

## **Strategies for Children Who Mouth, Bite or Chew Non-Food Items**

**Early Years Team**

**If a child is mouthing, biting or chewing, they may:**

- Put non-food objects in their mouth to chew and suck e.g., toys, buttons, clothing
- May bite adults, children or themselves
- Over fill their mouth when eating
- Put food too far back in their mouth, so can be prone to coughing or gagging on food
- Dribble or appear to produce excess saliva

**If a child is still exploring the world through mouthing, this is a developmental stage they need to pass through.**

Staff must make sure the environment is safe for them to do that with appropriate toys and activities.

### **Strategies for Mouthing, Biting or Chewing**

- Replace it with something it is okay for the child to chew or bite e.g. a chew toy
- Provide opportunities to explore using other senses - children who mouth things often enjoy exploring through their sense of smell
- Complete a sensory checklist to identify the child's sensory needs
- Introduce a sensory diet
- Encourage the child to eat crunchy foods (if developmentally appropriate) e.g. raw vegetables, as this provides deep pressure through the jaw muscles
- Increase the number of oral play opportunities the child can access e.g. blowing bubbles, using a straw or an electric toothbrush
- Consider facial massage, as this also provides deep pressure through the jaw muscles