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Title: A Service Evaluation of the use of Mealtimes Advice Mats with an Adult Learning Disability Service

This study aimed to gather the views of residential support staff and multidisciplinary team members (MDT) in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the current mealtimes advice mats. It aimed to use the information to plan improvements to the mats themselves or their provision.

Methods:

This service evaluation of a NHS Learning Disability team was granted approval by the local audit and development committee and registered so with City, University of London in partial fulfilment of an MSc in SLT. Consenting participants (42: 21 paid support staff, 21 MDT professionals) answered specifically created questionnaires. Areas explored included; frequency of mat use, adherence with mat guidelines, knowledge of the potential consequences of dysphagia and the format and design of the mats. The results were analysed using descriptive statistics and review of the free text comments.

Results:

Results indicated high levels of awareness of mealtimes mats and reported use by support staff. The MDT had less awareness and reported reduced use of the mats by themselves and support staff. Support and MDT staff shared differing facilitators and barriers for adherence to mealtimes mat guidelines. The current format was viewed positively with differing views on potential improvements e.g. increased pictures recommended by MDT but not support

staff. There was general awareness of many consequences of dysphagia but not all, with the MDT less aware.

Conclusion: This study's findings contribute to the limited literature on dysphagia recommendations for people with LD. Implications for service development, improvements to mats and future research avenues are discussed.

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