

## Progress report of the Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight to the September 2020 Health Improvement Board

### Obesity prevalence

In Oxfordshire, 55% of adults were either overweight or obese in 2018/19. This is lower than the national average of 62% and has reduced from 59% in 2017/18. Childhood obesity prevalence in Oxfordshire is significantly lower than national rates and has remained steady. The most recent data from 2018/19 show that 19% of reception year children and 28% of year 6 were overweight or obese. Obesity prevalence varies by ethnicity and deprivation, with the data showing that healthy weight decreases as deprivation increases. Further local detail can be seen in the Oxfordshire [JSNA](#).

### Policy Context

Reducing obesity is a priority public health issue; NICE recommends that Local Authorities, CCGs and Health and Wellbeing Boards commission a range of lifestyle adult and child weight management programmes.<sup>1,2</sup> The Whole Systems Approach (WSA) adopted in Oxfordshire in 2019 brings stakeholders together from a broad range of sectors to address the food and physical activity environment for joint action.<sup>3</sup> The WSA supports the Growth Board endorsed building a 'healthy place shaping' approach into all Oxfordshire Housing and Growth deal strategies, policies and workstreams.

The new strategy [Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives](#), published in July 2020, recognises that excess weight is one of the few modifiable factors for COVID-19 and highlights that tackling obesity is one of the greatest long-term health challenges we face. Actions include a new campaign Better Health, expanding weight management services, legislation on calorie labelling and restrictions on the advertising and promotion of high fat, salt and sugar foods.<sup>4</sup>

Part one of the [National Food Strategy](#) published in June 2020 focuses on recommendations during the COVID-19 pandemic and in preparation for the EU exit transition period. Part 2 is due in early 2021 and will provide recommendations to ensure safe, affordable food, regardless of where people live or how much they earn.<sup>5</sup>

These recent strategies and the Better Health Campaign present an opportunity be ambitious in our WSA to healthy weight and further galvanise local action.

### Progress on the Whole Systems Approach in Oxfordshire

The core working group developed an outline WSA action plan and begun working to it in 2019/20. Priority actions included addressing the food environment, ensuring support services are in place and joined up across the healthy weight pathway, and working with partners and professionals across the system.

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<sup>1</sup> NICE (2014) Weight management: lifestyle services for overweight and obese adults. Available [here](#)

<sup>2</sup> NICE (2014) Weight management: lifestyle services for overweight and obese children and young people. Available [here](#)

<sup>3</sup> PHE (2019) Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. Available [here](#)

<sup>4</sup> DHSC (2020) Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives. Available [here](#)

<sup>5</sup> The National Food Strategy: part one. Available [here](#)

The initial set up phase involved identifying and engaging stakeholders, building a Healthy Weight Story Map to present the data and the case for change to partners organising whole systems partner events. We also:

- Mapped the current initiatives to understand the current system and identified gaps and opportunities.
- Completed a survey to understand the challenges health care professionals experience when talking about weight and referring to services.
- Developed a draft child healthy weight pathway toolkit.
- Began discussions to streamline the adult pathway.
- Re-procured and expanded the adult weight management service (Achieve Oxfordshire) to target those most at risk and include prevention resources for families.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to the WSA partner engagement work in March 2020, but this has recently started again. A strategic group to take forward this work is being developed, with partners agreeing to focus on:

- Better Health Campaign opportunities, a group has been set up to ensure we align our local comms (the national campaign is mainly targeted at adults, but we would like to ensure a family approach locally).
- Develop clear healthy weight pathways and associated comms for adults.
- Finalise the healthy weight pathway and toolkit for pathway for children.
- Deliver virtual stakeholder events in the Autumn 2020 to map different parts of the healthy weight system (e.g. food environment and 'build back better') and further engage partners.
- Scope a hyperlocal feasibility study for the WSA in Oxfordshire.
- Scope an approach to address the gap in provision for children.

**For more information on the whole systems approach:**

PHE [video](#) provides an overview and a [full version](#) of the PHE blog is available.

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