

## **Cluster meeting - Talking about Babies:**

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> January  
2026**

**10:30 – 11:30am or  
6:30pm – 7:30pm**

**Laurie Johnson  
(Early Years Quality  
Improvement)**

Please introduce  
yourselves in the chat  
with your name and the  
name of your setting.



[What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](#)

# Agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Updates
3. Weaning
5. Parent carers supporting the home learning environment
6. CPD opportunities
7. Q&A
8. Date of next meeting



# Updates:

**School readiness** — School readiness begins in the baby room, with listening, language, communication, and movement all contributing to holistic development opportunities.



## Early learning and development

90% of your child's brain growth takes place before they turn 5. Discover more advice and activities for ages 0 to 5 to help you make the most of every moment.

<https://www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/baby/learning-to-talk/listening-and-learning-6-to-12-months/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/9-12-month-old-baby-development-activities>



## Boogie time

Having a boogie with your baby is a fantastic way for them to learn about rhythm and sound.

CBeebies Parenting

# Safety Alert:



## **OPSS issues Safety Alert on baby sleep pillows**

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) has issued a Safety Alert to warn about the risks associated with baby sleep pillows.

The Safety Alert advises that baby sleep pillows should not be used, as they pose a risk of suffocation and increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Babies should always be placed to sleep on a firm, flat mattress, free from pillows, soft bedding or other items.

Baby sleep pillows are sometimes marketed with claims that they can improve sleep or help prevent flat head syndrome; however, there is no evidence that they are safe for use and they can obstruct a baby's airway or cause overheating. Everyone who cares for children are urged to stop using baby sleep pillows immediately and follow safer sleep advice to reduce the risk of harm. Childcare providers are encouraged to share the safety alert with parents and carers:

<https://www.gov.uk/product-safety-alerts-reports-recalls/product-safety-alert-baby-sleep-pillows-psa8>

## Supporting the Weaning Journey: A Guide for Childcare Providers

Building a partnership between parents and practitioners to ensure a healthy start for every child – What can we do?



# When is a Baby Ready?

**The Golden Rule:** Weaning should begin when a baby is around 6 months old.

**Three Clear Signs of Readiness:**

1. Staying in a sitting position while holding their head steady.
2. Coordinating eyes, hands, and mouth to look at food, pick it up, and put it in their mouth.
3. Swallowing food instead of spitting it back out.



<https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/images/ic/624xn/p0l97pm0.jpg>

# Common Misconceptions

## **The "False Signs" of Readiness:**

These are normal baby behaviours and do not necessarily mean a baby is ready for solids:

- Chewing fists
- Waking up in the night more than usual
- Wanting extra milk feeds

Important Note: The NHS guidance states that starting solids will not make a baby more likely to sleep through the night

<https://www.nhs.uk/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/helping-your-baby-to-sleep/>



# The Role of the Childcare Provider

**The Key Person should work closely with parents and share daily information about the child's food and milk intake.**

## **EYFS Guidance on Food Diaries**

- EYFS does not require a daily food diary for each child as a statutory obligation.
- Providers should keep records of meals and snacks offered to ensure they meet nutritional standards.
- Share information with parents about what their child has eaten, especially for very young children or those with dietary needs.
- For children with allergies, medical conditions, or specific cultural/religious diets, individual documentation is essential for safety and compliance.
- While not mandatory, maintaining accurate records and good communication with parents is considered best practice.



# Creating a Positive Mealtime Environment

- Building social connection is important during mealtimes and they should be calm, happy and social occasions.
- Mealtimes provide an excellent opportunity for interaction and communication with babies, supporting their language development.
- To encourage healthy habits, practitioners are advised to sit at the same level as babies and eat alongside them whenever feasible.
- Encourage sensory exploration by allowing babies to discover a variety of textures, flavours, and scents in their own time.

# Managing Fussy Eaters – what do you do?

Patience is key. It may take 10 tries or more for a baby to get used to a new flavour or texture.

Some potential strategies:

- Sit fussy eaters with "good eaters" to encourage them.
- Give smaller portions to avoid overwhelming the child and offer second helpings if they finish.
- Never force-feed; if they refuse, simply take the food away and try again later.

# Top tips - First Foods

- Start with less sweet vegetables
- Introduce variety early of both finger foods and those with varied textures
- Encourage self-feeding - progress from purées → mashed → finger foods
- Nutrition & Safety - Breast milk/formula should still be the main source of food
- Avoid salt and sugar
- Babies under 12 months old do not need snacks – extra milk should be offered first.

<https://www.nhs.uk/best-start-in-life/baby/weaning/what-to-feed-your-baby/from-around-6-months/>

# Choking Hazards

## Early years food choking hazards

Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)



Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.
Meat and fish	Advice
Sausages and hot dogs	Cut sausages and hot dogs into short strips. Cut them in half and then lengthways or as thinly as possible. Peeling the skin off the sausages helps them to be swallowed more easily.
Meat or fish	Remove bones from meat or fish. Cut meat into strips as thinly as possible. Remove skin and fat from meat and fish, it will help the food pass smoothly down the throat.
Cheese	Advice
Grate or cut cheese	Grate or cut cheese into short strips. Cut lumps of cheese as narrow as possible.
Nuts and seeds	Advice
Chop or flake whole nuts	Chop or flake whole nuts, peanuts and seeds. Whole nuts should not be given to children under five years old.
Bread	Advice
White bread and other breads	White bread can form a ball shape with a dough-like texture at the back of a child's throat, if not chewed properly. Brown bread or toasted white bread are good alternatives. Cut bread, chapatis, naan bread and other breads into narrow strips.
Snacks and other foods	Advice
Popcorn	Do not give babies and young children popcorn.
Chewing gum and marshmallows	Do not give babies and young children chewing gum or marshmallows.
Peanut butter	Do not give babies and young children peanut butter on its own, only use as a spread.
Jelly cubes	Do not give babies and young children raw jelly cubes.
Boiled sweets and ice cubes	Do not give babies and young children boiled, hard, gooey, sticky or cough sweets, or ice cubes.
Raisins and other dried fruits	Do not give babies under the age of 1 whole raisins or dried fruits. Cut them into small pieces.

Make sure food is prepared appropriately for children under 5 years old, see: <https://www.nhs.uk/startinglife/weaning/>  
It is also advisable that care givers are familiar with how to respond to a choking incident, see: How to stop a child from choking: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid-how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>  
and How to resuscitate a child: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid-how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>



## Early years choking hazards food safety advice

For babies and young children, food can be a choking hazard, especially when they do not chew their food well or they try to swallow it whole.

Choking can happen with any foods, but 'firm foods', bones and small round foods that can easily get stuck in the throat present a higher risk. Therefore, care givers should follow these five essential steps:

- 1 Make sure food is **suitably prepared** and **served** for babies and children under 5 years old. For suitable foods, see <https://www.nhs.uk/startinglife/weaning/>. Introduce babies to solid foods from around 6 months of age.
- 2 **Think about size, shape and texture of food.** Cut food into narrow batons, avoid round shapes and firm foods. Firm fruit & vegetables can be softened by cooking.
- 3 Ensure that babies and young children are **alert and seated safely upright** in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair whilst eating.
- 4 **Babies and young children should be supervised at all times** while eating. You will be able to identify the early signs of choking and prevent harm.
- 5 **Encourage babies and young children to chew food well.** Teach children how to chew and swallow food properly, and ensure they take their time during meals. This will reduce their risk of choking.

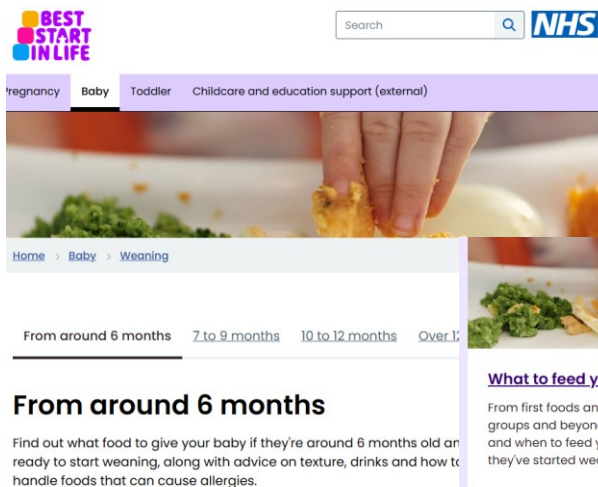
Care givers and parents should be familiar with how to respond to a choking incident in line with guidance on first aid for children:

**How to stop a child from choking:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid-how-to-stop-a-child-from-choking/>


**How to resuscitate a child:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/first-aid-how-to-resuscitate-a-child/>

<https://www.foundationyears.org.uk/2021/09/food-safety-advice-on-choking-hazards-in-settings/>

# Weaning - Best Start in Life - NHS



**BEST START IN LIFE**

Search 


pregnancy **Baby** Toddler Childcare and education support (external)

Home > Baby > Weaning

From around 6 months 7 to 9 months 10 to 12 months Over 12 months

## From around 6 months

Find out what food to give your baby if they're around 6 months old and ready to start weaning, along with advice on texture, drinks and how to handle foods that can cause allergies.



### What to feed your baby

From first foods and textures to food groups and beyond, find out what and when to feed your baby once they've started weaning.



### Safe weaning

Read about how to prepare, serve and store food carefully to keep your child safe.



### Recipes and meal ideas

Introduce your baby to simple, natural foods first. Have a look at our recipes and meal ideas for inspiration.

## Weaning guides



### Ready or not weaning quiz

Take our quick quiz to see if your baby might be ready to start weaning and learn more about the signs and common myths of introducing solid foods.

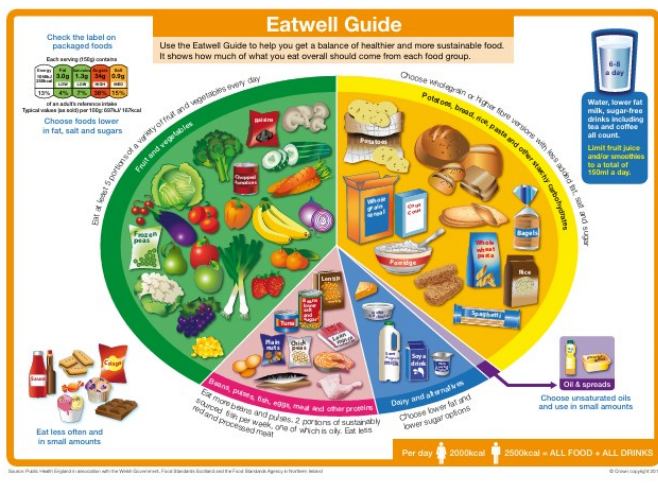


### How to start weaning your baby

Lots of parents wonder when and how to start introducing solid foods – find out the signs they may be ready, when and how much to feed them and what equipment you'll need!

# Children's Healthier Eating Toolkit

- 2-11 year olds



Eatwell guide

Ages 5-11





# Supporting the home learning environment:

[What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](#)



Useful guide for parents:

[www.ndna.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Home-learning-ParentsNDNA-Guide-Sept-24.pdf](http://www.ndna.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Home-learning-ParentsNDNA-Guide-Sept-24.pdf)



# CPD opportunities:

Community Playthings: Creating and Inspiring baby room environment



<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/videos/mona-sakr-baby-room-training>

# Have you seen..?

**Thrive together stronger practice hubs  
(West Midlands)**

## **Talking Time© Evaluation Study**

**Thrive Together Early Years  
Stronger Practice Hub (West  
Midlands)**



About the Hub

Evidence Based Programmes

Events

Resources

Sign up to the Hub

Contact Info

<https://www.strongerpracticehubs.org.uk/hubs/wm/thrive-tgh-eysh-wm/ebp/talking-timec-evaluation-study>

# Signposting:

## Early Years Information

Information on Early Years' funding, support, advice and training in Shropshire.

### Safeguarding

Policies and guidance relating to Early Years settings.

[Go to item](#)

### Early Years Funding

Information about 24U, Early Years Pupil Premium, Early Years Free Entitlement Funding, Early Years Provider Agreement and Early Years settings hourly

[Go to item](#)

### Early Years Newsletter

Monthly newsletter updates from the Early Years team.

[Go to item](#)

### Early Years Support

Details of the support and advice available from the Early Years' Team.

[Go to item](#)

### Early Years CPD

Schedule and booking details, links to training resources and slides.

[Go to item](#)

### Early Years Inclusion Advice and Funding

Information on Early Years inclusion advice and funding.

[Go to item](#)

### Becoming a Childminder

Presentation of the pre-registration briefing for childminders.

[Go to item](#)

### EYFS Documentation and Links

Links to online documents and resources supporting the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

[Go to item](#)

### Ofsted Documentation and Recommendations

Ofsted inspection documentation and resources, along with recommendations from recent Ofsted inspection reports.

[Go to item](#)

Any questions?



# Any questions?



Agenda items for the next meeting?

## CPD schedule and booking details | Shropshire Learning Gateway

### **My next training:**

For Childminders and Early Years practitioners working with 3-4 year-olds, to examine the importance of emergent writing.

27 January 2026  
18:30 - 20:00

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/early-writing-in-pre-school-tickets-1754561533779?aff=oddtcreator>

Cluster meeting: Talking about babies:

Date and time of next meetings in the Summer Term: **TBC**



[What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](#)

Slides from presentations and bite-size CPD | Shropshire Learning Gateway