



**“Supporting people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (Dysphagia)”**  
Statement from Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists  
for attention of Care Providers<sup>1</sup>  
(July 2020)

Eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (dysphagia) are complex and multi-dimensional difficulties experienced by a significant number of people requiring personal care.

Safe and effective management of eating, drinking and swallowing is always an important aspect of care, including during the Covid-19 pandemic, as it acts to:

- Optimise nutrition, hydration and overall wellbeing
- Prevent or minimise risk of aspiration pneumonia, chest infections, and choking
- Minimise coughing which may be caused by aspiration of food and drink

**People who experience eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties will often have guidelines as part of their care plans, provided by speech and language therapy services. It is important that these are known to staff and effectively implemented.**

To support carers with this essential area of care the RCSLT draws carers' attention to the **joint Care Inspectorate, RCSLT and Scottish Care publication: “Supporting people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties (Dysphagia) Guidance”** launched at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic on 18/3/20. See

<https://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/5595/Supporting%20people%20with%20eating,%20drinking%20and%20swallowing%20difficulties.pdf>

The Care Inspectorate will continue to promote these recently launched, jointly developed guidance which supports care providers and inspectors with good practice.

The guidance also helps carers to better understand and implement high quality care when working with adults with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties. It also sets out expectations in relation to care provider competences as described in the **Eating, Drinking and Swallowing Competency Framework (EDSCF)**

<https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/dysphagia>

The RCSLT, the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Care expect that those not directly involved in hands-on care, such as care inspectors, managers and chefs should achieve a minimum of Level 1 Dysphagia Competence (dysphagia awareness).

**Care staff who work directly with people with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties are expected to achieve a minimum of Level 2 Dysphagia Competence as set out in the EDSCF.**

Care providers are strongly encouraged to discuss dysphagia training opportunities with their local speech and language therapy department. Online information and training resources are listed below. They cover basic information.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement replaces to statement “*Joint Statement PPE for those providing ongoing care for people who regularly cough - particularly during eating, drinking, and mouth care*” published and then withdrawn in early June 2020

RCSLT stresses that all health and care providers must follow Health Protection Scotland Guidance in relation to infection control (including PPE) in care settings.

**Please contact [info@rcslt.org](mailto:info@rcslt.org) in the first instance with any queries on this statement.**  
**On line information on management of eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties**

**1: Dysphagia Guide – a learning resource designed to support knowledge and understanding of the management of dysphagia.**

<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/dysphagia/>

This resource has been developed by Health Education England and partners and is accessible to NHS and care staff working in Scotland.

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists have identified the Dysphagia Guide as a resource that can be used to support people working in care to gain the relevant level of competency for their role as laid out in the Eating, Drinking and Swallowing Competency Framework

**2: Fact Sheet on Dysphagia and the role and impact of speech and language therapy:**

<https://www.rcslt.org/-/media/Project/RCSLT/rcslt-dysphagia-factsheet.pdf?la=en&hash=18AEDA640CDABD6D2CAB1A9293E8F44ED4E9572A>

**3: RCSLT resources** at <https://www.rcslt.org/speech-and-language-therapy/clinical-information/dysphagia>

- includes -

- What is dysphagia?
- Role of speech and language therapy in dysphagia
- Eating, Drinking and Swallowing Competency Framework – including links to details of what levels 1 and 2 competences are
- International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) Framework

**4: IDDSI - Training toolbox on texture modification**

[https://ftp.iddsi.org/Documents/UK\\_Toolbox\\_Talk\\_Modified\\_Texture\\_Diet\\_V2.pdf](https://ftp.iddsi.org/Documents/UK_Toolbox_Talk_Modified_Texture_Diet_V2.pdf)