



Policy: Nutritional Guidance - Early Years

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Policy Statement

West Lothian as an Authority is committed to promoting a Healthy Lifestyle in partnership with parents, guardians, carers, early years staff and health professionals. This policy aims to provide guidance for our Early Years Education and Childcare provisions in light of new evidence and changes, outlined in the *Setting the table - Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland* and as described in the *National Care Standards: Early Education and Childcare up to the Age of 16*.

- National Care Standard 3 – *Each child or young person will be nurtured by staff who will promote his or her general wellbeing, nutrition and safety.*
- National Care Standard 3.3 – *Children and young people have opportunities to learn about healthy lifestyles and relationships, hygiene, diet and personal safety.*
- National Care Standard 3.4 – *Children and young people have access to a well-balanced and healthy diet (where food is provided) – which takes account of ethnic, cultural and dietary requirements, including food allergies.*

Rationale

Improving children’s health is an important priority for the Scottish Government. The strategy *Improving Health in Scotland: the Challenge* identifies the early years as one of the four key areas for health improvement, as well as putting special focus on diet and physical activity as a way of achieving this. *Eating for Health: Meeting the Challenge*, recommends that we need nutritional guidance for the pre-school sector to improve children’s health.

Children’s early experiences of food play an important part in shaping later eating habits. Good eating habits support healthy growth and development. Positive messages about food in the early years promotes the importance of a good diet to children’s families. A partnership approach to the development of health promotion within early years and care

settings is an effective way of achieving children's health through nutritional guidance. Being aware of a child's eating pattern and food intake and discussing solutions to any problems with parents and key professionals can be an important element within the GIRFEC approach.

Aims of Policy

- To provide a coherent nutritional guidance programme for West Lothian children in the early years.
- To encourage establishments to plan a nutritional programme which is in line with the *Setting the table - Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland*.
- To promote the development of healthy eating habits through partnership with professionals, parents and other agencies.
- To promote the development of positive attitudes towards food and healthy eating through a range of carefully planned experiences.

Responsibilities

Heads of all centres should actively promote healthy eating by ensuring that:

- Relevant training and development opportunities are provided. This should include basic food hygiene and knowledge of nutritional guidance in the early years.
- The needs of all children are met through appropriate food provision in line with the new regulations concerning food labelling and additives.
- Staff are aware of the 14 most common allergens
- Staff are informed and up to date of any food allergies and intolerances that children have.
- Parents and carers are consulted on food provision and healthy eating, seeking guidance if necessary from professionals.
- Oral health care is promoted and supported by appropriate services
- Monitoring and evaluation systems are in place.

Implementation

In delivering a programme for healthy eating, heads of centres should consider the following best practice suggestions:

- Snack and meal menus should be displayed in advance / shared with parents and carers.
- The weekly menu should provide children with a varied and healthy diet.
- All children should be offered appropriate foods: this will include children with special dietary requirements and allergies.
- Milk or water should be served with morning and afternoon snacks.
- All dairy products used in the nursery should be full fat.

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- Children should be allowed to have second helpings of fruit or milk-based deserts if available.
- Parents and carers should be advised if their child is not eating well.
- Advice should be given to parents about suitable food to bring from home, including suitable party foods and healthy options for packed lunches.
- Parents and carers of children who are on special diets should be asked to provide as much written information as possible about appropriate foods. In some cases they may be asked to provide the food themselves. A record of any child with a special dietary requirement or allergy should be discretely displayed in the food preparation area to ensure that permanent and supply staff are aware of individual children's needs.
- Staff may sit with children while they eat to provide a good role model for healthy eating.
- Children should be encouraged to develop good eating skills and table manners. They should be given sufficient time to eat.
- Snack / meal times should be an opportunity for positive social interaction and for promoting social skills.
- A variety of healthy food options should be made available to children and new tastes actively encouraged (see menus in *Setting the table - Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland*. Food options should reflect cultural, religious and medical needs of children.
- A toothbrushing programme should become part of the nursery routine.
- A range of learning experiences across the curricular areas and resources should be used to promote healthy eating.

Links to Other Documents

Curriculum for Excellence	www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum/whatiscurriculumforexcellence/index.asp
'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC)	www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright
National Care Standards	http://www.nationalcarestandards.org/files/early-education.pdf
Pre-Birth to Three: Positive outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families	www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/PreBirthToThreeBooklet_tcm4-633448.pdf
Setting the table - Nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland	www.healthscotland.com/documents/21130.aspx

Conclusion

Establishing children's nutritional health in the early years should set a firm foundation for future growth and development. A collaborative approach to working and planning should ensure that opportunities are provided for children, parents and carers to develop informed choices in relation to a healthy lifestyle.