**Advice:** Please note that this document acts as a guide only. Wording, tone, and content should be adapted by the EY setting in consultation with staff, parents, carers, and pupils. Some of the policy may take time to implement, so you may like to add a timeline with your final policy. Remember to add in a review date – ideally this should be no longer than 24 months.

**Example: Healthy Food and Drinks Policy** **for Early Years’ Care Providers**

**Statement of Intent**

We recognise the importance of introducing healthy foods and good eating behaviours at an early age to promote healthy weight and good oral health.

This policy aims to ensure that all aspects of food and nutrition in our setting promote the health and wellbeing of children, families, carers, and staff; provide a hygienic, healthy environment wherever food is offered; and promote healthy eating habits that will lead to lifelong health and wellbeing.

Our procedures are in keeping with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which states that ‘*where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious*’ and that ‘*children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity and to make healthy choices in relation to food*’.

We will work with families to best support their needs and wishes in line with current health guidelines.

**General Procedures**

1. **(1a) Food provision:** Children are provided with hot cooked food at (insert time points where food/snacks are served). This is provided by (insert name of caterer or setting). Menus are age-appropriate and in line with the [Eat Better, Start Better](https://foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/) government guidance. Individual dietary requirements will be respected and catered for as necessary. Children will only eat a packed lunch provided by home when discussed with the room lead and manager, this considers SEND children and inclusive practice.

**(1b) Food provision:** Packed lunches and snacks are provided by parents/carers. We direct parents/carers to [www.betterhealthns.co.uk](http://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/hints-tips/recipes-lunch-box-and-snack-ideas/) for healthy lunch box and snack ideas. We discourage foods and drinks that are high in added salt or sugar, such as crisps, sweets, chocolate, soft drinks, smoothies, juice, etc.

1. **‘Milk and Water Only’ setting**: We recognise that tooth decay is largely preventable, yet highly prevalent. Because of this, we are committed to being a “milk and water only” setting. Drinks with added sugar are not permitted unless a parent/carer can provide a valid reason (e.g., professional advice) for their child to consume drinks with added sugar. Children have access to tap water throughout the day and are encouraged to help themselves. At 12+ months, milk preferences will be discussed with parents/carers, as breastfeeding can carry on for as long as parent and baby want. At 12+ months, babies can be offered cow’s milk to drink (or expressed breast milk, if provided).
2. **Parents/Carers**: To ensure that children are receiving reliable and consistent information around food and nutrition, parents/carers will be provided with links to the Better Health North Somerset website for advice around nutrition for under 5s: <https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/eating-well-under-5/> and informed about the [Healthy Start programme](https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/healthy-start-scheme-get-help-to-buy-food-and-milk/).
3. **Appropriate portion sizes:** Snack and meal quantities are provided in line with the [Eat Better Start Better](https://foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/) government guidance.
4. **Introducing a variety of tastes and textures**: Mealtimes and snack times will be used to introduce a variety of fruits and vegetables.
5. **Fun and positive mealtimes**: We recognise the importance of creating a relaxed and fun atmosphere at mealtimes as this can help children to make positive associations with healthy eating. Staff sit with children where possible to show a good example of table manners, introduce new foods and model good eating practice. Areas used for meal and snack times are clean and bright with displays relating to healthy eating. We use positive language such as “it’s fun/nice/delicious/an experiment/an adventure” and stay away from language such as “because it’s healthy”. We focus on the positive health outcomes from fruit and vegetables, for example “it makes you feel full of energy”. Children who are slow eaters will be given time and not rushed. We recognise that all children have different appetites and will not pressure them to finish their meal if they explain that they are full. To reduce food waste, we serve small portion sizes to start with, and support children to ask for more if they wish.
6. **Healthy eating behaviour**: We do not use food as a reward or treat for good behaviour. Children will be encouraged to say “Please” and “Thank You”. Conversation will be encouraged at mealtimes, but not shouting. Children are provided with opportunities to feed themselves (and learn cutlery etiquette). Children will be supported to make choices about what they would like to eat at snack time by preparing and serving some of their food themselves as appropriate.
7. **Food Education**: Helping children to understand where food comes from can encourage children to increase the variety of food they eat. Food and nutrition is included in the curriculum through (insert ways in which food education takes place in the setting) for example, growing vegetables and herbs within the setting, cooking with setting’s grown vegetables, reading books which include healthy foods, picnic or kitchen role play, sensory play using food, arts & crafts -designing pictures of food or creating art with food.
8. **Fussy eating**: Fussy eating is common in children aged between the ages of 2-5 years. We recognise the importance of children hearing the same messages around healthy food habits, from all early year’s care providers and at home, as this can help support their eating habits. Children not on special diets will be encouraged to eat a small piece of everything. If a child refuses to eat certain foods, they will not be pressured. Children who refuse to eat/drink at mealtimes will be encouraged throughout the day. Where a child’s eating behaviour has continued for an extended period and parent/carer/EY professional raises concerns that it is affecting a child’s wellbeing, it is recommended that the families contact their Health Visitor and/or GP to discuss their concerns. For more information on fussy eating please see: <https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/eating-well-under-5/> .
9. **Staff training**: To ensure staff members are providing children and families with a consistent and reliable information around food and nutrition, we source updated information from the <https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk.>
10. **Allergies**: In accordance with the EYFS Statutory Framework, before a child is admitted to our setting, information will be obtained about any special dietary requirements, preferences, and food allergies that the child has. All staff will have knowledge of children’s allergy list and where to find it. Lunch boxes provided by home will not contain any form of nuts, and grapes must be cut appropriately by parent/carers when preparing lunch box. Please see our Allergies Policy for more information.
11. **Infant Feeding**: We recognise the importance of providing a consistent message amongst staff who work within early years settings when providing support and education for families around infant feeding and development. Please refer to the Infant Feeding Policyand [www.betterhealthns.co.uk/healthy-families/healthy-baby/infant-feeding/](https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/healthy-families/healthy-baby/infant-feeding/) for more information.
12. **Introducing solid foods:** We recognise the importance of introducing a baby to solid foods alongside breast milk or first infant formula at around 6 months old and when they clearly show all three developmental signs of readiness. For further information on all aspects of introducing solid foods, please see our Introducing Solids Policy and [www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/introducing-solid-food/](http://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/information/introducing-solid-food/).
13. **Food Safety and Hygiene**: All staff handling food have completed a Food Hygiene and Safety certificate. The setting has a designated area that is adequately equipped to provide healthy snacks and drinks for children as necessary, including sterilisation equipment for babies’ food. Children and staff are required to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks. If two or more children suffer the effects of food poisoning after eating on the premises, Ofsted will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable or within 14 days. Please refer to Food Safety and Hygiene Policy for more information.
14. **Cultural differences**: If a child follows dietary habits linked to their religion/cultural this should be recorded upon the child’s registration, giving the parent/carer opportunity to provide more details if needed. Differences in eating habits will be respected. Menus will include meals that accommodate religious/cultural dietary habits e.g., Kosher, Halal, and vegetarian options.
15. **Celebrations/events**: When food is provided at a celebration/event, all food provided must be in line with [Eat Better Start Better](https://foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/) voluntary government guidance. Celebrations/events will not be used to provide or promote foods high in fat, salt, and sugar for example, we discourage food items to be brought into the setting, such as birthday cake or sweets. Instead, we use cultural celebrations to introduce new foods at mealtimes, such as pumkin soup at halloween or baked samosas at Diwali. Celebrations/events are marked in other activities such as decorating rooms, games, crafts, songs, and stories. Examples can be found on the [Healthy Early Years](https://www.betterhealthns.co.uk/practitioners/healthy-early-years/food-and-nutrition-for-early-years/) webpage.

**Policy date:** **Review date:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**