

12<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Dear colleague,

**Open letter about the decision taken to close the Salford Royal Hospital kitchen and to outsource the provision of patient meals to a private company that would deliver ready-made chilled/frozen meals.**

We are a group of local health professionals who feel that the decision to close the Salford Royal Hospital kitchen and provide ready-made chilled/frozen meals to patients should be suspended for two sets of reasons.

First, 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 varying needs.

Furthermore, even if the hospital makes a financial saving by reducing refurbishment 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.<sup>1</sup>

For these reasons we invite local clinicians to add their voice to a campaign calling for:

- 1) Disclosure of the full report on the evaluation that was undertaken to compare the four alternative catering options
- 2) Suspension of the tender process until the evaluation report has been made publicly available and proper public consultation has taken place

The tendering process has set forth a tight timeframe and the new contract will be signed in May. If you are interested in supporting or would like more information about this campaign please email: [office@medact.org](mailto:office@medact.org). More information, including the documents referred to and a copy of this letter can be found at [www.medact.org/salfordroyal](http://www.medact.org/salfordroyal).

Kind regards



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(on behalf of the Medact Manchester group)

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Dr Rebecca Wilson, ST5 Paediatrics, HENW  
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*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 and health inequality. They have a body of work focused on moving towards more sustainable, healthier food systems.*

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<sup>1</sup> 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.