

Development of HM Government example menus for early years' settings in England

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Abstract (244 words)

Early childhood is a critical time for growth and development, but diets of young children in England are not fully in line with dietary recommendations, and childhood obesity is a national and international concern. The importance of early years' settings in promoting healthy food choices and helping to prevent obesity has been highlighted, and the extension in entitlement to funded early education and childcare in England over recent years provides an opportunity to encourage more children to develop good eating habits. Food provision in early years' settings is required to be 'healthy, balanced and nutritious' and voluntary food and drink guidelines were published in 2012 to support settings in England to meet this requirement. However, since these guidelines were developed, revised dietary reference values for energy, sugars and dietary fibre have been published. As part of Government's 'Childhood obesity: a plan for action', Public Health England commissioned the Children's Food Trust to produce example menus for early years' settings, to support provision of

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meals and snacks meeting current dietary recommendations. A multi-sectoral external reference group was convened and advised on the protocol for developing two seasonal example menus, including revising the underpinning nutrient framework for 1-4 year olds, and developing an appropriate framework for infants 6-12 months, as previous menus did not cater for this age group. This article describes the process of developing the example menus and associated guidance, which have since been published by HM Government, and offers recommendations for effective implementation.

Keywords: diet, dietary guidelines, nutritional requirements, menu planning, childcare, nurseries

Main text

Introduction

Childhood obesity is a global and national concern. Given the scale, economic cost and impact on children's health (Scarborough et al 2011, Health and Social Care Information Centre 2019), prevention of childhood obesity is a high priority, and fundamental in realising a child's right to a healthy life (CRC 2013). International and national reports have highlighted the importance of early years' settings to promote and support healthy eating and physical activity in early childhood (WHO 2016, HM Government 2016, HM Government 2018, Davies 2019). As part of the Government's 'Childhood obesity: A plan for action' (HM Government 2016), the Children's Food Trust (The Trust) was commissioned to develop new example menus for early years' settings in England in line with current Government dietary recommendations for infants and children aged 6 months to 4 years (i.e. up to their 5th birthday, covering the age range for which food is typically provided within early years' settings).

Infancy and early childhood are critical periods in terms of growth and development. The food children eat in their earliest years helps to establish food preferences and dietary patterns (Northstone & Emmett 2008), and can have consequences for growth, development, health and academic achievement in later life (Feinstein et al 2008, Gardner et al 2009). However, diets of young children in the UK are not fully in line with national recommendations. Solid foods are commonly introduced ahead of the recommended 'around 6 months of age' (SACN 2018) and excess [energy](#) and sugar intake is common (PHE & FSA 2018). The consequences of this are likely to have an effect across the life course, affecting diet, body weight, and disease risk throughout childhood and into adult life (PHE 2015).

Growing evidence is available on the important role early years' settings can play in obesity prevention interventions, particularly where these include a range of actions addressing both food intake and physical activity levels, and also include parental engagement (Sisson et al 2016, Ward et al 2017, Matwiejczyk et al 2018).

There were an estimated 72,000 Ofsted registered providers of childcare in England in 2019 (including nurseries, school nurseries and childminders), offering 1.7 million childcare places (DfE 2019a). All children in England are eligible for 15 hours a week (term time only) of free early education and childcare, from the term after their third birthday until they start primary school. The majority of eligible children in England - 92% of 3 year olds, and 95% of 4 year olds - accessed early education as part of this scheme in 2019 (DfE 2019b). In September 2017, a further 15 hours a week of funded childcare was launched for 3 and 4 year olds from working families, and in 2019 approximately 80% of eligible children took up their entitlement to these additional funded hours (DfE 2019b). This extension in entitlement to funded early education and childcare, together with the high take up of places, presents an important opportunity to help more children to eat well and develop good eating habits. It is therefore vital that the food provided in early years' settings provides appropriate amounts of energy and nutrients to support appropriate growth and development and healthy eating habits in young children.

In England, all regulated early years' settings must follow mandatory standards set out in the Early Years' Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (DfE 2017), which includes a welfare requirement to provide '*healthy, balanced and nutritious*' meals, snacks and drinks (The EYFS (Welfare Requirement) Regulations 2012). However, until 2012 there was no national guidance in England to support early years' settings to interpret these requirements and meet them in practice. Following recommendations made by the Advisory Panel on Food and Nutrition in Early Years' (APFNEY) to provide guidance on meeting the nutritional requirements of children attending childcare (APFNEY

2010), voluntary food and drink guidelines for early years' settings in England were developed and published by the Children's Food Trust as part of a Department for Education funded programme. The voluntary guidelines were included as part of a practical guide for early years' settings (Children's Food Trust 2012a), and published alongside two seasonal menus, designed to meet the voluntary guidelines, and nutritionally analysed to meet energy and nutrient requirements for children aged 1-4 years (Children's Food Trust 2012b). Shortly after these menus were finalised, the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) published revised Dietary Reference Values (DRVs) for energy requirements (SACN 2011) and subsequently, recommendations for reducing intakes of free sugars and increasing intakes of dietary fibre (SACN 2015). To ensure guidance on food provision for early years' settings is aligned to current government dietary recommendations, and promotes appropriate types and amounts of food for young children, Public Health England (PHE) commissioned the Trust to develop new example menus for early years' settings in England, as part of national work to reduce childhood obesity [and to support appropriate growth and development](#) (HM Government 2016).

The Trust convened a multi-sectoral External Reference Group (ERG) which included representative bodies with knowledge and experience of the early years' sector, public health nutritionists, representatives from across government departments and non-ministerial organisations. The group was tasked with advising on the overall approach for developing new example menus for early years' settings. This included agreeing the protocol, nutrition and menu planning principles, revisions to the nutrient framework underpinning the menus, and later reviewing the draft menus to ensure they were appropriate from both a nutritional and operational perspective. The ERG agreed that 'food-based guidance within a nutrient framework' (i.e. providing settings with practical advice on the types and amounts of foods to provide as part of meals and snacks, based on nutritional analysis undertaken during development to ensure appropriate energy and nutrient content) remained the most appropriate approach as it supports variety in food provision without the burden of nutrient analysis of menus (Children's Food Trust 2016). This approach has worked successfully in the past - piloting and

implementation of the 2012 food and drink guidelines (Wall et al. 2012) and later evaluation of settings' food provision (Children's Food Trust 2014, Neelon et al. 2015), have both suggested settings are able to use food-based guidance to plan varied and balanced menus.

Revisions to the nutrient framework for children 1-4 years

The 'nutrient framework' refers to the amount of energy and nutrients that the example menus were planned to provide (both across the complete menus, and for individual meals and snacks), calculated using applicable UK DRVs (DH 1991, SACN 2003, SACN 2011, SACN 2015).

The example menus published in 2012 were based on a nutrient framework calculated by APFNEY for children aged 1-4 years (APFNEY 2010). The nutrient framework as recommended by APFNEY includes energy and a range of nutrients which act as markers for the sufficiency of young children's diets overall. It was considered that if menus provide sufficient intakes of the nutrients included, then it is likely that intakes of nutrients not specified as part of this framework will also be sufficient. For this reason, and as National Diet and Nutrition Survey data did not show insufficiencies in intakes of other nutrients for young children (measured as more than 5% children aged 1.5-3 years with intakes below the lower reference nutrient intake (LRNI)), the ERG agreed not to include the full range of micronutrients for which DRVs are set (e.g. iodine) as part of the nutrient framework (Children's Food Trust 2016).

The framework was revised to reflect updated estimated average requirements for energy intakes (SACN 2011) and Government's dietary recommendations for intakes of free sugars and dietary fibre, since these are now in place for children aged 2 years and over (SACN 2015). Although there are no DRVs in place for free sugars or dietary fibre for children aged 1-2 years, it was agreed to apply the DRVs for these nutrients across the nutrient framework for children aged 1-4 years, as the principles are consistent with nutrition advice for all children of this age (NHS 2020a).

Although food provision may vary between individual settings, full day care provision within early years' settings is commonly organised to provide breakfast, a morning snack, a main meal at lunchtime, an afternoon snack, and a light meal for tea (APFNEY 2010). When calculating the nutrient framework, energy and nutrient requirements were split across the day in the following proportions: breakfast 20%, lunch 30%, tea 20%, and morning and afternoon snacks 10% each. This is typical of meal patterns observed in settings (APFNEY 2010), and means that full day care provision provides approximately 90% of a child's average daily energy and nutrient requirements, leaving 10% for a snack and/or drink at home.

As agreed with the ERG the nutrient framework for children aged 1-4 years was calculated based on those within the age group (1-2 years or 3-4 years) with the highest energy and nutrient requirements. The value for energy included in the nutrient framework was calculated as 90% of the average EAR for boys and girls aged 3 and 4 years (1108 kcal) and amounts of fat, carbohydrate and free sugars calculated from this as percentages of food energy. The nutrient framework for protein, zinc, calcium, vitamin A and vitamin C was calculated using the greater of either the reference nutrient intake (RNI) for 1-2 year olds (using the RNI for 1-3 year olds) or the RNI for 3-4 year olds (calculated as 50% of the RNI for 1-3 year olds and 50% of the RNI for 4-6 year olds). This approach helps to ensure that the menus provide adequate intakes for all, and meet the higher requirements for energy, protein, zinc, calcium, vitamin A and vitamin C of 3-4 year olds, and iron of 1-2 year olds. This also acknowledges that there is generally a higher proportion of children aged 3-4 years within settings than children aged 1-2 years. The amounts of fat, free sugars and salt provided by the example menus were checked to ensure maximum recommendations for 1-2 year olds were not exceeded, and portion size guidance made clear that it is appropriate to vary portion sizes offered for children depending on their likely requirements (i.e. giving portions towards the lower end of the portion size range when catering for younger children).

As the revised DRVs for energy (SACN 2011) are slightly lower for young children than those in place previously (DH 1991), the nutrient framework calculated for 1-4 year olds was approximately 5% lower for energy than when the previous menus were planned. This also resulted in corresponding reductions in amounts of carbohydrate and fat specified within the nutrient framework. As there was no reduction in the RNI for micronutrients, this required meals and snacks within the example menus to be more nutrient-dense to meet all DRVs compared with when the previous menus were developed.

National Diet and Nutrition Survey results reviewed by the ERG (PHE & FSA 2016) suggested that more than 5% of children aged 1.5-3 years had intakes of iron, vitamin A and vitamin D below the LRNI. The ERG advised that the nutrient framework for children aged 1-4 years should therefore include enhanced levels of iron and vitamin A to support adequate intakes of these nutrients. In practice, this meant that full day care provision (providing 90% of daily energy requirements), should provide at least 100% of the RNI for iron and vitamin A, with enhanced requirements split across breakfast, lunch and tea to ensure that the food provided at each meal was sufficiently nutrient-dense. The ERG also recommended that the importance of vitamin D supplementation should be highlighted in the menu guidance produced, so settings are aware and can advise families where to access this advice. In acknowledgement that product reformulation has helped to reduce the salt content of foods since previous menus were developed, it was recommended by the ERG that the example menus should not exceed the SACN population salt targets (SACN 2003) for children aged 3-4 years, and be checked against the maximum recommendations for children aged 1-2 years.

The nutrient framework calculated for children 1-4 years using the principles above is shown in Table 1.

Calculating the nutrient framework for infants 7-12 months

Since the example menus cover an extended age range (6 months-4 years) compared to those developed previously (1-4 years), separate nutrient frameworks were calculated for infants aged 7-9 months and 10-12 months using DRVs and principles appropriate for these age groups. Calculating these frameworks separately from the one in place for 1-4 year olds helped to ensure the nutrient analysis and portion sizes closely reflected the nutritional requirements and developmental stages of feeding of each age group. Infants aged 6 months were not included as part of these frameworks, as the emphasis at this stage is on first introductions to foods (NHS 2020b).

The nutrient frameworks for infants aged 7-9 and 10-12 months were calculated using the EAR for energy based on energy requirements for 'infants fed a mix of breast milk and breast milk substitute or for whom it is unknown' (SACN 2011). This principle reflects current lack of knowledge on infant feeding practices in England and, also that DRVs for some nutrients are based on formula fed infants. This principle applies only to the EAR used to calculate energy as part of the nutrient frameworks and has no implication for guidance for settings around promotion of breastfeeding. Also included were the nutrients which were part of the framework for 1-4 year olds for which DRVs also exist for infants aged 7-12 months (namely protein, iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin A, vitamin C, and sodium (DH 1991)). Although DRVs for free sugars do not exist for this age group, the free sugars content was calculated in acknowledgement that some foods on the menu (e.g. some breakfast cereals) included sugar as an ingredient and to ensure that the recipes and menus were aligned to guidance to limit free sugar intake for this age group.

As infants would not be expected to follow the same meal pattern as children aged 1-4 years, and energy intake at this age comes from both meals and breastmilk/first infant formula, the nutrient framework for full day provision was not split into separate meals and snacks (as was done with the framework for children 1-4 years), and was instead analysed over a complete day. This process

involved calculating the total daily energy and nutrient content of the three meals provided as part of the example menu, plus typical milk provision for each age group (four feeds daily totalling approximately 600ml/day infant formula for 7-9 months; three feeds daily totalling approximately 400ml/day infant formula for 10-12 months) and comparing the overall energy and nutrient content provided to the figures in the calculated nutrient framework (see Table 2). The meal patterns for infants 7-9 and 10-12 months were based on existing guidance for this age group (First Steps Nutrition Trust 2015) and agreed with the ERG (HM Government 2017b).

It was also deemed more appropriate to produce general portion size information for infants, rather than the more specific typical portion size information produced for children aged 1-4 years. This was in recognition that dietary advice for infants is much more general, with an emphasis on introducing a range of foods, and encouraging infants to accept and eat a range of flavours and textures (NHS 2020).

The nutrient frameworks calculated for infants aged 7-9 and 10-12 months using the principles above are shown in Table 2.

Overarching principles and menu planning principles

The ERG considered that the overarching principles published by APFNEY (APFNEY 2010) were still appropriate to follow when developing the example menus, that child wellbeing should be at the core of all guidance, and that it should be consistent with meeting the developmental needs of children as embodied in the EYFS framework. All recommendations should also take into account the social, cultural and ethnic diversity of settings, and the duration children attend childcare. The ERG recommended enhancing these overarching principles to include supporting children to exercise choice and acknowledging the role of food in supporting other areas of learning (Children's Food Trust 2016).

The menu planning principles previously published by APFNEY (APFNEY 2010) were also adopted. It was agreed that the example menus should be designed for periods of a week or more - the example menus were each 3 weeks in length - and include breakfast, lunch (as a main meal), tea (as a light meal) plus morning and afternoon snacks and drinks. These principles were enhanced to highlight the importance of introducing a variety of flavours and textures as part of complementary feeding, and also to include an explicit reference to sustainability (Children's Food Trust 2016).

Changes to the 2012 food and drink guidelines

In addition to nutritional analysis of the example menus against the calculated nutrient frameworks, the menus were also planned to meet the voluntary food and drink guidelines for early years' settings in England. The guidelines published in 2012 (Children's Food Trust 2012a) were reviewed by the ERG prior to development of the menus, to ensure that they still reflected best practice in menu planning for young children. The ERG recommended two main changes to the 2012 guidelines for use when planning the example menus. Firstly, that settings provide only tap water and plain milk for children to drink (meaning fruit juice should no longer be offered as a drink - the 2012 guidelines stated that fruit juice could be provided at mealtimes if diluted 50:50 with water). Secondly, the guideline related to desserts was strengthened to limit the provision of cakes and biscuits at the main meal (lunch) and avoid them entirely at the lighter meal (tea). The wording of a further 12 guidelines was amended to make them clearer and more closely aligned to government advice (Children's Food Trust 2016).

Development of the example menus

It was agreed with the ERG that the example menus would consist of two seasonal three week menu cycles - spring/summer and autumn/winter - plus a series of additional recipes that could be substituted into the menus. Each day of the menu would include breakfast, a two course lunch (with vegetarian option), a two course tea (with vegetarian option) and two snacks. To ensure recipes

included in the example menus were operationally practical (in terms of ingredient choice, ingredient cost, preparation times and methods), were popular with young children and reflected actual provision within the sector, recipes were sourced from early years' settings and caterers via the Trust's existing contacts within the sector, and a call out via social media for recipes to be submitted.

Recipes were checked and modified where necessary to fit with agreed menu planning principles and typical portion sizes, and then used to produce the two example menu cycles for 1-4 year olds. The typical portion sizes for children aged 1-4 years old were developed during the work of APFNEY (APFNEY, 2010) and pilot testing of the voluntary food and drink guidelines and were published in the accompanying practical guide. (Wall et al. 2012, Children's Food Trust 2012a). The menus were checked against the updated voluntary food and drink guidelines, and then nutritionally analysed against the energy and nutrient requirements included in the nutrient framework using Saffron nutrient analysis software (Fretwell Downing Hospitality). The nutrient analysis was conducted for each complete menu to ensure they were balanced across the whole cycle (with meat and vegetarian options analysed separately), and also for a morning session (morning snack and lunch) and an afternoon session (afternoon snack and tea) and separate meals and snacks. This ensured a balance of nutrients for each of these meal occasions acknowledging that children will not always be in a setting for the whole day. The energy and nutrient content of the example spring/summer and autumn/winter menus for 1-4 year olds are shown in Table 3.

Once the menus for 1-4 year olds were finalised, they were adapted to meet the requirements of infants 7-9 and 10-12 months. This included adapting recipes where ingredients included were not suitable for infants (e.g. honey), removing foods providing excessive free sugars or salt (e.g. gravy granules) and ensuring the texture of foods provided as part of meals was in line with guidance for this age group (First Steps Nutrition Trust 2015, NHS 2020b). Portion sizes for main meals were limited to approximately 100g to ensure the volume of food was not unrealistically high and there was

sufficient nutrient density. The menus for 7-9 and 10-12 month olds were then nutritionally analysed against the calculated nutrient frameworks for these age groups.

The draft menus were reviewed by the ERG and were also published for consultation by the early years' sector. Comments were collated and used to finalise the example menus for publication.

An example one day menu for children 1-4 years, and adapted for infants 7-9 months and 10-12 months as included in the spring/summer menu cycle is shown in Table 4.

Example menus and guidance

The HM Government example menus for early years' settings in England have been published in two parts. Part one titled 'Guidance' (HM Government 2017a) incorporates the two three-week seasonal (spring/summer and autumn/winter) example menus, plus useful information for settings to help them to meet the EYFS welfare requirement for food and drink. Also included are the updated voluntary food and drink guidelines by meal occasion, and practical guidance on how to plan varied menus with nutrient-dense dishes that limit salt and free sugars. The document also includes further advice around the timings of meals and snacks (particularly teas) and managing portion sizes. It also emphasizes the importance of breakfast choices in providing fibre and limiting free sugars, offering a variety of dishes that provide good sources of iron and zinc, and the nutritional adequacy of snack provision in full day care settings for children attending for sessional care only. There is also information on food safety, managing food allergies and intolerances, tips for providing varied and cost-effective meals and snacks, ways to minimize food waste and signposts to further advice on sustainable procurement.

Part two is titled 'Recipes' (HM Government 2017b). This includes all recipes from the example menus, plus the additional recipes which can be substituted into the menus using 'like-for-like dishes' to help create a more varied offer. The menus are displayed using a grid style format familiar to settings,

displaying all meals and snacks provided over each week. Additional supporting information accompanies the menu for infants aged 7-12 months, emphasising they are only a guide and do not constitute complementary feeding advice.

The Government has also developed six accompanying infographics available to download from The Foundation Years' website (National Children's Bureau 2017). These highlight the importance of healthy eating for young children, outline seven steps to planning menus, provide 'at a glance' menu planning information for breakfast, snacks and lunches, and illustrate using photos how to create a range of textures for the same recipe so it is suitable for different age groups (Action for Children 2017).

Effective implementation of the menus

The example menus provide evidence-based age-appropriate advice on the types and amounts of food and drink to offer young children. Using the menus to plan meals and snacks will support settings to meet the EYFS welfare requirement (The EYFS (Welfare Requirement) Regulations 2012, DfE 2017) to provide '*healthy, balanced and nutritious*' meals, snacks and drinks. Local authority public health and early years/childcare teams are therefore encouraged to increase settings' awareness and use of the example menu documents. The ERG recommended that settings use a '*whole setting approach*' to implement the menus, an approach also advocated in Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted 2015). In practice, this means embedding healthy eating and learning through food within the setting's policies and practices (Action for Children 2017b). This increases the available opportunities to influence the food choices made by children and families, helping every child to have the best start in life.

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Each author's contribution to article:

PM: secretariat member of the ERG, co-managed development of the menus, drafted the manuscript.

CW: secretariat member of the ERG, co-managed development of the menus, revised the manuscript.
LW: planning and nutrient analysis of example menus, edited the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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FILE 2: TABLES

Table 1 Nutrient framework for children aged 1-4 years attending full day care in an early years setting

Nutrient	Nutrient-based standard	Full day care†
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Energy (kJ (kcal))	Approx. 90% of EAR	4631 (1108)
Fat (g)	Approx. 35% food energy	43.1
Carbohydrate (g)	Approx. 50% food energy	147.7
Free sugars (g)	≤ 5% food energy	14.8
Dietary fibre (g)	≥ 90% RNI	13.5
Protein (g)	≥ 90% RNI	15.4
Iron (mg)	≥100% RNI‡	6.9
Zinc (mg)	≥ 90% RNI	5.2
Calcium (mg)	≥ 90% RNI	360
Vitamin A (µg)	≥ 100% RNI‡	400
Vitamin C (mg)	≥ 90% RNI	27
Sodium (mg)	≤ 90% of SACN target average	900
Salt (g)	≤ 90% of SACN target average	2.25

EAR, estimated average requirement; kJ, kilojoule; kcal, kilocalorie; RNI, reference nutrient intake;

SACN, Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition; g, gram; mg, milligram; µg, microgram.

†Full day care includes breakfast, lunch, tea and 2 snacks. Nutrient-based standards are for children aged 1-4 years, which includes children up to their fifth birthday.

‡ Nutrient-based standards for iron and vitamin A are proportionally higher than daily percentage of energy provided by meals and snacks, to encourage meals and snacks dense in these nutrients.

Table 2 Nutrient frameworks for infants 7-9 months and 10-12 months (for all meals and milk provided across the day)†

Nutrient	Min/Max	7-9 months	10-12 months
Energy (kJ(kcal))	Target ± 5%	2851 (682)	2851 (682)
Protein (g)	Min	13.7	14.9
Iron (mg)	Min	7.8	7.8
Zinc (mg)	Min	5.0	5.0
Calcium (mg)	Min	525	525
Vitamin A (µg)	Min	350	350
Vitamin C (mg)	Min	25	25
Sodium (mg)	Max	400	400
Salt (g)	Max	1.0	1.0

kJ, kilojoule; kcal, kilocalorie; g, gram; mg, milligram; µg, microgram.

† Energy and nutrient content stated includes all food provided across the day, plus typical breast milk/first infant formula intake for 7-9 and 10-12 month old infants.

Table 3 Energy and nutrient content of example spring/summer and autumn/winter menus for 1-4 year olds

Nutrient	Nutrient-based standard	Nutrient framework for full day care†	Average daily energy/nutrient content of Spring/summer menu	Average daily energy/nutrient content of Autumn/winter menu
Energy (kJ (kcal))	Approx. 90% of EAR	4631 (1108)	4339 (1038)	4297 (1028)
Fat (g)	Approx. 35% food energy	43.1	33.1	30.7
Carbohydrate (g)	Approx. 50% food energy	147.7	146.7	154.4
Free sugars (g)	≤ 5% food energy	14.8	7.2	6.1
Dietary fibre (g)	≥ 90% RNI	13.5	16.4	17.1
Protein (g)	≥ 90% RNI	15.4	47.7	46.1

Iron (mg)	≥100% RNI	6.9	8.7	8.0
Zinc (mg)	≥ 90% RNI	5.2	5.7	5.6
Calcium (mg)	≥ 90% RNI	360	676	643
Vitamin A (µg)	≥ 100% RNI	400	585	870
Vitamin C (mg)	≥ 90% RNI	27	100	63
Sodium (mg)	≤ 90% of SACN target average	900	831	700
Salt (g)	≤ 90% of SACN target average	2.25	2.08	1.75

EAR, estimated average requirement; kJ, kilojoule; kcal, kilocalorie; RNI, reference nutrient intake; SACN, Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition; g, gram; mg, milligram; µg, microgram.

†Full day care includes breakfast, lunch, tea and 2 snacks. Nutrient-based standards are for children aged 1-4 years, which includes children up to their fifth birthday.

Table 4 Example of daily meal and snack provision for children aged 1-4 years, and adapted for infants aged 7-9 months and 10-12 months†

	Infants 7-9 months	Infants 10-12 months	Children 1-4 years
Breakfast	Malt wheat cereal with whole milk (mashed as needed) and sticks of banana served as a finger food	Malt wheat cereal with whole milk (mashed if needed) and sticks of banana served as a finger food	Malt wheat cereal with whole or semi-skimmed milk and sliced banana Crumpet and spread
Mid-morning snack	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula)	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula)	Breadsticks and mixed vegetable sticks Milk or water
Lunch	Thai chicken or tofu curry and white rice (blended/mashed with soft lumps) and broccoli florets served as a finger food	Thai chicken or tofu curry and white rice (chopped or minced) and broccoli florets served as a finger food Seasonal fruit slices served as a finger food	Thai chicken or tofu curry, white rice and broccoli florets Seasonal fruit salad

Mid-afternoon snack	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula)	Not provided (energy and nutrient needs met by main meals and breastmilk/first infant formula)	Cheese (sliced or cut into sticks) and sliced tomatoes Milk or water
Tea	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake (blended/mashed with soft lumps) with green beans served as a finger food	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake (chopped or minced) with green beans served as a finger food Plain yoghurt, with sliced strawberries as a finger food	Bean and tomato gnocchi bake with bread and spread Strawberry frozen yoghurt
Breastmilk/first infant formula	Typically, four breastmilk/first infant formula feeds per day (for example on waking, after lunch, after tea, before bed), but provided in line with individual routines	Typically, three breastmilk/first infant formula feeds a day (for example after breakfast, after lunch, before bed), but provided in line with individual routines	Provided in line with individual routines
Water	To be available throughout the day, and offered as appropriate to all infants and children.		

† Week 1 Monday daily menu from HM Government example spring summer menu (HM Government 2017a).

‡ For drinking milk and milk used on cereals for children aged 1-4 years, the nutrient analysis was conducted on the basis of 25% whole milk and 75% semi-skimmed milk provision, in line with government advice on provision of drinking milk to young children in the UK (NHS 2020a).