

Healthy Eating for Early Years

February 2025

Product Overview

An app all about Healthy Eating packed with activity ideas for parents to get their children learning about healthy eating, recipes that can all be done with the help of their children, a separate log in portal for teachers with lesson plans and a partnership section which allows both parents and teachers to share their achievements!



Fun and Engaging

The app is fun and engaging for parents, teachers and children. Children enjoy the fun superhero fruits and vegetables and genuinely want to participate in activities.

Real results

Through our trials and market research we have found that parents and schools enjoy the app. They have reported children developing healthy habits as well as the ease of use for the app.

Expansion

Due to technological advances and this app being available on any smart phone, there is unlimited opportunity for expansion throughout early years settings worldwide.

Healthy Eating for Early Years app in detail

I created this app with three goals in mind: Healthy, Easy and Fun. Bringing these elements together meant drawing upon the experience and knowledge I have gained throughout my career in childcare. I wanted parents to have quick access to something that will change their children's lives for the better, but I also wanted schools and nurseries to be able to implement the app in their settings with benefits for themselves and the children. This app creates a streamlined approach to healthy eating, giving children the consistency they need in settings and at home to be able to fully benefit from the healthy habits they can form with this app.

Innovative idea with links to Early Years

The idea is something not seen before, however there are similar services available which can be learned from. As mentioned in my business pitch there is an app called 'Class Dojo' which is widely used worldwide. Their success is down to the ease of access and fun approach to learning. 'Learning through play' is the phrase they use. They proved that an app can have immense influence over the education sector and become relatable worldwide. (ClassDojo, 2023)

Another idea which was developed by Cbeebies 'Mr Bloom' provides schools and nurseries with lesson plans and in person visits to develop children's knowledge about growing their own vegetables and fruit. Getting them outside and active in practical, real life sessions. The vegetables are all babies to instill the idea that they need looking after, teaching children care for their plants. (Let's Grow!, 2025)

HM Government (2024) is a great tool to find example menus for the early years. Our app looked at these menus for ideas and adapted our own to their characteristics. As well as the information about the need for regular regular physical activity and focusing on the main food groups included in the information. These include carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, proteins in all forms, dairy and alternatives. The importance of alternatives is needed in recent times as children seem to be developing allergens and intolerances more easily, or they are being recognised more easily.

The EYFS says children need access to healthy food, the app allows teachers to streamline this integrating their access through fun and exciting lesson plans. The app allows teachers to have ready to go, low resource lesson plans. The resources needed are adaptable and include cheap items in an attempt to cater to all budgets.

Benefits of the app for early years development

Public Health Agency (2018) explains why good nutrition is important. Children in the early years experience rapid growth and development, their most vital years are from 0-5. Including the importance of dental health and physical health. The need for consistency between early years settings and home life is apparent due to the amount of time children are now spending in settings.

The development of lifelong habits is demonstrated by Goudie (2021). With one in five children obese when they start school, Goudie asks whether there is a flaw in our food policy systems.

Allowing children to reach their full potential is crucial to their futures, this can only be achieved with overall health and wellbeing which is directly connected to food and nutrition. However the lack of correct nutrition information and access to healthy foods means children worldwide are suffering adverse effects from unhealthy diets. (UNICEF, 2019) Our app tackles this issue and upon expansion can reach worldwide.

Challenges and Barriers

Potential challenges and barriers of this app includes security concerns. This could be those who are not schools or parents/carers having access to the media on the app such as pictures on the sharing page. To avoid issues with this we will regularly assess security of the app and check for any breaches.

We will also need to make sure that schools and parents use children's aliases, for this we can ask for the child's nickname rather than their full name and have a message which states 'Please do not use your child's real name'. The reasons for this should be included in the terms and conditions which all will be required to read and tick a box to confirm they agree when signing up.

The app will not ask for personal information, to identify children within schools for teacher purposes we will need a nickname and a year group.

Schools and nurseries must sign a contract when signing up to agree that they have gained consent from any and each parent/carer that wants to use the app for their children's photographs to be posted or not posted. The school must follow their own safeguarding policies and procedures and blur out any school identification details or crop the photo. (Such as a school uniform badge).

A secure platform is our goal, therefore we will continuously analyse data from security partners and assure comments and pictures are filtered by key words and then reviewed by our security team before allowing them to be posted on the social page.

It is important to assure compatibility across platforms including android, apple and computers. This can be assessed by our tech team and tested regularly.

Our audience

Our app will benefit all early years children in schools, nurseries and at home with their parents and carers. We have big plans for expansion worldwide, with the opportunity to adapt the app for different languages and resources. Creating jobs for many in regards to tech teams, security teams, language translation teams, early years activity creators, customer support and more!

The opportunities are endless and we hope you will be seeing us in your early years setting soon.

Research

The app is an innovative idea which bounces from other successful apps used in the early years which are not related to health and nutrition. These apps include Class Dojo an app which was rolled out worldwide and became a success through the ease of access and parent partnership opportunities. As well as cute monster designs which attracted children and made them want to be a part of the learning process. (ClassDojo, 2023) Another initiative which was not in app form includes Let's Grow a service offered by a Cbeebies character and his partner, the service offers schools and nurseries lesson plans to support their understanding of growing healthy food and nurturing plants. In an attempt to get children outside in the fresh air and to support their knowledge of life skills. (Let's Grow!, 2025)

The idea was first developed through the statistical need for healthy information, accessibility and habit forming opportunities for children in the early years as demonstrated by Public Health Agency (2018), Goudie (2021) and UNICEF (2019). Expanding on this research, it is apparent that there is a need for transformative healthy eating and nutrition education across the early years sector worldwide.

Public Health Agency (2018) takes into account the differences between settings. Whereas some early years settings will have the ability to provide children with their own snacks, meals and drinks which can then be adapted to more healthier options, there are some settings which will not have this ability. This could be due to lack of financial wealth, lack of facilities or lack of access to healthy foods depending on the area they are located. They will therefore struggle to bridge the gap between information they have about healthy eating and nutrition for children and the information parents have. The app aims to fill this gap, given that most people worldwide now own a smartphone, the app can be rolled out to parents and settings even in low income areas where the need may be highest. The fun, engaging, bright and simple information is streamlined through the app to make it easy for all to understand and take in the information.

Goudie (2021) for The Food Foundation highlights the worrying issue faced by the early years sector which affects children's readiness to learn, health, wellbeing and future prospects. Obesity at one in five children before the age of 5 is an increasing cause for concern which statistically is not improving. The problem is faced all over the UK and is actually a greater issue in the UK than other countries. Dental decay caused by poor diets is an issue which has been affecting 5-9 year olds causing hospital admissions mainly amongst those from deprived areas. Food insecurity is a factor which affects the quality of diets many children can access. If the cheaper option is a sugary snack, then how can parents from deprived backgrounds without financial security afford to pay for healthy alternatives. Not just for children but the health and

nutrition of the pregnant mother is also a factor in the outcomes for children under 5. Goudie (2021) concludes that the forming of healthy habit during the early years is crucial to long term success and health in later life.

UNICEF (2019) recommend a focus on good nutrition and diet in the early years. From breastfeeding to weaning to later diet, children need healthy foods to be able to develop properly. UNICEF explain the negative outcomes for children who cannot access healthy diets, they may become lacking in much needed nutrients and vitamins which can lead to disease and illness, from diarrhea to blindness. UNICEF indicate the barriers which can be apparent for parents or carers trying to feed their children. For example having poor access to nutritious foods depending on where they live or financial situation. Especially in areas of conflicts, disasters and humanitarian crisis.

Using this research it is apparent the impact an app like this could have on the early years healthy eating and healthy habit forming. The need for an app such as this is clear and the app must strive to become accessible for all, this will continuously need developing throughout all expansions of the app. Starting to roll the app out in local schools, nurseries and with parents and carers will give the insight needed to continue to grow and develop the accessibility of the app.

For further adaptation the app should look at SEND developments offering read - aloud - text, and image description. As well as adding videos and additional media for children and parents with SEND who could struggle to stay focused. Adaptations such as Craig (2021) explores to support equal opportunities in the early years. Different types of content on the app will support the equal opportunities of children with SEND, for example in app games and video content. Craig (2021) explains how reducing stress at home supports SEND children in their readiness to learn at settings which this app is part of. The app offers parents easy and cheap activity ideas and cooking ideas in which their children can join in with. Developing a parent/carers and child's relationship in a positive way.

Technological barriers as described in the brochure are important and must be addressed as and when they come, or ideally before they can have an effect on the children, schools and parents/carers. This relates to security concerns and there must be a security team available before launch of the app. Having contracts and terms and conditions in place for all to sign before using the app will legally protect the app from any issues that can occur, as long as the teams are continuously working to improve and keep the app safe for all.

Barriers as indicated by UNICEF (2021) include access for those in conflict areas and humanitarian crisis areas. Possible future expansion could look at the development of paper or

physical resources which can be used in this area, taking the idea from an app to physical packages. Such as pre-made activity boxes with written instructions.

Department for Education (n.d.) gives early years providers help to support children in strengthening their healthy eating habit forming. Referring to the health inequalities that occur throughout the UK, the information provided here aims to support the eradication of imbalances throughout the UK.

Public Health England (2021) explains how the 'Childhood Obesity: A Plan For Action' in 2016 aimed to tackle the issues faced by under 5's which caused obesity. This was further followed up by the 2018 adaptation. The plan aims to halve obesity rates by 2030 therefore it is still implemented in current practice. Their own research indicates multiple factors for unhealthy habits including genetics, environment and culture. Therefore the app will tackle some of the environment and culture issues.

In conclusion there are many reasons as described above as to why this app is needed in the early years sector. The factors are indicative of a growing problem amongst the early years sector based off a number of factors which the app aims to tackle through parent partnership, ease of access and easy and engaging information to process. Future opportunities for expansion are endless and as long as the app constantly strives to stay secure, adaptable and make improvements then the success should be worldwide, supporting families and children everywhere. Department for Education and The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi (2021) demonstrates how initiatives for healthy eating and nutrition work and succeed, including the rolling out of free school meals which succeeded in providing hundreds of thousands of children with healthy warm meals. Their own expansion includes healthy workshops and food based holiday clubs which had over 600,000 children attend. Therefore, the app has every likelihood for success and changing the outcomes for children in the UK and eventually worldwide.

Reference List

Presentation:

British Nutrition Foundation (2024). *Healthy Eating Week 2024 - Early Years*. [online] British Nutrition Foundation. Available at: <https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthy-eating-week/early-years/>.

Early Years Nutrition Partnership (n.d.). *Early Years Nutrition Facts and figures*. [online] Available at: https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/early_years_nutrition_-_facts_and_figures.pdf.

Brochure and Research:

Reference list

ClassDojo (2023). *About us*. [online] ClassDojo. Available at: <https://www.classdojo.com/en-gb/about/?redirect=true>.

Craig, D. (2021). *The disproportionate impact of the pandemic on children with SEND: is technology the key?* • *SEN Magazine*. [online] SEN Magazine. Available at: <https://senmagazine.co.uk/content/tech/assistive-tech/15449/the-disproportionate-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-children-with-send-is-technology-the-key/> [Accessed 20 Feb. 2025].

Department for Education (n.d.). *Help for early years providers : Nutrition*. [online] help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk. Available at: <https://help-for-early-years-providers.education.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/nutrition>.

Department for Education and The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi (2021). *More than half a million children benefitted from healthy food and activities during summer*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-half-a-million-children-benefitted-from-healthy-food-and-activities-during-summer>.

Goudie, S. (2021). *The Critical Importance of Early Years Nutrition in Prevention of Childhood Obesity | Food Foundation*. [online] foodfoundation.org.uk. Available at: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/publication/critical-importance-early-years-nutrition-prevention-childhood-obesity>.

HM Government (2024). *Example menus for early years settings in England Part 1: Guidance*.

Let's Grow! (2025). *Early Years Resources UK | Let's Grow*. [online] Let's Grow. Available at: <https://www.letsgrow.org.uk/> [Accessed 19 Feb. 2025].

Public Health Agency (2018). *Nutrition Matters for the Early Years Guidance for Feeding under Fives in the Childcare Setting*. [online] Available at: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Nutrition%20Matters%20for%20the%20early%20years%200118.pdf>.

Public Health England (2021). *Early years high impact area 4: Supporting healthy weight and nutrition*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commissioning-of-public-health-services-for-children/early-years-high-impact-area-4-supporting-healthy-weight-and-nutrition>.

UNICEF (2019). *Early Childhood Nutrition*. [online] UNICEF. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/early-childhood-nutrition>.

