



FlexiLearnHub

Knowledge Hub

Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Supporting Individuals with a Poor Appetite

A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 009

Version 1.0

First Published: July 2026



www.flexilearnhub.com

Part of the FlexiLearnHub Professional Knowledge Lib

About This Resource

Supporting Individuals with a Poor Appetite

A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Supporting Nutrition, Wellbeing and Person-Centred Care

Some individuals living in care settings may experience a reduced appetite for a variety of reasons. A poor appetite can affect nutritional intake, enjoyment of meals and overall wellbeing. Care staff have an important role in creating positive mealtime experiences, encouraging healthy eating where appropriate and remaining observant to any changes.

This guide has been developed by **FlexiLearnHub** to provide professional awareness of supporting individuals with a poor appetite. 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 why some individuals may experience a poor appetite.
 - ✓ Appreciate the importance of encouraging positive mealtime experiences.
 - ✓ Recognise the role of care staff in supporting good nutrition.
 - ✓ Understand the importance of observation, communication and reporting.
 - ✓ Promote person-centred care that supports dignity, choice and wellbeing.
-

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 when supporting nutrition. Any concerns regarding changes in appetite, eating habits or general wellbeing should be reported promptly in accordance with local procedures.

Continue Learning

Expand your knowledge through the **FlexiLearnHub Nutrition & Hydration in Care Settings (CPD Accredited)** course, together with our growing collection of professional awareness guides and CQC-aligned online training.

Visit:

www.flexilearnhub.com

Understanding a Poor Appetite

What Is a Poor Appetite?

A poor appetite means that an individual may have less interest in eating than usual or may eat smaller amounts of food. This can happen for many different reasons and may be temporary or longer lasting.

In care settings, it is important that care staff remain observant, encourage positive mealtime experiences and follow the individual's documented care plan.

Why Might Someone Eat Less?

There are many reasons why an individual may experience a reduced appetite, including:

- Changes associated with ageing.
- Feeling unwell or recovering from illness.
- Changes in routine or environment.
- Emotional wellbeing or mood.
- Difficulties with eating or drinking.
- Personal food preferences.

Understanding that everyone is different helps care staff provide compassionate, person-centred support.

The Importance of Mealtimes

Mealtimes provide more than nutrition. They are opportunities for social interaction, enjoyment and maintaining independence.

Creating a calm, welcoming environment and allowing individuals to eat at their own pace can help make mealtimes more enjoyable and encourage a positive attitude towards food.

Good Practice

Care staff should:

- ✓ Encourage relaxed and enjoyable mealtimes.
 - ✓ Respect personal food preferences where appropriate.
 - ✓ Offer encouragement without applying pressure.
 - ✓ Promote independence wherever it is safe to do so.
 - ✓ Follow the individual's documented care plan.
-

Remember

Every individual is different. A patient, respectful and person-centred approach helps create positive mealtime experiences and supports overall wellbeing.

Good Practice Reminder

Supporting individuals with a poor appetite means promoting:

 **Nutrition**

 **Wellbeing**

 **Enjoyment**

 **Patience**

 **Person-Centred Care**

Supporting Individuals at Mealtimes

Creating Positive Mealtime Experiences

A welcoming and relaxed mealtime environment can encourage individuals to enjoy their food and make eating a more positive experience. Care staff play an important role in providing reassurance, respecting personal preferences and allowing individuals to eat at their own pace.

Supporting someone with a poor appetite is about encouragement, patience and creating an enjoyable dining experience rather than focusing solely on how much food is eaten.

Encouraging Healthy Eating

Care staff can help by:

- ✓ Providing a calm and comfortable dining environment.
- ✓ Offering encouragement in a respectful and supportive way.
- ✓ Allowing sufficient time to eat without rushing.
- ✓ Respecting food preferences and individual choices.
- ✓ Supporting independence wherever it is safe and appropriate.

The Importance of Choice

Offering choice can help make meals more enjoyable and encourage interest in eating.

Where appropriate, individuals should be involved in decisions about:

- Meal choices.
- Portion sizes.
- Favourite foods.
- Suitable drinks.

Supporting personal choice helps promote dignity, independence and person-centred care.

Good Practice

Care staff should always:

- ✓ Follow the individual's documented care plan.
 - ✓ Encourage without applying pressure.
 - ✓ Respect individual preferences and cultural choices.
 - ✓ Promote independence where appropriate.
 - ✓ Work closely with colleagues to provide consistent support.
-

Remember

Positive mealtime experiences are built through patience, encouragement and respect. Small acts of support can help individuals feel more comfortable, confident and willing to enjoy their meals.

Good Practice Reminder

Supporting individuals with a poor appetite means promoting:

 **Enjoyment**

 **Respect**

 **Patience**

 **Choice**

 **Person-Centred Care**

Working Together

Supporting someone with a poor appetite is a team effort. Care staff, catering teams, nurses, managers and healthcare professionals all contribute to creating positive mealtime experiences.

By communicating effectively and following agreed care plans, care teams can provide consistent support that promotes both nutrition and wellbeing.

Observation, Communication and Teamwork

The Importance of Observation

Care staff are often the first to notice changes in an individual's eating habits or appetite. Remaining observant during and after mealtimes helps ensure that any concerns are recognised and shared promptly with the appropriate member of the care team.

Regular observation supports continuity of care and helps ensure individuals receive appropriate support in accordance with their documented care plans.

Communicating Concerns

Good communication between care staff, catering teams, nurses, managers and healthcare professionals is essential when supporting individuals with a poor appetite.

If an individual is eating significantly less than usual or there are concerns about their nutritional wellbeing, these observations should be reported using your organisation's agreed procedures.

Timely communication helps the wider care team review the individual's needs and provide appropriate support.

Recording Observations

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

Examples may include:

- ✓ Changes in appetite.
- ✓ Meals that are only partially eaten.
- ✓ Food or drink preferences expressed by the individual.
- ✓ Concerns raised by the individual about eating.

Accurate records help promote consistent, person-centred care and support informed decision-making by the wider care team.

Good Practice

Care staff should always:

- ✓ Remain observant during mealtimes.
- ✓ Encourage healthy eating in accordance with the care plan.
- ✓ Report concerns promptly using agreed procedures.
- ✓ Record relevant observations where required.
- ✓ Work closely with colleagues to provide consistent support.

Remember

Supporting someone with a poor appetite is a shared responsibility. Good observation, effective communication and accurate recording help ensure individuals receive the right support at the right time.

Good Practice Reminder

Excellent nutritional support includes:

 **Observation**

 **Communication**

 **Accurate Recording**

 **Teamwork**

 **Person-Centred Care**

Supporting Quality Care Every Day

Every positive interaction at mealtimes can contribute to an individual's health, confidence and wellbeing. By working together, following agreed care plans and communicating effectively, care teams help create a supportive environment where individuals feel respected, encouraged and valued.

Continue Your Learning

Continuing Professional Development

Supporting individuals with a poor appetite requires patience, understanding and a person-centred approach. By encouraging enjoyable mealtimes, respecting individual preferences and following agreed care plans, care staff can help promote good nutrition, wellbeing and quality of life.

Continuing professional development enables care teams to build confidence, improve everyday practice and provide consistent, high-quality nutritional support.

Continue Your Learning with FlexiLearnHub

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

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

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

Related Knowledge Hub Resources

Continue exploring the **FlexiLearnHub Knowledge Hub**, including:

Nutrition & Hydration Resources

Resource 007

Preventing Dehydration in Care Settings – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Resource 008

Encouraging Good Nutrition in Care Settings – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Resource 009

Supporting Individuals with a Poor Appetite – A Professional Awareness Guide for Care Staff

Dysphagia & IDDSI Awareness Series

 Resource 002 – Understanding the IDDSI Framework

 Resource 003 – Recognising the Signs of Dysphagia

 Resource 004 – Supporting Safe Mealtimes for People with Dysphagia

 Resource 005 – Texture-Modified Food Awareness

 Resource 006 – Helping Someone Eat and Drink Safely

Our Knowledge Hub continues to grow with free professional resources designed to support best practice across the care, catering and hospitality sectors.

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 009

Version 1.0

First Published: July 2026
