

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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CHILD OBESITY

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Summary

This report provides an overview of the interventions and progress of the place to reduce childhood obesity within the Medway Public Health department and the Whole System Approach work taking place with key partners and stakeholders across Medway.

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 include '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 in the most disadvantaged communities, national and local actions are continually needed to address this serious challenge to the public health.

The following graphs highlight the challenges for Medway.

Figure 1: Year R (4-5 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average. The 2022 data shows a decrease following the pandemic however Medway remains higher than the England average with 23.7% of children being either overweight or obese when starting school.

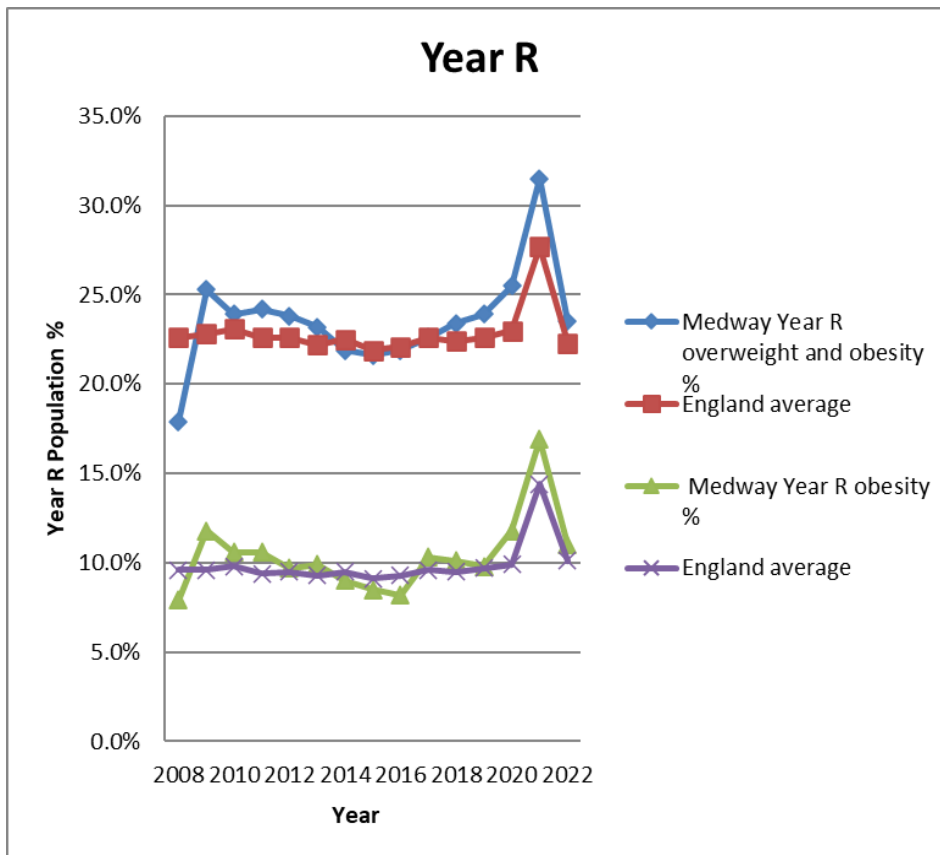
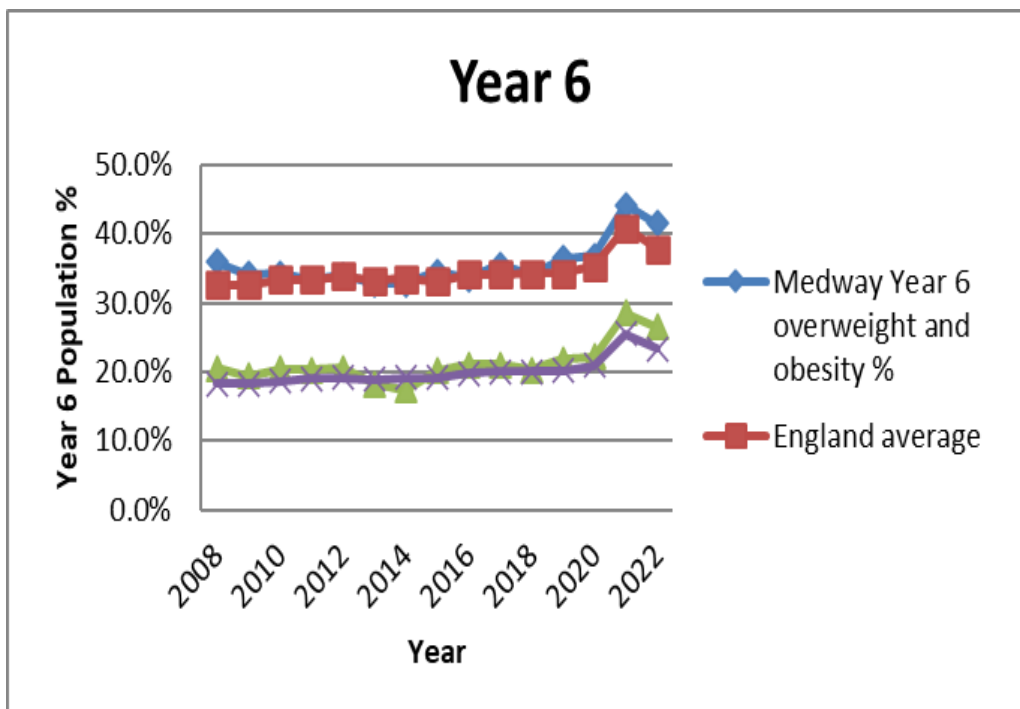


Figure 2: Year 6 (10-11 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average. Medway's levels have decreased however, Medway remains higher than the England average with 41.3% of children being either overweight or obese when leaving primary school.



The most recent National Child Measurement data shows that nationally children living in the most deprived areas were more than twice as likely to be obese, than those living in the least deprived areas.

3. Interventions

3.1 The Medway Public Health department have a range of free interventions in place to support families and children in Medway from antenatal to age 18. Below are a list of the current interventions directed to reducing or preventing obesity in children and families.

- Little Food Explorers, Tri cookery courses, Little chefs
- Beside You, normalising breastfeeding across Medway
- Bump Club healthy weight advice for pregnant women
- Healthy Early Years Award
- Tier 2 Fit Fix and Tri Club family weight management
- Tier 3 and Health and Wellbeing coaching for children and families
- National Child measurement programme
- Food for Life school programme
- Medway Go – Holiday, Activities and Food programme (HAF)
- Medway Can Healthy Weight Campaign

4. A Whole System Approach

4.1 The Medway's whole system approach builds on the last nine 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 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 their partners with implementing a whole systems approach to address obesity and promote a healthy weight. Tackling such an ingrained problem requires a long-term, system-wide approach that makes obesity everybody's business. The main benefits of this approach are

- The effect of collective actions is greater than the sum of the individual actions.
- Reflects the local leadership role of local authorities which enables reach and penetration into local places, working with and through an extensive range of stakeholders
- Aligns with a 'Health in All Policies' approach which recognises the range and complexity of the causes of obesity
- Maximises all the assets in the local area, including community assets.
- Supports a community centred approach to tackling health inequalities. Involving local communities.
- Develops transferable workforce skills and capacity.
- Recognises the potential of all partners to contribute including NHS organisations, local authority departments and the education, business

and voluntary sectors all have a significant role to play in improving the population's health

- 4.2 The Healthy Weight Network delivers this approach via its three sub-groups Medway Infant Feeding, Medway Food Partnership (MFP) and the Physical Activity Alliance (PAA). The Infant feeding group is currently refreshing the Infant Feeding Strategy for the coming five years and supports the best start for babies and infants. While this has a prime focus on infants and children the MFP and PAA also have members who solely work on the improving the health and wellbeing of children.

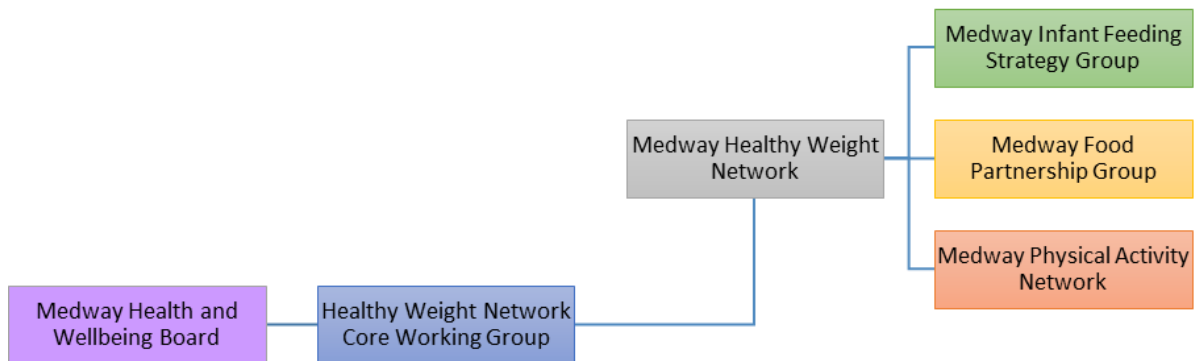


Figure 3: Structure of the Healthy Weight Network supporting the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity

- 4.3 The network holds an annual summit where its priorities for the year are decided by its members and taken to the Medway Health and Wellbeing board for agreement. The suggested priorities for 2023 are as follows:
- Refresh the Medway Infant Feeding Strategy
 - Grow the number of organisations participating in the Physical Activity Alliance, promoting each other's opportunities for residents to become more active and collectively promoting the benefits of regular movement.
 - Medway to achieve Bronze status for the Sustainable Food Places Award
- 4.4 The Medway Healthy Weight Network is engaged with over 140 different organisations covering the voluntary, public, education, and public sectors. Internally across Medway Council excellent working relationships have been formed with the following departments with a focus on improving the health and wellbeing of children. This ranges from physical activity activities to planning policy restrictions, working together to promote programmes to joining forces at public events.
- Medway Greenspaces
 - Integrated Transport Team
 - Climate Response Team
 - Planning Department

- Environmental Health
- Medway Sport
- Communications Team
- Child Friendly Medway
- Youth Services
- Medway Family Solutions

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications related to this briefing paper. The Public Health grant funds the majority of the targeted child obesity prevention and treatment interventions, as per the terms of the ring-fenced Public Health grant. The wider work of the Healthy weight network is funded by a range of sources.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this paper.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

A whole system approach to obesity

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