

Eat better, start better

Promoting and supporting healthy eating in early years settings

A guide for early years settings in England

Introduction

Early years settings provide an ideal opportunity to encourage young children to eat well and learn about food. This not only helps protect their health while young but also sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing.

Ofsted's new Common Inspection Framework includes a judgment on personal development, behaviour and welfare. As part of reaching this judgment, inspectors will look at the extent to which early years settings successfully support and encourage children and their parents/carers to gain "*knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy*", and "*evidence of a whole setting approach to exercise and healthy eating*".

Action for Children has updated this best practice guidance to help early years settings to adopt and demonstrate a whole setting approach to healthy eating.

Where to find help

Action for Children is one of the leading experts in early years nutrition and has a large range of free resources where you can find support and information. www.actionforchildren.org.uk

You will find guidance on providing healthy balanced and nutritious food and drinks and how to encourage children to eat well in the Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England – A Practical Guide (updated 2017). You will also find practical tools and guidelines including menu planning checklist, packed lunch guidance, two seasonal one week early years menus, Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink.

Early years food, nutrition and healthy cooking face to face and online training is available from www.actionforchildren.org.uk



Use this best practice guidance to help you consider your current approach to promoting and supporting healthy eating in early years settings. Read each question and tick (✓) to indicate if you have considered the best practice.

Name of setting:		Date of completion:	Review due:
	Key questions	Best practice	✓
Leadership and management	What steps have you taken to ensure there is a whole setting approach to healthy eating?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References in self-evaluation form demonstrating how a whole setting approach is adopted to healthy eating across policies, procedures and practices. A 'whole-setting' food policy covering all aspects of the approach to food and healthy eating is developed, consulted, shared and regularly reviewed by staff, families and children. 	
	Who is responsible for healthy food provision and food education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named member(s) of staff responsible for healthy food provision and food education in setting. 	
	How do you involve staff, parents/carers, children in promoting healthy eating? What do children think about the food and drink provided? How are they involved in decision-making?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional voice of practitioners, all staff are able to share the setting's approach to healthy eating with parents/carers and children. Families and children are consulted and encouraged to give feedback (e.g. survey/questionnaire, comments box) about the meals and snacks offered. Family and children's involvement in decision making is included in the settings self-evaluation. Families are encouraged to participate in food activities to support development of healthy cooking skills. 	
	How do you monitor and evaluate the setting's approach to and provision of food?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete menu planning checklists. Sign up to Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink. Apply for local, regional and national food and nutrition and healthy eating awards. 	
	How do you ensure meals and snacks meet the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) welfare requirement for healthy, balanced and nutritious food and drink?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals and snacks are planned using evidence-based age appropriate national best practice food and drink guidelines. Menus for meals and snacks are planned for a week or more to include different tastes, colours and textures, are seasonal, sustainable and minimise impact on the environment. Menus are shared (e.g. notice boards, website, face book) to ensure parents/carers know what is provided. 	
Menu planning and provision	How do you ensure your food provision meets the requirements of all children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about dietary requirements is collected for children before starting to attend the setting. Policies and procedures are in place to support and manage children's dietary requirements. Food allergen information is available for all food and drink provided in line with EU and UK legislation. All staff receive training on handling and effectively communicating allergen information. Staff are trained to understand the specific dietary requirements of different aged children, and to help children learn about food and make informed healthy choices. 	
	How do you ensure fresh drinking water is available and accessible at all times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water is easily accessible for all children, and they are encouraged to drink water. 	



	Key questions	Best practice	✓
Menu planning and provision	How do you ensure mealtimes are a positive welcoming environment, where children are encouraged to eat well, develop good eating habits and social skills?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area where children eat is clean, warm, bright and the furniture, plates, and cutlery are suitable for young children. Children are involved in preparing, cooking and/or serving foods at snack and mealtimes. Children are encouraged to try new foods and there is an agreed approach to manage fussy eating included in the settings food policy. Meal and snack times are used as an opportunity to talk to children about healthy eating, to help children to develop good eating habits, social skills including speaking and listening. Staff and children eat together (where possible), and staff engage children in conversation and act as positive role models. 	
	What advice is provided to families and children who bring in food from home?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food and drink brought from home are appropriately labelled and stored. Healthy eating advice is given to parents on the types of food and drink brought in from home. 	
Education	How do you make learning about healthy eating possible for all children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about and through food is integrated into the seven areas of learning and development and is considered throughout the settings educational programme. Children are given the opportunity to grow, shop, prepare and cook food. Children and parents/carers are given the opportunity to participate in food activities together (cooking sessions, visits). 	
	How do you measure progress of children's knowledge and skills about healthy eating?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are working to age-appropriate levels of development within personal development health and self-care plan. Children know the importance of physical exercise for good health, and a healthy diet, and can talk about ways to keep healthy and safe. 	
Wider wellbeing	<p>How do you know that you are following the current food safety regulations and the food hygiene regulations requirements in the EYFS?</p> <p>How do you ensure you are following food safety and hygiene regulations</p> <p>What CPD/training is in place for all staff to support their knowledge of health and wellbeing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and procedures are in place and are routinely monitored to demonstrate how responsibilities under the Food Safety Act 1990 are followed. The setting is registered with the relevant local authority health department to provide food. All staff who handle or prepare food have up to date Food Handling Certificates and are fully trained in food storage, preparation, cooking and food safety. Staff development plans and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) records that show staff have completed relevant training are monitored to evaluate the impact of the training on how they use their knowledge of health and wellbeing to impact on children's outcomes. 	
	How does the setting link healthy eating within the wider personal development, behaviour and welfare judgment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting follows and signposts parents/caterers to appropriate evidence-based healthy eating advice and resources and local services such as breastfeeding network, health visitors, healthy weight team, dietitians, registered nutritionists, dentists, physical activity groups, food safety team and environmental health. Information is displayed in the setting and shared electronically and via events hosted around health and wellbeing. 	

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Further advice and resources from other organisations include

Anaphylaxis Campaign advice on catering for allergies is available from www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/food-industry/catering-for-allergy---practical-measures

Allergy UK food allergy information is available from www.allergyuk.org/food-allergy-menu/food-allergy

British Heart Foundation advice on physical activity guidelines for the early years is available from www.bhfactive.org.uk/earlyyearsguidelines/index.html

Healthy Start scheme for information on healthy eating, applying for Healthy Start Vouchers, and appropriate use of vitamin supplements is available from www.healthystart.nhs.uk/

Nursery Milk Scheme - to claim for reimbursement for milk www.nurserymilk.co.uk

First Steps Nutrition Trust for further information and resources to support eating well from pre-conception to five years see www.firststepsnutrition.org

NHS Choices for further information on what to feed young children see NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/understanding-food-groups.aspx#close

Food Standards Agency for food businesses to provide allergen information, and to teach children about food allergies, are available from the Food Standards Agency website www.food.gov.uk/allergen-resources

HOW

**ACTION FOR
CHILDREN**

WORKS

Contact us

Action for Children,
3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road,
Watford, WD18 8AG

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Registered charity nos:
England and Wales 1097940.
Scotland SC038092.
Company no. 4764232.

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