

Practical ways to protect your time

For frontline managers, good management is essential to enable you to achieve everything that needs to be done in a busy care provider.

In our busy workplaces it's easy for day-to-day demands on our time to divert or distract us from our main role. It's challenging to keep up with all the demands placed upon us in a time-compressed and complex world and still maintain quality of care.

Taking control of our time means we make better decisions, feel less pressure and take a more holistic view of our priorities. Effective time management can reduce stress and improve wellbeing.

This short tool helps you to consider practical ways to protect your time.

Self-assess	Use this self-assessment tool (available alongside this resource) to understand your strengths and areas for improvement relating to time management
Set clear objectives	Objective setting helps you achieve your goals by providing clarity, focus and motivation within a clear timeframe. You can use it to manage change, set clear expectations with staff and to delegate.
Group tasks together	Going from one unrelated task to another can take time. By grouping similar tasks together, you can protect time for more substantial work.
Break your day up	Break your working day into 25-minute chunks separated by five-minute breaks. This can help you to keep focused and limit interruptions.
Play to your strengths	Consider when you are most productive and schedule your day accordingly (e.g. if you are a morning person, concentrate on the more substantial tasks before lunch).
Change work patterns	Where possible, consider alternate work patterns to help you focus on specific tasks.
Manage interruptions	Build in ring-fenced time for staff questions and support. Empower other colleagues to answer queries when you are not available.
Minimise distractions	When focusing on a task, turn off all electronic devices and any access to social media so you avoid unnecessary distractions.
Reminders	Avoid forgetting to do things by setting up practical reminders. Use technology, to do lists or post it notes ... whatever works for you.
Limit your meetings	Avoid going from one meeting to another, consider "do I need to be in this meeting?" or "what will happen if I don't attend?" See our Time to manage guide recommendations about managing meetings.

Keep your day varied	Plan your tasks so that you mix up your day between focused concentration, social tasks and simple tasks that give your brain a rest.
Don't put off difficult tasks	Deal with the unpleasant tasks first. Tick them off your to-do list and you will feel much better. It won't be filling you with dread for the rest of the day or week.
Don't start from scratch	There are thousands of frontline managers who may have undertaken similar tasks. Draw on Registered Manager Networks and Registered Manager Facebook Group .
Chip away at bigger tasks	Find 'quick wins' such as tasks (five minutes or less) which will get you into tackling the main job.
Use technology	Digital Social Care is a great place to get started, with useful information to help you use technology as a tool to save time and create efficiencies.
Delegate more	Focus on encouraging confidence, resourcefulness and self-management. Our Effective delegation webinar and resources here can help.
Say yes to what matters	Saying 'No' firmly and reasonably is quite acceptable but you could equally ensure that you only say "Yes" to what matters.
Free up time to enjoy your work	Ensure that you manage your time to ensure that you have time to enjoy your work. Avoid a busy workload denying you the pleasure of working in social care.

Further information and advice about time management is available from www.skillsforcare.org.uk/time