**Food and Drink Policy**

This policy is for the centrally managed (by Bristol City Council Early Years Service) early education and childcare provision in our Children’s Centres.

In the Children’s Centres we recognise the importance of a healthy and balanced diet for all children. We also appreciate the value and the vital role that the sharing of food and snacks can have on children’s social development.

**Supportive Breastfeeding Environment**

Breastmilk is the ideal source of nutrition for infants during at least the first year of their life. Mothers are welcome to breastfeed and a space will be provided for this. We can direct mothers to where they can access breastfeeding support.

**Meals (Southmead Children’s Centre only)**

We work to ensure that our food meets the NHS Eat Well Guide, this means that the type of food served meets the nutritional requirements of the children who eat meals at the centres.

We serve portion sizes that are age appropriate, a small portion size is better for children as they are able to ask for seconds rather than to serve them too much. This helps children to recognise when they are hungry and when they have eaten enough.

We aim to provide food suitable for all our children. Children with special educational needs and disabilities have their nutritional and eating and drinking requirements taken into account. Our food reflects the ethnicity and cultures of all children attending our centres.

**Packed Lunches**

If a packed lunch is being provided we ask that the food meets the NHS Eat Well Guide to ensure the child receives a balanced meal.

**Mealtimes**

We aim to create a calm and relaxed eating environment where staff role model good behaviours and communication.

Children are involved in setting the table, serving the food and clearing the table as much as possible.

**Snacks**

Children are offered snacks during all sessions as children have small stomachs and high nutrient needs to grow and develop, and to play and achieve. Children are seated during snack times and the components are healthy choices.

Children have the opportunity to be involved in food preparation and are encouraged and helped to be successful in whatever self-serving they are able to do.

**Partnership with Parents**

We ask parents for advice to ensure the needs of all children are met, and we learn from parent’s experiences and suggestions.

We tell parents how well their child ate during the session and which foods they particularly enjoyed or tried for the first time.

A menu plan is available for Southmead Children’s Centre parents.

**Special Occasions**

If food is used for celebrations it forms part of a balanced meal provision and does not replace healthy foods. Sugary treats are kept to a minimum and only offered during special occasions always with a healthy alternative. Cakes and other sugary treats for children’s birthdays are discouraged due to allergies and our aim to keep sugar intake low.

**Drinks**

Water and milk are the best drinks for children’s teeth and bodies; we provide whole milk for all children.

Water is available at all times during the sessions for children, parents can provide a water bottle from home but the Children’s Centres will only allow water and no carbonated or fizzy drinks.

Children are encouraged to keep themselves hydrated, particularly in hot weather. During extreme hot weather conditions children will be offered water throughout the day to ensure they are kept hydrated.