

Protected mealtimes: guidelines for staff

What are protected mealtimes?

Protected mealtimes are dedicated periods where meals are prioritised with minimal interruptions. This ensures that residents can focus on eating in a pleasant and supportive environment, leading to better nutrition and less food waste.

What this means for you:

- **Prepare residents for mealtimes:** Ensure that residents are comfortable and that they are ready to enjoy their meal.
- **Create a positive dining environment:** Turn off the TV, consider playing music, minimise noise or disruptions, i.e. PA system announcements, phone calls, medication rounds.
- **Focus on the meal and the resident:** Engage with residents and watch to see if there are any residents needing assistance or if something has changed with their meal.
- **Assist, observe and encourage:** Sit with residents, chat with them, and provide eating assistance as required.
- **Ensure meals are finished:** Do not remove food from residents until they have finished eating/had enough to eat.

During protected mealtimes, please avoid:

- Routine medication rounds (unless essential for meal consumption).
- Non-urgent tasks or conversations that may distract residents.
- Removing trays or plates too quickly – allow residents the time they need to eat.

By working together, we can help residents enjoy their meals, improve nutrition, and reduce food waste.

Thank you for helping to ensure every mealtime is a positive, dignified experience.