## Steam-cook meals case study: Chelsea and Westminster hospital foundation NHS Trust

Chelsea and Westminster hospital foundation NHS Trust (Chelsea and Westminster hospital) use frozen steam-cook meals for their maternity, burns and a surgical ward.

They introduced steam-cook meals to these wards in April 2012, in order to provide more flexibility for patients so they would have a wider choice of hot meal available outside of traditional meal time services. This is important for mothers in labour, burns and surgical patients who may not be able to eat at standard mealtimes due to treatment or clinical checks.

Up to 270 steam-cook meals may be served in one day, with over 1,000 cook-freeze meals often served to patients in the other hospital wards. Chelsea and Westminster hospital chose to offer steam-cook meals to patients in the burns, surgical and maternity units because the meals can be reheated very quickly – in just 5 or 6 minutes – and on a single patient meal basis.

In the cook-freeze system they use for other meals, it can take 45 minutes to defrost and reheat meals, which are provided in bulk rather than on a single portion basis. The availability of individually portioned frozen steam-cook meals also cuts down on wastage.

In the system used at Chelsea and Westminster hospital, each steam-cook meal has a barcode which is scanned into the microwave so it can automatically recognise the required cooking time, avoiding the potential for human error. Meals are served by dedicated catering staff, allowing nursing and clinical staff to focus on patient care.

Patients who need help to eat their meals have them served on different coloured trays so that nursing and catering staff can easily recognise this, and will, for example, leave the meals for longer or offer specific help to those who require it. These trays are not removed until the nurse has checked the patients' food consumption.

Offering steam-cook frozen meals means that an individual patient has the opportunity to eat a hot meal whenever they feel like it. Snack boxes with sandwiches and fruit are always available to patients, however the hospital recognises the importance of a hot meal which is why it is pleased to provide steam-cook options.