

## **Case study: Borders Council Local Education Authority**

### **Introduction**

Borders Council Local Authority serves meals to 73 schools across the Scottish Borders area. When the current catering manager joined in 2008, 20 of the 73 schools only had dining centres available – with no proper production kitchens on site – so meals had to be transported hot each day, usually by taxi.

Borders Council believes that the best school food is that which is cooked freshly on-site each day, so in 2008, it set about rebuilding kitchens for those schools which did not have them. Its preference is always for schools to have full on-site production kitchens. However, in cases where this is not possible – due to space or financial constraints – it believes that a cook-freeze system allows for a better quality lunch for the school children. Meals which are transported hot can quickly change texture, lose nutrients or cool down.

### **Putting kitchens back in to schools**

Through an investment of £2 million, the Council has added full on-site production kitchens to three schools and cook-freeze regeneration kitchens to 9 schools. One of the cook-freeze schools is about to switch to a full on-site production kitchen. There are plans to move the remaining 8 schools with dining centres – which require hot transported food – to a cook-freeze system over the coming years. A full on-site production kitchen is not possible in schools which are particularly small – one has only 13 pupils.

### **Working with other sectors**

Borders Council also provides meals for day care centres for the elderly, which are run by specialist service provider WRVS. Over the coming year, WRVS will be taking over 22 care homes across the Scottish Borders, and the meal provision will be moving to the Local Authority. At present, meals are provided through a cook-freeze service from Apetito.

Meals in day care centres are served by WRVS volunteers, who are highly trained and follow the Local Authority's guidelines for regeneration, including serving temperature. Working closely with the Local Authority offers each centre the opportunity to speak directly to the catering manager or chef, so they can ensure the meals on offer are tailored to their customers' appetites and requirements.

Regular patient surveys are carried out; patients are also encouraged to feedback directly to the staff who serve the meals to give the Local Authority the fullest possible picture of patient satisfaction.

### **The Food for Life Catering Mark**

Borders Council is very keen to achieve the bronze Catering Mark and believes it is meeting the standards. It sources many of its ingredients from Scotland through a purchasing consortium and is hoping to find ways to narrow this down so it can buy ingredients from within the Scottish Borders area.

Borders Council does not feel comfortable with the concept of achieving the Catering Mark only for those schools with full on-site production kitchens or hot transported meals. It believes that this would be unfair on the 9 schools which are receiving cook-freeze meals, particularly given that the meals are the same as those being served in all of the other schools. Frozen meals are kept for up to two weeks.

ENDS