

An Evaluation of the Use of Mealtime Advice Mats with an Adult Learning Disability Service

Cannon R, Harding C and Morgan S

City, University of London, London, UK

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Abstract

Aim: 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 mealtime 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 fulfillment 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 analyzed using descriptive statistics and review of the free text comments.

Results: Results indicated high levels of awareness of mealtime 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 mealtime mat guidelines. The current format was viewed positively with differing views on potential improvements e.g. increased picture 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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