



FlexiLearnHub

Knowledge Hub

Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Helping Someone Eat and Drink

A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 006

Version 1.0

First Published: July 2026



www.flexilearnhub.com

Part of the FlexiLearnHub Professional Knowledge Library

About This Resource

Helping Someone Eat and Drink Safely

A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Supporting Safe, Dignified and Person-Centred Mealtimes

Supporting an individual during meals is an important responsibility for care staff. A calm, respectful and person-centred approach can help promote confidence, dignity and a positive mealtime experience while ensuring care is delivered in accordance with the individual's documented care plan.

This guide has been developed by **FlexiLearnHub** to provide professional awareness of good mealtime support for individuals who may require assistance with eating and drinking. It complements workplace training and should be used alongside organisational policies, documented care plans and guidance from appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

Purpose of this Resource

This guide has been designed to help readers:

- ✓ Understand the importance of creating a safe and supportive mealtime environment.
 - ✓ Recognise the role of care staff in promoting dignity and independence.
 - ✓ Understand the importance of following agreed care plans.
 - ✓ Appreciate the value of observation, communication and teamwork.
 - ✓ Promote safe, respectful and person-centred mealtime support.
-

Suitable For

- Care Assistants
 - Senior Carers
 - Nurses
 - Care Home Managers
 - Support Workers
 - Healthcare Assistants
 - Catering Teams
 - Family Carers
-

Important Information

This guide provides professional awareness only. Care staff should always follow the individual's documented care plan, organisational policies and procedures, and any guidance provided by appropriately qualified healthcare professionals. Staff should not change food textures, drink consistencies or mealtime support arrangements without appropriate authorisation.

Continue Learning

Expand your knowledge through the **FlexiLearnHub Dysphagia Awareness & IDDSI Framework Training, Supporting Safe Mealtimes for People with Dysphagia**, and **Advanced IDDSI Level 4 Professional Purée Presentation & Plating Training**.

Visit:

www.flexilearnhub.com

Creating a Safe Mealtime Environment

Preparing for a Positive Mealtime

A calm, comfortable and well-prepared environment can help individuals feel more relaxed and confident during meals. Taking a few moments to prepare before food and drinks are served can contribute to a safer and more enjoyable mealtime experience.

Good preparation also helps care staff provide consistent, person-centred support while following the individual's documented care plan.

Before the Meal Begins

Good practice includes:

- ✓ Checking the individual's documented care plan before providing assistance.
 - ✓ Ensuring the correct meal and drinks have been provided.
 - ✓ Creating a calm environment with as few distractions as possible.
 - ✓ Encouraging good hand hygiene in accordance with local procedures.
 - ✓ Making sure the individual is comfortable and ready for their meal.
-

Promoting Comfort and Dignity

Every individual should be treated with dignity, respect and patience.

Taking time to communicate clearly, explain what is happening and allow the individual to eat at their own pace can help create a more positive mealtime experience.

Supporting independence wherever it is safe and appropriate also helps maintain confidence and wellbeing.

Good Practice

Care staff should always:

- ✓ Follow the individual's documented care plan.
 - ✓ Respect personal preferences wherever possible.
 - ✓ Encourage independence when appropriate.
 - ✓ Remain patient, calm and supportive throughout the meal.
 - ✓ Work closely with colleagues to provide consistent care.
-

Remember

A safe mealtime begins before the first mouthful is taken. Good preparation, a calm environment and person-centred support all contribute to a positive dining experience.

Good Practice Reminder

Every mealtime should promote:

 **Safety**

 **Dignity**

 **Comfort**

 **Respect**

 **Person-Centred Care**

Supporting Individuals During Meals

Providing Calm and Respectful Support

Every individual should be supported in a way that promotes dignity, confidence and independence. Some people may require only occasional encouragement, while others may need more assistance. The level of support provided should always reflect the individual's documented care plan and assessed needs.

Mealtimes should never feel rushed. Allowing individuals sufficient time to eat and drink at their own pace helps create a more relaxed and enjoyable experience.

Encouraging Independence

Where it is safe and appropriate, individuals should be encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves.

Supporting independence may help maintain confidence, preserve existing skills and promote a sense of choice and control.

Care staff should always provide assistance in accordance with the individual's care plan and organisational procedures.

Good Communication

Simple, clear and respectful communication can help individuals feel reassured during meals.

Good communication includes:

- ✓ Speaking calmly and clearly.
- ✓ Offering encouragement where appropriate.
- ✓ Listening to the individual's wishes and preferences.
- ✓ Respecting cultural, religious and personal food choices.
- ✓ Working together with colleagues to provide consistent support.

Good Practice

Care staff should always:

- ✓ Follow the individual's documented care plan.
- ✓ Respect the individual's preferred pace.
- ✓ Promote dignity and privacy.
- ✓ Encourage independence where appropriate.
- ✓ Remain observant throughout the meal.

Remember

Providing support during mealtimes is about much more than helping someone eat. It is about promoting dignity, respecting individual choices and creating a positive, person-centred experience.

Good Practice Reminder

Excellent mealtime support promotes:

❤️ **Respect**

😊 **Confidence**

🍽️ **Safety**

🤝 **Independence**

☀️ **Person-Centred Care**

Working as One Team

Providing high-quality mealtime support is a shared responsibility. Care staff, catering teams, nurses, managers and other healthcare professionals all contribute to creating a safe and positive dining experience.

Good communication between team members helps ensure that agreed care plans are followed consistently and that individuals receive the support they need.

Observation, Communication and Reporting

Remaining Observant During Mealtimes

Care staff play an important role in recognising when an individual's eating or drinking appears different from usual. Remaining observant during and after meals helps ensure that any concerns are shared promptly with the appropriate member of the care team.

Care staff should always follow their organisation's reporting procedures and the individual's documented care plan.

The Importance of Communication

Good communication between care staff, catering teams, nurses, managers and healthcare professionals helps ensure that everyone involved in supporting the individual is working from the same agreed information.

Sharing observations promptly contributes to consistent, person-centred care and helps maintain safe mealtime practices.

Recording Information

Where required by your organisation, relevant observations should be recorded accurately, clearly and promptly.

Good record keeping supports continuity of care and helps ensure that important information is available to those involved in the individual's care.

Always follow your organisation's policies and procedures when completing care records.

Good Practice

Care staff should always:

- ✓ Remain observant throughout the meal.
 - ✓ Report concerns promptly using agreed procedures.
 - ✓ Record relevant information accurately where required.
 - ✓ Work closely with colleagues to maintain consistent care.
 - ✓ Continue following the individual's documented care plan.
-

Remember

Good observation and effective communication help ensure individuals receive the right support at the right time. Small observations, when shared appropriately, can contribute to safer and more person-centred care.

Good Practice Reminder

Every mealtime should include:

 **Observation**

 **Communication**

 **Accurate Recording**

 **Teamwork**

 **Person-Centred Care**

Supporting Continuous Quality Care

Providing excellent mealtime support is an ongoing responsibility. By remaining observant, communicating effectively and following agreed care plans, care staff help create a safer, more positive dining experience while supporting dignity, wellbeing and quality of life.

Continue Your Learning

Continuing Professional Development

Supporting individuals during mealtimes requires compassion, observation and a commitment to person-centred care. By continuing to develop your knowledge and following agreed care plans, care staff can help promote safer eating and drinking while maintaining dignity, comfort and wellbeing.

Professional learning, combined with effective teamwork and good communication, helps ensure individuals receive the highest standards of care.

Continue Your Learning with FlexiLearnHub

Expand your knowledge through our growing range of CPD-accredited and CQC-aligned online training courses, including:

- ✓ Dysphagia Awareness & the IDDSI Framework
- ✓ Advanced IDDSI Level 4 Professional Purée Presentation & Plating
- ✓ Nutrition & Hydration in Care Settings
- ✓ Food Safety & Hygiene Level 2
- ✓ HACCP Level 2
- ✓ Infection Prevention & Control
- ✓ Dementia Awareness
- ✓ End of Life Care Awareness

Courses designed to support continuous professional development, workplace compliance and excellence in care and catering.

Related Knowledge Hub Resources

Continue exploring the **FlexiLearnHub Dysphagia & IDDSI Awareness Series**:

Available Now



Resource 002

Understanding the IDDSI Framework – A Quick Reference Guide for Care Staff



Resource 003

Recognising the Signs of Dysphagia – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff



Resource 004

Supporting Safe Mealtimes for People with Dysphagia – A Good Practice Guide for Care Staff



Resource 005

Texture-Modified Food Awareness – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff



Resource 006

Helping Someone Eat and Drink Safely – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Together, these free professional resources provide a practical awareness pathway to help care staff, catering teams and healthcare professionals promote safer eating, dignity and person-centred mealtime support.

Visit FlexiLearnHub

Explore our free professional resources and CPD-accredited online training at:

www.flexilearnhub.com

About FlexiLearnHub

FlexiLearnHub provides professional online training, downloadable workplace resources and practical awareness guides for the care, catering and hospitality sectors.

Our mission is to make high-quality learning accessible, practical and affordable while supporting safer workplaces, continuous professional development and excellence in care.



Copyright

© 2026 ASL Catering Agency Ltd trading as FlexiLearnHub.

This publication may be downloaded and printed for internal workplace learning and staff development. It may not be copied, altered, reproduced for commercial purposes or redistributed without the written permission of FlexiLearnHub.

Publication Information

Knowledge Hub Resource 006

Version 1.0

First Published: July 2026
