

# Case Study

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## Background

CATER<sup>ed</sup> is a local authority cooperative trading company in Plymouth. It is unique in the country in how it operates and has been formed and supplies school meals and a Meals on Wheels service, prepared from locally-sourced, seasonal fresh food, for the county council. It was formed by schools and the council in April 2015.

In 2012/13, the Meals and Wheels service was transferred from adult social care to the then education catering service. At the time, the number of clients accessing the Meals and Wheels service was in decline, and labour and food costs were too high. The education catering service management team was successfully delivering sustainable, seasonal school meals and was tasked with replicating this for older and vulnerable citizens.

Offering similar meals for schools and Meals on Wheels creates efficiencies in food procurement, storage and production. CATER<sup>ed</sup> uses its procurement power to purchase fresh, local and seasonal food and ingredients for both school lunches and Meals on Wheels dishes, which are produced by school catering staff in school kitchens.

Now, working with a privately run residential home for elderly and sight impaired residents, CATER<sup>ed</sup> has recently negotiated a move for its Meals on Wheels operation to a purpose-built kitchen. The residential home offers full and rent-free use of its on-site kitchen (CATER<sup>ed</sup> pays utilities and business rates), and in return CATER<sup>ed</sup> prepares a lunchtime meal for the residents' restaurant, at a charge of £5+VAT per meal. It currently serves 25-30 residents per day and the additional income supports the cost of Meals on Wheels.

The combined service maintains economies of scale on labour and allows for growth of the Meals on Wheels business without impacting on school food operations, which have seen significant increases in production since the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals.

CATER<sup>ed</sup> also delivers meals to several private nurseries.

## About the service

- 130 meals delivered a day to a client list of 270

Meals on Wheels is delivered 365 days a year by a small team of drivers in and around Plymouth.

Lunch costs £5 for people in receipt of a care package and £6 for others. Tea, a sandwich and a piece of cake or fruit, costs £2.75.

The service has approximately 270 listed clients, receiving five meals a week on average. There are no eligibility criteria to access the service, which enables it to attract a wider clientele, including private customers, as well as those receiving care and support. Since the service started, the number of private purchase meals has increased by two-thirds (67%).

CATER<sup>ed</sup> surveys its clients on an annual basis. In September 2015, 70% of customers expressed good levels of satisfaction across a range of measures.

## How the service is run

CATER<sup>ed</sup> employs 16 part-time drivers and four staff, preparing and delivering approximately 130 meals a day. Protecting and growing the service has saved local jobs and secured increased hours and improved conditions for staff.

The drivers use their own cars to deliver meals and are paid mileage expenses whilst one Area Supervisor and 1.1 FTE administration organise and cover for weekends and bank holidays themselves.

Prepared frozen meals are no longer used as the service found them not to be cost effective as staff are still needed to reheat, order and deliver the meals, and stock holding and freezer storage was costly and problematic. By using existing employees more efficiently, CATER<sup>ed</sup> has successfully lowered costs whilst delivering a higher quality fresh product.

## Local partnerships

CATER<sup>ed</sup> is also an active member of Food Plymouth a city-wide, cross-sector partnership of organizations and businesses working to support Plymouth's journey to be a 'Sustainable Food City'.

It is led by the three main public sector bodies in the city: Plymouth City Council, Plymouth Community Healthcare, Plymouth University and is working to promote sustainable and healthy food as a powerful driver for promoting and enabling positive social, economic and environmental change.

## Added value

The service values one-to-one contact between staff and clients. Drivers are able to carry out a welfare check, plate the meal and encourage people to eat, with a protocol to raise any serious concerns with next of kin, GP, or social worker.

When delivering meals to sheltered housing, the service also plates meals in the communal dining area. There is a small additional charge for this of 54p per head.

## Plans and hopes for the future

CATER<sup>ed</sup> is working to increase the numbers of meals served to private individuals, private care homes and lunch clubs. The company is also exploring the potential to supply small local hospitals.

CATER<sup>ed</sup> would also like to develop school lunch clubs, where older people can eat alongside pupils, and is discussing this with individual schools.

*"We are not just a meal delivery service. Our hospitals are in critical situation due to the number of older people being hospitalised through not eating nutritious meals and not having anybody to check they are safe and well. Local authorities aim to support older people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. Meals on Wheels plays a vital role in this – all this for just the cost of a meal!"*

**For more information about CATER<sup>ed</sup> Meals on Wheels Services or speak to a representative please contact [info@thenacc.co.uk](mailto:info@thenacc.co.uk)**



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