

Healthy eating, food and drink Policy

Version History

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description of Changes
Original	Feb 19		
2025/1	September 25	Board of Management	Added onto new template and annual review
2026/1	September 26	Board of Management	Yearly review and updates

Policy Owner

Head of Children and Young People

Purpose and Scope

Children and young people's health is an integral part of their emotional, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing, and is supported by attention to these aspects. Diet is central to their health and can be an important influence on their wellbeing now and in the future. Nutritional status can have immediate impact on the health of children and young people. A poor diet can contribute to anaemia, dental decay, obesity, susceptibility to illness and adversely affect general health.' (DfES, 2007)

The policy outlines how YMCA East Surrey highlights that snack and mealtimes are an important part of the session/day, and that eating represents a social time for children, young people and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating.

This policy also outlines YMCA East Surrey's commitment to:

- ▶ Raising awareness of nutrition
- ▶ Encouraging and develop children / young people's skills so they can make informed choices about food and drink
- ▶ Helping children and young people develop positive attitudes to diet, health and oral health
- ▶ Developing healthy eating and drinking activities that can benefit children, young people, staff and parents/carers
- ▶ Ensure staff have awareness of the importance of positive sensory eating and drinking experience.

Definitions

- ▶ Healthy eating - consuming a variety of foods in the right proportions to provide the body with the nutrients it needs to maintain good health and well-being
- ▶ Allergy - is where your body reacts to something that's normally harmless like pollen, dust or animal fur. The symptoms can be mild, but for some people they can be very serious.

Relevant Legislation or Governance Requirements

- ▶ Working together to Safeguard Children 2026
- ▶ Early Years foundation stage Nutrition guidance 2025
- ▶ Early Years foundation stage Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers 2025
- ▶ Equality Act 2010
- ▶ Benedicts Law 2026
- ▶ Allergy safety in Schools 2026

Related Policies and Procedures

- ▶ Safeguarding Children Policy
- ▶ Admissions Policy
- ▶ Health and Safety Policy
- ▶ Medication Policy
- ▶ Complex Health Needs
- ▶ Risk Assessments

Policy Requirements

YMCA East Surrey promotes healthy lifestyles and healthy eating through poster campaigns, structured activities and conversations with children and young people. All staff have a responsibility to ensure they are up to date with relevant food and drink guidance.

Where appropriate depending on the setting children and young people are offered a selection of fresh seasonal fruit and vegetables daily, fresh fruit and vegetable cooking is built into the activities.

Staff regularly consult with parents/carers to make sure that records of their children and young's dietary needs are up to date (see Admissions policy).

Staff are made aware about individual dietary needs at the beginning of each day. Staff supervise lunch time to make sure that children and young people only get food and drink which is consistent with their dietary needs and their parents'/carers' wishes.

YMCA staff will ensure that there are appropriate Risk Assessments in place to cover all activities involving food and drink. Staff are responsible for ensuring that they have up to date knowledge of current allergy guidance.

Across YMCAES staff, especially in Early Years settings, also have the responsibility to improve experiences for young children with sensory eating and drinking differences.

Food preparation

Within all settings, we will from time to time cook with the children, young people and their families. When preparing food and drink with the children and young people, staff will be mindful of the provisions of the hygiene, to ensure that the safety of staff and those attending is paramount. In addition to these provisions, staff will be careful to ensure both the safety of themselves and children when using sharp or dangerous equipment in food and drink preparation.

Staff are mindful of their responsibilities and obligations under the Food Safety Act 1990. All staff who either handle or prepare food have up to date Food Handling Certificates and are fully trained in food storage, preparation, cooking and food safety.

Ofsted must be informed within 14 days if two children suffer from food poisoning who are looked after at YMCA settings.

No child or young person will ever be forced to eat or drink something against their will and the withholding or granting of food and drink will never be used as either a punishment or reward.

Dietary requirements and allergies

Before the child / young person starts at a YMCA setting, registration details/personal care plans/starter pack forms are completed, which includes information about any special dietary requirements or allergies, along with their food and drink preferences. Allergy information will then be put on the allergy chart (readily available in all settings). The Manager/Coordinator and staff will make every effort to make any reasonable adjustments and ensure that food and drink offered to children takes account of the information provided to safeguard their health and meet as far as possible their preferences.

YMCAES is aware that children and young people can have a variety of allergies and often these are in relation to a variety of food products. YMCA will make every reasonable effort to ensure that while in our setting children and young people are not exposed to their allergens but adopting a culture of allergy awareness and education. As nuts is a common allergy parent/carers are reminded to not send in any nuts or nut products into any YMCA CYP settings, this is to ensure we do not put any children at risk who are allergic to nuts, and for those who are under the age of five years (as they pose a choking hazard). YMCA will ensure that staff have appropriate awareness and training of allergies including anaphylaxis and the use of Epi-Pens. YMCA will ensure that our settings will keep up to date with guidance including that issued under Benedicts Law.

Cultural and religious diversity

All YMCA Children and Young People Services settings and its staff are committed to embracing the cultural and religious diversity of the families who use our services. The Manager/Coordinator and staff will work with parents/carers to ensure that any dietary requirements are met. YMCA East Surrey is also keen to help introduce children and young people to different religious and cultural festivals and events through different types of food and drink. Parents/carers are also welcome to come in and share birthday celebrations and relevant festivals with the children.

Snack and mealtimes

Snacks within sessions are planned carefully and in consultation with Children, Young People, parents and carers.

CYP Services provide healthy and nutritious snacks by avoiding large quantities of fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings.

When a meal is provided by YMCA East Surrey every effort is made to ensure that this is consistent with all Health Eating Guidelines and to ensure that this is sourced from a supplier with high standards of food hygiene.

Staff show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies, staff do not use a child or young person's diet or allergy as a label or to make them feel singled out because of their diet or allergy.

We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children, young people and staff participate by sitting together. We use meal and snack times to help children develop independence through making choices, serving food and drink and feeding themselves, by providing children with utensils which are appropriate for their ages and stages of development, and which take account of the eating practices in their cultures. Snack and mealtimes can also be used as a time to support with educating children and young people about food, healthy eating and broaden preferences.

Packed lunches

When providing a packed lunch, parent/carers are encouraged to keep them interesting and healthy. They are reminded that a third of a child's diet should be made up of starchy foods, such as bread, so sandwiches are a good choice. Furthermore, they are reminded that the key to a healthy lunch box is to include a balance of appropriate foods from the four main food groups:

- ▶ Bread and cereals
- ▶ Fruit and vegetables
- ▶ Meat (or alternative)
- ▶ Milk and dairy products (or alternatives)

We stipulate to parent/carers that where possible children should not have chocolate bars, sweets, cakes or fizzy drinks within their packed lunches – for YMCA East Surrey to promote and encourage healthy eating. Parent/carers are also asked to put familiar foods prepared in their usual way in the packed lunches, as introducing new foods to children should be avoided within YMCA settings.

Parent/carers are also reminded to include ice packs within their child's packed lunch, to keep the food cool. YMCA East Surrey takes no responsibility for any food related illnesses from packed lunches prepared outside of YMCA settings.

Access to drinking water

Children, Young People (and staff) always have access to drinking water throughout the day.

We make sure that fresh drinking water is constantly available for the children and young people by providing water in beakers which are regularly filled. Children / young people can independently serve themselves using their own water bottles/beakers provided by parents, or the jug and cups available. Staff consider factors that will affect how much children and young people need to drink such as physical activity, temperature and so on and make sure they offer water to children and young people frequently.

Parents are encouraged to provide a named water bottle. Checks will be made to ensure that the water bottles are filled regularly. All children and young people are shown where the water is on their first day, water areas are sign posted, and through observation/monitoring we check that all those attending have sufficient drinks during the day.

Early Years specific guidance

Surrey's *Supporting Sensory Eating and Drinking Differences* in Early Years guidance highlights that: *'Early Years settings play a vital role in helping children broaden their food and drink preferences, in fostering independence and confidence during mealtimes and building the foundations for a lifetime of healthy eating.'* YMCA Early Years setting will make every effort to support children with this and will respond appropriately to individual children's needs working with the child's family and if appropriate other professionals as well as make reasonable adjustments.

Early Years settings should ensure that they are following both the Early Years foundation stage Nutrition guidance and the Early Years foundation stage Statutory Framework for group and school-based providers 2025. This includes:

- When children are eating ensuring they are within sight and sound of a practitioner. Ideally practitioners should be facing those eating to help prevent choking, sharing of food and allow vigilance for signs of allergic reactions.
- There must be a paediatric first aider present within the room when children are eating
- Ensuring settings are clear as to who is responsible for ensuring food being provided meets requirements
- Staff being aware of the symptoms and treatments for allergies and anaphylaxis including the difference between allergies and intolerances. Staff also should have an understanding that allergies can develop at any time and ensure that appropriate arrangements are made with parents and carers for any allergies or intolerances
- Food must be prepared in a way that prevents choking.
- Ensuring appropriate setting for young children

Useful resources and websites

Food Standards Agency: www.food.gov.uk, www.eatwell.gov.uk

Healthy Schools: www.healthyschools.org.uk

Five a day (NHS site): www.5aday.nhs.uk

Food Standards Agency: www.food.gov.uk

Department of Health: www.dh.gov.uk

Roles and Responsibilities

Monitor:	Head of Children & Young People
Approve:	Board of Management
Endorse:	Children & Young People Advisory Group
Propose:	CEO
Draft and review:	Childcare and Children's Activity Manager

Implementation and review

This Policy is reviewed annually and disseminated to staff on HealthboxHR and SharePoint.