In 2009, Southwark local authority were looking for a provider of cafe and event catering services at their newly refurbished headquarters in Tooley Street.

Unity Kitchen responded to the competitive tender and successfully demonstrated that we could provide a contemporary, innovative and value for money cafe service for Council staff in an innovative and flexible environment. In addition, Southwark’s commitment to addressing environmental issues, to using Fairtrade products and to building sustainable local economic communities by creating training and employment opportunities for disadvantaged people, perfectly matched Unity Kitchen’s ethos and brand.

As part of the tender process, Southwark had consulted extensively with staff about what they would like the cafe to offer and a panel of staff had visited Unity Kitchen’s existing cafes to sample the quality of our food. Once we were awarded the contract, we ran taster sessions for staff to develop appropriate menus.

In the end we were able to deliver beyond expectations by showing that it was possible to prepare a wide range of hot meals in addition to fresh sandwiches, salads and snacks, within the limits of the kitchen facilities.

The cafe was up and running within 12 weeks of Unity Kitchen being awarded the contract.

From the planning stages in 2008 to the delivery of the Council’s new headquarters building for 2000 plus staff, a cafe provision was seen as a key element in creating the flexible working environment we wanted. A lot of thought and consultation went in to designing the cafe space and associated areas – all we needed was the right provider.

Unity Kitchen has been a fantastic partner. They met and continue to meet our corporate requirements, have proven flexible and responsive to feedback and we would recommend them to anyone wishing to bring that added social value to an in-house cafe for their business.

Unity Kitchen has brought significant benefits to the Council and its staff. The cafe provides value for money, high quality and healthy food for staff. The way the cafe is run helps Southwark meet its sustainability targets and maintain its Fairtrade accreditation. Above all, it has created training and employment opportunities for local people with disabilities.

Matthew Hunt
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