

Patient Led Assessment of the Care Environment (PLACE) Mealtime Assessment Form on the Inpatient Unit

Good quality nutritious food is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of patients. Many patients can experience eating and drinking difficulties or have special dietary requirements. It is essential that we provide a flexible catering service.

In each audit the team carried out a full audit for three patients and reviewed the food charts for up to 12 patients. The entire service was observed, including the final preparations in the hospice kitchen and the delivery of the food to the Inpatient Unit.



Aspects of mealtimes that were audited

- **General Food Assessment, Service and Presentation**
- **Hydration**
- **Food quality assessment**
- **Meal Tasting**
 - Assessors tasted between seven and 12 food items.
 - Tasting is done at the end of the food service to check that the food is still an acceptable temperature for the last person to be served.
 - Tasting is on the ward from the same food provided to patients.
 - All food on offer to patients should be tasted unless the assessor has a particular dislike for the item.

Final Impression 2019, 2021 Lunchtime and Teatime Meal Services

Overall, how would you rate the patient meal service observed?

Please tick

Good	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acceptable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>



Discussion

The assessors agreed that overall, in both lunchtime and teatime service, the food served was of a very high quality and was well presented but the whole meal service experience could be improved for patients on IPU. This was unchanged from 2019.

In both services, one area that requires some improvement relates to the patient's readiness to receive their meals trays. During the assessment there was evidence of clutter on the bedside tables that could have been removed prior to commencement of the meal service.

The level of clinical activity, in particular, the doctors ward round that was observed on IPU during this lunchtime service appeared to adversely affect the quality of the meal service provided. Although there was some evidence of Healthcare Assistant's supporting the meal service it was observed to be sporadic and the assessors felt that the lunchtime meal service could be improved if there was greater engagement and involvement of the nursing team in its delivery.

In the 2021 evening service the assessor felt that the meal service was on the whole much calmer as the ward area was generally much quieter.

In both lunchtime and teatime service, and as previously identified in 2019, it was noted that hot food is taken out of the meal trolley using tea towels rather than heat resistant oven gloves. Main course hot meals were observed being carried down the corridors using tea towels because the patient's meal tray is delivered with the starter course. The assessors felt the activity presented a risk to both the volunteer in terms of coming into contact with a hot plate and also that the plate may not be held securely and could fall.



Additional comments

Where food charts were audited they had only been filled in with the food offered and as was found in the 2019 audit there was no record of what the patient had eaten for any of the courses.



Recommendations

Whilst the catering team, volunteers and Healthcare Assistants work very hard to deliver the meal service on IPU, the assessors felt that the lunchtime meal service could be improved if there was less clinical activity over the lunchtime period. Consideration needs to be given to implementing changes to the ward routine to enable protection of mealtimes and improve the patient experience – the same recommendation as reported in 2019.

Consideration should be given to purchasing heat resistant oven gloves to make it easier to remove hot food from the meal trolley. In addition, it may be beneficial to consider providing some additional small trays which could be used to carry the main course plate and dessert course from the serving area to the patients room.