POLICY NAME: Food and Drink

Authorisation Signature: *H G Smith*

DATE ADOPTED: June 2025

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Food and Drink

Statement of Intent

We regard snack and mealtimes as an important part of the setting's session. Eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. Jigsaws Childcare promotes healthy eating through offering healthy varieties of snacks and allowing children to make choices. Jigsaws also provides advice and guidance to parents and carers who wish to supply their own food brought from home as they attend a session at the setting.

Aim

At snack and mealtimes, we aim to provide nutritious food, which meets the children's individual dietary needs. We aim to meet the full requirements of The National Standards for Day Care on Food and Drink (Standard 8) and Jigsaws also follows the new requirement in the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS that providers 'should' have regard to the new nutrition guidance (September 2025).

Methods

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we find out from parents their children's dietary needs and preferences vegetarian, vegan or religious requirements including any allergies.
- Children with different dietary requirements on the days they attend will have their food served on a white plate with a pattern to make sure that they receive the correct food.
- We record information about each child's dietary needs in her/his Contract and Child Record form and parents sign the record to signify that it is correct. This information is then put on the Blossom system where all practitioners can see it.
- Our kitchen team also keep a record to hand and attend SLT meetings to make sure they are always updated on information.
- We regularly consult with parents to ensure that our records of their children's dietary needs - including any allergies - are up to date. Parents sign the up-dated record to signify that it is correct. Again, this is logged on the Blossom system.
- We display current information about individual children's dietary needs in our record files in each room, on the Blossom system, in the kitchen area, so that all staff and volunteers are fully informed about them.

- We implement systems to ensure that children receive only food and drink that is consistent with their dietary needs and preferences as well as their parents' wishes.
- We display the menus of meals/snacks for the information of parents. Jigsaws also provides advice and guidance to parents and carers who wish to supply their own food brought from home as they attend a session at the setting.
- We provide nutritious food at all meals and snacks, avoiding large quantities of saturated fat, sugar and salt and artificial additives, preservatives and colourings. We ask that parents supplying food brought from home to also follow this and we will give guidance on appropriate foods, safety 7 hygiene..
- We include a variety of foods from two of the four main food groups:
  - dairy foods;
  - fruit and vegetables.
- We include foods from the diet of each of the children's cultural backgrounds, providing children with familiar foods and introducing them to new ones.
- We take care not to provide food containing or may contain nuts or nut products and are especially vigilant where we have a child who has a known allergy to nuts.
- Through discussion with parents and research reading by staff, we obtain information about the dietary rules of the religious groups to which children and their parents belong, and of vegetarians and vegans, and about food allergies. We take account of this information in the provision of food and drinks during snacks, lunch and teas.
- We provide a vegetarian alternative on days when meat or fish are offered and make every effort to ensure Halal meat or Kosher food is available for children who require it.
- We require staff to show sensitivity in providing for children's diets and allergies. Staff do not use a child's diet or allergy as a label for the child or make a child feel singled out because of her/his diet or allergy. We use a different coloured plate or bowl (white with a pattern) only to support children's needs.
- We organise meal and snack times so that they are social occasions in which children and staff participate.
- We use meal and snack times to help children to develop independence through making choices, eating as much or little food and drink and feeding themselves. We follow guidance on portion controls, so children are not overeating.
- We provide children with utensils that are appropriate for their ages and stages of development and that take account of the eating practices in their cultures.
- We have fresh drinking water constantly available for the children. Each child has a named drinks bottle provided by Jigsaws which are used in the rooms or at Forest/Outdoor Learning. We inform the children about how to obtain the water and that they can ask for water at any time during the session. During mealtimes we encourage children to drink from age-appropriate cups to develop independence.
- We provide information to parents on nutritional guidance and portion ideas when providing their own food brought from home. (please see below and food brought from home leaflet)

- We inform parents who provide food for their children about the storage facilities available in the setting. (please see below)
- We give parents who provide food for their children information about suitable containers for food. (please see below)
- In order to protect children with food allergies, we have rules about children sharing and swapping their food with one another.
- For children who drink milk, we provide semi pasteurised milk.
- For each child under three, we provide parents with daily written information about feeding routines, intake and preferences through Blossom.
- We do not prop feed babies and children.

As we have food made in site our kitchen, staff follow their own Food Health, safety and hygiene policies and procedures. These are detailed in another folder. All staff handling food are Food Hygiene trained.

Food brought from home

At Jigsaws we charge for our food. Families may wish to provide food from home and some children may need to bring their own meals and snacks for medical or cultural reasons. It is important to ensure that food provided from home aligns with the healthy options offered by Jigsaws, so that children receive consistent messages about nutrition. We do have guidelines and policies relating to how we store and serve the foods provided. We also offer guidance on how parents can create a nutritional and balanced diet.

Food safety and hygiene

All foods brought from home should be checked for potential allergens by parents/carers so that the risk of cross contamination is reduced. All food served to children must be prepared at home in a way to prevent choking. Please see the Food Standards Agency poster on how to prepare food safely to avoid choking. This is part of our additional leaflet.

Additionally, providers should communicate with parents and/or carers about best practices for packing lunches and other food brought in from home, including tips on keeping food safe and fresh. Parents and/or carers should be encouraged to:

- Ensure the food is suitable for their child's individual developmental needs and prepared in a way to prevent choking.
- For perishable items that should be kept cool, pack food in insulated sealed bags. If ice packs are unavailable, the '4-hour rule' can be applied. This rule allows food to be stored outside of chilled conditions for up to 4 hours, but this should only be done once during the entire storage.
- Clearly label their child's name on the lunch bag and detail the contents.
- Pack foods that can safely be kept at room temperature **Jigsaws has no refrigerated area for storing food brought from home**. The Food Standards Agency provides 26 advice on Listeria which has examples of ready-to-eat foods that should be eaten within 4 hours of removing them from the fridge.
- **Jigsaws are not able to reheat food brought in by children.**

Guidance

Unhealthy packed lunches/teas and food intake can include poor growth, tooth decay, obesity, anaemia, constipation, poor concentration and behavioural problems which may have an impact on a child's learning. The longer-term effects of a poor diet in childhood can be an increased risk of stroke, cancer, heart disease and diabetes in adulthood.

Children's packed lunches/teas should include items from the 5 main food groups;

1) Bread, Rice, Potatoes, Pasta. These starchy foods are a healthy source of energy. Packed lunches should include 2 or more portions eg pasta salad, sandwich.

2) Fruit and Vegetables. These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Lunches should include at least 1 portion of fruit and 1 portion of vegetables / salad, or more e.g. carrot/cucumber sticks, cherry tomatoes, a piece of fruit.

3) Milk and Dairy foods. These foods provide calcium for healthy bones and teeth. Include 1 portion at lunch e.g. yoghurt, fromage frais, milk.

4) Meat, Fish, Eggs, Beans. These foods provide protein for growth. Packed lunches should include 1 portion of these foods e.g. boiled egg as filling in sandwich, mixed bean salad.

5) Drinks – any drinks provided in lunch boxes should only include either plain water, milk (semi-skimmed) fruit or dairy based smoothies

Lunchbox ideas and recipes – Healthier Families - NHS

Packed lunches — First Steps Nutrition Trust

Please support us by not including these items in a packed lunch/tea

Foods and drinks high in fat and / or sugar It is important not to fill up on too many foods that are high in fat and / or sugar at the expense of other more nutritious foods. Limiting high fat and sugar foods will help protect young people from becoming overweight as well as helping prevent tooth decay, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

- Fizzy Pop/Fruit shoots
- Sweets
- Chocolate bars

Celebrations

We understand that children like to celebrate special events at Jigsaws, and we like to support that. We ask that any food brought in from home is balanced and meets the setting's food guidelines we prefer children not to be eating large quantities of sugary and fatty foods so we also recommend for example fruit platters to share or non-edible options to celebrate with such as bubbles or stickers. Any food shared in the setting should be checked for potential allergens.