

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No 12/13

Date: 27 June 2013

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Obesity Briefing - Medway

Causes of obesity

Obesity occurs when energy intake from food and drink consumption is greater than energy expenditure through the body's metabolism and physical activity over a prolonged period, resulting in the accumulation of excess body fat. This simplistic energy imbalance view is widely held to be true by health professionals and researchers, although alternative theories of the causes of obesity do exist. However, general consensus is that there are many complex behavioural, biochemical and societal factors that combine to contribute to the causes of obesity.

The [Foresight report \(2007\)](#) referred to a “complex web of societal and biological factors that have, in recent decades, exposed our inherent human vulnerability to weight gain”. The report presented an obesity system map with energy balance at its centre. Around this, over 100 variables directly or indirectly influence energy balance. The “complex web” can be found at the following web address <http://www.shiftn.com/obesity/Full-Map.html?>

The Foresight map has been divided into 7 cross-cutting predominant themes;

- *Biology*: an individual's starting point - the influence of genetics and ill health;
- *Activity environment*: the influence of the environment on an individual's activity behaviour, for example a decision to cycle to work may be influenced by road safety, air pollution or provision of a cycle shelter and showers;
- *Physical Activity*: the type, frequency and intensity of activities an individual carries out, such as cycling vigorously to work every day;
- *Societal influences*: the impact of society, for example the influence of the media, education, peer pressure or culture;
- *Individual psychology*: for example a person's individual psychological drive for particular foods and consumption patterns, or physical activity patterns or preferences;
- *Food environment*: the influence of the food environment on an individual's food choices, for example a decision to eat more fruit and vegetables may be influenced by the availability and quality of fruit and vegetables near home;

- *Food consumption*: the quality, quantity (portion sizes) and frequency (snacking patterns) of an individual's diet

National Targets

The most recent government ambition is to achieve:

- a sustained downward trend in the level of excess weight in children by 2020
- a downward trend in the level of excess weight averaged across all adults by 2020

Given that adult obesity rates have been steadily increasing since the 1980s and levels of childhood obesity have increased at a steady pace, since the mid 1990s, these ambitions are particularly ambitious. This is despite trend lines suggesting a plateau in the levels of childhood obesity in the last few years, so success which will require significant contributions from a wide range of partners and organisations.

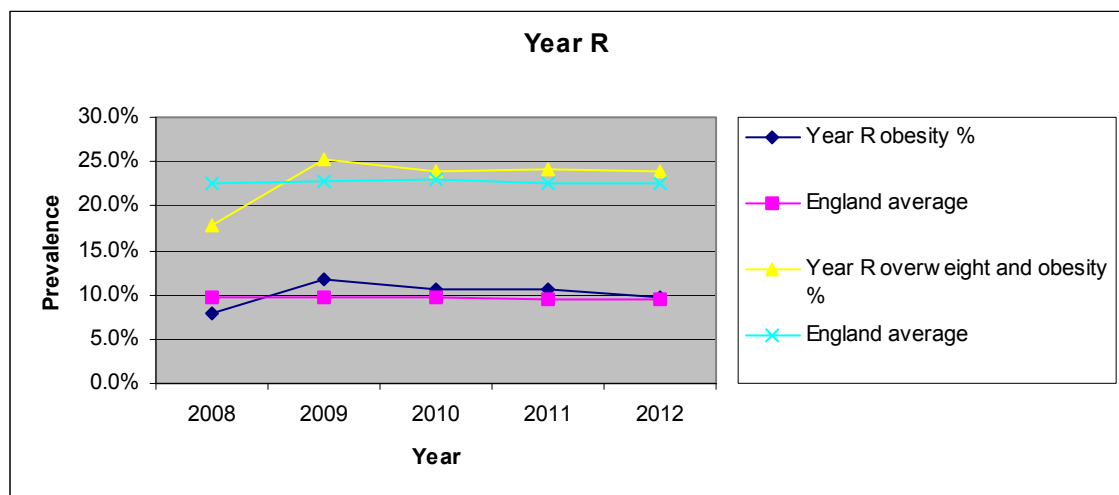
The Health and Wellbeing Board has identified promoting healthy eating and physical activity as one of its priorities within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

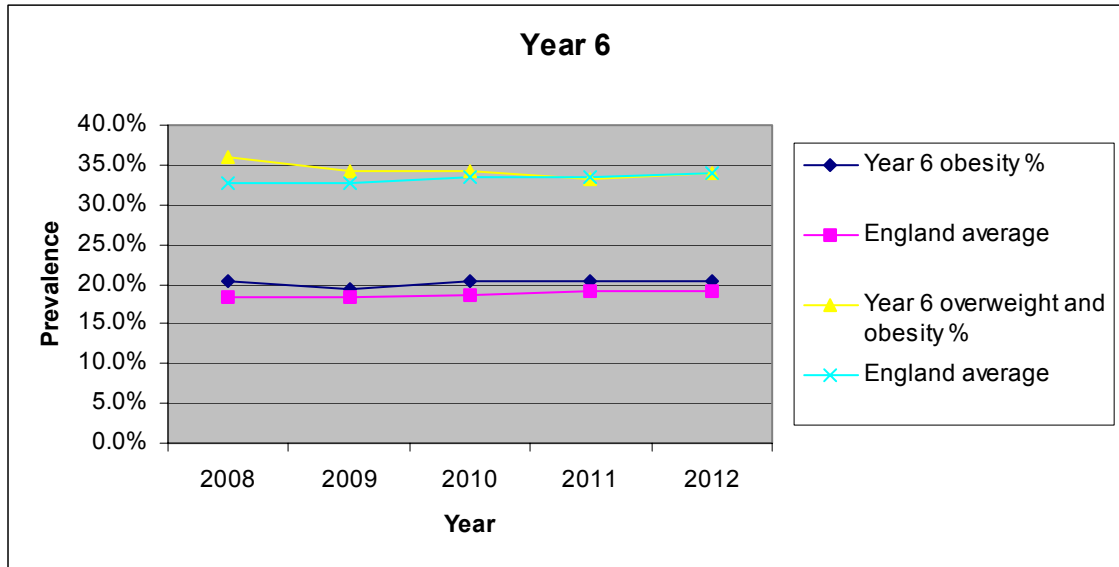
Obesity levels in Medway

Childhood obesity

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) weighs and measures children in Reception Year (aged 4-5 years) and Year 6 (aged 10-11 years) during the school year. Medway Public Health team are responsible for visiting each primary school and recording the measurements for all Year 6 children and commission school nurses to measure Reception Year children.

2012 NCMP data shows that 23.8% of 4-5 year olds and 34% of 10-11 year olds are classified as overweight or obese in Medway. This is slightly higher than the national average, which is 22.6% and 33.9% respectively

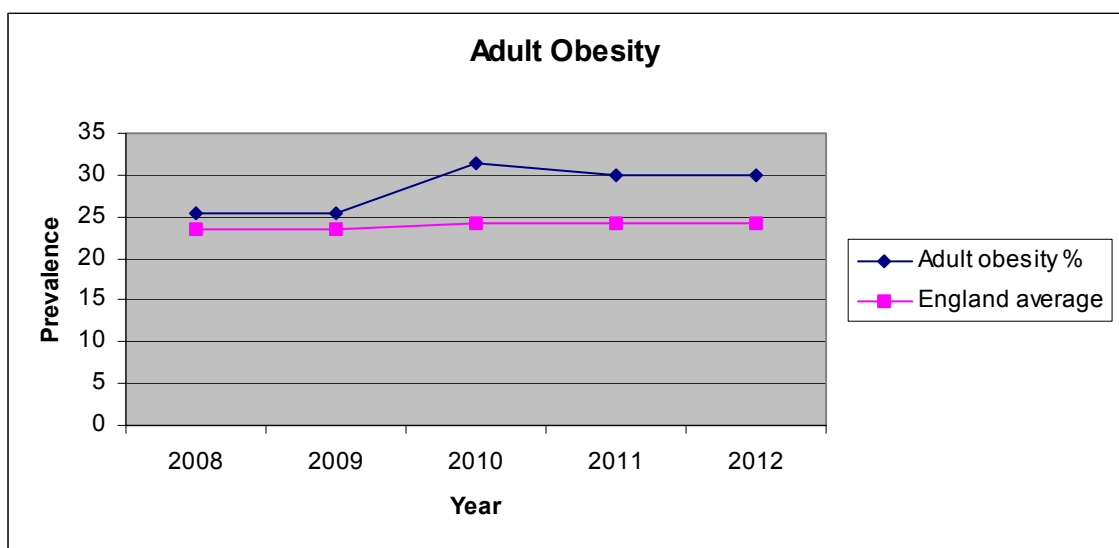




Adult obesity

Currently the most up to date data on local authority level prevalence of adult obesity come from the Health Survey for England 2006-2008 synthetic estimates. These estimates were commissioned for the LA Health Profiles and there are no plans to update them. It is anticipated that they will be superseded by new local level data being developed for the 'excess weight in adults' indicator in the Public Health Outcomes Framework. This local level data source is currently under development. Obvious limitations exist and caution should be used when using any synthetic estimate data is interpreted.

According to this data source in England a total of 23% of adults are obese and 61% are either overweight or obese. However, the Medway profile, suggests that 30% of the local adult population are obese.



Other data sources that could be used to estimate local obesity prevalence, include medical records held by GP surgeries. However, analysis of the Quality

Outcomes Framework (QOF) indicators that they produce, show extreme variations between the numbers of patients with a recorded BMI. As some surgeries have extremely low numbers of patients with a measurement recorded, it makes comparison across the local area very difficult.

In addition to these obesity statistics, data is available to predict local levels of healthy eating, adult physical activity levels and children's activity levels and breastfeeding rates that all play a role in reducing obesity. Trend lines of prevalence are available, however, some data sources are again based on synthetic estimates and/or use extremely low sample sizes, which make it difficult to compare Medway levels to national prevalence. Breastfeeding data is the exception to this, as the statistics are based on actual numbers of new mums feeding at initiation (prior to being discharged from hospital after the child birth) and at 6-8 weeks, following a health visitor appointment.

Evidence Base for Local Action

The Public Health team undertook a task of reviewing the best practice and evidence based recommendations to reduce obesity, to inform the forward planning of services and the setting of future objectives and priorities.

16 documents produced by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), Department of Health, HM Government and other internationally credible organisations, published between 2006-2013 were reviewed. These documents make 146 'SMART' recommendations that local areas can take action on, with some specific to services and particular groups, others being more general recommendations and some are more strategic objectives.

Full recommendations list (appendix 1) have been categorised into the following 20 headline objectives;

1. Multi agency approach
2. Leadership
3. Strategic planning
4. Community engagement
5. Commissioning
6. Support services
7. Physical Activity opportunities
8. Healthy eating accessibility
9. Supportive environment
10. Local authority
11. Town planning
12. Local mapping
13. Leisure services
14. Catering facilities
15. Health professionals
16. Education institutes
17. Training
18. Workplaces
19. Communications
20. Evaluation

Current Services in Medway

Public Health

The Health Improvement Service has a number of projects that are specifically tasked with supporting children and young people to achieve a healthy weight for their age. These projects include four MEND programmes (2-4, 5-7, 7-13 and Graduates) and a weight management programme for 13-17 year olds will also be piloted during 2013.

In addition to these support services the Healthy Weight team plays a key strategic, monitoring, training and community development role in a number of projects that contribute to reducing childhood obesity. This includes facilitating the Medway Breastfeeding Network along with coordinating and delivering the National Child Measurement programme in Medway. Specific projects also include facilitating the Obesity in Pregnancy and Early Years group, encouraging uptake of the Healthy Start programme (scheme for low income families to receive vouchers for milk, vegetables, infant formula milk and vitamins) and promoting the Change4Life campaign messages across Medway. The team also play a lead role in the design and implementation of the Infant Feeding Strategy for Medway, working with several other key partners to increase the rates of breastfeeding and working towards UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative Accreditation.

Tipping the Balance is a community-based service helping people to lead a healthier lifestyle. The main aims of the service are to: help people work towards a healthy weight; encourage healthy eating and physical activity; boost self esteem and confidence. Any adult with a body mass index greater than 30kg/m² without diabetes or a history of ischaemic heart disease, can be referred to the service by their GPs.

The Health Improvement team also play a strategic role in adult obesity, by attempting to develop Medway into a less obesogenic environment. Work has commenced with Medway Council Planning Department to review the local policies, which directly influence food accessibility in Medway.

The team delivers a community food programme that encourages people to make healthy food choices and enjoy a healthy diet. The programme provides training, resources, awareness road shows & events, healthy recipes and courses. Specific projects include the Medway Cooks recipe collection, Medway Grows, which includes the coordination of activity at a community allotment and other local food projects, such as linking with local farmers to bring seasonal months to Medway communities.

Healthy eating messages are embedded into all services that the Supporting Healthy Weight team provide. In addition to supporting the creation of project resources and training for internal team members, the Community Food team play a key role in supporting external partners with similar tasks, acting as an expert resource.

The service also include an exercise referral programme which residents of Medway can be referred to, by their GP or another health professional. People living with a long-term health condition are eligible for the programme, which is delivered in all of Medway Council's leisure centres.

The team also coordinate Medway Health Walks and Active Medway Cycling Groups, which is a group-based programme lead by volunteer walkers and ride leaders. Free training and resources are provided for volunteers and we promote the series of weekly group ride and walks.

Other Active Medway branded programmes, includes an accredited exercise provider scheme, which community clubs and facilities can register for. Adults that are looking to increase their physical activity levels, can be signposted towards quality assured providers and find out about the wide range of exercise options available via the Active Medway programme.

Other Council Departments

As previously stated, reducing obesity levels for adults and children is a complex problem, requiring a multi agency approach. A number of those agencies exist within Medway Council and these departments already play a key role in addressing the issue.

These departments have provided a summary of how they contribute to this agenda:

Medway Leisure

To encourage specific sections of the population to be active by offering free swimming during any public swimming session to those under 11 years of age and those over 60 years of age.

Leisure also operates the "Passport To Leisure" scheme, which is a discount card that makes sport and leisure more accessible to a wider group of people who live in Medway. It gives them and their dependants reduced prices or free access to the Council's leisure facilities in Medway at certain times. To qualify for the scheme applicants must be registered unemployed; registered disabled and a social services recipient; a senior citizen, 60+ years old; on social security and income support ; an asylum seeker; or on incapacity benefit.

All Echoes gyms run specific "junior sessions" where children from 14 years of age can use the gym under supervision from our fitness instructors. Medway Park also has a specific "SHOKK gym" for children aged between 8-14 years of age.

Medway Sport

Key areas of delivery in Medway that have a direct impact on improving health through sport are;

- Mass Participation events include the Medway Mile, Medway Big Splash and Medway Big Ride, celebratory community events that inspire

participants to get active through walking, running, swimming and cycling

- On Your Marks, MedwaySport's legacy programme to break down barriers and support community participation in sport. From teenagers to pensioners and everyone in between, our aim is to provide the people of Medway with exciting and innovative ways to get fit and active removing barriers

Medway Festival of Sport is a sporting celebration to inspire Medway to get active and to increase sporting opportunities for all members of the community, featuring events ranging from schools tournaments, mass participation community events to national and international competitions

Medway Sport organises the Medway Games, a pioneering competition series, including the celebrated Mini Youth Games and Disability Youth Games series. The games directly impacts on thousands of children from all Medway Primary Schools and encourages lifelong participation in sport through school clubs, community clubs, holiday sports camps and competition.

Medway's Disability Sport programme develops opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in sport, recreation and physical activity, through regular clubs and promotional events such as Disability Sports Taster Day.

Medway Sure Start Children's Centres

Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCCs) in Medway are now well established within their respective communities, making a total of 247,230 contacts with young children and their families in the previous year (1st April 2012 – 31st March 2013).

A dominant theme throughout the provision of all services run by SSCCs is that of health promotion and Medway's children's centres contribute to a reduction in child and adult obesity levels through their day-to-day contacts with families.

Each SSCC works to a service specification that forms part of a formal Service Level Agreement between it and the Local Authority. As a part of this service specification, it is mandatory for children's centre to provide public health services, including "breastfeeding support, food and nutrition advice and stop smoking services", and is also mandatory for each children's centre to work with Medway's Public Health team as a key partner. In addition, the following provisions within the SLA outline the minimum expectation for all centres in relation to the services that they deliver:

- *Adhere to Medway's Breastfeeding policy and Baby Friendly Initiative standards*
- *Implement a healthy eating policy, based on the model healthy eating policy for Sure Start Children's Centres, written in conjunction with the Public Health team.*
- *Signpost directly to the Medway Breastfeeding Peer Support network*
- *Raise awareness of a healthy weight and a healthy lifestyle by using Start4life / Change4life resources throughout the activities and the centre, including providing opportunities for families to learn about how to make changes*

- *Be an essential information hub for supporting healthy weight opportunities for families*
- *Actively promote and encourage opportunities for play*
- *Ensure staff are kept up-to-date on healthy weight topics by either attending training or seeking support when necessary. Key areas include breastfeeding support, introducing solid foods, toddler portion sizes, general healthy eating messages, oral health, play and activity.*

Medway's SSCCs work closely with colleagues from the Public Health Directorate, particularly via the Obesity in Early Years and Pregnancy (OPEY) meetings, to ensure that public health initiatives are coordinated throughout the Authority, and are able to target young families effectively.

In addition to the policy guidance and requirements illustrated in the SLA extract above and planned joint working initiatives, SSCCs also provide numerous regular sessions to encourage healthy and active lifestyles for young children and their families. Healthy lifestyle messages are promoted as the norm during all sessions, and particularly through sessions such as "Active Explorers", "Make and Munch" and "Physical Fun", which are aimed at children. Sessions such as "Lighter Living", "Adult Keep Fit" and "Power Walk" aim to encourage healthy lifestyles within parents. In addition, there are a number of child and adult swimming sessions, cooking sessions and play sessions that provide opportunities to model movement and healthy eating options.

Integrated transport

Walking and cycling is mentioned within the Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 transport objective - '*Encouraging active travel and improving health*', and demonstrates the important links to the overall LTP priorities. Medway has a number of cycling activities currently in place and these are classified into 'hard' and 'soft' measures. Including; cycle network / infrastructure, cycle parking, off road cycling, cycle counter network, Bikeability training in schools, Bikeability training for adults, partnership working with Sustrans, cycling to work mileage allowance, liaison with cycle clubs, cycle maps and cycle scheme bids.

Greenspaces

Greenspace Services manage over 1,900 hectares of land owned by Medway Council for public recreation, sport and play including allotments, play areas, parks, woodlands, grasslands and outdoor sports facilities. These facilities provide opportunities for formal and informal sport and recreation with wide range of associated health benefits. The Wildlife, Countryside and Open Spaces Strategy 2008-16 includes a revised headline action of 'Open spaces contributing to healthy lifestyles and environmental quality' while the Greenspace & Heritage Development Programme provides direct linkage between Greenspace projects and strategic priorities in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure opportunities for health benefits are considered in project delivery.

Greenspaces and the Public Health team have discussed opportunities for joint working culminating in the current development of a report considering how investing in improving play provision in Strood, could result in improvements in

occurrence of childhood obesity and other health indicators in the area. Together with seeking capital investment, opportunities also exist for improving awareness of existing facilities within local communities through work with General Practitioners and community engagement.

School Health Services

School Health Service offers a universal service to all children in education during their first year in school. The children are seen with parent/carer consent, the child's height and weight is taken and plotted on a centile (growth) chart. If the child's height and weight are out of proportion a targeted piece of work would then be offered to the parent/carer and child. If the parent/carer is present at the time of the child having their growth measured a face to face discussion would take place discussing the Eatwell Plate and advising the parent/carer of Change4 life information, if not present telephone contact would be made. The child's growth will be reviewed by School Health. School Health can refer the family directly to Medway Councils' Public Health Team

Education may request School Health's support if the school is focussing on Healthy Eating, this could be in the form of a class room activity; part of a Healthy Lifestyles week or parent event.

Safer Journeys Team

A key part of the Safer Journeys Team remit focuses on school travel, including walk to school initiatives and the promotion of other sustainable modes of travel. The team collects data on the mode of travel that children usually use on the journey to and from school annually through the School Census, in addition to supporting schools produce school travel plans. The Safer Journeys team also support primary schools, pre-schools and after school clubs to develop Walking Bus routes in partnership with the Kent and Medway [KM] Charity Team, helping to reduce the number of local car journeys to schools. Other projects that are developed include Modal Shift/Super Schools, National Walk to School Week/Month, Walk 2 Count Challenge, Golden Boot Challenge, Green Footsteps, School Crossing Patrols, Children's Traffic Club, Child Pedestrian Training, Pedestrian Awards Scheme, Zigzag Banner campaign and Park and Stride.

Economic Development & Social Regeneration

The Inspirer Project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund and its main aim is to *Improve the Quality of Life for residents of Medway's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods*. As well as Medway Council and MHS Homes, here in the UK, the project has partners in Boulgone (France) and Kortrijk (Belgium). Partners share experiences with each other both at professional level, and resident level. Cross border activities are a regular feature in delivering the project.

The three main activities are:

1. Creating green spaces, gardens, community clean ups, play areas and safety
2. Communicating on recycling, composting, minimising food waste, healthy eating education. The project also works with PH team on healthy recipe books

3. Energy/water efficiency measures for houses in the target areas.

Recent work has been completed to create 2 community gardens, with three more in the pipeline, which encourage the growing of food and preparation for a healthy diet. Community clean ups continue to improve the pride of residents in their neighbourhoods and improve the feel good factor.

Planning Department

Following a successful workshop held in January 2013 (attended by elected members and officers from a range of council departments) Public Health, Planning Policy and Development Management are taking forward a range of actions. These relate to promoting healthy eating, restricting food availability and promoting physical activity.

Following an Overview and Scrutinee Committee in 2010 and Annual Public Health Report recommendation to review fast food take away availability close to schools, discussions are underway to consider whether Medway should follow other Local Authorities and restrict access through a specific planning policy.

Representatives from each department have undertaken a policy review to determine the need for a new policy or guidance note, and will be presenting their findings to members in due course.

Opportunities To Do More

The 20 evidence based recommendations listed in appendix 1, represent a wide range of opportunities for the local area to do more. To realise the ambition of reducing trends in obesity levels for adults and children, each of the 20 recommendations need to be taken forward. Some of the recommendations are already showing good progress and Medway can be proud of its achievements in some areas. However, other recommendations need much greater investment in time and resource.

The priorities for Medway are;

- Ensuring necessary decision makers and all practitioners and professionals, understand the role that they can play in supporting people to lose weight, become more active and eat healthily
- Raising awareness that being overweight, inactive and/ or eating an unbalanced diet is important to an individuals health and informing people of the services and facilities that can enable them to make a lifestyle change
- Develop the physical environment so that healthy eating and physical activity becomes the norm rather than the exception, creating a less obesogenic Medway
- Map the local assets to assess what services and facilities exist to support the agenda, then consult with local residents and the evidence base, to assess the gaps that may exist

Appendix 1

Evidence Based and Best Practise Recommendations Summary

1. **Multi agency approach** - Ensure a multi agency agenda is in place for reducing obesity, increasing healthy eating and physical activity, with partners aware of their contributions and responsibilities. With key roles played by Health and Wellbeing board, health professionals, local authority, local caterers, education institutes, community members, CCG, Public Health and local businesses. Identifying champions within these organisations and groups to promote the agenda
2. **Leadership** - Ensure key decision makers are aware of importance of reducing obesity, increasing healthy eating and physical activity and that they are aware of the role they can play to support this, including elected members, Health and Wellbeing board members, Overview and Scrutiny committees, Head Teachers and senior managers of local businesses.
3. **Strategic planning** - Include importance of reducing obesity, increasing healthy eating and physical activity within strategies, plans and key local documents (including CCG operational plans, chronic disease pathways, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Health and Wellbeing board strategy, local transport plans and local physical activity strategy)
4. **Community engagement** - Engage with community members (especially those with high levels of obesity and low levels of healthy eating and physical activity) to gain input when planning services to identifying barriers and concerns, gain social approval and recruit champions
5. **Commissioning** - Commission long term programmes based on local needs that build on strengths of local programmes and individuals, build on effective local and national initiatives where possible, meet the needs of the population and encourage innovation
6. **Support services** - Ensure community services exist to support agenda, including weight management groups, nutrition education programmes and walk leader programmes. Services should measure long term success (12 months), involve whole families where possible, promote a life course approach and meet best practise guidance
7. **Physical activity opportunities** - Develop physical activity opportunities locally, including opportunities for active play for children and sport opportunities accessible to a wide range of groups, whilst ensuring that space and facilities meet recommended safety standards
8. **Health eating accessibility** - Develop local food environment to make healthy eating options more accessible, by encouraging shops to promote affordable healthier choices, local caterers to publish calorie content on menus and outlets to increase the nutritional quality of their food

9. **Supportive environment** - Develop local environment to reduce obesity levels and support physical activity and healthy eating by reviewing bye laws or any other restrictions that discourage active play, ensure mothers can breastfeed their babies in public areas without fear or interruption and encourage sustainable initiatives such as allotments
10. **Local authority** - The local authority should produce a local transport plan that maximises walking and cycling opportunities and commission personalised travel planning programmes
11. **Town planning** - Utilise planning mechanisms to support the agenda, including reviewing application for food outlets, ensuring availability and access to green space is protected, ensure environment promotes active travel options over other modes of transport, building design encourages physical activity and suitable cycle storage is in place
12. **Local mapping** - Map assets that support the agenda, identifying evidence based and/or quality assured support services, whilst identify barriers to accessing facilities or services and gathering local residents views
13. **Leisure services** - Ensure leisure services are affordable and acceptable with consideration given to free swimming options, suitable changing facilities and sufficient transport links
14. **Catering facilities** - Consideration is given to the catering facilities within education institutes, local authority leisure centres, early years childcare facilities, NHS and local authority buildings, using the power of commissioning to promote healthy eating opportunities
15. **Health professionals** - Health professionals should conduct screening, using these and routine appointments to make patients aware of importance of reducing obesity, increasing healthy eating and physical activity providing advice and/or signposting to quality assured services when appropriate (including GPs, pre-conception, pre and post natal professionals). Also providing breastfeeding support and information to mothers and increasing access to the Healthy Start programme
16. **Education institutes** - Education institutes (schools, colleges etc) should encourage physical activity and healthy eating by considering building layout, food choices available to students, promoting sport for all, encouraging active travel, providing cycle and road safety training and making sport facilities available outside of teaching hours
17. **Training** - Ensure training and development opportunities are available for individuals that can contribute to this agenda including health professionals, fitness instructors and other physical activity professionals, education staff, local caterers (particularly within schools and public facilities), decision makers and local champions

18. **Workplaces** - Local businesses should encourage healthy eating and physical activity to employees through the provision of food options and catering facilities, encouraging active travel, providing shower facilities and considering new buildings layout
19. **Communications** - Use mass media to promote campaigns that reduce obesity, increase healthy eating and physical activity targeting those in greatest need. Ensuring that messages are clear, consistent and suitable for the audience, raising awareness of local services and facilities that support agenda and raising awareness of government guidelines for healthy eating and physical activity
20. **Evaluation** - Ensure programmes and services are evaluated measuring a broad range of outcomes, using the National Obesity Observatory Standard Evaluation Framework and ensuring a percentage of the project costs are set aside at the planning stage. Whilst assessing cost effectiveness and linking with education institute where possible.

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