**This document provides guidance for policy development in outline/template form only. It is not a sample policy.**

*(Policy Number) TEMPLATE* POLICY ON HEALTHY EATING *WITH GUIDANCE*

## Rationale and Policy Considerations

“A child’s early years are important for their future health and wellbeing, and good nutrition during this time lays a healthy foundation for all of childhood and life.”

[Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-school Services](https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services.pdf)

The Policy on Healthy Eating must specify the way the service will ensure that the [food and drink](#FOOD_AND_DRINK) provided to the children attending the service is nutritious, and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of the child. The policy must also state how breastfeeding is supported in the service.

Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. Food provides the energy, protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals to live, grow and function properly. Children need a wide variety of different foods to provide the right amounts of nutrients for good health and development. The food a child eats in their early years influences their eating habits as they grow and develop. It is important to teach young children about healthy food choices and staying well hydrated, and to help them develop good habits and a healthy relationship with food from an early age.

The interactions relating to healthy eating are also important. [Síolta](http://www.siolta.ie) Standard 9 Component 9.4 states that a quality service is proactive in supporting the development of healthy eating habits in children while supporting their enjoyment and appreciation of eating and drinking as a positive social experience.

[Aistear](https://www.ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/aistear) states that adults support children’s psychological and physical well-being by helping them to make healthy choices about nutrition, hygiene and exercise (this also applies to hydration). One of Aistear’s learning goals for young children is to “make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine”.

“Learning about how to live in a healthy way, and being able to take increasing responsibility for making good health choices and caring for themselves, enables children to experience wellbeing in their present lives, and lays the foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the future. A key part of learning about and adopting healthy lifestyles involves children seeing these modelled positively and enthusiastically by the important people in their lives, including their peers, families, communities and early childhood educators.”

 The National Quality Standards Professional Learning Program Early Childhood Australia, 2012

Healthy eating needs to be considered even more broadly than just how it affects physical and even social development.

“The eating experience provides not only sustenance but also an opportunity for learning. It affects not only children’s physical growth and health but also their psychosocial and emotional development.”

 [Feeding Behaviour of Infants and Young Children and Its Impact on Child Psychosocial and Emotional Development](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/sites/default/files/textes-experts/en/535/feeding-behaviour-of-infants-and-young-children-and-its-impact-on-child-psychosocial-and-emotional-development.pdf) Yi Hui Liu & Martin T. Stein, 2013, University of California San Diego

It is important to consider that poor nutrition affects a child’s physical development and also that social behaviours and even learning functions are susceptible to the negative effects of poor nutrition and poor interactions relating to eating and drinking. The [United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition](https://www.unscn.org/) says that even in mild or moderate situations, stunted growth resulting from poor nutrition is correlated with poor academic performance and lowered mental capacity.

### Legislation and regulatory requirements

* Regulation 10 of the [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print) requires that there is a healthy eating policy in place that sets out the way the service ensures that the food and drinks provided to the children attending the service are nutritious, and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of the child.
* Regulation 22 on Food and Drink requires that the registered provider ensures that all children attending the service receive adequate, suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink, which takes their individual needs into consideration.

### Children’s needs

Children need:

* Their carers and educators to understand the importance of healthy nutrition.
* This policy to recognise that food has always been a central part of community, social, cultural and religious life.
* This policy to recognise in its practice guidance that, in addition to satisfying physical and social needs, food and the way it is experienced may also satisfy certain emotional needs (not to be used as a reward for behaviour, but enjoyed as part of a positive social experience). These emotional needs include a sense of security, love and acceptance.
* The interactions relating to eating and drinking to always be positive.
* The effect of poor nutrition on learning to be considered.
* This policy to ensure that all aspects of healthy eating are considered and their dietary requirements are appropriately met as well as any particular religious requirements their family may have. Children with allergies and very young children also need this policy to help ensure that they are not put at risk of allergic reactions to food or drink or of choking.

### Parents’/Families’ needs

Parents and guardians need:

* This policy to clearly outline the service’s approach to healthy eating including the ways in which sufficient, suitable and nutritious food and drink are made available to their child and how these are suited to their age and development, and psychological as well as physical needs.
* To know what foods and drinks are provided by the service or to be included by them in their child’s lunch box,how they are provided and what foods or drinks should not be included.
* To be aware of the service’s positive approach to interactions with the children relating to eating and drinking.
* To know what the service’s specific approach is to ensuring that no child will be given access to a food to which they have a known allergy and that no child will be at risk of choking on any foods.

### Staff needs

All staff members need:

* This policy to provide clear information on what the service’s approach is to providing healthy, safe and nutritious food for the children.
* This policy to provide the correct information for them to give to parents/guardians about what foods the service will provide and in what ways, and what types of foods they encourage parents/guardians to provide for their child in snack or lunch boxes.
* The policy to include guidance on how to ensure that food provided in the service is safe for the children.
* Clarity on what the service approach is to how, when, where and how much the children eat or are fed, as well as what kinds of interactions with the children are expected of them around and during meal times.
* To know how to access the quality guidelines relating to food and nutrition that are associated with the policy, and how these guidelines are to be implemented in the service.

### Management needs

Management needs:

* This policy to ensure that the service meets the requirements of the [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print) in relation to Food and Drink (Regulation 22) and the provision of a Healthy Eating Policy (Regulation 10).
* To ensure through this policy that all staff members and all parents/guardians of children attending the service are clear on the service’s approach to healthy eating and positive interactions relating to eating and drinking.
* All staff members and parents/guardians/carers to clearly understand their respective roles and responsibilities in relation to all children attending the service being provided appropriately with healthy, safe and nutritious foods that meet their particular needs and religious requirements.

### National Quality Frameworks

* [Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/)
* [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](http://siolta.ie/)
* [Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework](https://www.ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/aistear)

## Definitions/Glossary

*[Include here definitions of any words used in the policy that you think may need explanation.]*

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3. Policy Statement*[The Policy Statement outlines the principles, values and the purpose of the policy. It will generally be quite short. The Policy Statement can be included in the Parents/Guardians Handbook.]*

*[Your service’s Healthy Eating* ***Policy Statement*** *will need to outline, in broad terms, how your service will ensure that all children are provided appropriately with suitable sufficient, healthy, nutritious and safe food and drinks. This includes how breastfeeding is to be supported (where required).*

*State in general terms how the policy will achieve its stated purposes (See* ***Rationale and Policy Considerations for a Healthy Eating Policy*** *above and relevant guidelines – links are included under* ***References*** *below).*

*State how the service intends to practise to ensure that it is a service where everyone has their individual healthy eating and nutritional needs understood and met (as far as resources allow and within the context of the service provided).*

*You will also need to include the steps that will be taken by the service to deal with any individual dietary needs or concerns.*

*It is important that your service policy is in accordance with the requirements of the* [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print)*]*

4. Procedures & Practices*[Outlines the specific steps and/or guidance to be followed in order to implement the policy.]*

*[To complete this section you will need to**spell out specifically what actions are to be taken in line with your own policy statement and outline the steps to be followed or the way that tasks are to be performed to implement this policy.*

*This policy must include the core elements set out in the* [*Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework*](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/) *(QRF) Policy on Healthy Eating in the Appendices of the QRF.*

*You will need to refer to the* ***Rationale and Policy Considerations*** *above as well as the guidance documents listed below under* ***References****, in order to ensure that all considerations are comprehensively covered here in your own procedures and practices guidance.]*

## Communication Plan *[For staff & families]*

*[Suggested wording for this section]*

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Healthy Eating on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

The Policy Statement will be included in the Parents/Guardians Handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with all staff members at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies and procedures will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/guardians in the Policy Folder located in ………………....................

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/guardians and all staff members will receive written notification of any updates.

## Related Policies, Procedures and Forms *[List of all related documents]*

*[List here all other service’s policies that are directly related to this policy e.g.:*

* ***Policy on Managing Behaviour***
* ***Staff Training Policy***
* *Admissions Policy*
* *Interactions Policy*
* *Curriculum Policy*
* *Parent Involvement/Partnership with Parents Policy*
* *Supporting Social, Emotional and Behaviour Skills Policy*
* *Communications Policy*

… *]*

7. References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation*[List of any relevant Legislation and Practice Guides referred to in drafting the Policy]*

*Include:*

* [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/)
* [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print)
* **Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Preschool Services**

[health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services.pdf](http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services.pdf)

* **Little Bites**

[www.safefood.eu/Education/Pre-school/Little-Bites-(ROI)/Healthy-eating.aspx](http://www.safefood.eu/Education/Pre-school/Little-Bites-%28ROI%29/Healthy-eating.aspx)

* **3 Week Menu Plan**

[www.ncn.ie/images/3week\_menu\_plan\_available\_on\_web.pdf](http://www.ncn.ie/images/3week_menu_plan_available_on_web.pdf)

* **Serving Size** [www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications\_1/G6101-Safefood-App-Port-Control-Guide\_single-pages.pdf](http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications_1/G6101-Safefood-App-Port-Control-Guide_single-pages.pdf)
* **Infant Feeding**

[A Practical Infant Feeding Guide for Healthcare Professionals](https://www.fsai.ie/uploadedFiles/events/Dr%20Mary%20Flynn%20-%20Infant%20Feeding%20Guide.pdf)

[Best Practice for Infant Feeding in Ireland](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CSinead_Lawton%5CDownloads%5CBest%20Practice%20for%20Infant%20Feeding%20in%20Ireland%202012%20FINAL%20Revised%202013.pdf)

* **Breastfeeding**

<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/EncouragingSupportingBreastfeedingInChildcareResourceKit.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/pdf/strategy6-support-breastfeeding-early-care.pdf>

* **Bottle Feeding**

[www.indi.ie/images/public\_docs/1620\_New\_Guide\_to\_Bottle\_Feeding.pdf](http://www.indi.ie/images/public_docs/1620_New_Guide_to_Bottle_Feeding.pdf)

* **Weaning**

[www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating/Food-Diet/Life-Stages/Weaning.aspx](http://www.safefood.eu/Healthy-Eating/Food-Diet/Life-Stages/Weaning.aspx) [www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Healthy%20Eating/HPM00971.pdf](http://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Healthy%20Eating/HPM00971.pdf)

* **Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute**

[www.indi.ie/fact-sheets/fact-sheets-on-nutrition-for-babies-children/365-links-to-useful-resources-on-childhood-nutrition-a-guide-for-parents-and-teachers.html](http://www.indi.ie/fact-sheets/fact-sheets-on-nutrition-for-babies-children/365-links-to-useful-resources-on-childhood-nutrition-a-guide-for-parents-and-teachers.html)

* **Safe Food – Make a Start** Promotes healthy eating and food safety. Provides free to download resources on a range of childhood nutrition topics, including healthy lunchbox ideas.

[www.safefood.eu/Start/Welcome.aspx](http://www.safefood.eu/Start/Welcome.aspx)

* **Bord Bia nutrition for two to fives**

[www.bordbia.ie/consumer/aboutfood/nutrition/pages/nutritionfortwotofives.aspx](http://www.bordbia.ie/consumer/aboutfood/nutrition/pages/nutritionfortwotofives.aspx)

* **Irish Food Allergy Network** provides a guide to assist those who, through their work, encounter children and families affected by food allergy

[www.ifan.ie](http://www.ifan.ie)

* **My Child**

[www.mychild.ie](http://www.mychild.ie)

* **Early Childhood Ireland – Nutrition and Regulation**

[www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/operating-childcare-service/nutrition/nutrition-and-regulation/](http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/operating-childcare-service/nutrition/nutrition-and-regulation/)

* **NCN Healthy Ireland Smart Start**

[www.ncn.ie/index.php/contact-us/2-ncn/201-healthy-ireland-smart-start-nutrition](http://www.ncn.ie/index.php/contact-us/2-ncn/201-healthy-ireland-smart-start-nutrition)

* ‘Feeding Behaviour of Infants and Young Children and Its Impact on Child Psychosocial and Emotional Development’, Liu YH, Stein MT., 2013. In: Tremblay RE, Boivin M, Peters RDeV, eds. Faith MS, topic ed. Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development [online]. [www.child-encyclopedia.com/child-nutrition/according-experts/feeding-behaviour-infants-and-young-children-and-its-impact-child](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/child-nutrition/according-experts/feeding-behaviour-infants-and-young-children-and-its-impact-child)
* Zero to Three The Feeding Relationship [www.zerotothree.org/resources/1071-the-feeding-relationship](http://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1071-the-feeding-relationship)

## Who Must Observe This Policy

*[Suggested wording for this section:]*

**a) The Owner/Management Committee will:**

* Ensure the service complies with all relevant Healthy Eating legislation and guidelines.
* Ensure the policy and its related procedures and practices are implemented and regularly reviewed. (Regulations 10, 14 and 22)

**b) Service Manager will:**

* + Implement the policy and its related procedures and practices.
	+ Ensure that all staff members are aware of their roles and responsibilities and given appropriate training and support.
	+ Take appropriate action in any cases of additional needs.
	+ Lead the annual review of the policy.

**c) All Staff Team Members will:**

* Ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities to ensure children’s nutrition and healthy eating needs are met according to this policy.
* Implement the policy and its related procedures and practices.
* Contribute to reviews of the policy.

**d) Parents/Guardians will:**

* Be aware of and understanding their role in the implementation of the service’s Healthy Eating Policy and understanding that it applies to all of the children attending the service.

## Actions to be followed if the Policy is not implemented

*[Add in any relevant actions to be taken]*

10. Contact Information*[Who to contact for more information]*

If you need more information about this policy, contact:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Phone number or email |  |

## Policy Created

|  |  |
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| Date this policy was created  |  |

## Signatures

|  |  |  |
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|  | Name and position | Signature |
| Approved by  |  |  |
| Approved by |  |  |

## **Review Date**

|  |  |
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| Date this policy will be reviewed  |  |