



## CATERING MANAGER AT LISTER HOUSE

**Brian Preston, catering manager at Lister House, Royal British Legion, was crowned NACC Care Chef of the Year 2023. He started his catering career in the local fish and chip shop before moving to the Army Catering Corps at 16. After working in Germany in a number of roles, the highlight of his career was working and living at The Tower of London for the Governor General and Keeper of the Keys. Leaving the Army, his next post was executive head chef at the Harrogate Hotel before starting up his own business providing hand-made patisserie and desserts to local hotels, restaurants and caterers. After 23 years, he sought a new challenge at Lister House.**

### Why did you choose the care sector as your next challenge?

I didn't know much about the care home sector when I took the job. I thought it would be a semi-retirement post, but I was wrong. The care industry grabs you and pulls you in. It makes you innovate, change, and push yourself. It's always a challenge, but very fulfilling.

### What do you like best about your current role?

The best aspect is the residents and staff I work with. The residents are amazing, very much a captive audience, which can make the job harder but far more rewarding. The staff are wonderful individuals and every day is different. It's a humbling experience, but so gratifying.

### How did it feel to win NACC Care Chef of the Year in 2023?

Fantastic! To be judged by top industry chefs and come out on top proves that there is life in the old dog yet! You are never too old to learn. It was such an enjoyable experience and I have made some great friends. I loved every minute.

### Tell us about Royal British Legion's Lister House, the food and the philosophy behind it?

My philosophy is that the residents 'fancy what they fancy, when they fancy it'. There is no pre-ordering as the dining room is open 12 hours a day, with 24-hour food availability. Residents may only fancy egg and chips, so make it a good egg and chips! Sad as it is, the meal you serve may be the last one a resident has, so you need to make it the best you can.

### Would you encourage young people to enter the care home catering sector?

Yes I would. The care home sector is an ever-growing market with greater expectations. It offers such a wide variety of food compared to a restaurant and the hours you work give a home/work life balance. None of this is mentioned at catering colleges. You should be able to do a care home catering placement from college as with other career paths. Quality locally sourced produce, cooked well and finished with a resident's smile and an empty plate. That's what it's about.

### How do you relax?

DIY – I've done five house renovations, now I'm working on my children's properties. Reading, painting, drawing, growing my own fruit and vegetables in our garden. Annoying my wife of 41 years, without whom I wouldn't be where I am today and of course, cooking, my true passion. I'm just embarking on my daughter's wedding cake.