

Sodexo partners with NHS England to provide wellbeing support and educational content to NHS chef competition

3 years ago



[Sodexo Health & Care](#) is delighted to support the 2023 NHS Chef of the Year competition, providing competing chef teams with access to Sodexo's Circles service as well as bespoke best practice videos for competitors produced using experts from across the organisation including dietitians, highly skilled chefs and sustainability experts.

The special video series is being created to share the learning and development experience of the participating chefs with the wider NHS culinary community. The series will cover a range of subjects which the chefs have to consider as part of the competition such as allergen management, creating children's menus and minimising waste.

The NHS Chef of the Year competition was launched in 2021 following recommendations in the Independent Review of NHS Hospital Food to support and develop hospital chefs.

Run by NHS England, the annual competition, supports the aims and objectives of the new National Healthcare Food & Drink Standards. It aims to raise the profile of NHS chefs by giving them a platform to showcase their talent, skills and creativity and enhance healthcare catering excellence by sharing the learnings from the competition with the wider NHS culinary community.

Having contributed to the new standards, Sodexo [Health & Care](#) recognises their importance and how, by working in partnership across the health system, we can make a real difference to a patient's nutrition and hydration.

The competition which runs from June to November is open to two-person teams from NHS hospitals across the country.

Each team has been tasked with creating healthy, nutritious meals within a budget of £5 and £6. Their chosen meals must be suitable for generic NHS patients, with an emphasis on Government Buying Standards for Food and Catering Services (GBSF), The Department of Health's Obesity Strategy and be nutritionally balanced, in accordance with the British Dietetic Association (BDA) guidance.

Phil Shelley, Senior Operational & Policy Manager and Chair of the NHS Review of Hospital Food said: *"This competition highlights the best of NHS catering, chefs' skills, catering knowledge and menu engineering. We are delighted to have Sodexo on board to support the competition. As NHS Trusts and providers work towards achieving the standards and make progress, new and exciting initiatives continue to emerge which not only enhance the food and drink available but also the experience of patients, visitors and staff. Our intention is to run this programme annually and with the support of organisations such as Sodexo we will be able to do this.*

"The new food standards for healthcare address the broad aspects of hospital food provision such as governance, workforce development, food waste as well as the choice and quality of the provision available, our aim is to continue to elevate hospital nutrition and hydration to board level accountability."

Throughout the competition Sodexo will provide the competing teams with access to its Circles service which it already provides to a number of its NHS hospital clients staff and patients. With the chefs balancing their work, personal lives and the pressure of the competition the service will support the chefs' wellbeing, enabling them to seek personal and professional support while balancing work, home and competition commitments.

Circles will be on the end of a phone to help with everyday tasks - being that finding a local plumber, arranging last minute childcare, finding that elusive event ticket, helping save money on everyday costs, arranging holidays - as well as offering discounts from national partner offers.

Simon Lilley, Director of Strategy and Marketing for Sodexo Health & Care said: "NHS England's Chef of the Year programme identifies and highlights the very best practice and expertise across the NHS. At Sodexo patient and staff nutritional food is a key service we provide to many hospitals across the UK and the world, but being able to support NHS England, Phil Shelley and his team by supporting with other aspects from the Sodexo portfolio gives us great pleasure; and hopefully adds value to the wonderful chefs taking part.

"We have had lots of interest from our chefs from right across our organisation including those working at prestigious events and venues or working for global organisations, all of them keen to support and passionate about helping improve the standards of food services delivered in the healthcare sector. We are proud to have their support and to be a part of this exciting and important competition."

In 2022, Sodexo Health & Care's team from Hereford County Hospital made it to the final. Head chef Les Beare and chef Josh Banner were runner ups last year and the only contract catering team to make it to the final stage last year. Les and Josh are supporting the 2023 competition by sharing their experience and tips for this year's competitors.