

Easton Community Children's Centre

Policy on Food, Nutrition and Dietary Requirements

At Easton Community Children's Centre we believe that good nutrition is essential for health and effective learning. Our policy on food, nutrition and dietary requirements is to provide tasty, nutritionally balanced meals, which cater for the cultural and dietary needs of all children while also introducing new foods and eating experiences. We aim to provide food that reflects the culturally diverse communities we serve and to maintain good dialogue with parents and carers about Centre meals.

Key Commitments we make as part of our of food policy;

1. We will meet the specific dietary and cultural needs of the children and ensure that our food reflects the diversity of the communities we serve
2. We will serve tasty, nutritious and varied meals every day
3. We will use fresh, natural and whenever possible locally sourced ingredients
4. We will make meals important times for communication, learning and socialization
5. We will engage parents and carers with their children's nutritional development
6. We will encourage a positive understanding of food and its role in our lives

We will meet the specific dietary and cultural needs of the children and ensure that our food reflects the diversity of the communities we serve

We value the diversity of the communities we serve and understand and respect the fact that diet and choices about food can be a significant way in which people observe their faith, make ethical choices and express their personal preferences. We also understand that some children have specific dietary needs as a result of allergies, food intolerances or other medical needs.

- We will seek information from parents and carers about their children's dietary requirements with particular reference to food intolerances or allergies, religious dietary practices and lifestyle choices for example about meat and dairy products.
- We will ensure that information about children's specific dietary needs is circulated to all relevant staff, easily accessed and regularly reviewed.
- Where appropriate we will ensure that staff receive appropriate training and/or information about particular issues such as diabetes or use of an epi-pen.
- We will do our utmost to meet children's different dietary needs in an inclusive manner which does not cause particular children to feel or be perceived as different in any negative way.

- If a child has a dietary requirement that we are unfamiliar with or that is challenging for the Centre to meet we are committed to becoming better informed about the child's specific needs and working with parents and carers to find a way forward.
- We will ensure that parents and carers are made aware of the potential risk to other children if they allow their child to bring their own food to the Centre or enter the building whilst eating. We will continue to ask parents to ensure that they thoroughly wipe their children's hands and faces of all traces of food before attending the Centre and to only bring food to the Centre that is sealed in its original packaging with a clear list of ingredients.

We will serve tasty, nutritious and varied meals every day

We understand that eating should be a pleasure as well as a necessity.

- By serving varied, attractive and nutritious meals we aim to help children develop appreciation and enjoyment of a broad range of foods including a wide variety of fruit and vegetables.
- We will encourage the children to express their preferences from a range of healthy choices and incorporate their views into our menu planning
- When we serve puddings we will ensure that these are part of a nutritionally balanced meal and that our puddings have nutritional value for example the calcium and vitamins derived from milky puddings or baked puddings with a high fruit and fibre content.
- We will offer all children milk (cow's, goat's and soya) as well as water at each meal
- We will encourage the children to stay well hydrated throughout the day with water

We will discuss parental or carer issues and concerns about their child's eating patterns, nutrition and healthy weight and where appropriate seek or refer parents to sources of specialist advice

We will use fresh, natural and whenever possible locally sourced ingredients

We are committed to using natural materials in all aspects of the Centre and where possible and appropriate to gradually replacing plastic toys and resources with more organic toys and resources made from environmentally sustainable processes and materials. We seek to extend this ethos to our approach to food and in doing so hope to provide a healthy and inspiring environment for the children to learn and develop in and to minimize the Centre's carbon footprint.

- We seek to involve children and parents in growing some of own food.
- We will whenever possible buy locally produced seasonal fruit and vegetables
- We will ensure that parents, carer's and trustees know that they have a standing invitation to have lunch or tea with staff and children in the childcare units.
- We will use Centre events and publications to engage and inform parents and carers about the Centre's approach to food and specific food related events

We will use meals as important times for communication, learning and socialization

We understand that meal times help children to socialise and learn table manners. They can also be important bonding times when we share food, talk and listen to the people who are important to us. Eating at a table with other people is an important social skill that we need all throughout school and into our adult lives. We understand that modeling and encouraging positive, appropriate behavior at meal times helps children to enjoy eating with others and can also have a positive effect on behaviour throughout the day.

- We will support the children in our care to feel confident and learn positive appropriate behaviour at meal times.
- We will encourage the children to try new foods and model being interested and enthusiastic about trying a wide range of different tastes
- We will eat together with the children at a table and encourage good table manners
- We will gently encourage the children to try foods that are new to them and encourage them to describe the experience to their peers and practitioners

We will engage parents and carers with their children's nutritional development and seek their advice and input

We always remember and respect the fact that parents and carers are their child's first educator and primary carers and that input and advice from parents and carers assists Centre staff in knowing and fully meeting the needs of each child in our care.

- We will encourage parents and carers to contribute recipe ideas and share information about their child's preferences and eating patterns
- We will ensure that all parents receive a copy of this food policy and that our meal times and approach to food are explained to parents
- We will ensure that parents and carers are aware that we warmly welcome them to join us for breakfast, lunch or tea in their child's unit.

We will encourage a positive understanding of food and its role in our lives

We recognize that as adults we have a responsibility to give children accurate and appropriate information about food and nutrition and to help them to develop a positive body image whatever their size, shape or physical ability.

- We will give children positive messages about all food and will strive to avoid passing on our own prejudices and dislikes
- We will reward children with praise and acknowledgement of their achievements rather than with sweets or snacks

- We will help children to make healthy choices
- We will value children's preferences and opinions and wherever appropriate will allow these to influence Centre practice and provision
- We will create opportunities for children to cook and eat what they have prepared
- We will create opportunities for children to see food growing and understand how food is produced.
- We aim to create opportunities for children to participate in growing some of their own food
- We will encourage children to feel positively about their growing bodies whatever their size, shape or physical ability and will support children to be physically active in ways that enhance their wellbeing