



Patient Protected Mealtimes Policy

Document Summary

To ensure the Trust meets its legal duty to comply with the Food Safety Act 1990 and all subordinate legislation.

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POLICY AUTHOR	Head of Facilities

Important Note:

The Intranet version of this document is the only version that is maintained.

Any printed copies should therefore be viewed as “uncontrolled” and, as such, may not necessarily contain the latest updates and amendments.





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1. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff, whether they are directly employed by Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust staff, are under contract, or are employed as part of a Service Level Agreement.

It identifies the requirements of Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to ensure that:

- Patient mealtimes are protected from unnecessary and avoidable interruption.
- An environment is provided conducive to eating.
- Staff provide assistance and support to patients/clients with meals, placing food first at mealtimes.

2. INTRODUCTION

Mealtimes are not only a vehicle to provide patients/clients with adequate nutrition but also provide an opportunity to support social interaction amongst patients/clients. The therapeutic role of food within the healing process cannot be underestimated. However, food even if it is of the highest quality, is only of any value if the patient/client actually eats it!

Clinical areas where meals are served often adopt different approaches to mealtimes; can vary both between wards & from day to day. In addition there are a number of environmental factors, which may influence whether a patient/client eats or not.

A greater understanding in the importance of the patient meal experience and nutritional requirements are increasing within the wider healthcare team. Food and the service of food are now regarded by many as an essential part of treatment.

It has been estimated that up to 40% of adults show signs of malnutrition on admission to hospital. It can also often be their stay that exacerbates the condition. Certain groups of patients, such as the elderly, have particular dietary and eating requirements that need to be met to prevent malnutrition and to aid recovery.

The ward environment, presentation of food and the timing and content of meals are important elements in encouraging patients to eat well. The importance of mealtimes needs to be re-emphasised and ward based staff given the opportunity to focus on the nutritional requirements of patients at mealtimes.

3. STATEMENT OF INTENT

Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust will ensure that this policy is brought to the attention of all staff within the Trust.

The purpose of a Protected Mealtime Policy is to protect mealtimes from unnecessary and avoidable interruptions, providing an environment conducive to eating, assisting staff to provide patients/clients with support and assistance with meals, placing food first at mealtimes.



A Protected Mealtimes Policy will also seek to provide a framework for mealtimes without stifling new ways of working, placing the patient/client at the centre of the mealtime experience.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1. Director of Performance and Development

- The Director of Performance is the accountable Director for this policy.

4.2. Head of Facilities

- The Manager has ultimate responsibility for the implementation, control, monitoring and review of this policy.
- He/she will ensure that the policy and workplace standards are monitored through PLACE inspections, and ward observational assessments.

4.3. Head Cook/Catering Supervisor/Housekeeping Supervisor

- He/she has the overall responsibility to ensure that the Catering Department provide ward meals within the target time, promotion the success of the patient protected meals times.

4.4. Facilities Coordinator – Compliance

- He/she must provide additional assurance monitoring of the compliance to support the CQC requirements, by completing the ward observational assessments.

4.5. Ward Manager/Sister

- He/she will ensure that staff receives training on the patient protected mealtimes policy within their local induction.
- He/she will ensure that all recommendations from PLACE inspections and ward observational audits in relation to patient protected mealtimes are acted upon.
- He/she has the day to day responsibility for supervising and ensuring the ward staff are compliant in completing their responsibilities as laid out by this policy.

4.6. All Ward Based Staff

- He/she is to ensure that their training for this policy is kept up to date
- He/she must follow the guidelines stipulated in this policy.



5. POLICY CONTENT

In order to maximise the benefits to patients, from the mealtime experience, clinical staff are required to prepare themselves, the environment and their patients/clients prior to the service of food.

The main aims of this policy are:

- To improve the “meal experience” for patients by allowing them to eat meals without disruption.
- To improve the nutritional care of patients by supporting the consumption of food.
- To support ward based teams in the delivery of food at mealtimes.
- To ensure that mealtimes are a key social activity for patients.

The following principles should be adopted in all clinical areas where patients/clients receive food. However, it is acknowledged that in a number of clinical settings patients/clients manage their own mealtime preparations.

Protected mealtimes are periods when all ward based activities (where appropriate) stop to enable nurses, ward based teams, catering staff and volunteers to serve food and give assistance and support to patients.

Patients should be able to eat their food in a relaxed environment, at their own pace and rest afterwards.

5.1. General Guidelines

- Nursing staff will make food a priority during mealtimes, providing assistance and encouraging patients to eat, being aware of how much food is eaten and identifying patients nutritionally at risk.
- Ward based teams will organise their own mealtimes to maximise the number of staff available to deliver and assist patients/clients with food.
- Where appropriate, ward based teams will provide patients/clients with assistance to use the toilet prior to the service of food.
- Prior to the service of food all patients/clients will be given the opportunity to wash their hands.
- Patients/clients will be made comfortable prior to the service of meals, with food served within a comfortable reach, patients/clients supported by an appropriate eating position.
- Patients requiring assistance with food will be identified to the ward/unit team prior to the service of meals.
- The ward may consider closing to visitors during mealtimes, but there must be a general agreed approach to mealtimes. The patient/client and their relatives should be made aware of the mealtime policy as soon after admission as is reasonably possible.
- Interruptions e.g. drug rounds, cleaning, documentation and therapy will only occur (during mealtimes) when clinically appropriate.

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- Staff directly involved with patients/clients at meal times will avoid answering the telephones. Clinical areas may consider diverting telephones at meal times.
 - Consideration will be given to where patients/clients sit to eat their meals, supporting the social aspects of mealtimes whilst respecting the preferences of the individual.
 - Each table will be clean and suitably prepared prior to the service of food and beverages, with appropriate place mats, cutlery, crockery and condiments.
 - Bed tables and eating areas will be cleared (prior to the service of food) of items not conducive to mealtimes e.g. urine bottles and used dressings.
 - Evidence to support that this procedure is in place, will be collated via PEAT audits and Ward observational audits. Staff are to assist the auditor by allowing access when required.

5.2. Communications

- The principle of a Protected Mealtime needs to be established within the ward routine and structured day.
- Appropriate signage should be developed and displayed outside the ward, to inform staff and visitors of the protected meal time period.
Example provided in Appendix 1.
- Staff must also be aware of the needs of their patients, carers and visitors and actively provide information in different languages and/or formats to effectively address as necessary.
- Medical staff and other healthcare professionals should be consulted in changes to ward routines to ensure patient care is enhanced.
- Staff should be aware of the Essence of Care, Food and Nutrition benchmark, the importance of patient nutrition and the environmental impact in food consumption.
- The principles of Protected Mealtimes should be included into the induction training for all staff.
- Communicating the principles of protected mealtimes to visitors and carers should not be overlooked. Carers and visitors can support patients/clients with food and should be supported in this role.
- Emphasise the importance of teamwork and co-operation between Catering/Facilities staff and ward based teams.
- Support ward based teams in the policing of the Protected Mealtimes Policy.



6. TRAINING

Training required to fulfil this policy will be provided by the Ward Manager/Sister during local induction.

The management of training will be in accordance with the Trusts Learning and Development Policy.

7. MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY

The table below outlines the Trusts' monitoring arrangements for this policy/ document. The Trust reserves the right to commission additional work or change the monitoring arrangements to meet organisational needs.

Aspect of compliance or effectiveness being monitored	Monitoring method	Individual responsible for the monitoring	Frequency of the monitoring activity	Group / committee which will receive the findings / monitoring report	Group / committee / individual responsible for ensuring that the actions are completed
Mealtimes are provided free from avoidable and unnecessary interruptions	PLACE Audit	Facilities Coordinator	Annual	PLACE team Facilities Management Group	Head of Facilities
Staff to provide patients with support at mealtimes	Food Safety Audit Ward observational audit	Facilities Coordinator	Annual Ongoing	Facilities Management Group	Head of Facilities
Staff awareness of this policy.	Local Induction Checklists Signatures	Ward Manager Facilities Coordinator	Staff Employment On going	Facilities Management Group	Ward Manager



8. REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cumbria Partnership Patient Protected Mealtimes Policy (2015)
- Department of Health, Essence of Care, Food and Nutrition benchmark
- Care Quality Commission Guidance (March 2010)
- European Nutrition for Health Alliance (2008) Malnutrition

9. RELATED TRUST POLICY/PROCEDURES

- Privacy and Dignity Policy



APPENDIX 1 - SIGNAGE



This Ward Operates a *Protected Mealtimes* Service

At Lunch from to

AND

at Supper from to

**Please avoid entering the ward or
visiting during mealtimes**

Please speak to the nurse in charge for more information

Patient Protected Mealtimes Policy

