria.

If you have any questions or comments please contact medactmanchester@gmail.com.

Yours sincerely



Dr Ruth Wiggans, Vice Chair of Medact Manchester.
ST5 in Respiratory Medicine, HENW

On behalf of Medact Manchester:

Dr Matthew Bowker, ST6 Anaesthetics, HENW
Dr Alice Lee, ST1 Paediatrics, HENW
Dr Nadia Mahmood, ST5 Respiratory and Intensive Care Medicine HENW
Catherine Maffia, RGN
Dr Katie Lawton, FY2, HENW
Dr Maya Painter, FY2, HENW
Dr Piyush Pushkar, ST2 Psychiatry, HENW
Dr Louise Tomkow, ST5 Medicine for The Elderly, HENW
Dr Rebecca Wilson, ST5 Paediatrics, HENW

Medact is a London-based global health charity whose goal is to inspire and enable health professionals to act on the social, political, ecological and economic determinants of health

¹ The *Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012* requires those commissioning, or buying, public services to consider how they can also secure wider economic, environmental and social benefits for their local area.

and health inequality. They have a body of work focused on moving towards more sustainable, healthier food systems.

c.c.

Mr Anthony Hassall

Mr Steve Dixon

Dr Jeremy Tankel

Mr Tom Tasker

Ms Clare Todd

Dr Jenny Walton

Dr Mansel Haeney