

CASE STUDY, DOCUMENT

Nourishing Recovery Sustainable, Local Food for Velindre Cancer Centre: PDF

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Overview

Velindre Cancer Care Centre, one of Wales' most respected cancer treatment facilities, has set out to completely reimagine its relationship with food. Through its ambitious Food Mission, the Centre aims to provide high-quality, nutritious, locally sourced meals that support not just patients, but also staff, visitors, and the wider Welsh food economy.

NHS Wales' food spend is not big enough to drive a shift in the working of the food system, but it can play a lead role in driving public sector food sourcing and wider food systems – in an environmentally and socially responsible direction, driving better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Only Wales has the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, which both challenges the public sector to consider holistic approaches to these issues, while providing a legislative basis for making progress.

Velindre has a food mission that targets the increase in the supply of local, healthy, good quality, and environmentally sustainable food to improve the well-being of patients, staff and their families. Further, this is contributing to Velindre's Value Based Healthcare, Innovation, Decarbonisation, Workforce and Sustainability Strategies as well as the Wellbeing of Future Generations goals, and contributes towards the ambition to reach Net Zero by 2030.

Velindre's Food Mission: Enabling a FutureGen-ready food system in Wales:

By 2035 at least 70% of food sourced by Velindre University NHS Trust will be Welsh, environmentally friendly or globally responsible. Our people have access to affordable, healthy food.

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The Business Wales, Food & Drink in the Public Sector project, fully funded by Welsh Government's Foundational Economy team, has commissioned Business Wales to partner with Velindre and Dietitian, Beca Lyne-Pirkis to begin the first steps towards achieving the goals of the Velindre Food Mission. Since then, an initial assessment of Velindre's menu has been conducted, and quick-win additions have been added to the menu, including a 'Welsh Week' menu for staff and visitors at Velindre.

Background: Reframing Food in Cancer Care

Velindre's current facility is being replaced by a new, purpose-built centre. As part of its forward-looking strategy, the organisation introduced a Food Mission—a cross-departmental commitment to making food more sustainable, nourishing, and locally sourced. This mission recognises food's powerful role in:

- Supporting patient recovery and wellbeing
- Sustaining hard-working NHS staff through long shifts
- Providing comfort and community for visitors
- Supporting Welsh food producers
- Reducing food waste and decarbonising supply chains

"Food should never be seen as an afterthought in healthcare," said Beca Lyon-Pirkis. "It's integral to patient recovery, to morale, and to community. This project lets us think differently about food as nourishment, as comfort, and as a tool for change."

Project Objectives

The initial phase of the project focused on:

- Reviewing current menus and services within Velindre's existing facility
- Consulting with patients, staff, dietitians, speech and language therapists, and procurement professionals

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- Mapping opportunities to integrate more Welsh food producers into the supply chain
- Planning for the future catering and kitchen infrastructure at the new Velindre site
- Identifying quick wins that could be implemented immediately in the current facility
- Outlining longer-term goals, including recipe development, staff training, procurement reform, and sustainability

Strategic Highlights

A Whole-System Approach to Food

Rather than treating catering as a standalone service, Velindre is embedding food into its wider strategic planning, from care pathways to community outreach. The food mission is deeply connected to sustainability, workforce wellbeing, and patient experience.

Nutrition-Driven, Seasonally Sourced Menus

Working with clinicians and dietitians, Beca reviewed current offerings and began planning new menus that would prioritise:

- Welsh-grown and produced ingredients
- Seasonal fruit, vegetables, fish, and meats
- Specialised menus for patients with specific needs (e.g. dysphagia-friendly meals)
- A 24-hour menu for patients with irregular appetites due to treatment

“The goal isn’t a Michelin star,” Beca explained, “It’s to create food that’s tasty, comforting, and beneficial for people going through some of the hardest times in their lives.”

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Early Wins with Long-Term Vision

Through the consultation phase, Velindre was able to implement small but meaningful improvements “quick wins” that improve the current food offering while paving the way for the larger transformation when the new site opens.

Preparing for Procurement Reform

One of the most challenging and essential aspects of the project is NHS procurement. Beca worked with Velindre’s procurement teams to begin exploring:

- How to incorporate local producers into supply chains
- How to meet NHS standards and food safety regulations
- The training and onboarding required for kitchen and catering staff
- Partnerships with organisations like Business Wales and Menter Môn to support Welsh producers’ readiness

Outcomes and Next Steps

With the consultation phase complete, Velindre and Business Wales are now moving into the next stage, aligning procurement, developing recipes, and finalising the kitchen and chef-led model for the new site.

Future goals include:

- Full integration of Welsh food producers across core categories
- A new chef-led kitchen model for cooking fresh meals on site
- Staff training around food sustainability, seasonality, and nutrition
- A high-quality, welcoming visitor café and community space
- Creation of themed events and revenue- generating services that support the Velindre Charity arm

A Model for Other Healthcare Settings

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The Velindre Food Mission is more than a catering upgrade, it's a blueprint for how the NHS in Wales could transform food as part of holistic patient care. It brings together the priorities of the Well-being of Future Generations Act: health, sustainability, local economic resilience, and community wellbeing.

"We're not just feeding patients," Beca said.

"We're building a culture of food that's Welsh, that's caring, and that's built to last."

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