



Northumberland
County Council

Healthy Weight for All Children

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021/22

Health and Wellbeing OSC
7th March 2023

www.northumberland.gov.uk



Background

- Directors of Public Health in England have a statutory duty to write an Annual Public Health Report on the health of the local population; the Local Authority has a duty to publish it.
- The DPH Annual Report is a vehicle for informing local people about the health of their community, as well as providing necessary information for commissioners and providers
- The DPH Annual Report for 2021/22 is on healthy weight in children. It uses data from 2020/21 which was the most up-to-date available when it was being written.

Why childhood healthy weight?

Improved health

- Lower risk of weight-related illnesses
- Could increase life expectancy by 2.7 years
- Risks of weight-related illnesses can be reversed

Improved wellbeing

- More likely to do well at school
- Lower rates of mental health conditions
- Report they feel better about their lives

Economic benefit

- In the UK obesity is now second largest economic burden following smoking

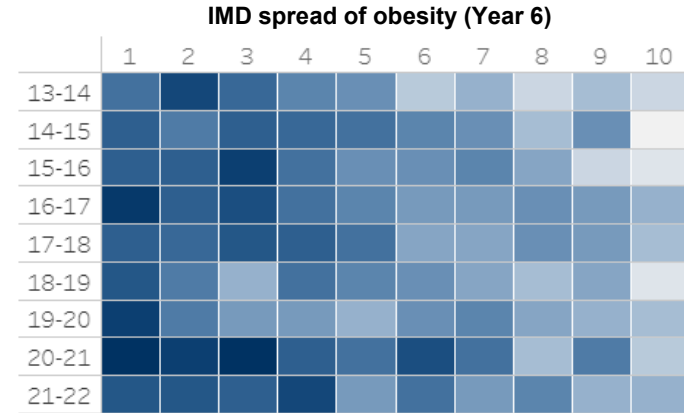
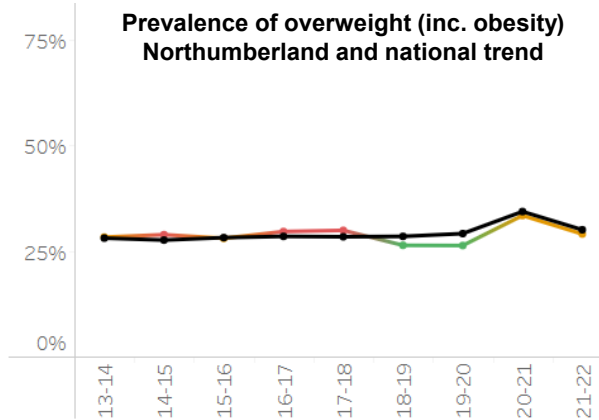
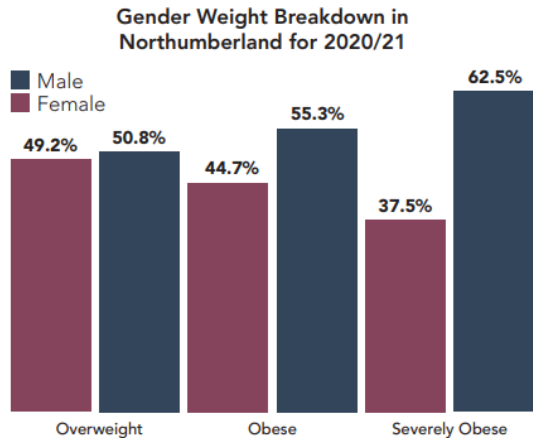


The picture in Northumberland

In 2020/21 in Northumberland:

- **Over 1 in 5** (26.7%) of children were overweight or had obesity in **Reception** (aged 4-5 years)
- **Over 1 in 3** (40%) in **year 6** (aged 10-11 years)

2021/22 shows similar figures (25.4% in Reception and 38.1% in Year 6)



Barriers to healthy weight

- ***Not just individual responsibility and ‘willpower’***
- An ‘obesogenic’ (obesity causing) environment and culture created by:



Limited access to green space



Advertising of unhealthy foods influencing choices



Technology impacting play



Widespread car use making journeys less active



Wide availability of cheap, easily accessible food high in fat, salt and/or sugar (HFSS)

Healthy weight in the home

Barriers

- Increased portion sizes
- Frequency of ready meals/take aways
- Breastfeeding rates
- Family budget
- Increased use of food banks
- Stress and anxiety
- Access to basic equipment
- Lack of good quality sleep

What can we build on?

- ✓ Existing breastfeeding support
- ✓ Healthy Start scheme
- ✓ Slow cooker sessions



Healthy weight in our communities

Barriers

Food environment

- More unhealthy food on the high street
- Accessing healthy food via public transport
- Widespread advertising of HFSS foods

Physical environment

- Access to space, equipment and/or opportunities
- Confidence and skills
- Feasibility and convenience

What can we build on?

- ✓ NCC Hot Food Takeaway Policy
- ✓ Nourish Northumberland
- ✓ Developing active travel infrastructure
- ✓ Cycling schools and Wheels for All



Healthy weight in schools

Barriers

Food environment

- Meal provision

Learning environment

- Missing breakfast
- Energy drinks

Physical activity environment

- Activity decreases with age, especially in young women

What can we build on?

- ✓ Roots and Shoots
- ✓ Active Northumberland and Ability2Play
- ✓ School Streets
- ✓ Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme



Healthy weight in healthcare

Barriers

- Lack of recognition
- Personal weight stigma
- Professional weight stigma

What can we build on?

- ✓ MapMe tool
- ✓ National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)
- ✓ Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY)



Recommendations



Reframing our approach. Instead of considering overweight and obesity we need to look more widely at the ways in which our homes, communities, schools and healthcare systems can better support children to live healthy, active lives.



Communication and sharing good practice. Good communication will make it clearer what support is available to help families achieve and maintain healthy weight and how to access this support.



Collaboration. Develop a healthy weight alliance to build on the good work already being done across Northumberland, bringing communities and agencies together to ensure a coordinated approach.



Strategy development and implementation. Childhood healthy weight to be a core priority in new and existing strategies including the Northumberland Food Insecurity plan and the Northumberland Physical Activity Plan, to ensure there are steps in place to improve the opportunities for Northumberland's children to stay healthy.



Using data and local insights. Make best use of data to inform plans and ensure work is prioritised and targeted to those areas where they are most needed. Fully involve communities to understand what is important to them.