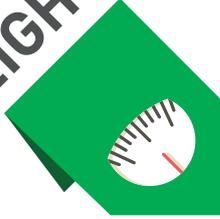


**LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
DECLARATION ON  
HEALTHY WEIGHT**



THIS LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
DECLARATION ON HEALTHY WEIGHT IS A  
STATEMENT, INDIVIDUALLY OWNED BY X  
CITY/LOCAL AUTHORITY.

It encapsulates a vision to promote  
healthy weight and improve the health  
and well-being of the local population. We  
recognise that we need to exercise our  
responsibility in developing and implementing  
policies which promote healthy weight.



Leader of  
Council

Chief  
Executive

Director of  
Public Health

# FOOD ACTIVE DECLARATION SUPPORT PACK

## USING THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit has been designed to provide local authorities with a step-by-step guide to adopting the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight (declaration). We recognise that not all councils have the same procedures, and with the declaration being taken in different directions there will be variations of course. We have included suggestions for local priorities, along with a number of case studies which provide experiences from the perspective of the declaration leads from a number of localities. You will also find links to the evidence base behind the 14 commitments included in the declaration, FAQs and a template press release.

## BENEFITS & CONTENT

The aim of the declaration is to achieve a local authority commitment to promote healthy weight and improve the health and well-being of the local population; and to recognise the need for local authorities to exercise their responsibility in developing and implementing policies which promote healthy weight.

1. About Food Active
2. Introduction to the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight
3. The case for addressing poor diet
4. The steps to adopting the declaration
5. What will we be signing up to?
- 5a. The 14 commitments
- 5b. Local commitments
6. Learning from experience
7. FAQs
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9. How Food Active can help

## FOOD ACTIVE

Food Active was set up in 2013 in response to high levels of unhealthy weight in the North West. Funded by North West Directors of Public Health, Food Active takes a population-based approach to promoting healthy weight with advocacy, policy change, research and targeted campaigns core elements of the work. You can find out more about Food Active and the work we do at: [www.foodactive.org.uk](http://www.foodactive.org.uk)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECLARATION ON HEALTHY WEIGHT

The Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight was developed by Food Active with expert input from a steering group including Directors of Public Health and public health leads; epidemiologists and public health academics from NW universities; third sector and other food and physical activity partner organisations.

The declaration was based on one previously developed in tobacco control by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

The declaration includes 14 standard commitments with the opportunity for local authorities to add local commitments relevant to their needs and aspirations.

Since being launched in August 2015, the Declaration was first adopted by Blackpool Council in January 2016 and subsequently by other councils in the North West and beyond.

Diet-related ill health in the UK is estimated to lead to approximately 70,000 premature deaths annually, which represents around 12 per cent of the total number of deaths. Evidence shows that poor diet has the highest impact on the NHS budget, costing around £6 billion per year, a figure which is greater than alcohol consumption, smoking and physical inactivity.

An unhealthy diet is strongly associated and causally linked with a number of chronic, complex conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, some cancers and type II diabetes.

The majority of children, young people and adults in the UK are not eating a healthy diet. One in five children start school overweight or obese, and a third of children leave primary school overweight or obese. Nearly two thirds of adults in the UK are overweight or obese. These figures are worse for populations in the North West than for other areas of the UK, with 23.2% of reception age children, 35.2% of Year 6 children and 66.6% of adults overweight or obese (compared to 22.1%, 34.2% and 64.8 for England respectively). With worrying highs of 28.1% for reception age (St Helens), 40.2% for Year 6 (Manchester) and 74.7% for adults (Halton).

Many children and adults in the UK are aware of the importance of consuming a healthy diet, and are concerned about the amount of unhealthy content in food and drink products. However in contrast, the majority of children and adults do not meet dietary guidance, for example 5-a-day, where in the North West the average amount of fruit and veg consumed is 2.45 servings. This demonstrates the need to consider the range of factors beyond an individual's knowledge and attitudes that impact on their dietary behaviour.

People's diets are influenced by the food and drink products available in their surrounding environment. Unhealthy food and drink is easily accessible and often eaten outside the home. Those living in socially deprived areas often have less access to healthy foods.

Children and young people particularly are exposed to a range of food and drink marketing tactics that work in combination to influence demand for their products. Mass media advertising is known to have a direct impact on children and young people's dietary choices and an indirect effect on their dietary preferences, consumption and behaviour. There are various other marketing communication tactics beyond mass media advertising, including attractive packaging, celebrity endorsement, linkage with fictional characters, sponsorship and sales promotions.

Often companies aim to influence policy makers through stakeholder marketing, typically in the form of corporate social responsibility. This has the purpose of strengthening a company's brand and enhancing consumer trust. Stakeholder marketing also helps fend off statutory regulation, providing a platform for companies to influence the public health agenda through the development of public-private partnerships.

Action is required at all levels to promote healthier eating and to make it easier for people to make better choices. A local authority level commitment, which encompasses planning, public health, environmental health, leisure and recreation, has the scope to impact significantly on the residents of a council area. A whole-systems approach is key to improving the health of our populations.

## THE STEPS TO ADOPTING THE DECLARATION

Through speaking with local authorities who have been through the process of passing the declaration through their respective council, we have compiled a series of steps deemed necessary to successfully adopt the declaration.

- STEP 1: Help frame the problem. Make sure you provide a clear evidence base using local data. Make a compelling case for why action is required in your area. Use the declaration as a tool to meet local priorities as identified in your health and wellbeing or obesity strategies.
- STEP 2: Work with your elected members. Ensure they identify with the issues and appreciate how the council is able to support their local communities through the Declaration. Identify a champion to help the declaration through the democratic process.
- STEP 3: Make sure all sections of the council are involved, not only public health. Everyone has a part to play. Use your champion to garner support from all local authority departments. Health and wellbeing is cross-cutting. Leisure services, planning and environmental health are often keen to support.
- STEP 4: In establishing local priorities work with the Health and Wellbeing Board and a Healthy Weight Steering Group (if you have one). Refer to your local strategies and identify how the declaration can help you to meet these.
- STEP 5: Sign up and celebrate! Share your commitment with the media and establish ownership.
- STEP 6: Make sure you maintain the momentum once the Declaration is signed and make people accountable for their actions.
- STEP 7: Monitor and evaluate the Declaration.

## WHAT WILL WE BE SIGNING UP TO?

The declaration comprises of 14 standard commitments, these were decided after a period of consultation with an expert stakeholder group, and are supported by the following evidence base (insert link). The commitments were designed to be bold but achievable with the opportunity for councils to make further local commitments to supplement the declaration if they wished.

## THE 14 COMMITMENTS

- Engage with the local food and drink sector (retailers, manufacturers, caterers, out of home settings) where appropriate to consider responsible retailing (such as not selling energy drinks to under 18s), offering and promoting healthier food and drink options, and reformulating and reducing the portion sizes of high fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) products;
- Consider how commercial partnerships with the food and drink industry may impact on the messages communicated around healthy weight to our local communities. Funding may be offered to support research, discretionary services (such as sport and recreation and tourism events) and town centre promotions;

- Review provision in all our public buildings, facilities and 'via' providers to make healthy foods and drinks more available, convenient and affordable and limit access to high-calorie, low-nutrient foods and drinks (this should be applied to public institutions such as schools, hospitals, care homes and leisure facilities where possible);
- Increase public access to fresh drinking water on local authority controlled sites;
- Consider supplementary guidance for hot food takeaways, specifically in areas around schools, parks and where access to healthier alternatives are limited;
- Advocate plans with our partners including the NHS and all agencies represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board, Healthy Cities, academic institutions and local communities to address the causes and impacts of obesity;
- Protect our children from inappropriate marketing by the food and drink industry such as advertising and marketing in close proximity to schools; 'giveaways' and promotions within schools; at events on local authority controlled sites;
- Support action at national level to help local authorities reduce obesity prevalence and health inequalities in our communities;
- Ensure food and drinks provided at public events include healthy provisions, supporting food retailers to deliver this offer;
- Support the health and well-being of local authority staff and increase knowledge and understanding of unhealthy weight to create a culture and ethos that normalises healthy weight;
- Invest in the health literacy of local citizens to make informed healthier choices;
- Ensure clear and comprehensive healthy eating messages are consistent with government guidelines;
- Consider how strategies, plans and infrastructures for regeneration and town planning positively impact on physical activity;
- Monitor the progress of our plan against our commitments and publish the results.

The commitments you choose to include here, if any, will be individual to the needs of your population. Here you can be much more specific about action you wish to take as a council. Previous local commitments have included:

### **Children And Young People**

- Improving the quality of packed lunches by developing local agreement with schools to implement guidance in line with school food plans
- Working with schools to achieve 'walk to school' recommendations as part of School Food Plans and increase physical activity for children and young people
- Promote the uptake of breastfeeding as providing the best nutrition for babies and reducing childhood obesity

### **Food Poverty**

- Working with community organisations and stakeholders in order to increase effectiveness and approaches to identify, advise, refer and support those at risk of food poverty and adverse nutritional status

### **Workplace**

- Supporting workplaces to increase engagement with staff around physical activity, healthy weight and healthy eating
- Promoting access to healthier food and drinks in canteens and vending machines, and advocating to reduce access to unhealthy food and drinks
- Promote workplace health with local employers and voluntary sector organisations, via rollout of the Workplace Wellbeing Charter.

### **Partnership Working**

- Develop a healthy weight forum to engage a broad spectrum of partners in tackling excess weight across the borough
- Considering weighted/financial support for 'healthier' retail (e.g. greengrocers, co-operatives etc.) in deprived areas

### **Campaign**

- Undertake a social marketing campaign with young adults to promote healthy weight.

### **Out Of Home Offer**

- Work with take away restaurants to make the food they sell healthier.
- Working with commercial outlets within all public sector premises to develop a food and drink policy.

**Blackpool:****The journey to a Local Authority Declaration on Health Weight in Blackpool  
Lynn Donkin, Public Health, Blackpool Council**

Following support from Food Active, the council team first presented the idea for a local declaration to the portfolio holder for public health in September 2015 alongside a review of the local healthy weight strategy. They discussed the complex challenges driving obesity levels, and the particularly worrying rates in children. The declaration moved forward and a paper to the authority's Corporate Leadership Team followed soon after. A process of consultation with the Healthy Weight Steering Group and senior managers from across all directorates of the authority was set up to determine the local areas for action. The wide range of discussions revealed a number of perspectives ranging from the practicalities of advertising restrictions, income from corporate sponsorship of council-led events and initiatives, the strength of the council's position to lead by example and influence the local environment.

This process was taking place at a time when child obesity was featuring frequently in the media and this greatly influenced the local declaration going forward in the council. The House of Commons Health Committee was working on child obesity and celebrity chef Jamie Oliver was campaigning for a sugary drinks tax. There was local interest too around the #GULPchallenge, Blackpool's campaign encouraging teens to 'give up loving pop'.

In the end the journey has been quicker and smoother than originally anticipated. In January 2016, only five months after the first discussions the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight was formally presented and signed in a Full Council meeting. Although there were some anxieties about potential impacts on the economy and revenues, there was a clear acceptance that supporting healthier weight was the right thing to do. The council has since then been working with procurement and revising vending arrangements to reduce the amount of sugary drinks available, linking to other Strategies across the council, holding healthy cake sales, working with other Public Sector organisations, working with schools to improve packed lunches, doing staff health events, running a second GULP campaign, engaging with Visit Blackpool, relaunching healthy catering award and linking with Health and Wellbeing Board.

Contact:

Lynn Donkin, Public Health, Blackpool Council  
[Lynn.Donkin@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:Lynn.Donkin@blackpool.gov.uk)

**Evaluating Blackpool, One Year On****Robin Ireland, Director of Research (honorary), Food Active**

With overweight and obesity levels significantly higher than the national average, Blackpool Council used their adoption of the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight in January 2016 to highlight healthy weight as an issue. The Declaration provided an opportunity to relaunch Blackpool's Healthy Weight Strategy and the public health team worked with the council's Healthy Weight Steering Group to help to determine local priorities. The Declaration helped the council both to take leadership but also to challenge partner organisations to play their own role in addressing healthy weight.

Link to evaluation report:

[www.foodactive.org.uk/support-pack-evaluation-report](http://www.foodactive.org.uk/support-pack-evaluation-report)

## **St Helens:**

### **The St Helens Experience**

#### **Dympna Edwards, Assistant Director Public Health, St Helens BC**

St Helens is a metropolitan borough of Merseyside, in North West England. Over the years it has undertaken various approaches to try and increase the prevalence of healthy weight and halt the increase in unhealthy weight. Currently, adult obesity stands at almost 30 per cent. Obesity in children, as captured in the NCMP, currently stands at ten per cent in reception age and increases to 20 per cent amongst year six pupils, demonstrating a linear increase in unhealthy weight through generations.

In 2014 a Healthy Weight Strategy was launched which highlighted three priority areas to address – people, places and policy. Action since then has included:

- People- reframing weight management services to include more universal preventive programmes and recommissioning of specialist weight management services.
- Policy- building on the successful supplementary planning guidance, working with local takeaways on a chip fryer award, healthier takeaways.
- Places- introducing the workplace wellbeing charter with local businesses; healthy eating awards in early years settings and schools, introducing a range of outdoor gyms across the borough and promotion of active travel.

When Food Active developed the Healthy Weight Declaration this presented an ideal resource for the council to put their own spin on. The council has adopted the declaration in September 2016. Key to ensure uptake included:

1. Availability of local data highlighting the issue, particularly amongst children (via NCMP).
2. National Childhood Obesity Strategy coverage within the media generating the interest of local press, the local population and members.
3. Proactive and passionate cabinet member for Public Health who took on a personal approach to highlighting the need for such a declaration convincing peers to adopt.
4. Being the first council in Merseyside to adopt the declaration.

The declaration highlighted the work that was already underway and provided an opportunity for the council to commit to a whole system approach. It raised the profile of the work on healthy weight and provided cross council support for a number of initiatives that are being taken forward.

**London:****Success Outside of the North West, Two London Boroughs First to Sign Declaration on Sugar and Healthy Food****Sofia Parente, Campaign Coordinator, Sustain**

The idea for a local declaration arose out of the East London 'Growth Boroughs' 'Healthier Children Healthier Place' programme established to share learning and good practise on developing a whole systems approach to tackling child obesity. The inspiration then came from the work of Food Active in the North West that culminated in the Blackpool Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight. Following a tender process, the East London councils then commissioned Sustain as an independent organisation to run the project, from consulting with key stakeholders on the content of the declaration to promoting it to the majority of London local authorities. Food Active supported the development.

The initiative was launched at City Hall in November 2016. Since then many London local authorities are making progress to identify their actions under the six key areas of action. Lambeth and Tower Hamlets are the first two to have signed the declaration in April 2017.

Lambeth Council pledges to restrict unhealthy advertising, promote the uptake of Healthy Start Vouchers starting at Brixton market, have healthier food and drinks at Council events, promote a voluntary sugary drinks levy to local businesses and continue the 'Feel 100%' social media campaign targeting local young people. Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group is co-signatory, underpinning the commitment of the NHS to work in partnership to tackle obesity in the borough.

Tower Hamlets has some of the highest rates of tooth decay and child obesity in the country. Tower Hamlets Council pledges to tackle advertising and sponsorship, bringing in a voluntary sugary drinks levy on sales at council-run canteens and offering healthy choices at public events, alongside healthy food in schools being further encouraged. More and more stall-holders selling fresh produce in East End markets like Whitechapel and Poplar's Chrisp Street have been signing up to the council's 'food for health' award scheme launched two years ago and the Council pledges to continue to increase this number.

For more details on the Local Government Declaration on Sugar Reduction and Healthier Food initiative visit:

[www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink/declaration](http://www.sustainweb.org/londonfoodlink/declaration)

## **Obesity Is A Complex Problem. Will A Local Authority Declaration Make A Difference?**

There is no one size fits all solution to obesity, it is going to take action at many different levels before we have any significant progress. However local authorities have an important role to play. They control planning, public and environmental health, leisure and recreation and regeneration and this declaration is a vehicle to take the sort of whole-systems approach needed to tackle this complex issue. The declaration can have an impact across local authority departments, making sure the council works as one to achieve maximum impact, and ideally will by working with other local partners have an impact far beyond council controlled areas.

### **What about the economic impact of the declaration?**

The role of the local authority is to work for the wellbeing of the population, this responsibility does not only sit with public health, it needs to be considered across all departments. The local authority and other public sector bodies need to balance the long term costs to the health and care services against the short term costs of turning down sponsorship or vending deals. Sponsorship and advertising, vending or others may be a source of income locally and for the local authority but supporting healthier food is the right thing to do.

“We’ve recognised that a community that’s unwell and reliant on lots of services is a drain on resources and a drain on the economy, so really to have a healthy, resilient population will help us with our other objective of regenerating Blackpool”. Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health, Blackpool.

### **Where can I get data to support the declaration?**

You will need to make a compelling case why action is needed at a council level. Much of the information can be found in the supporting documents we have prepared, including the toolkit, the evidence base and the evaluation. You will need to evidence local data which can be found in recent public health reports, public health outcomes online and/ or healthy weight strategies. When preparing your case, think about all of the departments who can influence healthy weight, both directly and indirectly.

### **Who needs to be involved in the process of adopting the declaration?**

There are many healthy weight stakeholders in each local area who will have an interest in the Declaration and what signing up to it might mean for the local council. It is useful if they have a good understanding of the content and purpose of the Declaration so they can support the process. Local stakeholders might include:

- Director of Public Health
- Lead Member for Health
- Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Clinical leads
- Consultants in Public Health/Health Improvement Leads
- Clinical Commissioning Groups
- GPs, dietitians

### **We Have Limited Resource, How Can We Make The Process As Straight-Forward As Possible?**

We realise the declaration may seem like a daunting process, but much of the work has already been done. The main job will be to put your case forward and get to identify a champion. Bringing in external support may be a cost-effective way to get the declaration passed. Food Active can provide resource in terms of presenting to HWB boards, preparing papers, feeding into a steering group and with external communications. Current commissioners of Food Active will receive elements of this at no cost.

## What Happens Once The Declaration Has Been Passed?

It is important to keep momentum going. Keep an action log so that you can refer to progress made. Set up a stakeholder group to decide upon and push forward next steps. Consider a follow-up event to engage with council colleagues and other organisations in the locality.

### TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

XX has become the latest council to sign a declaration to promote healthy weight across the borough through improved food and drink provision

Councillors voted in favour of a Local Government Declaration on healthy weight at the Full Council/ Cabinet meeting held XXX.

The Council's declaration shows a commitment to reducing overweight and obesity in XX by helping residents to make better choices. Overweight and obesity in XX is currently at a staggering level (enter stats).

Developed by North West based Food Active, the declaration was first adopted by Blackpool Council in 2016 where it has been shown to have made a positive impact on policy at local authority level.

Council leader XXX, along with Public Health Director XXX, met with representatives from Food Active to put the Council's commitment down in writing by signing a declaration that will be proudly placed in the Council building.

Cllr XXX, Cabinet Member for XXX, said: "Obesity is a huge problem for us in XXX. XX% of children in the borough are overweight or obese by the time they start secondary school (complete using National Child Measurement Programme borough level data).

"It is important to have such a commitment to healthy weight at a council level, to work with all departments to ensure healthy weight is included in all policies. I'm really pleased that this council has taken this positive step.

"Our work will focus on ... (complete with actions the council is committing to under the declaration)

Robin Ireland, Research Director at Food Active and the lead for this project, said: "Congratulations to XXX Council for taking this stand.

"We all know how difficult it is to make the right choices when we are surrounded by unhealthy food, the wrong advertising messages and when sugary drinks are cheaper than water. I am delighted that XX Council is doing everything they can to help their residents, workers and pupils eat healthier.

"I hope other councils will follow XX's example".

For more details on the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight visit:  
[www.foodactive.org.uk/projects/local-authority-declaration](http://www.foodactive.org.uk/projects/local-authority-declaration)

# FOOD ACT!VE

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Food Active is a programme of work commissioned  
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