

BRAIN BOOSTER

BY FUSION

**THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD DINING
EXPERIENCE IN CARE SETTINGS**

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THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD DINING EXPERIENCE IN CARE SETTINGS



For many of us, mealtimes are an important part of our daily routine. Whether it's a chance to sit down with family and catch up on the events of the day or take some time to “down tools” and grab a bite in peace.

They're about more than simply satisfying our appetites – although, of course, that's important too! They're social occasions, quality time, or a break from the task in hand. For care home residents, mealtimes can be even more important.

A good dining experience can help enhance social interaction, build a sense of community and increase nutritional intake – all of which contribute to mental and physical well-being.

You are what you eat...

While we're focusing on the elements that make up a positive dining experience, this doesn't take away from the importance of providing a variety of good quality, nutritious food for each meal and ensuring residents are sufficiently hydrated.

The dining experience is an opportunity for residents to experience the independence they once knew and still desire. Through appropriate meal consistency, a comfortable dining room setting and coordination of the total care home team, these goals can be reached. The resident benefits from the dining experience, while through observation, the care home staff gain more insight into the individual needs of residents.

Dining can be a focal point of the residents' day, an opportunity to socialise, interact and enjoy a well-presented, tasty and nutritious meal. The dining room environment plays an important part in ensuring that this is achieved.



What does the dining room look like?

- ▶ Are the tables laid up using napkins, table cloths including any table decoration, i.e. flowers where available?
- ▶ Are condiments available on the tables?
- ▶ Are the chairs and tables arranged to allow easy movement around the dining room and socialising for residents?
- ▶ Is there discrete suitable music playing to create a calm ambience?



Serving the meal



- › Do staff serve the meals to each table at a time?
- › Is the food well presented? Does it look appetising?
- › Can the staff identify from the menu the food they are serving?
- › Is the portion size correct for each resident?
- › Is the temperature of the food suitable for each resident?
- › Are discreet napkins/clothes protectors used only where care planned?

➤ Modified diets:

- Are modified diets labelled by the catering staff with the resident's name & IDDSI level?



➤ Menus and choice:

- Menus should be available in the dining room. Residents may have forgotten what they have chosen for their meal, staff can use these to remind them. Residents may change their mind as to what they want to eat, this should be accommodated.

➤ Memory Care:

- Residents in memory care settings can be presented with show plates to support them with meal choice.

➤ Drinks:

- A selection of drinks should be available to all residents, i.e. water, squash, wine, beer, fruit juice.
Please ensure IDDSI levels are met for those on modified food/drink, and they are offered the same drinks as others.



Residents requiring support to eat and drink must be supported discretely and as soon as their food is served to them. A napkin or cloth should be available for the residents to wipe their mouth as needed. For further information please see [Fusion Brain Booster..... Supporting residents to eat and drink safely.](#)

Observing and supporting the dining room experience

- Observation of the mealtime experience must take place for all meals, ideally by the shift leader or an allocated senior member of the care team. This team member should be present and alert in the dining room to ensure residents remain safe, receive the correct meal and to liaise with the catering team.
- The dining room should be a calm and relaxing place where residents can choose where they sit and who they sit with. The meal service should be unrushed, and staff should not be rushing to clear plates where residents have finished their meal if other on the table are still eating.





- Serving groups seated together at the same time ensures that they can enjoy their meals at the same pace. Encouraging conversation and interaction between residents is important and staff should not be talking to each other across the dining room.
- Staff should encourage residents if they are not eating their meal, and rather than *'come on Fred eat some more'* it is better to say *'Why don't you try some of this Fred?'*
- When plates are removed from the table they should be taken to an appropriate area and quietly stacked on a clearing trolley. All crockery & cutlery must be returned to the kitchen to be washed and sanitised through the main dishwasher.

Residents eating in their rooms:

➤ **These residents should have their meals delivered as a tray service:**

- **The tray must be set up with napkin, tray cloth/doily, cutlery, a glass and condiments**
- **One course at a time should be taken to their room to ensure food is served at the correct temperature**
- **The resident's name (not room number) must be used to establish who the food is for**
- **Staff serving food to residents in their room, including those residents at risk of choking, must ensure that they are in a suitable position to eat safely and can access their meal easily**
- **Trays should be cleared in a timely manner and drinks offered (ensuring any IDDSI requirements are met)**

➤ Feedback:

- Mealtimes should be an interactive experience between residents and Chefs. Chefs should be visible in the dining areas, supporting the presentation of the food and actively seeking feedback from residents and staff.

➤ Protected Mealtimes:

- Protecting mealtimes from unnecessary and avoidable interruptions will provide an environment conducive to eating and enable staff to provide residents with support and assistance with their meals.

Care staff can focus on the meal and nutritional needs of each resident, and be able to support, assist and monitor each person as required with their eating and drinking undistracted.

This will ensure individual nutritional and hydration needs are being met and care plans and assessments can be updated and be reflective of a resident's current needs.

More than just a meal



Recognising the importance of a good dining experience is essential for care providers aiming to deliver holistic, person-centred support. By prioritising not only what is served but how it is served, care settings can enhance both nutritional outcomes and emotional wellbeing, ultimately improving the daily lives of those in their care.