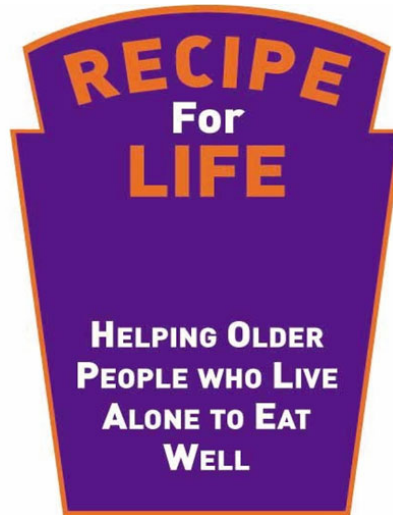




Queen Margaret University College



GOOD PRACTICE BOOKLET



Research Team

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to the making of this booklet, especially the staff from home care teams for sharing their Good Practice and their ways of working that meet the challenges they face.

A big thank you to Elspeth Talbot, Graphic Artist at Queen Margaret University College, for her creativity in designing this booklet.

Forward

The idea for the Good Practice Booklet stems from the research project, Recipe for Life. Recipe for Life was a three year project which aimed to find better ways to support older people to eat well. The project was undertaken by the Royal Bank of Scotland Centre for the Older Person's Agenda at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh in partnership with the Dementia Services Development Centre at Stirling University and Age Concern Scotland. It was funded by Zurich Financial Services Community Trust under their 'Zurich Community Trust Older People Programme'. The Good Practice booklet is part of the practice development phase of this project.

Recipe for life was a three year project. The primary aim of the project was to identify action that can be taken to improve the physical and social well being of older people who live alone and have difficulty leaving home. This was achieved by looking at their nutritional and food-related needs from the perspective of older people, family members, friends and social work staff.

Some of the main findings that emerged during the research phase of the project were:

- Low appetite was common among frail older participants, putting them at risk of becoming undernourished.
- Home care workers play an important role in encouraging older people to eat well.

- Home care workers are in a position to develop trusting relationships with clients, suggesting new foods or recipes to them and bringing new or favourite foods into the person's home.
- It is important that workers have specific knowledge of the nutritional needs of frail older people, as well as skills in finding out the preferences of older people and the social, psychological and cultural meaning of food in older people's lives.
- Many older people were eating bland and unexciting diets, perhaps because of a lack of motivation or imagination on their part or that of the service provider. Alternatively changes in older people's tastes and digestion may have led them to reduce the range of foods they find acceptable and are willing to eat.
- Older people and workers could valuably work together to develop ways that older people can be better supported to eat well that are acceptable to older people and achievable within service limitations.

To begin to address some of the findings a number of interventions have been identified, implemented and evaluated in the final phase of the project from October 2005 to June 2006. The Good Practice Booklet is among these interventions.

The executive summary and full report of the research phase of the Recipe for Life project are available at <http://www.qmuc.ac.uk/opa/>

Introduction

Why have we developed this booklet? The research phase highlighted that home care staff are met with many challenges in their aim to deliver a high quality food related service. Cooking freshly prepared food in a short space of time and making meal times more of a social event are just two of the challenges.

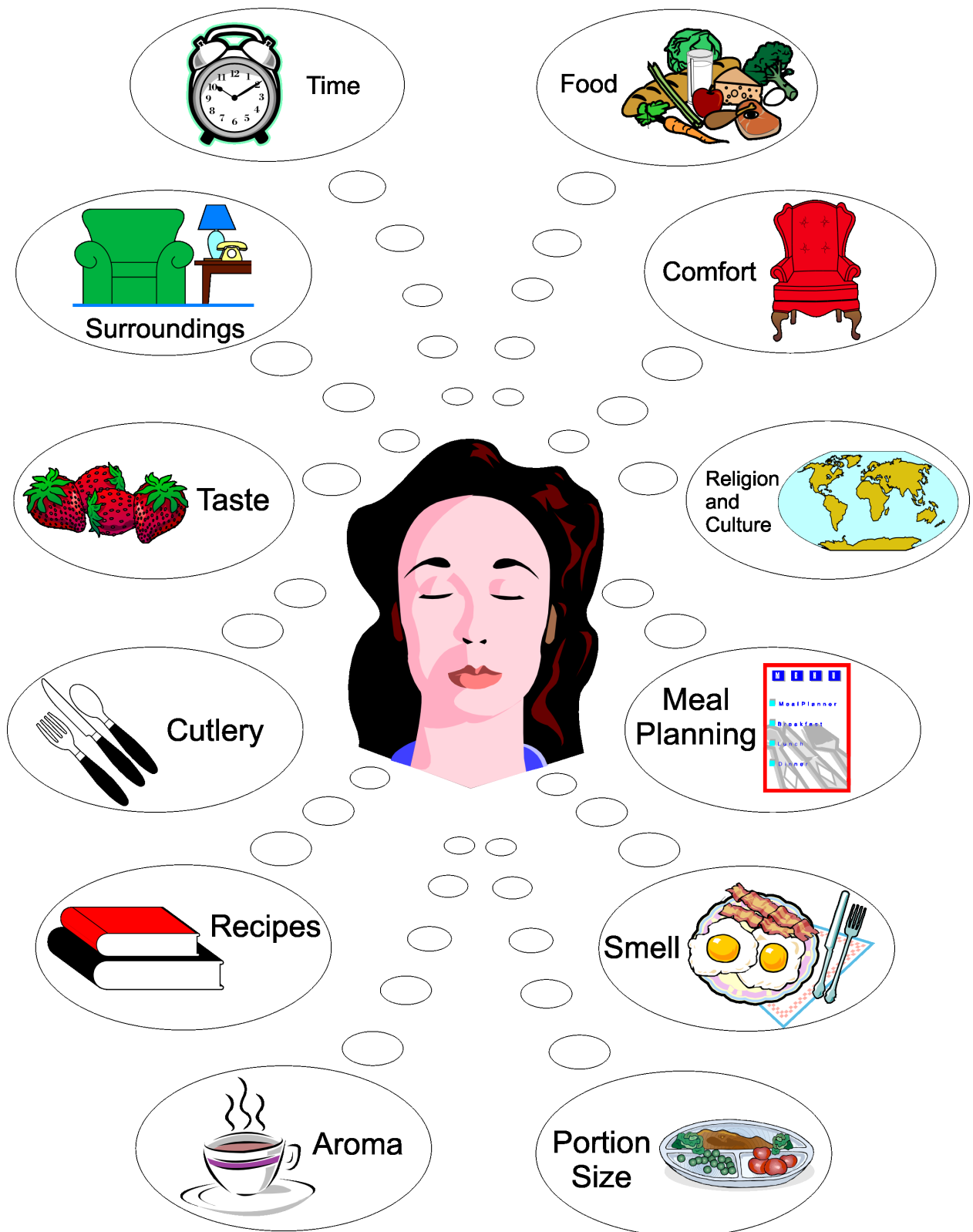
The purpose of this booklet is to help you, as a member of frontline social work staff in a home care team, to share ways of working that helps you to deliver a quality food related service to frail older people who live alone and have difficulty leaving home.

The examples of good practice, ways of working that answer some of the questions staff face have been identified from the research phase of the project and from further meetings with home care social work staff.

We hope the booklet will be a valuable resource and act as a means for sharing solutions and ways of working more widely. It is designed as a 'living' resource. As new issues and problems arise you may want to share them with your colleagues. We have left space at the end of the booklet in order that you can jot down notes on the good ideas which you come across in your work. By sharing in this way you can have an impact on the on the quality of life experienced by the older people you work with around food. We hope that the booklet will be of value to experienced staff and staff new to the field of home care.

"We want this booklet to be useful in your work so you can provide a better service."

Helping Older People to Eat Well



1. What makes us want to eat?

As a member of a home care team you will be aware of the importance of eating to staying well. If you have gone off your food or lost your appetite, there is a risk of weakening your immune system and over time you may become vulnerable to infections. More seriously, you may be at risk of being undernourished.

Here are some thoughts about eating and food, and our desire to eat.

Having an appetite to eat food is more complicated than just feeling hungry. What makes us feel hungry starts as we begin to think about food, and plan what we want to eat. The body begins to prepare to eat before food is ready and placed in front of us. **Preparing food, seeing it being prepared and smelling the aroma** of food cooking all helps us to have an appetite and feel hungry to eat. As a home care worker commented, *“Smelling food cooking helps to get your juices going.”*

Cooking aromas - help people to have an appetite to eat a meal. A home care worker suggested that, *“Frying bacon and eggs creates an appetising aroma.”*

Home care workers suggested cooking, *“Anything that smells nice”* as a way to encourage people to eat.

Soft foods - Food that is difficult to eat, makes eating a chore and not a pleasure may put people off eating. When eating is no longer a pleasure it is difficult to have enthusiasm about eating and food altogether.

A home care worker suggested, *“Fish and chicken are softer foods that may be easier to eat.”*

A suggestion from a member of the home care team is, *“A boiled egg mashed up with butter is popular with clients.”*

Portion size - Large portions of food can be off putting for some people. Try smaller portions to stimulate appetite.

How to tackle a **boring diet** – *“Try and vary their favourite foods for example if their favourite food is fish – fish pie or fish cakes.”*

Home made fresh cooking always gives people a better appetite; apart from fish, chicken and mince all of which can be cut up small, maybe try softer meals such as fresh corned beef hash, stovies, pastas, veg and lentil soups, fresh fruit cut up small and mixed salads, all easy to prepare with an all round balanced diet.

Try something different - Trying meals that are new and different is one way to encourage a person's appetite to eat. A home care worker suggested, *"Try something different – watch a cooking programme, buy a food magazine and discuss it with your client."*

A home care worker suggested a tasty dish that her clients like, *"Stuff a piece of chicken with cheese and wrap in bacon."*

As we age our sense of taste may decrease and you may want to make something for your client that has a stronger taste, like a spicy or even a mild curry. A home care worker commented that curry takes a while to cook and suggested a way around this, *"If a client wanted a curry there would be no time so instead of making from scratch a substitute would need to be offered, like using a jar of curry sauce."*

It's a good idea to first check with people to make sure they are happy with a jar of curry sauce being used.

Home made soup smells delicious when cooking and provides a nutritious and filling meal. Making soup is time consuming, however a home care worker has a suggestion that makes soup making much quicker, and gives the client the opportunity to be involved in the preparation and cooking process. She recommends, *"Suggest that your client or yourself cut all the veg up small, less cooking time, home made soups are easy healthy idea."*

NOTES

2. Helping people to have an interest in food and ideas about what to eat

It is easy to get **in a rut with food**, eating the same meals week in, week out. Here are some ideas from the home care team to help an older person to think about what they would like to eat.

Try **involving** the older person in their choice of meal by **discussing** with them what is available for them to eat in their fridge, freezer and cupboards.

“Read over supermarket leaflets with clients, go over shopping lists with them to ensure they have a good healthy diet.”

Home care workers talked about the **usefulness of free supermarket leaflets** to trigger thoughts about food and eating. Supermarket leaflets can **help** to get people **thinking about what other foods are available** to buy and eat, and get people **talking about foods** and memories of what is enjoyable and good to eat.

A home care worker suggests, *“Ask their preferences, give ideas, what you enjoy may help, tell of anything new on the market, get free supermarket magazine, leaflets, recipes etc., to inspire, and inform of any offers on small quantities.”*

Supermarket leaflets are sometimes posted to people’s homes or are available to pick up at the supermarket.

Comment from a Home Care Worker, *“Reminding them (clients) what is available in the shops.”*

If your client is unable to get out of their home to go to the shops, prepare their own food or if they don’t have the opportunity to talk about food with other people then it is easy to lose interest in food. This makes it difficult for people to have ideas about what they want to eat. **Cookery programmes on television** can create an interest in food and **get people thinking** about food and eating.

A home care worker comments, *“Watching cooking programmes, looking through magazines and making food and snack suggestions.”*

Watching cooking programmes on TV can help to give people **ideas about what to eat** both for the older person and for the home care worker preparing food.

Some other meal suggestions from home care workers:

A home care worker gave **ideas** for different meals. She suggests, *“Home made soups, salads, pastas, any fruit, maybe make fruit salad, client maybe able to help with food prep.”*

Porridge is a favourite for many clients and there appear to be a few ways to cook it. A home care worker explained, *“I’ve had to learn a lot of different ways of making porridge – with milk; milk and water; water only. I never knew there were so many ways of doing it.”*

A home care worker talked about **eggs** being a popular food with her client’s; can be varied and easy are to eat. She suggests, *“I think eggs are good. You can put cheese in scrambled eggs and sometimes I chop up tomatoes and put them in.”*

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3. Eating for one

It can be difficult when you live on your own to buy food in small amounts. Lots of food products are produced in large sizes more suited to families and it is difficult to cater for one. Here are some examples from home carers that can help to tackle this problem.

Large milk cartons - Large four and six pint cartons of milk are heavy and awkward to lift and pour. **Smaller cartons** are **easier to use** and have the advantage of **staying fresher**.

Home care workers commented that – *“a large carton used over a week may begin to lose its freshness whereas a batch of small pint cartons, each carton will stay fresh as it will be used up quicker once opened.”*

Home Carers commented about the difficulty of buying **small portions** for one and suggested to try and **use local shops** like the butchers - who will be **happy to sell small amounts** such as a couple of sausages.

A home care worker suggested, *“Buy small tins of food.”* Small tins of food are convenient when making a meal for one person.

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4. Company: eating with others

Eating is very much a social activity. People often comment about **eating more food in the company of others** and the added enjoyment this brings.

A home care worker comments, *“they’re eating, so you eat ... you see them doing it and you say oh I must do it ... I eat more in company.”*

Eating in the company of others can have a positive impact on a person’s **enjoyment** of food, their appetite. By **sitting** with your client and **having a cup of tea whilst they are eating** often can encourage people with a poor appetite to eat.

A home care worker comments, *“Having a cup of tea with the client whilst they’re eating their meal – keeping them company.”*

Pushed for time, it is sometimes difficult to have a moment to sit with your client if you have lots of things to do. A home care worker gave a suggestion of working together- being more sociable with your client whilst you are working in their home. The home care worker suggested that whilst preparing a meal, *“Set boiling water ready, read info on packaging to the client in the kitchen whilst physically making the meal in order that the session becomes more of a social event.”*

A further suggestion of how to make eating a more social activity was suggested from a member of the home care team, *“The client may join a day centre club and have a social meal with others, cook a meal for client and maybe a friend.”*

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5. Being involved

It is important to encourage and keep going an older person's ability to maintain their independence. An older person's **independence** and **interest** in food can be **maintained** by **involving them in tasks**, such as food preparation.

Home care team members suggested tasks such as **preparing potatoes** for cooking. Take the pot/pan, potato and the potato peeler to wherever your client is comfortable to do the task - this maybe sitting in a chair in the living room or kitchen to peel potatoes.

Even if your client only manages to peel one potato, by **being involved** helps the person to have an interest in food, thoughts about what to eat, conversations about food, and a want to eat.

A suggestion from a home care worker of ways to involve your client in meal preparation and cooking was around new potatoes. **New potatoes** need very little or no preparation. Your client perhaps could wash/rinse the potatoes and place in a pot/pan to begin the cooking process. Some people can do this by themselves before you arrive.

Oven ready products can be put in the oven by the older person and timed to be ready when you arrive. If your client has difficulty with taking hot food out of the oven then this can be done when you arrive and the hot food can be put on a plate.

Switching the oven on to warm before you arrive is another suggestion from home care workers.

Focus on what people can do - It is important to be aware of an older person's abilities and limitations when thinking of how to involve people in food related activities. **Spend time talking with your client to find out what tasks they would like to do** and are comfortable doing. This will help you to engage your client in achievable activities, if the client wishes to do so.

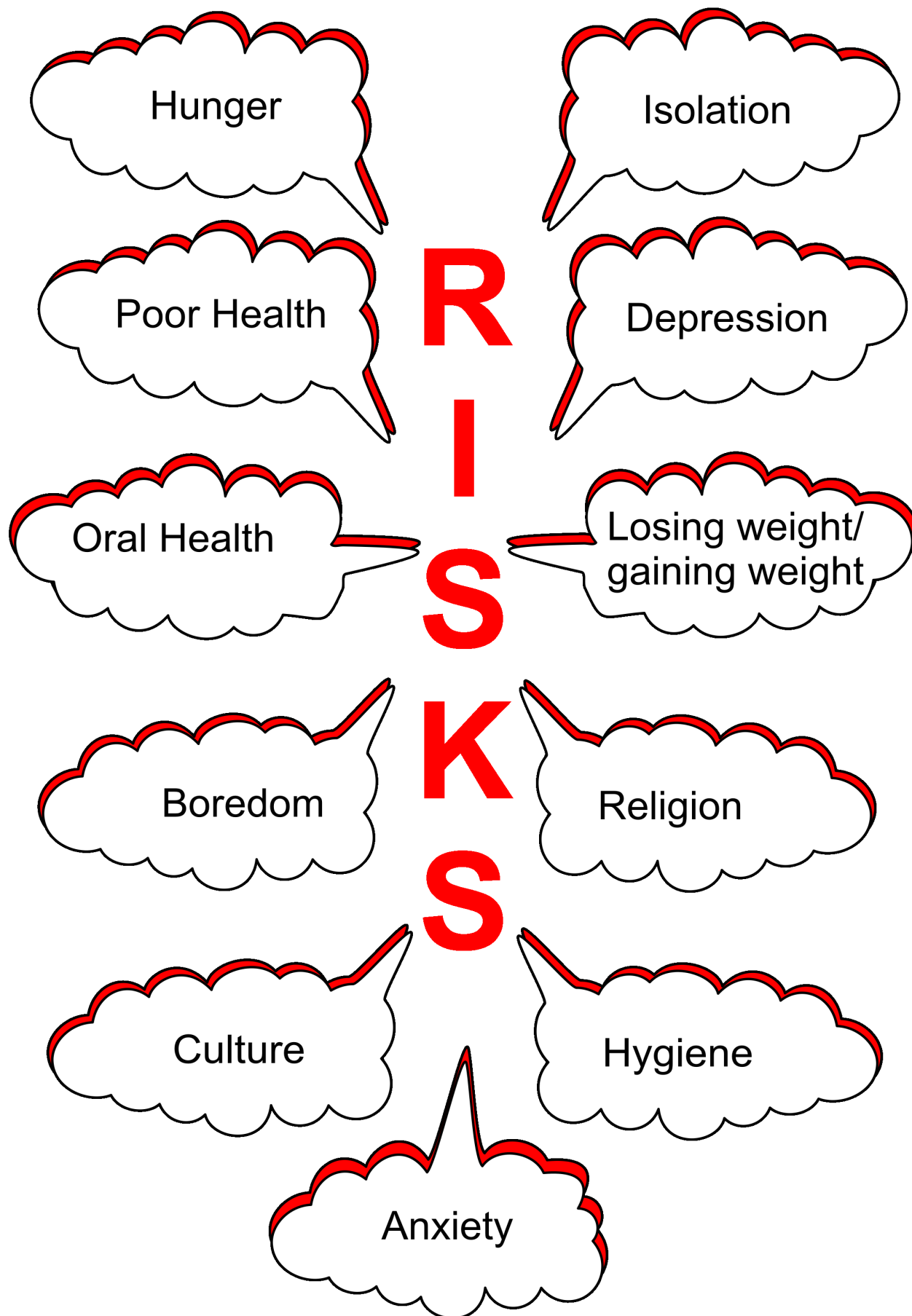
Your client may be able to **defrost food from the freezer** ahead of your arrival. A home care worker comment, *“Meal prep, ask the older person to take food out of freezer the night before.”*

The ability to **participate** in food related tasks is important in **maintaining independence**, preserving cooking skills, and helps people to stay interested in food and have thoughts about what they would like to eat.

A Home Care Worker comments – *“I think of it as team work, between the client and myself.”*

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What would get in the way of eating well?



6. Team work: working together, food and personal plans, others involved

As you will be well aware it is important to that everyone involved with a client's care is updated regularly in order to identify and meet the changing needs of that person.

Diaries, communication books and personal plans provide an easy way for all concerned with a client's care to **stay in touch** with the **needs** of the person and the service(s) they receive. Not only is this essential for yourself and colleagues caring for the older person but is also useful for the older person themselves, family carers and friends. For example, food likes and dislikes can be noted here, along with details of what meals have been served to prevent repetition.

A home care worker commented, "You have to work together with other carers who come in at different days and times. I leave a note saying what I've taken out of the freezer and put in the fridge to defrost. If you don't leave a note they (other carers) think it's past its date and just throw it out."

Diaries, communication books and personal plans are good to note information about a **clients choices** of where, when and how much a person eats. For example they may like to eat at a table, have their main meal at lunchtime and have a glass of juice to drink with their meal followed by a cup of tea.

A home care worker talked about writing things down, a useful way of working for the client and all involved with their care. The home care worker explained,

"I make up a weekly menu for my clients. I know what's in the fridge and make sure the shopping list is ok."

Writing things down is useful for all involved, client and carer. For the client this is useful as a **reminder**, for example what food is stored in the kitchen; the meals they have had to eat, and what is going to be served next. For those involved as carers it is a good method of **keeping everyone up to date**.

Home care teams have suggested the usefulness of **detailed information** about clients. **Getting to know your client** and noting small details such as a preference to drinking tea from a china cup and saucer enables you to provide a better service that is **tailored to the needs of your client**.

“Clients get really fed up if people are always asking them how they take their tea. That should go in the front page of the notebook so nobody should have to ask.”

Important information about a client’s **medication** should also be noted such as; what and when to take and whether medication should be take with food or on an empty stomach.

As you are aware, diaries, communication books and personal plans should be used to **note any concerns** you may have about a client, for example information about the person’s eating, what they have eaten, how much.

A home care worker explained, *“You really need a jotter if they’ve got dementia. I always write things down and check it when I come in.”*

Diaries, communication books and personal plans allow you to write information down about your client and **share with other people involved** with your clients care. Regular meetings, leaving notes, phones/ mobile phones and mobile phone text messaging all help to keep everyone concerned up to date with a clients needs.

A home care workers advises, *“Speak to your care organiser about any changes.”*

Another home care worker commented, *“I always phone the office if I think that someone isn’t eating.”*

NOTES

7. Monitoring

Here are some suggestions from home care team members that help in monitoring risks for an older person:

Checking bins – Home care workers suggested that a good practice to follow is to check the client's bins for food remains or wrappers. This can give clues/act as evidence of what the client has eaten or what has been thrown away as well as things that should be in the bin but are not.

A home care worker commented, *"I check the bins but they can be really fly and put things down the pan (wc)."*

A home care worker commented about the **importance of hygiene** when working in a client's home, *"Wash hands, different chopping boards for cooked and uncooked food."*

Another home care worker comments, *"Food safety, ensure fridge and work tops are kept clean, half used food can be put on a plate covered with cling film and dated."*

Another home care worker commented on the being aware of the **freshness of food** in a client's home. *"Get rid of out of date food and blown cans."*

A further thought from a home care worker, *"Rotate tins and food in the fridge and freezer by dates."*

Storing remains of open tins in fridge - When a tin of food is opened and only half used care has to be taken when storing the remainder. Ideally the remaining food should be transferred into a sealable container and labelled stating the contents of the container and a date to be used by.

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8. Planning ahead

Time management - Planning ahead and being organised makes more efficient use of time.

A home care worker comments, "Cooking fresh vegetables whilst completing another task such as personal care means that freshly cooked food is still possible."

With limited time available, if possible, the older person can make a start on meal preparation through support and discussion with you as their home care worker.

A home care worker explained, "The older person may be able to complete some or all of the possible tasks involved for a particular meal. For example a meal of mince and potatoes, it may be possible for the older person to brown the mince, and or chop up an onion, and or peel the potatoes depending on the level of mobility, physical health/ strength, and frailty."

Cooking large batches - Home care workers suggested that cooking large quantities of food is an efficient use of time.

A home care worker comments, "Cooking enough for two days, putting half aside in the freezer (depending on the food) saves time on subsequent visit."

Here are some further suggestions from home care team members about ways of working that helps to maximise the time allocated to clients

A home care worker comments, "Fresh food is always nice such as home made soup but time is limited in which to make soup. One solution is to cut veg up small as it cooks quicker."

A suggestion from a home care worker about making home made soup, "You can make home-made soup. Just cut the vegetables really small and let it cook for the hour you are in the morning. Then at lunchtime you can just finish it off."

A further suggestion from another home care worker, "I cut apples and fruit into small bits and put them in a covered dish in the fridge. She wouldn't eat a whole apple."

Some clients may enjoy eating a **roast dinner** but a roast dinner takes time to prepare and cook. Here is a suggestion from a member of a home care team of how this meal can be achieved in a short space of time.

The home care worker explained, *“She likes a roast dinner. So I get a couple of slices of ready cooked beef, make a nice gravy and pop some wee frozen Yorkshire puddings in the oven and that’s great. You can do it with roast pork and roast chicken as well.”*

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'Living' resource

Do you have any other ideas of ways to help an older person to eat well? Here are some challenges that home care staff face and for which solutions have yet to be identified.

Ongoing challenges

A home care worker explains, "The shopping service sometimes throws things out that are in the fridge because they think they are past their date – but it's something I've taken out of the freezer to defrost. We'll need to get a better method."

A further comment from a home care worker about a challenge they have encountered, "She could eat better but she always gets the cheapest things so that she's got enough for fags."

We are sure that you will have many other examples of good practice and ways of working that enable you to deliver a high quality food service to your clients. This is an opportunity for you to make a difference to a frail older person's home care service.

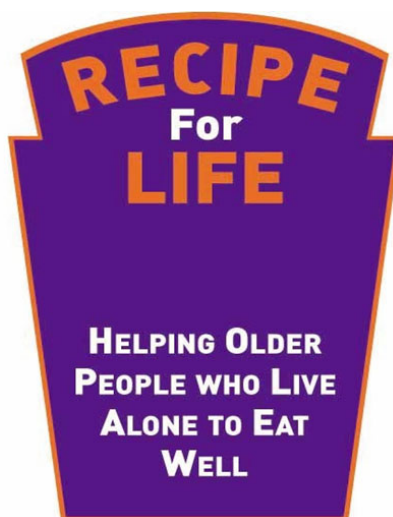
Notes

You may wish to add your own challenges to which you are seeking a solution or indeed a solution you have found useful here.

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