

CABINET

3 MARCH 2020

MEDWAY'S WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH TO TACKLING OBESITY

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Brake, Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services

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Summary

This report provides details of the proposed long-term approach to reducing the childhood and adult obesity prevalence in Medway.

This report was considered, initially, by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 18 February 2020, details of which are set out in section 5 of the report.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Local authorities have, since 1 April 2013, been responsible for improving the health of their local population and for public health services. In addition to this statutory responsibility, Medway Council's strategic priorities includes 'supporting residents to realise their potential'. Tackling obesity specifically links to the aspiration of creating 'healthy and active communities'.
- 1.2 Tackling obesity is a core priority that relates to and directly impacts on all of Medway's Health and Wellbeing Strategy's five themes. Obesity is considered to be one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. It is having an impact on people's lives now, in terms of quality of life, risk of developing chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and its association with common mental health disorders. Doing nothing is not an option. Without action, the health of individuals will continue to suffer, health inequalities associated with obesity will remain and the economic and social costs will increase to unsustainable levels. Obesity is a complex problem with a large number of different but often interlinked causes. No single measure is likely to be effective on its own in tackling obesity.

2. Background

- 2.1 Obesity is a complex problem with multiple causes and significant implications for health and beyond. With the majority of adults in England overweight or obese, and a substantial number of children on the same trajectory, particularly those in the most deprived areas, national and local action is needed now. There is no one single solution. Tackling such an ingrained problem requires a long-term, system-wide approach that makes obesity everybody's business.
- 2.2 The following graphs show the need to take immediate and sustained action, as obesity rates continue to be challenging for Medway.

Figure 1: Year R (4-5 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average. There has been a recent increase in the overweight and obesity prevalence for this age group. The national picture suggests a plateauing of these rates for England as a whole.

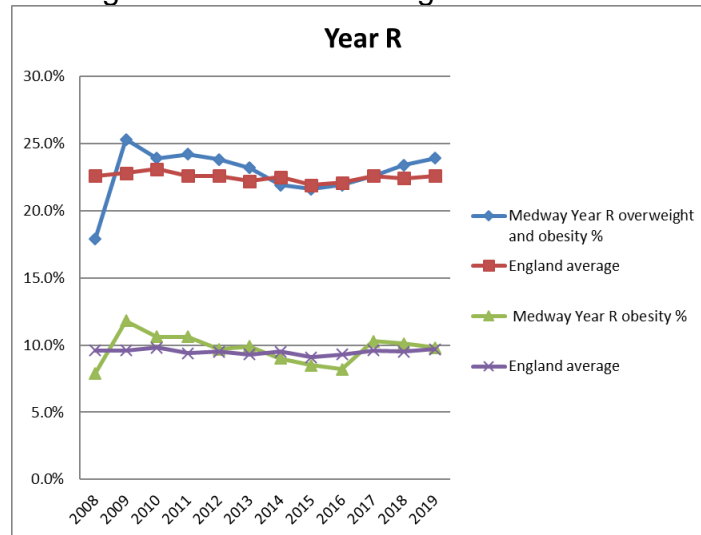


Figure 2: Year 6 (10-11 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average. Medway's levels have recently increased to above the England average. The national picture suggests a plateauing of these rates for England as a whole.

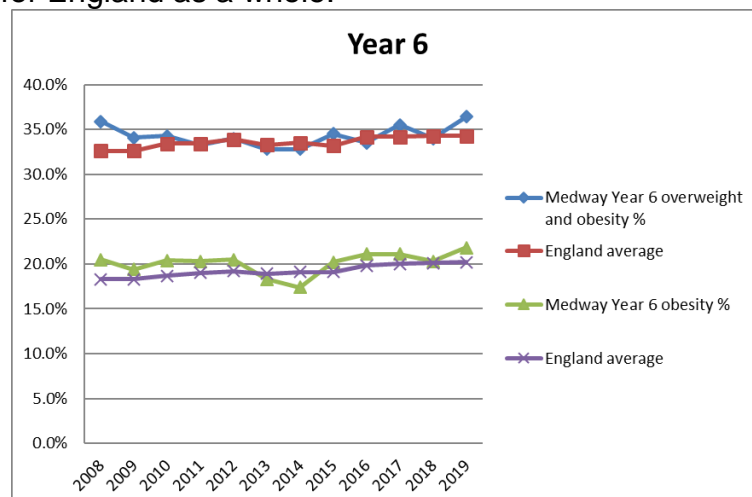
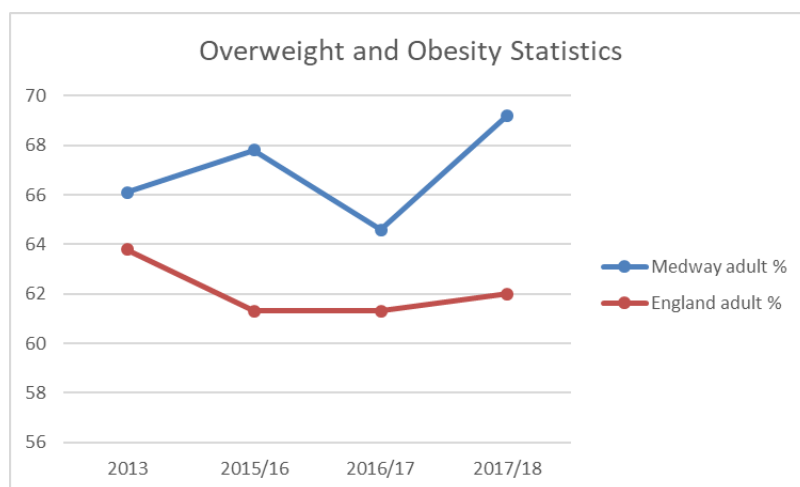


Figure 3: Adult overweight and obesity statistics for Medway compared to the England average. The graph shows a mixed recent trend line for Medway compared to a relative plateau for the England average.



- 2.3 In addition, the most recent National Child Measurement data shows that obesity prevalence for children living in the most deprived areas was more than double that of those living in the least deprived areas for both reception and year 6.
- 2.4 The proposed Medway whole system approach builds on the last five years of activity that has been largely delivered through the Medway Healthy Weight Network, which is co-ordinated by Medway Council's Public Health team. The new revised approach follows the steps suggested by Public Health England (PHE) in their 2019 'Whole systems approach to obesity publication'. This guide and set of resources support local authorities and its partners with implementing a whole systems approach to address obesity and promote a healthy weight.
- 2.5 Recent rises in obesity prevalence for children and adults, require all Medway partners to refocus their attention on the wicked system problem that is obesity, in order to sustain a downward trend in prevalence. A whole system approach is necessary if we are to meet the government's ambition of halving childhood obesity by 2030.
- 2.6 Medway Council continues to take its responsibility seriously and prioritise tackling obesity through a wide range of interventions. This includes:
- Comprehensive range of adult and children weight management services
 - Adult and family cookery classes
 - Volunteer led walking, cycling and Nordic walking schemes
 - Workplace health programme supporting businesses to be healthy
 - Breastfeeding support services
 - Free swimming and discounted leisure concessions
 - Hot Food Takeaway planning guidance note
 - Healthy Early Years award supporting nurseries and pre-schools
 - Exercise referral programme
 - Range of health and mass participation events
 - Active travel to schools projects such as walking buses and bikeability
 - Health promotion campaign such as Sugar Smart and Beside You
 - Commissioning 0-19 child health services and other support within schools

- Coordination of the Medway Healthy Weight Network

3. National Whole System Obesity Guidance

3.1 PHE's guidance on whole system approach includes six key phases (Figure 4):

- Set-up: Securing senior-level support and establishing the necessary governance and resource structure to implement the approach;
- Building the local picture: Building a compelling narrative explaining why obesity matters locally and creating a shared understanding of how obesity is addressed at a local level;
- Mapping the local system: Bring stakeholders together to create a comprehensive map of the local system that causes obesity;
- Action: Stakeholders come together to prioritise areas to intervene in the local system and propose collaborative and aligned actions;
- Managing the system network: Maintain momentum by developing the stakeholder network and an agreed action plan;
- Reflect and refresh: Critically reflect on the process of undertaking a whole systems approach and consider opportunities for strengthening the process.

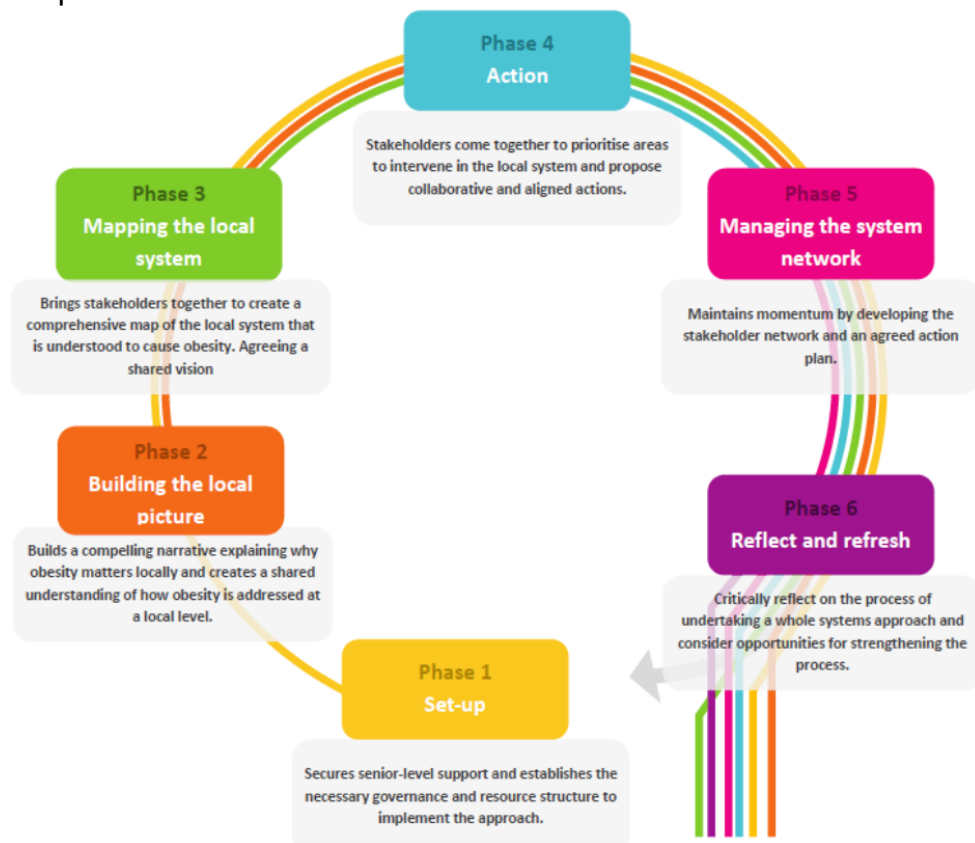


Figure 4: Six phases to develop a whole systems approach

4. Medway's Whole System Plan

4.1 PHASE 1 – SET UP

4.1.1 The first Medway Healthy Weight summit was held in 2014 and is chaired by the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board Chairman. Becoming an annual event, the summit aims to bring representatives of the public, private, academic and third sector together to work collaboratively to tackle obesity. In 2016, the summit formed into a Healthy Weight network, who agreed a shared vision statement of “*Working together to support all Medway residents to adopt healthier lifestyles and achieve a healthy weight*”.

4.1.2 The network has representation from 25 local organisations who deliver or support a wide range of healthy weight interventions that are listed on the [‘Action/Asset Mapping’ directory](#). The directory includes a wide range of interventions from leisure, healthy eating, environmental and weight management activities. Many of these interventions were created as a direct result of the network and individual partners’ commitment to the obesity agenda.

4.1.3 In order to ensure the revised whole system approach has the required level of buy in from all senior leaders and to reflect the evolving nature of the health and social care system, support for this approach will be requested from the following groups by March 2020:

- Medway and Swale Clinical and Professional Board: January 2020
- Patient Experience and Patient and Public Engagement Steering Group: January 2020
- Medway Health and Wellbeing Board: 18 February 2020
- Medway Council Cabinet: March 2020
- Medway Educational Leaders Association: Date to be agreed

4.2 PHASE 2 - BUILDING THE LOCAL PICTURE

4.2.1 The [Medway JSNA](#) provides an in depth overview of the levels of obesity for adults and children, which are summarised in the graphs on page 1 of this report. The [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) also provides a tool that compares Medway’s prevalence for related healthy weight indicators to the rest of England and other local authority areas. This includes data for:

- Breastfeeding rates
- Physical activity and sedentary behaviour
- Healthy eating levels.

4.2.2 A prerequisite to developing a local whole system approach is having an overview of the current actions being undertaken by all local partners to tackle obesity. Collating actions into one tool demonstrates the breadth of the current approach. Medway Public Health team have maintained a directory of known actions and interventions that aim to reduce or prevent obesity since 2014. This [‘Action/Asset Mapping’](#) directory can be found on the Medway JSNA website.

4.2.3 If Medway is to be successful in tackling obesity, new actions need to be taken forward and existing actions need to work more collaboratively to ensure all existing resource is used most effectively.

4.2.4 Medway established the Supporting Healthy Weight Network in 2016. Network analysis is an essential step to creating a whole system as it helps to recognise:

- The main organisations and/or people within the current network
- Key organisations or people that are missing
- Where gaps might open up if a key person left the network.

4.2.5 The network analysis is conducted by Medway Council's Public Health team on an annual basis, using a modified PHE Network Analysis template. Stakeholders involved in the network (and by default the whole system work) will be asked to complete a stakeholder survey every year, using the PHE template. Results will be fed back to network partners at the annual Healthy Weight Network Summit.

4.3 PHASE 3 – MAPPING THE LOCAL SYSTEM

4.3.1 System maps are a key stage in developing a local whole systems approach to tackling obesity. It allows stakeholders to begin to see the bigger picture, how the parts of the system are interrelated, identify root causes of obesity and explore the factors, drivers and beliefs of the individuals and organisations that cause the system to function as it does. Reversing the language of the causes of obesity allows the identification of potential solutions to reduce or prevent obesity.

4.3.2 These obesity causes have been mapped at recent Healthy Weight Network events and are revisited each year to reflect the changing environment we live in.

4.4 PHASE 4 – ACTION

4.4.1 A wide range of stakeholders have the potential to positively affect the obesity whole system work. These opportunities can often be described as system levers, due to the opportunities and influence that individual organisations have to intervene. These opportunities to be proactive and to ultimately tackle obesity, have been identified in an opportunities matrix. The opportunities identified are based on evidence of best practice and evidence based recommendations from organisations such as the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). The matrix is available to network partners via the [Medway JSNA website](#). The aspiration is for each stakeholder to understand the opportunities they have and to take forward additional actions.

4.4.2 A whole systems action plan will be produced each year. This will be completed by reviewing existing actions with the action/asset mapping directory and identifying new actions proposed by network members (which is supported by the system levers matrix). It is proposed that a core working group be established to represent the breadth of stakeholder groups, who will meet on a six monthly basis. This will include representatives of the public and the action plan will be developed using relevant public engagement feedback and insights work. One of the group's objectives will be to develop a draft action plan that is shared with wider stakeholders for review and ultimate sign off by each partner organisation.

4.4.3 The action plan will consider:

- What system levers do stakeholders have access to?
- What are the anticipated outcomes for the action in the short, medium and long-term and for whom?
- How does the action impact on health inequalities?
- Does the action align with the best available evidence base?
- Is the action feasible to deliver?
- Who will take responsibility for delivering the action?
- Does the action align with other proposed or current actions?
- What could the unintended consequences of the action be, including how these may impact inequalities?
- What is the implementation timeframe for the action?
- How and when will progress be monitored?

4.4.4 It is proposed that once drafted the action plan will be presented to Medway's Health and Wellbeing Board for their support. Any necessary approvals from the Cabinet will be obtained in accordance with decision-making rules set out in the Council's Constitution. Once approved the systems action plan will be published on the Medway JSNA website.

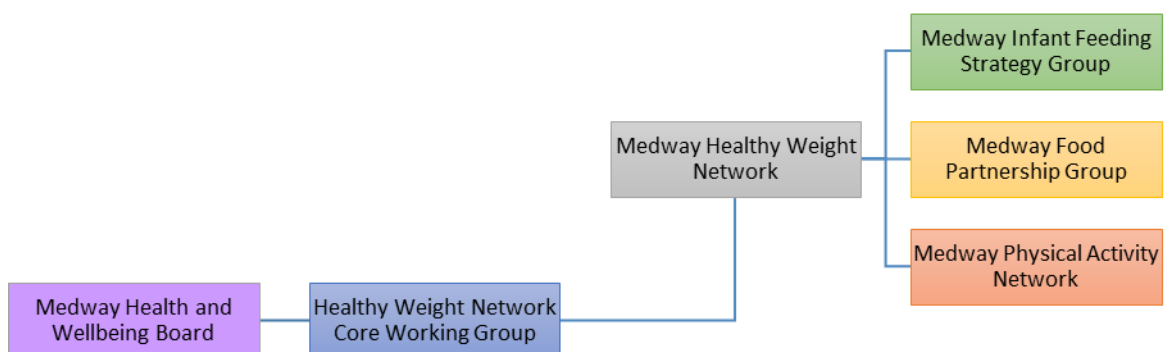
4.5 PHASE 5 – MANAGING THE HEALTHY WEIGHT NETWORK and PHASE 6 – REFLECT AND REFRESH

4.5.1 The healthy weight network is an inclusive forum which brings stakeholders together to promote systems working. This phase ensures the network is up and running and the structure of the network is sustainable for the long-term commitment needed to effectively tackle obesity.

4.5.2 The network will meet on a six monthly basis. The Healthy Weight network is chaired by the Chair of the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board and co-ordinated by Medway Council Public Health Team.

4.5.3 A number of sub groups will feed into the overall network group, including:

- Medway Infant Feeding Strategy Group
- Medway Food Partnership Group
- Medway Physical Activity Network



4.5.4 FORWARD PLAN

- March 2020: Obtain approval of the Whole System Obesity (WSO) approach and recruitment of a Whole System Obesity Officer
- April 2020: Hold the annual Healthy Weight Summit to present new WSO approach, revised tools and methodology
- May 2020: First core working group to be held
- May 2020: Infant feeding strategy, food partnership and physical activity sub group meetings held
- July 2020: Mid-year Healthy Weight Network meeting held
- November 2020: Infant feeding strategy, food partnership and physical activity sub group meetings held
- January 2021: Healthy Weight Network Summit
- February 2021: Core working group meet to consider and approve in principle the annual Systems Action Plan
- February 2021: Medway Health and Wellbeing Board to consider and support the Systems Action Plan and recommend where required any initiatives to the Cabinet for approval.
- March 2021: Approval of the action plan

5. Health and Wellbeing Board – 18 February 2020

- 5.1 This report provided details of the proposed long-term approach to reducing the childhood and adult obesity prevalence in Medway. This was considered to be Medway's biggest population health challenge. The Board's attention was drawn to the data set out in section 2 of the report which demonstrated that obesity rates in Medway, particularly among the adult population, continued to be challenging.
- 5.2 It was explained that the proposed whole system approach to tackling obesity followed the steps outlined in the Public Health England (PHE) publication called the 'Whole systems approach to obesity' and it would build on existing activity which had been delivered through the Medway Healthy Weight Network. It was noted that the Public Health Team had created a directory of known actions and interventions which aimed to reduce obesity.
- 5.3 In response to questions regarding engagement, it was explained that there would be a number of sub groups feeding in the Healthy Weight Network including, a Medway Food Partnership Group (agenda item 9 on the Health and Wellbeing Board) and a Medway Physical Activity Network. Whilst it was explained that Medway's Workplace Health Team undertook a lot of outreach work, the Board was encouraged to help the Public Health Team make connections with local initiatives that they were aware of and identify any other avenues of engagement. With respect to increasing engagement with schools, it was suggested that the Head of Health and Wellbeing present to the four area specific zones under the Medway Educational Leaders Association and the education partnership.
- 5.4 In response to a question regarding the effect of breastfeeding on obesity, it was explained that breastfeeding reduced the risk of obesity many years after birth. Breastfeeding also benefited mothers in terms of accelerating weight loss after birth and had wider benefits in relation to attachment.

- 5.5 With regards to a question on quality versus quantity of food, it was explained that obesity was caused fundamentally by consuming more calories than burned and was less associated with food quality. Although it was recognised that consuming high quality foods had wider benefits.
- 5.6 Concerning existing interventions, Members raised further points and questions including:
- A concern was expressed in relation to accessibility of leisure opportunities at for example country parks, it was considered that the cost of parking could be prohibitive.
 - Asked about the value of the exercise referral scheme, it was explained that Medway had one of the best schemes in the country.
- 5.7 In response to a question concerning best practice, it was explained that good practice was evident in Finland and some US States. However, there was limited good practice nationally as many local authorities faced similar challenges to Medway in regards to obesity prevalence. Areas with lower obesity rates were more affluent. The upcoming Healthy Weight Summit would promote best practice found in Finland.
- 5.8 The Health and Wellbeing Board:
- a) noted that tackling obesity is a core priority area relating to and directly impacting on all five themes of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy;
 - b) recommended Cabinet to support the proposed whole system approach to tackling obesity in Medway which will include the establishment of a Healthy Weight Core Working Group as set out in paragraph 4.4.2 of the report to review existing actions and develop a Whole Systems Action Plan as set out in section 4 of the report;
 - c) agreed to encourage stakeholders and organisations to engage with the Healthy Weight Network;
 - d) noted that the Director of People – Children and Adult Services would arrange for the contact details for the four area specific zones under the Medway Educational Leaders Association to be provided to the Head of the Health and Wellbeing Service and that the Portfolio Holder for Education and Schools would suggest to the Education Partnership that the Head of the Health and Wellbeing Service present to the Partnership;
 - e) noted the value of the exercise referral scheme; and
 - f) agreed to receive a further report with the Whole Systems Action Plan in February 2021.

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of partner engagement	Effective engagement from representatives across all sectors is essential. If there is insufficient buy in and action taken, we will not achieve the national ambition of halving childhood obesity	All council services and cross sector partners encourage stakeholders and organisations that they are in contact with to engage with the Healthy Weight network and/or food partnership or physical activity network and take additional action to tackle obesity	D2

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications resulting from this report. The ongoing support for the network and sub networks is already funded by the Public Health grant. Individual partners engaged in network activity commit their own resource to any interventions they participate in.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The key functions of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in the Council's Constitution are to prepare the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and to encourage an integrated approach in the planning and delivery of health and social care services as well as services related to the wider determinants of health. The Board has no executive decision-making powers.
- 8.2 The proposal is to establish a Healthy Weight Core Working Group with a remit to develop an action plan. This initiative has the potential to result in actions which are significant in terms of their effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in Medway and which may therefore require approval of the Cabinet under the key decision rules.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Cabinet are asked to:
- 8.1.1 Note the comments of the Health and Wellbeing Board as set out in section 5 of the report.
- 8.1.2 Note that tackling obesity is a core priority area relating to the Council Plan priorities and directly impacting on all five themes of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy;

8.1.3 Support the proposed whole system approach to tackling obesity in Medway which will include the establishment of a Healthy Weight Core Working Group, a food partnership group and physical activity network.

8.1.4 Agree to encourage stakeholders and organisations to engage with the Healthy Weight Network.

9. Suggested reasons for decision

9.1 With the majority of adults in England overweight or obese, and a substantial number of children on the same trajectory, particularly those in the most deprived areas, national and local action is needed now. There is no one single solution. Tackling such an ingrained problem requires a long-term, system-wide approach that makes obesity everybody's business.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

Whole systems approach to obesity guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whole-systems-approach-to-obesity>

Medway Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – Whole Systems Obesity dashboard

<http://www.medwayjsna.info/wso/>

Medway Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

<http://www.medwayjsna.info/jsna-appendices.html>

Public Health Profiles

<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/obesity#page/0/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/202/are/E06000035>