

# Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No. 5/22

Date: 18 August 2022

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

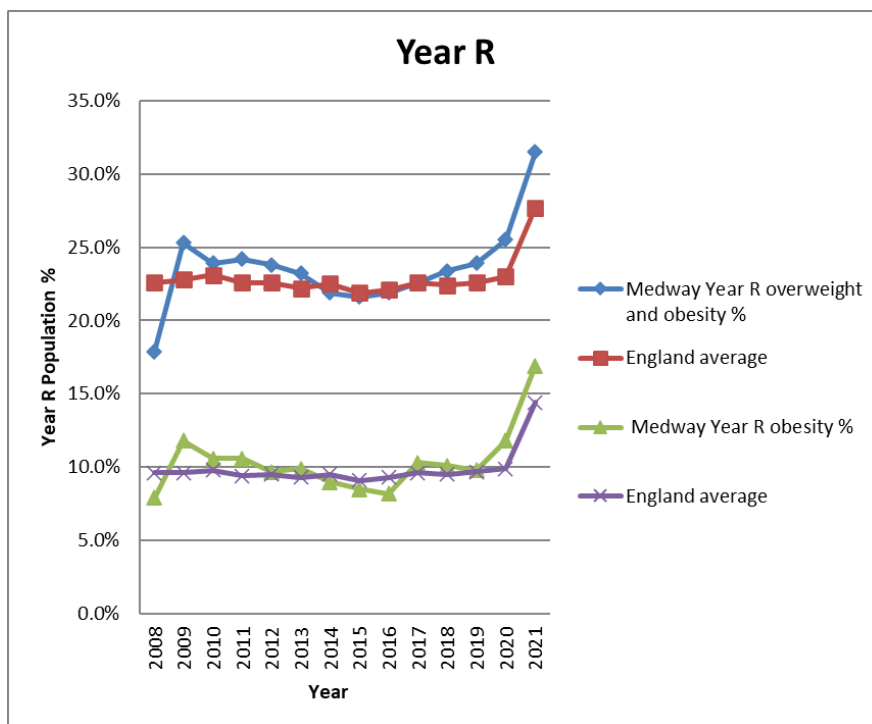
Purpose: To provide members with an update on the most recent childhood obesity and overweight statistics and the whole system plan to tackle the issue

## Reducing Excess Weight in Children

### Background

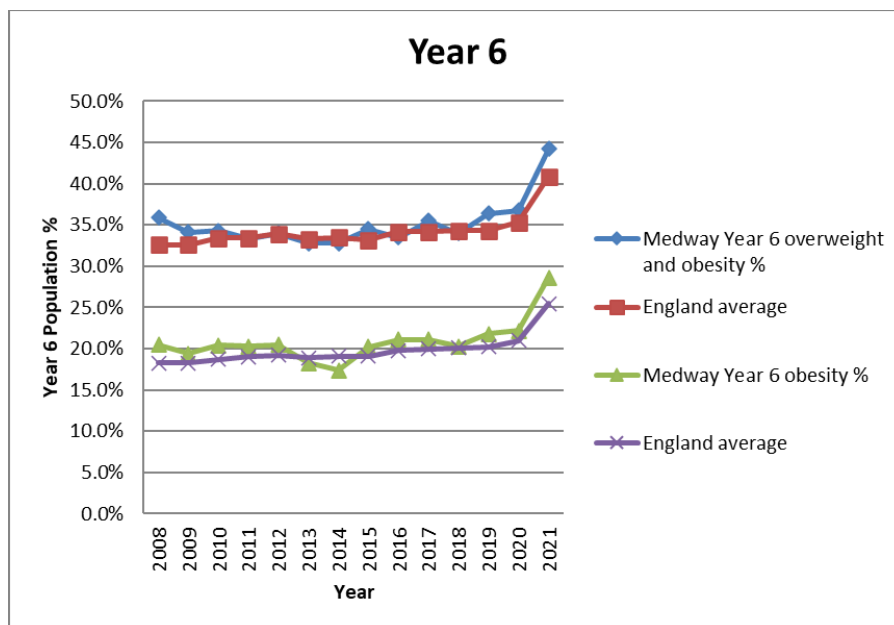
- The proportion of adults (18+) in England classified as overweight or steadily increased over time. Currently the majority of adults in England (65%) are overweight or obese. The pattern and levels of overweight and obesity in children is unfortunately, following the same trajectory as the adult population. The impact is more significant in the most disadvantaged communities. Given the complexity of factors that give rise to excess weight, national and local actions must be coordinated and systematically applied to address this serious challenge to the public health. Tackling such an ingrained problem, requires a long-term, system-wide approach that makes obesity everybody's business.
- The following graphs highlight the challenges for Medway.
- The 2021 data highlights a significant increase in the overweight and obesity prevalence in reception age children in Medway. Whilst rates have risen sharply across England, Medway has seen a much higher rate increase than the England average. 2021 saw a 5.6% increase in obesity levels in reception year children in Medway compared to the 0.2-1% rises experienced over the previous 12 years.

**Figure 1:** Year R (4-5 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average.



- The lines for obesity only show Medway has consistently been in line with gradual increase and similar to the England average until 2020 and 2021, when Medway rate has been higher than the England average for year R children.
- The combined overweight and obesity line for 4-5 year olds was also similar until 2019, with Medway now consistently above the England average.

**Figure 2:** Year 6 (10-11 year olds) overweight and obesity rates in Medway compared to England average.



- The percentage of children in year 6 categorised as obese has risen significantly in England in 2021. Medway rates of obesity and overweight in year 6 children have followed this trend, are above the England average and reached an all time recorded high.
- The lines for obesity only show Medway has followed the national trend of gradual increase and consistently been similar to the England average until 2021, when the Medway rate rose higher than the England average for year 6 children.
- The combined overweight and obesity line for 10-11 year olds, was also similar until 2019, with Medway now consistently above the England average.

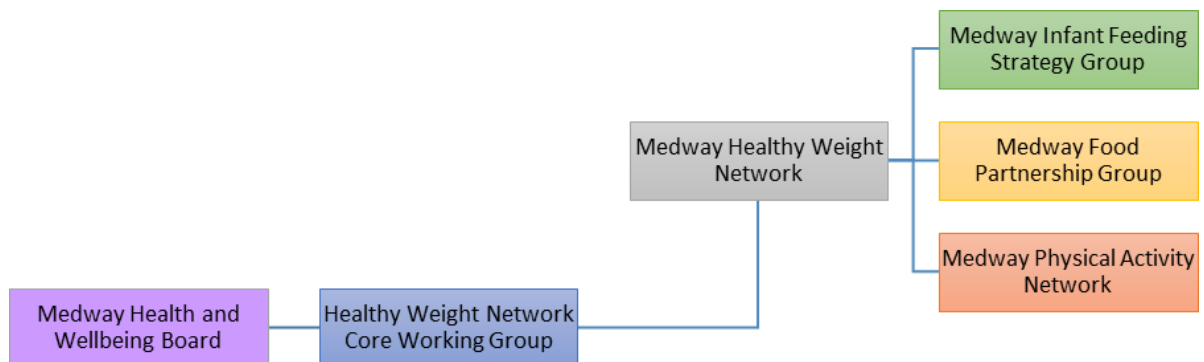
## Medway's Whole Systems Plan

- The most recent National Child Measurement data shows that nationally children living in the most deprived areas were more than twice as likely to be obese, than those living in the least deprived areas.
- The Medway's whole system approach builds on the last eight years of activity that has been largely delivered through the Medway Healthy Weight Network. The network is co-ordinated by Medway Council's Public Health team and is nationally recognised. The continued approach follows the steps suggested by Public Health England (PHE) in their 2019 'Whole systems approach to obesity publication'. This guide and set of resources, support local authorities and their partners to implement a whole systems approach to address obesity and promote a healthy weight.
- Recent rises in obesity prevalence for children and adults reflect a number of specific factors, not least it is suggested, the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the population. Action to address these systemic issues requires all Medway partners to increase their focus and attention on the whole system which is not simply about calorific intake or physical inactivity . A whole system approach is necessary to lower prevalence and meet the government's ambition of halving childhood obesity by 2030. Figure 3 provides an overview of the whole system approach to tackle obesity. Figure 4 sets of the framework of the Medway Health Weight Network.

### Figure 3: Obesity Whole Systems Approach

- Phase 1 – Set up – Secures senior-level support and establishes the necessary governance and resource structure to implement the approach
- Phase 2 – Building the local picture – Builds a compelling narrative explaining why obesity matters locally and creates a shared understanding of how obesity is addresses at a local level
- Phase 3 – Mapping the local system – Brings stakeholders together to create a comprehensive map of the local system that is understood to cause obesity. Agreeing a shared vision
- Phase 4 – Action -Stakeholders come together to prioritise areas to intervene in the local system and propose collaborative and aligned actions
- Phase 5 – Managing the system network – Maintains momentum by developing the stakeholder network and an agreed action plan
- Phase 6 – Reflect and refresh – Critically reflect on the process of undertaking a whole systems approach and consider opportunities for strengthening the process

Figure 4: Structure of the Medway Healthy Weight Network supporting the Whole Systems Approach to Obesity



### Local Action

- As already described, action to tackle obesity in Medway is shaped by the whole systems approach and implemented through the Healthy Weight Network. There is an annual Healthy Weight Summit which brings together a wide range of private, public, voluntary and academic sector partners with major contributions from the following subgroups of the Healthy Weight Network
  - Medway Infant Feeding Strategy Group
  - Medway Food Partnership Group
  - Medway Physical Activity Network
- Updated action through new sub-groups and networks put in place in 2021, produced a list of priority actions which were endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board in April 2021. The 2021 priorities are outlined below with a progress summary:

- *Increase awareness and engagement with existing and new infant feeding social marketing campaigns (i.e. Grow my Brain and Beside You)*

Social media interaction has increased. The initiation of a bespoke campaign, survey and targeted posts have seen rises in engagement. Current figures show there are over 5,000 followers of Beside You across various channels with Facebook, with reach of about 15,000 monthly, and average annual reach of 126,000.

- *Restoring numbers of peer supporters on maternity wards and in the community, increasing the number of community drop-ins available for breastfeeding support.*

While it was not possible to have peer supporters on hospital wards due to COVID-19, there are 6 peer support venues across Medway with bookable appointments. Drop-in coffee mornings with trained peer supporters attending are due to launch in April 2022.

- *Work towards the next level of Baby Friendly Accreditation status for community, acute and neo-natal units, ensuring all new staff are trained on infant feeding skills.*

COVID-19 prevented the assessment process from taking place due to visitor restrictions. Medway Maternity Unit has however evidenced its current practice and committed to maintaining the current level of activity. There are also plans to progress to the next phase of accreditation over the coming year. Medway Community Healthcare have dates in place for assessments to take place in the over 2022. Training requirements for new and existing staff have been maintained across the pandemic by all units in line with the Baby Friendly guidance.

- *Physical Activity Alliance members to promote each other's physical activity offer through all available channels and networks, encouraging members to work in partnership to generate opportunities for each other.*

The alliance has held 3 virtual meetings over the past year with over 30 organisations and individuals in attendance. Attendees are invited to promote their activities to the group during the meeting and then enter

their offer on the Every Day Active website.

<https://www.everydayactivekent.org.uk/communities/medway/>

- *Understand residents' barriers to exercise and prioritise finding local solutions for groups with the lowest activity levels.*

There are many collaborations that have developed from the alliance between schools, local charities, organisations and businesses to promote physical activity. For example include revival bikes have increased the supply of recycled bikes to children of all ages from families on a low income. This helps promote active travel. There has been a pilot project initiated with Medway Extra Care Schemes. This pilot promotes physical activity for people living in supported accommodation. This initiative has been well-received. It is will be rolled out incrementally to other sites .

- *Undertake local mapping exercise to identify needs for a 'Food Hub' pilot project in Medway.*

The Public Health Intelligence team presented the mapping for food deserts at the November 2021 Medway Food Partnership. This work provided an overview as to how food is accessed across all wards in Medway. This has generated a proposal to develop a central food hub in Medway.

- *Develop culturally diverse Eatwell guidance and supporting information such as recipes/growing info.*

This task has been completed and guidance is now available for African Caribbean and South Asian Eatwell guides. If well utilised, further guidance for other ethnic communities will be developed by the food and nutrition team.

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/download/677/medway\\_food\\_partnership](https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/download/677/medway_food_partnership)

- *Develop and deliver cooking on a Budget Classes supporting local organisations working within the Medway community.*

Plans to redevelop the Adult Cookery Programme are in place, these will incorporate food and budgeting and will be face to face to enhance learning.

- *To support the education process to improve the whole school approach to providing healthy food options to all pupils of all ages.*

The Soil Association has been awarded a contract to deliver the Food 4 Life Programme to all schools in Medway over the next 3 years (2022 to

2024). Planning stages are in place with a launch date of 30 March 2022 where the programme will be presented at the Child health conference.

- Following the 2022 Medway Healthy Weight Summit, the sub-groups and network produced a list of priority actions for 2022/2023. This year's summit saw an attendance increase of approximately 25 percent over the last year with attendance by 97 people across the public, private and voluntary sectors. The session included updates from our network partners, case studies from local organisations showcasing their work to create healthier environments for their staff and local communities, and the forming of the 2022/23 priorities.
  - Increase uptake of antenatal education sessions and ensure breastfeeding and responsive feeding are included.
  - Achieve highest level of BFI accreditation for acute and community settings.
  - Physical Activity Alliance members to promote each other's services through all available channels and networks, encouraging members to work in partnership to generate opportunities for each other.
  - Encourage promotion of the benefits of Physical Activity in primary and secondary care settings, providing relevant education and resources to facilitate positive conversations with inactive people.
  - Increase the number of food related businesses that are engaged in the Medway Food Partnership.
  - Promote and increase healthy vending machines and water refill across businesses in Medway.
  - Deliver the Medway Can healthy weight marketing campaign [www.medwaycan.com](http://www.medwaycan.com)

3.5 These priority actions are being taken forward by a large range of partners that make up the Healthy Weight Network and its sub-groups. This list is not exclusive and does not detail the comprehensive list of actions being undertaken all partners are pursuing to tackle obesity in Medway. It does however highlight the priorities that are largely dependent on partnership working.

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