**Information on Food for those with Sensory Difficulties:**

* **Information:**

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/fussy-eaters/

An excerpt from the NHS on fussy eaters states not to worry too much about day to day eating rather think about what they eat over a week. If your child is active and gaining weight, they seem to be managing then they are getting enough to eat. It also states if a child is eating from the 4 main food groups (1)fruit and vegetables, potatoes, 2)bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates, 3)dairy or dairy alternatives, 4)beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins) then do not worry.

Few of the tips for parents of fussy eaters (included in the link provided upon):

* Try eating food with the child as often as you can.
* Small portions and praise child when they eat (even if only little)
* If your child rejects food do not force them, take the food away without saying anything.
* Do not leave meals until the child is too hungry or tired to eat.
* Your child may be a slow eater be patient.
* Do not give child too many snacks in-between meals.
* Do not use food as a reward as they may associate sugary foods with being good and vegetables as not. Instead offer to take them to the park or play with them.
* Make mealtimes enjoyable not just about eating. Chat about others things during these times.
* Creating a food diary to note when and what your child is eating might be reassuring. For example include:

What did they eat?

What time of day did they eat?

Where did they eat (room/place)?

How much did they eat?

Who was there?

How did the people around respond to the child eating the particular food?

Were there any environmental factors (radio/TV on in the background)?

* Social Stories explaining why we eat and the function of food: 1)foods provides us with fuel and power to do the things we enjoy, 2) eating food from all the food groups gives us energy, 3) missing out on food groups can make us tired.
* Produce a visual schedule of daily/weekly menu of foods-display time of the next meal
* Provide visual tools to help child express and recognise their needs, feelings and preferences. For example, stress scale, hunger and fullness scales or happy/unhappy face pictures.
* Create a food group chart (using food groups mentioned above) with a rule that they must have at least one food from each food group each day. Try not to categorise food into healthy and unhealthy/ good or bad. Be specific with the pictures of how food looks as it might cause confusion and misunderstanding if brought food that does not resemble picture.
* Try modifying food to improve the sensory experience for example puréeing and introduce new foods or textures in small steps for a gradual desensitisation. First let child look at new food, then touch it, then invite them to put it on their plate to smell it, lick it, put it into their mouth, bite it, chew it and lastly swallow it. Try to avoid reacting negatively to food being spat out it is their way of exploring new foods being in and around their mouth (steps could take months).