



HCA NATIONAL AWARDS 2026

NOMINATION BROCHURE

HOSPITAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION NATIONAL LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT FORUM



PRESENTED AT THE PRESIDENTS DINNER ON TUESDAY 14th APRIL 2026

- Caterer of the Year Award
- Catering Team of the Year Award
- Chairman's Choice Award
- National Leadership Excellence Award
- National Rising Star Award
- Special Contribution Award
- Sustainability Award
- Trade Stand Award
- Wilma Wilkie Outstanding Service Award

Entry deadline – Friday 20th February 2026

HCA NATIONAL AWARDS 2026

It's time to start nominating the teams and individuals who have excelled over the last year for one of HCA's 2026 Awards. The HCA awards are designed to recognise the hard work, excellence and achievements of HCA members across the UK. Since the awards were launched in 2001 more than 150 members have joined the exclusive roster of Award winners, having demonstrated their dedication and ability to improve the standards of catering and customer care within their respective hospitals – and consequently further the aims of the HCA.

There are six categories open for nominations:

- Caterer of the Year - see page 3
- Catering Team of the Year - see page 3
- National Leadership Excellence Award - see page 4
- National Rising star - see page 4
- Sustainability Award - see page 5
- Wilma Wilkie Outstanding Service - see page 5

Being recognised for an award is a tremendous achievement. Not only is it good for staff morale, it also provides a superb opportunity for hospitals to promote the good work being undertaken by their people within the communities which they serve.

Eligibility - The nominee must be a Full Member of the Hospital Caterers Association.

You have until Friday, 20th February 2026 to submit your nominations via the website - www.hcaforumco.uk.

The winners will be announced at the Presidents Awards Dinner at the National Leadership & Development Forum 2026 at the DoubleTree Brighton Metropole on Tuesday 14th April 2026.

In addition to the above, there are also the following awards which will be presented:

- Chair's Choice Award
- Special Contribution Award
- Trade Stand

Chair's Choice Award

This award will be chosen by the National Chair to recognise a Branch, as they are the cornerstones of the Association, providing an active professional support network around the UK for healthcare catering professionals who face the same challenges the industry brings and who are striving for similar targets.

The Chair's Choice Award will go to the HCA Branch:

- which has displayed an exceptional commitment and outstanding contribution to its Members over the preceding 12 months
- recognising how the branch engages with its members and what it does to support the training and development of them
- initiatives the branch implemented to encourage the growth of membership
- any inter-branch activities
- how has it contributed to either the HCA journal or website

Special Contribution Award

This award will be chosen by the judging panel to recognise an individual who has supported the Association in many ways over a period of time.

Trade Stand Award

We recognise our events would not be achievable without the support of the trade. The Trade Stand Award will be judged by the President and Vice Presidents following a visit to each of the stands during the first day of the National Leadership & Development Forum.

Please answer the entry criteria for your chosen category in your submission and include any additional support information plus a high resolution jpeg image or similar of the person or team you are nominating with your online nomination form.

Note – by submitting this application, you agree to any promotional materials of winners.

Completed nomination form and supporting documentation to be submitted no later than 17.00 on Friday 20th February 2026

Please contact hcaforum@dewberryredpoint.co.uk if you have any queries on the entry process.

CATERER OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Hospital Caterer of the Year Award is in recognition and celebration of the significant contribution the Hospital Caterer makes to the wellbeing and recovery of the patient, the patient experience and to the staff and visitors who use their services.

ENTRY CRITERIA:

Background of the nominee's involvement with the Hospital Caterers Association.

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Brief history of their career within the NHS

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Describe how the nominee

- Has used innovation, flair and imagination to provide the best possible catering service.
- Used their leadership skills instrumental in the delivery of the service and the impact this had on food quality for patients and/or retail.
- Key performance metrics and results that demonstrated their positive outcomes on the service.



2025 winner:

Francesco Fiore, Milton Keynes Hospital

The award was collected on his behalf by Steve Hall and Louise Sayell.

CATERING TEAM OF THE YEAR AWARD

This award will be presented to a team which consistently demonstrates good team working, to deliver an efficient and high performing catering service. They have successfully implemented change and/or improved services. This could include developing new ways of working and shared learning.

ENTRY CRITERIA:

Background on the Catering Team.

Describe how the Catering Service is provided, including type of service and number of employees. This section is to provide the judges with some background information on the Catering Team.

Describe how the catering team demonstrates

- Effective teamwork and collaboration.
- How they have worked together to support the personal and professional development of team members.
- Consistently delivering a high quality, safe and compliant catering service and how the team evidence user satisfaction.



2025 winner:

Nottingham University Hospital

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARD

This award is for a Full member who demonstrates outstanding leadership skills who inspires people to go the extra mile. Good leaders are innovative and value their peers while actively mentoring and encouraging people they work with to reach their full potential.

ENTRY CRITERIA:

Background of the nominee's involvement with the Hospital Caterers Association.

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Brief history of their career within the NHS

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Describe how the nominee has

- Excellent communication skills.
- Inspired and motivated others to achieve their objectives.
- Overcome any barriers to change.
- Supported personal and professional development as well as promoting equality and inclusion.



2025 winner:

Dr Mabel Blades, Oxford Branch

NATIONAL RISING STAR AWARD

This award is for a full member who, in the course of their work has shown impressive dedication and commitment to furthering themselves and supporting the work of Hospital Catering who demonstrates Association values and shows outstanding dedication and commitment.

ENTRY CRITERIA:

Background of the nominee's involvement with the Hospital Caterers Association.

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Describe how the nominee has shown impressive dedication and commitment to furthering themselves.

Provide examples which demonstrate how the individual has supported the work of the Hospital Caterers Association.

Include any supporting evidence or references that support the nomination.



2025 winner:

Margaret Valenti, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

This award is for members who have demonstrated positive progress towards Net-Zero with excellent sustainable working practices and implemented positive change within their operation.

ENTRY CRITERIA:

Background of the nominee's involvement with the Hospital Caterers Association.

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Brief history of their career within the NHS

Provide the judges with some background information on the nominee.

Describe how the nominee has

- Improved the positive sustainable working practices of their department linking to their NHSTrust/Board green plan.
- Made fundamental changes and the impact on the service and environmental impact.
- The changes created efficiencies including any cost impact and how these are measured.



2025 winner:

Margaret Valenti, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde

WILMA WILKIE OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

Wilma Wilkie placed great emphasis on providing outstanding service to our customers and her legacy lives on in supporting the HCA Outstanding Service Award. This Award is presented to an outstanding professional who is a Full, Life, or Honorary Member of the Association. The individual must have given many years of service to healthcare catering.

ENTRY CRITERIA:

Background of the nominee's involvement with the Hospital Caterers Association.

Brief history of their career within the NHS

The nominee must have been employed for a minimum of 25 years.

Describe the nominee's

- Achievements whilst employed in NHS catering.
- Demonstrated outstanding commitment to both patients and the profession over and above the normal expectations.
- Shown commitment to the principle of catering excellence to the benefits of patients, staff and visitors during their career.



2025 winner:

Brian Robb, immediate past Chair, HCA