

Early Years Setting: Food, Drink, Oral Health and Physical Activity Policy Supplementary Guidance



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A clear policy helps everyone to understand what is expected of them and what part they have to play in making the policy a success.

By creating and implementing a food, drink, oral health, and physical activity policy for an Early Years Setting, it contributes to improving children's health and well-being by:

- Establishing clear guidelines that form the foundation of your setting
- Emphasising the importance your setting places on promoting healthy lifestyles
- Turning standards and best practices into practical, actionable steps

Whether you are creating a new policy or updating an existing one, it's essential to ensure it reflects a whole-setting approach.

Below are examples that can be implemented in your setting, using policy guidance to meet your specific needs. These examples have been taken from the [Early Years Settings Food, Drink, Oral Health, and Physical Activity Policy](#). It is important that your policy reflects your settings values and beliefs. We suggest you use the policy document to tailor make a policy for your setting. Below are some of the key points from each section (Oral Health/Drinks/Food and Physical Activity). We recommend including these in your own policy. Ultimately, your policy should support and reinforce the values of all areas within the setting, while aligning with national guidelines. It's important that your policy is tailored to your setting, meeting the needs of children, staff, and parents/carers.

Oral Health

Promoting oral health in early years is essential to protect young teeth and establish good habits. Oral hygiene is very important in achieving overall good oral health, keeping children free from toothache, tooth decay, infection and swollen gums.

At [insert setting name], we believe it's important to support children's oral health, as their early experiences can have a lasting impact. By educating children at nursery, we can teach them about their oral health, introduce good habits, and help normalise dental visits.

At [insert setting name], we provide children with nutritious healthy snacks. We ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water all day. We encourage the use of open cups or free-flow beakers, as prolonged bottle use can contribute to tooth decay. Around our setting, you will find oral health displays and information to help promote good oral hygiene habits to both children and their families.

Drinks

At [insert setting name], we support parents' choices regarding infant feeding. The nursery will prepare milk (expressed breast milk or first stage formula milk). We strive to follow each baby's home feeding routine.

All staff are trained in safe formula preparation. Each bottle is made fresh for every feed in a designated area, with staff ensuring hands and surfaces are washed. Our staff follow the [NHS guidance](#) on preparing infant formula.

We ensure that children have access to fresh drinking water throughout the day.

Food

We are committed to providing food that supports the development of healthy eating habits. We recognise that early food experiences can have an important effect on adult eating patterns and attitudes towards food. Mealtimes are enjoyable, social occasions which provide an opportunity to encourage good communication skills and language development.

At the nursery, we provide snacks and meals that are both healthy and tailored to meet each child's individual dietary needs. Mealtimes are also used to promote independence, allowing children to make choices, serve food and drinks, and feed themselves.

Staff encourage children to try a bit of everything but avoid making a fuss if they choose not to.

We will ensure that:

- A balanced and healthy breakfast, lunch, dinner and two daily snacks are provided for children attending a full day at the nursery
- Menus are planned in advance, rotated regularly, and reflect cultural diversity and variety. These will be displayed in setting and on our website for parents to view.
- Nutritious food is provided at all snack and mealtimes, avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar, salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings
- Menus will include a variety of different fruit and vegetables
- Staff will promote healthy eating and social skills by eating with and engaging with the children during mealtimes

Allergens

Before a child starts attending the setting, we gather information from parent/carers about their child's dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies.

Details of each child's dietary requirements are clearly displayed in their home room, the kitchen, and the office to ensure all staff are fully informed.

We are careful not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and are particularly vigilant when a child has a known nut allergy.

Consider becoming a nut free setting to minimise risk to any nut allergies.

Physical Activity

We believe that engaging in physical activity is essential for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. All children are encouraged to participate in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities throughout the day. We make every effort to raise awareness of the importance of physical activity for both children and adults.

Our goal is to promote the health and well-being of the whole setting by encouraging physical activity and providing consistent messages to children, parents, and staff. We recognise that children of all ages should be active, especially those under five, as physical activity is crucial for their growth, development, and overall health. The early years are an important time to establish good habits related to physical activity.

Physically active play is planned for each session as well as having free flow play which includes access to balls, hula hoops, climbing frames. For children who are not yet walking yet, we ensure that they have ample space to move freely throughout the nursery. We ensure that the children have sufficient time outdoors.

We provide suitable physical activities for all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), ensuring everyone has access to a comprehensive program of physical activities.

Review

It is important to regularly review and evaluate the policy with the staff team to identify what works well, what doesn't, and how it can be improved. This ensures the policy remains effective and doesn't become stagnant or merely a tick-box exercise.

Put measures in place to assess whether the objectives of the policy are being met and the outcomes achieved. You can then amend and update your policy as necessary, to reflect developments.