

## **Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Health**

Where children are provided with meals, snacks and drinks, they must be healthy, balanced and nutritious.

### **6.5 Food and drink**

#### **Policy statement**

We regard snack and meal times as an important part of our day. Eating represents a social time for children and adults, and helps children to learn about healthy eating. We promote healthy eating using resources and materials. We try to encourage an awareness of healthy eating through the snacks we provide, specific curriculum topics, cookery activities and discussions we have about eating a healthy balanced diet. At snack and meal times, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs.

#### **Procedures**

We follow these procedures to promote healthy eating in our setting.

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we ask their parents about their dietary needs and preferences, including any allergies. (See the Managing Children who are Sick, Infectious or with Allergies Policy.)
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in the Registration 'All About Me' Form and parents sign the form to signify that it is correct.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs – including any allergies - are up-to-date. Parents sign the updated record to signify that it is correct.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs so that all our staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.
- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences, as well as their parents' wishes.
- The snacks in our daily 'Healthy Snack' bowl are donated from families and shared between the children. Healthy eating is discussed regularly and forms part of our curriculum. Through encouraging parental contributions we ensure a good supply of fresh foods as well as providing a different range of foods for the children to try.
- When purchasing pre-school snacks and drinks we are careful to assess the nutritional value, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings and consider organic options.
- We include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- We take care not to provide food containing nuts or nut products and we are especially vigilant when we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, as well as

about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks.

- We provide a vegetarian alternative on days when meat or fish are offered and make every effort to ensure Halal meat or Kosher food is available for children who require it.
- We show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. We do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child, or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and adults participate.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves.
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the day. Staff will also observe children's activities throughout the session and will respond appropriately by offering drinks.
- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in our setting.
- We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food. Food and drink provided specifically for individual children with dietary needs should be clearly labelled and stored appropriately.
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we discourage children from sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi-skimmed milk.
- We ensure children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and pays due attention to children's particular dietary and religious requirements. Those responsible for the preparation and handling of foods should be competent to do so and must receive training in food hygiene. Regulations relating to food safety and hygiene should be complied with.
- Food should be stored and checked regularly and used in correct rotation. Any food kept after its 'Use by / Best before' dates should not be consumed. The fridge temperature is checked weekly.

### *Packed lunches*

Where we cannot provide cooked meals and children are required to bring packed lunches, we:

- ensure perishable contents of packed lunches are refrigerated or contain an ice pack to keep food cool;
- inform parents of our policy on healthy eating;
- inform parents of whether we have facilities to microwave cooked food brought from home;
- encourage parents to provide sandwiches with a healthy filling, fruit, and milk based deserts, such as yoghurt or crème fraîche, where we can only provide cold food from home. Children may supply their own drinks or we are able to provide a choice of water or milk;
- discourage packed lunch contents that consist largely of crisps, processed foods, sweet drinks and sweet products such as cakes or biscuits. We reserve the right to return this food to the parent as a last resort;
- provide children bringing packed lunches with plates, cups and cutlery; and

- ensure that adults sit with children to eat their lunch so that the mealtime is a social occasion.
- Lunch bags/boxes should be clearly labelled with the child's name.

### **Legal framework**

- Regulation (EC) 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Hygiene of Foodstuffs.

### **Further guidance**

- Safer Food, Better Business (Food Standards Agency 2011)

### **Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications**

- Nutritional Guidance for the Under Fives (Ed. 2010)
- The Early Years Essential Cookbook (2009)
- Healthy and Active Lifestyles for the Early Years (2012)