The Early Years Nutrition Partnership: A Collection of Views from Partners

Bringing young children brighter futures through better nutrition

May 2016
The Early Years Nutrition Partnership is an independent social enterprise, set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC). It has been created in partnership with the Pre-school Learning Alliance, the British Nutrition Foundation and Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition. The Early Years Nutrition (EYN) Partnership is currently funded by Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition and Danone Ecosystem. It aims to be a financially sustainable social enterprise within three to four years.

This report has been put together by Munro & Forster, a communications consultancy. For more information on the report and its contents, please contact eynpartnership@munroforster.com.
Table of contents

01 Foreword 2
  1.1 Neil Leitch, CEO, Pre-school Learning Alliance 2

02 Nurturing healthy habits in early years nutrition across the country 4
  2.1 Professor Christine Pascal OBE, Director, Centre for Research in Early Year Childhood 5
  2.2 Professor Marion Hetherington, Professor of Biopsychology, University of Leeds 6

03 Supporting local action to improve nutrition at an early age 7
  3.1 Catherine Lippe, EYN Partnership Registered Nutritionist 7
  3.2 Nicola Calder, EYN Partnership Nutritionist 8

04 National survey on early years nutrition 10
  4.1 Pre-school Learning Alliance and London Early Years Foundation 10

05 Helping to set the standard for nutrition in early years settings 14
  5.1 Ayela Spiro, Senior Nutrition Scientist, British Nutrition Foundation 15

06 Providing hands-on support to early years settings 16
  6.1 Michael Freeston, Director of Quality Improvement, Pre-school Learning Alliance 17
  6.2 Julia Wolman, EYN Partnership Registered Nutritionist 18

07 Working to nourish children’s growing relationship with food 20
  7.1 Jo Mainwaring, EYN Partnership Registered Dietitian 20

08 Afterword 22
  8.1 James Mayer, General Manager, Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition 22

09 About Us 23
  9.1 Early Years Nutrition Partnership 23

10 References 24
Childhood obesity is one of the biggest public health challenges of our time. Described by the Secretary of State for Health as a “national emergency”, political and media attention on the issue has never been greater.

In her 2011 report ‘The early years: foundations for life, health and learning’ Dame Clare Tickell made a clear call to action to early years settings and practitioners to recognise their role in helping set patterns for the future. “The most important influences on children’s early years development are those that come from home” she said. “This is followed by access to good quality early years provision, which has the next largest impact on children’s development by the age of five.”

The evidence supporting the importance of good nutrition in the early years is clear. Practitioners and public health experts agree that giving a child a healthy start in life is vital, as nutrition in the early years has consequences across the life course. Eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active during the first 1,000 days of life, from conception to toddlerhood, plays a significant role in influencing long-term health outcomes. In light of this, early years settings have an essential role to play in helping to support parents to establish good eating habits at the earliest opportunity.

A recent survey of 700 early years settings carried out by the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the London Early Years Foundation (2016) found that the majority of settings (79 per cent) do not receive any support or external nutrition advice. Understandably, nearly all settings get enquiries from prospective parents about the meals and/or snacks that are provided (93 per cent). As a parent myself, I know it is only natural to be concerned about your toddler’s diet.

The Pre-school Learning Alliance has always taken an active role in supporting practitioners to help children understand the value of healthy eating. I am delighted to say that the launch of the Early Years Nutrition (EYN) Partnership has taken this approach to a new level.

The EYN Partnership has been established as an independent social enterprise and created in partnership by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, the British Nutrition Foundation and Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition to improve the future health outcomes of young children by setting a standard for nutrition practice in early years settings. Our ambition is that, in the future, every child in England aged under five will have access to expert nutrition support within their early years setting.
The Pre-school Learning Alliance has always taken an active role in supporting practitioners to help children understand the value of healthy eating. I am delighted to say that the launch of the Early Years Nutrition Partnership has taken this approach to a new level."

Neil Leitch, Chief Executive Officer, Pre-school Learning Alliance

Unique and central to the EYN Partnership is the provision of tailored ‘hands-on’ help for early years settings, delivered by a network of locally-based nutrition professionals with experience in the early years. The nutrition professionals (Registered Nutritionists and Dietitians) will work alongside settings, supporting them to improve and enhance their nutrition practice, implementing a whole setting approach to effect genuine change.

Importantly, the support that they provide will take into account the demographics of each particular setting, and the community in which they operate, in recognition of the fact that each setting is different and is likely to face a distinct set of challenges.

There is an increasing appreciation, at both a local and national level, of the need to address the growing issue of childhood obesity and poor eating patterns, and the detrimental impact that they are having on the health outcomes and life chances of young children. If we are going to effectively confront these challenges, then it is crucial that partnerships, like this one, are formed and resources are pooled to reach as many children as possible, in particular those that are most in need of support.

An integral aspect of the EYN Partnership is its total commitment to supporting settings in areas of high social deprivation. To do so the aim is to provide subsidised access to services for settings with a high proportion of children receiving free childcare at aged 2 years.

Our partnership approach lies at the heart of the EYN Partnership model. We have sought to harness the knowledge, expertise and scope of each of our partners to deliver an ambitious programme that can make a difference. As a testament to the strength of this partnership, this report brings together a collection of views from our partners, our expert panellists and our nutrition professionals, to share their own experiences of the challenges within the sector and how they believe the EYN Partnership can help.

Neil Leitch is the Chief Executive of the Pre-school Learning Alliance, which supports more than 800,000 children and their families in England through its membership of more than 14,000 day nurseries, sessional pre-schools, and childminders. The Alliance is also the largest voluntary sector childcare operator in the UK, managing approximately 120 settings in areas of deprivation. During the 15 years he has been with the Alliance, Neil has strongly lobbied for early intervention, believing all children, regardless of background, deserve the best possible start in life. He is Chair of the EYN Partnership Board.

* National Survey on Early Years Nutrition. As part of a sector-wide review of the current provision of meals and snacks in early years settings, the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the London Early Years Foundation carried out a survey of nearly 700 early years settings across the country in April 2016. The results of the survey have been commented on throughout the report and have been summarised in section 4.
Nurturing healthy habits in early years nutrition across the country

As an early childhood educationalist and political advocate for improving young children’s social mobility through high quality early education and care, my work is all about improving the life chances of children, and particularly those who are less advantaged.

I see children’s development and learning as key to their long-term social mobility. I am convinced that having a healthy diet means young children live a better quality of life, both psychologically and socially, which enables them to achieve more.

We have a crisis in relation to current eating patterns, which is particularly impacting on those who live in poverty or are less advantaged in other ways. This will have a deep impact on children’s quality of life. It is in the very early stages of life that these long-term dietary habits are ingrained, which gives us a window of time when something can be done to improve family nutrition. I believe the EYN Partnership will make a valuable contribution to this and add value to local authorities who are struggling to maintain support.

Ofsted has a vital role to play as the key regulatory body for early childhood settings. It can and does drive what goes on within settings. Therefore, working to ensure that settings are meeting their Ofsted requirements and providing ‘healthy eating’ as part of a wider health and wellbeing agenda will form an important element of the work of the EYN Partnership.

I care deeply about this, and believe that the Government’s upcoming Childhood Obesity Strategy will become a marker that we as a society have recognised this issue. A marker that shows that we collectively care about it and are willing to bring resources to bear to change this trajectory. I am hoping that the very early years is a key element in this strategy.
The early years are a critical time to establish healthy eating habits. There is no doubt that food preferences established in infancy track to later life. This observation is robust and has been seen in a number of studies. It has also been evidenced that a healthy diet from an early age can provide considerable health benefits throughout life.

For example, research conducted on Health Survey for England data (2014) found that greater fruit and vegetable intake predicted lower all-cause mortality, with substantial benefits to health from high intakes of fruits, and especially vegetables. If children begin life with a love of vegetables, this will carry through to later life. Intakes of at least 5+ fruit and vegetables each day confer significant protection against ill health. The recent survey carried out by the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the London Early Years Foundation found that more than nine out of every 10 settings provide snacks to young children every day. We have identified evidence-based methods to encourage children to accept healthier foods including vegetables and smaller portions of high energy density foods, such as snacks and treats, and I am supporting the EYN Partnership to bring such evidence-based strategies to the table.

As a psychologist I am extremely mindful that food intake is only one part of promoting a long and healthy life. Healthy lifestyles involve more than just healthy eating, they include activity, psychological well-being and achieving personal development goals. However, healthy eating sets an important foundation for a healthy lifestyle which is key to successful development.

My ambition is to participate in initiatives that will enhance healthy eating in the early years. The EYN Partnership and its focus on healthy food choice and healthy lifestyle development is central to this, and key to producing happy, healthy and active young people.

“We have identified evidence-based methods to encourage children to accept healthier foods and I am supporting the EYN Partnership to bring such evidence-based strategies to the table.”

Holding the post of Professor of Biopsychology at the University of Leeds since 2008, Professor Marion Hetherington has an interest in human appetite across the lifespan. During her time at the University, she has overseen the establishment of an infant lab within the Human Appetite Research Unit, part of the Institute of Psychological Sciences. Marion has a BSc (Hons) first class from the University of Glasgow, and a DPhil from the University of Oxford. She also holds a postgraduate certificate in primary education, and a DipEd from Glasgow. She is a member of the EYN Partnership Expert Panel.
Supporting local action to improve nutrition at an early age

The EYN Partnership is an exciting initiative. It offers settings access to qualified nutrition professionals who have the expertise and skills to provide settings with tailored support in early years nutrition.

Every setting is different, so you cannot take a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Each locality will present different socio-economic, cultural and religious demographics, which can significantly impact the food provision in each setting.

The survey carried out by the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the London Early Years Foundation found that only one in every five early years settings were receiving external nutrition advice on the meals and/or snacks that they provide. From the minority that did receive advice, 61 per cent said that they received it from their local authority team. Having worked for a local authority in the past, I have seen first-hand the funding cuts which mean that local initiatives offering bespoke, ‘hands-on’ support to early years settings are now few and far between.

Offering tailored support can make all the difference between settings who are successful in achieving standards of excellence for healthy eating, and those who need further improvement. The personalised support that is advocated by the EYN Partnership will make it much easier for settings to achieve and maintain their healthy eating standards.

Early years settings face a range of challenges to providing good nutrition. My experience of working with settings, especially in deprived areas, is that some do very well in encouraging healthy eating and others may need more ‘hands-on’ support and guidance.

In either case, it’s important to provide settings with recognition for what they are doing well and help them to improve where needed. By having Registered Nutritionists and Dietitians to support them, settings can work on improving these areas to achieve standards of excellence for healthy eating across the whole setting.

Catherine Lippe is a Registered Nutritionist based in Surrey, specialising in paediatric and maternal nutrition. Catherine has over 10 years’ experience working in both the public and private sector. She has previously worked as a Community Nutritionist for the NHS and has experience of working with over 55 Early Years settings across the London borough of Newham, supporting settings to improve all aspects of their food provision and eating environment.
It is widely recognised that childhood obesity is a key public health issue. We are all familiar with the statistics that 1 in 5 children are either overweight or obese by the time they reach reception, which rises to 1 in 3 once they reach Year 6. However, where I work in Manchester, around 40 per cent of children in Year 6 will be obese or overweight. Child obesity is highest amongst children living in the most deprived local authorities – 32 per cent of children in Manchester are living in poverty, compared to the national average of 18 per cent. As obesity is a risk factor for type 2 diabetes - worryingly, we are now also seeing increasing cases of children being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes – a condition that was previously only associated with people over-40. This is a serious problem that we have to tackle in the early years, before children’s habits and attitudes towards food become more entrenched, so it is vital that we work to increase the awareness of early years practitioners. In my experience, understanding of healthy eating tends to be mixed amongst staff in early years settings. This is made more complex by the issue of high staff turnover within the sector.

The recent Pre-school Learning Alliance and London Early Years Foundation survey highlighted that a significant number of settings that receive external advice on nutrition believe that the level of practical support and guidance provided could be improved. I believe that the EYN Partnership will go a long way towards supporting settings to retain knowledge and keep a consistently high standard of healthy meal provision for their children.

Local authorities that prioritise improving the health of young children will go a long way towards making progress on the Public Health Outcomes Framework, the national framework that provides a set of outcomes and indicators that all local authorities must report against. There are some key indicators around excess weight in children, the number of portions of fruit and vegetables consumed and the number of diabetes cases recorded that this programme could help local authorities make progress on.

Early years settings have many other competing priorities, so it can be a real challenge for them to meet Ofsted healthy eating requirements. The Pre-school Learning Alliance and London Early Years Foundation survey found that many settings are currently unsure how they will respond to Ofsted’s emphasis on healthy eating in its new Common Inspection Framework, so the EYN Partnership can really help to support settings to meet high standards, especially as guidance from Ofsted is fairly limited. At the moment, there are a number of local programmes that do a lot of good work to promote healthy eating in early years. We want to support and build on this local good practice, and develop a nationally consistent approach that can reach as many children as possible.

Nicola Calder has a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health Nutrition and a Masters in Public Health. She has worked as a research associate with the Food Policy Team at the Department of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool. Most recently, Nicola led work at the Food and Nutrition Programme for the Health Equalities Group, managing the Food Active programme delivered on behalf of the North West Directors of Public Health. Prior to this, she worked on a sub-regional cardiovascular disease prevention programme which she joined following a secondment to the Department of Health North West where she was part of the food and nutrition team, as well as working as a Food and Health Advisor within a community Nutrition and Dietetic Department for 7 years.
“There are a number of local programmes that do a lot of good work to promote healthy eating in early years. We want to support and build on this local good practice, and develop a nationally consistent approach that can reach as many children as possible.”

Nicola Calder, EYN Partnership
Registered Nutrition Professional
National survey on early years nutrition

As part of a sector-wide review of the current provision of meals and snacks in early years settings, the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the London Early Years Foundation carried out a survey of nearly 700 early years settings across the country in April 2016. A summary of the results can be found below.4

04.1 Provision of meals and/or snacks

- Nearly all settings provide meals and/or snacks to children on a daily basis, with 98% of those serving snacks, 28% serving breakfast, 27% serving lunch and 17% serving dinner.4

- Of the settings that provide meals and/or snacks:

  79% do not receive external nutritional advice
### 04.2

#### Settings that do receive external nutritional advice

- Of the 21% of settings that do receive external nutritional advice, 61% said that they receive this advice from their local authority, 25% from public health professionals, 25% from the Children’s Food Trust, 11% from a consultant or private company and 21% from other sources (which include catering companies, nursery publications and individual research).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Advice</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Food Trust</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultant/Company</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>21%</td>
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### 04.3

#### Ofsted

- Of the settings that receive external nutritional advice, the level of support or guidance available was described as 32% satisfactory, 31% could be improved, 27% very good, 6% poor, 2% very poor and 2% not sure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Support</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<td>Could be Improved</td>
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<td>Very Good</td>
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<td>Poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>2%</td>
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- When settings were asked whether Ofsted’s recent emphasis on healthy eating (set out in their new Common Inspection Framework) will encourage them to seek nutritional advice and support, 40% were not sure, 35% said yes and 25% no.
### 04.4 Barriers

Settings were asked if there were any barriers to them providing nutritious food. 38% said that there were no barriers, 34% said it was the cost, 31% said it was the poor understanding of parents on the importance of nutrition, 17% said lack of facilities, 9% said sourcing accessible advice, 5% said chef skill levels, 1% said staff turnover and 11% said other (which include preparation time, children not willing / used to eating fruit, parents not keen to pay more and that the cost is not covered by free entitlement funding).

### 04.5 Cost and spend

When settings were asked how much money they spend on meals and/or snacks per child per day, 54% said less than £1, 19% said between £1 - £2, 14% said between £2 - £3 and 9% said over £3 (with the remaining 4% not providing meals and/or snacks).
04.6
Parental inquiries

93% of settings receive inquiries from prospective parents about the meals and/or snacks provided, with just 7% saying that they never receive inquiries.4

93%
receive inquiries from prospective parents about the meals and/or snacks provided

In terms of the way that settings tend to promote their nutritional policy and meal provision to parents, 71% said that they do so informally during parent discussions, 61% in response to parent inquiries, 50% formally via their newsletter, 23% formally via their website, 8% promotion of nutrition quality mark, 7% do not promote it and 23% in other ways (which include displaying on noticeboards, posters and parent packs).4

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If you would like any further information about the survey, please contact the Munro & Forster team on eynpartnership@munroforster.com.
Helping to set the standard for nutrition in early years settings

When settings sign up to the EYN Partnership, a Registered Nutritionist or Dietitian will work with them to achieve a Quality Mark based on both food and non-food criteria and a Level 3 award for two members of their team.

These criteria are based on government nutrition recommendations, voluntary guidelines and best practice around good nutrition for children. There are a whole range of excellent guidelines available for settings, but we wanted to combine these into one consistent message.

Schools must adhere to a number of standards in terms of the quality of food provision, but, currently, the fact that there are no mandatory guidelines on food provision in early years settings means that it can be pushed down the priority list in favour of other issues. Considering how important the first 1,000 days of life are for a child’s future development we believe that instilling good nutritional habits is a key priority at this stage.

The EYN Partnership Quality Mark consists of three levels, with the programme aimed at assessing a setting against these levels and then working closely with them to support the development of their nutrition practice going forward. In doing so, we hope to encourage settings to continuously improve their development in early years nutrition. A core feature of the EYN Partnership is the provision of Level 3 training for staff in nutrition and hydration in the early years. The award combines knowledge, skills and practice in a way that we feel will empower and upskill practitioners.

Food in an early years setting is not just about the nutrients that children are eating, it is about the whole experience. We want to help nurseries look at how they can use food and nutrition to help with learning and socialisation, such as helping children develop as independent social individuals; widening their conversations about food, and helping them improve their vocabulary, literacy and numeracy (describing textures, colours, quantities, likes and dislikes for example). Early years practitioners are very important role models for children in these areas.

There is not an organisation in the world that, on its own, can be an expert in everything. This is why we are working alongside the Pre-school Learning Alliance and our EYN Partnership Expert Panel, whose experience encompasses nutrition, behavioural science and early years education. This independent expertise is invaluable and a real point of distinction as we seek to support settings in improving their whole setting approach.

We know that there is a real desire amongst early years practitioners to improve nutritional standards, and an increasing appreciation of the significant role that such practitioners must play. We are excited about the prospect of empowering teams, and recognising excellence in practice in order to set a standard that will improve the future health outcomes of our next generation of young children.

Ayela Spiro is a Senior Nutrition Scientist at the British Nutrition Foundation. After graduating from Kings College, London with a BSc in Nutrition and Dietetics, Ayela began her nutrition career as a research dietitian at Imperial College and has since developed strategies for elderly malnutrition with key health and charity organisations including Age UK, the Malnutrition Task Force and Guy’s and St Thomas’ and has also been involved in nutrition research required for the Department of Health and the National Patient Safety Agency. At the British Nutrition Foundation, Ayela develops the BNF conference series and leads on the Information Standard, to ensure the information that is produced is evidence-based.
Providing hands-on support to early years settings

The importance of encouraging young children to eat well and lead a healthy lifestyle as early as possible is now widely understood. Practitioners know this innately and the increasing evidence-base has made policy makers recognise it as essential if we are going to ensure that children do not become overweight when they present at school.

What we can do with the EYN Partnership is to help settings develop their skills and knowledge in this area, with a science and knowledge-based approach to the messages they may already be giving to children and their parents, and in the meals and snacks that they provide.

One of the interesting factors that has emerged through the development of the EYN Partnership has been the understanding that food is not just food. There are cultural, religious, sociological and medical circumstances that actually make the provision of food within a nursery quite a minefield for practitioners. This is why we have recruited registered nutritionists and dietitians from the localities in which they work, to ensure that they understand the demographic make-up of their area and what that means in terms of nutrition and healthy, balanced meals.

What makes the EYN Partnership really special is the ‘hands-on’ help that the nutrition professional can provide. They can look at the local needs of a community, and for each specific setting look at their intake of children, and guide the team on how to achieve the best nutritional practice. We are acutely aware that not all settings are the same and that they have different provisions - some may have wonderful kitchens, whereas others may not have kitchens at all. The purpose of the EYN Partnership is that for every setting that wants to be part of the programme, irrespective of their resources, their kitchen size, or their staff numbers, the nutritionist will equip them with the knowledge and skills to put good nutrition into practice in their setting.

Practitioners often say that they hear conflicting messages in the media; what is believed to be healthy one week may well be considered unhealthy the next. The importance of the EYN Partnership is to develop a relationship between the setting and the nutrition professional who has the technical expertise and scientific knowledge to negotiate the landscape for practitioners, so that they can then produce messages for the children and parents that are accessible and with which they can engage.

The nutrition professionals that we have recruited for the programme bring with them huge amounts of experience, qualifications and expertise. They bring many different specialisms – some of them have worked in the NHS, local authorities or in public health. They all have experience of working in the early years and the drive and commitment to improve nutrition in this vital stage.

Michael Freeston is Director of Quality Improvement at the Pre-school Learning Alliance. He leads the Pre-school Learning Alliance team producing resources, materials and training provision to improve the skills, knowledge and practice of the workforce, with particular emphasis on curriculum development, inclusion and safeguarding. He holds a BA (Hons) in Law and Politics, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (FE) and a Master’s Degree in Education Policy, and represents the Alliance on the Department of Education’s strategic partner group.
From my experience of working in the field, I have seen that parents rely on early years settings to provide the best health-promoting environment for their children. Settings are at the cornerstone of providing good nutrition – indeed, many will be providing children with the majority of their meals during a given week.

It is no surprise that nearly all early years’ settings receive inquiries from prospective parents about the meals and/or snacks that are provided. For many settings, healthy food provision is very much a priority and they will already be doing everything they can. But for some, other priorities may take precedence over nutrition, especially if only breakfasts or snacks are provided. In actual fact, the snacking behaviours and messages around food that children adopt in the early years can have a real impact in later childhood and adult life. Every eating occasion that a setting provides can be used to educate young children about food, and these opportunities should be maximised wherever possible.

Having worked with early years’ settings across London for many years I am aware of the challenges that they face. For example, I have seen a number of nurseries who only provide vegetarian meals in order to avoid having to cater to religious dietary requirements. However, this is often problematic since it can be hard to build into meals adequate non-meat iron sources without specialist knowledge or awareness.

If a settings’ meals are catered by an external supplier, it is fair to assume that the catering company has nutrition expertise within its team, but unfortunately this is not always the case. There is a lot of misinformation about healthy eating which can cause confusion for caterers, practitioners and parents, and they may not necessarily know where to go for reputable nutrition advice.

It is so important to have a consistent, evidence-based approach to establishing healthy practices as the longer term benefits of getting nutrition right and establishing positive relationships with food in the early years is so vitally important. I am really excited about working with both practitioners and parents through the EYN Partnership to help settings further develop their skills, enhance food provision and achieve excellence in practice.

“I have seen that parents rely on early years’ settings to provide the best health-promoting environment for their children. Settings are at the cornerstone of providing good nutrition – indeed, many will be providing children with the majority of their meals during a given week.”

Julia is a Registered Nutritionist with the Association for Nutrition and a member of the self-employed nutritionists’ network SENSE. She has a special interest in infant and child nutrition and has previously worked in a variety of settings, including schools’ health promotion advisor and community nutritionist for children’s centres. Julia also co-developed the MEND healthy lifestyle programme for 2-4 year olds and their families which is running successfully across the UK and internationally.
There is a wealth of evidence to show that good nutrition is pivotal in the early years. I see it as a golden thread that will last a lifetime. Not only does it impact on biological health, it helps to sustain good food choices from childhood right through to adolescence and adulthood.

The blueprints for an individual’s future health are laid down very early on, so to achieve good health and wellbeing, attention to nutrition is paramount. The EYN Partnership is a great opportunity to work with children and their families to secure better nutrition, to help them achieve their maximum potential. Children thrive when they are provided with the right food. It is important to remember the joy and pleasure that is to be found in food in the early years. It is much more than just nourishment, it provides opportunities to learn, play and socialise. All parents should be given the opportunity to share in and encourage the fun that children have with food, and this goes a long way towards promoting a healthy and positive attitude towards eating.

Early years settings are a central support to many families with young children. The trusting relationship that early years settings have with parents and carers make them an ideal place to cascade important messages on healthy lifestyle. This is hugely valuable, as sometimes the nutritional messages we hear from the media are at best confusing, and at worst, simply wrong. As one of the registered nutrition professionals working within the EYN Partnership, I will be able to help parents and settings by sharing only the most appropriate information and best practice on good food and nutrition for young children.

Many practitioners will agree that it is sometimes easier to introduce children to new foods within a setting, where they are surrounded by their peers, compared to the family home. The positive impact of peer pressure can make it an ideal place to introduce children to healthy eating concepts. However, it is essential that the good work that takes place when children are at nursery is reinforced at home.

A failure to provide a balanced and nutritious diet in the early years can have worrying knock-on effects in terms of the prevalence of obesity and broader health and wellbeing. Teaching children how to eat well, both within settings and with their families, is an important way to address this significant public health challenge.

Jo Mainwaring is qualified with a Masters in Dietetics and has worked for the NHS as a Dietitian. Pursuing her interest in childhood nutrition, Jo progressed to become a paediatric dietitian and has spent over 7 years working with infants, children and families with varied nutritional needs and requirements in both central London and Bedfordshire. Within her career Jo has worked for 8 years as a Senior Lecturer at Coventry University. Since leaving Coventry University, Jo has worked as an online lecturer delivering the Masters in Public Health for Liverpool University.
Zoe has over 20 years' experience working with a variety of organisations including early years settings, schools, the Department of Health and many public health departments. She has run multiple health promotion projects and training courses to help professionals integrate healthier eating into their practice. Zoe has specialised in working with children and young people, which has included developing under 5’s nutrition training for nurseries, working with Bristol City Council to offer healthy eating sessions for schools and leading the roll out of the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme in the South West. She also lectures on public health nutrition topics at Bath Spa University and the University of Bristol.

“It is brilliant to see that the Pre-school Learning Alliance and London Early Years Foundation survey showed just how interested parents are in the food provided by their setting. Parents will benefit hugely from having additional support from their setting, to reinforce healthy eating messages.”

Jo Mainwaring, EYN Partnership Registered Nutrition Professional

“The EYN Partnership is a great opportunity to work with children and their families to secure better nutrition, to help them achieve their maximum potential.”

Jo Mainwaring, EYN Partnership Registered Nutrition Professional
It has been fascinating being involved in the creation of the EYN Partnership and working with our partners to establish this unique social enterprise. We are all like-minded organisations with similar values, so the idea of creating a programme that would allow us to pool our expertise and resources to improve the future health outcomes of young children made perfect sense.

The EYN Partnership team recognises that good nutrition requires an evidence-based approach. What makes it different to other programmes is that the content and materials will be delivered in a ‘hands-on’ way by the nutrition professionals, who all have experience in the early years and will bring excellent skill sets to the communities in which they will be working. They will work hand-in-hand with early years practitioners, to inspire them and empower them as they take on the task of improving nutrition practice. The localised model offers real benefits to each setting and will take into account the social and cultural needs of communities.

We are really excited that the EYN Partnership is the first project in the UK to be funded by Danone’s Ecosystem Fund. The Ecosystem Fund is an endowment fund that was set up five years ago to encourage businesses around the world to set up projects that will create employment, training and empowerment opportunities.

It is really exciting to be working with the Ecosystem team, not only are they providing funding, but they also bring with them considerable expertise and ideas from all the other projects that they are running around the world. This has really inspired us to think innovatively and creatively about the EYN Partnership programme.

Our vision at the EYN Partnership is to bring young children brighter futures through better nutrition. Our ambition is that, in the future, every child in England aged under five will have access to expert nutrition support within their early years setting. This is no small task. However, we are hopeful that the programme, with the support and collaboration of partners across the country, will be able to achieve this important ambition.

James Mayer is UK Managing Director of Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition, which specialises in products and services for pregnant women, babies and young children, centred on the critical first 1,000 days of life. He is also MD for Business Services across Danone UK & Ireland. James is a staunch champion of the positive contribution Danone can make to support healthy lifestyles in the UK, and believes it goes hand-in-hand with achieving business success.
9.1 About the Early Years Nutrition Partnership

The EYN Partnership is an independent social enterprise that has been created in partnership with the Pre-school Learning Alliance, the British Nutrition Foundation and Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition. The EYN Partnership is working to improve the future health outcomes of young children by setting a standard for nutrition practice in early years settings. Our ambition is that, in the future, every child in England aged under five will have access to expert nutrition support within their early years setting.

Unique and central to the enterprise is the provision of tailored ‘hands-on’ help for early years settings, delivered by a network of registered nutrition professionals specialising in the early years. The nutrition professionals will work alongside settings to improve their nutrition practice, supporting them at every step of the way.

The EYN Partnership is currently funded by Danone Nutricia Early Life Nutrition and Danone Ecosystem. Danone Ecosystem is an internationally recognised fund, which supports social enterprises and initiatives worldwide. The EYN Partnership is the first UK beneficiary of this fund. The EYN Partnership aims to be a financially sustainable social enterprise within three to four years.

Vision
Bringing young children brighter futures through better nutrition.

Mission
To improve the future outcomes of young children by setting a standard for nutrition practice in early years settings.

Goal
Every child in England aged under five will have access to expert nutrition support within their early years setting in the future.

Our Values

- **Child focused** – holding the child at the heart of everything we do
- **Community oriented** – genuinely connecting with communities, families and children with diverse social, cultural and religious needs and celebrating differences
- **Expert and personalised** – taking pride in our professional excellence and evidence based approach, delivering ‘hands-on’ practical support to suit the needs of individual settings, children and parents
- **Collaborative** – working in partnership in a unified way to achieve a shared goal
- **Ambitious and innovative** – demanding of ourselves and our partners, delivering pioneering and creative activities that will lead the way and inspire early years settings to achieve excellence in nutritional standards
- **Transparent** – being open and honest about all our activities, including our partners and funding, and building trust among our stakeholders, communities, early years settings and parents

About us

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