

FOOD & NUTRITION POLICY GUIDANCE



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Develop a working party of interested people with representation from a group of different stakeholders.
2. Discuss and record issues and concerns raised about food and nutrition.
3. Conduct a baseline audit (review) of current practices around food and drink within your setting.
4. From the audit, decide what the priorities for the setting are.
5. Draft a food and nutrition policy, keeping it concise and user-friendly.
Include:
 - An introduction (i.e. date developed/ agreed, review date, etc.).
 - Overall aims and objectives (i.e. what you want to achieve).
 - Guidelines on how to meet the objectives.
 - Monitoring and evaluation guidance (i.e. how to measure if you are meeting your targets).
6. Distribute the draft policy for comment to all stakeholders (anyone involved with or in contact with your setting). You may want to develop a brief feedback questionnaire.
7. Modify the draft policy according to comments and feedback, ensuring it is clear and realistic.
8. Distribute the revised food and nutrition policy to all stakeholders.
9. Implement the food and nutrition policy (i.e. make any changes necessary to meet the statements within the policy).
10. Monitor, evaluate and update the food and nutrition policy periodically, as specified within the document.

CHECKLIST

The food and nutrition policy should include:

- Recipes and menu plans.
- Guidance on food and drink provided within the setting and brought into the setting from home.
- Food allergy and special dietary management.
- Mealtime management and encouraging eating well.
- Health and Safety aspects of food and drink preparation, serving and consumption.
- Health and nutrition promotion activities including parent/carer education and events.
- Childhood education aspects of food and drink, including healthy eating messages and meal time behaviour management.
- Communication with parents about food and drink provided in the setting.
- Anything relating to nutrition and food that is deemed important by the setting and its community.

EXAMPLE OF A FOOD POLICY FOR EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

We provide healthy meals and snacks to help children grow and develop well and develop well. We offer and encourage food activities and play that will help children to be able to gain independence and make healthy food choices.

There is a supportive breastfeeding environment.

Breastmilk is the ideal source of nutrition for infants for at least the first year of life. We have refrigerated storage space for expressed breastmilk which is clearly labelled with name and date. Mothers are welcome to breastfeed and a space will be provided for this. We can direct mothers to where they can access further breastfeeding support.

We work to ensure that our food meets the Voluntary Guidelines for Food and Drink in Early Year Settings in England.

This means that the type and amount of food served meets the nutritional requirements of the children who eat with us.

Meals and snacks are scheduled at regular times.

Either a meal or a snack is offered to children at least every 1½–3 hours as children have small stomachs and high nutrient needs to grow and develop, and to play and achieve. Snacks served are mini-meals, with components as healthy as mealtime choices. Children are seated when eating meals and snacks.

Portion sizes are age appropriate.

We serve small portion sizes as it is better for children to ask for seconds than to serve them too much. This helps children to recognise when they are hungry and when they have eaten enough.

Mealtimes are relaxed, calm and with shared conversation.

We eat with the children at mealtimes and eat the same food. We role-model good manners and eating behaviour, direct conversation, and create a calm and relaxed eating environment.

At the same time we can supervise the children eating. This is important because choking happens quietly and immediate help is vital.

Children decide which food they will eat from the food offered.

All food we serve is healthy, so whatever the child chooses will be nutritious. We trust children to know how much they want to eat and allow them to say 'no' to something they dislike. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.

Children are involved in food preparation, setting of the table, serving the food and clearing the table as much as possible.

Food is used to support the development of children and they are given opportunities to explore food.

Children have the opportunity to be involved in food preparation, such as simple cold dishes: sandwiches, dips, salads and so on.

Children are encouraged and helped to be successful in whatever self-feeding and self-serving they are capable of doing. Food is served in a form that young children can eat with minimum assistance and without choking; the texture changing from soft mashed food to adult texture by the age of 12 months.

Parents are given information on the meals and snacks provided.

We tell parents how well their child ate during the day and which foods they particularly enjoyed or tried. Children benefit when parents, carers and staff share information and work together.

We support parents to do the best for their children.

We ask when food is brought from home that it meets the voluntary food and drink guidelines for early year settings. We encourage eligible pregnant women and mothers with children under four to register with the Healthy Start scheme and access the weekly food vouchers. We will promote free Healthy Start vitamins to all pregnant or breastfeeding women and all children up to the age of four.

We aim to provide suitable food for all.

Children with special needs have their nutritional requirements taken into account. Our food reflects the ethnicity and cultures of all children attending our setting. We ask parents for advice to ensure the needs of all children are met, and we learn from parents' experiences and suggestions.

Special occasions and birthdays are celebrated with healthy food or non-food treats.

We promote activities and non-food treats, such as craft projects, stickers and balloons, as alternatives to birthday sweets. If food is used for celebrations it forms part of a balanced meal provision and does not replace healthy foods.

Only healthy drinks are provided.

Water and milk are the best drinks for children's teeth and bodies. We provide whole milk for children under two; we do not use skimmed milk for children under five.

Drinks are offered in an open cup from six months and bottles stopped at one year. We follow DoH hygiene instructions when preparing a formula drink.