

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

13 APRIL 2021

WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO OBESITY PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22

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Summary

Following the Medway Healthy Weight Summit on 11 March 2021 and participation from our Network members, this report provides some context around the Medway obesity data and a summary of our priorities for the coming year.

1. Budget and policy framework

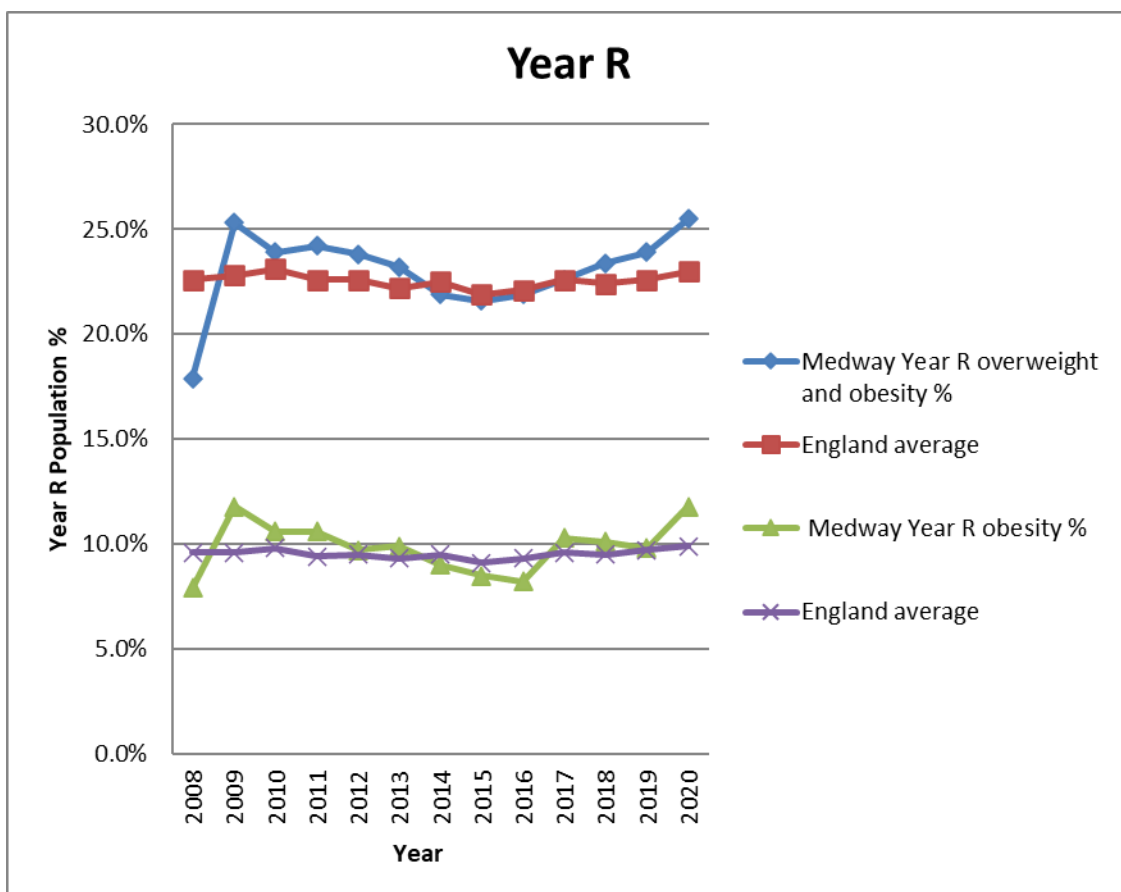
1.1. Since 1 April 2013, local authorities have been responsible for improving the health of their local population and for public health services. Medway Council's strategic priorities includes 'supporting residents to realise their potential'. Tackling obesity specifically links to the aspiration of creating 'healthy and active communities'.

2. Background

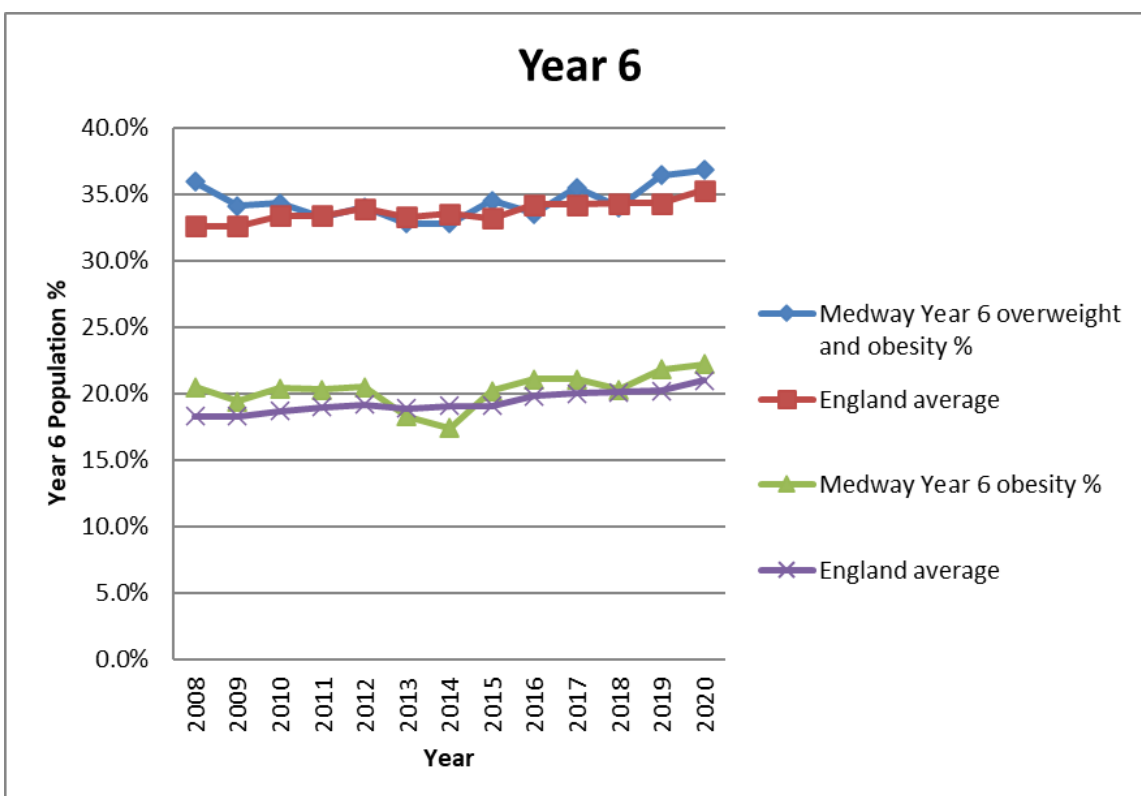
2.1. With the majority of adults in England overweight or obese, and a substantial number of children on the same trajectory, particularly those living the most disadvantaged communities, national and local action is needed now to address this serious challenge to the public health. Tackling such an ingrained problem requires a long-term, system-wide approach that makes obesity everybody's business.

2.2. The following graphs highlight the challenges for Medway.

2.3. **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.



2.4. **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, with both rates being an all time recorded high for year 6 children. The national picture suggests a steady increase in these rates for England as a whole.



- 2.5. The most recent National Child Measurement data shows that obesity prevalence for children living in the most disadvantaged areas was more than double that of those living in the least deprived areas for both reception and year 6.
- 2.6. The proposed Medway whole system approach builds on the last six 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.
- 2.7. Recent rises in obesity prevalence for children and adults, require all Medway partners to refocus their attention on the whole 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.
3. Medway’s Whole System Plan

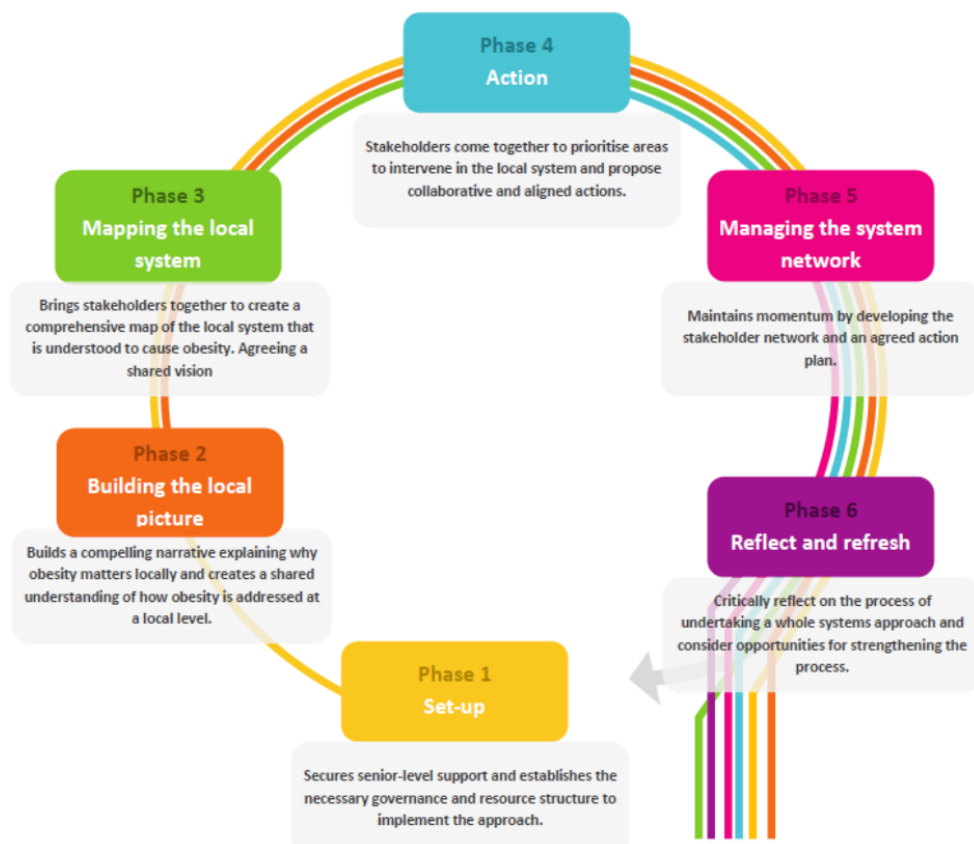


Figure 3: Six phases to develop a whole systems approach

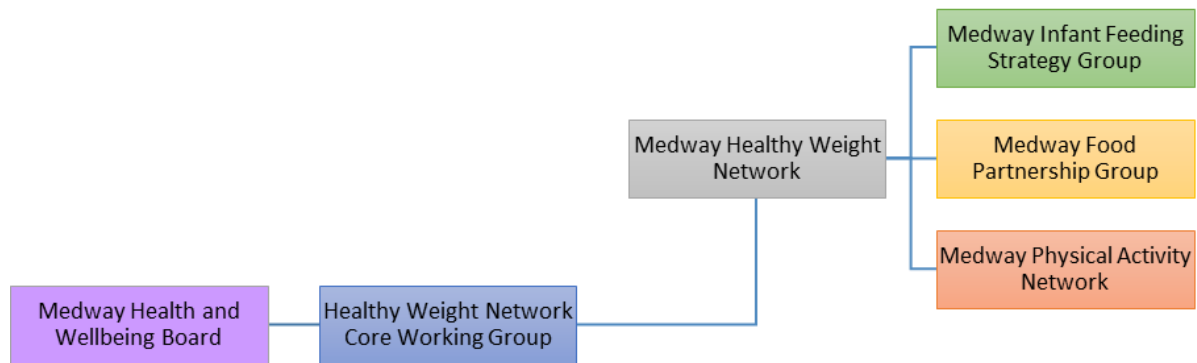


Figure 4: Structure of the Healthy Weight Network supporting the Whole System Approach to Obesity

3.1. PHASE 4 – ACTION

3.2. This report focuses on phase four of the whole systems cycle and relates to our annual Healthy Weight Summit held on 11 March 2021. This year’s event brought together a wide range of private, public, voluntary and academic sector partners with major contributions from the following subgroups of the Healthy Weight Network

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

3.3. The sub-groups and network were asked to produce a list of priority actions for the forthcoming year. These have been reviewed by the Healthy Weight Core working group and are outlined as follows:

- Increase awareness and engagement with existing and new infant feeding social marketing campaigns (i.e. Grow my Brain and Beside You).
- Restoring numbers of peer supporters on maternity wards and in the community, increasing the number of community drop ins available for breastfeeding support.
- Work towards the next level of Baby Friendly Accreditation status for community, acute and neo-natal units, ensuring all new staff are trained on infant feeding skills.
- Physical Activity Alliance members to promote each other’s physical activity offer through all available channels and networks, encouraging members to work in partnership to generate opportunities for each other.
- Understand residents barriers to exercise and prioritise finding local solutions for groups with the lowest activity levels.
- Undertake local mapping exercise to identify needs for a ‘Food Hub’ pilot project in Medway.

- Develop culturally diverse Eatwell guidance and supporting information such as recipes/growing info.
- Develop and deliver cooking on a Budget Classes supporting local organisations working within the Medway community.
- To support the education process to improve the whole school approach to providing healthy food options to all pupils of all ages.

3.4. These priority actions will be taken forward by a large range of partners that make up the Healthy Weight Network and its sub-groups. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of actions that all partners will be pursuing to tackle obesity. For example this list does not cover the array of weight management interventions being delivered by the Medway Public Health Team. Instead, the priorities focus on actions that are largely dependent on partnership working.

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of partner support	Due to COVID recovery and resource constraints, partners may not have capacity to support new initiatives	Develop an effective and well linked partnership of providers that have a shared ambition	C2
Lack of priority	Education settings may not see enhancing food provision and physical activity as a priority on return from COVID restrictions and restoring the curriculum	Develop effective relationships with school leaders to drive forward the uptake of healthy weight initiatives	C2

5. Financial implications

5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising 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.

6. Legal implications

6.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the report and priority actions identified by the Healthy Weight Network.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

[Whole systems approach to obesity guidance](#)

[Medway Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

[Public Health Profiles](#)

[Action/Asset Mapping tool](#)