



# Northumberland County Council

Health and Well-being Board

Thursday, 13 February 2025

## Healthy Weight Alliance Annual Update

**Report of Councillor(s)** Veronica Jones, Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequalities

**Responsible Officer(s):** Gill O'Neill, Executive Director for Public Health (DPH), Inequalities & Stronger Communities

### 1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

This report supports the overarching themes below, identified in the NCC Corporate Plan 2023-2026:

Tackling inequalities; Children and young people have the best start in life and grow up well. Residents have the building blocks of a good life. Empowered and resilient communities.

This update outlines the disproportionate impact being an unhealthy weight has on the population of Northumberland. The Healthy Weight Alliance (HWA) will work collectively to ensure support services meet the needs of those accessing a range of services as well as creating an environment conducive to supporting healthy weight. We know the causes of overweight and obesity exist in the places our residents live, work and play and where the food and built environment can make it difficult to make healthier lifestyle choices. Ongoing work to prioritise good nutrition for our children and young people, food availability and affordability and promoting active travel will all contribute towards residents achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

Driving Economic Growth; Skilled and aspirational people. A connected county

Addressing the causes of obesity and supporting residents to achieve a healthy weight is likely to support economic growth by increasing productivity and reducing pressure within health and social care. Residents achieving a healthy weight where being active is part of everyday life can also benefit from increased mobility and independence.

This report also contributes towards priorities outlined in Northumberland's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, notably by aligning efforts across the system to

ensure a collective approach to promoting a healthy weight with organisations supporting each other.

## **2. Purpose of report**

- a) To update board members of the progress made by the Healthy Weight Alliance in Year 1.
- b) To feedback on current work, gaps and opportunities identified by Healthy Weight Alliance Task and Finish groups.
- c) Seek feedback from Board Members regarding work to date and proposed future approach to support a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight in Northumberland.

## **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Health and Wellbeing Board (H&WBB):

- 3.1 Continue to receive updates and reports from the HWA which outline work undertaken.
- 3.2 H&WBB continue to support representation and engagement in the Healthy Weight Alliance dedicating time and resource to support the development of key actions such as the proposed action plan and input of data and intelligence.
- 3.3 Ensure that HWA actions align with systemwide priorities across all Northumberland partners.

## **4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

This report is scheduled for 13 February Health and Wellbeing Board as an annual update from the Healthy Weight Alliance.

## **5. Background**

- 5.1 Maintaining a healthy weight has many health benefits, including improved health-related quality of life and a reduced risk of health conditions. The benefits of supporting residents in Northumberland to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, stretch beyond an individual's health. We know that actions to support Healthy Weight can have positive impacts on employability and productivity of local populations and could reduce demands for health and social care
- 5.2 While most children and young people remain a healthy weight (see table 1 below), approximately one-third of adults are a healthy weight (Body Mass Index 18.5 – 25) meaning most of our adult population are overweight or obese (see table 2 below). In addition, younger generations are becoming obese at earlier ages and staying obese for longer.

**Table 1. Prevalence of Healthy Weight in Children in Northumberland.**

Indicator	Period	Northumberland	North East	England
Reception Prevalence of Healthy Weight (4-5 yrs)	2022/23	74.1%	74.0%	77.5%
	2023/24	74.6%	74.5%	76.8%
Year 6 Prevalence of Healthy Weight (10-11yrs)	2022/23	60.6%	58.9%	61.9%
	2023/24	63.8%		
			60.1%	62.5%

**Table 2. Prevalence of Overweight (including Obesity) in Adults in Northumberland.**

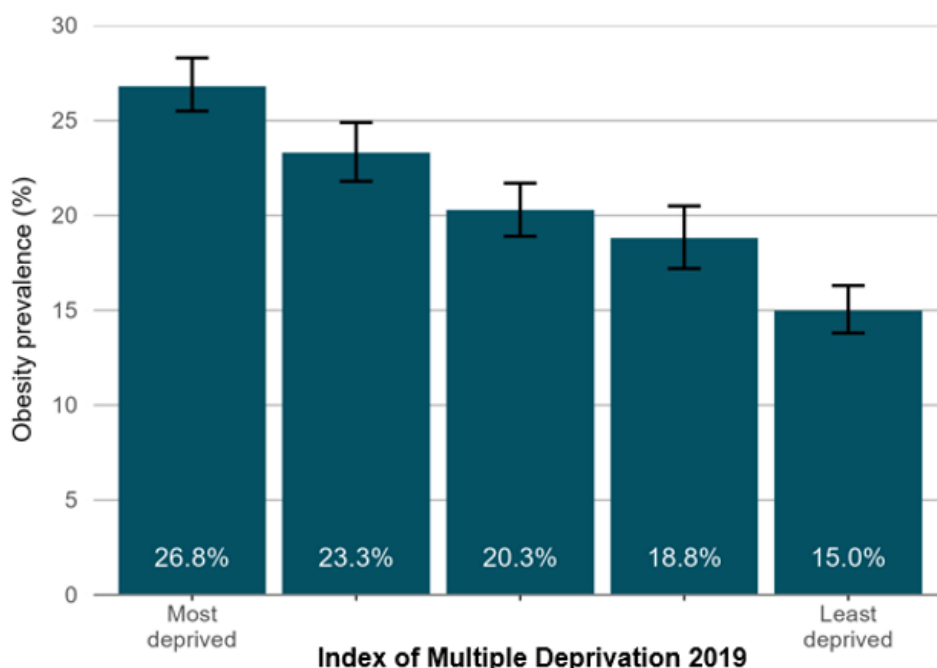
Indicator	Period	Northumberland	North East	England
Overweight Prevalence (including obesity) in Adults (18+)	2021/22	63.4%	70.5%	63.8%
	2022/23	69.8%	70.2%	64%

- 5.3 The causes of obesity exist in the places where we live, work and play and where food availability and our immediate environment can make it difficult to make healthy lifestyle choices. There is no single solution to tackle obesity and local action to promote healthy weight across the life course requires a coordinated, collaborative approach. No one is immune to becoming obese however some people are more likely to become overweight or obese than others.

### Healthy Weight and Inequalities

- 5.4 The Marmot Review identifies, low income and social deprivation as important factors regarding the likelihood of becoming obese with obesity prevalence highest amongst the most deprived groups in society .
- 5.5 There is a strong relationship between deprivation and childhood obesity. Data from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) shows that obesity prevalence among children in both Reception and Year 6 increases with increased socioeconomic deprivation. Figure 1 below highlights obesity prevalence by deprivation (measured by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score) for children in year 6 (aged 10-11 years old). Obesity prevalence in the most deprived 20% of children is approximately twice of that of the least deprived 20%.

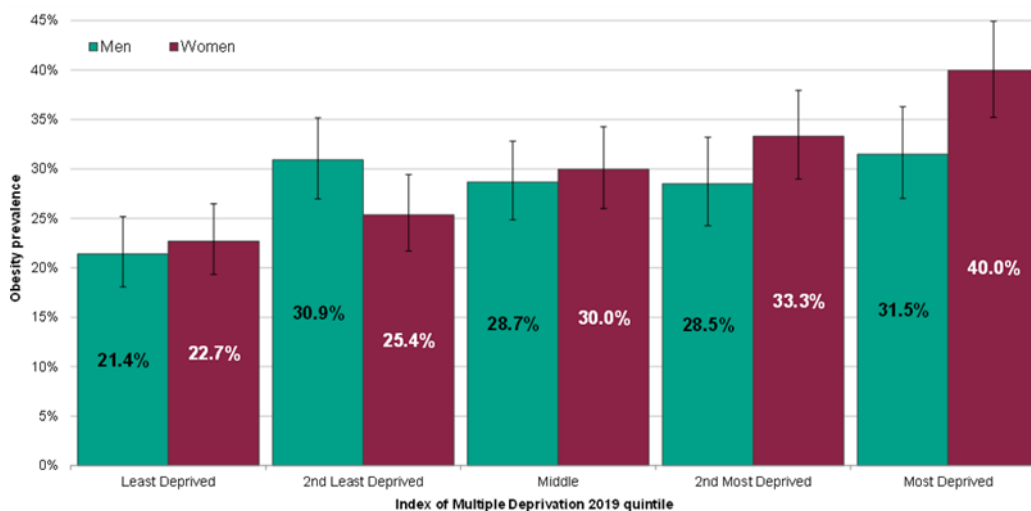
**Figure 1. Obesity Prevalence by Deprivation for Year 6 Children (aged 10 to 11 years old) in Northumberland.**



**Source:** National Childhood Measurement Programme

5.6 Although obesity prevalence data by deprivation for adults is unavailable for Northumberland, Figure 2 below shows national obesity prevalence for men and women in England with obesity rates highest amongst the most deprived.

**Figure 2. Adult Obesity Prevalence by Deprivation in England**



**Source:** Health Survey for England 2022

### **Adopting a Systems Wide Approach to Healthy Weight**

- 5.7 A whole systems approach can add value by providing the opportunity to engage stakeholders across the wider system to develop a shared vision and actions that tackle the more upstream drivers of obesity, that are outside the direct influence of public health.
- 5.8 Taking a whole systems approach can provide additional benefits over and above the benefits of tackling obesity in general. The benefits of a whole system approach include:
- a) Effect of collective actions is greater than the sum of the individual actions. Identifies, implements and aligns actions that have wider impact across the local system.
  - b) Reflects the local leadership role of local authorities. Enables reach and penetration into local places, working with and through an extensive range of stakeholders, including communities.
  - c) Aligns with a 'Health in All Policies' approach. Recognises the range and complexity of causes of obesity, supporting a system-wide approach to understand and address health inequalities.
  - d) Maximises all the assets in the local area, including community assets. Recognising and identifying local assets can help build on the strengths of communities.
  - e) Supports a community centred approach to tackling health inequalities. Involving local communities, in particular disadvantaged groups, can better reflect the local realities, help improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities
  - f) Develops transferable workforce skills and capacity. Relevant and applicable for other complex issues.
- 5.9 Changes in levels of obesity and creating an environment conducive to healthy weight are long-term outcomes. Obesity impacts individuals and families living in our local communities and this gives local government and its partners the opportunity to work with communities to help prevent the causes of obesity, complementing work at a national level.

### **Actions Being Taken at a National Level**

- 5.10 Many of the most powerful levers to support people to achieve a healthy weight are within national control. There have been recent national policy changes such as the introduction of the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL) designed to remove sugar from soft drinks and additional funding for the Physical Education and Sport Premium designed to support children and young people to have an active start to life. Evidence indicates that the SDIL will lead to medium-term reductions in dental caries and levels of overweight and obesity as well as long-term improvements in life expectancy. In addition to these well documented national interventions, additional, ongoing measures to support healthy weight include:
- 5.11 *Volume price and local promotion:* Restrictions on location promotions came into force on in October 2022. The location restrictions aim to reduce the likelihood of impulse purchases by restricting the placement of High Fat Sugar or Salt (HFSS)

foods in prominent places such as store entrances, aisle ends and checkouts. Online restrictions equivalents are also in force and include restricting the promotion of HFSS products on homepages, landing pages for other food categories and shopping baskets or payment pages. Volume price promotion restrictions, which include buy one get one free (BOGOF) or multibuy offers such as 3 for 2, have been delayed, with implementation now required by October 2025.

- 5.12 *Calorie Labelling*: Legislation requiring large, out-of-home food businesses to add calorie labels to the food they sell came into force April 2022. The calorie labelling regulations aim to empower people to make informed nutritional choices regarding. Businesses in England including, restaurants, fast-food outlets and supermarkets with more than 250 employees are required to display calorie information of non-prepacked food and soft drinks.
- 5.13 *Advertising Restrictions*: Restrictions include banning the advertisement of products HFSS on television before the watershed (from 9pm to 5:30am) as well as advertising restrictions for paid online junk food adverts. The policy aims to influence children's consumption behaviour by reducing the amount of advertising they see for HFSS products with advertising restrictions coming into effect October 2025.
- 5.14 As previously mentioned, complex issues such as healthy weight need a collaborative system-wide approach. Central government action should enable and amplify local action to support residents to achieve a healthy weight. The 2021/22 Director of Public Health Annual Report recommended the establishment of a Healthy Weight Alliance, which brings together agencies to build on existing good work and ensure a coordinated approach

## **6. Northumberland and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Healthy Weight Declaration**

- 6.1 Both organisations have signed Food Active's Healthy Weight Declaration to drive actions outlined across the thematic areas. Much of this progression has been within health promoting environments, using policies contained within the local plan to limit the number of new hot food takeaways and using Health Impact Assessments to maximise health benefits of proposed developments.
- 6.2 In addition, both organisations have used local authority and healthcare settings respectively to ensure a cultural shift towards health and wellbeing. Actions include increasing access to fruit and vegetables for staff, patients and visitors as well as ensuring fresh drinking water is available within workplaces. Action has also been taken to promote active travel with designated walks, the inclusion of standing desks and promotion of cycling schemes available to both organisations.
- 6.3 Work within both organisations will continue to progress with future actions including commercial determinants theme, particularly procurement of healthy foods within organisations and protecting residents from unhealthy food advertising.

## **7. Northumberland's Healthy Weight Alliance**

- 7.1 Northumberland's Healthy Weight Alliance (HWA) was formally launched in February 2024 with a vision of seeing an increasing trend in the proportion of people in Northumberland achieve and maintain a healthy weight within the next decade. The HWA forms an important component in our systems wide approach to improve health and wellbeing and contributes towards priorities outlined in Northumberland's

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Building on existing strengths to promote healthy weight will support physical and emotional wellbeing within our children and young people while our whole system approach to healthy weight continues to put prevention at the forefront of our approach.

- 7.2 Initial HWA meetings focused on sharing feedback from the Healthy Weight Workshop held in 2023, agreeing a shared purpose and focusing on local priorities. The alliance has established a quarterly meeting frequency, appointed a designated Chair (Paul Jones, Director of Environment and Transport) and devised 3 task and finish groups to lead on immediate priorities. Alliance membership continues to grow, ensuring all parts of the system are engaged. Membership representation currently comes from multiple services across Northumberland County Council and includes partners such as NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB), Voluntary and Community Sector, Places Leisure, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust.
- 7.3 From the initial workshop feedback and with consideration for the current evidence base to promote healthy weight , and prevent obesity , the HWA identified 3 priority areas for action:
  - a) Priority 1: Children and Young People – Conception to 5 years old
  - b) Priority 2: Children and Young People – 5 to 19 years old
  - c) Priority 3: Building a Healthy Weight Environment
- 7.4 To ensure consistency regarding information collected by each of the task and finish groups, the HWA created a template proforma designed to capture current work within the 3 areas, gaps in current provision and potential opportunities. In addition to these questions, each task and finish group also asked 3 community centred screening questions:
  - a) What can communities do for themselves?
  - b) What might communities need some help with?
  - c) What can't communities do that agencies can?
- 7.5 A summary of feedback for each of the task and finish groups facilitated during August and September 2024 can be seen below in Table 3. For more information regarding feedback from each task and finish group, please see Appendix 1: Healthy Weight – Task and Finish Group Feedback.

**Table 3. Summary of Task and Finish Group Feedback**

<b>Theme 1:</b> Healthy weight for 0-5 year groups	
<b>Purpose:</b> To support healthy weight in Infants and Children through diet, nutrition, healthy eating & lifestyle	
<b>Stakeholders Engaged:</b> Family Hubs, NHFT Maternity Services, Growing Healthy Northumberland 0-19 Service, Early Years Providers	
Current Approaches	Various programmes aimed at supporting expecting and new mothers such as our family hub 'preparing for parenthood' programme and 'feeding friends' infant support groups delivered across the county.

	<p>Training available across early years settings to enable professionals to access tools and resources to support the promotion of healthy weight in under 5's.</p> <p>Policy implementation – Healthy Northumberland Infant Feeding Policy and Structural changes – Normalisation of Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition through our Breastfeeding Friendly scheme in hospitality.</p>
Gaps	<p>Healthy eating resource packs for providers to borrow (like the oral health boxes which have been rolled out successfully).</p> <p>Consistent messaging for families regarding healthy home time snacks for children.</p>
Opportunities	<p>Production of guidance / criteria for early years settings for healthy packed lunches.</p>

<p><b>Theme 2:</b> Healthy weight for 5-19 year groups</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> To support healthy weight in Children &amp; Young People through diet, nutrition, healthy eating &amp; lifestyle</p> <p><b>Stakeholders Engaged:</b> Public Health, Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, North East &amp; North Cumbria ICB, 0-19 Service, Family Hubs, Places for Leisure, School Meals Service, Leading Link, HAF</p>	
Current Approaches	<p>Continue to support partners with their remit around tackling childhood obesity for example, NCMP, Starting Well Digital Programme, HENRY, GP Referral Pathway, VCS activities, HAF, Health Trainers and Community Sports.</p>
Gaps	<p>Universal healthy weight support for 12-16 year olds through partner agencies or social prescribing.</p> <p>Additional support for families who have additional needs.</p>
Opportunities	<p>Work with schools to promote a 'whole school approach' to healthy weight – including policies and practice regarding healthy food and physical activity.</p>

<p><b>Theme 3:</b> Supporting healthy weight through the built environment</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> Focused on what is strong in terms of the current procedures in place to support a healthy environment identify and challenges within this area.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders Engaged:</b> Planning, RISE, Public Health Team, NCT, Strategic Transport and Environment.</p>	
Current Approaches	<p>Screening Tools and Frameworks prioritising health promoting environments (design and build) - Examples include: Healthy Planning Checklists, Northumberland Design Code and Health Impact Assessments.</p> <p>Restricting the number of new hot food take-aways through policies contained within the Local Plan.</p> <p>Develop new and continue to improve our current walking and cycling infrastructure.</p>
Gaps	<p>Relationship with out of home catering providers to provide and promote healthy food options.</p>



	Research into the impacts of 'Dark Kitchens' in Northumberland and any potential negative health impacts.
Opportunities	To work with small, medium enterprises providing food and drinks on their floor layout to ensure local response to product placement and promotional offers, mirror national legislation.  To work with our Anchor Institutions providing food and drink to ensure restaurant, vending and shops for staff continuously promote healthy choices.

7.6 In addition to the template proforma completed by all task and finish groups, 3 screening questions were asked with the aim of better understanding how we can work with communities and narrow inequality gaps in healthy weight. A summary of these questions for all 3 task and finish groups can be seen below in Table 4.

**Table 4. Response to Screening Questions (from Cormac Russell).**

	<b>Task and Finish Group</b>		
<b>Screening Question</b>	0-5 Year Group	5-19 Year Group	Built Environment
What can communities do for themselves?	Make small manageable changes such as eating more fruit and vegetables, reducing portions sizes, moving more, eating together as families.  Offer peer support – giving encouragement, advice and guidance.	Act on key messages around healthy eating and being active, for example 5-a-day.  Access a range of information (from reputable sources) regarding healthy weight.	Access local facilities such as parks, country parks, and beaches.  Promote and share opportunities to be active and utilise infrastructure such as active travel corridors.
What might communities need some help with?	Building positive relationships with professionals and places: such as family hubs.  Understand that offers that often seem attractive such as meal deals and BOGOF can be of poor nutritional and monetary value.	Support regarding shopping and cooking including healthy packed lunches for children.  Enhance the 'child's voice' considering how to best work with families in a non-judgemental way, understanding that weight is a delicate subject.	Accessing community space for growing such as allotments and community gardens.  Engaging in opportunities to be involved in the design and planning of local development proposals.
What can't communities do that agencies can?	Provide accurate, evidence-based information regarding healthy weight.  Support Early Years providers to provide healthy meal choices, suitable to their physical resources.	Commission support services to reduce gaps in current provision.  Support families entitled to free school meals during school holiday periods.	Shape the local commercial food landscape.  Ensure that 'where I live' is conducive to walking and cycling or has adequate public transport.

## 8. Future Plans for Northumberland’s Healthy Weight Alliance

- 8.1 The results of the Task and Finish groups provided analysis of gaps and opportunities, which are being considered for further action by partners within the Healthy Weight Alliance. Next steps to narrow the focus of the HWA and agree alliance priorities to maximise impact include:
- a) Develop an assessment tool, which will help prioritise actions that have evidence of effectiveness, address inequalities and have a population impact. Alliance members have begun work on an assessment tool which will be finalised early 2025.
  - b) Once complete, priority actions will be used to form an HWA strategic plan capturing HWA resource available, outputs and outcomes.
  - c) Utilise available data to best inform actions taken by the HWA. This includes a deep dive into National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) data and data collected by alliance partners which makes the case for health weight and produces a narrative to focus on addressing inequalities.
  - d) Develop a Northumberland response to future national policy consultations – to ensure Healthy Weight is considered in all Policies.
  - e) Understand how the Healthy Weight Alliance can lead on and contribute towards actions proposed in Northumberland’s Food Strategy. The HWA is well placed to lead on sustainable public sector catering and procurement as well as ensuring our residents are protected from the harmful effects of ‘unhealthy food’ advertising. These actions will also support commitments outlined within the Healthy Weight Declaration.

## 9. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	HWA seeks to identify and use local policy levers to promote healthy weight - and also influence national policy related to healthy weight.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. While this report does not outline any financial expenditure, actions taken to address healthy weight are likely to have benefits to the economy (increased productivity) as well as cost savings (likely within healthcare and social care).
<b>Legal</b>	None Identified
<b>Procurement</b>	None identified
<b>Human resources</b>	None identified
<b>Property</b>	No specific implications for property

<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	No - not required at this point All of this work will be undertaken through an inequalities lens.
<b>Risk assessment</b>	No Risk Assessment Undertaken
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	Not applicable
<b>Customer considerations</b>	The HWA is developing and strengthening our relationships with key partners and stakeholders with an involvement in promoting healthy weight.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	Creating Healthy Weight environments is likely to support a reduction in the counties carbon footprint. Likely contributors to this reduction include an increase in the number of trips made by walking or cycling as well as reducing food milage by sourcing and the use of locally produced products.
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	Supporting residents to achieve a healthy weight will have a positive impact on the physical and social health of Northumberland's population. Overweight and Obesity are associated with poorer health and social outcomes as well as decreased quality of life and life expectancy.
<b>Wards</b>	(All Wards);

**10. Background papers**

Appendix: Task and Finish Group Presentations

**11. Links to other key reports already published**

Not Applicable

**12. Author and Contact Details**

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