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Dining Companions

Identifying Patients Suitable For Support With Feeding

Introduction

1. Dining Companion volunteers were introduced to support patients at mealtimes on our wards. Dining Companions support patients in a wide variety of ways from companionship, encouragement to eat and drink, offering alternatives, supporting patients to eat independently and spoon feeding.
2. All Dining Companion volunteers complete a robust training module which has been designed in partnership with speech and language therapists, dieticians, and the Dining Companion Coordinators. The training includes the importance of good nutrition and hydration, choices and restrictions, modified diet and fluids, signs of struggling, arriving on the ward, getting ready to help your patient and communication.
3. Once a volunteer has completed all their recruitment checks and the Dining Companion training, they will have a local induction on the ward with the Dining Companion Coordinator. They will also complete three feeding competencies (Appendix 1) on the ward with the Dining Companion Coordinator before being allowed to go onto the ward without direct supervision from the Coordinator.

Aims

This document aims to provide clear processes, roles and responsibilities for the Dining Companion volunteers, coordinators, ward staff and key stakeholder.

Roles/responsibilities

Head of Volunteering/ Volunteers Operational and Project Manager

- To recruit a sufficient number of volunteers to support project
- To report and evaluate on the data collected from the project to funders and key
- stakeholders
- To advocate the Dining Companions Project to senior managers/directors/stakeholders
- To support the Dining Companion Coordinators in their role
- To chair Dining Companion Steering Group Meetings

Dining Companion Coordinator

- To complete (minimum) three feeding competencies with all volunteers to ensure they are adequately trained to support patients
- To manage a volunteer rota for each ward to ensure best possible volunteer support
- To escalate any issues in a timely manner to Ward Manager and/or Team Leaders
- To support Ward Staff & Ward Manager with any issues concerning volunteers
- To feedback project updates and issues to the Dining Companion Steering group
- To meet monthly KPI's including Patient surveys, Staff surveys and Patient stories and share with steering group.
- To ensure all volunteers are happy and supported in their role as a Dining Companion

- Work collaboratively with the Ward Champion to identify patients who need additional support at mealtimes
- Advocate the importance of good Nutrition and Hydration

Ward Manager

- Ensure volunteers are welcomed on to the ward by all staff and are made to feel part of the team
- To work collaboratively with the Dining Companion Coordinator to ensure all volunteers feel supported in their role.
- To be a point of contact for any issues relating to mealtimes

Nurse in Charge/ Team Leader

- To identify suitable patients for the Dining Companion to support
- To ensure the volunteer is well supported and visible to clinical staff on the ward
- To ensure volunteers feel comfortable to ask questions and raise issues or concerns in the moment

Volunteers

- Ensure you are only carrying out duties as documented in your role description and Dining Companion training
- Carry out your 'Stop, Ask and Check' as covered in your training **at any point** you are unsure or have any questions
- Escalate any issues from your shift to your Dining Companion Coordinator and Nurse in Charge in a timely manner
- If a patient discloses any information or displays any behaviours that make you feel uncomfortable or that are a cause for concern, please escalate to a member of staff and discuss with your Dining Companion Coordinator
- Use the signing in and out book to document who you have supported that mealtime
- Ensure you have documented the patient's meal on the food and fluid chart and show the nurse in the bay what your patient has eaten.

Volunteers process for identifying patients who require support

1. Introduce yourself to the Nurse in Charge and ask which patients need support this mealtime
2. Are there any needs with this patient you should be aware of
   - *Hearing impairment*
   - *Sight impairment*
   - *Any Limb weaknesses*
   - *Cognitive impairment*

- *Any behaviour issues – is this patient low mood, agitated etc*

3. Introduce yourself to the patient and explain you will be supporting them this mealtime
4. Look at the patient's bedside board for signs of support needs (modified diet, cognitive impairment etc) ensure this is consistent with what your handover has been from the Nurse. If not discuss this with the patient's nurse in the bay
5. Look at the patients Intentional rounding to see what the patient has eaten that day and look for a purple or blue sheet which is the patients eating and drinking care plan if on a modified diet.
6. Ensure the food that is being served corresponds with patients' requirements – if unsure, please STOP, ASK & CHECK
7. Feed modified food with a teaspoon, ensuring your patient has an opportunity to have a drink every three spoonful's.
8. Follow your patients lead and ensure they are not rushed.
9. Be sure to escalate any concerns in the moment to the nurse

DO NOT

- Feed a patient who has 'Feeding Risk' written on their bedside board
- Feed a patient who is at risk of aspiration
- Feed a patient who is on a modified diet in a side room

Appendix 1