



Healthy Eating Policy

1. Statement of Purpose

The promotion of children's healthy eating is an important aspect of high-quality childcare and children should have a positive experience which helps to develop lifelong healthy eating habits. Healthy eating should be promoted in all early learning and childcare (ELC) settings by providing a well-balanced and nutritious diet. All children in ELC settings need regular healthy meals, snacks and drinks to help develop their health and wellbeing. Through sharing a positive food experience with others, children's language and social skills can be developed. It is important for staff to consider the individual and cultural needs of any children in their care.

Throughout this guidance the term '*parents*' is used to include all main caregivers.

2. Wellbeing

No matter the age of the child, from babyhood onwards, health and wellbeing is the principal driving force behind children growing up and learning. The wellbeing indicators of [GIRFEC](#), for children to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, are implicit. It is also well known that a healthy diet and regular physical exercise are fundamental for a healthy childhood. Babies and young children need a healthy balanced diet to support brain development and physical development. (As per [Realising the Ambition: Being Me \(Scottish Government 2020\)](#) and the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#).)

3. Menu Planning

We will ensure that a well balanced, healthy and nutritious snack is provided for all children. We will ensure that a well-balanced, healthy and nutritious diet is provided for all children. When planning a menu, staff will consider the individual nutritional needs of the children, the children's stage of development, any allergies they may have and their cultural background. The planned menu will ensure children experience a wide variety of food options from the different food groups. Menus can be divided into meals, snacks and drinks, and each of these areas will include fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and water. Water should be available to all children throughout the session and milk, as well as water, should be offered at snack and mealtimes. Meals will reflect a balance from the different food groups (starchy food,

fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, eggs and pulses). Food containing large quantities of fat, sugar, artificial additives and colouring will be avoided. Further information on menu planning can be found in [Setting the Table, Nutritional Guidance and Food Standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland](#) (NHS Scotland 2015 p76)'.

Please note that in local authority settings, menus will be provided.

4. Environment

The environment should be calm and welcoming and encourage positive social interaction amongst children and staff. Meal and snack times should be used to develop good table manners, establish healthy eating patterns and develop regular eating routines in children. Independence skills should be developed by offering children food and drink choices and encouraging children to serve and feed themselves. Children should be given time to eat at their own pace and not be rushed. Consideration should be given to the space and managing of meal/snack times as well as the type of food provided. Suitable equipment will be provided for all children taking into account their individual needs and stage of development to ensure a positive experience.

5. Space to Eat

Provision of food is an integral part of a care and learning environment. When children have a positive experience of eating and drinking in an early learning and childcare service, it will help them to develop an appreciation that eating can be an enjoyable activity, and understand the role of food within social and cultural contexts on long term health benefits. (As per [Space to Grow](#) Scottish Government 2017).

6. Good Eating Habits

Positive eating habits should be encouraged., Staff should provide an enjoyable, flexible eating experience within the setting, enabling children to develop good eating patterns. Children should experience a variety of different foods and regularly be introduced to new foods. They should be encouraged to try small quantities of all types of foods unless on a special diet or for cultural reasons. Quantities of food/drink offered will be determined by the ages of the children and their individual needs. If a child does not want to eat a meal or shows signs of distress the food should be removed, without fuss, after a reasonable time. A healthy snack should be offered later in the day to the child. Any child who has not eaten their main course should not be denied dessert. Relevant information regarding the child's eating habits should be recorded and parents should be informed. Staff should ensure a consistent approach in relation to children's eating habits and offer praise and encouragement whenever possible. Through play, positive attitudes to healthy eating should be developed.

7. Food Policy

Specific information, relating to the individual ELC setting, should be provided within the Healthy Eating policy. Information regarding frameworks for food policy development can be found in [Setting the Table, Nutritional Guidance and Food](#)

[Standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland \(NHS Scotland 2015 p86-91\)](#)

8. Partnership with Families

The setting will work in partnership with parents and any other relevant agencies in their community to promote healthy eating. The weekly menu will be displayed in advance and available for parents and children to view. Parents should be made aware of what their child has eaten and how well they have eaten through regular informal contact.

9. Staff Development

The preparation and handling of food should be carried out by competent staff who will have sufficient knowledge to ensure food is safe to eat. Staff should receive training in food hygiene. Food safety and hygiene is the responsibility of each individual setting. The local authority environmental health department will have up to date information regarding food safety legislation and procedures. In line with good practice the setting should aim to have at least one staff member who has a Basic Food Hygiene Certificate. (As per [Setting the Table, Nutritional Guidance and Food Standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland](#) (NHS Scotland 2015 p95).

Monitoring of this Policy

It will be the responsibility of Sophie Startin to ensure that new or temporary staff are familiar with this policy and that the policy is being implemented by all staff.

See also:

Infection Control Policy

Links to national policy

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-standards-support-life/>

Space to Grow - Section 02 Environment

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/549001/space-to-grow.pdf>