



Northumberland County Council

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

DATE: 9TH MARCH 2023

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021/22 – Healthy Weight for All Children

Report of: Cllr Wendy Pattison - Adult Wellbeing and Health

Lead Officer: Gill O'Neill - Executive Director of Public Health, Inequalities and Stronger Communities

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present the independent Director of Public Health (DPH) Annual Report for 2021/22 which for this period, is focused on healthy weight in children and highlights the importance of creating the conditions to enable all children to be a healthy weight.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- a. Considers the content of the DPH Annual Report 2021/22;
- b. Comments on the contribution that Health and Wellbeing Board partners can make to healthy weight in children;
- c. Accept and endorse the findings in the independent DPH Annual Report 2021/22 attached as appendix 1 to this report.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is linked to the overarching theme in the Northumberland County Council Corporate Plan 2021 – 24 of 'Tackling inequalities within our communities, supporting our residents to be healthier and happier' and to the 'Living and Learning' priority, caring 'for our residents, supporting the most vulnerable in our society as well as encouraging active citizens. We will ensure the best education standards for our children and young people.'

Key issues

Whilst progress has been made in Northumberland in increasing the proportion of children who are a healthy weight and reducing inequalities, children in our least deprived communities are much more likely to be a healthy weight than children in our most deprived communities at Reception year age and at Year 6. In 2020/21, the National Child Measurement data (NCMP) indicated that there had been a significant increase in the proportion of children who were overweight or obese. This rise in prevalence was the largest single-year increase since the programme began in 2006/7 and is likely to have had a disproportionate impact on children living in our most disadvantaged communities. The Covid pandemic has driven much of this through lockdown measures which led to children leading more sedentary lives as a result of school closures, restrictions on leaving the house, and limitations on meeting others.

Childhood obesity is caused by a complex interaction of social, environmental and economic factors so there is no one solution. The report makes a number of recommendations which seek to place healthy weight in children as a key priority. These are:

- Reframing our approach. Overweight and obesity have long been considered through the lens of individual responsibility, and the result of insufficient knowledge or willpower to make healthy choices. This report shows the 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 and fully involve communities to understand what is important to them.

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. It is an independent report. 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 of services on health and wellbeing issues and priorities that need to be addressed.

This year's report is about childhood obesity; the importance of maintaining healthy weight in children; and the need to focus on creating the conditions that foster healthy weight rather than on the personal responsibility of those looking after children. The report explains some key concepts relating to healthy weight and also provides some context.

For instance, in 2020/21, over 1 in 5 children in reception year (aged 4 – 5 years) were overweight or obese; and over 1 in 3 in Year 6 (age 10 -11yrs). This was a significant increase on the previous year. Whilst a small proportion of children remain underweight, it is overweight and obesity which are linked to social disadvantage. Those inequalities mean that in our most deprived communities nearly 1 in 5 children in Reception year and nearly 1 in 3 children in Year 6 were overweight or obese in 20/21 compared to about 1 in 9 children and 1 in 7 children respectively in our least deprived communities. This has implications across the life course because being a healthy weight in childhood both directly and indirectly increases the likelihood of good health, in its widest sense, in adulthood.

The report explores healthy weight in children through the key environments that they are born, grow and play in: the home, our communities, schools and looks at the influence of healthcare. Each chapter highlights the factors within that environment that can influence healthy weight in childhood; looks at the strengths we can build on; and features a case study. Enabling healthy weight in children is fraught with complexity and like most inequalities, there isn't one thing that will address this challenge. It requires a systems approach and the contribution of all partners and links closely to the wider Northumberland Inequalities Plan and the principles of building on the strengths in our communities.

The report concludes with a small number of recommendations on how the Northumberland system can enable all children to maintain a healthy weight, setting the foundations for a healthier and more productive adulthood.

Appendices



FINAL DPH Annual
Report - Healthy We

1.

Implications

Policy	Any suggested policy implications will be explored further and presented to respective organisations with supporting evidence for decision.
Finance and value for money	The report has no direct financial implications but makes recommendations on how investment in adapting environments where children live and play to make healthier options more accessible can reduce the financial costs of health and social care due to obesity in adulthood.
Legal	The report meets the statutory requirement of the DPH to produce an annual report on a health issue relevant to the local population. The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are not functions reserved to Full Council
Procurement	Food supply chains should be considered from a nutritional content perspective

Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The report highlights the way in which addressing childhood obesity can help to reduce health inequalities.
Risk Assessment	Not undertaken
Crime & Disorder	N/A
Customer Consideration	N/A
Carbon reduction	N/A
Health and Wellbeing	The report thoroughly explores the contribution that reducing childhood overweight and obesity can make to improving health and reducing health inequalities.
Wards	This report relates to population health and wellbeing in all wards.

Background papers:

None

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full name of officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Suki Binjal
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	Jan Willis
Relevant Executive Director	Gill O'Neill
Chief Executive	Rick O'Farrell
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wendy Pattison

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