

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

7 SEPTEMBER 2023

WHOLE SYSTEM OBESITY

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Summary

This report provides an overview of the interventions and progress to reduce childhood obesity within Medway currently being undertaken by the Public Health department. It also sets out the work of the Whole System Obesity programme in relation to collaboration with key partners and stakeholders across Medway.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to consider how they or the organisations that they represent can help to deliver the whole systems approach to addressing obesity.
- 1.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the content of the report.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1 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. Obesity is a major cause of premature mortality and morbidity. For children, being obese can lead to significant physical and mental health challenges, including type 2 diabetes, anxiety and depression and poor oral health.

3. Background

- 3.1 The majority of adults in England are classed as being overweight or obese. There are a substantial number of children and young people who are also at great risk of becoming obese. This issue generally affects those living in the most disadvantaged communities. National and local actions are continually needed to address this serious challenge to the public health.

3.2 The following graphs highlight the challenges for Medway in relation to obesity and overweight children.

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, rates of obesity in Medway remain higher than the England average with 23.7% of children being either overweight or obese when starting school.

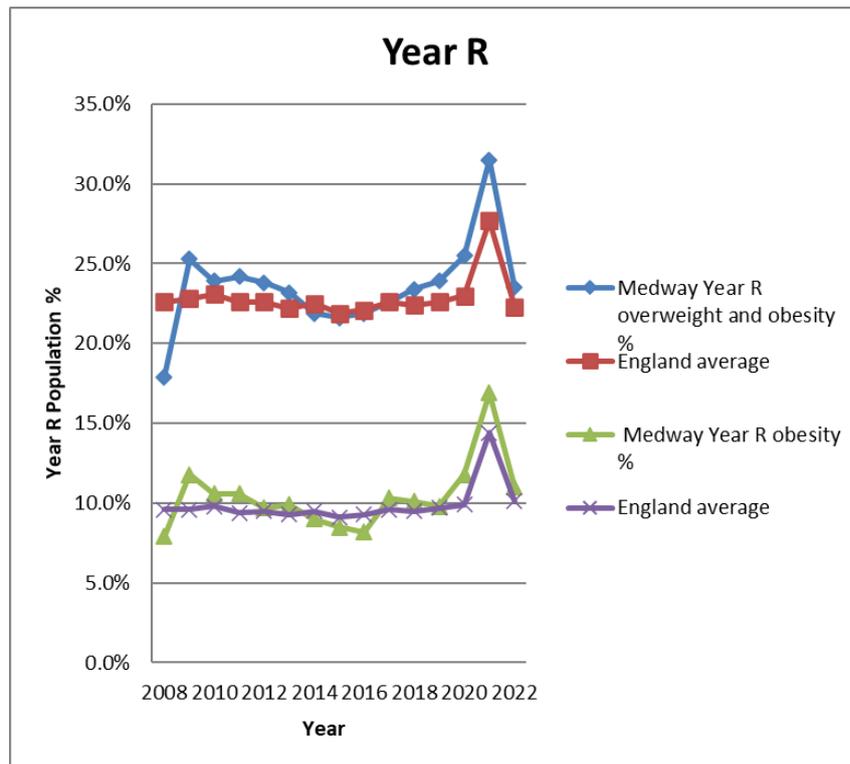
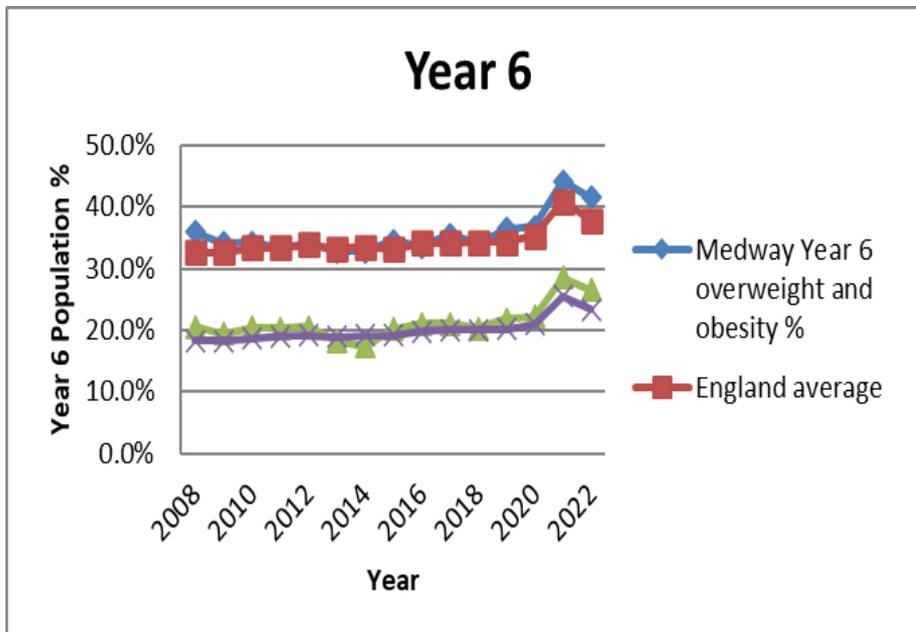


Figure 2: Year 6 (10-11 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average have decreased. Medway does, however, remain higher than the England average. Currently 41.3% of children are found to be either overweight or obese when leaving primary school.



- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The Medway Public Health department have a range of free interventions in place to support residents to be healthy. Services directed to reducing or preventing obesity in children, families and adults includes:
- Little Food Explorers, Tri cookery courses, Little chefs, Adult cookery
 - 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
 - Adult tier 2 and tier 3 weight management programmes (Man vs Fat, Healthy Way, Oviva and Tipping the Balance)
 - Exercise referral service
 - Active travel programmes including health walks, Nordic Walking and Cycling Groups

3.5 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. This network 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. 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.

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).

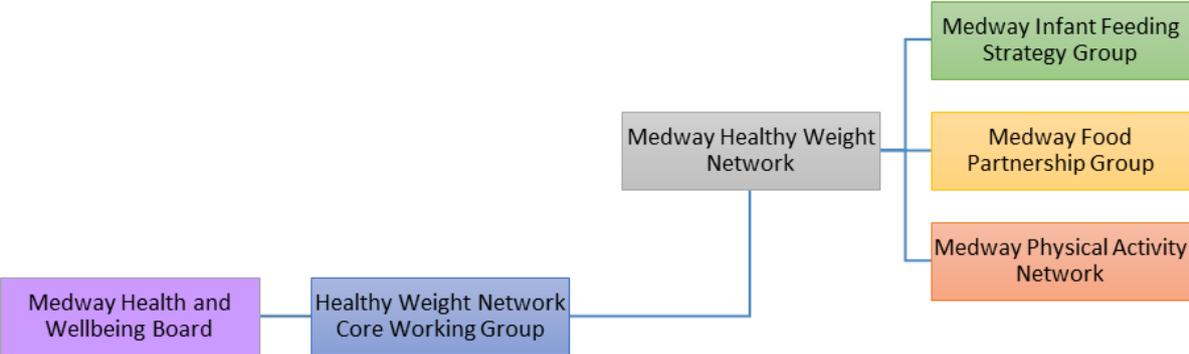


Figure 3: Structure of the Healthy Weight Network supporting the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity

4. Options

4.1 The Medway Healthy Weight Network holds an annual summit where its Priorities for the year are decided by its members. These actions are taken to the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board for discussions and agreement. The 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 residents. This ranges from physical activity activities to planning policy restrictions, working together to promote programs 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

4.2 The agreed 2022 priorities are outlined below with a progress summary:

- *Increase uptake of antenatal education sessions and ensure breastfeeding and responsive feeding are included.*

Collaboration between Medway Foundation Trust maternity unit, Medway Community Healthcare Health Visitors and Public Health have resulted in a newly devised offer to all expectant parents in Medway to receive all the information they need on one place delivered by all the experts coming together. [Welcome to parenting](#)

- *Achieve highest level of BFI accreditation for acute and community settings.*

Both the community and acute teams have had their visits from the assessors now that Covid-19 restrictions have lifted. All have either maintained or gained a level and working towards the higher awards over the coming year.

- *Physical Activity Alliance members to promote each other's services through all available channels and networks, encouraging members to work in partnership to generate opportunities for each other.*

The first face to face alliance meeting took place in September 2022 with attendance from private sector, public sector, healthcare, and non-for-profit physical activity professionals. The Everyday Active website has seen considerable growth and through the alliance, partnerships between different

members has been reported in the form of news stories, with these shared across the network in email updates and the Activate newsletter.

- *Encourage promotion of the benefits of Physical Activity in primary and secondary care settings, providing relevant education and resources to facilitate positive conversations with inactive people.*

Delivery of the sedentary behaviours model has been presented across many council, NHS and private sector meetings over the past year bringing an awareness of the dangers of “not moving”.

- *Increase the number of food related businesses that are engaged in the Medway Food Partnership.*

Revision of a toolkit to give clear explanation of the Medway Food Partnership and what businesses will gain from engaging has been created. A successful face to face event saw over 80 members come together in November 2022.

- *Promote and increase healthy vending machines and water refill across businesses in Medway.*

Following the pilot of healthy vending with Medway Sport leisure centres, subgroup 4 of the Medway Food Partnership has members who both supply businesses and hold vending machines in their setting. Working in collaboration with Greenwich University, a revised guidance tool to provide a simple and clear method to implement healthier vending has been agreed by this group.

- *Deliver a high-profile healthy weight marketing campaign.*

Medway Can ran from May 2022 to March 2023. A call to action to move more, engaged people who live, work and study in Medway to log their activities with the aim to move Medway around the world. The logging took place via the website and offered an array of resources and activities to take part in. With 3 stages, the first two had a focus on physical activity with stage three bringing in a healthy eating aspect. Some of the key campaign outcomes include:

- 80,730 miles were collectively travelled and logged by Medway residents, equating to more than three times around the world.
- 60,000 individual people visited the website, with 2,667 residents or organisations logging their miles.
- 84,000 people engaged via all social media channels with comments, interactions or clicking through to the website.
- Over 2.6 million social media impressions
- 2,000 people engaged at various Medway Can events in a meaningful conversation about physical activity, healthy weight, or healthy eating.
- Over 1,500 people engaged through the community chest funds, via 30 voluntary sector organisations.
- 67 schools engaged in a Medway Can activity, reaching over 10,000 children and education staff.

5. Advice and analysis

5.1 The Medway Healthy Weight Network 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

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Multi-sector partners fail to engage in the healthy weight network	A successful whole system obesity programme will only be successful if multiple partners engage and take forward new healthy weight related actions	Public Health map the engaged partners and identify gaps from critical partners. Support from Health and Wellbeing board members and similar groups can assist with raising the importance of action on the obesity agenda to new partners	BIII

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

7. Consultation

7.1 There is no consultation required.

8. Climate change implications

8.1 Within our application for Medway to become a Sustainable Food Place, there is a requirement to demonstrate a number of methods that relate to climate change. These include, promoting water refill stations to businesses and organisations, working with businesses to encourage reduction in food waste and reducing the use of single use plastics. The Medway Food Partnership contains a working subgroup with a focus on Climate change which takes these topics forward.

9. Financial implications

9.1 There are no direct additional 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 through a variety of sources. It should be noted that there are significant financial consequences for society. It is estimated that the national costs associated with overweight, and obesity is £27 billion per year.

10. Legal implications

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this paper.

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Appendices

None

Background papers

A whole system approach to obesity
[Public Health England Whole System Obesity Guidance](#)