



HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
2nd MARCH 2022

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to Inform the committee of the current work programme to address overweight children and obesity.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

National:

2. The policy paper *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives*¹ (2020) suggests tackling obesity is one of the greatest long-term health challenges. It is a call to action in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic to take steps towards a healthier weight.
3. There is also guidance for Local Authorities on a *Whole systems approach to obesity*² (2019) to tackle the complex issue of obesity. There is no one solution to tackle such an ingrained problem and local action to promote healthy weight across the life course requires a coordinated collaborative approach to support change. It aligns with a 'Health in All Policies' approach.
4. Earlier than these two reports Public Health England published *promoting healthy weight in children, young people and families: A resource to support local authorities*³ (2018). This encourages a systematic approach to creating local environments that promote healthy weight in children. Recognising the structural actions that go beyond education and information are needed to enable children, young people and their families to make healthier choices. Studies have shown that a child with at least one obese parent is more likely to be obese themselves.
5. Individuals who are overweight and obese are less likely to be in employment, face discrimination and stigmatisation, and have an

¹ DHSC (2020) Tackling Obesity: Empowering adults and children to live healthier lives

² PHE (2019) Whole systems approach to obesity

³ PHE (2018) Promoting healthy weight in children, young people and families: A resource to support local authorities

increased risk of hospitalisation. In the UK it has been estimated that obesity can be attributed to approximately 16 million days of sickness absence. Being an unhealthy weight can impact on the employability and productivity of local communities which in turn increases welfare costs and demand for social care.

6. There are also national programmes that are implemented locally. Healthy Start is a national voucher scheme to enable eligible families to access fruit and vegetables and milk. It also enables pregnant women and their babies to access vitamins and minerals for free.
7. The National Childhood Measurement Programme (NCMP) is mandated through the healthy child programme. Children's height and weight is measured in reception and year 6 annually. Those classified overweight or very overweight are offered local weight management services and from a population perspective this data informs public health commissioning, either through the healthy school's programme or physical activity programmes via active together.
8. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG): Healthy and Safe Communities, reaffirms that local health and wellbeing and health infrastructure are to be considered in plan making and in planning decision-making. It advises: "*Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system (taking into account the changing needs of the population).*"

Local:

9. The national guidance has been embedded within the Leicestershire Healthy Weight strategy that was approved by Cabinet in September 2021. It states a commitment to working together with a range of sectors, including food, health, education, planning, transport, sport and leisure, and economic development to support our communities to start, live and age well, and develop in a way which facilitates healthy behaviours and a healthy weight. Priorities include:
 - Promoting a healthy weight environment: Population approaches to improve the wider health environment to promote healthy weight;
 - Support for people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight: Provision of weight management services across the life course to increase the number of people who are a healthy weight;
 - Prioritising healthy weight through systems leadership: Develop a workforce that is competent and confident to talk about and promote healthy weight and working with partners to develop healthy weight policy.
10. The Health and Wellbeing Board strategy consultation has just closed. It follows a life course approach and childhood obesity is covered within

the Best Start for Life priority. This will be implemented as part of the Leicestershire Children and Young People's Plan.

11. The Leicestershire Walking and Cycling Strategy was approved by Cabinet in December 2021, led by the Environment and Transport Department but working closely with the Public Health Department. It aims to ensure Leicestershire becomes a county where walking and cycling are safe, accessible and obvious choices for short journeys, and a natural part of longer journeys, helping to deliver healthier, greener communities.
12. The Active Together Partnership have recently published a new ten-year framework that aims to widen access, opportunity for physical activity and increase participation levels across the communities of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (LLR). There is particular emphasis on targeting resources to local communities and residents who face the greatest barriers to being active and the suffer inequality in accessing opportunities to engage in physical activity and sport. It is closely aligned with the healthy weight strategy and health and wellbeing board strategy, taking a life course and whole systems approach.

Background

13. One in three children leave primary school already overweight or living with obesity.¹ Obesity prevalence is highest amongst the most deprived groups in society. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2018-19-school-year>
14. Children in the most deprived parts of the country are more than twice as likely to be obese as their peers living in the richest areas. <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/2018-19-school-year> This is sowing the seeds of adult diseases and health inequalities in early childhood.
15. Obesity is associated with reduced life expectancy. It is a risk factor for a range of chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, cancer, liver and respiratory disease, and obesity can impact on mental health. This not only impacts and costs the health services but also social care.
16. The majority of children (92.3% of boys and 90.7% of girls) do not eat the recommended minimum of five portions of fruit and vegetables per day and children's consumption of added or processed sugars exceeds the maximum recommended level. This is often exacerbated by low levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviour. Around 10% of 2-4 year olds meet the Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) guidelines for physical activity of at least 180 minutes of physical activity spread throughout the

day. The proportion of children meeting the CMO's physical activity recommendations is lower in those from lower income households.

17. Obesity is also an increasing problem in women of reproductive age and could lead to a range of poor maternal outcomes such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, increased risk of caesarean section and pre-eclampsia. It is important for women to be a healthy weight and follow recommended dietary requirements during pregnancy for the benefit of a child's growth, development, and long-term health. There is evidence linking breastfeeding with protection against excess weight in later childhood⁴.

Local data:

18. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA), Best Start in Life (0-5) and Children and Young People's Physical Health (5-19) were carried out in 2018 to determine health needs of children and young people in the County. A summary update has been appended to this report as Appendix A. This shows areas for improvement in relation to childhood overweight and obesity are breastfeeding initiation and continuation, healthy start uptake, consumption of at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables and levels of physical activity.
19. Maternity data from UHL showed, 9.1% of women had a BMI over 35 (class II obesity), compared to 9.4% the previous year. The Maternity Services Dataset (2018/19) found that the rate of obesity (BMI >30) in early pregnancy in Leicestershire was 21.9%, not significantly different compared to 22.1% in England.
20. Healthy Start eligibility is based on being at least 10 weeks pregnant or having a child under the age of four. Plus being in receipt of income support if your family earnings are less than £16,190.
21. Table 1: Healthy Start data for Leicestershire by District:

District	Number receiving vouchers	Number eligible	% Uptake
Blaby	157	416	38%
Charnwood	274	716	38%
Harborough	115	292	39%
Hinckley and Bosworth	169	445	38%
Melton	77	206	37%
North West Leicestershire	159	438	36%
Oadby and Wigston	100	236	42%
Leicestershire	1051	2949	38%

⁴ Victoria CG, Bahl R, Barros AJD, Franca GVA, Horton S, Krusevec J, Murch S, Sankar MJ, Walker N, Rollins NC (2016) *Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect*. The Lancet Series: Breastfeeding 1. Volume 387, No. 10017, p475–490, 30 January

22. The latest NCMP report showed the number of children classified as overweight and underweight increased in the last year. In 2019/2020 NCMP showed in Leicestershire, more than one in five children (22% or 1,265) are overweight or obese when they begin school (aged 4-5) and one in three children (30.6% or 2,020) are overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school (aged 10-11). A caveat for this is the number of children measured was just 10% due to COVID. It was suggested the 10% sample was representative nationally.
23. The health-related behaviour questionnaire was conducted in 32 primary schools across the County. Through the lens of obesity, it demonstrated that 7% of pupils had nothing to eat or drink before lessons on the morning of the survey (11% of Y6 girls). 84% of pupils had something to eat or drink at home; 18% reported having something at school. 61% of pupils said they spent time watching television after school on the day before the survey, 42% read a book for enjoyment and 33% met with friends. 84% of Year 6 boys and 69% of Year 6 girls played computer games the night before the survey. A detail summary of the report can be found in Appendix B.
24. The latest Active Lives Children and Young People Survey data for the 2020/21 academic year has been released by Sport England. 30.5% of children & young people in Leicestershire are classed as less active, meaning they do less than an average of 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day.

Current service provision:

25. Current service provision and programmes of work to address the need highlighted above are listed below.
26. ***Universal services – all ages***
27. ***Making Every Contact Count (MECC)***: Healthy Conversation Skills as a mechanism of encouraging more healthy conversations is offered to all front-line staff across the Leicestershire system. There are face to face and e-learning modules for UHL Maternity Services staff/ 0-19 Healthy Child Programme staff on healthy weight before/during and post pregnancy.
28. **Public Health 0-19 Nursing service**: The Healthy Child Programme includes five mandated contacts such as antenatal, new birth visit, 6-8 weeks, 10-12 month and 2 and half year checks. Healthy weight is discussed at all these contacts if appropriate. This service is commissioned by Public Health and delivered by Leicestershire Partnership Trust (LPT). Breastfeeding support is also part of this contract to support women across the county to breastfeed as long as they want to. The service has achieved the gold standard UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative: Stage 3. Another mandated element of the healthy

child programme is the National Childhood Measurement Programme. The purpose of the programme is to measure children's height and weight in reception and year 6.

29. **Food Plan:** Good Food Leicestershire recognises the strong role food plays across the community and sectors to tackle growing health issues, reduce the impact of poverty, cut food waste and address the environmental impact of food. Recognising the intrinsic link between poverty and obesity, Public Health has employed a Food Poverty Officer to map provision across Leicestershire and to work with partners (including community organisations, Districts/Boroughs and LCC departments) to develop proposals for a coordinated approach to alleviating food poverty. This work will consider wider issues such as access to fresh and affordable food for struggling families, support to enable more affordable healthier diets (such as cooking courses and access to kitchen utensils) and linking to services such as MECC, First Contact Plus and community debt advice.
30. **Active Together:** A range of physical activity and sport programmes (both targeted and universal) for children, young people and their families, in community and education settings. Support is also provided to integrate physical activity into wider programmes (e.g. weight management programmes). Public Health funding supports a number of these opportunities working with Active Together, District / Borough Physical Activity Teams and School Sport & Physical Activity Networks. Details of these programmes can be found in Appendix C
31. **Holiday Activities & Food:** Holiday activities programme targeted to school aged children (5 to 16 years) who are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals.
32. **Promotion of national campaigns** such as start4life, sugar swaps, 10-minute shake up, change4life and veg power. Public Health work closely with the communication team in the County to promote national campaigns.

Pregnancy to age 4:

33. **Weight Management in Pregnancy Service:**
<https://www.leicestershirewms.co.uk/pregnancy/>
 Offers a 12-week tailored support programme of free and confidential advice about healthy eating before, during and after pregnancy. Appendix D shows numbers accessing the service.
34. **Venner Boxes:** Fruit and vegetable boxes for pregnant women who are classified overweight. Also contain healthy recipes for the contents in the box. The boxes are part funded by the CCG but works closely with Public Health.

35. **Healthy Start:** <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/> National voucher programme for eligible families to buy fruit, vegetables, milk, and formula milk and receive free vitamins and minerals for mother if pregnant and baby until they turn 4. Promoted locally through health visiting service, children wellbeing service and healthy tots.
36. **Maternal Physical Activity pathway:** Aims to increase physical activity levels and reduce obesity for subsequent pregnancies, leading to lower levels of childhood obesity.
37. **Healthy Tots:** <https://www.leicestershirehealthytots.org.uk/> Accreditation scheme – providing dedicated support, resources, and training to ensuring a whole setting approach focusing on oral health, healthy eating, physical activity, and emotional wellbeing. 17 settings have signed up to the pilot. A list of settings that have signed up can be found in Appendix E

School age:

38. **Healthy Schools:** <https://www.leicestershirehealthyschools.org.uk/> Accreditation scheme – providing dedicated support, resources and training to ensuring a whole setting approach to physical activity, food and nutrition, drugs and alcohol, relationships, sexual health and wellbeing and resilience. Delivered by Public Health.
39. **Food 4 Life:** Accredited whole school approach to food. Schools work through bronze, silver and gold levels. Over 50% of the 363 primary schools in Leicestershire are enrolled onto Food for Life with 100 Bronze awards, 18 Silver and 2 golds. An impact report due to be released soon shows that the programme has supported 77,000 children over 8 years of commissioning. Leicestershire Traded Services distribute 35,000 school meals a day accredited at Gold Food for Life Served Here standard. Ensuring children are eating meals that not only comply with the Food and Nutrition based standards but go further in terms of nutritional content and ethical sourcing.
40. **Cooks 4 Life:** Healthy cooking classes for families, delivered through schools across the county. Schools currently engaged included in Appendix F
41. **Weight management service:** www.leicestershirewms.co.uk/children-and-families/ HEHA Family service for children identified as overweight and obese. Data for current service use can be found in appendix G.

Working with Partners:

42. The NHS Long Term plan states obesity is a priority. The children's design group have childhood obesity as a priority working with public health and active together to build on the universal provision and weight

management services delivered. Development of an LLR Obesity pathway is in progress.

43. District Councils have the responsibility for planning - throughout the NPPF there are examples of how the planning system can contribute to the health and well-being of communities, and a range of issues are raised covering matter such as:
 - Provision of accessible green infrastructure;
 - Opportunities for sport and physical activity, including layouts that encourage walking and cycling;
 - Provision of sports facilities and allotments;
 - Access to healthier food;
 - Limit need to travel and opportunities for sustainable travel, to help reduce congestion, improve air quality and public health;
 - Securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places

44. Each District Council has committed to embed health and wellbeing within their local plan either through working with public health to conduct a health impact assessment or including health and wellbeing policies within their supplementary planning documents. They are also responsible for physical activity and Leisure Services and work closely with Active Together to ensure there is an offer for families within their physical activity locality plan, which responds to public health priorities and funding.

Next Steps:

45. COVID has had an impact on service provision but recovery plans are in place to address this and meet the needs of Leicestershire Children and Young People.

46. The National Healthy Start scheme has recently changed from a voucher scheme to an electronic card. There are some teething problems nationally, but once they have been resolved this programme will be promoted to eligible families again.

47. A survey following this year's national childhood measurement programme is being conducted. These results will inform the offer to families looking to reduce their weight.

48. There will be further joint work between Public Health, Active Together and the Environment and Transport Department around schools to embed active travel plans and promotion of choose how you move.

49. Work continues towards Leicestershire becoming a sustainable food place. This involves working with those in Planning, Trading Standards and Environmental Health with regards to regulation and licensing of fast-food outlets, especially those close to schools and early year settings. Work also continues to support food outlets to offer/promote healthier choices through healthier options merit schemes.

50. Work to develop proposals for a coordinated approach across Leicestershire partners to alleviation of food poverty will be drafted by the end of summer 2022. Consultation across partners will follow along with more detailed understanding about how proposals might be delivered.
51. A health in all policies approach has been introduced working across Departments within LCC and partners to look at how health impacts can be considered in all decision and policy making. Training is under development for decision makers and officers to consider the impacts their work could have on health and how the positives can be maximised, and the negatives mitigated or minimised.

Conclusion

52. Obesity is a complex issue that needs to be considered across the system. The Leicestershire healthy weight strategy needs senior buy in for implementation across partners and linked programmes of work.

Background Papers

Leicestershire Healthy Weight strategy

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2020/11/2/Draft-Healthy-Weight-Strategy-for-Leicestershire-2021-2026.pdf>

Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-obesity-government-strategy/tackling-obesity-empowering-adults-and-children-to-live-healthier-lives>

Whole Systems approach to Obesity:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820783/Whole_systems_approach_to_obesity_guide.pdf

Promoting healthy weight in children, young people and families: A resource for Local Authorities.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/750679/promoting_healthy_weight_in_children_young_people_and_families_resource.pdf

0-19 Healthy Child Programme <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-0-to-19-health-visitor-and-school-nurse-commissioning#history>

Leicestershire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - <http://www.lsr-online.org/jsna.html>

The Best Start in Life and Beyond - <https://bit.ly/3dJsGKb>

Leicestershire Food Plan: <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/good-food-leicestershire>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

53. None.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A: Health needs updated

Appendix B: Health related behaviour questionnaire summary

Appendix C: Active Together CYP physical activity programmes

Appendix D: Weight management service use for pregnant women

Appendix E: Healthy Tots Pilot settings

Appendix F: Schools currently engaged in Cooks4Life

Appendix G: HEHA weight management service use.