



# REIMAGINING WORKPLACE CATERING:

A new vision for health,  
wellbeing, and sustainability

elior  
at **WORK**

# FOREWORD

——> Workplace catering is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Nutrition and wellbeing are no longer afterthoughts. Today, they are priorities that have become central to how we think about food. Employees increasingly want to understand how the food on their plate affects their health, energy, and overall sense of wellbeing.

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**Calum McLaren**

Divisional managing  
director, Elinor at Work



For companies, this presents a real opportunity. The employee experience has taken the spotlight, and food is playing a fundamental role in that. Expectations are changing, and colleagues now desire workplace catering that aligns with their nutritional preferences and personal values, all while facilitating connections among colleagues.

The best workplace dining experiences deliver all of that by providing variety, transparency, quality and moments that matter. They help people feel seen – no matter where they are on their personal wellbeing journey. There's a real appetite for functional foods, served in dining spaces that are uplifting workplace cultures. Sustainability and ethical sourcing have also come into sharp focus, with organisations striving to go local, reduce food waste and explore plant-based foods more actively.

These are exciting trends developing. The bar has been raised in workplace catering, and with it comes the chance to create an offering that supports not just physical health, but the social and cultural fabric of companies.

At Elixir at Work, we're proud to be playing our part in driving these trends.



Building the Elixir at Work Food Strategy for 2030 has been momentous. Our aim is straightforward in the sense that we strive to deliver satisfying plates of food to our customers. However, tying all the component parts of a successful strategy together, including supply chains, budgeting, sustainability goals and individual preferences, requires careful planning.

That same attention to detail underpins our client relationships. Every organisation is different, so it is our responsibility to understand individual needs, workplace norms and employee demands to create a bespoke strategy that works. That's not always about trying to force everyone make healthy choices. Often, it simply means supporting people in ways that feel relevant, respectful and real to them.

The goal of this white paper is to explore how workplace catering can capitalise on these shifts, trends and new opportunities – fresh with insights, practical ideas and examples for business leaders who are keen to make food a pillar of their health, wellbeing and sustainability strategies. These findings have been gathered from extensive research into our clients' demands, as well as interviews with experts across nutrition, health and wellbeing.

Done well, food can be far more than just fuel. It has the potential to shape communities, symbolise care and attention, facilitate memory making and provide physical and psychological nourishment. For workplaces, food can greatly enhance the employee experience and feed into crucial performance gains, improved attendance records and positive corporate cultures.

“Done well, food can be far more than just fuel. It has the potential to shape communities”

# INTRODUCTION

→ This white paper explores how workplace catering is transforming to meet evolving employee expectations around health, wellbeing and sustainability. From nutritional transparency to environmental responsibility, modern workplace dining must balance diverse needs while delivering exceptional experiences that support both individual wellness and corporate goals.



The following sections examine the key trends, challenges and opportunities shaping the future of business and industry catering:



**PART 1**  
**Fuelling bodies and minds:** How nutritional science is reshaping workplace menus and supporting employee performance



**PART 2**  
**Supporting mental health through food:** The connection between nutrition, social eating, and psychological wellbeing



**PART 3**  
**Sustainability and ethical sourcing:** Practical approaches to reducing environmental impact while maintaining quality and appeal



**PART 4**  
**Legislative and corporate policies:** Preparing for regulatory changes and integrating food into broader wellness strategies



**PART 5**  
**Inclusive catering for a diverse workforce:** Meeting varied dietary, cultural, and generational needs through flexible, technology-enabled solutions





# PART 1

**Fuelling bodies and  
minds**

# **PART 1** – Fuelling bodies and minds

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→ Growing awareness about the impact of food on the way we feel is influencing workplace catering. Employees don't just want lunches that taste good. Today, they want meals that will keep them energised through the workday, align with their nutritional preferences, and support their long-term health goals.

“One of the biggest misconceptions we see today is that people feel they can't truly eat well at work.”

– Hannah Locket, head of nutrition, Elior at Work



# Gen Z

Employers are also picking up on the benefits of providing nutritious food for staff. Healthy meals can help them to feel and perform at their best, which in turn can boost productivity, improve morale and support wider wellbeing strategies.

## Balanced menus that meet nutritional guidelines

It's for these reasons that workplace catering is changing, with nutritious foods now at the forefront of menus. Yet in offices, that can provide challenges.

'Healthy' means different things to different people. For one employee, it might mean foods high in protein. For another, it may be foods that support gut health or cognitive function.

In workplace environments, where there are a wide range of age groups and demographics, those disparities are particularly pronounced. According to the [International Food Information Council](#), younger people generally prioritise energy and weight loss in their nutrition, while older people are naturally more focused on foods that support healthy ageing. Gen Z, meanwhile, could be more susceptible to food-based trends, with 55% using [TikTok as a source of nutritional information](#).

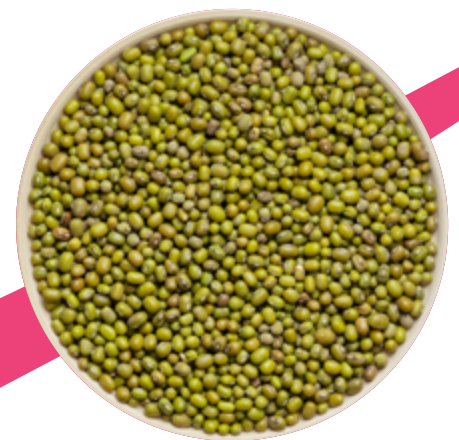
Workplace menus must consider these different perceptions and preferences. At Elior at Work, we focus on creating nutritionally

COULD BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO FOOD-BASED TRENDS, WITH 55% USING TIKTOK AS A SOURCE OF NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION.



diverse menus featuring a range of macro- and micro-nutrients – from omega-3-rich fish to fibre-packed grains – that have broad appeal and are scientifically proven to support mental and physical wellbeing.

### OMEGA-3-RICH FISH



### FIBRE-PACKED GRAINS



## Providing nutritional transparency

Across all demographics and age groups, a growing appreciation of the link between diet and health is driving greater demand for nutritional insights.

While calorie labelling is a legislative requirement, it's important that workplace catering goes the extra mile and makes it easy for customers to identify exactly what it is that they're eating. Elior at Work strives to

achieve this through the Eatuitive initiative, which offers balanced, healthy meals that are nutritionally signposted to help employees make quick yet conscious choices without needing to decipher complicated labels or basing their food choices on calorific values alone.

## A growing focus on functional foods

While nutritional priorities such as cognitive function, gut health and immune support are prevalent both

in and out of the office, the desire for employees to avoid workplace slumps is also putting the spotlight on functional foods.

Pre and probiotics to support gut health and healthy fats such as omega 3 to support brain health are rising in popularity, in part driven by emerging research. The long standing 5-a-day advice has recently been supplemented by a target to incorporate 30 plants a week into diets – a new benchmark for optimal gut health and improved wellbeing.

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# INTRODUCING EATUITIVE – eat intuitively

Eatuitive is a wellness initiative that focuses on empowering employees to make healthy, informed food choices. Developed by qualified dietitians and nutritionists, it provides nutritionally balanced dishes in workplace environments, and supports staff with informative resources such as videos, online seminars and healthy eating tips tailored to support wellness.

Each Eatuitive dish is:



**At least  
10g fibre**

a third of an adult's  
recommended intake



A source of protein

**>12% kcal  
from protein**



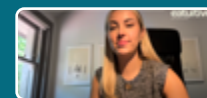
Low in saturated fat

**<1.5g/100g**

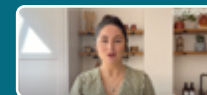
Dishes that meet any number of the criteria are clearly signposted, and dishes that meet all criteria are highlighted as 'Eatuitive' approved. Trusted nutrition education content is also made available at the point of sale. Accessible via QR codes, this provides people with the information they need to make manageable and informed dietary changes.



▶ Food & Mood



▶ Healthier Food Swaps



▶ Fibre & Gut Health





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## THE TRADITIONAL '5-A-DAY' TARGET HAS EVOLVED INTO A NEW GOAL OF 30 PLANTS PER WEEK.

For some, that figure can feel unachievable. However, understanding that the full range of contributing ingredients includes herbs, spices, legumes and seeds, as well as fruits and vegetables, can make this a much less daunting prospect.

Elior at Work is making these benchmarks feel simpler and more attainable by providing workplace meals that are packed with supportive and diverse ingredients – from fermented foods and healthy fats to leafy greens and wholegrains.

As part of our food strategy, we are also striving to provide more nutritional information to customers. Alongside Eatuitive, our aim is to ensure that all our chefs are trained in nutrition, equipping them with the knowledge to answer queries and demystify nutritional misconceptions.

### Supporting personalised nutrition

In workplaces, catering to individual nutritional plans and preferences can be a challenge. True personalisation isn't operationally viable in many workplace

environments – however, that doesn't mean employees can't exercise greater control over what they eat.

For instance, build-your-own stations and customisable food options such as flexible salad bars are a great way of achieving this. We also work closely with clients to subtly promote healthier choices in the workplace by positioning nutritional meals in prominent places and reducing the visibility of less healthy snacks.

Above all, we are focused on making the healthy choice the easy choice – helping people to eat better, feel better and perform better both in and out of work.



**ELIOR AT WORK IS MAKING THESE  
BENCHMARKS FEEL SIMPLER AND  
MORE ATTAINABLE**



# **PART 2**

**Supporting mental  
health through food**



# **PART 2** – Supporting mental health through food

→ While the physical benefits of good nutrition are increasingly understood in workplace settings, the connection between food and mental wellbeing represents an equally important (yet often overlooked) dimension of employee health. As organisations grapple with mental health challenges among their workforces, nutrition emerges as a powerful tool for supporting psychological resilience alongside physical wellness.

## **Translating nutritional science into workplace wellbeing**

The connection between nutrition and mental wellbeing is well-established in scientific literature, but translating this knowledge into practical workplace benefits requires smart communication.

Certain nutrients have been proven to positively affect mood, energy levels and stress resilience. For instance, omega-3 fatty acids support brain health, B vitamins aid neurotransmitter production and magnesium helps regulate stress responses. Complex carbohydrates play a particularly important role in serotonin production – the ‘feel good hormone’ – while fibre supports gut health, which research increasingly links to reduced anxiety and depression through the gut-brain axis.

However, employees often struggle to connect these scientific insights with their daily food choices. The challenge is compounded by widespread nutrition misinformation on social media platforms, creating confusion about what constitutes genuinely beneficial dietary advice.

Elior at Work addresses this through the Eatuitive programme, which delivers evidence-based nutrition education through expert-created videos. Topics such as ‘Food & Mood’ help employees understand the practical connections between what they eat and how they feel, without overwhelming them with complex dietary science.

## **The social dimension of workplace eating**

Beyond individual nutrition, the social aspects of eating play an

equally important role in supporting mental health.

Social eating has been shown to boost morale and reduce stress by combining the psychological benefits of human connection with proper nourishment. [University of Oxford research](#) demonstrates that people who eat socially more often feel happier, more satisfied with life and have stronger social networks. When employees step away from their desks to share meals in communal spaces, this can serve as a powerful reset and help to improve productivity and emotional resilience.



This understanding underpins Elior at Work's 'Cahoots' coffee concept, which follows the Chatty Café model. The concept uses simple table indicators that allow employees

to signal their openness to conversation, which helps to directly address workplace loneliness and isolation. Good coffee serves as more than caffeine delivery. It acts as a social anchor by bridging the gap between home comfort and workplace efficiency. The ritual of coffee breaks creates natural opportunities for

informal mentoring, team bonding and stress relief.

Modern workplace dining spaces are evolving from functional areas to vibrant community hubs, designed to foster connection and provide respite from work pressures. This shift recognises that supporting mental health through food isn't just about what employees eat, but how, where and with whom they eat it.



**PEOPLE WHO EAT SOCIALLY FEEL  
HAPPIER, MORE SATISFIED WITH  
LIFE AND HAVE STRONGER SOCIAL  
NETWORKS**

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“Taking yourself away from your desk and sharing the food experience is really important for mental health and wellbeing. It combines the psychological benefits of social connection with the physical benefits of nourishment.”

– Hannah Locket, head of nutrition, Elior at Work





# PART 3

## Sustainability and ethical sourcing

# PART 3 – Sustainability and ethical sourcing

→ Meaningful sustainability in workplace catering comes through consistent, manageable progress that brings everyone along the journey. When the full scope of environmental challenges feels overwhelming, the solution lies in breaking initiatives into achievable steps that work for each site's current reality.

This philosophy of incremental change proves crucial for securing buy-in at every level. Leadership teams must commit to sustainability as part of core business decisions, while operations teams need practical tools and training to make daily improvements. This dual approach has enabled Elior at Work to exceed targets, such as achieving 30% food waste reduction in 2024 and maintaining 100% renewable energy for directly supplied contracts over the past two years.



ACHIEVED A 30% FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IN 2024.



## Start off by looking local

For organisations beginning their sustainability journey, local sourcing represents one of the most accessible first steps. Examining where ingredients and food products originate offers an immediate opportunity to reduce carbon footprints while supporting regional economies. Unlike complex operational overhauls, sourcing decisions can be adjusted gradually, making this an ideal entry point for companies looking to make meaningful environmental improvements without overwhelming their teams or budgets.

Local sourcing also delivers tangible benefits that resonate with employees – fresher ingredients, seasonal variety and a stronger connection to the community. These visible improvements help build momentum for broader sustainability initiatives while demonstrating genuine commitment to environmental responsibility.

“Carbon labelling offers businesses a practical, implementable solution that requires no recipe changes or operational complexity – simply providing clear information that helps employees make informed choices.”

– Hannah Craig, CSR manager, Elinor at Work



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### **Plant-based options: Making informed choices easier**

The growing demand for plant-based and sustainable choices reflects changing consumer preferences, particularly among younger generations entering the workforce.

However, driving meaningful behaviour change requires more than simply expanding menu options – it demands making sustainable choices the easy choice.

Our carbon labelling trial, conducted in collaboration with a Cambridge Institute of Sustainability master's student, demonstrates the power of simple information. The labels quantified environmental impact in relatable terms, such as explaining that seven high-carbon meals equal emissions from driving 22 miles. This makes abstract concepts tangible for everyday decision-making.

Our study, carried out across four workplace sites spanning offices and manufacturing facilities, showed a statistically significant 1.5% shift from meat to vegetarian options when carbon labels were displayed.

### **Tackling food waste**

Food waste reduction requires both creative prevention strategies and robust measurement systems to track progress. A combination of the two is critical, as any progress made by waste reduction programmes must be quantifiable and accountable, while measurement capabilities can also inform new areas for waste reduction improvement.

### **Reducing waste with creative repurposing**

Several initiatives at Elinor at Work demonstrate how innovative thinking can transform waste streams into valuable resources.

The Kitchen Reclaimed initiative exemplifies how food that's traditionally wasted can become showcase dishes. Coffee ground brownies, vegetable kimchi from peelings, and other repurposed ingredients not only reduce waste but actively engage customers in sustainability conversations. Pop-up demonstrations at client sites combine tastings with education, showing customers how to apply these principles at home, extending impact beyond the workplace.

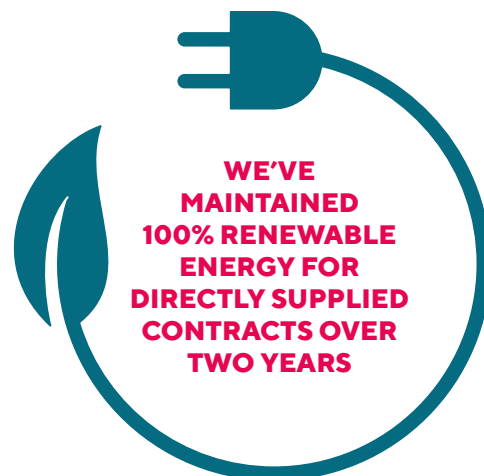
Beyond recipe innovation, this includes the creation of customer cookbooks for home use and structured training for kitchen staff. This training is becoming embedded in our induction process to ensure new staff understand food waste reduction principles from day one, making sustainability standard practice rather than an add-on consideration.

## Baking traceability into your operations

Measuring progress requires sophisticated tracking capabilities that go beyond simple weight measurements.

In 2024, we launched the Foodprint Reporting Assistant, a tablet-based, in-house tool that helps teams track and reduce food waste. Simple and cost-effective, it integrates with our menu systems, automatically calculating waste volume and cost.

Our innovation supports our action on food waste reduction. Last year we reported a 30% reduction in food waste, verified by independent auditors. The system's ability to make food waste measurement part of routine operations proves crucial for sustained behaviour change. It's a tool that has already been effective in driving cultural changes on site.



Moving forward, internal innovation is evolving into Track'd, a more scalable solution planned for rollout across 100 sites by the end of 2026. The development reflects growing industry recognition that effective sustainability requires precise measurement capabilities, with Track'd offering the kind of detailed, recipe-specific insights that external tools simply cannot provide.

“We’re giving customers a resource to take home so that the impact of repurposing food waste isn’t just in our kitchens, it’s also going into their homes. It’s a simple way organisations can extend their sustainability impact – providing employees with practical tools they can actually use to eat more sustainably and reduce waste at home.”

Hannah Craig, CSR manager, Elior at Work





# PART 4

## Legislative and corporate policies



# PART 4 – Legislative and corporate policies

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→ The regulatory landscape for workplace catering is evolving rapidly, driven by government health initiatives and corporate responsibility commitments. For contract caterers like Elinor at Work, staying ahead of these changes is crucial, not only from a compliance perspective, but also in terms of creating a competitive advantage through proactive preparation.

## Getting ready for mandatory healthy food reporting

A significant shift is on the horizon with the [UK Government's plans](#) for mandatory healthy food reporting requirements for large firms. This builds on Henry Dimbleby's 2021 National Food Strategy recommendation that firms with more than 250 employees should report sales data across multiple categories including:

- Volume and value of high fat, salt, sugar (HFSS) items
- Fruit, vegetable, and protein types (meat, dairy, plant-based)
- Nutrient metrics including fibre, saturated fat, sugar, and salt content
- Food waste and total sales figures

While the timeline for implementation remains to be confirmed, this will signal the start of a new era of transparency and accountability in workplace food provision. Contract caterers who prepare for these anticipated requirements will be well-positioned to support their clients' future compliance while

demonstrating their commitment to employee wellbeing.

Elinor at Work is already positioning itself ahead of potential regulatory changes through a comprehensive menu management system, which provides detailed allergen information, calorie counts and carbon labelling in an accessible traffic light format. For clients, this

means they can seamlessly meet future reporting requirements while aligning their food services with broader ESG goals and employee wellness strategies.

## Part of the bigger wellbeing picture

Beyond regulatory compliance, forward-thinking organisations are increasingly integrating nutrition into their broader employee wellness programmes. This shift reflects changing workforce expectations, particularly among younger generations who prioritise employers' social values and employee care initiatives.

Modern workplace catering must therefore go beyond simply providing food to become an integral part of corporate wellbeing strategies. This includes offering healthy eating incentives, nutrition workshops, and educational resources that empower employees to make informed choices both at work and at home.

The convergence of regulatory requirements and corporate wellness initiatives creates new opportunities for catering teams to add value and demonstrates that compliance and competitive advantage can go hand in hand.



THE UK  
PLANS MANDATORY  
HEALTHY FOOD REPORTING  
FOR FIRMS WITH  
**250+**  
EMPLOYEES.



# **PART 5**

## **Inclusive catering for a diverse workforce**





# **PART 5** – Inclusive catering for a diverse workforce

→ Modern workplaces bring together people from vastly different backgrounds and cultures and with specific dietary requirements. Creating truly inclusive catering means understanding these diverse needs and developing flexible solutions that ensure everyone feels valued and catered for.

## **Understanding different dietary and cultural considerations**

This means workplace catering must extend far beyond traditional preferences. From halal and kosher requirements to gluten-free, dairy-free and plant-based diets, what was once considered special dietary needs has become standard expectation.

Regional preferences also play a significant role and vary considerably. From Scotland's desire for distinct regional offerings, to the passionate defence of Devon pasties over





“I really believe that if you give people healthier options that are done really well, you’ll see bigger uptake. People don’t want to be told to eat something healthy – they just want something that looks good and tastes good”

– Jon Lilley, head of culinary, Elior at Work



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Cornish alternatives in Plymouth workplaces. These preferences aren’t trivial; they’re expressions of identity and belonging that smart catering programmes recognise and respect.

Generational differences create additional complexity. While younger employees might gravitate towards global street food concepts and Instagram-worthy presentations, others may prefer familiar, traditional options. The challenge lies in creating menus that satisfy these varied expectations without compromising on quality or nutritional value.

Allergen management has evolved from accommodation to integration. Rather than creating separate, often inferior alternatives, forward-thinking caterers now design inclusive options that everyone can enjoy. This approach transforms allergy-inclusive cooking from a limitation into an opportunity for culinary innovation.

### How to meet diverse needs

Technology is playing an increasingly crucial role in managing dietary complexity. Digital ordering systems and apps provide detailed nutritional information, allergen alerts and ingredient lists, which are

empowering employees to make informed choices based on their specific requirements.

However, technology adoption varies significantly across different workforce demographics. While tech-savvy office workers readily embrace digital solutions, manufacturing and industrial workers often prefer simpler, more direct approaches. Successful inclusive catering recognises these preferences by offering multiple ways for people to access information and place orders.

The solution lies in flexible, customisable approaches. Build-your-own stations allow individuals to construct meals that meet their specific dietary, cultural or preference requirements. Street

food concepts work particularly well here as they can offer multiple proteins prepared in various ways, be it in wraps, with rice or as salads.

Menu design should focus on making inclusive choices the easy choice. In practice, that means positioning diverse options prominently, producing clear labelling and creating appealing presentations that don't segregate different dietary requirements into separate, less appealing sections.

Training plays a vital role in successful inclusive catering as well. Kitchen staff need confidence and knowledge to handle diverse dietary requirements safely and efficiently, while front-of-house teams need be equipped to answer questions and guide customers towards suitable options. This education should extend beyond basic allergen awareness to cultural sensitivity and an understanding of different dietary philosophies.

### **The future of health and wellbeing in B&I catering**

Looking ahead, the integration of personalised nutrition, sustainable food systems and workplace wellbeing strategies that provide platforms for education will continue to shape the industry. Businesses that prioritise health-conscious, ethical and technology-driven catering solutions are more likely to see enhancements to employee satisfaction, productivity and company culture

The role of technology is shifting from supporting ultra-processed alternatives, to enabling solutions that are both nutritious, sustainable and appealing. Meanwhile, regulatory changes and corporate wellness initiatives are converging to create new opportunities for contract caterers to demonstrate value beyond simply providing food.

### **It's time to elevate workplace catering**

The evidence is clear – workplace catering has evolved far beyond basic sustenance. Today's successful programmes combine nutritional expertise, sustainability credentials, cultural sensitivity and technological innovation to

create experiences that genuinely support employee wellbeing and business objectives.

Forward-thinking organisations recognise that food is a powerful lever for employee engagement, talent retention and corporate responsibility. By partnering with experienced contract caterers who understand these complex dynamics, businesses can transform their workplace dining from a necessary service into a strategic asset.

*Are you ready to explore how evolved workplace catering can support your organisation's goals? Contact Elior at Work to discover tailored solutions that align with your workforce needs, sustainability commitments, and wellness objectives.*



# Kitchen staff need confidence and knowledge to handle diverse dietary requirements

# A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Inclusive catering succeeds when it becomes part of broader workplace strategy rather than operating in isolation. This requires collaboration between catering teams, HR departments, facilities management and real estate teams to create fulfilling employee experiences.

HR teams provide crucial insights into workforce demographics, cultural celebrations and wellness priorities. Facilities teams ensure

dining spaces support inclusive experiences, while real estate considerations might influence everything from kitchen design to dining area layouts. When these functions work together, catering becomes a powerful tool for employee engagement, retention and workplace satisfaction – this is particularly important as organisations compete for talent in an increasingly diverse and competitive jobs market.



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“To get people back into the workplace, soft services have become hugely important. Offering ‘surprise and delight’ experiences – whether it’s a special pop-up or delivering something unexpected to different teams – can work really well.”

Jon Lilley, head of culinary, Elia at Work

## **[www.elioratwork.co.uk](http://www.elioratwork.co.uk)**

Elior at Work is the regional business and industry (B&I) catering brand of Elior UK, created to nourish workplaces through food, service and experiences that make a difference. Focused on innovation, wellbeing and sustainability, Elior at Work reimagines traditional office and industrial workplace catering to support modern working environments and evolving employee needs. From vibrant staff restaurants and modern coffee bars to hospitality and grab-and-go concepts, Elior at Work is committed to supercharging people at work.

As part of Elior UK and the global Elior Group, Elior at Work combines a passion for culinary excellence with the strength of a leading international operator.

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