

TOP TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTING PROTECTED MEALTIMES

(Adapted from Evelyn Prodger, 2003 - National Patient Safety Agency)

- Start by carrying out ward observation audit (tool available on the Nutrition page on the NHS Lothian Intranet at <http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Healthcare/A-Z/Nutrition/Pages/Nutrition.aspx> Discuss results of observation with your team. Look at how things would need to change in order to implement Protected Mealtimes. Outline the roles staff would have during Protected Mealtimes. Consider any environmental changes that you would make (e.g. the use of a dining table).
- Discuss practicalities (e.g. what will happen with the drugs rounds, staff breaks, and any other activities that routinely happen at mealtimes), consider whether visiting times need to change.
- Discuss your plan with the multi-professional team and patients. Emphasise the benefits of Protected Mealtimes (see FAQ sheet which is available on the Nutrition page on the NHS Lothian Intranet at <http://intranet.lothian.scot.nhs.uk/NHSLothian/Healthcare/A-Z/Nutrition/Pages/Nutrition.aspx>). Be open about the practicalities and negotiate what will happen with the ward rounds etc.
- As there will be other wards implementing Protected Mealtimes, you may need to think about staggering mealtimes. Discuss how this might be done at your local nutritional care group meeting.
- Discuss the proposed plans with patients and their relatives in the run up to the introduction of Protected Mealtimes.
- Be realistic. Things will not change overnight. Relatives will turn up, ward rounds will run late and emergencies will happen. Be prepared to accept things that happen and try again for the next mealtime.
- Persist. Review Protected Mealtimes with staff regularly, work at resolving obstacles and barriers. Be consistent in providing positive feedback when it works well.
- Repeat the audit and observation, as a way of demonstrating changes and improvements that have happened and as a check of what changes are still required.
- Share your experiences with others. You can share what works well and problem solve together. This could be done at your local nutritional care group.