

Enabling Healthy Weight for All Update

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Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board an update on progress towards increasing healthy weight levels in our local population as part of one of the four Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities. This includes the County Durham Healthy weight plan (a refreshed plan of actions informed by the Review of healthy weight approaches 2023).
- 2 The report includes an update on the Moving Together in County Durham physical activity strategy.

Executive summary

- 3 The County Durham Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) outlines the vision for improving health and wellbeing and tackling inequalities across the county. The strategy highlights four key priorities identified to tackle the major risk factors that affect health and wellbeing, enabling healthy weight for all is one of these priorities. As part of the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment (JSNAA), overweight and obesity remains an enduring area of concern when working to address health inequalities.
- 4 Obesity is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers and high blood pressure. It is a chronic condition that can contribute to poor mental health and even early death. Obesity also has a social and economic impact, reducing productivity and healthy life expectancy, whilst increasing disability and demand for health care services.
- 5 The most recent data for adults showed a rise in overweight and obesity with nearly 8 in 10 adults living with overweight or obesity, with 34%

experiencing the condition of obesity. There are 26.1% of children aged 4-5 years and 4 in 10 children (39.9%) aged 10-11 years experiencing overweight or obesity. This is statistically worse than England and North East averages.

- 6 Overweight including obesity (OW/OB) is highest in children living in the most deprived areas: Reception aged 4-5 years: 26.7% of children living in the most deprived areas experiencing OW/OB compared to 12.7% in the least deprived. Year 6 aged 10-11 years: 44.2% of children living in the most deprived areas experiencing OW/OB compared to 23.9% in the least deprived.
- 7 In County Durham, nearly 6 in 10 adults and half of children are physically active enough for good health, this is statistically similar to the North East and national average. However, those in more deprived areas experience more challenges in keeping and staying active in their everyday lives.
- 8 Recent estimates put the total cost of obesity to be £98 billion per year, with the NHS bearing £19 billion of this amount. These costs include productivity losses due to sickness absence. Obesity has wide-reaching implications and is recognised as contributing to the current high levels of economic inactivity due to sickness in the UK.
- 9 The County Durham Healthy Weight Plan (informed by the review of healthy weight – reported to Health and Wellbeing Board, November 2023 – see Appendix 2) incorporates five ambition action areas to enable a systematic and equitable approach to a system that empowers and promote healthier choices:
 - (a) Healthy At Place - ambition to normalise healthy and sustainable food availability, choice and consumption - making it easier for people to move and eat well in their local environment. This ambition action area incorporates a focus on a 'health in all policies' approach.
 - (b) Healthy Families - ambition is for families to be able to access, cook and eat healthy, affordable food, and be active every day.
 - (c) Healthy sustainable food for all - enabling all who live, work and learn in County Durham to be healthy and sustainable 'Good food citizens'.
 - (d) Healthy Workforce - those who can influence the behaviours which promote healthy weight (i.e., eat well, move well, sleep well), equipped with knowledge and confidence to influence our workforce to achieve a healthy weight.

- (e) Healthy Weight: Patient care - seeks to support health care professionals whose patients are living with overweight and obesity. Increasing confidence and knowledge in health professionals and strengthening communication and signposting into local and national programmes.
- 10 This report includes a summary of some of the key areas of work that are underway including: Wellbeing for Life weight management service, Planning for Durham County Council signatory to the Healthy Weight Declaration, Healthy Weight Health Professionals network (primary care collaboration), school food, DCC healthier food provision guidance.
- 11 A Healthy weight Health professionals task group (reporting to the County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance) was established to support wider primary care colleagues to become confident in having healthy weight conversations with their patients, and to increase knowledge of weight management referral pathways in County Durham. Shame and guilt is one of the main barriers to patients seeking the support they need, which also impacts upon those health care professionals dealing with those issues.
- 12 Clinical assessment and treatment of obesity is an element of the whole systems approach to obesity. Primary care professionals are often called upon to provide advice and guidance to those living with overweight/obesity, and will sometimes refer patients onto specialist services for assessment and treatment. Recent pharmaceutical developments in the treatment of obesity (namely Liraglutide/Saxenda and Semaglutide/Wegovy) are now available through NHS specialist weight management services and through a fee-paying private prescription.
- 13 A review of the Healthy weight pathway took place at the end of 2023, to ensure there is clear signposting to all local and national support. The group has worked together to codesign a suite of resources to remove challenges and support primary care professionals to help patients reach their healthy weight goals. Paragraph 41 provides details of these resources.
- 14 The North East Good Food framework and benchmarking programme (led by the Association of Directors of Public Health North East) has been agreed and developed by North East Local Authorities (including DCC) and food partnerships across the region. The aim is to develop and implement a regional public health approach to Good Food, informed by our community's needs. Durham County Council and Food Durham has recently completed the baseline survey. The Healthy weight plan and Food Durham Strategy are aligned with the 9 areas identified as making up a 'Good food' system.

- 15 'Moving Together in County Durham' (MTiCD) physical activity strategy has been launched virtually with partners and a face-to-face event is planned to complete the coproduction of the delivery plan. In collaboration with Durham University an evaluation framework is under development. A baseline partnership survey has been codesigned and shared with MTiCD partners which will help measure engagement and impact, and the social network analysis mapping shown on Durham Insights provides a way to measure growth of MTiCD to help influence increasing activity levels for all across our County.
- 16 All work developed on healthy weight across County Durham both encompasses and embraces the Approach to Wellbeing to maximise positive outcomes.
- 17 Progress made during the past year, combined with the future plans as outlined above (and in this report), clearly show that matters relating to healthy weight can only be progressed through a system focus – with key partners from across the wider system working 'as a whole' to provide cross-sector support to achieve these objectives.

Recommendation(s)

- 18 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
 - (a) note the progress made towards further development of a whole systems approach to healthy weight in County Durham over the previous 12-month period;
 - (b) approve the Healthy Weight Action plan and affirm support for
 - continued close collaboration between DCC and key stakeholders to develop a strong, unified systems leadership approach through the adoption of the Local Authority Healthy Weight Declaration in County Durham;
 - the provision of healthy and sustainable food for all through the County Durham contribution to the Good Food Local North East programme;
 - a revision of DCC's advertising and sponsorship policy to restrict promotion of foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt on DCC platforms;
 - the proposed amendment to the National Planning Policy Framework to include specific guidance on promoting healthy and safe communities to support healthy lifestyles, particularly to address identified local health and wellbeing needs;

- continued partnership working to achieve the actions set out in the Moving Together in County Durham physical activity strategy.

Background

- 19 'Enabling healthy weight for all' is a key priority of the County Durham Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) 2023-28.
- 20 County Durham's whole systems approach to healthy weight dates back to the 'Healthy Weight Strategic framework 2014-2020', which set out a commitment to delivering system-wide approaches to address the obesogenic environment and tackle obesity within our communities.
- 21 A review of approaches to healthy weight was conducted in 2022-23 and associated recommendations were signed-off by the Health and Wellbeing Board in November 2023. These recommendations have informed the Healthy Weight Action Plan that is outlined below (and appended to reports for information).

Obesity a critical public health concern

- 22 Obesity is an enduring public health problem that can lead to Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. It is also associated with an increased use of long-term medication, impaired fertility, and musculoskeletal disorders. Children and young people with obesity may experience bullying, which in turn can be associated with shame, depression, low self-esteem, poor body image and suicide.
- 23 Modern day access to foods high in sugar, fat and salt and more sedentary behaviours have contributed to an 'obesogenic environment.' Many factors contribute to an individual experiencing obesity, most of which are out of an individual's control. Our biological drivers, the environment in which we live, work, study and socialise, and issues such as poverty and access to healthy, affordable food make it extremely challenging to maintain a healthy weight. Health behaviours which contribute to obesity can be supported better 'making the healthy choice easier' with shifts to local environments including opportunities to walk, wheel or cycle in local communities, reduction in advertising of unhealthy food options, access to affordable healthier foods, increased percentage of healthy choices in all settings.

Childhood obesity

- 24 Childhood obesity has been recognised by successive governments over the past few decades as a major crisis. The Government published Childhood obesity: a plan for action, in June 2018 with the ambition to halve childhood obesity rates by 2030.
- 25 The Health Foundation (2024) reported that patterns in child health outcomes in the UK, including obesity among 10–11-year-olds has increased by 30% since 2006. Babies born today have a lower life

expectancy than those born a decade ago and Type 2 diabetes in under 25s has increased by 22% in the past five years.

- 26 The review of healthy weight approaches included a full scoping of the evidence for children and young people's healthy weight in the context of County Durham. This has informed the Healthy Weight Action Plans and progress as outlined in this report.

The County Durham picture

- 27 A person living in County Durham who maintains a healthy weight is in a minority of our local population.
- 28 The most recent data for adults showed a rise in overweight and obesity with nearly 8 in 10 adults living with overweight or obesity - including 34% experiencing the condition of obesity. This is statistically worse than England and North East averages.
- 29 The National Child Measurement Programme data reports that in County Durham, 26.1% of children aged 4-5 years and 39.9% children aged 10-11 years are living with overweight/obesity. This compares to 21.3%/39.9% regionally and 21.3%/36.6% nationally.
- 30 In County Durham, the latest data shows a decrease in physical activity (-2.3%) in the last year. Nearly 6 in 10 adults and half of children are physically active enough for good health, this is statistically similar to the North East and national average. However, those in lower supervisory or technical occupations are most likely to be inactive and overall, those who in more deprived areas experience more challenges in keeping active in their everyday lives.
- 31 Recent estimates put the total cost of obesity to be £98 billion per year, with the NHS bearing £19 billion of this amount. Productivity and wellbeing in the workplace is negatively affected by those with obesity being more likely to attend work whilst experiencing illness. This leads to high levels of 'presenteeism'. Findings from the Institute for Public Policy Research (Scale of the challenge 2024) show current working conditions and the environments we work within can exacerbate obesity levels, as people find it challenging to prioritise healthy behaviours and have limited access to movement opportunities and healthy options. The report also demonstrates public opinion is strong in support of changing the environment through policy and moving away from solely individual responsibility (IPPR, 2024).
- 32 Easy to access and user friendly data dashboards have been developed to include an overview of data relating to healthy weight, health behaviours including fruit and vegetable intake, and comorbidities. The physical activity dashboard shows the partnership

mapping (social network analysis) which allows a measure of partnership collaboration and a tool for partnerships to align agenda's and seek opportunities to share resources.

- 33 Durham County Council public-facing web pages for eating well, healthy weight and start for life have been updated with ease of signposting and consistent messages as part of wider whole systems working to encourage the promotion of health behaviours across the life course.

Inequalities

- 34 The levels and impact of obesity and malnourishment is much greater for those in the lowest income bracket and those experiencing the highest levels of deprivation. This is based on multiple factors which include having to less disposable income to purchase nutritious food and equipment, increased consumption of poor nutritional quality of food and drinks, higher childhood exposure to marketing of foods that are high fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS), skills, knowledge and competency in preparing and cooking healthy foods.
- 35 The most recent data from the National Child Measurement programme (NCMP) provides us with local level data which shows that Overweight including obesity (OW/OB) is highest in children living in the most deprived areas:
- Reception aged 4-5 years: 26.7% of children living in the most deprived areas experiencing OW/OB compared to 12.7% in the least deprived.
 - Year 6 aged 10-11 years: 44.2% of children living in the most deprived areas experiencing OW/OB compared to 23.9% in the least deprived.
- 36 Breastfeeding can reduce the risk of children developing obesity and is an indicator of social inequity. Babies born in areas of higher deprivation are less likely to be breastfed. In County Durham, insights have been gathered to understand and develop strategies to increase breastfeeding. Partnership working to improve maternal nutrition, early feeding practices and breastfeeding is part of the whole systems approach to healthy weight.
- 37 Continued development of a whole systems approach to increasing healthy weight levels across County Durham will benefit and contribute to a wide range of existing inequalities including hospital admissions related to obesity, increasing physical activity, mental health outcomes, prevalence of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

Whole Systems Approach to healthy weight: progress during 2023/24

- 38 A review of healthy weight approaches was conducted between 2022 and 2023 and included a full audit of ‘where we have been’ and ‘where we are now’. This resulted in a set of recommendations to take us to ‘where we want to be’ in respect of achieving healthy population weight in County Durham.
- 39 A key finding of this review was the importance of refreshing and effectively re-embedding whole systems approach principles across key stakeholder/partner groups and organisations. This continues to ensure a focussed, consistent move away from an ad-hoc, interventionist approaches towards real, systems-based thinking. This underpins all aspects of the healthy weight plan that is presented below.
- 40 Substantial work has been conducted over the past year to strengthen those existing partnerships that are crucial to a well-functioning whole systems approach to healthy weight. This has incorporated an ‘*inform, build and influence*’ perspective by presenting evidence to a wide range of forums that demonstrates how we can collectively and effectively tackle the obesogenic environment, informed by local data and sharing best practice. These include primary care, nurse workforce, diabetes teams, maternity and Social Prescriber link worker protected learning time sessions, Better Health at Work Award, partnerships, Place Health and Communities Board, Poverty Action Strategy Group, Child Poverty Group, and 0-25 teams.
- 41 Work across the last 12-months has involved strengthening of existing partnerships and working towards ensuring the healthy weight agenda is shared with relevant partnership and stakeholder groups. Building on relationships and aligning healthy weight as a part of ‘health in all policies’ approach is a crucial aspect of this work.

- 42 Progress includes:

- **Systems leadership**

- *Healthy Weight Declaration*

- Becoming a signatory of the Healthy Weight Declaration demonstrates Durham County Council’s leadership commitment to increasing healthy weight levels in co-creating environments that make it easier to lead healthier lives for all our communities.

- A report that proposes DCC as a signatory to the Healthy Weight Declaration is current progressing through DCC governance.

- **Long term systems approach**

Developing and strengthening partnerships

As outlined above, this is a continual priority and a key focus of the Healthy Weight Alliance and its two subgroups ('out of home food' and 'healthy weight health professionals'). Further examples include Food Durham and 'Moving Together in County Durham' physical activity strategy network, which both have a memberships that advocate for (and influence) 'enabling healthy weight for all.' DCC data and intelligence officers (alongside public health) are using social network analysis to map partnerships and measure the growth of those organisations and groups that are contributing to and engaged with this agenda. This will produce evidence that shows how partnerships are being developed and strengthened.

A joined up regional approach - NENC Healthy weight and treatment of obesity strategy

County Durham public health team are contributing to the work in developing a regional strategy by contributing knowledge and practice elicited from its approach to date - which has been informed by the review of healthy weight approaches and knowledge of systems thinking in the obesogenic environment.

- **Health promoting environment**

Evidence of 'what works' has been shared with County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance, to inform and underpin actions to improve healthy weight. For example, within DCC, such evidence has informed the food poverty strategy actions, County Durham Plan Policy 30 (fast food takeaway policy), Healthier Advertising policy, DCC healthier vending and food provision, healthy build for life (Planning) and 'out of home' food task group discussions regarding healthy catering standards for all settings.

A significant development is the proposed amendment to the National Planning Policy Framework to include specific guidance on promoting healthy and safe communities to support healthy lifestyles, particularly to address identified local health and wellbeing needs. From a healthy weight perspective, this includes access to green infrastructure, sports facilities, healthier food, allotments and layouts that support walking and cycling. These reforms are currently out to consultation.

- **Community engagement**

The Approach to Wellbeing

This has informed (and been threaded through) all areas of the healthy weight agenda including the 'Moving Together in County Durham' physical activity strategy, the Healthy Weight action plan and terms of reference for the County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance and the Healthy Weight Health Professionals task group.

Health literacy tools and framing

These have been used in those health behaviours communications that contribute to increasing healthy weight i.e., moving more and healthy eating. This includes DCC website information, early years settings and partners social media, primary care resources, nutrition training for family hub and those who work with families and pregnant people.

Wellbeing for Life (WB4L) healthy weight service

This service was recently recommissioned (awarded to CDDFT). The service specification includes further developing services to help people achieve and maintain a healthy weight and these are informed by evidence presented in the DCC 'Review of Healthy Weight approaches' (2023). Public Health healthy weight stakeholders have liaised directly with WB4L service leads to inform service development. The Wb4L service has also contributed to the co-development of primary care 'healthy lifestyle conversation' resources and continues to engage in the Healthy Weight Health Practitioners group to ensure a joined-up approach to healthy weight within our communities. The development of a wider data collection framework will ensure we can measure, and report change to health behaviour outcome and ensure equitable access to weight management services across the county.

An audit/mapping of food inequality initiatives

There is a clear need to understand the wide range of healthy weight/food services/resources across County Durham so that all healthy weight stakeholders are aware of what exists and who these services support. For example, Action Area Partnership leads completed a template to gather all food support, growing and food waste initiatives in their area. Wider partners were invited to contribute to this exercise, and findings have been uploaded onto Durham Locate and shared with the Healthy Weight Alliance membership.

School food and healthy weight

School food is one of the most important elements in achieving good nutrition for a large majority of our children and young people. Taking a whole school food approach means that a coherent healthy food education and provision would be standard practice in every school. We know that this is not the case in most schools across the UK including County Durham. Public health produced evidence from wider research and local insights, which has been presented to DCC School food team. A school food task group, whose key objective is to improve the school food offer) has been established and public health has been invited to contribute to this work.

Creative engagement sessions to gather community voice at all ages

Food Durham, Public health and community partners are working to ensure that community voice informs healthy weight work. Northumbria University recently held a healthy eating/food workshop at North Durham Academy that was attended by children and young people, DCC representatives (including public health), and a range of stakeholders/partners. The university will publish a report around September 2024 that will inform wider approaches to healthy food choices for children and young people.

Healthy lifestyle/behaviours conversations – the Healthy Weight Health Professionals (HWHP) task group

- 43 People with living with obesity often experience shame (and sometimes discrimination) in everyday life. As a result, there remains a lot of stigma around this condition. Evidence tells us that brief opportunistic interventions are effective in tackling obesity; however, as such guidance is not always available, there can be some confusion amongst healthcare professionals about how to best deliver such interventions. Following publication of the 'Healthy weight pathway resource', discussions took place between DCC Public Health team and the former County Durham ICS clinical lead for overweight and obesity regarding training for health care professionals in engaging patients/service users living with overweight/obesity.
- 44 To address this, a 'healthy weight health professionals' task group was established, comprising public health officers and a range of clinical and allied health care professionals. The primary aim was to support wider primary care colleagues to become confident in having healthy weight conversations with their patients, and to increase knowledge of weight management referral pathways in County Durham. Furthermore, many of these healthcare professionals will contribute to the 'healthy patient

care' priority action area of the proposed 'Healthy weight action plan'. This group (reporting to the County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance) consulted with local health care professionals, patients with lived experience, and patient advisory groups, as well as scoping the evidence base on these matters. The purpose of this work was to better understand patient and health care provider experiences to inform approaches and resources that would improve engagement and support people living with these conditions.

45 Over the past 12 months, this group has produced the following resources (provided alongside this report), which have been codesigned by (and had oversight from) a wide range of healthcare professionals:

- *Brief intervention guide*

This guide includes the recognisable "Ask, Advise, Assist and Action" with the 'WANT' (Why, Assets, Next steps, Time to review) woven into the suggested questions and conversation starters. The guide is focused on a compassionate, person centred, health first approach.

- *Dietary advice prompt sheet*

Low confidence in providing basic advice on improving dietary intake was identified in several nurse workforce and task group meetings. This basic prompt sheet was produced using the five food groups (Wholegrains, Fruit, Vegetables, Legumes, Nuts/Seeds) which are associated with a reduction in population level disease endpoints including Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and many types of cancers. Additions to the suite of resources include an easy read patient health behaviour prompts and a list of training, resource and visuals links.

- *Smarter carb patient sheet*

Partnership working revealed patients can receive differing dietary advice when accessing services for weight loss and diabetes support in County Durham. Patients also reported feeling confused or not knowing how to incorporate dietary changes from first diagnoses. Members of the task group recognised the importance of aligning messages and ensuring that advice was evidence-based, including the most recent rigorous 'European guidelines for diabetes dietary management'. Training was delivered by Public Health including updated evidence and practical tips, and this was well received by health professionals across CDDFT. The 'Smarter carb' patient guidance resource was trialled in the community led 'Taking

Shape' and delivered by the Health and Wellbeing coach in Peterlee. Patient outcomes in wellbeing, weight and improvements in fasting blood sugars have been extremely positive and are currently being collated by Dr Liz Evans, Durham University.

- *Healthy weight pathway resource*
A collaborative review and refresh of the healthy weight pathway included simplified the guidance document and ensured that it was fully up to date regarding availability of local programmes. Primary care colleagues have provided positive feedback on the new version of this resource. There is still work continuing to ensure the resource is available to in all primary healthcare colleagues.

- 46 Task group conversations have revealed an appetite from some practice managers to use behaviour change techniques, such as embedding messaging through visuals and improving training practices for healthy weight. Marlborough Surgery, for example, has since implemented changes concerning where and how patients access information (digital messaging and face to face interaction). The Healthy Weight Health Professionals group meetings are ideally placed to share such developments and good practice.
- 47 This group has established that there is a clear need to ensure consistent approaches to (and understanding of) weight management programmes and services across Primary Care Networks in County Durham. Many practices are now in the process of designating a healthy weight lead, and the group is committed to ensuring that this grows. As mentioned above, the group will also have oversight of the 'healthy weight action plan' action area five, 'healthy patient care'.

Healthy Weight and Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach

- 48 MECC is a recognised approach to behaviour change that uses the many day-to-day interactions that organisations have with other people to support them making positive behaviour changes. This approach can also maximise 'scaling up' of these healthy weight conversation resources in other sectors, i.e. social care, sport and leisure.
- 49 Durham County Council is a member of the North East and North Cumbria ICS 'MECC Gateway', which supports the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to share healthy lifestyle messages and signposts to services. The 'brief intervention guide' that is referenced above is based upon the MECC 'ask, assist, ask' approach.

Local discussions have commenced to look at how these resources (and the MECC approach itself) can be maximised to improve healthy weight conversations.

A Healthy Weight Plan for County Durham

50 The Healthy Weight Plan (Appendix 2) is a key output of work over the past 12 months. It both reinforces (and is underpinned by) the whole systems approach to healthy weight. Furthermore, it incorporates 'healthy weight is everyone's business' at each level of the system. This includes:

- *Infrastructure, Policy and Strategy*
Incorporating 'Healthy Build for Life' planning and design review, 'Out of home food' standards that aim to include schools, workplaces, leisure and early years settings, food and Moving Together in County Durham strategies, the County Durham poverty strategy, fast food takeaway policy, healthier advertising, the National Child Measurement Programme and breast feeding.
- *Partnerships*
Incorporating systems level partnerships is another important aspect of this plan. This includes County Durham Together, Better Health at Work, the County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance, Early years 0-25, programmes and services, Child Poverty group, primary and secondary care partners.
- *Communities*
The plan incorporates community champions, community action teams, refugee settlement teams, volunteers and health professionals working with our people in our communities.
- *People as our strongest assets*
Embedding knowledge, developing skills and creating motivation within our communities will be achieved by County Durham residents. 'The information gap' tells us that our people will benefit from knowledge 'of why it's important' to motivate change.

51 The Healthy Weight Plan comprises five ambition action areas. Each area sets out key priorities and short, medium and long-term actions:

- **Healthy At Place**
The key objective is to normalise healthy and sustainable food availability, choice and consumption - making it easier for people to move and eat well in their local environment. This ambition action area incorporates a focus on a 'health in all policies' approach through a strong leadership and partnership approach. This includes

planning policy, active travel, Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plan, Climate Emergency Response Plan 3, healthier advertising policy, and 'out of home food' approaches for all settings.

- **Healthy Families**

The ambition is for families to have access to, cook and eat healthy, affordable food, and be active every day. This ambition action area incorporates the critical 1000 days (maternal to 2 years) and 0-19 (SEN +25). There are established partnerships throughout the county that will support this work, including the Child Poverty group. This area includes working with families, consistent evidence-based communication messaging/plans, staff knowledge and skills, improvements in NCMP approaches, school support, breastfeeding strategies, and working with young people to develop school food approaches.

- **Healthy sustainable food for all**

This area focusses on working towards a County wide food system where food choices are nutritious, affordable, accessible and desirable - enabling all who live, work and learn in County Durham to be healthy food citizens. This ambition action area is focused on equity and providing our residents with the freedom that comes from having good health. It incorporates the food security actions guided by the Poverty Strategy action group alongside a strengthened Food Durham county wide food strategy and partnership established and prioritised across the system.

- **Healthy Workforce**

This ambition focusses on our local workforce - those who can influence the behaviours which promote healthy weight (i.e., eat well, move well, sleep well) so that they have the knowledge and confidence to influence our workforce to achieve a healthy weight. This ambition action area incorporates Better Health At Work (BHAW) policy and practice and out of home food including behaviour change i.e., restructuring environments, nudge techniques, messaging, education, policy changes in the workplace.

- **Healthy Weight: Patient care**

The plan seeks to support health care professionals whose patients are living with overweight and obesity. This action area incorporates collaborations via the Healthy Weight Health professionals (HWHP) network, whose work has focussed on strengthening communications and coproducing the 'Healthy Weight Pathway' resource, Brief intervention guide, and associated tools to ensure our primary care colleagues are able to confidently converse and

signpost. Furthermore, there is a need to improve consistency, quality and quantity of referrals to the range of clinical programmes for patients living with overweight and obesity. This work includes improvements in the nutrition support provided in County Durham for patients with Type 2 diabetes.

North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (NENC ICB) and obesity prevention

- 52 To drive the prevention workstream forward, healthier weight and treating obesity's priority in the North-East and North Cumbria region is to identify and facilitate opportunities for the ICS to work with partners to support the healthier weight and treating obesity agenda.
- 53 This includes supporting whole system working to tackle obesity, to reduce the complications linked to overweight and obesity along with working towards the classification of obesity as a disease.
- 54 NENC ICB approaches include supporting and promoting the NHS Digital Weight Management Programme, expansion of tier 3 Specialist Weight Management Services and development of a children and young people's workstream.
- 55 Pharmacological agents are now available to treat those living with obesity. Drugs such as Liraglutide (Saxenda) and Semaglutide (Wegovy) have been proven to be effective in achieving a significant weight reduction which has motivated patients to work towards achieving a long-term weight reduction. These drugs have been approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) for the treatment of obesity.

Assessment for (and prescription of) these drugs can only be conducted through NHS specialist multidisciplinary tier 3 weight management services. This is currently subject to a two-year pilot programme that commenced in 2023.

- 56 Like many other medications, both Saxenda and Wegovy can be obtained through a private (fee paying) prescription and prescribers must follow rules and advice set by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Measuring outcomes: How will we know we are making a difference?

- 57 Obesity is a complex issue, and best practice, delivery and measurement of whole systems approaches to obesity are continually emerging.

- 58 The County Durham Healthy Weight Alliance (HWA) is crucial to performance measurement; therefore, progress against the plan will be reported annually to the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board via the alliance. A set of the main key performance indicators are provided within the Healthy Weight Plan document. These include partnership engagement, overweight/obesity, physical activity, hospital admissions and fruit and vegetable data, weight management support numbers and success measures.
- 59 The HWA meets quarterly and its members are responsible for delivery and overseeing progress of the healthy weight plan actions. Its membership has been reviewed and refreshed, and new terms of reference have been agreed.
- 60 The HWA agenda is wide. Examples of subjects covered over the past 12-months include:
- Maternity healthy weight training
 - Breastfeeding insights
 - Food Durham community projects and food inequality initiatives
 - Healthy weight planning and its key action areas, discussions to progress the Healthy Weight Declaration in County Durham
 - Establishing of an 'Out of home food' group.

North East Good Food Local

- 61 The North East has been selected by Sustain to be the regional project partner to replicate a 'Good Food for All Londoners' approach over 3 years. The North East Good Food framework and benchmarking programme (led by the Association of Directors of Public Health North East) has been agreed and developed by North East Local Authorities (including DCC) and food partnerships across the region. The aim is to develop and implement a regional public health approach to Good Food, informed by our community's needs.
- 62 Durham County Council and Food Durham has recently completed the baseline survey. The Healthy weight plan and Food Durham Strategy are aligned with the 9 areas identified as making up a 'Good food' system. Progress will be assessed annually and results will be reported in future updates to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 63 The 2024 timeline for the NE Good Food Local pilot is as follows:
- March – Submission deadline of benchmarking survey for each local authority (multiple workshops to support).

- July – First release of regional scoring to check and agree next steps with LA leads i.e., reporting and publication of scores.
- August – Local recommendations shared with local authority leads and regional recommendations go to NE HWWA network.
- 26 September – Celebration event
- October to December – Review of benchmarking questions ready for year two.

Moving Together in County Durham: Physical activity strategy update

- 64 Since the approval and publication of the ‘Moving Together in County Durham’ (MTiCD) physical activity strategy, work to develop and strengthen partnerships and influence positive change has included providing updates across partnerships and a virtual introductory event with our Moving Together partners and supporters.
- 65 A round table event is scheduled for 20 September 2024. More than 150 partners from all levels and a wide range of sectors in the County Durham System (who have contributed to the development of the MTiCD strategy and action plans) have been invited to this event so that they are able to meaningfully coproduce delivery plans that will achieve MTiCD actions and objectives. ‘Equitable physical activity’ is the focus and delegates will hear from speakers with UK-wide experience of social equity development.
- 66 In collaboration with academics from Durham University, a strategy evaluation framework is under development and progress will be reported in future updates.
- 67 The Physical Activity Strategy Committee (PASC) will oversee the strategy objectives.

Conclusion

- 68 The obesogenic environment and food as a commercial determinant to health are among the main challenges faced by those who are working hard to improve healthy weight levels in County Durham. The Healthy Weight Plan sets out evidence-based solutions that are wholly underpinned by the whole systems approach to healthy weight and ‘personalised’ to County Durham by local insights. To make meaningful change, a commitment to putting health first and making innovative and bold decisions (such as addressing the County Durham ‘out of home food’ environments, advertising and fast-food policy) are steps that are

required to move towards reducing the obesogenic environment and achieving healthy population weight in County Durham.

- 69 Having a focussed, evidence-based approach that is clear to all local partners is a crucial next step to increasing healthy weight levels. A whole systems approach cannot be effective unless all key stakeholders are aware of their role at each level of the system, and this plan seeks to achieve this. Making healthy weight everyone's business is built on ensuring everyone benefits from living with a healthy weight, 'why it matters' and what each organisation, community and individual can do to achieve this.
- 70 Progress made during the past year, combined with the future plans as outlined above, clearly show that matters relating to healthy weight can only be progressed through a system focus – with key partners from across the wider system working 'as a whole' to provide cross-sector support to achieve these objectives.

Other useful documents

- Review of Healthy Weight approaches: HWB report November 2023
- Moving Together in County Durham Strategy

Authors

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None identified in this current work.

Finance

Not applicable at this time.

Consultation and Engagement

In the development of this current work there has been a significant amount of consultation and engagement with a wide range of local groups and organisations.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Actions from this report are targeted to reduce the health inequalities of those people with overweight and obesity, with a particular focus in our most deprived communities.

Climate Change

The actions in this report are supported and aligned with DCC Climate Emergency Response Plan (3).

Human Rights

No risks identified.

Crime and Disorder

N/A

Staffing

N/A

Accommodation

N/A

Risk

No risks identified.

Procurement

The systems working towards 'enabling healthy weight for all' continually encourages working to economies of scale and make the best use of available

resource and capacity. Accordingly, no procurement issues have been identified at this time.

Appendix 2: Action Plan

Living with Healthy weight in County Durham

Action Plan

2024-2028

Our vision

County Durham is our place, where we can all eat well, move well, and have a healthy weight

Foreword

So many different parts of who we are, and our surroundings affect our chance of living with a healthy weight.

The Healthy Weight Plan is a County Durham wide approach to help guide action in working with communities, support people, value and accept them, and work hard to make their lives fairer together. Our Five ambition areas support an evidenced based solution pathway for healthy weight at all ages, to make the healthy choice the easiest choice for all who live, work, study and visit our beautiful County.

We cannot solve the disease of obesity in our population by simply telling people to move more and eat better. As well as our individual biology, genetics and behaviour, there are many more factors that affect our weight. For example, how much money we have, where we live, our culture and our family. It can often feel like we are swimming against a powerful flood of unhealthy foods, making it challenging for families to eat a healthy dietary pattern.

We understand health is an asset to us as individuals and the communities we live within. Having poor health makes our world feel smaller, therefore working with communities in experiencing the freedom which health provides takes collective action 'Healthy weight is everyone's business.'

We work with our health care providers supporting the need for treatment of obesity and eating disorder NHS led programmes. With the aim of sustainable changes and increasing healthy weight levels consistently over time, an evidenced based prevention approach is guided by our Healthy Weight review for County Durham recommendations (2023).

Collaborative working is at the heart of this action plan, and we are committed to finding more ways to share the best evidence we have and involve communities in identifying their own solutions to the challenges of maintaining a healthy weight, and we will regularly review our actions aligning with the County Durham Wellbeing Principles.

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- 1. Introduction**
- 2. A County Durham picture**
- 3. Whole Systems Approach to healthy weight**
- 4. Stamping out weight stigma in County Durham**
- 5. Action plan**
- 6. How will we know we are getting there?**
- 7. Glossary**
- 8. Important links and publications**

1. Introduction

Increasing healthy weight levels across our population not only contributes to longer healthy living years, but it also benefits population wellbeing and the economy,

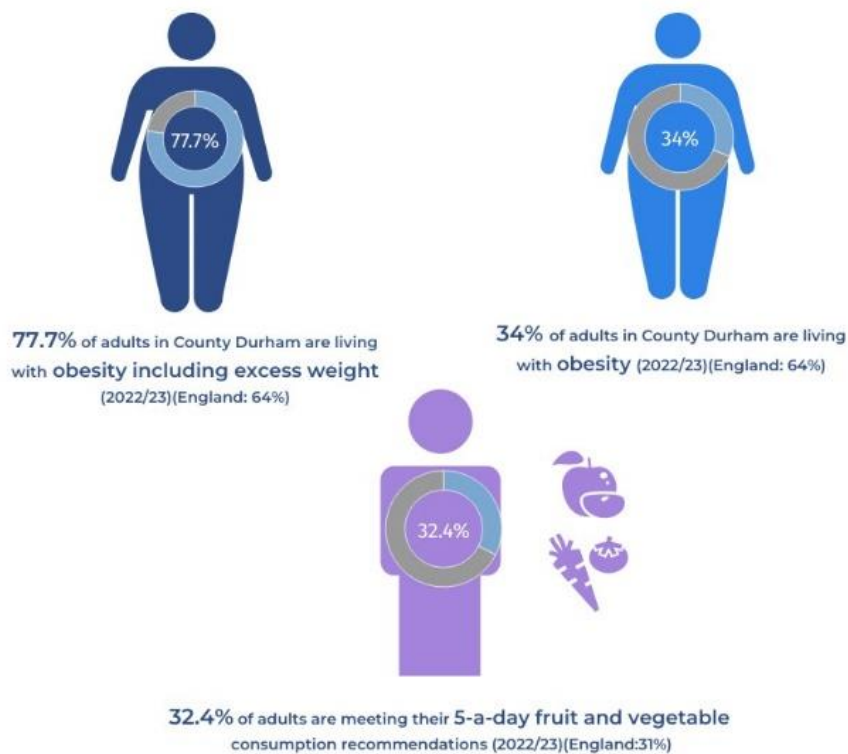
Poor diet is one of the biggest preventable risk factors for ill health. A healthy eating patterns improves physical and mental health, and contributes to a reduction in wider health inequalities at all ages.

Children with obesity are more likely to grow up to have diet-related health conditions. Obesity adversely affects ability to learn in school, self-esteem, and physical and mental health. Projections based on current trends show that more than 80% of children born in 2022 who survive to the age of 65 will be living with overweight or obesity, with one in 20 having died before this (1). More than one in five children in England have obesity by the time they finish primary school and those living in the most deprived areas are more than twice as likely to have obesity compared to those living in the least deprived areas.

2. The County Durham picture

County Durham has a higher prevalence of overweight and obesity than the England average (2022/23) and it is higher in areas of deprivation. The *County Durham Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) 2023-28*, as informed by the Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment (JSNAA), identifies 'Enabling a healthy weight for all' as one of four priorities in County Durham.

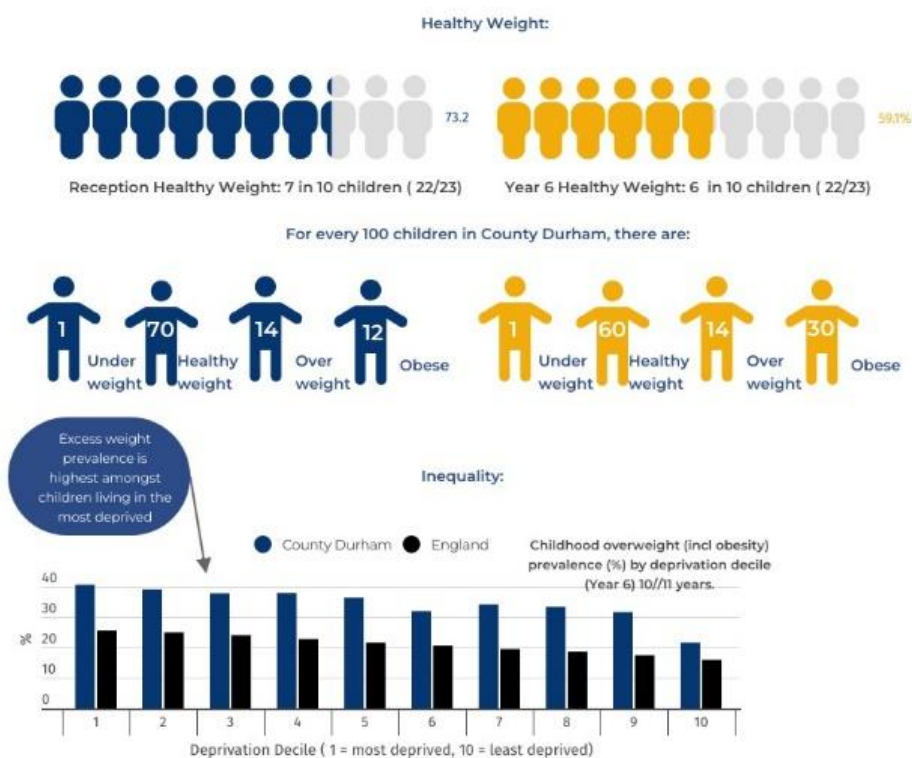
Adults



Note: Most adults are classified as overweight if their Body Mass Index (BMI) is 25kg/m² or greater or with obesity if they have a BMI of 30+. Some ethnic groups, however, need a lower cut off BMI since they have smaller structure and a different distribution of body fat (i.e. those of South Asian descent).

Children

In County Durham, more than 2,000 children at age 10 years are currently living with overweight (could we change this to number of those living with obesity?). By increasing healthy weight and providing nutrient packed foods, we provide the opportunity for our children and young people to perform well in their education, to thrive and to have a more positive future. Working with our families to create together ways to



3. A Whole systems approach in County Durham

Positive change requires a shared understanding of the benefits of improved levels of healthy population-level weight. Taking action to help people make healthy choices easier across our County, not only benefit people's health, but it can also support a healthier workforce, improve employability and productivity, lower demand for health and social care, and help build thriving communities.

Our five ambition action areas:

- Healthy at Place
- Healthy Families
- Healthy Workforce
- Healthy, Sustainable Food for all
- Healthy Patient Care

The ambitions are bold, based on strong evidence and about finding solutions to the challenges people experience in maintaining a healthy weight.

They will help us to look at the bigger picture and consider how our whole system is working towards our ambitions. They are designed to help us build and maintain strong relationships that will lead to meaningful change across the system.

Some of the actions are about policy and we will need strategic leadership support, and some are about collaborating with communities to find solutions that work for them. We have a strong focus on Health literacy so we can build knowledge and skills with and for our communities.

The Healthy Weight Alliance will act as a forum for strengthening relationships, monitoring the action plan and embedding the policy change needed. We will develop and test new approaches and standards to understand how they work in County Durham and can be implemented more widely.

What is a 'whole systems approach' to healthy weight in County Durham?

When we talk about the County Durham system, we are referring to all of those systems that influence our everyday lives, including our workplaces, schools, early years settings and health care systems.

A system is made up of many parts which interact and impact on each other and understanding how all parts of our County Durham system impact our health behaviours helps us identify where leverage points exist for positive change.

The County Durham system diagram ([in figure X/image X](#)) gives an example of the levels, sectors and communities that provide integrated working opportunities.

This approach is about aligning actions, building, and strengthening relationships, making best use of our existing resources, working with our communities to embed change and partners working together to achieve healthy weight across our population.

The County Durham system comprises infrastructure, policies and cross-sector organisations. It includes:

- Takes a 'health in all policies' approach
- Recognising the range and complexity of the causes of obesity and co-developing a coordinated set of actions

- Understanding the benefits associated with all key priorities, engaging key stakeholders and maintaining effective communication
- Engagement with partnerships and communities at all levels across the County
- Maximising assets in the local system - including our people power
- Maintaining momentum when addressing key actions, sharing learning, identifying any unintended consequences, and adapting local responses
- Always thinking about embedding change processes and open to long-term iterative, action learning

Infrastructure



Policy and strategy

Healthy build, Out of home food standards incl. schools and EY settings, leisure etc., Food and Moving Together in CD strategies, poverty strategy actions, Fast food takeaway policy, Healthier advertising, NCMP, BF approaches

Partnerships - Organisations

CDT (VCS) BHAWA, Early years 0-25 education, programmes and services, Child Poverty group, NHS – HDFT, MH services, restructuring our settings/ healthier environments

Community

Community champions, CAT, Volunteers and Health professionals working with our people in our communities

Our assets are our people

Help increase knowledge on the impact of nutrition and PA – ‘The information gap’ tells us without even the basic knowledge there can be no curiosity – Curiosity is essential for motivation - to learn more and to have the motivation to implement change people need the knowledge ‘of why it’s important’

4. Stamping out weight stigma in County Durham

Health is an asset that should be enjoyed by all who live, study, work in and visit County Durham. A focus on individual choice overlooks the role played by the environment in which we live. Many drivers of health are outside individual control, yet they often impact upon the choices we make. We know that focusing on health rather than weight is a great means of combatting weight-related stigma, and will work with stakeholders and communities to coproduce key messages that are aligned to health framing and literacy evidence.

We know that shame and blame does not help people make healthy changes. Indeed, such approaches can not only limit progress, but they can also affect mental wellbeing, leaving some people cycling restrictive diets.

Our people and communities are our power. We want every person in our county to feel valued and accepted; to feel confident and have self-worth. Building upon this important foundation, we want to create an environment that will maximise the opportunity for people to improve their health and wellbeing.

We can stamp out weight stigma by:

- Accepting and respecting different body shapes and sizes, whilst promoting the benefits of good health and wellbeing for all people
- Promoting an approach to nutrition from early years onwards that supports a positive relationship with food and eating
- Promoting movement that allows people of all size, abilities, and interests to engage in physical activity
- Supporting people to feel valued, accepted and happy by taking a health gains approach in all health conversations

A shared mission for our children and young people

The following four themes will underpin our messages:

- Increase food familiarity – widen the taste experiences of healthy foods from early years
- Increase fibre intake – more wholegrains, fruits, and vegetables, healthy snack swaps
- Increase 5 a day portions – snack swaps, healthy food access and including fruits and vegetables throughout the day
- Increase opportunity for moving – every child meeting 60 minutes total over the day of physical activity

5. Action Plan

Co-creating our plan for a healthier County Durham

Informed by the County Durham Approach to Wellbeing, the plan has been co-produced so that our people, communities and key local professionals and organisations have had an input into creating an environment where everyone is able to pursue health goals and adopt healthy behaviours.

Healthy At Place

In County Durham everyone can achieve and maintain a healthy weight, finding it easy to move more in the natural and built environment.

Healthy and sustainable food availability and consumption is the ‘norm’

Key priorities	Actions
<p>Ensure county wide policies consider the impact on healthy weight - ‘Health in all policies’ approach</p> <p>Co-develop local policies to ensure a consistent approach to sustainable and healthy food provision</p> <p>Make it easier to move more to increase physical activity levels across the County through the Moving Together in County Durham strategy</p>	<p><i>Short term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign up to the Healthy Weight Declaration. as a commitment to a shared mission in taking a whole county approach to increasing healthy weight. • Link with national and regional colleagues and organisations to advocate for interventions which can reduce the impact of an ‘obesogenic environment’ i.e., Sustain, Food Active, Feeding Britain <p><i>Medium Term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with academic partners to develop an evaluation and monitoring framework to include local data sets and monitor and report on progress against partnership-identified actions. • Develop an Out of Home food award that can be achieved by all settings in County Durham • Ensure healthy weight related policies and strategies (including ‘Healthy build for life’ health impact assessments, Poverty strategy action plans, ‘Out of home food,’ fast food outlet policy and HFSS advertising) are periodically reviewed and monitored.

Healthy Families

Every family can access, cook and consume healthy affordable food, and move more every day in ways they enjoy

Key priorities	Actions
<p>Ensure healthy weight for all is included in 'Best start in life' agenda across all parts of the system.</p> <p>Co-develop communications with simple key messages to help families feel supported, so that they can better prioritise healthy options.</p> <p>Encourage weight management programmes take a health first approach to support families to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and prevent obesity tracking into adulthood.</p>	<p><i>Short term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt frameworks institute framing of obesity and health literacy workstreams to develop a consistent county wide approach to family communications for healthy weight ● Promote the importance of training that provides advice, guidance and brief interventions on healthy weight for staff working with children, young people and families. ● Wellbeing For Life weight management service to incorporate a health first approach in delivery of programmes. <p><i>Medium term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage key local stakeholders to investigate coproduction of a Best start in life family healthy weight pathway ● Work with partners to co-produce 'out of home' food guidance/checklists (business, family hubs, leisure, fun and food providers, schools and early years). ● Conduct a scoping of best practice across the UK to explore implementing a County Durham healthy catering/food provision award.

Sustainable healthy food for all

A County Durham food system where food choices are nutritious, affordable, accessible, and desirable

All who live, work, and learn in County Durham are healthy and sustainable food aware citizens

Key priorities	Actions
<p>Develop a county wide food system strategy – to include sustainable healthy food provision and policy objectives</p> <p>Work with communities to support those living with food insecurity</p> <p>Ensure all food inequality initiatives are supported to provide key messages and appropriate advice to promote healthy weight</p>	<p><i>Short term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map food inequality initiatives • Involve community groups and structures (including volunteer programmes) in producing healthy eating and moving more messages. • Support the development a sustainable health promoting County Wide Food Strategy aligned to Climate Change Emergency Response Plan (CERP3), DCC Poverty Strategy Action plans, and North East Good Food Local pilot. <p><i>Medium Term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refresh the County Wide food strategy and achieve Silver sustainable food status • Launch a coproduced County Wide Food Strategy <p><i>Long term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food initiatives to provide information, advice and guidance to support service users with skills to make healthier food (exploring a wraparound offer for all FIIs) • Gather community feedback to understand lived experience and its impact upon making healthier food choices.

Healthy Workforce

All those who can influence healthy weight promoting behaviours in the workplace are confident and competent in their practice, making it easier to eat well and move well in the workplace and beyond

All who work in County Durham find it easy to eat well and move well for a healthy weight

Key priorities	Actions
<p>DCC workplaces leading by example in promoting healthy weight as part of the BHAW approach.</p> <p>Ensure County Durham workplace health programmes have a focus on supporting local organisations to develop policy and practice on matters relating to healthy weight.</p>	<p><i>Short term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham County Council to lead by example in promoting the Healthy Weight Declaration with local employers. • Adopt obesity framing and health literacy workstreams to develop a consistent narrative and key messaging for Better Health at Work (and wider workplace health) campaigns. • Align the County Durham Workplace Health programme with the healthy weight plan priorities. <p><i>Medium term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of a toolkit with key nutrition messages and healthy weight brief intervention guide tools or workplaces. • Consider the Healthy weight declaration and OHID catering standards within all Durham food provision contracts. <p><i>Long term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the County Durham Workplace Health Programme has an embedded programme for workplace information, advice and guidance to promote healthy weight and nutrition.

Healthy patient care

Health care professionals are confident in supporting patients with a compassionate approach to healthy weight to influence nutrition and weight outcomes in their communities.

Patients throughout the life course are empowered and supported to achieve their healthy weight goals.

Key priorities	Actions
<p>Ensure health and social care professionals are confident in having healthy weight conversations and signposting to local and national weight management and type 2 diabetes support programmes</p> <p>Develop ways to embed evidence based key nutrition advice/messaging to support all patients</p> <p>Embed a consistent compassionate approach in supporting patients and sharing key simple messages across all health and social care settings and communication channels</p>	<p><i>Short term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with health care colleagues to coproduce nutrition advice messaging for patients with the 'Healthy weight Health professionals network' and promote a consistent approach to key nutrition messages across Primary care including advice for those with Type 2 Diabetes. • Work with health care colleagues to codesign and pilot brief intervention associated tools with patients and communities to support health and social care professionals to increase confidence and knowledge in having healthy weight conversations. • Support health care colleagues to strengthen communications to maximise appropriate referrals/signposting to local and national weight management programmes. <p><i>Medium term</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage any targeted services for adults and families with obesity to include psychological and 'health first' non stigmatising approach, with a built in 12 month patient follow up. • Support health and social care professionals to develop the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate advice/brief intervention for health behaviours. • Promote inclusion of healthy weight and moving more awareness in mental health policy and programmes.

6. How will we know we are getting there?

Systems approaches rely on strong partnership and leadership engagement across all levels of our County Durham system. Building and strengthening relationships and partnership working is a priority which underpins our approach to increase healthy weight levels and reducing some of the enduring inequalities experienced by those living with obesity.

The plan will be monitored against a set of measurable outcomes that are set out in the table below. The process of what we can measure and what we can change will be monitored and reviewed each year.

Annual progress on the table indicators will be provided to the Durham County Council Health and Wellbeing board.

Indicator
Improved stakeholder engagement <i>(for discussion re measurement)</i>
Adults classified with Obesity
Reduce % children 4-5 yrs classified as overweight or obese
Reduce % children 10-11 yrs classified as OW/OB
Increase levels of physical activity in County Durham Adults
Increase levels of physical activity in children and young people
Increase number of people recorded as having 5+ a day fruit and vegetables
Use of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons
Reduction % children 4-5 yrs in most deprived quintile recorded as OW/OB
Reduction % children 10-11 yrs in most deprived quintile recorded as OW/OB
Fast food density in areas with higher rates of childhood obesity
HENRY uptake
Referrals/uptake to local and national weight management services

7. Glossary

To be completed

8. Important links and publications

1. [The Broken Plate 2022 | Food Foundation](#)
2. [Healthy eating: applying All Our Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
3. [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025 \(durham.gov.uk\)](#)
4. [PuttingChildren YP AtHeartOfGov.pdf \(childrenatthetable.org.uk\)](#)
5. [Whole systems approach to obesity: A guide to support local approaches \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
6. [Promoting healthy weight in children, young people and families: A resource to support local authorities - practical examples \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)