

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Childcare Services

Menu Planning Policy

Childcare Services at Queen's aims to ensure that Menus are carefully planned and constantly reviewed to provide nutritious, well balanced meals for the children in our care.

The menus are devised to include a variety of foods selected from the main food groups:

- Bread, cereals, rice, pasta and potatoes
- Fruit, legumes and vegetables
- Milk and dairy products
- Meat, fish and alternatives

We use guidelines from The Food Council, The Dairy Council, Food Standards Agency (Eatwell Plate) and Nutrition Matters for the Early Years when planning our menus.

Our menus and the ingredients purchased are researched to ensure that, where ever possible, are low in sugar, salt, additives and preservatives and GM Free. We aim to provide foods such as Yoghurts that are flavoured/coloured with natural ingredients.

Special dietary requirements, either therapeutic or cultural, will be respected and we will work in partnership with parents/carers to provide a nutritionally balanced and varied diet for any children who have different dietary needs.

The menus reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the children who use our setting through incorporating meals from around the world and these will also be used to promote the inclusive practices that we have adopted as we celebrate festivals and celebrations from other cultures.

Any recipes for meals on the menu can be provided to parents upon request.

Due to the increasing number of children with allergies to nuts, Childcare Services at Queen's operates a **Nut Free Zone** in the crèche sites as it is usually the Under 5 age group that has the most reactions to food as they become exposed to more choice. Within the Out of School Club this is not applicable due to the age of the children, however if it is brought to our attention that there is a child with an allergy to nuts then the Out of School Club will also become a **Nut Free Zone**. We would then request that no foods containing nuts, or nuts themselves, are brought onto the Childcare Sites. If consumed by a child with an allergy the consequences could be fatal.

Babies may also avail of crèche meals as soon as parents are happy to transfer them from "baby food" or home prepared meals. We will also provide freshly prepared alternatives to the general menu for weaning babies to the consistency that is required, upon parental instruction.

All children will be encouraged to eat, but will not be forced to do so. If a child is generally a poor eater, an alternative will be available.

Children are not permitted to bring sweets, crisps or fizzy drinks into the Childcare Sites, except for a special occasion. These foods have little or no nutritional value and tend to decrease children's appetites.