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By Fred Searle

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Govt launches review of NHS food

Overhaul of menus following listeria scandal could see hospitals using more local fresh produce and less frozen food



Prue Leith has been brought in to revamp hospital menus Photo: Allan Harris/Flickr

The Department of Health and Social Care has launched a review of NHS food in a development that could present new opportunities for fresh produce firms to supply hospitals.

The "root and branch" review follows a listeria outbreak earlier this year in which six people died from eating pre-packaged sandwiches and salads either bought on site or given out by hospital staff.

The review will explore whether hospitals can use less frozen food and source local fresh produce where possible, as well as looking at how to increase the number of hospitals with their own kitchens and their own chefs.

Consideration will also be given to: new systems to monitor food safety and quality more transparently; introducing more healthy food options for NHS staff,

shifts; and the sustainability and environmental impact of the supply chain.

Support will be offered by the Soil Association and National Caterers Association to source food services locally and reduce reliance on frozen or packaged foods.

Celebrity chef and Bake Off judge Prue Leith, a vocal critic of the food served on our hospital wards, will act as an adviser to the review, drawing on her experience in catering, restaurants and as a former chair of the School Food Trust.

Every year, the NHS serves more than 140 million meals to patients across the country, but the quality and nutritional value of these meals can vary substantially.

Leith has previously spoken out on the need for hospitals to provide healthy

the patient, warning that vulnerable patients are forced to eat "inedible food".

Today she said: "Millions of pounds are wasted in hospitals with food ending up in the bin, unpalatable food being the main complaint.

"I'm delighted that, at long last, Downing Street and the Department of Health have decided to do something about it.

"A hospital meal should be a small highlight, a little pleasure and comfort, and it should help, not hinder, the patient's recovery."

The chef was also brought in by British Rail back in the 1980s to revamp its sandwich offering and was responsible for introducing brown bread.

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particularly those working night

options that aid recovery and for meals to
be tailored to the individual needs of

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