

Open plan temporary kitchens have been used by the prison service for a considerable period of time, during which they have undergone a significant amount of change. Lee Vines of PKL explains.

The design and specification of temporary kitchens has changed a lot since we delivered our first open plan facility to the prison service nearly 10 years ago. Many of these changes have been driven by new technologies allowing for improved facilities to be supplied, while close consultation with the prison service and catering managers has also led to developments in temporary kitchen design not only in terms of improving quality standards but ensuring compliance with health and safety legislation.

Of course, there is no standard layout for a temporary kitchen and it's important that each facility is designed and installed to meet the particular requirements of the prison in mind. To this end, dialogue between all parties at the early design stages is crucial and helps to ensure that a facility is supplied that matches the expectations of the prison kitchen staff and, more importantly, correctly services the needs of the prison.

Consultation with the prison service is an important factor that has helped to develop the design of temporary kitchens. Many considerations that have been raised at one time or another during projects over the last 10 years are now standard requirements of a temporary open plan kitchen.

Developments that have been made to temporary open plan complexes include ensuring a clear line of site through the careful engineering of the modules so that when they are assembled to create the kitchen, internal walls and supporting columns are minimised and any partitions are as low as possible. Similarly, extraction canopies are sited so as not to impair visibility.

The goods-in area is also an aspect where design has improved over the years, with strengthened floors provided to cope with heavy pallets while the inclusion of bump rails



in high traffic areas helps protect the walls from damage from trolleys.

Recent experience has also shown that if you locate heating and ventilation plant on top of the temporary building (within a plant room module) it will benefit from enhanced protection, including cladding for ductwork and a housing to protect it from the elements and bird ingress.

A more recent innovation in open plan temporary kitchen design is the option to provide tempered air. This ensures that in the morning, instead of coming into a kitchen that has had cold air circulating all night, staff will benefit from the kitchen having had warm air circulation instead.

Health and safety considerations have also evolved open plan temporary kitchen design. An illuminance of 300-500 lux lighting, combined with even illumination, provides a safe environment for food preparation and helps to reduce the risk of slips and falls. The inclusion of a small porch over entrance areas also helps to prevent slip hazards by reducing the risk of rainwater pooling. In addition, changes to legislation surrounding ventilation means that temporary facilities should be tested for a safe level of carbon monoxide emissions before they arrive onsite.

Developments in the provision of temporary facilities are not just restricted to the design of the complex, there have also been many changes to the way in which projects are delivered and handed over.

Onsite access (particularly for low loaders and cranes), and siting units in a position which ensures that there is no compromise to security on site must be given as much consideration as the actual prison design itself, while risk assessments and method statements for each area of the delivery and installation process are now often a standard requirement.

It is also important to take measures to ensure the kitchen runs smoothly from day one. To that end, staff training is vital and we have found this is particularly effective when the entire catering team and the prison Head of Works attend the training session. In this way the information is spread as widely as possible.

Post-handover service has also developed and to ensure a smooth operation in the kitchen we would advocate weekly planned preventative maintenance (PPM) visits by the kitchen provider for the first four weeks, followed by regular PPM visits thereafter. It is also helpful if operation and maintenance (O&M) manuals are located in the kitchen.

By their very nature, temporary kitchens won't be an exact match for a permanent kitchen but there is no reason why they shouldn't come extremely close to best practice design standards. By ensuring a close working relationship and constructive dialogue between the prison and the kitchen provider and by developing ideas into common design features, expectations of what can be achieved with a temporary kitchen facility should be raised from one project to the next.

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Further information can be found at www.pkl.co.uk

