



Proposal for  
RNPSLO/Jack & Jill's Childcare Healthy Eating project  
(Plant it, grow it and eat it)

### **Aims of the project**

- The aim of this project is for the staff of all Jack & Jill's childcare provisions to teach the children about healthy eating and lifestyle choices through the undertaking of a healthy eating scheme, adopting good practices and engaging with the families to encourage them to replicate at home.
- Introduce to the children and adults connected with the childcare settings (staff and families) healthy foods and meals (diet) and to learn basic skills and recipes to be able prepare nutritional, healthy and economical meals/ snacks from crops grown within the childcare settings vegetable/ produce boxes.
- For the children, staff and families to learn how to plant, grow and look after vegetables and fruits on a small scale to produce items which can be harvested and eaten within the setting at snack times etc.
- To produce a small number of crops additional to the childcare setting's needs and sell for a minimal charge back to the parents to enable the setting to purchase seeds/ crops for the following year. (social enterprise) and provide suggested easy nutritional recipes using the crops produced by the childcare setting.

### **How we will do this**

- Educate the staff teams to be aware of the importance of a healthy diet and to cascade this into childcare settings for the benefit of the children through the Healthy Eating scheme and training.
- Creating growing spaces within the childcare settings outside areas which will be accessible to the children for them to tend to the crops and work in.

- Engage with volunteers to assist the staff and children in learning how to create a small growing space within the childcare settings outside areas. What and which crops to grow for the children to be able to look after, harvest, prepare and finally eat what has been grown.

### **Introduction to the need for the project.**

Food an essential to live, thrive and learn.

Over the years as technology has improved both in how we do things and the resources we use to do food tasks; some would argue that basic skills and food knowledge is being lost.

Many a grandmother or mother has previously been the main source of 'teaching the family to 'cook' and learn about food and providing for the family. A male member of the family growing vegetables and fruit, at home in the back garden, nurtured by the family and being the only source until the commercial shops and later the supermarket came along for the masses.

Historically within senior schools Domestic Science was taught as a mandatory subject, giving young people at that time the basic skills of how to 'cook 'a few simple items of food and make a meal. This, however, also included skills such as creating a budget, shopping for the items needed, following a recipe and then creating the dish.

Around the 1980's the Government decided that the curriculum should lose the cooking element and the skills and knowledge that are involved at a basic level and include more science and food technology, teaching young people skills and qualifications to go on and be employed in food sectors designing food for mass production.

The low cost of food produced through mass production made it far easier than growing it yourself along with the convenience of shopping and it quickly changed what and how we eat and how food is produced and marketed. However, over a period essential basic skills and knowledge have been lost.

Chatting to a young parent one day she remarked 'MacDonald's is essential, where else could you go and feed yourself and the children for £11.00! "

There are a generation of people in the last 20 years who have come to rely on these giant food providers producing unhealthy food laden with sugar, saturated fat, colourings and additives to make them attractive, which will over a period of time to be bad for us all because they are cheap and convenient. And over time people are losing the knowledge of knowing what good food is and how to cook it?

The media regularly informs us of the dangers of obesity, heart disease and lists other diseases as a factor with eating the wrong kind of food being a contributing factor. These diseases have become part of our lives now from generation to generation due to us not eating a balanced and healthy diet and looking after ourselves.

## **Food and teaching in the early years.**

Good nutrition in the early years is vital. Children's early experiences of food play an important part in shaping their eating habits and creating good eating habits. This supports children's healthy growth and their development. Adults giving positive messages about food in a child's early years will help them to understand the importance of a good diet.

Improving children's health is the responsibility of parents, guardians, early years staff, carers and health professionals.

Children having a varied and nutritious diet along with physical exercise and activities are important to ensure they have healthy growth and development, both physically and mentally also help with improving their concentration and their learning.

Poor eating habits whilst young can lead in later life to obesity, anemia and the risk of serious diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and osteoporosis.

Paiget writes about cognitive development in a child which is the name given to the intellectual processes that help children understand and learn about the world around them. He also writes about memory in cognitive development and the part it plays alongside the start of language.

He goes on to talk about how children acquire new knowledge through testing and making mistakes. Children see, taste, feel and reflect on past experiences. For example, a child does not need to have had a variety of fruits or vegetables many times to reflect that on the one occasion they did have it they either liked it or not.

Therefore, in early years childcare setting the teaching that the staff undertake could be to provide tasting of a variety of different foods and challenging what they think they like and then encouraging them to create an image of the one they liked the most. Early years staff introducing children to different food groups through using phrases like "food we eat every day" or "food we eat occasionally" to cover words such as protein, nutritious, healthy and unhealthy, phrases such as "food that helps us grow and get strong" can be used to enable young children begin to understand how to make choices and feed themselves.

Jack & Jill's childcare took part in a pilot scheme run by Plymouth City Council to ensure and promote healthy eating in the early years. From the pilot scheme Jack and Jill's childcare settings have adopted the good practices and knowledge, and it runs as a thread through in all that they do and provide. The organisation's aim is to ensure that all Jack & Jill's childcare settings undertake the scheme to provide all children, families and staff with the same opportunities.

How we worked towards the 'Plant it, grow it eat it' project.

Year 1.

- Outside funding was sought to meet the costs of purchasing appropriate raised beds, growing areas etc. Including tools for adults and children to be able to use and the seeds etc including the volunteers travel costs covered.
- Engagement with local garden centers, and other businesses for donations towards the project.
- A volunteer with a degree in Horticulture has been sought to assist in the planning and designing of the growing spaces and to help settings set up the growing spaces.
- The volunteers, staff and children will work together to decide what vegetables will grow in relation to the size of their outside space and position
- At the appropriate time the seeds. Plants etc. will be planted with the children and staff.
- The childcare setting with the Healthy Eating award will begin to cascade and work with the other settings until all have undertaken the scheme.
- Children and staff look after the crops until they can start to harvest the produce, encouraging parents to engage with the settings in tending the growing areas and informing them of the long-term goal of producing foods to be eaten in the settings **and if enough** additional crops are produced selling some of it back to the parents.
- Review and evaluate the projects in relation to production, engagement with staff and children and teaching opportunities.
- Consultation with parents and staff to determine successes and failures
- Showcase projects to prospective parents enhancing opportunities for children attending to take part in growing and teaching life skills.