



Foodmatters

HCA NATIONAL LEADERSHIP &
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Your Customer – The Patient

Kenny Milne

Person Centred Care Officer NHS Ayrshire & Arran





Hello – My name is

- Who am I?
- Why am I here?
- What can information can I share?



A little knowledge can be dangerous!





My experience of hospital food

My positive experience – choice of good fresh food

My negative experience – no choice

What was important to me – being offered choices of quality fresh food

What would have improved my experience – to have knowledge that there were flexible opportunities within the menu, if required



Variety – The Spice of Life!



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Thank You



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Who Am I – My name is Kenny Milne - I am proud to be married to Susan and together we have four fantastic boys. I became a wheelchair user when I had just turned forty years old after an accident at work when I was employed as a site manager, my boys were all quite young at that time and the results of this accident significantly changed all of our lives very quickly. This accident meant that my immediate future would require me to spend a fair bit of time as an inpatient in hospital and also as an outpatient during recovery from various operations on my lower back.

Why am I here today – at the start of this presentation my slide introduces me as Kenny Milne (Person Centred Care Officer (Involvement) NHS Ayrshire & Arran) however, I am not here today in relation to my current employment status. I am here today to give an insight of what it meant to me, as a patient, to have the availability of good fresh food along with the availability of choice during my hospital stays.

What information can I give you – I have been an inpatient on many occasions I would like to share my experience of using hospital catering services during my hospital stays and also at the times when I have chosen to eat in dining rooms at hospital whilst attending outpatient clinics.

My first real experience of using hospital catering services was as an inpatient in one of our Ayrshire hospitals. This was after my accident at work when I was recovering from a fairly large operation completed on my lower back. Being a patient I remember that I felt extremely vulnerable (the first time I felt this way in my adult life). I could not get out of bed on my own, I could not dress on my own and I was dependent on other people for so many things that I had taken for granted in the past. Choosing what I wanted to eat was one of the few things where I felt I had some control and this became important to me. When I found myself in a position where I realised that I had to depend on others to do what I would normally do myself then I found that I was grasping onto the parts of life where I could still have self-control. When I arrived in hospital I was suffering a lot of pain, eating was not high on my agenda and this feeling continued for the first few days after my operation, (what I learned from this was that it was not until I started to eat on a regular basis, that I felt I was beginning to feel well). I had to be encouraged to eat during these first few days as I had no or little appetite. For some reason this worsened as the day went on and the only time that I really felt like eating anything was first thing in the morning, providing that I had a reasonable sleep during the previous night.

I had little knowledge of what to expect in regards to hospital food other than the old slap stick jokes offered on get well cards (see slide 4)



This did not fill me with great confidence in regards to my expectations of hospital food

When being encouraged to eat I was offered a menu that gave an excellent variety of choice – and it definitely helped to know that the food was cooked on the premises and had not travelled for miles before being served, this being something that I feel has a definite effect on quality and taste of meals.

As I started to make a recovery I surprised myself as I started to look forward to breakfast. It was surprising to me as, prior to my hospital stay, I did not normally have very much for breakfast (usually only a cup of tea), also breakfast in the hospital, was a continental style breakfast, something to which I was most certainly not accustomed. It may be difficult to believe but I still can recall the taste of that fresh bread and jam after a bowl of cereal in the mornings; this must be testament as to how fresh this food was. I strongly feel that what was important to me was having reasonable variety of choice along with the offer of fresh nutritional food. I also believe that without this choice my recovery would have been hampered which would have meant I would have had a longer hospital stay than was necessary.

During another stay in a hospital (within an other health board area) after it was deemed that I required yet another operation on my lower back, my experience of hospital catering services on that occasion was not good. I have no doubt that the food offered to me was fresh, as indeed I have no doubt the food was edible and that the food was likely to have been cooked on the premises. However, the menu offered a choice of food that had very high spice content. I found that with the various medications I was taking at that time I could not eat spicy food. When I explained this to the nurses on the ward I was informed that they were sorry that the food was spicy and that they understood why I could not eat it; however, there was nothing else they could offer me and perhaps the next menu would offer a better choice for evening meal. Unfortunately the evening meal menu was similar in that it

mostly consisted of highly spiced food. After the first day seeing a menu like this I thought ok perhaps tomorrow's menu would offer a better choice, however, the next day I was fasting to prepare for my operation, therefore it did not matter to me if the menu was a better choice or not. I was feeling very hungry though, as the previous day I had only eaten a slice of toast first thing in the morning. On day three of this stay I did not feel that I could eat anything due to the after effects of medication and anaesthetic, though I feel that this was made worse due to having taken my medication on an empty stomach. Day four and the menu was again offering spicy food, I do not know if this was the case on both days previous, though I suspect not. I was then informed that I could go home. During that stay I found that breakfast was the only meal I could eat. I did think that if a patient finds they have a genuine reason for not being able to eat the food offered on the menu then surely it would not be a great ask to have a replacement, even if that is simply a sandwich.

I am pleased to say that this is probably the only bad experience that I as a patient have had at any time using hospital catering services. I certainly do not wish to complain and this sounds as if it is a trivial complaint. However, when I found I could not eat the food on offer, there was no alternative and I had nothing to eat for nearly four days I did not feel that it was a trivial complaint at the time, nor did I feel that the lack of food was aiding my recovery as I continued to feel ill for the full length of my stay.

(What is important to me)

When you are a patient in hospital you quickly realise just how important food is to aid your recovery. I feel it is a must that you are given a choice of different foods and food should be as fresh as possible. This helps to make you think about what you may like to eat. The choice of food offered should have a high nutritional value and meet and give due consideration to your particular dietary requirements. I also think that it is essential to be able to offer flexibility in the choice of food offered and that patients are made aware of this flexibility. There is little point of building flexibility if patients are not aware that this is available.

I probably should also say that hospital meal times also become important to assist patients to find order in the day i.e. after breakfast the ward comes alive with doctor's rounds, medication trollies and patients receiving their various care requirements. After lunch the ward settles down a little and patients take opportunity to rest before visiting time, then after evening meal patients are then getting ready for evening visiting.

As a patient I would like to take this opportunity to inform the hospital catering service that over the years they have come a long way in improving the service they deliver, though, I feel confident that they will not become complacent and will continue to seek where improvements can be made. In my experience catering departments consistently do a fantastic job when you give consideration to the many

pressures on budgets, and that there are so many other different considerations to make when bringing menus together, from patient's differing needs, to food restricted due to patient's religious beliefs etc.

As a final thought I have mentioned choice through this presentation and how important it is to be able to have choice. We may not always agree with the choices people make however, sometimes variety can be the spice of life



Thank you