

Julian Fris named Director of the Year for Innovation at IoD Awards 2025

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Julian Fris, founder and MD of [Neller Davies](#), has been named Director of the Year for Innovation at the 2025 Institute of Directors (IoD) Awards.

Fris was recognised for his work on the transformation of catering services at Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, where Neller Davies supported the Trust's move to an in-house catering model and the development of a new food strategy focused on nutrition, accessibility and value.

The programme introduced a collaborative governance model built around shared outcomes and a co-designed performance scorecard. Since its implementation, the Trust has reported a range of measurable improvements.

Daily catering transactions increased from around 400 to more than 2,000 between 2020 and 2024, while overall catering turnover rose by 265% during the same period. Staff satisfaction with food provision increased from 52% to 71%, and the average customer spend grew from £2.36 to £3.52.

According to Trust reporting, these service improvements were delivered without a material increase in catering cost per head, due to reinvestment and productivity gains achieved through the new model.

The wider programme has also been linked to improvements in staff wellbeing indicators. Between 2021/22 and 2023/24, staff turnover reduced from 13.2% to 11.8%, and sickness absence decreased from 4.2% to 3.5%. Access to nutritious and affordable food has consistently been cited by the Trust as a contributing factor in these trends.

Fris said: "I'm very pleased to receive this recognition from the IoD. Much of our work takes place in

hospitals and public-sector environments, and it's a privilege to contribute to services that have such a direct impact on people's daily lives. Food plays an important role in staff wellbeing, patient experience and the overall functioning of healthcare organisations. I'm grateful to the teams at Ashford and St Peter's and across the sector for their collaborative approach and their commitment to improving the way food is provided."

Neller Davies continues to work with NHS organisations on catering strategy, mobilisation and performance assurance, including models for insourcing and integrated FM delivery.

The Institute of Directors is a long-established professional body representing approximately 20,000 company directors, senior executives and entrepreneurs across the United Kingdom. Its annual Director of the Year Awards recognise leadership and governance across a range of sectors. Receiving the Innovation award reflects the assessment of an independent judging panel and places him within a select group of directors whose work has demonstrated clear progress in the development and application of innovative practices within their organisations.

The award was presented at the IoD Awards 2025, which recognised directors from across public, private and third-sector organisations.