



# Mealtimes Matter

Putting People First at Mealtimes



Mealtimes Matter is a regionally agreed framework to **maximise service user safety and ensure a high-quality experience *always* occurs at every meal, drink and snack time.**

## Effective communication and safe mealtime systems must include:

- ▶ **Communication at pivotal times:** Safety huddle/brief considers the needs of all individuals including those with eating, drinking and/or swallowing (EDS) difficulties, assistance needs, nutritional requirements and food allergens/intolerances.
- ▶ **A Mealtimes Coordinator** (registered nurse/nurse in charge<sup>1</sup>) who is clearly identifiable.
- ▶ **A Safety Pause** prior to serving meals, drinks or snacks.

**SAFETY PAUSE: Ask each other:**

**What service user safety issues for meal, drink or snack times do we need to be aware of today?**

## **BEFORE FOOD & DRINK, STOP & THINK!**

- ▶ **Ensuring on admission** that any Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Recommendations for Eating, Drinking and Swallowing (REDS) and allergens/intolerances are identified and communicated to all relevant staff.
- ▶ **Electronic alerts** in place to identify risks e.g. swallowing difficulties, food allergens/intolerances.
- ▶ **Signage** clearly visible and accessible – Safety Pause, Nil by Mouth (NBM), Recommendations for EDS (REDS), Supervision/Assistance, Food Allergens/Intolerances.
- ▶ **Protected mealtimes<sup>2</sup>** in place.

## The Mealtimes Coordinator MUST:

- ▶ Implement a formal process for delivering meals, drinks and snacks safely to include a food and drink **SAFETY PAUSE**.
- ▶ Clearly identify team roles and responsibilities which must include care and catering staff where appropriate.

**Care/catering staff<sup>3</sup>, i.e. the staff member(s) responsible for the service of meals, drinks and snacks MUST:**

Link with the Mealtimes Coordinator and follow the formal process for the safe provision of meals, drinks and snacks.

1 See Appendix 1 below for further information on the Role and Responsibilities of the Mealtimes Coordinator.

2 Protected Mealtimes definition: Service users are not interrupted during mealtime, unless it is clinically necessary.

3 [Roles and responsibilities leaflet](#)

## MENU ORDER

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- ▶ Menu order must be completed fully and accurately:
  - Correct service user name
  - Using correct ordering process, e.g. tablet, coded menu card, paper-based menu
  - Assisting service users with personal preferences and choice selection, including communication support where required
  - Consider ordering snacks for service users with reduced appetite
- ▶ Identify any:
  - REDS: - Recommendations for Eating, Drinking and Swallowing
  - Food allergens/intolerances
  - Nutrition and hydration requirements
  - Supervision and assistance needed
- ▶ Ensure completed menus are communicated to the catering office as per local protocol.

## BEFORE MEALTIMES

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### The Mealtimes Coordinator leads the meal, drink or snack service and ENSURES:

- ▶ A food and drink **Safety Pause** is undertaken prior to the serving of meals, drinks and snacks.
- ▶ Service users are offered support, if required, to use the bathroom prior to mealtimes.
- ▶ Hand hygiene is attended to as appropriate.
- ▶ Service users are in a comfortable upright position, medical needs are met e.g. oxygen requirements.
- ▶ Noise and distractions are reduced as much as possible.
- ▶ Appropriate eating and drinking environment is set up, e.g. bed tables are cleared and positioned correctly.
- ▶ Provision of adapted plates or cutlery, SLT recommended cup or beaker and protective napkin where required.

### Care/catering staff responsible for the service of meals, drinks and snacks MUST:

- ▶ Work alongside the Mealtimes Coordinator and be clear about the formal process for preparing, serving and delivering meals, drinks and snacks safely.
- ▶ Be fully informed of the individuals up-to-date EDS needs **before** serving or assisting with meals, drinks and snacks.



## DURING MEALTIMES

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- ▶ The right meal is served to the right service user and corresponds with:
  - ▶ Individual choice
  - ▶ Correct level of supportive assistance to eat and drink
  - ▶ SLT Recommendations for EDS (REDS), including supervision level as required
  - ▶ Allergens/intolerances
  - ▶ Nutritional requirements: special diets, high energy snacks, **'Food First Guidance'**
- ▶ Suitable and safe alternatives are offered to service users who refuse or miss their meal, in line with any individual eating, drinking and swallowing recommendations.
- ▶ Drinks are offered to service users with meals, in line with any EDS recommendations (REDS) and if necessary, thickened by an appropriately trained member of staff.

### Care/catering staff responsible for the service of meals, drinks and snacks MUST:

- ▶ Present food attractively.
- ▶ Ensure that seasoning, sauces and cutlery are served alongside the meal.

## AFTER MEALTIMES:

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### Care/catering staff responsible for the service of meals, drinks and snacks MUST:

- ▶ Exchange feedback with the Mealtimes Coordinator.
- ▶ Report any problems to the Catering Supervisor/Manager.

### Mealtimes Coordinator must ensure that:

- ▶ Service users are satisfied with their meal and communicate any issues to the nurse in charge and to catering staff.
- ▶ Service user intake of food/fluids (specifics of amount and volume) is recorded accurately, as required.
- ▶ Thickeners, food and drinks posing a risk to service users are stored safely.
- ▶ Mouth care is offered to service users as appropriate.

## SUPPLEMENTARY SUPPORTIVE GUIDANCE:

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- ▶ [Roles and Responsibilities leaflet](#) – 'Are you caring for someone with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties? What is your role and responsibility in supporting the safety of people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties?'



## Appendix 1 - Role and Responsibilities of the Mealtimes Coordinator

**Please note:** The Mealtimes Coordinator **must** be allocated at the beginning of every shift (including evening and night shifts) and be clearly identifiable to all staff.

### Who is the Mealtimes Coordinator?

- ▶ In all hospital settings the Mealtimes Coordinator is a **registered nurse**, usually the nurse-in-charge, who has knowledge of service users dietary and eating, drinking and swallowing (EDS) needs.
- ▶ In other settings where there is no registered nurse, the Mealtimes Coordinator must be a senior healthcare assistant/social care worker, who has knowledge of service users dietary and EDS needs.
- ▶ In circumstances where the Mealtimes Coordinator is called to deal with an emergency, the role may be re-allocated to another appropriate member of staff as above, who has knowledge of service users dietary and EDS needs.

### The Mealtimes Coordinator is responsible for:

- ▶ Ensuring they have full understanding of all service user safety issues for meals, drinks or snacks before service.
- ▶ Implementing a formal process for delivering meals, drinks and snacks safely in line with the Mealtimes Matter Framework.
- ▶ Leading a **Food and Drink Safety Pause** before every meal, drink or snack service (including tea trolley and water jugs). This must involve the whole team, including care and catering staff, asking:

*“What service user safety issues for meal, drink or snack times do we need to be aware of today?”*

- ▶ Ensuring any safety concerns are communicated clearly to all relevant members of the team.
- ▶ Identifying any issues in relation to the provision of meals, drinks and snacks and escalate to the appropriate manager within Catering/Nursing.
- ▶ Completing a Datix form for any incidents around the safe provisions of meals, drinks and snacks, including near misses.