

Food and Drink Policy

Policies and Procedures Guidance

Developing an effective food and drink policy will enable a setting's community to consistently express and maintain their ethos around healthy eating, food and drink provision and how it makes a positive contribution to the health and well-being of all.

Best practice will involve consulting with all staff, management, parents/carers and children at the setting as well as considering how each party's contributions can be used to formulate the policy.

Outlined below are areas your setting may wish to reflect upon and consider whilst developing policy.

Policy Statement

This could be a brief summary of your ethos and why the policy is in place.

You could consider:

- Basic needs of all children; hygiene, health and well-being.
- Valuing diversity; inclusion and equal access of opportunity for all.
- Managing individual needs – allergies and specific dietary requirements.
- Age range of children, stages of development and opportunities to develop independence.
- Social interaction and language development.
- Importance of adults as role models.
- Who you have consulted during policy formulation.
- How you will communicate the information to all parties on a regular basis.

Policy Aims

These could be more specific targets with visible/measurable results.

You could link your aims to:

- Developing healthy eating and drinking practice which can benefit children, staff and parents/carers.
- Ensuring snack and mealtimes are an integral, valued part of the setting's day; opportunities for social and language development are maximised.
- Raising awareness of nutrition for babies and young children.
- Helping children develop positive attitudes to diet, health and dental health.
- Encouraging and developing children's skills so they can make informed choices about food and drink.
- Sharing key health messages with parents/carers.

Statutory Requirements:

- Lay out how practice meets the relevant EYFS Statutory Welfare Requirements.

Strongly Recommended:

- Provide information on how you ensure that bottle preparation, storage of expressed/formula milk and feeding procedures meet the latest advice from the Department of Health. [Link to “Guide to Bottle Preparation and Feeding” on Merlin](#)

Individual Dietary Requirements

- How you gather, store and update information about individual dietary requirements, allergies, medical issues, religious and ethical considerations.
- How you display current information about individual requirements so that all staff and volunteers know about them, whilst maintaining the child’s privacy.
- How you ensure that preparation/serving systems are managed so that children only get food and drink consistent with their special requirement.
- How information such as ‘Nut Free Zone’ is shared with all users of the setting staff.
- How staff members show sensitivity in providing for children’s diets and allergies so that they do not feel singled out.
- How you ensure children do not share or swap food.
- How you manage different ages/stages of development e.g. bottle feeding/weaning.

Strongly Recommended:

- The snack and mealtimes you provide at the setting. How you decide the timings of these. Whether you offer early arrivals and/or children who stay late an appropriate meal or snack at parents’/carers’ request.
- How you involve parents/carers in planning menus.
- How you display menus/choices.
- How you ensure that you provide healthy, nutritious food at all snack/mealtimes, what guidance you follow.
- How you ensure appropriate portion sizes.
- Where packed lunches are brought from home what guidance and information is provided to parents/carers.
- How you store packed lunches.
- How you include food from each child’s cultural background.
- How you keep parents/carers informed about their children’s feeding routine, daily intake and preferences.
- How food hygiene and safety practices are included in the induction of new staff.
- How relevant training is identified and for which members of staff.
- Your policy on food brought in from home to be shared with others e.g. birthday cakes and ‘holiday’ sweets.
- How you ensure children and adults always have access to fresh drinking water.
- How you ensure babies have sufficient intake of fluids.
- The type of milk available to children.

Learning and Development

- How opportunities for exploring food and its provenance are provided for children e.g. cooking; growing; real fruit and vegetables in role play, books etc.
- How children are supported to understand the importance of healthy eating through age appropriate play.

The Eating Environment and Interaction

- How you organise snack/mealtimes so they are relaxed social occasions.
- How long each snack and mealtime lasts.
- The adult:child ratio in the eating area during snack/mealtimes.
- How all communication and interactions are encouraged and supported, building on what interests the child and extending where appropriate.
- How snack/mealtimes support children to develop independence e.g. personal hygiene, making choices, preparing, serving themselves, feeding themselves and clearing up.
- How the eating environment reflects children's cultural eating practices.
- How and what adults model to children during snack/mealtimes.
- How you help children to adopt a healthy relationship with food by avoiding the use of food, particularly high sugar, high fat varieties, as a reward or as a bribe to eat another food item; portion control; accepting when a child has had enough; supporting 'fussy' eaters and encouraging children to try new things.

Developing/Monitoring/Evaluation of Policy and Practice

- The systems in place to ensure that your policy is implemented and reviewed regularly with all of the setting's community.
- Details of quality improvement schemes that influence your food and drink provision.
- How you keep up-to-date with latest guidance and information.

Useful resources and websites

For further information and guidance please look at the Healthy Early Years section on Merlin. Resources include:

- "Food for Thought" Document
- [Appendix 19](#) "Laying the Table. Recommendations for National Food and Nutrition Guidance for Early Years Settings in England. Volume 2" [Merlin link here](#)
- Food Portion Book for 1 – 4 year olds [Merlin link here](#)
- Change4Life references