

Protected Mealtimes Policy

DRAFT 7 [Jan 2012] SG

Approved by: 

On: 

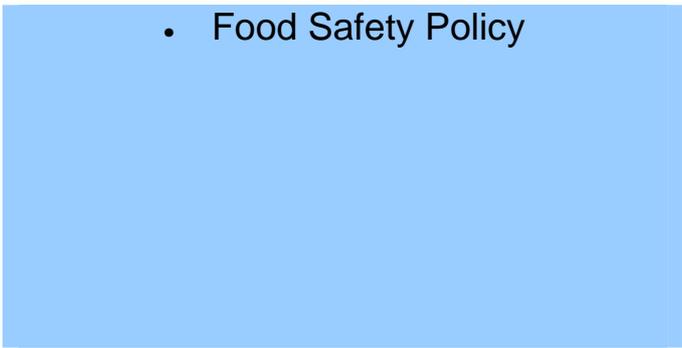
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To be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Food Safety Policy



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1 Introduction to Protected Mealtimes

- a. Protected Mealtimes are periods when patients are allowed to eat their meals without unnecessary interruptions and when nursing staff and the ward team are able to provide greater levels of assistance and support to meet patient's nutritional and hydration requirements.
- b. The therapeutic role of food within the healing process is well documented. Food, and the service of food, is now regarded by many as an essential part of treatment.
- c. Approximately (up to 50% surgical and 44% medical) of adults show signs of malnutrition on admission to hospital and often their stay exacerbates their condition. 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-emphasized and ward based staff given the opportunity to focus on the nutritional requirements of patients at mealtimes.
- d. Clinical areas where meals are served often adopt different approaches to mealtimes and in addition a number of environmental factors may influence whether a patient eats or not. The adoption of a consistent approach within the organization (with an appropriate implementation strategy) is more likely to ensure visiting professionals and relatives will understand the benefits of Protected Mealtimes and therefore are more likely to comply with the initiative.
- e. Members of Allied Health Professional teams will be able to gain access more readily to nursing staff when visiting wards outside mealtimes, as the delivery of food and support of patients unable to feed themselves is a time consuming job.

2 Purpose of policy

- a. The Trust accepts its responsibility to provide Protected Mealtimes for all patients across all inpatient areas placing the patient at the centre of the mealtime experience.
- b. This policy is to protect mealtimes from unnecessary and avoidable interruptions, providing an environment conducive to eating and allowing relevant staff to provide patients with support and assistance with meals. The policy places food and its delivery first at mealtimes

3 Scope

The intention of the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and the Chief Executive is to ensure compliance with the Protected Meal Times Policy at

- The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital
- The Princess Royal Hospital

4 Aims of Protected Mealtimes

- a. To provide a calm and peaceful environment conducive to the enjoyment of a meal on the ward allowing patients to eat their meals without disruption
- b. To ensure that patient mealtimes and the importance of nutritional care are respected across the organisation.
- c. To focus ward activities into the service of food, providing patients with support at mealtimes.
- d. To increase the understanding of all staff, patients and visitors on the importance of mealtimes as part of care and treatment for patients.

5 Executive summary

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

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 without non time critical interruptions (all essential and urgent care will still be met)

Interventions by all staff that are non urgent should be planned to avoid mealtimes. All areas should collaborate with colleagues to identify such instances and agree local arrangements. In appropriate enforcement of the ethos captured in this policy must be avoided so that other aspects of patients care are not affected.

The ward should consider restricting visitors during mealtimes unless prior arrangements are made for the visitor/relative to provide assistance and each ward must agree an approach which is conducive to the needs of the patients. [Refer to 7 (e)] The patient and their relatives should be made aware of the mealtime arrangements as soon after admission as is reasonably possible. Relatives should be informed in a sensitive manner of the importance of nutrition and they should not be made to feel unwelcome at mealtimes if they wish to support the meeting of the nutritional needs of the person they are visiting. Inclusion of this information into patient information leaflet is essential. **See Appendix B(i)**

6 PROTECTED MEALTIMES AND FOOD SERVICE CODE OF PRACTICE

Keeping nourished-getting better is about identifying individuals at risk of being malnourished, providing good nutritional care and stopping inappropriate weight loss and dehydration in NHS provided care

Better Nutrition and Hydration means better health and faster healing, recovery and reduced length of stay

The following principles should be adopted in all clinical areas where patients receive food.

- a. Nursing staff on the ward are asked to promote protected mealtimes by prioritizing the provision of food and nutritional care at mealtimes. Ward based teams should organize their own mealtimes to maximize the number of staff available to deliver and assist patients/clients with food.
- b. It is important to ensure that all menus are checked before sending to the kitchen to ensure the correct diet has been chosen and the appropriate tick box is completed for patients requiring assistance with feeding. These Patients will have their meal served on a red tray. Staff providing assistance with feeding should be identified before the meal times.
- c. Staff must be mindful of patients who are at risk with a swallowing difficulty and adhere to altered textures menus as indicated above the bed on yellow [by Speech and Language Therapist] or Green [by a Dysphagia Link Nurse].
- d. All available staff [qualified and unqualified staff should participate in the meal service].
- e. Where appropriate, ward based teams will provide patients with assistance to use the toilet prior to the service of food.
- f. All patients must be given the opportunity to wash their hands before eating or be provided with hand wipes.
Staff must also wash their hands prior to handling or serving food and put on a green disposable apron.
- g. Patient's bedside tables should be clean and suitably prepared prior to the service of food and beverages. They must be cleared of items not conducive to mealtimes e.g. urine bottles, used tissues, magazines.
- h. Patients should be made comfortable in an appropriate eating position and with food served within a comfortable reach. Patients should be provided with appropriate equipment where necessary e.g. adapted cutlery.
- i. Ward based activities, both clinical (i.e. drug rounds) and non-clinical (i.e. cleaning tasks) should where possible be limited to those that are relevant to mealtimes or 'essential' to patient care.
- j. The ward should be welcoming, clean and tidy. Patients should be able to eat their food in a relaxed environment, at their own pace, and rest afterwards should they chose.
- k. The cultural beliefs for those patients who carry out specific religious practices e.g. Fasting must be given consideration and appropriate arrangements should be made to ensure their needs are accommodated during the meal service.
- l. The presentation of the meal served is important and staff must work together to ensure that the meal served to each patient is presented in a manner that is pleasing to the eye and encourages the patient to eat it.
- m. Ward staff must ensure Food and Fluid charts are completed after meal times.
- n. Patients should be offered at least 7 beverages each day.

Training and Staff Awareness

- a. The principle of a Protected Mealtime will be established within the ward routine and structured day. It will be developed in conjunction with the meals module of productive ward.
- b. Appropriate Posters will be displayed outside the ward, to inform staff and visitors of the protected mealtime period. (**Appendix A**)
- c. Medical staff and other healthcare professionals will be consulted in changes to ward routines to ensure they have a full understanding of the purpose of the Protected Mealtime initiative.
- d. The principles of Protected Mealtimes are included in **Induction and Statutory training** for all staff. (**Appendix C**).
- e. Communicating the principles of protected mealtimes to visitors and carers is important. Carers and visitors can support patients with food and will be supported in this role if it is deemed appropriate for the patient, and the carers/visitors wish to provide that support. A patient leaflet will be provided to patients and visitors and a poster will be displayed at the entrance to the ward (**Appendix A&B(i)**). Information in relation to protected mealtimes will also be included in relevant ward information pages on the intranet, and “ward welcome packs”.
- f. Incident reporting [DATIX] should be used to identify when patients are being brought in inappropriate food or drink. [Refer to Food Safety Policy Code of Practice 13].

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Compliance.

- a. This policy applies to all staff and managers working within the Trust who require to visit wards as part of their work. It is accepted that there may be exceptional circumstances where compliance with this policy would not be appropriate. Such examples will include (but not limited to) the clinical deterioration of a patient or significant operational pressures.
- b. The importance of teamwork and co-operation between ward based teams and Catering/Facilities staff is essential. All staff must work together to ensure the success of the Protected Mealtime initiative so that patients have a calm and where possible uninterrupted meal experience.
- c. All Staff are required to comply with the Code of Practice for Protected Mealtimes which is also included in **Appendix C** as a training handout. A staff information leaflet is also available **Appendix B(ii)**

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Review Procedure

- a. This policy will be reviewed regularly through the Nutritional Steering Group at least once per year following its adoption as a Trust Board policy.
- b. Chief Nurse/Director of Quality and Safety will assume responsibility for the Trust Health board Protected Mealtimes Policy

This policy must be read in conjunction with

- **SaTH Food Safety Policy**

It is the intention of the Trust to ensure this policy meets the requirements of:

- *Department of Health Essence of Care, Food and Nutrition benchmark*
- *NHS Estates, Housekeeping Project (England) - “get the basic right” so that food is enjoyable and enjoyed.*
- *NHS Plan (England) – things the public wanted to see – better facilities, higher standards of cleanliness and better food.*
- *Standards for Better Health*
 - *National Patient Safety Agency Fact Sheet 02 Implementation of Protected mealtimes to provide an environment conducive to patients enjoying and being able to eat their food.*

Protected Mealtimes is supported by:

- *The British Dietetic Association (BDA)*
- *The Patients Association*
- *Royal College of Physicians – a Doctors Responsibility 2002*
- *Royal college of Nursing*
- *British Association for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, Hospital Food as Treatment 1999*
- *Age Concern - Hungry to be Heard Campaign 2007*
- *“Don’t go Hungry in Hospital’ Council of European Resolution, Food and Nutritional Care in Hospitals*