

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**FOOD POLICY AND PROCEDURE GUIDELINES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTRES**

The purpose of this policy is to clearly set out the responsibility of all staff in providing high quality safe mealtime experiences for children.

Who is responsible?

1. It is the overall responsibility of the SMT to ensure that staff preparing and serving food have a good working knowledge of food hygiene/safety and follow the procedures within this policy, other relevant policies such as EAC Infection Control policy.
2. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that children are provided with mealtimes that are safe, happy and nurturing.
3. It is the overall responsibility of the SMT to ensure that staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to maintaining a safe, clean and hygienic environment, including the safe management of staff and children's allergies/intolerances/dietary needs.
4. It is the responsibility of the SMT to ensure that all staff understand that healthy eating and physical activity are essential for proper growth and development in childhood, and that healthy eating habits developed in the early years are often carried into adulthood. This will include providing opportunities for children to explore and discover where their food and drink has come from.

How will this policy be implemented?

5. All staff who prepare food will be trained to the REHIS Elementary Food Hygiene standard as soon as possible from starting within their post. New staff will be closely supervised by experienced staff to ensure that the required procedures are followed prior to any training taking place. Only staff who have undertaken appropriate training should be given the responsibility of preparing and storing breast milk or infant formula milk. All staff should familiarise themselves with standard circular 026 Food Allergy and Intolerance, RA 19 Serving of Hot Foods, RA 021 Children Choking and also complete the allergy awareness learn-pro module.
6. All staff should be familiar with the updated Setting the Table guidance and refer to this when necessary (refer to the STT webinar for most recent updates). Staff should be encouraged to complete the SSSC My learning badge to reflect on their learning.

7. Children's needs and preferences will be fully discussed with parents/carers as part of their induction to the ECC. Relevant information will then be shared with appropriate staff.

8. Hand Washing

- Staff must wash hands on arrival at the centre, before handling/serving food, after handling raw food, after using the toilet, after returning from breaks, after blowing own/child's nose, after touching waste bucket/cleaning, and at other appropriate times. The six step hand washing method should be followed (see below).
- Liquid hand soap must be provided at all sinks for staff, children, parents/carers and visitors to use when needed.
- Following handwashing staff should dry their hands thoroughly.

Six step hand washing method



9. Food Storage

- If packets are opened and not all content consumed, these should be placed in an air tight container and labelled with the date it was opened, the use by or best before date according to the instructions on the packet and the allergen information contained in the product. Allergen information should be recorded in red pen.
- The fridge and freezer temperatures where food/milk is stored should be recorded daily. Fridges should be between 1 and 5 degrees at all times and freezers colder than -18 degrees. If this is not the case, staff must record this and take note of the corrective action taken. If the temperature does not resume to a safe level within a reasonable timescale, items may have to be disposed of in the bin.
- Fridge and freezers used for food, drinks and medication must have a working thermometer at all times.
- Staff should store food correctly by covering raw food, including meat, and keeping it separate from ready-to-eat food.

- Raw and ready to eat foods should be stored in their designated areas. Please note flour is classed as a raw food and should be stored away from ready to eat foods.
- High risk food should be stored in the fridge.
- Staff should make regular checks of all foods to ensure the shelf life has not exceeded and the food has not deteriorated in quality.
- Staff should follow procedures outlined within Setting the Table guidance for the safe management of breast milk, including storage, transportation, preparing, discarding and creating the appropriate environment.

10. Food Preparation and Handling

- All areas that are used for food preparation must be cleaned following a two-stage cleaning process.
 1. (a) Pre clean soiled surfaces with Suma Multi D2.3 SmartDose solution to remove all visible dirt, food particles and debris from equipment and surfaces that come into contact with food.
(b) Wipe thoroughly using a clean cloth or disposable blue roll. If using reusable cloths for stage one, these must be discarded/laundered immediately after use.
 2. Staff will spray the clean surface with Suma Bac D10 Smartdose solution and leave on for 30 seconds. After this, staff will wipe the surface thoroughly with disposable blue/paper roll and allow it to air dry. Suma Bac D10 solution must be changed on a weekly basis. **For more information, refer to 'Cleaning Products for use in ECCs'** (this can be found in the Head of Centre tile on Glow).
- Staff must also wash their hands and put on an apron before handling food and change in between preparing different food groups if needed. Surfaces should be wiped at this time again as above. If staff leave the area for any reason, their apron must be disposed of. On return hands must be washed again and a fresh apron applied before continuing to prepare food.
- Unwashed fruit and vegetables are classed as a raw food and must be kept separate from ready to eat food until they are thoroughly washed. Particular care must be taken with any vegetables which are visibly dirty with soil. When dealing with fruit and vegetables staff should unpack, handle and peel if required in the raw area.
- All unwashed fruit and vegetables should be placed in the basin until washed. This should happen as soon as possible. Once washed these may be treated as ready to eat.
- After washing the fruit and vegetables, staff should wash hands and transfer them to the ready to eat area and use ready to eat equipment. Once finished, the sink and work areas must be cleaned following the two-stage cleaning process. All equipment used in the preparation of raw food must be washed in the dishwasher on the highest temperature.

- Extra care is required when dealing with visibly soiled vegetables. In addition to following the above procedure, staff should change and dispose of their apron once the vegetables have been peeled and washed. Staff should promptly clean the area following the two-stage cleaning process and wash their hands before handling any ready to eat food.
- Staff must ensure areas/equipment are cleaned following any food preparation. Kitchen areas should be left clean and tidy following any use by ECC staff.
- Staff must ensure they use the appropriate chopping board and cooking utensils when preparing different foods. Separate utensils, plates and chopping boards should be used for raw and cooked food.

Yellow – cooked meats

Green – salads and fruit

Brown – vegetables

White – dairy products

- Separate knives should also be used for each chopping board/food group.
- Staff should keep preparation times short to ensure that high risk foods are not left at ambient temperatures for excessive periods of time.
- Jewellery on hands and wrists should be removed. Staff with nail varnish/acrylics must wear gloves when preparing foods.
- Any individuals suffering from sickness and/or diarrhoea should not be involved in food preparation until at least 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.
- Staff involved in the preparing or serving of snacks/meals should not deal with nappy changing or sick children during this time.
- All cuts and sores must be covered with a waterproof plaster, staff should wear gloves when preparing food until cuts/sores have completely healed.
- Staff should refer to the Setting the Table guidance for procedures to follow when preparing, feeding, storing and discarding of baby milk.
- Settings should contact Liz Smith (AA Children and Families Health Team) by email on Elizabeth.Smith@aapct.scot.nhs.uk if further guidance is needed in relation to Breastfeeding arrangements.

11. Heating and Probing

- When heating food it must be heated to 75 degrees. If food is being reheated it must be heated to a temperature of **82 degrees** and checked in several places in the food. Allow to cool to a temperature that is safe for the children to eat without burning themselves and serve immediately. Care should be taken to handle the food as little as possible.
- Temperatures of heated foods should be recorded by staff/catering assistants.
- Staff should ensure probes are disinfected before and after every use to avoid contamination.

- Any unused reheated food should be discarded – never cool and refrigerate or put in the freezer.
- Never place hot food in the fridge as it can cause condensation and bring the temperature up for other foods already being stored.
- The following foods should never be reheated:
 - Celery, spinach, beets
 - Mushrooms
 - Eggs
 - Potatoes
 - Rice
 - Chicken
- Please ensure if raw meat such as poultry is being used from frozen, it must be completely thawed before cooking and left to defrost in an entirely separate area from other foods in a cool room.
- Food defrosted must be immediately refrigerated and used within 24 hours and handled as little as possible.

12. Mealtime Experiences

- Staff are not required to wear aprons or gloves when supporting children at mealtimes, PPE should only be worn if staff are involved in the preparation of food i.e. snack. If staff feel there is a particular risk of contaminating foods during mealtimes, they can choose to wear PPE on that particular occasion. For example, if the staff member has been outdoors all morning and their clothes are visibly dirty or if the staff member has chipped nail varnish, loose acrylics etc.
- Mealtimes should be calm, sociable and unhurried for children, with staff sitting with children as they eat.
- Opportunities should be provided to promote children's independence skills.
- Where possible, children should be involved in making choices, including where they would like to sit.
- Foods provided should be healthy, low in sugar and salt and meet national nutritional guidelines.
- Staff serving hot food must ensure it is never served over a child's head. Hot foods in the form of a liquid such as soup or custard should be served from a heat-resistant jug with a lid at all times from the side of a child directly in to the bowl.
- Staff should pass on information to parents/carers where appropriate about feeding/drinking, for example all feeds for an infant and significant changes for an older child.

13. Foods/Drinks provided by the ECC

- The only drinks that should be provided are: still, plain water and plain milk or unsweetened fortified non-dairy alternatives.
- Water must be freely accessible to children throughout the day (Health & Social Care Standard 1.39).
- Semi-skimmed milk should be provided for children over 1 year old unless otherwise advised by a parent/carer or healthcare professional.
- Diluting juice should not be offered to children as standard practice.
- ECCs must refer to the food and drink standards within the Setting the Table Guidance at all times when planning snacks and meals. Staff should be particularly mindful of this if a child refuses their lunch option and an alternative food is provided.
- Menus and allergen information should be provided to parents/carers and easily accessible.
- Staff should be mindful of portion control when serving foods to children (see appendix 2 for guidance).

14. Foods brought in from home

- Staff should discuss with parents and carers the ECC regulatory obligations of promoting a well-balanced and nutritious diet alongside positive eating experiences.
- In the first instance foods from home should be discouraged. However, if parents wish to bring in food for their child, good examples of healthy and nutritious choices should be provided. ECC staff should encourage parents/carers to download the NHS Ayrshire and Arran app that provides detailed information on children's health and nutrition, including ideas for healthy lunches and snacks.
- It may take a period of adjustment for parents/carers to provide the desired food/drink choices for children. Staff must continue to reinforce the importance of healthy choices in a supportive way.
- It is essential that foods brought in from home are stored appropriately in airtight containers.

15. Learning about Food

- Allowing children to play with food outside mealtimes can provide them with opportunities to experience new foods in a relaxed, fun and sociable way.
- When considering food-based learning experiences, staff should think of ways that food waste can be minimised.
- Staff should provide opportunities for children to explore and discover where their food and drink has come from.

16. General hygiene

- Staff should encourage and support all children to follow appropriate hygiene routines at all times.
- Staff must wash hands thoroughly before supporting children at mealtimes. This includes staff serving foods from the trolley and staff sitting at tables.
- If children help prepare snack they should wash their hands prior to handling food and wear an apron. If children help to serve snack, staff should ensure hands are washed and aprons changed if those children leave and return to the snack area.
- If staff leave the area during snack, aprons and gloves should be discarded. On return staff should wash their hands and reapply PPE.
- The table where food is eaten must be cleaned before and after meal provision using the 2 stage cleaning process.
- Cleaning chemicals must be stored separately from food and equipment within a safe area that is out of reach of children.
- The food bin within the kitchen must have a lid and be emptied daily to prevent food waste from accumulating.
- Daily and weekly cleaning checklists should be completed within all areas.
- Work surfaces must be kept clutter free at all times within areas where food may be prepared.
- Children should be encouraged and supervised whilst brushing their teeth at all times. Please see RA10 (Toothbrushing) for more information.

17. Dishwasher

- Dishes and utensils should be cleaned in the dishwasher on the highest setting.
- If no dishwasher is available, dishes and utensils should be washed in hot water with washing up liquid and dried with blue roll soon afterwards. Water temperature should be at least 60 degrees (optimum temperature for killing bacteria). Children helping to dry dishes should wash their hands beforehand to minimise transfer of bacteria.

18. ALLERGIES/ INTOLERANCES/ PREFERENCES

- The 14 food allergens as identified by the Food Standards Agency, should be cross checked with all foods provided and allergen information shared with parents/carers. This information is generally supplied to the ECC by the catering team to share with parents/carers, however any updates or changes to the daily menu or foods/drinks provided should be shared by ECC staff on the day of the change.
- Management are responsible for ensuring all staff and the Catering Manager are informed about allergies, intolerances and preferences. This information should be gathered at the point of induction and shared prior to the child's first visit.

- Where possible, temporary staff should not be involved in serving snack or lunch service at tables where children have allergies/ intolerances/ preferences until management are confident that staff are aware of children's needs and the process for serving food safely.
- All children's personal plans should be kept updated with information on allergies/ intolerances and preferences and how these needs will be met. It is important not to exclude foods from a child's diet without a valid reason as this may lead to unnecessary restrictions in their diet.
- Information regarding children's dietary requirements/preferences must be collated and displayed in playrooms and kitchens and should be readily accessible to staff but not visible to parents/carers. For example, this may be in a folder or displayed inside a cupboard door. Management should ensure this information is updated prior to children starting at the ECC.
- A laminated card indicating children's allergies/ intolerances and preferences should be easily accessible and visible to staff during both snack and mealtimes. This should contain dietary information, a photograph of the child and detail the signs and symptoms that staff must be aware of (see appendix 1).
- Children should only receive foods/drinks which are deemed safe for them by parents/carers.
- Care must be taken when preparing foods to minimise any risk of contamination for children with specific allergies such as gluten.
- Cow's milk (free through the SMHSS) will be offered with mealtimes. Children with an allergy to cow's milk can be offered an alternative. This must be stored as directed by the manufacturer's instructions and labelled in the same way as all other food items once opened. Cartons with liquids that cannot be fully resealed should not be used. Staff should ensure foods/drinks for children with allergies are stored separately to prevent contamination.
- Health plans and risk assessments must be in place for children with severe allergies. Management must ensure staff are fully aware of procedures to follow in the event that a child becomes unwell. Staff must sign risk assessments/protocols to confirm they fully understand procedures to follow.
- Staff should ensure that children with allergies/intolerance/preferences are fully included in the mealtime experience.

- **MEALS SUPPLIED BY OTHER CATERING UNITS/SCHOOL KITCHENS**

- All meals for children with allergies/ intolerances/ preferences should be packaged and labelled for each child with allergen information and the child's name.
- Labelled meals should be served first, with the staff member serving checking with the staff member at the table against the allergy information on the laminated card.
- During lunch or afternoon tea service all staff should be aware of any child with a dairy allergy/ intolerance and ensure that appropriate drinks are provided and accessible to the child.

19. Staff Allergies

- It is the responsibility of the staff member to share their own allergy information with management to allow appropriate discussions to take place. Managers must also inform their own line manager of any allergies they have and ensure appropriate protocols are in place should they become unwell.
- Appropriate risk assessments/action plans must be in place for staff with confirmed allergies, these should be easily accessible and shared with key staff.
- Any medication held for staff must be recorded and stored appropriately (see Medication policy for more information).

20. Food for religious faiths and beliefs

- Children and their families may exclude certain foods or only eat foods prepared or cooked in a particular way according to their religious faith. Fasting is common in many religions, although younger children tend to be exempt. It is important for staff to be aware how this may affect children at meal and snack times and ensure where possible that an inclusive approach is used.
- Compliance with these restrictions may vary between denominations, branches or even families.
- The management team should discuss the provision of food for any children where their religious faiths or beliefs require consideration during the induction process and ensure planning is respectful of parents/carers wishes. Any concerns with parents/carers wishes should be discussed with other professionals (with consent from parents/carers unless considered as a safeguarding concern).

21. Children with additional support needs and other special diets

- Some children may have specific dietary needs because of physical or developmental issues, this information must be well documented within children's personal plans for staff to follow. Relevant information must also be shared with food service providers to ensure appropriate foods are provided. Where a special diet is required, this should be overseen and reviewed regularly by ECC staff, parents/carers and other relevant professionals.

22. Celebrations and special occasions

- ECCs should promote healthy eating habits at all times, this includes celebrations and special occasions and where possible staff should use non-food items for rewards.
- If staff decide to celebrate with food, they should use healthy ingredients and be mindful of the special dietary requirements of children within the setting.
- ECCs should not provide fizzy drinks for children at any time.

23. Sustainability

- As a council EAC is the only authority in Scotland to retain the Gold standard year on year since 2008 for Food for Life. Meals are prepared using sustainable and organic ingredients purchased from local suppliers.

24. REPORTING OF INCIDENTS OR ISSUES

- Any near misses or incidents involving food/drinks should be reported to the catering manager, the Care Inspectorate and recorded via the SHE system.
- Issues with foods supplied; incorrect foods, quality issues or quantity issues should be communicated to the catering manager and coordinator as soon as possible.

Guidance used to inform this policy:

- Setting the table – Nutritional standards and practical guidance for early learning and childcare providers in Scotland, 2024.
Accessed at: [Supporting documents - Setting the Table Guidance - gov.scot](#)
- Food Matters, Care Inspectorate, 2019. Accessed at:
<https://hub.careinspectorate.com>
- Health & Social Care Standards, 2017, 1.33 – 1.39 – Eating & Drinking.
Accessed at: www.newcarestandards.scot
- Food Standards Scotland. Accessed at: <https://foodstandards.gov.scot>
- Eatwell Guide – NHS. Accessed at: <https://www.nhs.uk>
- Health Protection in Children and Young Peoples setting, including education, 2024. Accessed at: [Overview - Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#)
- Practice note Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC) Accessed at:
[elc-practice-note-4-mealtimes.pdf \(careinspectorate.com\)](elc-practice-note-4-mealtimes.pdf)
- Standard Circular 026 - Food Allergy and Intolerance. Accessed at:
[026-Food-Allergy-and-Intolerance](#)

Discussions also took place with colleagues in Health (AA dietetics team lead and AA Health Improvement Officer) and Facilities and Property Management in the development of this policy.

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Appendix 1: Allergy Card Example

	Childs Name/Photo	Allergies/Intolerance/Preference	Signs/Symptoms requiring medication
Tiger Group	Child's Name Photo	Allergy Lentils	Hives, Scratching neck, Coughing
Tiger Group	Child's Name Photo	Low Salt Diet All foods on ECC Menu are okay. Party Food must be checked.	No medication required
Tiger Group	Child's Name Photo	Parental Preference Only oat milk to drink Can have cows milk in foods	No medication required
Lion Group	Child's Name Photo	Parental Preference Gluten and Dairy Free Diet	No medication required
Panda Group	Child's Name Photo	Intolerance Lactofree/soya milk only	May become a little sick No Medication Required
Panda Group	Child's Name Photo	Celiac Disease Gluten Free Diet	No Medication Required
Giraffe Group	Child's Name Photo	Allergy Raw Egg & Pulses (peas, lentils & chickpeas)	Red patches on cheeks Itching around facial area
Penguin Group	Child's Name Photo	Parental Preference Vegetarian Diet No fish, meat or eggs. Soya milk only	No Medication Required
Penguin Group	Child's Name Photo	Allergy Raspberries & Bananas	Rash may appear / Tidus may also be sick

Appendix 2: Portion Control Example

