

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
Date: 17th March 2020
Report for: Information
Report of: Eleanor Roaf, Director of Public Health

Report Title

Healthy Weight

Summary

Excess weight in children and young people is strongly linked with deprivation as demonstrated by local National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) data. Excess weight is influenced by a complex system of factors, which we need to reflect in our healthy weight strategy. In order to make changes to this system we need to ensure senior leadership and political buy-in and support. One tool to support this is to sign up to the Healthy Weight Declaration.

Recommendation(s)

**To support the signing of the Healthy Weight Declaration.
To support a whole systems approach through the healthy weight strategy
To generate support among elected members as advocates for work to make system changes that will have a positive impact on healthy weight**

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1. Background

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is challenging and complex, and excess weight (overweight and obesity) is a serious Public Health concern. Excess weight can have serious health implications for individuals, with increased risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, vascular dementia and some cancers and significantly reduces life expectancy. Being overweight can be prevented, but it can be seen as a normal reaction to an abnormal environment, where it is very difficult to achieve and maintain a healthy weight given all the external factors and influences on our lives.

The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) has been recording the height and weight of children in Reception and Year 6 since 2006. It was set up to provide intelligence to support local public health initiatives and to inform the local planning and delivery of services for children.

Trafford fares relatively well compared to England, however prevalence of obesity more than doubles between the first and last years of primary school, and Trafford school children living in areas that rank in the 10% most deprived in England are more than twice as likely to be obese as those living in the 10% least deprived areas.

This paper will provide an overview of:

- The local picture of overweight and obesity in children and young people in Trafford
- The current development of an all age healthy weight strategy for Trafford
- The development of a whole system approach to excess weight
- The use of the Healthy Weight Declaration in order to gain high level political and leadership buy-in to tackling excess weight.

2. Local picture

Weight status in children is measured using BMI centile on the UK90 Growth Reference charts. There are different centile thresholds for population monitoring compared to clinical classification as shown in the table below. BMI is the most suitable way to determine excess weight in most of the population.

Classification	BMI centile	
	Clinical	Population
Underweight	<2 nd	<2 nd
Healthy weight	≥2 nd to <91 st	≥2 nd to <85 th
Overweight	≥91 st to <98 th	≥85 th to <95 th
Obese	≥98 th to <99.6 th	≥95 th to <99.6 th
Morbidly obese	≥99.6 th	≥99.6 th

There is currently no guidance on different BMI ranges for Black And Minority Ethnic (BAME) children, however a recent study in the Journal of Public Health (Firman et al. 2020) suggests that BMI overestimates weight category in children from black backgrounds, and under-estimates BMI in children from South Asian backgrounds. This means that parents of black children may be informed that their child is overweight when they are in fact a healthy weight, and that parents of children from

a South Asian background may be informed that their child is a healthy weight when they are overweight. Overweight and obese are terms that represent excessive body fat accumulation that presents a risk to health, and therefore in different populations the level of excess weight at which there is a risk to health can be different.

In children of reception age (age 4-5) one in five (19.9%) are overweight or obese, and this increases to almost one in three (31.6%) by year 6 (age 10-11). It is estimated that the increases in excess weight are fairly linear as age increases, and therefore it is likely that by the age of 18 around 45% of young people are overweight or obese. This equates to over 14,000 children and young people who are heavier than they should be. In addition, between Reception and Year 6, the prevalence of children who are obese doubles from 7.7% to 17.7%, and is more than twice as high for children living in the most deprived decile compared to the least deprived. As child poverty increases, so does excess weight, and a similar pattern can be seen with obesity.

The ratio of obesity prevalence between Reception and Year 6 has been stable at around a 2.2-fold increase since 2010/11, with no evidence of an upward or downward trend.

In Reception, the prevalence of excess weight is now slightly lower than the 2006/07 baseline, whilst in year 6 the prevalence of excess weight is similar to the 2006/07 baseline. Prevalence of excess weight in Reception in Trafford is lower than the England average, however, excess weight in year 6 is similar to England. At the other end of the weight spectrum, around 1% of children at Reception and Year 6 are underweight, and if this prevalence is consistent throughout childhood, then around 600 children and young people in Trafford are underweight.

National data tells us that there are certain groups within a population who will be disproportionately affected by overweight and obesity.

- Obesity prevalence is higher in black children than white children at both reception and year 6;
- Obesity prevalence is over twice as high for children living in the most deprived areas compared to children living in the least deprived areas;
- And morbid obesity prevalence is almost four times as high for children living in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived.

3. Trafford Approach

In July 2019 a multi-agency Healthy Weight steering group was established in Trafford to start the process of developing a healthy weight strategy, address issues relating to safeguarding, look at pathways into current available services and agree an approach for Trafford in relation to healthy weight. There has been excellent engagement in the steering group and sub-groups from key children's services such as education, school nursing, health visiting, social care, safeguarding, primary care etc.

3.1 Safeguarding

The first priority for the healthy weight steering group was to establish a protocol and toolkit for the identification of obesity in the context of neglect. This decision was

taken as a result of recent Serious Case Reviews in Manchester and Bury where children had died and their obesity was a factor in this. There were recommendations from each review which were relevant to the processes and procedures at the time in Trafford. These were:

- There is a lack of professional clarity about when childhood obesity should be considered as a child neglect concern which, if not addressed, leaves children at risk of continued harm.
- The lack of professional knowledge about the multiagency obesity pathway, coupled with the way services are currently delivered does not support professionals in the management of obesity.
- Professional sensitivities to “naming the problem” in relation to obesity is unduly driving practice. This will be compounded when a parent is seen as challenging.
- Professionals are not supported to take a psycho-social approach to obesity, whereby the well-being of children and their parents are linked and worked with as such.
- Children’s help-seeking behaviour is insufficiently recognised and responded to by professionals, leaving them unsupported in the short term and potentially less likely to ask for help in the future.

A task & finish group was established from the healthy weight steering group which was led by the Trafford Safeguarding Board. From this, a new policy document was developed and approved in December 2019 “Safeguarding response to obesity when neglect is an issue”. The document includes clear guidance to support professionals when it is considered that a child’s obesity may be related to neglect (Appendix 1). It also includes two safeguarding analysis tools – one for health practitioners and one for non-health practitioners – to help practitioners establish whether neglect is a concern in relation to the child’s weight, and this then links to Trafford’s Levels of Need document to determine the appropriate level of support. The levels of need document also includes clear weight-related needs to support decision-making.

This policy is now being rolled out with practitioners across Trafford. This will be supplemented with additional support where required.

3.2 Pathways

A second task and finish group met to look at pathways into services that support people who want to achieve a healthy weight. Members of the steering group were unsure of the support that was available and felt that this was reflected in the wider workforce. Therefore a document that details key services that are in place was collated to share with partners and the workforce. A piece of work is also underway to review the way this information is presented on the Trafford Directory to ensure that it can be easily accessed and found by members of the public and professionals.

In addition, the current pathway into the children and young people’s weight management service was shared to ensure that the wider workforce were aware of this specialist offer.

3.3 Healthy Weight Strategy and whole system approach

The steering group considered the approach that we wanted to take with the strategy and it was agreed that we needed to reflect a whole system approach to the issue. The strategy will cover the life course and identify priority groups where the prevalence of excess weight is highest.

- BAME communities
- People living in areas of high deprivation
- People with disabilities
- Looked after children and care leavers
- Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy

The strategy will reflect that population level change requires a whole system approach, and will identify changes that need to be made at all levels of the system:

- Culture
- Policy
- Physical environment
- Organisations and institutions
- Social environment
- Individual

The system of factors that influence weight are multiple and complex (Appendix 2), and this is why we need to look at the whole system of drivers that cause excess weight, in addition to supporting those people who are already overweight or obese to achieve a healthy weight. The video in Appendix 3 demonstrates how external factors have a huge influence on young people's decisions around food consumption.

The strategy is in first draft, awaiting feedback from members of the steering group, before wider engagement with community partners and people with lived experience.

In order to take a whole system approach, we need to engage with wider stakeholders so that they understand their role in helping the people of Trafford to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. We also need political and leadership buy-in to enable partners to recognise the importance of healthy weight, and their own role in helping to achieve this. This will form the next stage of the whole system approach.

In order to secure leadership buy-in, a paper was submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board in February to recommend that the Council sign up to the Healthy Weight Declaration (see Appendix 4). The Healthy Weight Declaration sets out the Council's recognition of the need to exercise responsibility in developing and implementing policies that promote healthy weight. It encapsulates a vision to promote healthy weight and improve health and well-being. The Healthy Weight Declaration support pack can be found in Appendix 5.

The priorities are to:

- Finalise the healthy weight strategy
- Sign up to the healthy weight declaration

- Commence the whole system approach using the Public Health England (PHE) toolkit
- Review the current commissioned services for adults and children and young people's weight management.

4. Key Issues for Children and Young People's Scrutiny to consider

- The importance of taking a whole system approach to tackling childhood obesity
- The influence that external factors such as social media have on our children and young people, and what we can do at a local level to raise awareness of this influence
- The role of the Healthy Weight Declaration in generating political and leadership buy-in

6. Links to Corporate Priorities

- Children and young people
- Health and wellbeing
- Green and connected
- Targeted support
- Successful and thriving places
- Pride in our area

7. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the scope of the work that is currently in progress to improve the ability of Trafford children and young people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, and comment on the proposed plans.

- Members are asked to support the signing of the Healthy Weight Declaration, and engage with fellow members and residents around this.
- Members are asked to support engagement with wider Council teams around the issue of healthy weight (such as strategic planning and growth, trading standards, traffic and road safety etc.).
- Members are asked to support engagement with external partners whose work has an impact on the ability of our children and young people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

8. Appendices:

Appendix 1- Safeguarding and childhood obesity policy

Appendix 2 - Foresight obesity system map

Appendix 3 - BiteBack video on the influence of social media available on <https://youtu.be/TLf2gOrL1iM>

Appendix 4 Report to the Health and Wellbeing Board

Appendix 5 - Healthy weight declaration support pack