



Standards and Guidance



Working with education settings to inspire children and families to lead a healthier lifestyle

Introduction

The Family Food First programme aims to encourage families with young children in Luton to adopt healthier lifestyles in order to reduce the burden of diseases such as obesity and tooth decay. We work with early years settings, including nurseries, pre-schools and children's centres and support them to promote healthy messages to families.

The Family Food First standards provide a framework for early years settings to follow; this in turn will create healthier environments for children to learn in, and early years professionals that are more knowledgeable and confident discussing healthy lifestyles with families. This document has been developed to support early years settings to achieve these standards.

Our evidence-based standards have been developed alongside representatives from early years settings in Luton, as well as our key partners in health and education. Each of the standards contains essential criteria which cover areas of best practice that need to be achieved in order to meet the standard. This document provides a list of all of the essential criteria a setting will be expected to achieve, as well as links to further supporting information which will help in achieving the standards.

Additional desirable criteria, although not required to gain accreditation, have been listed as examples of excellent practice to help inspire early years settings to continually improve.



Our Standards



Healthy Policy & Practice

1. The Family Food First standards and ethos will be incorporated across the whole setting.
2. A Nutrition and Health policy, which has been developed alongside parents, carers and staff, will be in place and will be reviewed annually.
3. Children are actively encouraged to eat well and develop healthy eating habits.
4. Children participate in purposeful physical play which has been planned to meet their developmental needs, and are encouraged to develop their physical skills.

Food & Health Education

1. All staff will have a basic knowledge of infant feeding and healthy eating for under 5s; they will recognise what constitutes good oral health practice and purposeful physical play.
2. All staff will have confidence to promote healthy lifestyle messages to parents.
3. Children of all ages and stages of development are provided with opportunities to experience and learn about healthy eating, good oral health care and the benefits of being physically active.

Food Provision

1. Children and babies are offered regular healthy meals and snacks throughout the day, which are varied and appropriate to their age and stage of development.
2. Food and drink provided by the setting will meet the Family Food First catering standards as a minimum requirement.
3. Children with special dietary requirements will be accommodated where possible and their nutritional needs will be met.

Working with Families

1. Healthy lifestyle messages will be consistently promoted throughout the year.
2. Parents and carers will have the opportunity to feedback on food provision and health promotion activities within the setting.

Healthier Communities

1. Identify at least one event a year where healthy lifestyles can be promoted throughout the wider community.



Healthy Policy & Practice



1. The Family Food First standards and ethos will be incorporated across the whole setting.

Essential Criteria

- a. A nominated staff member will coordinate the Family Food First programme for the centre or setting. They should have a minimum NVQ Level 3 or at least 2 years childcare (or other relevant) experience.
- b. All staff are aware of the Family Food First programme and will recognise the programme standards.
- c. Staff are able to comment on the different activities they are undertaking as part of the Family Food First programme.
- d. Parents are aware of the Family Food First programme; they will recognise the logo and will be able to comment on some of the different activities the centre has completed for the programme.

How we will assess this

- We will review your setting policies.
- We will review how the nutrition and health policy is being put into practice.
- We will talk to different staff members.
- We will talk to parents that use your centre or setting.

2. A Nutrition and Health policy, which has been developed alongside parents, carers and staff, will be in place and will be reviewed annually.

Essential Criteria

- a. Develop and promote a Nutrition and Health policy. *Please see the supporting document for further guidance on what your policy should cover.*
- b. The policy must be developed and reviewed alongside staff, parents and carers.
- c. The policy should be reviewed on an annual basis and agreed with staff, parents and carers.
- d. All parents and staff are made aware of the Nutrition and Health policy.

How we will assess this

- We will review your policy on an annual basis to ensure that it meets the Family Food First standards, and provide verbal or written feedback where necessary.
- We will discuss the policy with staff members and/or parents on your audit visit.
- We will review your process for developing and reviewing your policy alongside parents and staff.

3. Children are actively encouraged to eat well and develop healthy eating habits.

Essential Criteria

- a. Ensure babies and children have a shared mealtime experience with other children and adults.
- b. Meal and snack times should be seen as an opportunity for learning about food and developing good eating habits.
- c. Adults should supervise all mealtimes, and eat with children where possible.
- d. Staff will act as good role models for children, which includes choosing healthy food and drink options at mealtimes.
- e. A clear strategy for fussy eating is available, and is consistently applied by all staff.
- f. Allow children enough time to eat their meal, and aim to finish mealtimes within 30-45 minutes.
- g. Children are provided with opportunities to serve themselves at mealtimes.
- h. Food is not used as a reward or treat, or withheld as a punishment.
- i. Distractions are minimised at mealtimes including no TV or toys at the table.
- j. Children are encouraged to be physically active in both morning and afternoon sessions, to encourage a good appetite.
- k. The celebration of children's birthdays will not involve the sharing of unhealthy food or drinks, such as cakes and sweets. Children will be made to feel special in other ways, such as using a birthday hat or a birthday song.

Babies & infants

- l. If bottle-feeding, make sure babies are held close, have eye contact, and are well supported. For each baby, ensure that one key worker is responsible for feeding. All key workers should be able to identify and respond to infant feeding cues appropriately. [See 'Start 4 Life: Guide to Bottle Feeding' for further information.](#)
- m. Encourage babies to start solids around 6 months of age, when they are developmentally ready.
- n. Encourage self-feeding from six months of age by allowing babies to use their hands and fingers to feed and offering finger foods.
- o. Encourage babies to use an open top cup from 6 months of age.
- p. Discourage bottle use from 12 months of age.

Desirable Criteria

- q. A member of staff will eat with the children on a daily basis.
- r. Further strategies are developed to promote good eating habits in the setting. i.e children are involved with laying the table, shopping and preparing food.

How we will assess this

- We will observe meal and snack times within the setting and discuss mealtime routines with staff.
- We will look over the fussy eating strategy, and discuss with staff to ensure they are familiar with this.
- We will review weekly plans to ensure that physical activity is offered in both the morning and afternoon sessions.

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4. Children participate in purposeful physical play which has been planned to meet their developmental needs, and are encouraged to develop their physical skills.
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Essential Criteria

- a. A minimum of 45 minutes of purposeful physical play is provided each session (every 3 hours), for babies and children. This should be provided as short bursts of varied, age appropriate activities.
- b. Restrict the amount of time children spend engaged in sedentary activities (this excludes sleeping and eating), including being restrained or seated to 15 minute bouts.
- c. Design an environment that enables purposeful physical play, indoors and outdoors.
- d. Age appropriate resources are available that help children to develop a range of physical skills.
- e. Monitor children's individual physical development and how they interact during physical play.
- f. Create plans to ensure development of children's physical skills.

Children's Centre specific:

- g. Incorporate purposeful physical play into every stay and play session.
Will not need to meet standard 4a if session is less than 3 hours.

Desirable Criteria

- h. Plans are in place for children who are showing signs of delayed physical development. Refer to the SENCO or the SENST team for further advice and support.

How we will assess this

- We will observe purposeful physical play within the setting.
- We will assess the environment and resources available.
- We will review planning tools used to organise and develop purposeful play.



Food & Health Education



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1. All staff will have a basic knowledge of infant feeding and healthy eating for under 5's; they will recognise what constitutes good oral health practice and purposeful physical play.
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Essential Criteria

- a. The Family Food First coordinator will receive training on the Family Food First programme.
- b. All staff will receive cascade training from the Family Food First coordinator about the programme.
- c. The Family Food First coordinator will attend at least one nutrition or relevant health training session a year.
- d. The Family Food First coordinator will have a plan for cascading relevant nutrition & health information to staff.
- e. At least 80% of staff will meet agreed learning outcomes for nutrition, oral health and purposeful physical play. [See supporting document for further information.](#)

Desirable Criteria

- f. The Family Food First coordinator considers staff training needs in the areas of nutrition and health each year, and submits this to the Family Food First team.

How we will assess this

- We will ask staff to complete knowledge and skills questionnaires before and after training events.
- We will conduct knowledge and skill assessments with staff in the setting.
- We will have discussions with staff about their knowledge of nutrition and health.
- We will review coordinators plans for cascading information to their teams.

2. All staff will have confidence to promote healthy lifestyle messages to parents.

Essential Criteria

- a.** Staff will feel supported by the setting to address practices which don't meet the Family Food First standards.
- b.** Staff will work with parents or carers who need support with recognising and changing unhealthy behaviours.

Desirable Criteria

- c.** The setting will have the confidence to actively promote healthier lifestyles to parents and the wider community.

How we will assess this

- Staff will be able to provide examples of healthy lifestyle messages they have promoted to families. This should include feedback from parents.
- We will review the parent information and resources available in the setting.
- We will discuss the setting ethos in relation to Family Food First and the promotion of healthier lifestyles.

3. Children of all ages and stages of development are provided with opportunities to experience and learn about healthy eating, good oral health care and the benefits of being physically active.

Essential Criteria

- a.** A variety of activities are offered across each term which will support children's understanding of healthy eating, oral health care and physical activity.
- b.** Children will be able to meet learning outcomes for healthy eating, oral health and physical activity.
- c.** If conducting cooking activities with children there will be an emphasis on preparing healthy, savoury foods.
- d.** Children will be encouraged to explore cultural events and celebrations with an emphasis on healthy food or non-food-based activities.

How we will assess this

- We will observe activity sessions in the setting.
- We will assess activity plans.
- We will ask staff to conduct 'child friendly' surveys to assess learning outcomes.
- We will talk to children about food, health and being physically active.

1. Children and babies are offered regular healthy meals and snacks throughout the day, which are varied and appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Essential Criteria

- a. If offering full day care, food provision should include breakfast, lunch, tea and both morning and afternoon snacks. See the [Family Food First catering standards for further information](#).
- b. Intervals between meals and snacks should be no longer than 3 hours.
- c. A minimum of a three week menu rotation should be in place.
- d. New menus should be introduced at least twice a year.
- e. A variety of meals should be offered over the three week cycle; include different tastes, colours and textures.
- f. Parents and carers should be aware of the routine and timing of meals offered in the setting.
- g. Eating areas should be warm, clean and bright.
- h. Children, staff and visitors should wash their hands before meals.
- i. Tables and chairs should be of an appropriate size.
- j. Babies should be seated safely for meals and snacks. They should have access to a tray or table to support self-feeding.
- k. Provide appropriately sized cutlery, plates and bowls and encourage children to use them where appropriate.
- l. Clearly display menus for breakfast, lunch, teatime and snacks.

How we will assess this

- We will ask to see the menus before they are implemented, so that we are able to assess them.
- We will talk to parents regarding their knowledge of the menus on offer.
- We will assess your dining environment and observe a snack and/or mealtime.
- We will talk to children about their mealtime experiences.



2. Food and drink provided by the setting will meet the Family Food First catering standards as a minimum requirement.

Essential Criteria

- a. All menus, including breakfast, lunch, tea-time meals, snacks and food offered to babies, will need to meet the Family Food First catering standards.
See the Family Food First catering standards for further information.

Packed lunches

- b. Packed lunches that are bought from home or offered at a picnic should meet the recommendations within the Family Food First catering standards.
- c. A procedure should be in place for managing packed lunches that don't meet the Family Food First catering standards. Parents and carers should be supported to provide healthier options.

Desirable Criteria

- d. If cooking onsite, settings work towards and achieve the Family Food First Catering Award.

How we will assess this

- We will assess all menus used throughout the year.. Menus should be sent in at least 1 month prior to starting the cycle.
- We will assess your Nutrition and Health policy, and your strategy for dealing with unhealthy packed lunches.

3. Children with special dietary requirements will be accommodated where possible, and their nutritional needs will be met

Essential Criteria

- a. Essential Criteria Special dietary requirements, including those for cultural, religious or medical reasons will be met wherever possible.
- b. If a child has a diagnosed allergy to a food, a letter from their GP or dietitian should be provided.
- c. For children that have special dietary requirements, a suitable alternative should be offered to ensure that the meal or snack will meet the Family Food First catering standards.
- d. If catering onsite, the food offered to children on a special diet should be similar in texture and appearance to that of the main meals offered.

How we will assess this

- We will review meals provided for children on special diets to ensure they meet the Family Food First catering standards.



Working with Families



1. Healthy lifestyle messages will be consistently promoted throughout the year.

Essential Criteria

- a. Parents and carers will have the opportunity to discuss healthy lifestyle messages with staff.
- b. There will be consistent messages across the whole setting, in accordance with the Family Food First ethos. This ethos will be adhered to at all times, including during any celebrations or special events.
- c. Parents will be encouraged to provide healthy food and drinks or non-food items for celebrations and birthdays.
- d. No advertising for breast milk substitutes, bottles, teats or dummies will be allowed in the setting or promoted to families.
- e. Settings will be supportive of breastfeeding mothers including those who may be returning to work and wishing to breastfeed. [See 'Start 4 Life: Breastfeeding at study or work' for further information.](#)
- f. Current government and Family Food First programme approved healthy lifestyle campaigns will be promoted in the setting. [See the supporting document for further information.](#)
- g. All staff will know where to access appropriate healthy lifestyle resources and information, and will signpost parents accordingly.
- h. Health information is freely available to parents & carers in a variety of formats.

Desirable Criteria

- i. Nutrition and health awareness events are promoted in the setting.

How we will assess this

- We will review your Nutrition and Health policy for guidance on your approach to promoting healthy lifestyles to families.
- We will review the health promotion information on display in the setting.
- We will review evidence on how you have promoted different health related campaigns or messages within the setting.
- We will discuss with parents their experiences of the healthy lifestyle messages that are promoted.

2. Parents and carers will have the opportunity to feedback on food provision and health promotion activities within the setting.

Essential Criteria

- a. A plan for capturing parent feedback on food provision and health promotion activities is in place.
- b. Feedback from parents is reviewed by staff and is acted upon to improve food provision and health promotion in the setting.

How we will assess this

- We will review feedback provided by parents.
- We will discuss with parents whether they feel able to provide feedback to the setting, and how well they feel their feedback is taken into consideration.



1. Identify at least one event a year where healthy lifestyles can be promoted throughout the wider community.

Essential Criteria

- a. Each setting will identify one community event each year, where they will be able to promote the importance of good nutrition and/or oral health and/or physical activity. This event can be undertaken alongside the local children's centre.

Desirable Criteria

- b. Plan events throughout the year to include, winter, spring, summer and autumn terms.
- c. Each setting will host their own community event annually, which will focus on healthy lifestyle messages, and will promote the Family Food First programme.

How we will assess this

- We will attend the event and provide feedback where appropriate.
- If a member of the team is unable to attend the event, we will require evidence that the event took place, including a clear plan of how the healthy messages were promoted.

References

The following documents have informed the development of the Family Food First standards.

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8. Rudolf, M (2009) Tackling Obesity through the Healthy Child Programme: A Framework for Action. Available at: http://www.noo.org.uk/uploads/doc/vid_4865_rudolf_TacklingObesity1_210110.pdf
9. UNICEF (2013) The evidence and rationale for the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative standards. Available at: http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Baby_Friendly/Research/baby_friendly_evidence_rationale.pdf

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