

Meallmore

Scotland's leading care home provider



Background

22 years ago Meallmore opened the doors of its first nursing home for the elderly in Daviot, in the Scottish Highlands. In the ensuing years it has evolved into one of the country's leading providers of nursing and residential care, with 18 care homes throughout Scotland.

As the estate has grown so has the purchasing requirement and around two years ago Meallmore started working with beacon purchasing to centralise and manage its buying function. Previously each care home had undertaken its own purchasing, buying from a range of suppliers with different contracts negotiated at care home level.

Why work with beacon?

beacon was introduced to Meallmore by Company Head Chef, Willie Amps. Willie joined Meallmore three years ago following 15 years in the hotel industry. Willie had worked with beacon previously and knew that they could help Meallmore leverage its food budgets and would help develop a strong relationship with their suppliers to give added benefit in the Meallmore food offering. Meallmore now purchase many of its key provisions and services via beacon including linen, laundry services, electricity, uniforms and food.

Food is always under the spotlight in care homes, mealtimes often present highlights in the residents' day and the food a care home offers is often a final deciding factor after care for relatives making a choice for their loved ones. Meallmore's food spend is intentionally higher per head than the national average in line with the company's general superior standards. Meallmore's annual food budget is around £1,000,000 per annum. Purchasing

is now negotiated centrally, with Brakes being the biggest provider. However, Willie has ensured the individual chefs have some flexibility to allow them to purchase some products local to their homes to keep favourite dishes for the residents.

Benefits of beacon

beacon have demonstrated better pricing, introduced regular pricing reviews and access to occasional exclusive special offers. Centralised email billing with just one invoice being received each month instead of different invoices from each individual supplier have saved significant management time and online statements mean Willie can keep a check on the situation as and when he needs to. The dedicated beacon account manager means there is always someone at the end of the phone to answer queries. In addition a supplier directory, regular useful industry information and access to major supplier insight and support is invaluable, as has proved the case with Meallmore's relationship with Unilever Food Solutions.

Offering more than just cost savings

Through the membership with beacon, Meallmore has been able to develop a vital relationship with both the culinary and marketing teams at Unilever Food Solutions that has provided Meallmore with insight and nutritional expertise. Working closely with the beacon regional manager, Susan Young and Unilever's Development Chef, Paul Hawkins, Meallmore now has a bespoke menu solution that informs their four-week menu cycle. Mark Singleton, the UFS National Account Manager has worked with the beacon team to deliver the advice and training to ensure the initiative operates at all levels.

Unilever's bespoke solution for Meallmore is much more than just a recipe bank. It helps menu planning, provides vital nutritional information and covers special dietary requirements from allergies to health problems like diabetes, exclusion diets or where special nutrients or enhanced calories need to be considered. Each recipe is broken down into portion sizes of ten servings and takes no more than six different steps to produce.

The recipe templates have been developed by Unilever under its 'Tailormade' initiative for the social sector. Willie and his team agree the menus and Paul Hawkins accesses the UFS central menu data bank, adapting the recipes if needed. The recipes are then nutritionally analysed by UFS and checked against the specification and nutritional guidelines to produce

the final detailed recipes, many which are sampled by Willie at Unilever's head office in Leatherhead.

Quality is key

Meallmore's four week menu cycle is designed to change four times a year to reflect the seasons, however, Willie encourages dialogue between the kitchen, the carers, the residents and their families to ensure meals served are appropriate and above all deliver guest satisfaction. The business ethos is to offer a hotel style service.

"Being able to access the nutritional values of the menus we serve is invaluable." comments Willie. "The NHS used to provide us with information on menus and nutritional values but this service was stopped. However, I believe the Care Commission will insist at some point on complete menu transparency and we are already there because of the help from beacon, Paul and his team at Unilever Food Solutions. Food and nutrition is a key operational area in the annual Care Commission inspections and Meallmore's scores are always good."

"Menu planning and nutritional analysis is vital but incredibly time-consuming and expensive. Time is a massive issue to me given all my other priorities and it goes without saying budgets are always tight. I can now spend more time training my teams and morale within the kitchen teams has improved as a result. I need partners like beacon and Unilever who can work with me to both develop and deliver the right recipes with the right back up information"

Unilever define this support across three distinct service areas that focus on guest satisfaction, menu planning and profitability, and optimum operation efficiency within the kitchen to increase profits and margins.

Nick Ryan, Channel Marketing Manager says "At Unilever Food Solutions we invest a huge amount of time and resource in developing our insight. We examine everything from global food trends, nutritional factors, how chefs work in their kitchens and how, when and why people eat and much more beside, so we can build up a picture of what's happening now and what is most likely to happen in the future. We share this insight with our customers through our partners like beacon and Brakes and together with our marketing and culinary services teams we create concepts, products and marketing support material. At the end of the day it's all about helping our customers get a head start on their competition. "