

Health Improvement Board

6th February 2025

Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight

Purpose / Recommendation

The Health Improvement Board is asked to:

- a) Consider the contents of the report, and questions/ points to discuss, as outlined within it.
- b) Note the presentation by 'Bite Back' and provide advice and support to progress the following key areas:-
 - **Healthier food advertising policy**, with supporting evidence from the Bite Back report - capturing the voice of local young people and supporting evidence on junk food advertising.
 - **Support stricter planning regulations**: Influencing the out of home food and drink offer available in Local Authority owned spaces across Oxfordshire, particularly in spaces regularly occupied by children and young people. Noting the recently updated (December 2024) National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF). Strengthening Local Authorities powers to prevent new hot food takeaways from opening where children learn and play and in areas showing adverse health impact.

Background

The Health Improvement Board (HIB) has requested an update on actions related to the whole systems approach to healthy weight, following its last update in February 2024. This report give and overview of core activities over the past 12 months with a focus on the healthy weight environment pillar of the related action plan and explores key actions that require progression.

Living with excess weight poses a significant challenge to living a healthy life. It is one of the leading causes of preventable early death, increasing the risk of a wide range of health conditions, including Type 2 diabetes and some cancers. It is also associated with worse mental health and lower educational attainment in children and needing to take more sick leave in adults. On average living with obesity reduces someone's life expectancy by around three years with severe obesity shortening life by as much as lifelong smoking – by up to 10 years. Children who live with excess weight are more likely to become adults who live with excess weight¹.

Excess weight impacts negatively on both physical and mental wellbeing of children and adults as demonstrated in Figure 1:-

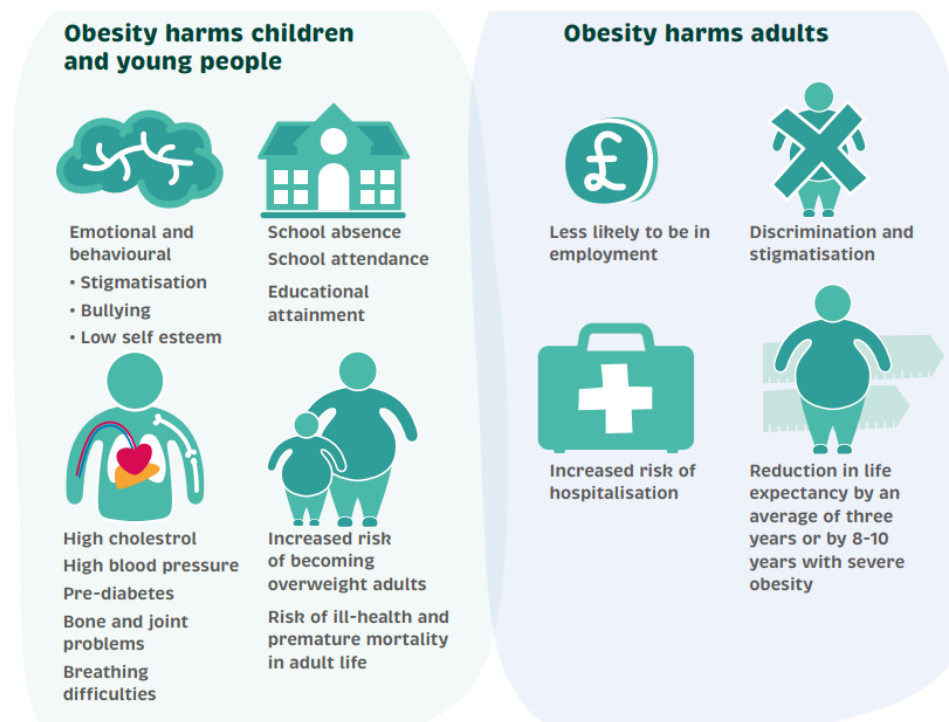


Figure 1: Obesity harms children and young people and obesity harms adults

¹ [Predicting adult obesity from childhood obesity: a systematic review and meta-analysis - Simmonds - 2016 - Obesity Reviews - Wiley Online Library](#)

The estimated annual costs of obesity in the UK are £58 billion, rising to £62 billion with unemployment benefits related to obesity added². This equates to around 3% of the UK GDP³. National costs of obesity on health services are estimated to be £6.5 billion and relate to increased visits to GPs, hospital admission rates and medications and community services⁴.

A Summary of trend in Oxfordshire

In the previous report to HIB detail was given about the trends for the following groups in Oxfordshire; children, adults, adults in areas of deprivation, and pregnant women, noting there was a rise in rates of overweight and obesity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children

In Oxfordshire, the latest data (23/24) shows that of 4 years olds, entering Reception (R) Year, nearly one in five (19.3%) are overweight or obese, rising to around one third in year 6 (32%). Figures for year R fell in 22/23, remaining very similar in 23/24. For year 6 they fell a little from 34% to 31% then back to 32% in year 6. Figures for year 6 remain just above pre-pandemic levels (Table 1).

Oxfordshire	21/22	22/23	23/24
Year R	20%	19%	19%
Year 6	34%	31%	32%
Adult	60%	58%	-

Table 1- Oxfordshire children's obesity data from the National Childhood Measurement Programme 21/22 to 23/24

Overall, rates in Oxfordshire remain below the England average (Figure 2).

² Frontier Economics (2022) Estimating the full costs of obesity. Available [here](#)

³ ONS. 2022. Gross Domestic Product: chained volume measures: Seasonally adjusted £m - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/timeseries/abmi/pn2>

⁴ PHE. 2020. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/907966/PHE_insight_Excess_weight_and_COVID-19_FINAL.pdf

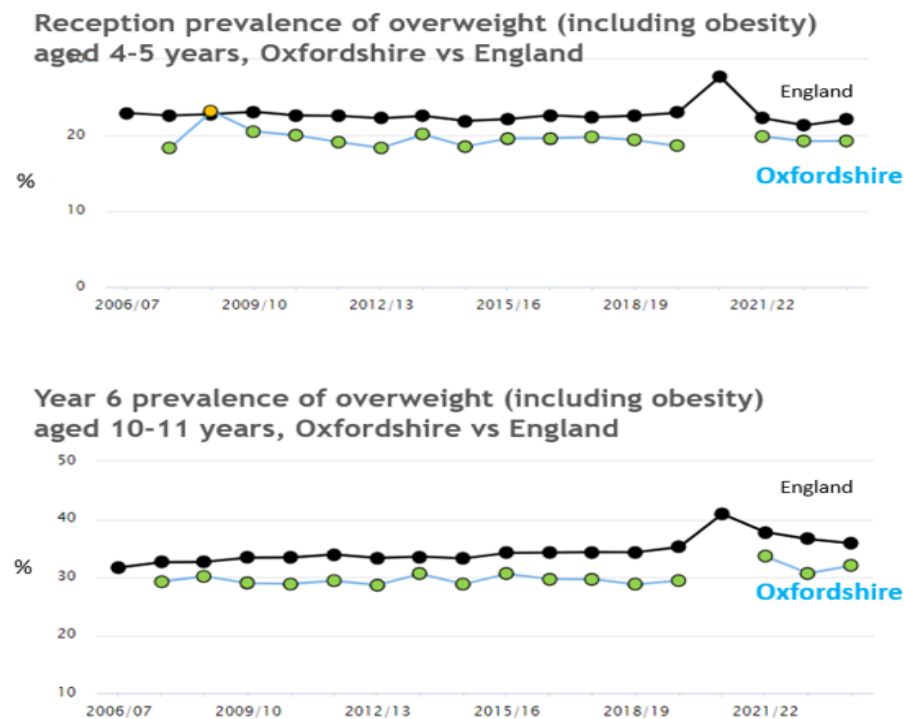


Figure 2: Year on year prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and summary of recent data

Figure 3 and 4 show there is some variation by District but changes this year are not statistically significant. Later, in the inequalities section, further detail will be given about smaller areas within Districts where children are consistently living with much higher levels of excess weight than Oxfordshire and even England averages.

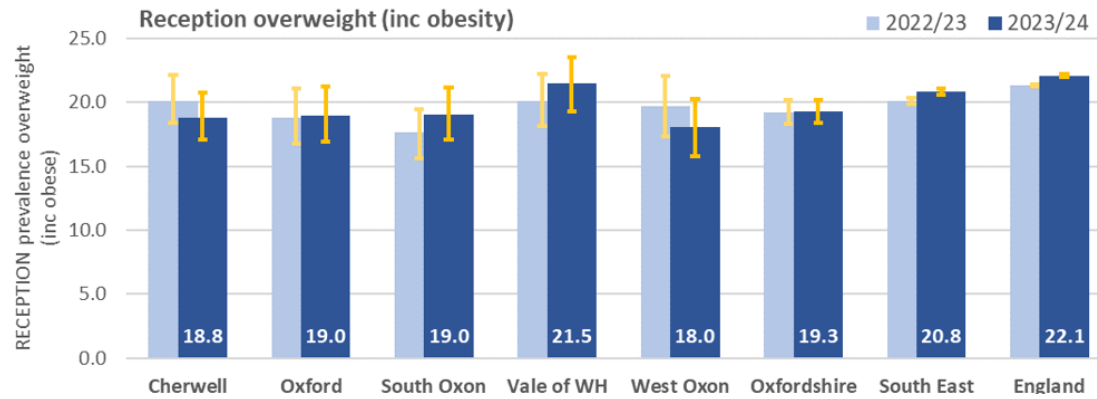


Figure 3: City and Districts reception prevalence overweight (including obesity)

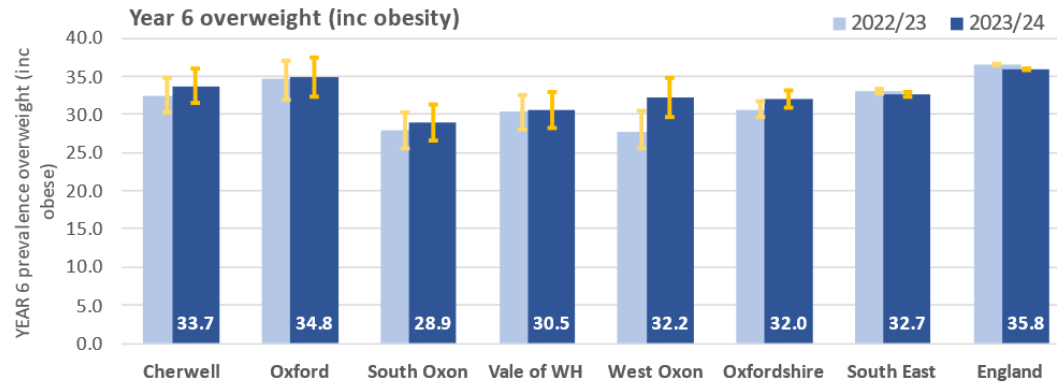


Figure 4: City and Districts year 6 prevalence overweight (including obesity)

Adults

Overall, in Oxfordshire the latest data from the annual population survey (22/23) found 57.8% of adults to be overweight or obese, a reduction of around 2% from the previous year⁵.

Figure 5 shows the trend over the past 10 years.

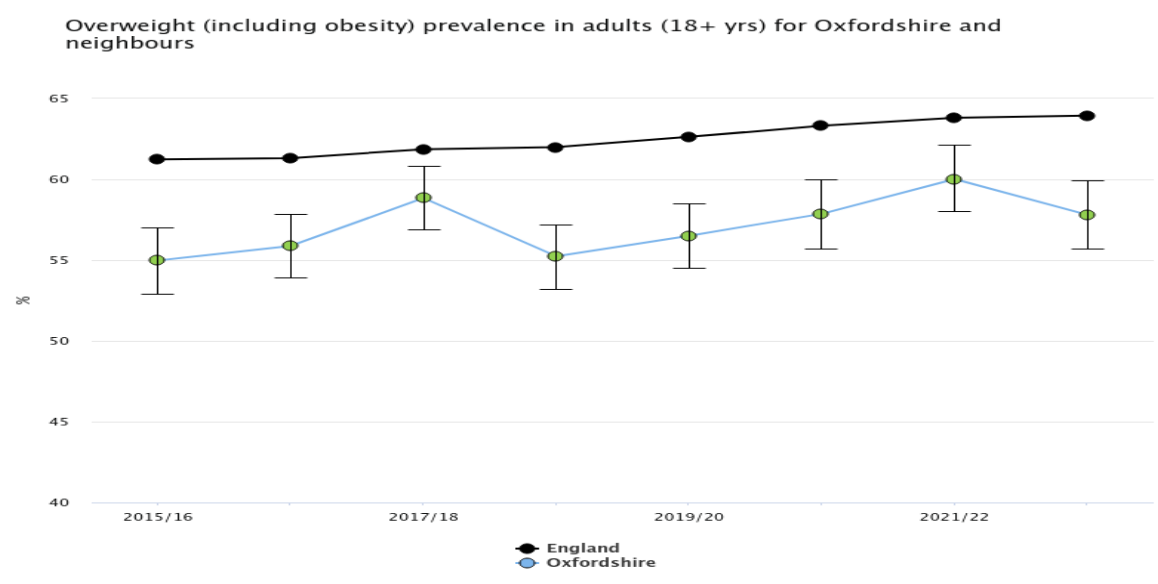


Figure 5: Trend data over 10 years for overweight (including obesity) prevalence in adults for Oxfordshire

Figure 6 shows there is variation by District, but all areas have more than half of their adult population living with excess weight, with ranges from 53.9% (Oxford City) to 60.3% (South and Vale).

⁵ [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

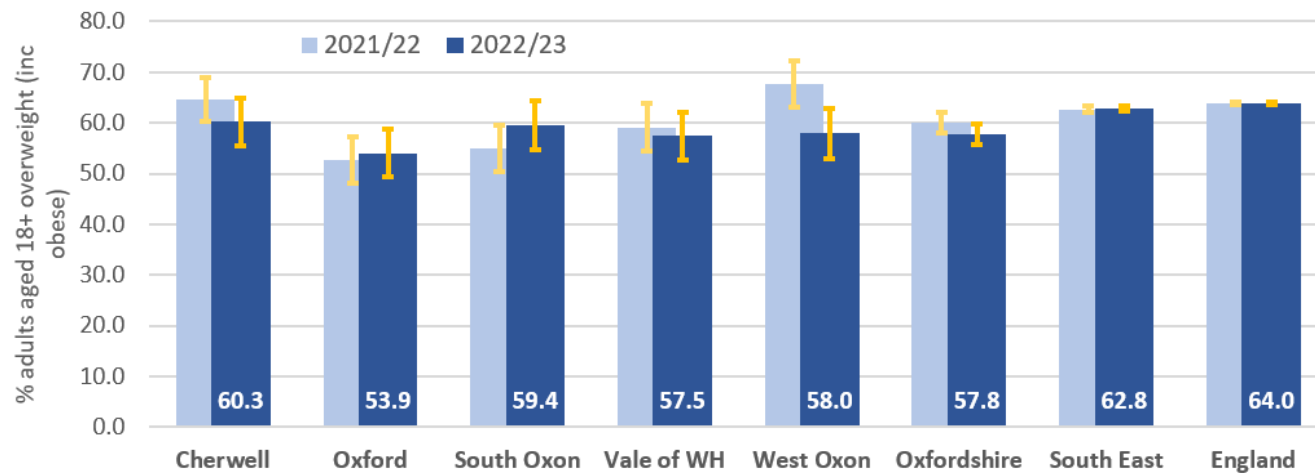


Figure 6: adults classified as overweight (including obesity) across City and Districts

Key Issues

This report will primarily provide an update on core actions against the ‘environment’ pillar of the healthy weight action plan, with a brief update related to ‘support’ in light of a new service offering at Tiers1 and 2.

Excess weight is a challenge for many of us nationally and locally. Even those who currently maintain a healthy weight are not immune to the challenges of eating well and being active in today’s obesogenic environment. The environment we live in makes it harder for us to ensure a varied balanced dietary intake and achieve sufficient physical activity.

Health inequalities exist. Excess weight, and the ability to eat well and move enough for good health, disproportionately impact some people more than others. The differences in excess weight across Oxfordshire are likely due to a combination of differences in socio-economic deprivation, ethnicity, and the age profile of people living in different parts of the county.

While Oxfordshire’s overall rates of overweight and obesity in childhood remain lower than the England average, some areas have similar (amber) rates than the England average and some have much higher (red) rates, see Figure 7. This year, for year 6, four

areas rank worse than the England average. These areas with worse rates have featured over a long period of time. It is notable that Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys have previously featured, but we have seen them move from worse than, to similar to, the England average this year.

Areas of Oxfordshire with the highest prevalence (%) of overweight including obesity (3 years combined to 2023/24)

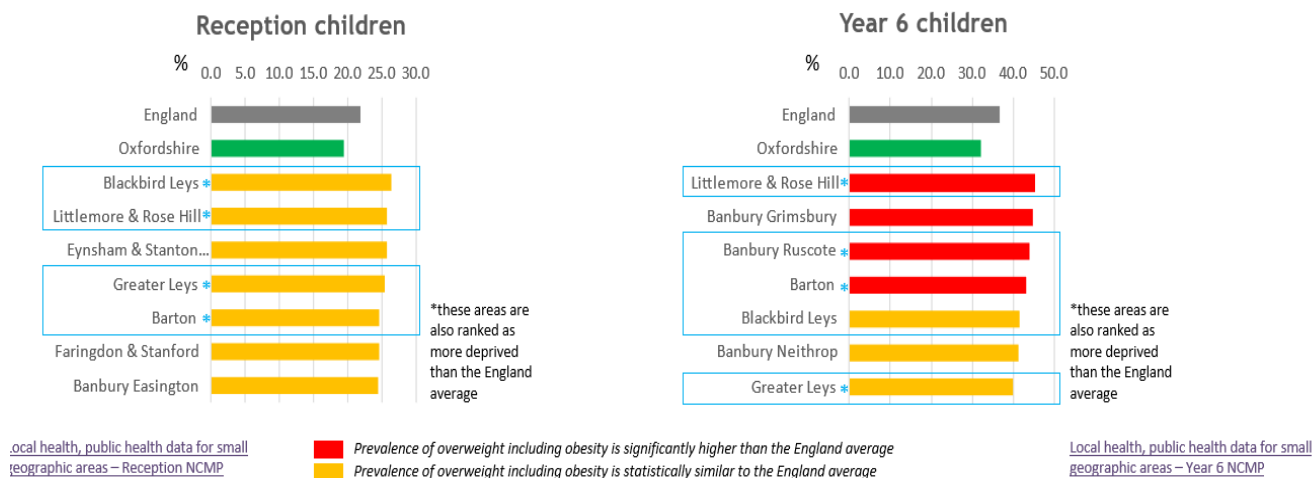


Figure 7: areas of Oxfordshire with the highest prevalence overweight including obesity

We know that areas of greatest socio-economic deprivation have residents with the lowest rates of fruit and vegetable consumption. Typically they find it harder to access healthier food locally, but easier to access hot food takeaways.

While undertaking some work across the whole of Oxfordshire, over the past year we have honed our approach to focus on specific geographical areas where there have been consistently higher levels of excess weight in children. This year the focus has predominantly been on Blackbird Leys/Greater Leys area.

Our approach to addressing this issue

Reducing excess weight is a priority for Oxfordshire's Health Improvement Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board and was the focus of the Director Public Health Annual Report 22/23. A related Health Needs Assessment (HNA) in 2023 (see Appendix 1) made more than 20 recommendations ⁶. This work led to a key change of focus, giving a greater emphasis on the wider food environment within which food purchasing and consumption occurs.

An Oxfordshire Whole Systems Approach (WSA) to healthy weight action plan (see Appendix 2) is in place focusing on four key areas: prevention, healthy weight environment, support and system.

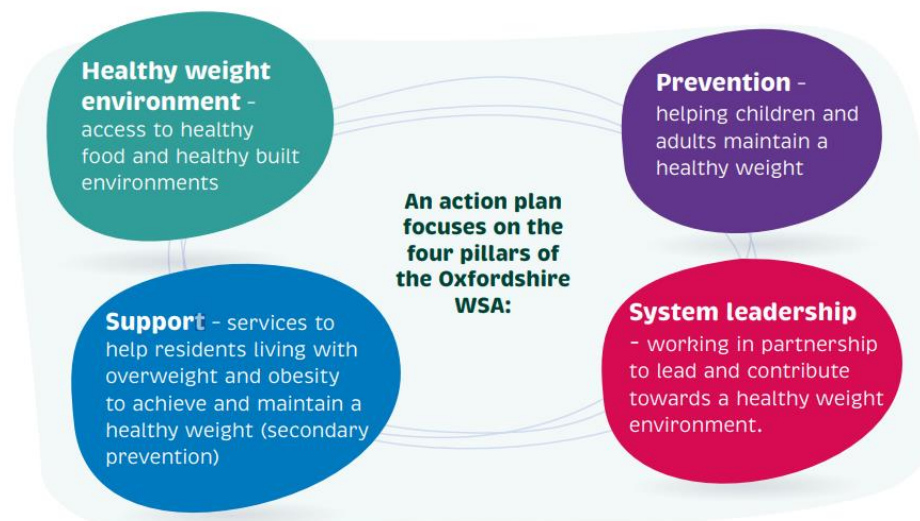


Figure 8: Showing the four pillars of the whole system approach to healthy weight for Oxfordshire

Updated recommendations following the HNA gave a greater focus on prevention and changes to the environment to encourage and facilitate access to healthier food. It remains important to maintain an offer of effective support to people who are already experiencing excess weight.

The causes of excess weight are complex, resulting less from individual behaviours and more from the many factors which collectively make up an obesogenic environment. No single organisation has the knowledge, tools, or power to solve it, and so a 'whole system'

⁶ Oxfordshire County Council (2023) Health Needs Assessment for Promoting Healthy Weight. Available [here](#)

approach is needed to make a sustainable change happen. Actions will not show immediate effect and may take some time and resource to implement and for sustainable change to be seen. To make significant progress input is required from a broad range of partners. It's also pertinent to remind ourselves that actions that seek to reduce levels of excess weight through improving dietary quality and physical activity levels will benefit health, wellbeing and environmental sustainability more broadly. For example, a shared ambition to increase active travel will support increased physical activity for both physical and mental health, but also support less vehicles on the road which improves air quality (thus improving health and wellbeing) but also improve congestion and noise level.

Historical perspective

Following the HNA (2023) the Oxfordshire WSA action plan (appendix) was refreshed. An overview of the process towards the development of WSA since 2019 is summarised in the table below:

July 2019	Guidance towards a Whole System Approach to Obesity Issued ⁷ . Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board endorse WSA for Oxfordshire
2020/21	More than 125 stakeholders in Oxfordshire work together towards a collective approach to developing Oxfordshire WSA including causal mapping
2022/23	Health Needs Assessment completed by public health Healthy Weight Needs Assessment 2023 Full report Oxfordshire Insight
2023	Whole Systems Approach action plan refreshed (appendix 2). Outcomes influence Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Oxfordshire.

In Appendix 3 we present more detail on the work in plan and progress across the four pillars.

Progression of the WSA was last reported to the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board in February 2024, where the focus was on the 'support' pillar. Good Food Oxfordshire presented progress on Food Strategy and City/District food action plans, and Active

⁷ PHE (2019) Whole systems approach to obesity: a guide to support local approaches to promoting a healthy weight. Available [here](#)

Oxfordshire presented an update on their work. Below is a brief update against these previously reported areas followed by more detail about the 'environment' pillar.

New life course healthy weight service – BeeZee.

Since September 2024 a new all age healthy weight service, BeeZee Oxfordshire, is in place [Home Page - Free Healthy Lifestyle Services | Oxfordshire](#). The previous service was an adult only service, although a programme for children aged 4–12-year-olds was piloted with good outcomes. The new service has capacity to work with 5000 adults and 200 children and families. People can refer themselves or be referred if they have a BMI over 28 (or lower for some ethnic groups and some co-morbidities). They offer:-

- BeeZee Families: a 12-week family focused programme (online or in person) with fun activities and expert support on nutritious snacks, easy meals and getting active.
- BeeZee adults: designed to help adults lose weight in a healthy way and keep it off for good.
- Gutless: a bespoke programme developed for men recognising the challenges they face when managing their health and fitness.
- Slimming World: offers members support, commitment and accountability to help boost happiness, self-esteem and slimming success, both in person and online.
- Weight Watchers Reimagined – another commercial support group, providing a similar offer to weight watchers across the county.

From 2025 a staged approach to piloting the following programmes of work will be delivered, to be co-produced with residents and partners:

- **Health Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young HENRY** ⁸, is an evidence based programme, providing holistic support, to help families create healthy habits around eating well and moving more, supporting a healthy foundation for life. The programme will focus on geographical areas where there is higher need,
- **Antenatal/Postnatal pilot:** The HNA found a high proportion of women going into pregnancy are already overweight. Working in conjunction with maternity and dietetics will develop an approach in line with guidance for this group.

⁸ [Homepage | HENRY](#)

- **Young people aged 13-18** –support, dedicated for young people,
- **Ethnic Minority groups** - such as women only swimming for Muslim women, building on success seen previously and expanding to other parts of Oxfordshire.
- **Mild-moderate mental health conditions** – building on links with social prescribing to provide additional support, with gaining confidence and building resilience to attend a specific healthy lifestyle type course.

Food Strategy and City/District food action plans

Oxfordshire Food Strategy – Part 1 was adopted by all county, district/city councils in May 2022, followed by the formation of five Food Action Working Groups (FAWG) with action plans agreed in April 2024 for City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell areas. These FAWGs are working with Good Food Oxfordshire on a 6-month progress report. South and Vale are in the final review of their area action plan. There will be end of year report for Year 1 (2024-25) with plans to showcase at a food summit bringing stakeholders together in early Summer 2025.

OCC achieved the [Sustainable Food Partnership \(SFP\) Silver Award for Oxfordshire⁹](#) in November 2023, and are now working towards Gold in 2026 by continuing to develop and grow activities across all the key SFP issues (see Figure 9) and collect evidence across Oxfordshire on broad impact, exceptional achievements and systematic partnerships. Key activity that will contribute to achieving Gold include:

⁹ [Oxfordshire wins Sustainable Food Places Silver Award! | Good Food Oxfordshire](#)

OxFarmToFork¹⁰: a short supply chain initiative that connects local, ethical, sustainable food to Oxfordshire institutions. With 18 Oxford colleges already on board, and plans to expand to schools in 2025. In year one £66,000 was invested in start-up costs and infrastructure; 14 farming livelihoods supported; £28,000-worth of transactions facilitated.

- **Participatory processes:** Food Action Plans will provide comprehensive data, alongside initiatives like **FEAST¹¹** (European project Oxfordshire is a living lab researching the shift to a sustainable and healthy diet) and the Community Research Network. Priority Places Food Index (PPFI) is a new measure we are using for monitoring impact of the action plans started using this from April 2024 - March 2025 Year 1 will report in May 2025.

- **Healthier food environment (Good Food Retail/healthier food out of home/healthier advertising)** – discussed later in this report.

There will be launched at the food summit (Summer 2025) to signal our goal of achieving an SFP Gold Award for Oxfordshire.

Whole Systems Approach to Physical Activity.

After successful development of pilots commissioned by Public Health, (You Move and Move Together) overseen by Active Oxfordshire and delivered by City and District Councils, a partnership approach has been taken to continue and expand this offer with joint commissioning from Oxfordshire County Council, Public Health, the Integrated Care Board, and City and District Councils New support is available as part of the programmes already delivered including:



Figure 9: Sustainable Food Places 6 key issues

¹⁰ [OxFarmToFork | Good Food Oxfordshire](#)

- **You Move Early Years** offer is for families who are supported by Home Start, families with 0–4-year-olds who are being supported by early help services, and families in receipt of Universal Credit, or similar benefits.
- **Move Together** launched in September 2024 for pregnant and post-natal women (12 months post birth).
- **Moving Medicine** post to further embed physical activity into acute hospital pathways.

The Report **Prevention First: transforming health and wellbeing through activity in Oxfordshire**,¹² showcases the positive outcomes to date. Some highlights include:

- Reaching 13,000 residents at highest risk of inactivity. This includes residents with long term health conditions (2,052), children on free school meals and their families, and residents living in areas of highest deprivation in Oxfordshire (10,057).
- Focusing on creating healthier, more active places, to live through increasing active travel with a new Community Outreach Active Travel Fund and Active Neighbourhood Scans in priority areas, which benefit us all.
- 55% of participants overall increased their activity levels.
- Reducing the burden on Primary Care - 51% fewer GP appointments in the 4 weeks prior to 3-month review. This can be translated into a saving of 4.5 GP appointments per participant per annum with a cost-saving of £396,900
- With the additional funds, for the first time they are taking a full life course approach with the addition of (early years and maternity programmes).
- Recruited a Physical Activity Clinical Champion, with a wealth of experience, relationships and credibility with their audience, to train and upskill hundreds of health and social care professionals across Oxfordshire.

'Healthy Weight Environment' Pillar

The rest of this report focuses on the Healthy Weight Environment pillar.

Whilst there is continuing work to promote physical activity, which remains important to support a healthy weight and positively contributes to many other health, wellbeing and environmental benefits, we know that consumption of excess calories is the predominant cause of excess weight.

¹² [prevention-first-report.pdf](#)

The purpose of the healthy weight environment pillar is to change the environment in which food is offered. Our current food environments are designed in ways that often make it easier to ‘choose’ less healthy foods rather than healthy ones. There is evidence that in areas of greatest deprivation, children are flooded by less healthy food with access to hot food takeaways and exposure to advertising of junk food (high fat salt and sugar products) being disproportionately prominent.

Local authorities are in a unique position to improve the quality of the environment by enabling easier access to healthier food and drink options, supporting a diverse and healthy high street retail offer and supporting advertising of healthier products.

Table 2, below, provides more detail about some of the aims, key action and supporting evidence, behind programmes of work taking place, over the last 12 months as part of the ‘**healthy weight environment**’ pillar. The Oxfordshire Good Food Retail Project and the ‘Healthier out of Home’ work have been designed to support food and retail businesses to intervene and identify opportunities to benefit health and economy. Initial pilot work is underway in Blackbird Leys and Banbury.



“Temptation is put in your way everywhere really these days, isn’t it? It’s like when you walk past the chip shop; it’s just that smell. It might not be on your mind, but then you walk past...”

Banbury Resident Press Red Insight Project 2022

Table 2: Summary of aim’s, evidence and progress on the healthy weight environment pillar

Aim and objective	Background/Evidence	Progress update on supporting work/projects
Oxfordshire Councils to have a healthier advertising policy in place that promotes healthier food options over foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar.	Advertising of less healthy food has been shown to drive over-consumption. “Food marketing and advertising promotes consumption of what is available ... That intake is not compensated for, so when children snack in response to food marketing, they do not then consume less at the	National Over the last few years, local authorities across the UK have introduced Healthier Food Advertising policies in their own advertising spaces with 21 known to have successful policies in place. A further 150 Local Authorities have expressed intent

<p>Switch the spotlight away from less healthy food across council owned advertising spaces phone boxes, billboards, roundabouts, lampposts) and council advertising contracts.</p>	<p>next eating opportunity to balance out their energy intake; additional energy is added.</p> <p>It takes only between 40 and 70 additional calories per day to contribute to weight gain in children¹³</p> <p>For children growing up in this frenzy of advertising, exposure to HFSS products normalises these highly processed, less healthy foods and drinks, and research shows this influences their food choices¹⁴. HFSS marketing is linked to a strong preference for HFSS products,¹⁵ more snacking¹⁶, eating more calories¹⁷, and HFSS products replacing healthier foods¹⁸. This leads to lower consumption of fruit and vegetables and higher sugar content.</p> <p>Local insight from young people (collected October 2024 from across the County by Bite Back):</p>	<p>to explore and adopt such an approach. Evidence shows this does not negatively affect income from advertising, advertising revenues were maintained and, in some areas, improved following changes of policy.¹⁹</p> <p><u>Local</u></p> <p>Oxford City Council are retendering their bus stop advertising contract with appropriate criteria to discourage HFSS advertising, and are currently exploring how they might implement an overarching policy. Work is ongoing across other Districts with a key challenge being identifying who would lead on such a policy.</p> <p>Public Health, Oxfordshire County Council have worked with Bite Back. Through workshops and walkabouts with young people from Oxfordshire, the aim was to capture their stories and evidence on junk food advertising and food available in Local</p>
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¹³ Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system, quote from Professor Emma Boyland committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14569/html/ evidence food, diet and obesity, March 2024.

Available [here](#).

¹⁴ Ferguson CJ, Muñoz ME, Medrano, MR. Advertising Influences on Young Children's Food Choices and Parental Influence The Journal of Paediatrics. 2012; 160(3):452 – 455.

¹⁵ Boyland EJ, Harrold JA, Kirkham TC, Corker C, Cuddy J, Evans D, Dovey TM, Lawton CL, Blundell JE, Halford JCG. Food commercials increase preference for energy-dense foods, particularly in children who watch more television. Pediatrics. 2011; 128(1):93-100

¹⁶ Boyland EJ, Nolan S, Kelly B, Tudur-Smith C, Jones A, Halford JCG, Robinson E. Advertising as a cue to consume: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of acute exposure to unhealthy food or non-alcoholic beverage advertising on intake in children and adults. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 2016. 103:519-533

¹⁷ Boyland EJ, Whalen R, Christiansen P, McGale L, Duckworth J, Halford J, Clark M, Rosenburg G, Vohra J. See it, want it, buy it, eat it: how food advertising is associated with unhealthy eating behaviours in 7 - 11 year old children [online]. Cancer Research UK. 2018

¹⁸ Thomas, C, Hooper L, Petty R, Thomas F, Rosenburg G, Vohra J. 10 years on: New evidence on TV marketing and junk food consumption amongst 11–19-year-olds 10 years after broadcast regulations [online]. Cancer Research UK. 2018

¹⁹ [Transport for London declares healthier food advertising policy a success as revenues announced | Sustain](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Everywhere we look and everywhere we go, we are surrounded by junk food ads. This needs to stop. It is negatively impacting my generation's health.</i> - Poppy, young participant • <i>"When you are out with friends and you see a McDonald's advert, you think oooo that looks so good, let's go and get it."</i> - Faith, young participant • <i>"Another ad... It's even got a little cartoon on it to tempt the kids to get it. They're gonna see that when they're waiting for the bus to school and go oooh!"</i> - young participant 	<p>Authority owned spaces across Oxfordshire for example leisure centres. (In attendance at the HIB meeting will be one of these young people, who will share her experience and recommendations to the Board). More information is available on the report (end of February 2025), fact sheet (see appendix 4) and video (watch here) in the communications section.</p>
<p>All City and District Councils to introduce planning policy to restrict new hot food takeaways in areas where children learn and play and/or in areas where geographies have ongoing excess weight.</p>	<p>Nationally, one in four places to buy food are fast food outlets, and almost one in five meals are eaten outside the home²⁰. Out-of-home meals contain significantly higher intakes of sugar, fat and salt, portion sizes tend to be bigger, and they are usually cheap and easily available²¹. There is robust evidence linking availability of fast-food outlets to excess childhood weight.</p> <p>In January 2024, Oxfordshire had 513 takeaway food outlets²². In some areas of Oxfordshire there are more than double the number of takeaway outlets per 1000 population than the England average. Takeaway outlets tend to be located</p>	<p>National</p> <p>More than half of local authorities in England now have planning policies in place to address the proliferation of hot food takeaways.</p> <p>In December 2024, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that sets out land use in England providing a framework for local authorities to shape their local plans and make planning decisions, was updated. This highlighted the need to address health inequalities and for developments to promote health and prevent ill health. Chapter 8 (promoting healthy and safe communities) policy states local planning authorities should refuse</p>

²⁰ [2022-23 Director of Public Health annual report | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

²¹ [Health matters: obesity and the food environment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

²² Food Environment Assessment Tool, used to present data on Oxfordshire takeaway food outlets Jan 2024, Available [here](#)

	<p>closer to people’s homes in the most deprived wards of the county where we see the highest levels of obesity^[5]. In some of our areas with the highest levels of childhood obesity fast food outlets are shown to be frequently located within 400m of primary and secondary schools.</p>	<p>applications for hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets that are near where children congregate (unless in a designated town centre).²³ Or in locations where there is evidence that a concentration of such uses is having an adverse impact on local health, pollution or antisocial behaviour.</p> <p><u>Local</u></p> <p>In 2023 all District and City Councils were provided with a detailed summary of the situation for their area, evidence, data and options for wording in their local plans to support the above.</p> <p>We have highlighted the latest change in the NPPF framework (December 2024) to City and District planners and reminded them of the current situation in their areas.</p> <p>Despite the provision of detailed information including evidence to support these policies, to date most Districts/City have been reluctant to include such a policy. As Cherwell District Council and South & Vale District Councils have progressed their Local Plans to Reg 19 and Submission stages respectively, their Local Plans are based on the previous version of the NPPF (though S97 of the NPPF will still apply to applications when lodged). South and Vale have not included relevant wording in their Local Plan, Cherwell have some</p>
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^[5] 2022-23 Director of Public Health annual report | Oxfordshire County Council

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/8-promoting-healthy-and-safe-communities>

		<p>relevant wording included in their Reg 19 Local Plan (no new hot food takeaways within walking distance of schools). City Council have previously decided not to include any wording around hot food takeaway restriction. They are expected to vote to redo their Plan following Inspectors' direction, in which case it will come to consultation around June.</p> <p>While it's a positive that this wording is included in the NPPF, there are some nuances in the wording which might need some work to help City/Districts clarify when reviewing applications, i.e. how to judge what is appropriate walking distance from schools (guidance is minimum 400m). Clarification may be needed about what a 'designated town centre' is (i.e. assurance that this does not include local centres) and what locations could have an adverse impact on local health (i.e. the areas that have much higher levels of excess weight than Oxfordshire and England). How we ensure this information is taken into account is probably what we now need to consider and HIB's support in doing would be appreciated.</p>
<p>Increase access to healthier food by working with local convenience stores in key locations to:</p>	<p>Access to healthy food in the UK is unequal which has created food deserts²⁴. These are areas where people are likely to pay a higher cost for their weekly food shopping and have to shop in more expensive small convenience stores with a limited stock of good value fresh products.</p>	<p>Local <u>Oxfordshire Good Food Retail project</u>²⁸ (first area in UK to deliver this outside of London) delivered by a retail expert organisation to engage local convenience shops to offer healthier options to their customers. Shops are assessed against the 100</p>

²⁴ The University of Sheffield (2018) 1.2 million living in UK food deserts. Available [here](#).

²⁹ [Making Healthier Choices Easier in Blackbird Leys: Local Shops Partner with Good Food Retail Network | Good Food Oxfordshire](#)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the affordability, range of healthier options and quality of fresh fruit and vegetables in the selected stores. 2. Focus on the purchasing behaviours of children 3. Improve the promotion of healthier options in store 4. Ensure that retailers are confident and ready to accept the new Healthy Start card. 4. Improve the range and availability of culturally appropriate foods 5. Engage convenience stores and connect them with the local community 6. Develop a Good Food Retail criteria for Oxfordshire 	<p>The chances of accessing healthy food at an affordable price depends on where we live. Areas with a high proportion of families living on a lower average income often have many less healthy food options²⁵. This influences food consumption and contributes to excess weight.</p> <p>Healthier food is three times more expensive calorie for calorie than less healthy options²⁶. There is a need to ensure healthier products are available and sold at either the same price or cheaper than less healthy alternatives. If this is not addressed there is a high risk that individuals living on a low income will be pushed towards less healthy food and drink options, further contributing to health inequalities²⁷.</p> <p>Oxfordshire Health Needs Assessment reviewed findings from a community insight project (2021-22) which gathered lived experiences of residents trying to be a healthy weight. This highlighted a need to address access to healthy affordable food as the local food infrastructure was designed and characterised by convenience and ease, leading to less healthy habits.</p>	<p>healthier lines framework, supported/agree an action plan and receive free stock drops to trial healthier products for example baked, wholegrain, reduced fat, salt and sugar.</p> <p>A Good Food Retail brand has been developed for stores to use to help market their stores and promote to customers when part of the project.</p> <p>Phase 1 took place in Blackbird Leys where there is a price premium in local shops compared to Tesco of +30%. The number of healthier lines available increased by 19% and on average the stores stocked 12 more healthier lines.</p> <p>Evaluation as to the difference this has made to wholesaler purchasing is underway. Phase 2 has commenced working in Banbury.</p>
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²⁵ Public Health England (2017) Health matters: obesity and food environment. Available here.

²⁶ The Food Foundation (2022) The Broken Plate; at a glance. Available [here](#).

²⁷ Impact on Urban Health (2022) Putting health at the heart of convenience. Available [here](#).

<p>Implement a ‘whole school approach’ to promote healthier eating and physical activity in schools, prioritising areas in Oxfordshire with high excess weight prevalence amongst children.</p>	<p>A number of key national documents including Childhood Obesity: Applying All Our Health²⁹, Promoting Healthy Weight in Children, Young People and Families³⁰, and related NICE Guidance³¹ advocate for schools to be a key place of focus to improve childhood obesity and physical activity, highlighting the types of measures (from policy, food provision, and activity opportunities) that can be put in place.</p> <p>The driver for schools is evidence that overweight or obese children are more likely to experience poor health and related poor attainment³². Healthy school meals in school-age children are linked with improved school attendance and exam grades³³ whilst emerging evidence suggests an association between being physically active and academic attainment and attention³⁴.</p> <p>School settings provide an opportunity to increase children’s acceptance of a wide range of healthy foods and improvement in diet related factors⁶. When implemented as part of a multicomponent programme, cooking activities have the potential to facilitate healthy food consumption, increase frequency of home-cooked meals, and improve physical and wellbeing indicators e.g. self-esteem.⁷</p>	<p>National</p> <p>The Great Big School Dinner debate January 2025 hosted by Soil Association in partnership with Good Food Oxfordshire at St Ebbe’s Primary School in Oxford. The food was provided by Oxfordshire County Council school catering team and discussions were facilitated with local and national stakeholders on ‘School Food Supply Chain’ informed by the experts and pioneers from across the farm-to-fork spectrum- – farmers and growers, supply chain and procurement professionals, caterers and head teachers.</p> <p>Local</p> <p>A Strategic School Food and Physical Activity Advisor has been in post since January 2024 Progress so far includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed policy (uniform to support being active, healthy lunches) and programmes to encourage healthier eating and more physical activity for a whole school approach (and linked early years settings). New programmes such as Healthy Movers to be piloted in 20 Oxfordshire schools.
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²⁹ OHID (2022) Childhood obesity: applying All Our Health. Available [here](#)

³⁰ PHE (2018) Promoting healthy weight in children, young people and families: resource to support local authorities. Available [here](#)

³¹ NICE (2015) Obesity Prevention Clinical Guidance CD43. Available [here](#)

³² Caird et al (2011) Childhood obesity & educational attainment: a systematic review. Available [here](#)

³³ Belot & James (2011) Healthy school meals & educational outcomes. Available [here](#)

³⁴ Chalkley et al (2015) Rapid evidence review on the effect of physical activity participation among children aged 5-11 years. Available [here](#)

	<p>The Oxfordshire Cooking and Healthy Eating report published February 2024 highlights the need for parents to be involved in School based activities as teaching children about cooking and healthy eating is incredibly beneficial. Cooking and healthy eating programmes offer superior advantages beyond simply enhancing people’s nutrient intake. Food brings people together, creating a space for shared experiences, conversations and an opportunity to signpost people to other types of social support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications and building relationships with schools: Schools’ forum established and an Oxfordshire Schools Conference on healthy and active young people bringing together local cross sector (VCS, NHS and Education) and national partners (Youth Sports Trust, Veg Power). • Training and skill development: to be delivered in March 2025 for school governors and senior leadership on a whole school approach to wellbeing, learning and performance through nutrition. <p>School Cooking project</p> <p>Public Health commissioned SOFEA (founders of the Nourish and Flourish programme) to develop and deliver an interactive school-based cooking programme in priority areas in Oxfordshire linking to wider community (in line with best practice). Working with Primary (Year 5 and 6) and linked Secondary Schools with delivery in school commencing April 2025. The approach embeds the programme into the core curriculum for year 5s in biology, maths, geography and history. Using lesson plans, teaching session slide decks, designed activities and resources. Sessions cover a range of topics; food labelling, growing, sugar smart, healthy lunchboxes and junk food advertising. Engagement with parents/carers (sports day and informal coffee morning) is a key part of the programme. Alongside a train the trainer model and access to an online</p>
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<p>Work in partnership with food businesses to improve the availability and affordability of healthier food and drink options, through the introduction of a scheme designed to enhance the local out of home food environment.</p>	<p>Eating out increasingly plays an important part in our lives – around a quarter of our calories are consumed out of the home in restaurants, cafes, pubs and fast-food outlets. Approximately one fifth of children eat food from out of home food outlets at least once a week.³⁵</p>	<p>resource hub to support delivery by schools themselves after the initial course.</p> <p>National Councils elsewhere have developed healthier catering initiatives (schemes, commitments, awards) aiming to support restaurants, takeaways, cafes, education and health settings (early years, colleges, schools, hospitals) and other food businesses to provide healthier and accessible food options.</p> <p>Local A ‘Healthier out of Home’ post has been in place for 6 months sitting within Trading Standards at OCC. Work to date has focussed on identifying an appropriate support offer that meets both business and health needs for Oxfordshire including:- ,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning from areas that have or have previously offered a similar scheme • understanding the food business landscape across Oxfordshire and for priority areas • community insight which has included, survey and in-person in-depth conversations to understand people’s current eat out of home eating habits and motivations. <p>The next step is to pilot the programme in Banbury.</p>
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³⁵ PHE (2017) Health matters: obesity and the food environment. Available [here](#).

<p>Work with local authorities and providers in council owned spaces and contracts on practical ways to make the food and drink in vending machines healthier.</p>	<p>Vending machines have been highlighted as providing convenient access to food and drinks that are high in energy, fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt. ³⁶</p> <p>Local councils can use their leasing and purchasing powers to influence the nature of the food supplied to outlets and vending machines on council owned premises or contracts out to food services. This might involve cafes in council buildings and parks, leisure and sport centres and community, children’s centres. Such contracts or leases could be used to ensure healthier food options are provided for example Central Bedfordshire included a requirement that at least 25% of the snack options in vending machines should be ‘healthier’.</p>	<p>Local</p> <p>Healthier vending project aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce standards that improve the overall health profile of food and drinks available in vending machines, and influence vending machine locations to adopt the standards/set of phased targets for the proportion of ‘healthier products. • Provide guidelines that support businesses with making the required changes, evaluating the acceptability and effectiveness using sales data. • Take an evidence-based approach to determining ‘healthiness’. Draft standards have now been written, giving clear quantifiable goals that use the Nutrient Model Profiling approach. <p>In partnership with Oxford City Council, we have now reached an agreement with Serco, who have recently taken over the Leisure Centre contracts in Oxford City to trial the standards across the five sites they operate.</p> <p>Following the pilot we will look to roll-out the standards across all identified publicly available vending machine locations, with an initial focus on those located in Council owned spaces.</p>
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³⁶ [Food Active | Guest Blog: Healthier snack provision in vending machines – findings from Leeds City Council trial](#)

Look Forward

Over the next 12 months there will be continued focus on the healthy weight environment including the following aspirations. HIB's support to progress the first two in particular would be appreciated:-

- Find a pragmatic way to adopt healthier advertisement policy across all the District and County Council owned advertising spaces. We welcome the opportunity for further discussion at the HIB on how best to can we progress with this strategically. For example, is there a key person to facilitate the required change? What else is needed to progress this further.
- Ensure Councils take full advantage of the additional powers following amendments to NPPF and apply the approaches as per Table 2 (incorporating a set distance from facilities frequented by children) and taking into account areas of excess weight that would enable the second condition to be met. .
- Support with the roll out the Healthier Out of Home pilot and consider further iteration of Healthier Out of Home pilots projects to the food and drink offered at community groups– one of the areas that helpfully engaged in the consultation.
- Determine the need and support required for Early Years Settings with regards food provision. Review and build on the current evidence base of best practice to support early years settings,

Budgetary implications

The Public Health budget contributes to a number of programmes and services related to the WSA to healthy weight.

Some WSA to healthy weight actions do not have budget attached and are required to be driven and supported across the system through partnership work.

Equalities implications

As outlined earlier in this report, there are differences in excess weight which are due to a combination of both differences in socio-economic deprivation, ethnicity, as well as the age profile of people living in different parts of the County. Some ethnic groups are

more likely to experience excess weight. For example, national rates show 48.1% of black Caribbean and 49.6% of black African Year 6 children experiencing overweight or obesity, and 68% of black adults are overweight or obese.

The risks of less healthy diets and obesity start before conception. Children living with obesity are five times more likely to become adults with obesity, and more likely to become parents with obesity in turn. Experiencing excess weight in pregnancy is a risk factor for several health issues for women, their baby, and their childbirth experience. Local data found between March 2022 and February 2023, that over 1900 pregnant women had a BMI of 30 or over at the time of booking in Oxfordshire (within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy).

People with Learning Disabilities (LD) experience greater barriers to reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, For most of them, the diet and exercise requirements of losing weight are similar to the actions required of others for some certain conditions or taking particular medications may add complexity³⁷. Work is underway to develop bespoke support for this cohort.

Communications

Below detail two pieces of work that involved public engagement in the latter half of last year.

Bite Back report and video (consultation with Oxfordshire young people) in October 2024 will be discussed in depth at this meeting. A small group of young people from across Oxfordshire came together to explore issues relating to the local food environment and child health. Across two days, they took part in a range of workshops and went out onto the streets to collect evidence on junk food advertising and food available in council owned spaces. Most hadn't taken part in anything like this before and in addition to exploring the food environment locally, they had a chance to develop their communication, teamwork, research and content-creation skills. The full report (available end of February 2025), for the fact sheet see appendix 4 and video (watch [here](#)) bring together the young peoples' stories with the evidence we collected documenting the problems we discussed.

They proposed the following actions communicated with leaders of all local authorities in Oxfordshire,

- Bring in a **healthier advertising policy** on all advertising sites you control to promote healthier food options over junk food.
- **Work with council-controlled spaces** such as leisure centres, to reduce the prevalence of less healthy food, while making healthy food more available, accessible and affordable for young people.

³⁷ [Obesity and weight management for people with learning disabilities: guidance - GOV.UK](#)

Healthier food out of home community insight in October 2025 an online survey and in-person in-depth conversations with the community took place at a range of community engagement events e.g. men's breakfast. The aim of the insight work was to understand Oxfordshire residents current eat out of home eating habits and motivations. In total the online survey received 268 responses they included:

- 47% of respondents eating meals outside their home at least once a week.
- 49% of respondents regularly purchase takeaways.
- Convenience and social occasions were cited as the most popular reasons for purchasing food from these places.
- Sandwiches, traditional pub food, pizza and Indian cuisine were the most often purchased, which is in-line with the national research conducted by NESTA³⁸.
- Most respondents (76%) stated that, when buying from these establishments, the healthiness of the food was either 'very important' or 'somewhat important'
- 58.6% said that it was 'a lot more likely' or 'a little more likely' that they would buy food from these places if the food was healthier.
- Similar majority (64%) also felt that a business having a badge or logo that show their food met County Council standards for being healthier mean they would be 'a lot more likely' or 'a little more likely' to buy from them instead of another place.
- When asked 'What would you like businesses to do to make their food healthier?'. The themes included reducing less healthy ingredients (salt, sugar, MSG), increasing healthy options, transparency and labelling, sourcing and quality, affordability and accessibility, portion control and cooking methods.
- Many respondents, particularly parents with young children, strongly support increased transparency and better options.
- For other groups, lower-income individuals, health is not a primary concern, likely due to competing demands on their time and energy such as paying bills, rent and income.

Key Dates

Report by Claire Gray, Public Health Practitioner, Derys Pragnell, Public Health Consultant and Yasmine Illsley, Public Health Principal.

January 2025

Contact: Yasmine Illsley, Public Health Principal, Yasmine.illsley@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

³⁸ [How eating out contributes to our diets | NESTA](#)

Appendix

1. Appendices

Appendix 1: Recommendations from Healthy Weight Health Needs Assessment



20230824 HNA
Recommendations Su

Appendix 2: Whole systems approach to healthy weight action plan 23/24



20230823 WSA
Action Plan Summary.

Appendix 3: Oxfordshire WSA To excess weight: Work undertaken or in progress update 2024



Oxfordshire WSA To
excess weight underta

Appendix 4: Bite Back Oxfordshire Report fact sheet (January 2025)



BITE BACK _
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