

[News story: Healthy eating guidance published for the early years sector](#)

New example [menus and recipes](#) have been published to help early years providers plan healthy, tasty meals for young children.

The resources have been jointly developed by the Department for Education, the Department of Health and Public Health England, with advice from a panel of early years and nutrition experts including the British Nutrition Foundation.

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill said:

A good early education is vital to set every child on the path to fulfilling their full potential, and getting healthy, balanced food during the day is an important part of high-quality childcare.

Providers can use these menus to create appealing meals for young eaters – which any parent with small children knows can be a challenge. I have seen for myself what an important role caterers and kitchen staff have in the settings I've been able to visit, so I'm pleased that these new resources can now help them in their work.

The menus and accompanying resources published today (November 13) set out the information simply for early years settings offering meals and snacks throughout the day. They will also be accessible for parents to help them prepare healthy, balanced meals at home and introduce their child to new foods.

This builds on the good practice already being seen and shared among the sector, and is part of the wider package of support and advice the government is making available to providers, helping them run high-quality childcare businesses in a sustainable, cost-effective way.

The example menus will contribute to delivery of the government's ambitious Childhood Obesity Plan by helping early years settings meet the latest government dietary recommendations. The plan aims to significantly reduce childhood obesity over the next decade, and providing a healthy, balanced diet in early childhood is key to this.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine said:

We are absolutely committed to giving children the best start to life. We know how important a balanced diet is in shaping a healthy lifestyle and getting this right in early childhood is key. These practical tools will help providers to deliver healthy meals in

early years settings.

This is yet another positive step in our world-leading Childhood Obesity Plan—which includes taxing sugary drinks, helping children to exercise more and cutting sugar and calories in food before it reaches consumers.

Dr Alison Tedstone, chief nutritionist at Public Health England, said:

This is an important milestone in introducing healthy balanced meals from a young age. With far too many children entering school already overweight or obese, early years settings play an important role in helping children to develop good habits and avoid poor health later in life.

We hope early years providers embrace this guidance and play their role in supporting the health of future generations.

Professor Judy Buttriss, Director General of the British Nutrition Foundation, said:

It's vitally important that children eat well in early life, not only to provide them with the nutrients they need to grow and develop but also for their lifelong health. With almost a quarter of children starting school overweight or obese, children's health in the early years needs to be a key focus in tackling the obesity epidemic.

We welcome the guidance published today, especially as the Foundation is a partner in the Early Years Nutrition Partnership, which provides support on food and nutrition practice in early years settings.

The guidance has been developed to make it easier for providers to meet the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework – all providers must follow this framework.

Sir Tony Hawkhead, Chief Executive of Action for Children, said:

Action for Children supports parents, carers and practitioners by providing tools and guidance to ensure that children receive the very best start in life.

We are seeing too many starting school overweight, which often leads to long-term health issues. This is avoidable, and by using this essential, practical guide, early years practitioners can support young children to learn good food habits, laying the foundations for a healthy future.