

# Menu box delivery service for Long Day Care

**The concept is a food service model supplying a fresh food box, including vegetables, to childcare centres.**

Similar to residential home fresh food box type product, this concept has been adapted to the scale and accreditation requirements of the long day care setting to deliver recipes and exact quantities of ingredients to children attending on any given day. The model includes menus that are based on nutrition guidelines and menu planning accreditation requirements and overcomes several barriers faced by cooks in this sector, such as inadequate menu planning tools and resources, insufficient time and nutrition knowledge. This concept aims to simplify the process for childcare centres by removing the challenges of developing healthy menus.












## Summary

This study demonstrates a proof of concept that a menu box delivery box service can be adapted and delivered for the child care setting. While the service was well received, barriers to implementation were identified. With refinement these barriers can be addressed to offer a market ready product and deliver both an increased supply and increase in children's vegetable consumption.



# Evidence summary

A menu box delivery service concept was pilot tested in eight long day care centres in 2020 showing that a meal kit service can be adapted and delivered for the child care setting.

	Standard practice n=4 centres	Menu box delivery service n=4 centres
<b>Centres provided with</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online nutrition and menu planning training for cooks.</li> <li>Menu assessment tool (FoodChecker)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All recipes and ingredients for 3 meals per day delivered to the centre</li> <li>The recipes were underpinned by a four-week menu that meets guidelines.</li> </ul>
<b>Steps involved for cooks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete menu planning training</li> <li>Plan menu (using menu assessment tool)</li> <li>Source recipes</li> <li>Create shopping list</li> <li>Order products</li> <li>Cook meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subscribe to menu box delivery service</li> <li>Include child numbers/dietary requirements</li> <li>Order extra ingredients if necessary</li> <li>Cook meals</li> </ul>
<b>Ordering time</b> Average weekly	 <b>45 minutes</b> per week	 <b>7 minutes</b> per week
<b>Cost</b> Average per child per day	<b>\$2.28</b>	<b>\$3.61-\$4.62</b>
<b>Vegetable menu compliance</b>	<b>25%</b> of centres met guidelines	<b>100%</b> of centres met guidelines
<b>Vegetables provided on the menu</b>	 <b>1 serve</b> 75g on average per child per day	 <b>2 serves</b> 150g on average per child per day
<b>Vegetables served</b>	<b>0.8 serves</b> at meals only 60g on average per child per day 	<b>0.9 serves</b> at meals and snacks 68g on average per child per day 
<b>Childrens vegetable intake</b>	 <b>0.5 serves</b> 38g on average per child per day	 <b>0.5 serves</b> 38g on average per child per day
<b>Feedback</b>	 <b>1/4 directors</b> and <b>2/4 cooks</b> would continue to use cook training at the centre   <b>1/4 directors</b> and <b>1/4 cooks</b> would continue to use the menu assessment tool	 <b>4/4 directors</b> and <b>2/4 cooks</b> would continue to use the menu box delivery service  <i>"Recipes were good, and all ingredients were there. The ingredients were also good quality. The delivery was very useful and the process was easy to follow."</i> - Cook 7
<b>Barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient time to plan/assess menu</li> <li>Difficulties using menu assessment tool</li> <li>Lack of access to resources (e.g. computers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economic viability</li> <li>Food costs for centres using the menu box service exceeds standard practice</li> <li>Recipe suitability <i>"I don't think some of the recipes were for young children, they were more adult style recipes."</i> - Cook 4</li> </ul>

Vegetables served and consumed by children is based on n=224 children at follow up. Menu compliance compared using FoodChecker menu assessment tool (Guidelines are the Victorian Healthy Eating Advisory Service (target is 1.0-1.5 serves of vegetables on the menu per child). Menu budgets for long day care centres across Australia range from \$1.17 to \$4.03, averaging at \$2.00 per child per day (Sambell et al., 2020).