

Health and Wellbeing Board

17 November 2016

Healthy Weight Alliance



Report of Gill O'Neill, Interim Director of Public Health, Adult and Health Services, Durham County Council

Purpose of the report

- 1 To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) with an update from the Healthy Weight Alliance (HWA). The report will highlight the strategic approach to obesity as a result of County Durham becoming a national pilot for obesity.

Background

- 2 In County Durham 24% of 4-5 year olds, 37% of 10-11 year olds and an estimated 72% of adults have excess weight. Obesity has significant health, financial, social and environmental impacts in County Durham.
- 3 The healthy weight strategic framework was developed through the healthy weight alliance, which aims to be a multi-agency group working to tackle obesity. This year's Director of Public Health annual report focused on obesity in an effort to promote wider involvement in the agenda.

A strategic systems approach to tackle obesity

- 4 The Government Office for Science (2007) highlighted that as there are a significant number of factors that contribute towards obesity, approaches to tackle it must focus on multiple projects, at multiple levels, in multiple settings and for many groups of people. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) suggest that obesity needs to be tackled as a whole system and this became the overall strategic focus for the HWA.
- 5 The HWA secured support from the North East Leadership Academy for a pilot whole systems approach in the Four Together Area Action Partnership (AAP) area. The approach attempted to understand obesity, its causes and possible solutions within a specific geography. The intention was to involve a variety of representative organisations that are part of the local community, and was designed to engage with the local system to understand obesity through their eyes. Further detail around this approach is available on request.
- 6 There has been much learning from this early adopter area and following this, the HWA bid to be a pilot region in Public Health England's (PHE) three year programme into obesity systems, delivered by Leeds Beckett University (LBU). Over 70 applications were received from local authorities and County Durham is one of four to be identified to lead on obesity.

- 7 Work with LBU has identified a need for strategic actions that require multiple partners in order to encourage a system wide response. The strategic themes; 'leading by example', 'give every child the best start in life', 'improving play', and 'engaging the system' are being developed as a mechanism to progress. Approaches are informed from national guidance and evaluation will be continual, whilst acknowledging that at a population level obesity has no single cause or solution. Further details of projects to support these strategic themes are available on request.

Leading by example

- 8 Leading by example is an opportunity to work with HWB partners to continually improve the health of their workforces and our residents. The National childhood obesity plan published in August 2016 states that every public sector setting's food environment should be designed so that the healthy choice is the easy choice.
- 9 The food offer in Durham County Council (DCC) has been reviewed, Government buying standards for food are being adopted, the healthy choice is more readily available and food labelling is improving so employees and visitors can make informed choices. Vending machines where possible, have had their branding removed, in order to limit product promotion. Actions align to the evidence based recommendations in the national childhood obesity plan, and Public Health England's sugar reduction report.
- 10 Durham food partnership has been successful in achieving sustainable fish city status for Durham City.
- 11 New opportunities to integrate physical activity into the working day have been implemented. The StepJockey intervention proved successful in DCC and the HWA is encouraging other partners to utilise StepJockey.

Best start in life

- 12 The focus is on early years and preventing obesity from the antenatal period. Breastfeeding remains a priority and its impact on obesity is critical. UNICEF accreditation, breastfeeding cafes, and peer supporters are examples of the ongoing efforts. Health colleagues in County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust are leading the way in maternity, working in close partnership with Harrogate and District Foundation Trust (HDFT), yet there is still much to do within schools and communities to change breastfeeding attitudes.
- 13 In partnership with Newcastle University a project is being finalised which will assist in understanding the cultural challenges of weight gain in infancy. This three year programme will also focus on improving the early year's health professional's approach to discussing weight with parents.

- 14 A recent evaluation of the Families Initiative in Supporting Children's Health (FISCH) programme highlighted that the programme led to a reduction in excess weight prevalence. Further work is underway to consider how best to encourage greater uptake of the targeted programme.

Increasing play through the County Durham physical activity framework

- 15 DCC culture and sport have the lead on the development of a physical activity framework for County Durham. A physical activity board has been convened which will oversee the framework implementation, and the HWA is represented at this board to ensure the two agendas are aligned and synergistic. The groups are working to develop shared objectives and outcomes.
- 16 The slow to 20 for safer streets programme reduces traffic casualties and makes our communities safer places to play. Road safety education and cycling schemes are included, to equip children with the skills they need.
- 17 AAPs are instrumental in improving opportunities for physical activity within their communities. The 'Ready Set Go' programme in South West Durham, aims to improve physical literacy amongst early years and work is now ongoing to consider how to expand the programme across County Durham.

Engaging the whole system

- 18 The HWA and County Durham Community Foundation have developed a match funded community grant to encourage community based initiatives, adopting systems methodology, to develop sustainable obesity programmes. This funding will be allocated in January 2017 and totals just under £300,000.
- 19 Primary care is an important setting. Community pharmacies assess and refer clients to weight loss companies, with 634 clients currently engaged and an average weight loss of 6lb per person, per current programme. There is a commitment to continue this programme.

Next steps

- 20 Consider a refresh of the healthy weight framework to provide a coherent set of common goals deliverable across a range of partners. Develop a unified and consistent approach across HWB members to address the obesogenic environment, and to change the culture associated with weight.
- 21 Work with partners such as LBU, PHE and Newcastle University on innovative approaches to healthy weight whilst capitalising on the skills that already exist within the local system. Work in partnership with the physical activity leadership board to ensure cohesive programmes such as 'Beat the Street'.

Recommendations

22 The Health and Wellbeing Board are requested to:

- Provide leadership and support all partners in the continued delivery of the whole systems approach to obesity by actively participating in the LBU pilot work.
- Agree within their organisations to adopt a 'leading by example' approach to improve staff and residents' health and wellbeing.
- Agree to develop the public sector in County Durham; to make the healthy choice the easy choice, within a health promoting environment.
- Support building on local best practice and developing countywide approaches by scaling up what works.
- Progress evidence led brief interventions around obesity in front line or patient contact within primary and secondary care

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance: Funding for Newcastle University study. Promoting healthier choices may have an impact upon retail.

Staffing: None

Risk: None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty:

Public health aims to reduce inequalities and improve health outcomes by reviewing PH outcomes data and developing relevant policies, strategies and intentions as appropriate.

Accommodation: N/A

Crime and Disorder: N/A

Human Rights: N/A

Consultation: N/A

Procurement: Possible impact upon policy through 'leading by example' work.

Disability Issues: None

Legal Implications: None