

New guidance to support Wales' childcare settings provide healthy food and drink to children

Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies is today launching new guidance to help childcare settings support young children to eat well and learn about the food they eat. This builds on current good practice across the sector.

Childcare practitioners and settings are in an ideal position to help develop children's eating habits – since children attending childcare settings from a young age may be receiving up to 90% of their food and nutritional intake there, if they attend full day care. They may also be receiving snacks and drinks in a range of settings that contribute to their nutritional intakes, which can impact on their overall diet.

Encouraging good eating habits and trying a variety of nutritious foods can help to establish lifelong eating habits. Children will often try new foods when in a social setting with their peers.

The guidance forms part of range of Welsh Government initiatives that will contribute to supporting positive dietary change through the early years and ensuring children reach and maintain a healthy weight as they grow and develop.

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

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 and taking messages home on the healthy choices they have made.

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

- serve snacks that are nutritious, with little or no sugar and salt;
- provide only healthy and safe drinks that are protective to teeth, milk and water;
- serve a range of tasty, nutritious meals to help develop good eating habits;
- ensure portion sizes are appropriate for the age of children.

Launching the new guidance, Minister for Children, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“We want all children from all backgrounds to have the best start in life. Ensuring children develop good eating habits early in

their lives is absolutely crucial if they are to grow up to be a healthy weight.

“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.

“So the food they are offered in childcare settings is so important. That’s why we’re launching the new guidance today – which will help those who work in childcare to ensure the children they care for eat healthy, nutritious food.”

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“Eating nutritious food is essential for children in their early years. This helps promote healthy growth and development, to attain and maintain a healthy weight, 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 Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales 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.”