

# Step by step guide to successfully developing and implementing an early years food policy

## Aim

The aim of an early years food policy is to help early years settings, including all staff, parents, carers and children to understand the setting's approach to food and drink provision and learning about food.

## The objectives of an early years food policy are to ensure:

- All staff, parents, carers and children are aware of the setting's approach to food and drink provision and learning about and through food
- Parents and carers are provided with the knowledge and information they require about the food and drink provision at the setting
- Children receive consistent messages about healthy eating.

## What is this step by step guide for?

This step by step guide has been written to support early years settings to successfully develop, implement and monitor a food policy within their setting. It lists six actions to follow when developing and implementing a food policy and provides tips and highlights additional resources to help settings. This step by step guide is based on the guidance given on 'Developing a food policy' included in Section 5 'How to encourage children to eat well' of *Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England – A Practical Guide*.

## Who is this step by step guide for?

This step by step guide can be used by any practitioner in an early years setting who is responsible for the setting's approach to food and drink provision.

## Resources

All resources referenced in this guide can be downloaded at <https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/>

## Step 1: Planning

Action	Tips and resources
Identify a member of staff or practitioner with the appropriate knowledge and skills to develop, review and maintain the food policy	<p>This can be any member of staff or a practitioner within the setting that may have an interest in food, nutrition and health. Although the responsibility for developing the policy may lie with this named individual, they should be supported by other practitioners or members of staff within the setting including the manager and cook/chef.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> inform all staff, parents, carers and children so they are aware who is responsible for the setting's approach to food and nutrition.</p>
Agree a timeline for developing and implementing the food policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set realistic dates for when each of the following steps will be completed, and when the policy will be implemented.</li> <li>• Include the date for implementation on the food policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b> a food policy should be reviewed regularly (at least once a year) with practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> Use the blank example planning sheet on page 8 of this step by step guide to organise the development of the food policy and keep track of the progress you have made.</p>
Identify who should be engaged in the development of the food policy	<p>It is important to consult with all practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children so that everyone is involved in planning the setting's approach to food and drink provision.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> consider setting up an 'action group' to help develop and implement the food policy.</p>

## Step 2: Consulting

Action	Tips and resources
<p>Gather ideas and views from staff, parents, carers and children, on how the setting could approach food and nutrition</p>	<p>Consultation is important because it provides the setting with an opportunity to explain why they would like to develop and implement a food policy and it provides practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children with an opportunity to give their ideas and views on how the setting could approach food and nutrition and what they would like included in the policy.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> gathering views and ideas from practitioners, staff, parents/carers and children can be carried out in many ways, for example via questionnaire, sharing and using current menus with parents, carers and children as a tool for discussion or via an 'ideas box' where staff and parents, carers can post their ideas confidentially.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> use the <i>Example template food policy</i> for early years settings as a discussion tool to decide on what information to include in the setting food policy. Download the <i>Example template food policy</i> from the Foundation years website <a href="https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/">https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/</a></p>

## Step 3: Developing the policy

Action	Tips and resources
<p>Write the food policy</p>	<p>Use the ideas and views gathered from practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children to write a draft food policy.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> information included within food policies varies. Examples of the types of information to include in a food policy are listed in the section 'Developing a food policy and putting it into practice' see page 45 of the <i>Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years Settings in England – A Practical Guide</i>. Download this from the Foundation Years website.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> use the <i>Example template food policy</i> for early years settings as a guide to draft the settings food policy. The headings used in this template are in line with the guidance given in the <i>Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years settings in England – A Practical Guide</i>. The <i>Example food policy</i> can be downloaded from the Foundation Years website <a href="https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/">https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/</a>.</p>

## Step 4: Sharing the food policy

Action	Tips and resources
Share the draft food policy with staff, parents, carers and children to agree the final content	<p>Share the draft food policy with all practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children to ensure everyone's views and ideas have been considered. This will help to get everyone's agreement on the proposed approach to food and drink provision. You may need to make some minor amendments to the food policy at this stage.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> display the draft food policy on your notice board or send a copy of the policy out with a letter and invite practitioners, staff and parents/carers to read and comment on the content of the policy by a certain date. Use the draft food policy with children when learning about and through food and cooking with children so they become familiar with its content.</p>

## Step 5: Putting the policy into practice

Share the final food policy with staff, parents, carers and children	<p>Share the final food policy with practitioners, staff, parents/carers and children. This can be done in many ways, for example, send copies of the food policy home with parents and carers, display a copy on the notice board and in the kitchen and upload a copy onto your website. Use the food policy when learning about and through food and cooking with children.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> consider signing up to the <i>Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink</i>. This is one of the best ways to show families, staff and visitors that your approach to food and drink follows national best practice (see page 62 of <i>Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years settings in England– A Practical Guide</i> for more information).</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> an electronic copy of the <i>Early Years Code of Practice for Food and Drink</i> can be downloaded from the Foundation Years website <a href="https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/">https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/</a>.</p>
--	--

## Step 5 continued

Action	Tips and resources
<p>Explain how the food policy will be monitored</p>	<p>Explain to practitioners, staff, parents/carers and children how the setting plans to monitor the implementation of the food policy.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> a food policy can be monitored in many ways, for example by using the checklists when menus are changed to ensure they continue to meet the food policy and the voluntary food and drink guidelines. Regularly use the food policy in staff training and in discussions with parents on the types of food and drink to bring in from home to help them to follow the setting's food policy.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> use the <i>Code of Practice Checklist</i> to evaluate the setting's approach to food and drink provision. See pages 63-64 <i>Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years settings in England - A Practical Guide</i>.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> use the <i>Menu Planning Checklist</i> to plan and evaluate food and drink provision against the voluntary food and drink guidelines. See pages 65-69 of <i>Voluntary Food and Drink Guidelines for Early Years settings in England – A Practical Guide</i> or download an electronic copy of the <i>Menu Planning Checklist</i> from the Foundation Years website <a href="https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/">https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/</a>.</p>

## Step 6: Reviewing and evaluating the food policy

Action	Tips and resources
<p>Plan when and how the food policy will be reviewed and evaluated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set a date for reviewing the food policy and describe how it will be reviewed and evaluated</li> <li>• Gather ideas and views from practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children on what is working and what needs changing in the food policy. Views can be collected by questionnaire, an 'ideas box' and through consultation with an 'action group'</li> <li>• Consult with practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children about any changes to be made to the food policy.</li> <li>• Inform practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children of any changes that are made to the food policy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b> a food policy should be reviewed regularly (at least once a year) with practitioners, staff, parents, carers and children.</p> <p><b>Resource:</b> use the <i>Example template food policy</i> for early years settings which includes ideas how to review and evaluate the impact of the food policy, which can be downloaded from the Foundation Years website <a href="https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/">https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/eat-better-start-better/</a>.</p>

### Developing a food policy: Example planning sheet

Use this to help you to organise the development of the food policy and keep track of the progress you have made.

Task/Action/ Milestone	Outcome	Resources needed	Training needs	Who's responsible	Start date	Date to be completed	Current status/progress