



£107,628



**Provincial Grand
Lodge of
Northumberland**

In 2016, the kitchen at St Oswald's Hospice was old and tired. After 30 years of near constant use, preparing meals for hospice patients, visitors, volunteers and staff, the equipment was constantly breaking down. The tiled walls and floors were cracked in places and very difficult to keep clean.

The kitchen had been fitted in 1986 when the Hospice first opened its doors to patients from all over the north-east of England. Over the years the service had grown beyond all recognition and the challenge of catering for patients had increased exponentially.

Every day the St Oswald's chefs must prepare meals for 15 adult inpatients. Each patient staying on the hospice ward is very poorly and has highly individualised needs. Some have difficulties swallowing or chewing and need specially blended or puréed meals. Others have conditions such as diabetes or coeliac disease which must be managed alongside their cancer or other life threatening conditions. Some have lost their appetite or their ability to taste food, yet need to increase their calorie intake and many also have religious or cultural requirements. Of course, everyone has their own food preferences.

The chefs also prepare lunch for up to 80 day hospice patients each week. This group of patients present all the same challenges as the adult inpatients.

The Children and Young Adult Service supports 58 young people with complex, life limiting needs. Each of these children comes to St Oswald's regularly for short breaks. All enjoy at least 3 meals a day, plus snacks. In addition to the challenges described above, many of the children are tube fed, requiring either prescribed milk diets or specially blended meals. Those who are following a blended diet need the hospice chefs to prepare a well balanced, nutritious meal, blended to a consistency which will fit through a very narrow feeding tube. Not forgetting that the children who stay at St Oswald's are every bit as fussy as their healthy peers!

When patients come to St Oswald's for end of life care, especially when the patient is a child, they often have large numbers of family members who want to stay with them. The hospice catering team step up to the challenge at such times,

providing tasty and nutritious food, whenever required, helping to provide some of the physical and emotional support which people need at such a sad time in their lives.

As the service has grown to support over 2,000 patients each year, so too have the numbers of staff and volunteers needed to provide patient care. St Oswald's has around 250 staff and over 1,400 volunteers, many of whom rely on the hospice chefs to provide them with meals while they deliver round the clock care.

So, as you can see, St Oswald's kitchen is a very busy place. By 2016 the need for a full refurbishment was URGENT.



The kitchen was old, tired ...

... and cluttered.



Cracked wall and floor tiles were hard to clean.

Work begins

There were celebrations in the hospice when the old kitchen equipment was stripped out.



The floor tiles came up next, followed quickly by the walls.

White, Altro walls immediately made a huge difference to the area.



The lovely new flooring really pulled everything together.



Brand new
'State of the art'
equipment was
installed

along with
much needed
work and
storage space.



The chefs were beside
themselves when the
small equipment was
unpacked!



What a transformation!



The Mark Benevolent Fund's grant of £107,628 covered the full cost of the original kitchen refurbishment plan. Your gift has enabled us to create a more streamlined kitchen. The whole area works more efficiently, with more space for food preparation and more room for staff and volunteers to work around one another. Probably the most important difference is that all the equipment works. The chefs no longer have to worry that one of the knobs will fall off the front of the oven or that the dishwasher will spring another leak! Everything works efficiently, enabling the team to plan each meal in advance, confident that everything will be ready at the expected time.

In addition to replacing equipment which was no longer fit for purpose, the team have been able to purchase new items which have greatly increased the efficiency of their service. For example, prior to the refurbishment, when chefs prepared meals in advance, they had to leave them to cool on a kitchen bench until they were the correct temperature for refrigeration. This created difficulties within the limited space available and also carried a risk of unwanted bacteria developing in the food. Today they are able to cool the food very rapidly, in a brand new blast chiller, enabling swift transfer to fridge or freezer. This ensures compliance with the very highest food hygiene standards whilst also freeing up time (and space in the kitchen).

More new equipment has made it much easier for the catering team to purée foods to the correct consistency for patients who have swallowing difficulties – before reshaping them on the plate so that they still look tempting to the eye. Special moulds mean that, for example, pea puree, can be reshaped to look just like garden peas. We all ‘eat with our eyes’ to some extent, so this bit of kitchen wizardry helps patients to continue to enjoy their food despite their ill health.

On an even more technical level, the St Oswald’s team now has all the equipment and technology needed to produce highly nutritious blended meals for patients who are tube fed as described earlier. This is a tricky task. Firstly it requires a superb blender! Secondly, the chef must be able to assess the calorific content of the very small volume of liquid which patients can consume at any one time. The hospice chefs are learning to use an online tool which helps them to calculate the exact nutritional value of a blended meal – vital for the continued wellbeing of some very poorly patients.

In addition to all these very real benefits, your grant meant that monies already raised towards the kitchen refurbishment project have been reallocated to bring even more improvements to the nutritional care offered at the hospice. The St Oswald’s team were able to fund essential electrical and fire safety work

in and around the kitchen area and will be able to replace the very large, draughty (and somewhat unsafe) windows in the kitchen and dining rooms. Even more excitingly the team have been able to appoint a dietician who will work alongside their nutrition link nurses to assess the dietary requirements of every patient and to make sure that each individual receives the best possible nutritional support and advice.

Everyone at St Oswald's Hospice is so grateful for your kindness. We simply can't thank you enough!



Our thanks to St Oswald's Hospice for their updates and help putting this brochure together. 01.09.2017