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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Welsh Government  
Consultation – summary of response

## Food and nutrition in childcare settings

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The Welsh Government undertook consultation to ask for views on the draft guidance to support healthy food and drink provision in regulated childcare settings. This document summarises the key themes from the responses received.

1.2 The proposed food and nutrition guidance for childcare settings is one element of the work to deliver a Healthy Weight Strategy, which we will consult on in 2019. Childcare settings play an important role to create environments which support healthy choices and can help introduce good eating habits for life.

1.3 In a written statement the cabinet secretary confirmed the development of the guidance for Food and Nutrition in Childcare Settings for consultation. The purpose of this best practice guidance is to support childcare settings to achieve quality healthy food provision for children in their care, which meets their nutritional requirements for healthy growth and development. It updates the 2009 Welsh Government guidance and reflects current evidence.

1.4 We acknowledge the input from key childcare provider organisations, Care Inspectorate Wales, Dietitians and Public Health Wales, who helped inform and shape the draft guidance. Also, Public Health England for the use of the menus and recipes, which were informed by the original work of the Children's Food Trust, (2017)<sup>1</sup>.

## **2.0 Methodology**

2.1 The written consultation document asked 10 questions on a range of key areas to determine how acceptable and useful the guidance would be in relation to its content, design and format, accessibility and how easy it would be to implement.

2.2 In addition to the formal consultation document, the Welsh Government also delivered 3 stakeholder events in Llandudno, Merthyr and Swansea in order to gain a more interactive, in depth discussion on the draft guidance documents. Also in order to reach child minders, an evening webinar was arranged with PACEY Cymru at which 8 child minders from across Wales participated.

2.3 In total, 59 responses were received to the formal written consultation and 123 participants attended the events in total.

### 3.0 Overview of responses

3.1 The written consultation generated 59 responses mainly from childcare providers, health professionals, and a range of national organisations and professional bodies, as detailed in Table 1.

For full list see Annex 1.

Table 1

Respondent type	Number	%
Childcare provider	20	34
Health professional	24	40
Childcare inspector	1	2
Parent	1	2
Anonymous	1	2
<b>Other :</b>		
Childcare umbrella organisation	3	5
Professional body/National organisation	6	10
Local authority service	3	5
	59	100%

### Summary of responses overall

3.2 Across all responses there was an agreement that the standards and guidance with accompanying practical menus and recipes will be helpful to childcare settings. It was also felt that it will benefit a wider audience including parents, health professionals, organisations and regulatory bodies. Overall, responses reflected these main points:

- The proposed design and format was positively received with the need for some adjustments but a very strong recommendation for hard copies to be produced for settings in addition to the proposed web access.
- Positive comments were made on how the guidance will be used and how it would benefit settings in providing nutritious balanced meals, snacks and drinks. The content was felt to be informative, comprehensive and relevant with a need for some more clarity in specific areas, such as drinks and processed food and additional explanation of special diets and timing of meals. It was also felt it would be used by stakeholder organisations and services that support settings.
- A need for training was identified to support effective implementation with further support from dietitians and the need for a 'train the trainer' approach and potential for web based learning.
- Some potential barriers were identified to implementation such as:
  - increased cost of food, if using the example menus and recipes;

- lack of food preparation and cooking skills in staff to prepare the example menus and recipes;
- equality of access, if the document was only available online;
- demands for training on the guidance outweighing current capacity to deliver; and
- lack of support from parents when settings make changes to meet the guidance.

#### 4.0 Summary of responses to specific questions

##### Question 1

Do you agree that up to date nutrition standards and guidance are helpful to have in place ?

Please explain why

4.1 The response was unanimous and all respondents felt that the new guidance is needed across Wales. It was felt to be useful to have the information all in one place, and it will ensure that children have access to healthy balanced nutrition. Most agreed that updated guidance would be useful for both childcare providers and health professionals to communicate consistent messages, and to help combat rising obesity rates amongst 4-5 year olds in particular.

4.2 It was felt that this is an area where there is sometimes conflicting or confusing advice on nutrition and with the current problem of childhood obesity, it is crucial to have up to date guidance, clear information and practical advice. It was also suggested that such guidance needs to be reviewed more frequently.

4.3 Comments included:

“To ensure a consistent approach across the sector. To share good practice”

“Any information that improves a child’s diet is essential”

“The updated nutrition standards and guidance are very helpful to have in place. The example menus and recipes aid settings in being aware of what nutritious meals, snacks and drinks they should offer”

“Great opportunity to influence crucial sector/providers, along with an important workforce in Wales, and a chance to up skill this workforce to deliver key and consistent healthy messages to children, parents, care-givers and the wider childcare sector”

“The recipes are a great asset”

“Staff need a go to reference for food and nutrition”

“The entire document is well written and put together”

## Question 2

How do you feel about the layout of the sections, are they easy to read and follow?

4.4 Overall respondents provided positive statements that the layout was well structured, easy to follow and the design was engaging, with a good mix of visuals, info graphs and informative text. The colour coded sections reflecting the separate topics were received well by most. However, some people thought that if the document was printed in black and white, then this would leave the colour coding redundant.

4.5 While some thought the document was too lengthy and required improved navigation and referencing of the contents. The use of images and infographics was received particularly well along with the practice points, lists of other resources and support.

4.6 Comments included:

“Easy to follow, comprehensive and easy to understand. Good use of photos and info graphics to highlight key points”

“We agree that the sections are easy to read, however navigating round a large document is difficult, and to keep track of where you are within it. We feel providers may find it hard to have an overall understanding of what is included in the document – and a more detailed content section, not only at the beginning but at the beginning of each section could be useful”

“The inclusion of live links to facilitate moving across sections when cross-referencing would be useful, and the ability to download entire guidance or sections of it.”

## Question 3

What would help to ensure these are easily accessible to you? (e.g. individual sections on the web, printer friendly)

4.7 Many responses highlighted the need for hard copies to be produced and sent out to settings, alongside printer friendly versions being available on line. Most felt that the document needs to be clearly signposted for ease of reference, with clear visibility on the web. Other suggestions included developing hyperlinks to the recipes and providing accessible options such as wipe clean recipe cards. However, many responses stated that web access and IT equipment is limited or not available to them.

4.8 Comments made included:

“Individual sections on the web would be helpful, especially for settings who supply only snacks, although the whole document is good for a reference guide. I think it

will be necessary for each setting to have a hard copy of the document as not all childcare settings have access to printing facilities, particularly colour ones and subsequently this would be of cost to the setting.”

“Menus on wipe clean pages so they could be used directly from the book, individual clearly marked sections for a chef to follow. Printer friendly would be useful without having to print the whole booklet as not all settings have access to quality printers.”

“Being available online ensures they are kept up to date and relevant. Making them printer friendly allows the user to print off a specific recipe or advice section if needed for an individuals file. If they were also made accessible from mobile devices information about e.g. cultural and religious considerations could be accessed quickly if on a day trip.”

“The inclusion of links to facilitate moving from one section to another when cross referencing, would also be useful”.

#### **Question 4**

- 4a. any particular sections of information in the document which you disagree about?  
4b. any gaps in information which you think should be included?  
4c. any parts that are particularly helpful ?

4.9 The majority of responses felt that there were no overall sections they disagreed about. In addition to general minor suggestions on clarity and changes, there were some detailed responses about specific pieces of information in the guidance, these included the following examples:

- Suggestions were made about making the term ‘free sugars’ clearer as this may be misinterpreted.
  
- One responder felt that the guidance limited the use of processed food too much and there needed to be clearer explanation about using food labelling to choose healthier foods. With the increased availability of foods labelled with lower levels of salt, fat and sugar settings could choose healthier and more appropriate foods. Another respondent felt that the use of processed food should be discouraged and that fresh food options should be sourced and prepared.
  
- Some felt that the amount of snacks and meals were too much for a child care setting and more information was needed on frequency and amounts at mealtimes.
  
- In relation to the section on good eating habits there was some concern that it would not be practical to achieve good communication about food intakes of children across 2-3 settings, (such as in wrap around care situations) and/or provide a variety of choices to ensure there is no duplication of provision. A suggestion was made to add information in this section on the importance of children learning to use cutlery and eating together.

- Suggestions were made to provide parents with information about the guidance and what they should expect from the childcare setting. This was seen as a way of supporting settings in their approach to providing healthy balanced meals, snacks and drinks. Also it was felt that it could be helpful to provide information on healthy packed lunches for parents.
- A few responses felt that the section about the provision of special diets had potential for confusion. There could be more information on specific diets, such as allergen free, milk free diets, diabetes and coeliac disease in order to make it clearer for settings if they need to provide these diets for medical conditions. Suggestions were made to:
  - clarify the section on peanut allergy and make the distinction between peanut and other nuts,
  - make the section more pro active and include practical checklists for action planning and further signposting for additional support
  - show menu adaptations and suggested alternatives on the menus for different diets
  - move information on vegan diets to the main section with vegetarian diets.
- One respondent highlighted that some settings use external independent caterers or adjacent schools to provide their food and reference should be made to how the guidance relates to these.
- A few respondents suggested how the document could be adapted for audiences outside childcare settings such as health visitors working with families at home, although it was recognised that the guidance is aimed at childcare settings.

#### 4.10 Comments made included:

“The menu examples are particularly helpful as different individuals have varying perceptions of what a nutritious meal is and what nutritious snacks are etc.”

“I think what classes as ‘5 a day’ is really useful”

“The sections are split regarding what childcare provider you are, and as a snack provider it was helpful to read that the section was titled as snack provider.”

“It would be ideal to have a leaflet type document that we can also send home to inform parents. Parents need to see clear diagrams detailing sugar contents of children's popular shop bought snacks.”

“We endorse the use of language ‘plain milk’ and ‘plain water’ to ensure clarity that milkshakes or flavoured water are not included within descriptions of milk or water. We support recommendations of only plain milk and plain water for all age groups of children covered by the document .....”

“Particularly helpful with food allergy advice, as more children have cow's protein milk allergies and other food allergies. Also helpful to have a portion size guide.”



“ The table that refers to cultural and religious consideration will help the settings.”

### Question 5

Do you feel there are any particular issues or barriers which could prevent the successful implementation of the nutritional guidelines?  
If yes, please say what they are and how do you think these could be overcome?

4.11 The main barriers that were raised and potential solutions offered included:

- Concerns for potential increased costs to smaller settings if menus were fully implemented and the potential impact for additional fees. Some comments were made on specific recipes and ingredients in the example menus that may be costly, and suggestions for alternative recipes or ingredients where cost may be a barrier would help. One respondent requested that a financial impact assessment should be carried out to determine the cost of providing the example menus.
- Lack of food preparation and cooking skills in staff responsible for food provision, in order to fully to implement the range of example menus and recipes. Practical training was suggested as a solution to up skilling staff in those settings where it was needed.
- Respondents pointed out that the lack of hard copies could impact on the accessibility and therefore the implementation. To overcome these barriers, production of hard copies with clear labelling of the information so it is easy to access, or printing of particular sections such as the visual photographs and the menus, could help to disseminate key messages, e.g. “ a ‘how to use’ or ‘visual map’ of the document. Also it was commented that there may be lack of access to IT within work hours for staff.
- Of particular concern to the public health dietitians who deliver training on nutrition to the sector, was the lack of further capacity for delivering training and further consideration of training needs was proposed.
- One potential barrier that was mentioned by a few responders was the status of the guidance. There was felt to be a need to have more clarity on whether the document is considered as statutory guidance that will be enforced using the childcare regulations or if it is good practice that may contribute to a quality rating through inspections. Some felt it needed more ‘incentives’ for settings to make changes. Further clarity was suggested on its status and how it links to minimum care standards and regulation to aid delivery.
- Many respondents also felt that parental attitudes and engagement is seen as a barrier and children’s lack of familiarity of healthier food choices can impact on the introduction of new ideas. One respondent felt that with the introduction of the childcare offer, then this could lead to more parents providing food for their child, which could provide a risk to being able to influence dietary habits during the early years. More parental involvement including nutritional awareness sessions and provision of information was seen as essential.

- One positive solution was suggested of a national awareness event to ensure that the guidance achieves a high profile and to ensure that all partners across Wales are well informed. Childcare umbrella organisations, public health dietitians and healthy pre school practitioners were groups mentioned that could aid dissemination.

## Question 6

What kind of training, support or resource would you like to see to help support the successful implementation of the standards?

4.12 A range of training delivery and resources was proposed for childcare settings and it was mentioned that there is a need to ensure that all child care staff as well as their tutors and assessors when undertaking childcare qualifications, should have access to information on the guidance to support their day to day work on nutrition and hydration. Examples suggested included:

- more diet and nutrition courses being made available, with support and training from dietitians through 'Nutrition Skills for Life'
- 'train the trainer' approaches to enable wider coverage and dissemination
- regular refresher courses
- training for cooks and managers
- E learning such as webinars, videos and downloadable powerpoints, app for smartphone
- Posters, leaflets, information packs, flash cards, parent guides or handouts

4.13 Comments included:

"We have attended the health and nutrition courses a couple of years ago and this was really good and really helpful , we would like to send more staff on the course so we are able to feedback to the children and parents and allow staff to realise why we implement polices. ...."

"a resource that would enable childcare setting managers or others to train staff would be helpful "

" we as a setting would like to see more families getting involved ...we have found the children love taking part in cooking and food preparation activities, that way they are more encouraged to try different things ....."

"We will use the food guidance by introducing them to national staff that support grassroots locations. This means that staff will need to receive the same training and information on the guidance as any training for staff within settings".

## Questions 7 - 10

7. Do you think this guidance will help to improve food provision in childcare settings?

8. How will you use it ?

If you are a childcare provider please answer questions 9 and 10

9. Do you think the standards will help you to plan meals, snacks, drinks and menus for the children in your care?

10. Do you think the recipes will help?

4.14 In response to question 7, 97% of respondents answered positively.

4.15 Responses to question 8 included a range of answers. This included from:

- Childcare settings themselves who expressed that the menus will be used to change and improve their current menus and the guidance used to evaluate their current provision. Some had already updated their food and health policy and were very keen to promote a healthy lifestyle in the setting. The guidance would also be used for training within the setting or provider organisation.
- Services that support childcare settings who said they would encourage providers to implement the guidance and would use it to discuss with settings working towards local or national awards, such as the Gold Standard Healthy Snack Award and the Healthy pre school scheme.
- Childcare umbrella organisations who also felt that it would be useful in disseminating information to its members, promoting and signposting it in training delivered and to review member resources and update them.

4.16 Specific responses to questions 9 and 10 included comments:

“the recipes inspired our members”

“ this guidance is amazing, full of ideas”

“we will hand out recipes to parents, they are easy to follow”

“the standards will help to plan meals, snacks and drinks, and help to avoid hidden sugars for children in our care”

“staff feel that the standards are relevant, it is up to date information, with training this will be used, saving time on planning and preparation”

### **Feedback from consultation workshops**

4.17 A range of organisations and staff were represented across the three events including, Care Inspectorate Wales, Flying Start leads, staff from childcare settings, childcare development officers from local authorities and childcare umbrella organisations, public health dietitians, healthy pre school coordinators, FSA, Designed to Smile, and local public health teams.

4.18 Similar feedback was provided from the workshops and with the opportunity for discussion more detailed responses to specific areas of the content was provided. The discussions were enthusiastic and positive, which helped to focus on refining the content and detail.

4.19 The discussions were also informative to the delegates, sharing practices and pitfalls with their groups. Discussing individual experiences highlighted issues that were not necessarily obvious to others in their own settings, and gave way to sharing ideas and best practices already in place.

4.20 Recommendations made as a result were:

- Consideration of access - as online materials will be an issue for small settings, and cost of printing falling to those settings, also consideration of issues surrounding old IT equipment, such as firewalls – with regards to downloading content.
- Additional information and guidance in the following areas: recording food intake and handovers between settings; a specific smaller booklet resource for settings providing snacks and drinks only; posters/fact sheets/hand outs to back up messages within the guidance – to display in settings for both staff and parents.
- Train the Trainer approach for dissemination is preferred throughout. This was felt to be easier to facilitate across the board, and could help with reaching more settings staff. In addition incorporating the guidance into refresher courses and/or adding to courses working towards childcare qualifications.
- Support for the training with a power point style presentation that could be tailored to each setting type and be made available on the webpages.
- To review the style and tone of the Welsh language document, which some felt did not reflect the style and tone of the English document, and was not as user friendly.

### **Feedback from child minder webinar**

4.21 The group of child minders all agreed that up to date standards and guidance would be helpful, particularly in making them accountable and providing a basis for working from to ensure the food provided for children is right. They found the guidance to be visual, colourful and user friendly. They can show it to parents and it will help with monitoring and would be keen to look at awards they can access for their setting.

4.22 Useful sections included allergens, portion sizes, signposting, diaries, menus and recipes. Portion control was seen as helpful and for children when serving themselves. A printed document was preferable but also printer friendly versions.

4.23 Child minders will often have parents bringing in food and the guidance was seen to be helpful in supporting and working with parents to provide healthy food. They could also see it helpful in encouraging children to eat a variety of foods and to encourage milk and water in the early years in preparation for school, but this may be difficult if looking after older children from school who want fruit juice.

4.24 They felt it could be potentially intimidating and harder for those who may need to make more changes but also important that child minders can be seen to be following the same guidance as other childcare settings and will be able to receive positive feedback through CIW reports.

4.25 Child minders were fully aware of the need for good communication between settings during wrap around care to avoid duplication, addition of templates and diaries would help with this.

### **Next steps**

4.26 The Welsh Government has analysed and have considered all responses in order to produce the final guidance documents. Based on the comments and suggestions from the consultation a number of revisions were made to shape and produce the final guidance.

## **Annex 1**

### **List of respondents:**

#### Organisations:

British Dental Association (Wales)  
PACEY Cymru  
Diabetes UK  
Early Years Wales  
Public Health Wales  
Childcare Umbrella Organisation  
Food & Drink Federation  
Carmarthenshire LA Family Information Service Childcare & Play  
Cwm Taff Healthy & Sustainable Pre School Scheme  
Play Wales  
BMA Cymru Wales  
Mudiad Meithrin  
Public Health Dietitians in Wales /Welsh Dietetic Leadership Advisory group/Bwrdd  
Cymru  
Wales Pre Playgroup Association  
National Day Nurseries Association (Cymru)  
Hywel Dda University Health Board  
Coeliac UK  
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child health  
Social Care Wales  
Designed to Smile, Operational Managers group  
Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs

Individual childcare providers (17)

Individual health professionals (12)

Healthy Pre-school officer (1)

Early Years Advisor (1)

Anonymous (2)