

# Mealtime Profiles



## What is a mealtime profile?

Many people living in group homes and attending adult day services need a mealtime profile. Some people with disabilities have difficulties getting food and drink to their mouth, chewing, or swallowing. Some people cough – this may be an indication that food is going the wrong way and the person is at risk of choking or drink going towards their lungs.

A mealtime profile is an instruction sheet on how to safely support an individual at mealtimes. It is based on an assessment of the person’s eating and drinking skills, completed by a speech pathologist. A mealtime profile outlines what sort of food and drink is safe for someone to eat and drink. It describes how to support the person and any special equipment that the person needs when eating and drinking.

The person writing the mealtime profile must take into consideration the health and wellbeing of the person with a disability, their expression of preference or choice, and the needs of the people assisting during the meal. Disability support workers should follow the profile, as it is their guide for safe practice. If they or the person with a disability disagrees with the profile they should ask to have the profile reviewed and discuss their concerns. Not following the mealtime profile may put the person at unnecessary risk of choking or other eating and drinking incidents.

MEALTIME PROFILE		
Name: Sheridan Forster	DOB	12/03/1975
	<b>Solid Food Consistency</b>	<b>Regular diet</b> avoiding hard foods (hard fruits, hard sweets, crusty bread). She finds these difficult and tiring to eat. She is at risk of choking on these. She is able to safely eat soft foods that break down with 2-3 chews.
	<b>Drinks Consistency</b>	<b>Regular drinks</b>
	<b>Dietary Notes</b>	Sheridan is a vegetarian.
	<b>Equipment Needed</b>	Regular plate Knife and fork – Sheridan is able to chop her own food Regular cup. Sheridan prefers pottery mugs
	<b>Environmental Considerations</b>	Sheridan is good at focusing on her eating and drinking. She prefers an environment with only one or two other people.
	<b>Positioning</b>	A stable chair where Sheridan can place her feet on the ground.
	<b>Support Needed</b>	<b>Observe</b> throughout meal and provide support if Sheridan seems unsure. Sheridan likes to engage in conversation during her meal
	<b>Other Instructions</b>	Request a <b>review</b> of eating and drinking if Sheridan is coughing, has chest infections, refuses foods more, or if you are concerned. Otherwise, a review in 1 year is recommended.
 Speech Pathologist: Dr Sheridan Forster (CSP) <span style="float: right;">Contact details: sher@sheridanforster.com.au 0455 190 309</span> <span style="float: right;">Date: 09/10/2013</span>		

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## What's involved in a mealtime profile?

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Please request permission from the person (where possible) and their next of kin/ guardian, before requesting a service. You need to know that they are happy with the person being assessed, videorecorded, and paying for the consultation.

Development of a mealtime profile by me involves the following:

**Basic** (the person's eating and drinking is fairly consistent across environments and times)  
~ 2 clinical hours + travel

- 1 home visit during a meal, observing eating, drinking and interactions at mealtimes, and discussion with familiar staff member – part of the session is video-recorded
- Draft mealtime profile – usually 1 page including photos of assistance needed
- Draft profile emailed to staff member responsible to review with their team, and pass on any requests for changes to me
- Final mealtime profile emailed to staff, alongside a cover letter summarising any issues
- 5 minute videorecorded sample of eating and drinking skills given to house to keep on record as a document of present skills. The video can be provided on a DVD, usb, or secure Cloud sharing.

**Complex** (the person's eating and drinking may vary across environments and times)  
~4 clinical hours + travel

- 2 or more visits are undertaken at various venues (e.g., home and day service)
- As above

In some situations additional things may be requested.  
For example:

- Some people may need to be referred to having a swallow x-ray (videofluoroscopy) and this will require a doctor's referral and additional time
- Some people may need a follow up visit to see how they are going with the new profile recommendations
- Some people may benefit from their staff receiving specific training around how to best assist them
- Some people may benefit from seeing another person such as a physiotherapist to talk about their seating, an occupational therapist to talk about the equipment, or a dietician
- I may also recommend specialist equipment such as spoons, plates, or straws.

I will advise when a review of the profile should be done. Of course, staff, families, and the person may request an earlier review if they are concerned about the profile or the person's current skills.

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## Payment Models for Mealtime Profiles

There are a few different options for how to pay for a mealtime profile.

I currently charge \$150 / hr for the visit, profile writing, and review. I charge 60% of the hourly rate for travel time to get to and from home visits.

A basic mealtime profile may cost \$300 + travel time costs (i.e. 2 x \$150).

There are a range of options for how this might be paid.

- It can be paid entirely by the person with a disability.
- The person may be able write the request in their NDIS plan, and NDIS may approve for payment.
- The person with a disability or their supports can talk to their doctor about using the Chronic Disease Management Medicare item. This will allow them to have ~ \$50 of the fee from face to face contact covered by Medicare (i.e., if they have two face to face visits, then 2 claims for ~\$50 can be made – this cannot be made on the fee for the profile writing). Please note: The Chronic Disease Management Medicare item is only available for 5 allied health appointments each calendar year.
- The person may be able to use private health insurance – please check with their insurer.
- The person with a disability and the support provider may negotiate part payment by each. For example the person with a disability pay for the assessment visit and the supporting organisation pays for the profile development and travel time.

Please indicate how the payment will be made prior to the consultation.

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## Dr Sheridan Forster

BAppSc, GradDipEd, PhD, CPSP

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Sheridan is a Certified Practising Speech Pathologist. In 2011, she completed doctoral studies, looking at interactions between adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities and their support staff.

She has worked in the government and non-government sector in Australia and the UK. Sheridan currently combines research and practice, being aware and contributing to best practice in the communication support of adults with disabilities.

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**Sheridan Forster**  
attentive engagement

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**Dr Sheridan Forster**

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