

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 02/19

Date: February 2019

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To provide a briefing note on excessive weight in 4-5 year olds

The factors that give rise to the increasing prevalence of obesity in society are complex and interlinked. To effectively reduce childhood obesity at a population level, consistent and sustained action is required by a multitude of partners. Local action needs to be complimented by national action, such as legislation and policy changes. Take for example the current national focus on reformulation of foods to reduce high sugar content.

Childhood obesity levels are measured annually by the National Child Measurement programme. Updated information on obesity prevalence in children is published once per year. 2018 data for Medway showed an encouraging but mixed picture, for the four indicators that we measure local success against. The following table shows that 3 out of the 4 indicators improved since 2017.

	Medway 2017 %	Medway 2018 %	England 2018 %
4-5 year old obesity level	10.3%	10.1%	9.5%
4-5 year old overweight and obesity level	22.6%	23.4%	22.4%
10-11 year old obesity level	21.1%	20.3%	20.1%
10-11 year old overweight and obesity	35.5%	34%	34.3%

The long term trend of childhood obesity statistics shows that Medway closely follows the trajectory of national prevalence. There have been some variations locally, for example the increase and decrease in year R and year 6 data over the last 3 years. Interestingly the downward trend of both 10-11 year old data observed in 2018, was not seen in 2017.

Due to the whole system action that is required to effectively tackle obesity, it is not possible to identify which specific factors positively influence obesity prevalence from year to year. There are likely to be fluctuations over time as the impact of national legislation or local programmes take effect. However, the

evidence suggests that consistent and large scale interventions from all public, private, voluntary and academic sector partners is needed to achieve a sustained downward trend. Medway Council coordinates the Supporting Healthy Weight Network in order to achieve this multi-partner action.

Medway Council also provides a wide range of services to directly tackle the issue of childhood obesity including:

- A range of family weight management services including specialist support for 4-5 and 10-11 year olds
- Cookery education sessions for infants, families and children
- A range of health promotion campaigns including SugarSmart Medway
- Free swimming at Medway Leisure Centres

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