

New guidance to support healthy food and drink provision in childcare settings in Wales

The new guidance forms part of a range of Welsh Government initiatives that will contribute to preventing obesity in Wales, and help ensure more children can achieve and maintain a healthy weight as they grow and develop.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething and Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies are launching a 12 week consultation on new standards and best practice guidance for food and nutrition, such as the provision of meals, snacks and drinks for 1-12 year olds in childcare settings.

Children attending childcare settings from a young age may be receiving up to 90% of their food and nutritional intake, including snacks and drinks, in those settings, if they attend full day care. Encouraging children to eat a balanced diet made up of a variety of nutritious foods can help establish positive eating habits to take into later life and adulthood.

The new standards and guidance includes accompanying menus and recipes for settings. It aims to support settings to meet the childcare regulations for food and drink, but to also help parents in being more aware of what settings offer their children.

The guidance sets out up-to-date, evidence-based food standards and how to implement them in practice so that childcare settings can:

- Serve a range of tasty, nutritious meals to help develop good eating habits
- Ensure portion sizes are appropriate for the age of the children
- Serve snacks that are nutritious, with little or no sugar and salt
- Provide healthy drinks that are hydrating and protective to teeth i.e milk and water.

The Child Measurement Programme for 2017 shows that around a quarter of children (27.4%) aged 4-5years old are classified as overweight/obese in Wales.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Eating nutritious food is essential for children in their early years. This helps to achieve healthy growth and development, protect teeth from decay and sets the foundations for their future health and wellbeing.

“Nutrition guidelines are only one element of this Government’s work to prevent and reduce levels of obesity. Through the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, we are developing a 10 year strategy to

put in place the building blocks that will help us halt and ultimately reduce levels of obesity and increase the proportion of people who are a healthy weight.”

Ministers will launch a consultation on the obesity strategy later this year which will aim to test a range of ideas and proposals with communities across Wales.

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“Our vision is for children from all backgrounds to have the best start in life.

“The early years can have a positive influence on food preferences as a toddler begins to have a decisive say in the foods they choose to eat. The evidence shows that eating habits adopted in early years will be taken forward into later childhood and adult life.

“Childcare settings provide an ideal opportunity to encourage young children to eat well and learn about food.”