

Health Eating Policy

Statement of Purpose

The promotion of children's healthy eating is an important aspect of high-quality childcare and children should have a positive experience which helps to develop lifelong healthy eating habits. Healthy eating is promoted at Torphins Playgroup by providing a well-balanced and nutritious diet. All children need regular healthy meals, snacks and drinks to help develop their health and wellbeing. Through sharing a positive food experience with others, children's language and social skills can be developed. It is important for staff to consider the individual and cultural needs of any children in their care.

The Care Inspectorates [Food Matters Guidance](#) states: 'Food Matters shares Unicef's core message and vision: If a child receives the right nutrition and care at the start of their lives, they'll grow up healthy and strong – and there's no limit to what they can become. This aligns with Health and Social Care Standard 1.6: I get the most out of life because the people and organisation who support and care for me have an enabling attitude and believe in my potential.' The resource also focuses on making the link to the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) wellbeing indicators. This demonstrates how eating well and enjoying positive eating experiences contribute to children being safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

Wellbeing

No matter the age of the child, from babyhood onwards, health and wellbeing are the principal driving force behind children growing up and learning. The wellbeing indicators of [GIRFEC](#), for children to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included, are implicit. It is also well known that a healthy diet and regular physical exercise are fundamental for a healthy childhood. Babies and young children need a healthy balanced diet to support brain development and physical development. (As per [Realising the Ambition: Being Me \(Scottish Government 2020\)](#) and the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)).

Menu Planning

Lunch menu's are developed and provided by Aberdeenshire Council, any individual needs are shared and catered for by them.

We will ensure that a well-balanced, healthy, and nutritious diet is provided for all children. When planning snack menu's, staff will consider the individual nutritional needs of the children, the children's stage of development, any allergies they may have and their cultural background. All snacks will include a portion of fruit or vegetables and a drink of milk.

Together the planned menus will ensure children experience a wide variety of food options from the different food groups. Meals will include fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and water. Water should be available to all children throughout the session and milk, as well as water, should be offered at snack.



Meals will reflect a balance from the different food groups (starchy food, fruit and vegetables, meat, fish, eggs and pulses). Food containing large quantities of fat, sugar, artificial additives and colouring will be avoided. Staff will ensure baking opportunities include healthy options and are not an alternative to snack and parents are discouraged from bringing sweet confectionary to celebrate birthdays.

Further information on menu planning can be found in [Setting the Table Guidance - gov.scot](#). Summary's of this guidance are displayed in the lunch room for easy reference.

Environment

Torphins Playgroup ensures the environment is calm and welcoming and we encourage positive social interaction amongst children and staff. Meal and snack times should be used to develop good table manners, establish healthy eating patterns, and develop regular eating routines in children. Independence skills should be developed by offering children food and drink choices and encouraging children to serve and feed themselves. Children should be given time to eat at their own pace and not be rushed. Consideration should be given to the space and managing of meal/snack times as well as the type of food provided. Suitable equipment will be provided for all children taking into account their individual needs and stage of development to ensure a positive experience.

Space to Eat

Provision of food is an integral part of a care and learning environment. When children have a positive experience of eating and drinking in an early learning and childcare service, it will help them to develop an appreciation that eating can be an enjoyable activity and understand the role of food within social and cultural contexts on long term health benefits. (As per [Space to Grow](#) Scottish Government 2017).

1. Good Eating Habits

Positive eating habits should be encouraged. Staff should provide an enjoyable, flexible eating experience within Playgroup, enabling children to develop good eating patterns. Children should experience a variety of different foods and regularly be introduced to new foods. They should be encouraged to try small quantities of all types of foods unless on a special diet or for cultural reasons. Quantities of food/drink offered will be determined by the ages of the children and their individual needs. If a child does not want to eat a meal or shows signs of distress the food should be removed, without fuss, after a reasonable time. A healthy snack should be offered later in the day to the child. Any child who has not eaten their main course should not be denied dessert. If there is a concern, relevant information regarding the child's eating habits should be recorded and parents should be informed. Staff should ensure a consistent approach in relation to children's eating habits and offer praise and encouragement whenever possible. Through play, positive attitudes to healthy eating should be developed.



2. Food Policy

[The National Standard](#) requires that settings providing funded ELC have a clear and comprehensive policy on the provision of nutritious healthy meals and snacks for children. This should be consistent with the national guidance - [Setting the Table Guidance - gov.scot](#) and [The Eatwell](#) Guide.

Torphins Playgroup follows Setting The Table (Nutritional Guidance and Food Standards for Early Years Childcare Providers in Scotland 2024) Published by NHS Health Scotland alongside the Food Matters Document Published by the Care Inspectorate (2018) when determining snack choices for the children and is committed to ensuring a relaxed and enjoyable approach to mealtime experiences.

Information detailed below was taken from the document "Setting the Table"

"Eating well is essential for healthy growth and development in childhood. Children's early experiences with food, including the foods they are offered and the eating patterns they are exposed to, both at home and outside the home, can shape future eating habits. This paves the way for long-term health including maintaining a healthy weight, positive mental health and the foundations for good oral health. A varied diet and a regular eating pattern in early childhood can also have a positive impact on mood, attention, behaviour and learning."

Information detailed below was taken from the document "Food Matters"

"This resource celebrates the many ways in which early learning and childcare (ELC) settings are supporting children to have positive eating experiences and enjoy well-balanced, nutritious food".

"This resource complements, and should be used alongside, NHS Health Scotland's Setting the Table, the nutritional guidance and food standards for the ELC sector".

3. Partnership with Families

Torphins Playgroup will work in partnership with parents and any other relevant agencies in their community to promote healthy eating. The weekly menu will be displayed in advance and available for parents and children to view. Parents should be made aware of what their child has eaten and how well they have eaten through regular informal contact.

4. Staff Development

The preparation and handling of food should be carried out by competent staff who will have sufficient knowledge to ensure food is safe to eat. Staff should receive training in food hygiene. The local authority environmental health department will have up to date information regarding food safety legislation and procedures. In line with good practice the setting should aim to have at least one staff member who has a Basic Food Hygiene Certificate.

Staff will be encouraged to keep abreast of good practice documentation around healthy eating for the children and young people in their care. Management will ensure that messages relating to healthy eating are disseminated to their staff team through regular communication and professional learning opportunities.



5. Food Safety

As an organisation prioritising food safety, we will follow advice and use appropriate resources which are available through Food Standards Scotland and in line with Food Hygiene training.

Everyone at Playgroup is aware of the importance of good food hygiene practices and of the need to handle food in a safe, clean environment.

Monitoring of this Policy

It will be the responsibility of the Manager to ensure that new or temporary staff are familiar with this policy and that the policy is being implemented by all staff.

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