

News story: Local courts and tribunals help to raise the bar on provision of refreshments

Courts and tribunals vary a lot in the refreshments they provide. Some have a selection of hot and cold food; others offer drinks; and some offer very little. This can depend on where the building is, and how many people use it; but new guidance has been issued that will help courts to be more ambitious and provide better refreshment options.

For the first time, the guidance sets a minimum standard – saying that, at the very least, all visitors to our buildings should be able to access a broad selection of good quality hot and cold drinks, even in our smallest buildings.

In most places, we are keen to offer more than this. The new guidance and sources of information we've introduced will help operational teams to explore and introduce the best approach possible for their buildings and the people who use them. This includes both best practice in getting the right catering provision in place through conventional contracts; and advice on how to source and support sustainable small-scale initiatives with local businesses or charities in buildings where a commercial arrangement with a caterer may not work.

There are lots of good examples taking place across the estate that others can learn from. For example, one small court uses local sandwich shop menus to provide a delivery service to jurors; and in other courts local catering firms bring baskets of sandwiches round at busy times, for staff and those waiting for hearings.

In one court, we've encouraged a charity which supports children coming out of the care system to set up a snack bar which both provides great food, and helps to train young people in kitchen and service skills.

By encouraging and supporting a wider range of approaches to providing refreshments on site, we expect to raise the bar on court and tribunal catering.

Susan Acland-Hood, Chief Executive of HMCTS commented:

Since joining HMCTS, I've heard a lot about court refreshments – and seen a lot too, in the visits I make every week. At the moment, what we do is inconsistent; we have too many sites with no refreshments, and what others provide is very basic.

But there are also some great examples of excellent catering – and of people doing things in really innovative ways where a conventional big contract wouldn't work. The guidance will help us

bring the rest to the standard of the best, by giving people advice, help and support to put good arrangements in place.

For further information, email us at:
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