

Warwickshire Early Years Quality Inclusion SEND and Safeguarding Team

Safer Eating Practices Policy

Policy Framework for Early Years Providers



Purpose of this model policy:

This model policy has been developed to support all Early Years Providers working with children aged from birth to five years, with a focus on good practice in relation to Safer eating practices.

This is a policy framework and must not be used in its entirety. Instead, each individual setting should reflect upon their own policies and procedures and adapt the policy framework based upon these.

Links to settings individual policies may also need to be made when appropriate, which may include:

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Inclusion and Equality Policy, Allergy and Medical Needs Policy, Behaviour Policy, Staff induction and Training Policy, Staff Code of Conduct Policy, Parental Involvement Policy, and Environmental Sustainability Policy.



Please note:

Additional elements to consider are included within the policy and are highlighted in yellow. Early Years Providers should consider these points in relation to their own policies and procedures and include reference to these points when relevant.

Safer Eating Practices Policy Framework

Policy Statement

At [Setting Name], we are committed to promoting the health, safety, and wellbeing of every child through safe and inclusive eating practices. We recognise that mealtimes are not only essential for nutrition but also for social development, emotional security, and learning. This policy ensures that all food and drink provided or consumed within our setting meets the highest standards of safety, hygiene, and nutritional value, in line with the **EYFS 2025 statutory framework** and the **Department for Education's nutritional guidance**.

This Safer Eating practices policy is linked with other policies for the setting, including:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy,
- Health and Safety Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Inclusion and Equality Policy,
- Allergy and Medical Needs Policy,
- Behaviour Policy,
- Staff induction and Training Policy,
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy,
- Parental Involvement Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Policy.

This policy is guided by the following statutory and legal frameworks:

- [EYFS 2025 Sections 3.62–3.72: Food and Drink and Safer eating](#)
- [Childcare Act 2006](#)
- DfE Early Years Nutrition Guidance (2025)
- [Food Safety Act 1990](#) and associated hygiene regulations
- [Food Standards Act 1999](#)

Policy Aims

We aim to:

- Protect children from risks such as choking, allergic reactions, and foodborne illness.
- Support healthy growth and development through balanced, age-appropriate nutrition.
- Respect and accommodate individual dietary needs, cultural practices, and parental preferences.
- Foster positive attitudes towards food and mealtimes in a nurturing and inclusive environment.
- Empower staff with the knowledge and training to uphold safe eating practices consistently.

Roles and responsibilities

At [setting name], all staff understand and embrace their shared responsibility in maintaining safe eating practices. Leaders and manager play a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of this policy, ensuring staff are appropriately trained and that compliance is maintained across the setting.

Within our setting each Key Person is accountable for checking the safety of food provided to the children in their care, ensuring individual dietary needs are met. These needs may include allergies (e.g., nut, dairy), intolerances (e.g., gluten, lactose), cultural or religious requirements (e.g., halal, vegetarian), and medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, coeliac disease).

All staff at [setting name], are expected to be fully aware of children's dietary requirements and are be trained in allergy awareness and food safety procedures, fostering a culture of vigilance and care during all mealtimes.

Pre-Admission Procedures

At [Setting Name], we prioritise children's health and wellbeing by gathering detailed information from parents and carers before a child joins us. This includes any special dietary requirements, food preferences, allergies, intolerances, and health needs. This information is shared with all relevant staff involved in food preparation and handling to ensure every child's needs are met safely and consistently. During every mealtime and snack time, a designated member of staff is responsible for checking that each child's food aligns with their individual requirements.

We maintain ongoing communication with families and, where appropriate, health professionals to develop and regularly update allergy action plans. These plans are shared with all staff, who are trained to recognise the symptoms of allergies and anaphylaxis, understand the difference between allergies and intolerances, and remain aware that new allergies can develop, particularly during the weaning process. We follow guidance from the British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology (BSACI) [BSACI Allergy Action Plan](#) and refer to trusted NHS resources such as [Food Allergy](#) – NHS and [Anaphylaxis – NHS](#) to ensure our practice is safe, informed, and up to date.

At [Setting Name], we work closely with parents and carers to understand each child's individual stage of readiness for solid foods. We recognise that every child develops at their own pace, so we avoid making assumptions based on age alone. Through regular conversations with parents, we learn about the textures and types of food each child is familiar

Through education, improve life opportunities for children, young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities.
with, and we prepare meals in a way that supports each child's unique developmental needs. In partnership with families our team supports children as they transition to new stages of eating, and this is always at a pace that is right for the child.

We refer to trusted guidance such as the [NHS's Weaning – Start for Life](#) to ensure our approach is informed and up to date.

Mealtime protocols

At [Setting Name], we ensure that a member of staff with a valid paediatric first aid certificate is always present in the room while children are eating.

Children are always kept within sight and hearing of staff, as we understand that choking can be silent and requires constant vigilance. Staff are encouraged to sit facing the children during meals to monitor their eating habits, prevent food sharing, and quickly identify any signs of choking or unexpected allergic reactions.

At [Setting Name], we prioritise children's safety by seating babies and young children securely in highchairs or appropriately sized low chairs during mealtimes.

At [Setting Name], we uphold stringent hygiene measures during mealtimes by ensuring children thoroughly wash their hands before eating, table surfaces and seating (including highchairs) are cleaned appropriately, and all equipment used is sanitised and ready for use.

At [Setting Name], we aim to provide a calm, designated eating space with minimal distractions to support a safe and positive mealtime experience.

Food Preparation and Hygiene

At [Setting Name], we ensure that our food preparation areas are fully equipped to provide healthy meals, snacks, and drinks that meet the needs of all children in our care. We maintain suitable, hygienic facilities for food preparation, including sterilisation equipment for babies' food where required.

All staff involved in preparing or handling food receive up-to-date training in food hygiene and are assessed as competent before taking on these responsibilities.

All food served to children is prepared with choking prevention in mind, and we refer to the Food Standards Agency's visual resources: [how to prepare food safely to avoid choking](#) and the latest guidance from the government's [Food safety – Help for early years providers](#). This guidance helps staff understand which foods and drinks should be avoided, how to safely prepare food for different age groups, and where to find additional resources to support best practice in food safety.

Our team regularly refreshes their training and knowledge to ensure we continue to meet the highest standards of safety and care.

Nutrition Standards



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At [Setting Name], we are committed to providing children with healthy, balanced, and nutritious meals, snacks, and drinks throughout the day. Our menus are carefully planned with reference to the [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#) to ensure we meet the dietary needs of all children in our care.

Fresh drinking water is always available and easily accessible to children, encouraging independence and healthy habits.

All staff involved in food provision receive training in food hygiene and nutrition, ensuring they understand how to support children's health and wellbeing through safe and appropriate food choices.

At [Setting Name], We regularly review our food practices to ensure they reflect current guidance and best practice.

Infant Feeding and Weaning

At [Setting Name], we actively support both breastfeeding and the safe preparation of formula feeds, recognising the importance of responsive, individualised care for every child. Our staff follow the [NHS Start for Life guidance on how to safely make up infant formula](#) and [sterilise feeding equipment](#), ensuring high standards of hygiene and safety. We also follow [NHS advice on the safe storage of expressed breast milk](#), helping us to support families who choose to provide breast milk for their baby while in our care. This approach ensures that feeding practices are consistent, informed, and tailored to meet each child's needs.

At [Setting Name], we introduce solid foods based on each child's developmental readiness rather than age. Staff are trained to observe key signs that a child is ready to begin weaning, such as the ability to sit upright with minimal support, coordinated hand-to-mouth movements, and the ability to swallow food safely. Feeding plans are developed in close partnership with parents and carers and our approach is also guided by the [NHS Start for Life advice on introducing solid foods](#), ensuring that we follow evidence-based practices that support healthy development. We also align our procedures with the [Department for Education's solid food roadmap](#), which outlines safe, gradual, and responsive weaning strategies tailored to individual needs. This ensures that each child's transition to solid foods is both safe and supportive, in close partnership with parents and carers.

Feeding plans are regularly reviewed and adapted to reflect each child's changing needs. All staff involved in feeding are trained to recognise signs of readiness and are confident in supporting children through this important stage of development.

Managing Choking Incidents

At [Setting Name], the safety and wellbeing of our children is our highest priority. In the event of a choking incident that requires staff intervention, we ensure that a detailed record is made see appendix 1, including a description of the incident occurred, immediate actions taken, child's condition after the incident and follow up actions. Parents and/or carers are informed promptly and sensitively, and the parent/ carer response is also recorded on the form.

These records are reviewed regularly by the management team to identify any patterns or recurring factors that may indicate a need for changes in practice or additional staff training.

Where concerns are identified, appropriate action is taken to reduce the risk of future incidents and to strengthen our approach to food safety and supervision during mealtimes.

Managing Allergies and Intolerances

At [Setting Name], we take the management of allergies extremely seriously. Allergy Action Plans are maintained for all children with known allergies and are regularly reviewed and updated in partnership with parents and relevant health professionals.

All staff receive training to recognise the signs of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis and are confident in responding swiftly and appropriately.

If a food intolerance is suspected, we work closely with families to monitor symptoms and keep a food diary to support further investigation.

At [Setting Name], a designated member of staff is responsible for checking that each child's food is safe and suitable, based on their individual dietary needs.

We actively prevent food swapping between children to reduce the risk of cross-contamination or accidental exposure. Any incidents, including allergic reactions or near misses, are thoroughly recorded and reviewed to identify any patterns or areas for improvement, ensuring we continue to provide a safe and inclusive environment for every child.

To ensure the safety of all children, we follow clear procedures, including:

- Making sure all staff are aware of each child's allergies and dietary requirements.
- Clearly labelling all foods with ingredients.
- Storing allergen-containing foods separately.
- Preventing cross-contamination through handwashing, colour-coded plates and utensils, and labelled items (e.g. cups for children with milk allergies).
- Using separate preparation areas for allergen-free meals where needed.
- Having clear rules about food brought in by visitors.
- If a food intolerance is suspected, we work closely with families to monitor symptoms and keep a food diary to support further understanding and care planning.
- Ensuring all tables, highchairs and seating used for mealtimes are cleaned thoroughly before and after use.

Food for religious faiths and beliefs

At [Setting Name], we recognise and respect the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of our children and their families. We understand that some families may follow specific dietary practices—such as avoiding certain foods or requiring meals to be prepared in a particular way—based on their faith or beliefs. We are mindful of how these practices may affect children during mealtimes and aim to take an inclusive, respectful approach that supports every child's wellbeing.

We know that customs can vary not only between religions but also between families, so we take time to build strong relationships with parents and carers. Through open and ongoing communication, we ensure that all food provided reflects each child's individual dietary needs and family preferences. This helps us create a welcoming and inclusive environment where every child feels valued and understood.

Through education, improve life opportunities for children, young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities.

We also love to celebrate the rich cultural diversity within our setting by incorporating traditional foods into our menus.

We welcome families to share recipes, ideas, and feedback, helping us to reflect their heritage and create meaningful connections through food.

Children with additional support needs and other special diets

At [Setting Name], we are committed to meeting the individual dietary needs of all children, including those with additional support needs or special diets. We recognise that some children may require food to be prepared in a specific way due to medical, developmental, or sensory needs, and may need one-to-one support during mealtimes. We also consider sensory sensitivities, such as aversions to certain textures or smells, when planning meals and creating a calm, supportive eating environment.

If a child has a medically prescribed diet, we request written confirmation from a health professional. We work closely with parents, carers, dietitians, and specialist teachers within IDS to ensure we have clear, up-to-date information about suitable foods, exclusions, any supplements and special measures required. This information is shared with all relevant staff to ensure safe and consistent care.

Food from Home

At [Setting Name], we recognise that some families may choose to provide food from home, and in certain cases, children may need to bring their own meals or snacks due to medical, cultural, or dietary requirements. We work in close partnership with parents and carers to ensure that any food brought in is both safe and appropriate for each child.

To support this, we have a clear food and nutrition policy in place, which we share with families to help them understand our commitment to promoting healthy, balanced, and nutritious food choices. This guidance also helps parents make informed decisions when preparing packed lunches. We encourage all home-provided food to reflect the healthy options we offer within the setting, so that children receive consistent messages about nutrition and develop positive eating habits.

To maintain safety, all food brought from home is carefully checked for potential allergens to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

We also ensure that all food served is prepared in a way that minimises the risk of choking, following guidance from the Food Standards Agency.

We work closely with parents and carers to share best practices for packing lunches and sending food from home. This includes tips on keeping food fresh and safe throughout the day.

We encourage families to:

- Choose foods that are suitable for their child's developmental stage and prepared in a way that reduces choking risks.
- Use insulated, sealed lunch bags for perishable items, and where ice packs are not available, follow the '4-hour rule'—allowing food to be kept out of refrigeration for up to 4 hours, but only once.
- Clearly label lunch bags with the child's name and list the contents.
- Pack foods that can be safely stored at room temperature if refrigeration is not available.

While we are not required to refrigerate or reheat food brought from home, we do follow the latest guidance from the Food Standards Agency to support safe food handling. This includes advice on managing risks such as [Listeria](#) and using food safety procedures designed for [small settings](#) like ours.

Celebrations and Special Events

At [Setting Name], we know that birthdays and special occasions are important milestones for children and their families. Many families enjoy marking these moments by bringing in cakes or sweets to share.

While we appreciate the joy these celebrations bring, we also want to ensure that children continue to receive consistent messages about healthy eating. To support this, our food and nutrition policy includes gentle guidance for families around celebration foods. We encourage healthier alternatives such as fruit platters or fun, non-food treats like bubbles, stickers, or story time choices.

Any food brought into share is carefully checked for allergens to keep all children safe. We value open and ongoing communication with our families and work in partnership to create a positive and inclusive approach to celebrations that supports each child's wellbeing and reflects our shared commitment to healthy, happy experiences.

Food poisoning

At [Setting Name], we take our duty to safeguard children's health seriously. In the event of a food poisoning incident affecting two or more children in our care, we are required to notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably practicable and always within 14 days of the incident. We ensure that all relevant staff are aware of this responsibility and that clear procedures are in place to support timely and accurate reporting.

Monitoring and Review

At [Setting Name], we are committed to maintaining high standards in food safety and nutrition. To support this, we carry out regular audits of our food practices to ensure they remain safe, healthy, and in line with current guidance.

Allergy action plans and incident logs are reviewed each term to help us identify any patterns and make improvements where needed.

Staff training in food hygiene and allergy awareness is refreshed annually, or sooner if required to keep everyone confident and up to date.

We also value the voices of our families and children, and we actively seek their feedback to help shape our approach and ensure mealtimes are safe, inclusive, and enjoyable for all.

Staff training

At [Setting Name], we ensure all staff are fully equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to keep children safe and healthy.

This includes completing mandatory training in Paediatric First Aid, Food Hygiene (Level 2 or above), Allergy Awareness, and Nutrition and Menu Planning.

New team members receive thorough induction training, which includes our safer eating protocols, so they feel confident in supporting children's dietary needs from day one.

Ongoing training and refreshers are provided to keep everyone up to date with best practice and current guidance.

Choking Incident Report Form

Child Details			
Name:		Date of birth	
Room:		Key person	
Incident Details			
Date of Incident		Time of Incident:	
Location:			
Activity at Time of Incident			
Description of Incident			
What item/food caused the choking?			
How was the choking identified?			
Duration of choking episode			
Was the child able to breathe/talk/cough?			
Immediate Actions Taken			
First aid administered (e.g., back blows, abdominal thrusts):			
By whom:			
Was emergency medical help called? (Yes/No) - If yes, time called: - Time of arrival:			
Outcome of first aid			
Child's Condition After Incident			
Was the child monitored afterwards? (Yes/No)			
Duration of monitoring:			
Observations:			
Was the child sent home or returned to activity?			

Parent/Carer Notification			
Time parent/carers was informed:			
By whom:			
Method of communication (phone, in person, etc.):			
Parent/carers response:			
Follow-Up Actions			
Review of food/toy safety:			
Staff debrief or training needs identified:			
Changes to risk assessment or procedures			
Additional notes:			
Staff Involved			
Name(s) and role(s):			
Manager Review			
Reviewed by:		Date:	
Signature:			

Appendix 2



Food
Standards
Agency
food.gov.uk



Early years choking hazards food safety advice

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For babies and young children, food can be a choking hazard, especially when they do not chew their food well or they try to swallow it whole.

Choking can happen with any foods, but 'firm foods', bones and small round foods that can easily get stuck in the throat present a higher risk. Therefore, care givers should follow these five essential steps:

- 1** Make sure food is **suitably prepared and served** for babies and children under 5 years old. For suitable foods, see <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/> Introduce babies to solid foods from around 6 months of age.
- 2** **Think about size, shape and texture of food.** Cut food into narrow batons, avoid round shapes and firm foods. Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking.
- 3** Ensure that babies and young children are **alert and seated safely upright** in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating.
- 4** **Babies and young children should be supervised at all times** while eating. You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm.
- 5** **Encourage babies and young children to chew food well.** Teach children how to chew and swallow food properly, and ensure they take their time during meals. This will reduce their risk of choking.

Care givers and parents should be familiar with how to respond to a choking incident in line with guidance on first aid for children:

How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>

How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2021/09/Early-Years-Choking-Hazards-Poster_FINAL-21-Sept-2021.pdf

Appendix 3

Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)



Food Standards Agency
food.gov.uk

Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning/>

It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/> and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid/how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

Appendix 4

Introducing solid foods – a roadmap

0-6 months	• Until they are 6 months old, babies should only have breastmilk or formula milk. • Breastfed babies should be given vitamin D supplements. • A baby's digestive system isn't mature enough to handle nutrients in foods until around 6 months.
Around 6 months	Babies are ready for solid foods when: • They can stay sitting and supporting their own head. • They can coordinate hands, eyes and mouth. • They can swallow their food. • Start off with slightly bitter pureed vegetables (like broccoli) before moving onto sweeter ones (like carrot). • Many babies can handle a range of blended and mashed foods – go at a pace to suit them. • Food is complementary to breastmilk or formula until they are at least 12 months old. • Water can be offered as a drink, but cow's milk should never be given as a drink until 12 months.
Around 7-12 months	• Around 7 months, babies should be offered three meals a day, alongside breastmilk or formula. • As babies become more confident at eating, you can give them food with lumps in. • Babies have a heightened gag reflex, they will gag and spit out food as they work out how to move lumps around their mouths. • Babies will naturally reduce the amount of breastmilk they drink as they eat more food. If they are formula fed, gradually reduce the amount of formula milk you give them.

 Department for Education

How to cut food for babies

6 to 9 months: Babies are developing their pincer grasp. Cut food into long, thin strips or wedges to make it easy for them to hold and nibble. Try cooked vegetables, soft fruits and well-cooked pasta.	9 to 12 months: Babies are getting better at holding things, so introduce bite-sized pieces. This helps them practise chewing. Foods like soft fruits, cheese and well-cooked meat can be cut into pea sized cubes.	Over 12 months: Older babies and toddlers can handle a variety of textures. Be sure to cut food into pieces that are appropriate for the child's mouth and throat size, making sure they are easy to chew.
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Remember:

- Always supervise babies and toddlers while they are eating.
- Avoid choking by cutting food into the right sizes.
- Introduce a variety of textures and flavours.
- Pay attention to what the child likes and doesn't like.

 Department for Education



https://assets.ctfassets.net/dvmeh832nmjc/MuuWPvuZgkl3sPAwbnodW/b597f2654c4fdd22efaeb10f0df26b95/introducing_solid_foods.pdf