

# Halton's Healthy Weight Strategy: A Whole Systems Approach 2019- 2025



## Foreword

Welcome to Halton's first Healthy Weight Strategy using a whole systems approach. This document outlines a shared ambition for a population with a healthy weight, and improved health and wellbeing. Obesity is a complex problem that is linked to poorer health because it increases the risk of developing conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease. England's obesity levels increased from 15% in 1993 to 26% in 2018<sup>1</sup> and occurred due to social and cultural changes that affect the way we live our lives. While we know that obesity is an imbalance between the amount of energy consumed and the energy expended, experience has shown us that the solutions aren't as simple as just informing people to improve their diets and increase their activity levels.

In the last 15 years we have invested in providing services for people in Halton to help them to lose weight, and get more active. Individual choices are very important in weight loss, however to enable the population of Halton to have a healthy weight we need to influence all elements of people's lives: from cradle to grave, at work, home, school and in leisure their time. We know that there is not a simple answer to this complex problem, and this is why we need a new approach which can work across agencies to influence diet and activity at every opportunity. The whole systems approach enables us to identify the network of broad and interlinking factors that influence our lifestyle, and to work with new partners to create a health enhancing environment and find solutions.

Multiple sectors including: health, social care, the community and voluntary sector, planning, housing, transport, regeneration and environment all have a role to play. As do our local businesses, workplaces and the community themselves, all by jointly making better use of resources, seeking opportunities for change and working towards a vision of better health and wellbeing. If we are successful the whole system approach will support people to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, lead an active life, eat a healthy diet and reach a healthy long life expectancy.



**Eileen O'Meara**  
**Director of Public Health, Halton**



**Cllr Marie Wright**  
**Executive Board Portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing**

## Vision statement

***Everyone in Halton can achieve and maintain a healthy weight, lead an active life, eat a healthy diet and reach a healthy long life expectancy.***



## Halton a Whole Systems Approach

### The process so far

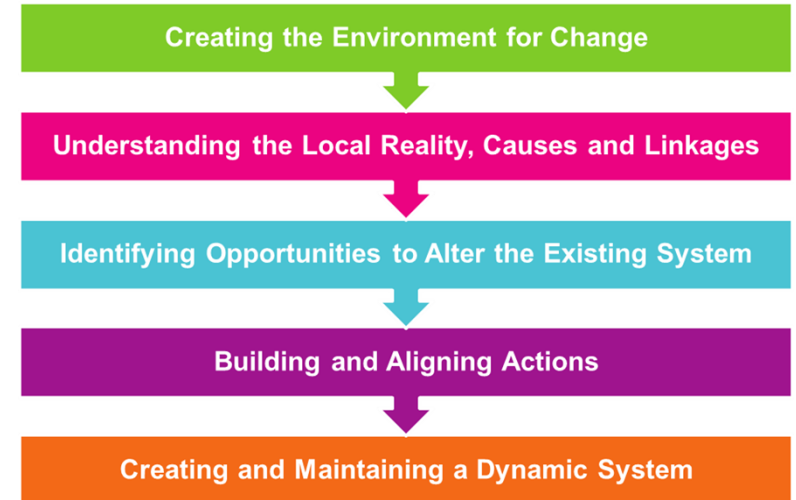
In order to address the challenge locally, Halton entered into a partnership with Leeds Beckett University with a view to designing local whole systems approaches to assist in preventing and tackling obesity. Halton was one of only 6 local authority areas across England chosen as a pioneer site.

The programme recognises the crucial role of local authorities (LAs) in tackling and working to prevent obesity. As well as having responsibility for many of the contributing factors (leisure services, parks and green spaces, planning, economic regeneration) local authorities can play a key co-ordinating role for engaging wider partners (health, education, housing providers, and the community and voluntary sector).

Implementing this approach locally also means that local authorities can build upon existing partnerships and best practice to develop a whole systems approach.

With support from researchers at Leeds Beckett University two initial workshops were held, attended by a wide range of stakeholders from across the borough. The first workshop used a “systems thinking” approach to identify the causes and drivers of obesity to form a number of causal maps. These maps provided a better understanding of the complexities of obesity and how interacting and changing causes and influences require a cross sector approach, not just a public health response.

Using the systems map, the second workshop looked at how the causal system of obesity could be disrupted in order to bring about change. This, in turn, identified the key priorities that now form the basis of this healthy weight strategy and action plan.



## Priorities areas for action

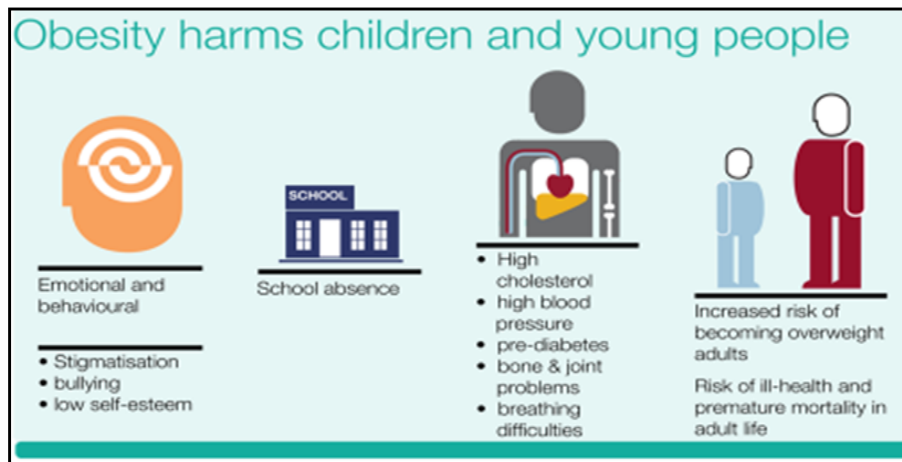
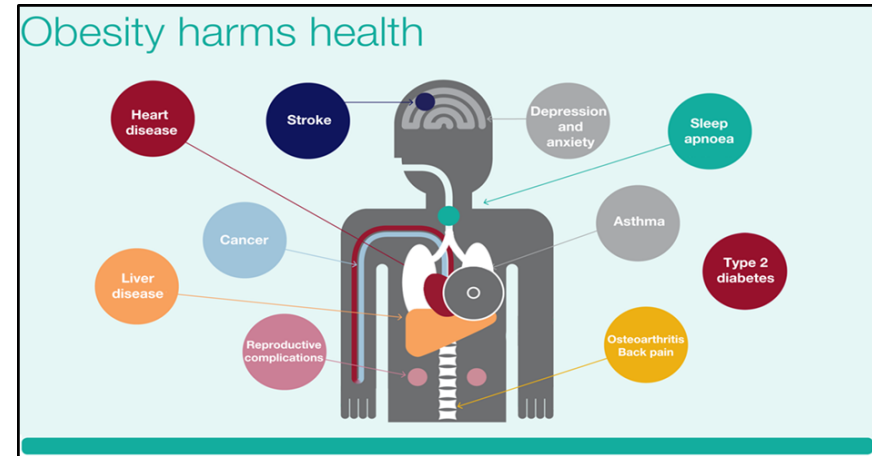
- **Early Years** – Support breastfeeding, enable families to provide a healthy varied diet and encourage lots of active play.
- **Socio-economic**- Work with local businesses to promote a healthy workforce and remove the barriers to employment.
- **Food Knowledge and Environment**- Improve the food environment to enable people to make healthier choices and improve food knowledge and understanding.
- **Transport**- Reduce sedentary behaviour and improve the uptake of active transport and travel options to increase physical activity.
- **Physical Activity**- Improve uptake of physical activity by promoting availability, increasing the range of activities on offer and creating the right environment for people to be able to take part.
- **Built Environment**- Improve the built environment and infrastructure to enable people to access opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing

## National context

### Why is a healthy weight important?

Obesity is one of the greatest public health challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the World Health Organisation worldwide obesity has nearly tripled since 1975. In 2016, more than 1.9 billion adults were overweight, over 650 million of which were obese. Childhood obesity is also a key challenge with 41 million children under the age of 5 being either overweight or obese<sup>2</sup>.

England, has an unenviable position as a world leader in excess weight. In 2017/18 62% of adults were overweight or obese<sup>3</sup>. Rates are also high in children; nationally over a fifth start primary school overweight or obese, rising to over a third by the time children reach Year 6<sup>4</sup>. Being obese in childhood increases the likelihood of being obese as an adult and doubles the risk of dying prematurely.



Halton has a wide range of different services that work with people at every stage of their life, to help to maintain a healthy weight. These services are successful in supporting individual weight loss, but are not sufficient to reverse the trend for the whole population. There is now recognition that in order to make sustainable change to the population's weight and health, then it needs to be supported across the entire social, economic, political and physical infrastructure, using a 'Whole System's approach'.

Without co-ordinated actions the health of individuals will continue to suffer, health inequalities associated with obesity will remain and the economic and social costs will increase to unsustainable levels.

The Government is implementing a number of measures to address the national problem of obesity such as the Soft Drinks Levy and reducing sugar in commonly purchased products as set out in the 'Childhood Obesity – A plan for action'<sup>5</sup>. It is clear that to have a significant impact, we as a Local Authority and the wider local system, must also take action alongside these policy measures.

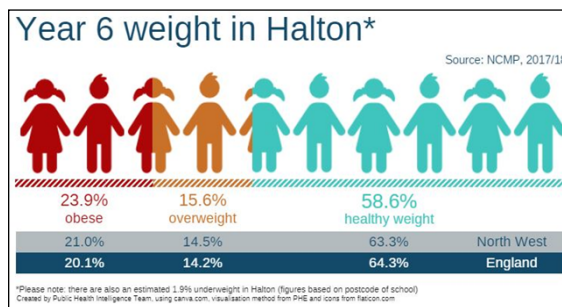
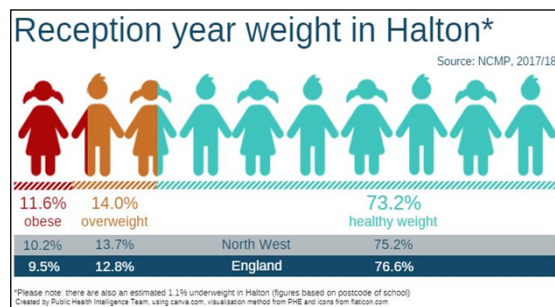
Reducing obesity and obesity-related ill-health in Halton is key to delivering the priorities set out within the [One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022](#). By implementing the whole systems obesity approach the system will be “disrupted” in a way that halts this preference for gaining weight and instead works and interacts to assist people in the achievement of healthy lifestyles. This essentially means that, not only do we need to tackle the issue with a comprehensive portfolio of interventions and actions, but more important to this, the interactions between them are clearly defined and linked. Essentially the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.



## The local picture

### Children and Young People

Every year the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) measures the height and weight of children in Reception class (aged 4 to 5) and Year 6 (aged 10 to 11), to assess overweight and obesity levels in children within primary schools. The infographics below show how children's weight in Halton compares to the North West and England. Whilst there is less of a gap for Reception year children, the percentage of those who are overweight or obese is above England and the North West. By the time children reach Year 6 nearly 1 in 4 children are obese and 4 out of 10 are excess weight.



### Adults

The data for 2016/17 from the Halton Health profile (PHE Fingertips, 2018) shows that Halton had a similar percentage of adults with excess weight (61.1%) to England (61.3%). This high rate across the country and locally indicates a national challenge.



## Summary of what's happening to support a healthy weight in Halton

Over the past 10 years there has been a huge amount of work to support the people of Halton to maintain a healthy weight. The table below details what is available.

Starting Well	School age	Living well	Ageing well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy child programme</li> <li>• Family Nurse partnership</li> <li>• Healthy pregnancy advice</li> <li>• Breastfeeding campaigns</li> <li>• Baby friendly initiative accreditation in children's centres and health venues</li> <li>• Training for staff on infant feeding</li> <li>• Infant feeding policy</li> <li>• Infant feeding support team and groups</li> <li>• Baby massage</li> <li>• Parks and playgrounds</li> <li>• Children's centres activities and active play sessions</li> <li>• Introduction to solid food sessions</li> <li>• Breastfeeding information sessions offered to early years settings and schools</li> <li>• Healthy settings award for early years settings</li> <li>• Portion size leaflets</li> <li>• Parents information sessions (parent bitesize)</li> <li>• Parenting support</li> <li>• Fit4 Life early years Pathway</li> <li>• School readiness train the trainer and courses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy schools – Broad offer that includes Healthy lifestyles, risk taking behaviour, staff and youth champion training for pupils, staff and pupils.</li> <li>• Daily mile in all schools</li> <li>• Work with provider on school meals</li> <li>• School Council sessions (includes Healthy packed lunches, food labels, sugars, drinks and Physical activity)</li> <li>• Free fruit in schools</li> <li>• Active transport to school</li> <li>• Fit for life pathway for all families includes school holiday provision (F4L Camp) and outreach, one to one support and CBT as needed</li> <li>• Sport in schools (school games)</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Planning restrictions on takeaways close to schools</li> <li>• Child poverty group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and green open spaces</li> <li>• Park Run</li> <li>• Allotments</li> <li>• Housing association growing scheme</li> <li>• Fresh start, healthy weight support</li> <li>• Exercise on referral</li> <li>• CBT and one to one support as required</li> <li>• Active Halton programme of activities</li> <li>• Travel maps</li> <li>• Workplace health</li> <li>• Workplace health charter in development</li> <li>• Campaigns and information</li> <li>• Healthy new towns</li> <li>• Information on local services, include family information service, SEND and Halton people into jobs.</li> <li>• Triple P and Fit for life support for parents</li> <li>• Parent Bitesize available for parent and carer groups in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halton health check programme includes activity advise and recommendations</li> <li>• Men's sheds</li> <li>• Sure start to later life</li> <li>• Lunch clubs and tea dances, to reduce isolation and maintain independence</li> <li>• Age well exercise sessions, such as chair exercises</li> <li>• Falls prevention programme</li> <li>• Cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation activity sessions</li> </ul>

## A Whole Systems strategic approach

This strategy places focus on the wider determinants of health and the impact that multiple sectors can have on reducing obesity through a whole systems approach. By tackling obesity, we can also reduce health inequalities. The whole systems approach is central to gaining multiagency buy in, which will help us to achieve our vision. It is a tool for having positive conversations with stakeholders around what can be done to tackle obesity in our local population. A comprehensive action plan has been produced with this strategy to ensure the delivery of the priorities. This has been developed and overseen by the multi-agency Whole System Obesity network and progress will be reported to One Halton's Population Health Board.

The Foresight report '[Tackling Obesities: future choices](#)' outlined that the underlying environmental and behavioural drivers perpetuating obesity exist in a complex and multifaceted system. Tackling obesity effectively requires the development of a sustained 'whole systems approach', which has the following characteristics:

- Recognises that obesity is the product of a complex web of interacting and changing causes and influences and as such requires a cross sector approach, not just a public health response
- Combines bringing together all the partners that can have a bearing on obesity with using "systems thinking" to identify the most important factors and make sense of changing dynamics – passage of time, multiple levels, complex influence
- Creates a map of moving and interacting drivers and recognises that tackling a single driver in isolation cannot work. By looking beyond the individual contributions of each organisation towards how the whole system can work together, it can become "more than the sum of its parts"
- Acknowledges the need for both individual and organisational action
- By moving the interventions upstream, it creates the environment for more effective societal change



## Priority areas

### Early years

#### Why is it important?

Pregnancy and the early years impact upon the health of the child throughout their life. Breastfeeding reduces the risk of childhood obesity, as the mother produces milk to meet the individual nutritional needs of her child. The early diet of infants is also very important in developing children who are happy to eat a wide range of tastes and textures. A healthy varied diet in young children supports positive food choices into adulthood and a positive relationship with food.

Infancy is a period of rapid growth and development, and encouraging lots of active play time, reducing sedentary behaviour and encouraging children to enjoy being active will build muscle strength and put in place lifetime habits, for a happy healthy child and adult.

In Halton:

- Breastfeeding rates have slowly improved over the last few years, but remain significantly lower than the England average. In Halton 50% of mothers initiate breastfeeding and 23% continue for 6-8 weeks after birth (2018/19).

**Focus for Action:** *Support breastfeeding, enable families to provide a healthy varied diet and encourage lots of active play.*

#### Key Actions

- Provide breastfeeding information and support to families during pregnancy, after birth, in the workplace and for the whole community
- Expand education available for parents, carers and the wider community on infant feeding, introducing solid foods, portion control, healthy diet etc. and continue with existing infant feeding support, solid foods etc.
- Maximise opportunities for young children to play and be active throughout the community in every part of their lives.



## Socio-Economic

### Why is it important?

The human costs of obesity are well known, but there is also the cost to public services, which is vast. In the UK billions of pounds are spent on obesity related issues every year. Businesses also lose out due to reduced productivity and obesity-related illness making people unable to work<sup>6</sup>. We also know that those who are unemployed or in lower paid jobs are more far more likely to be in poorer health.

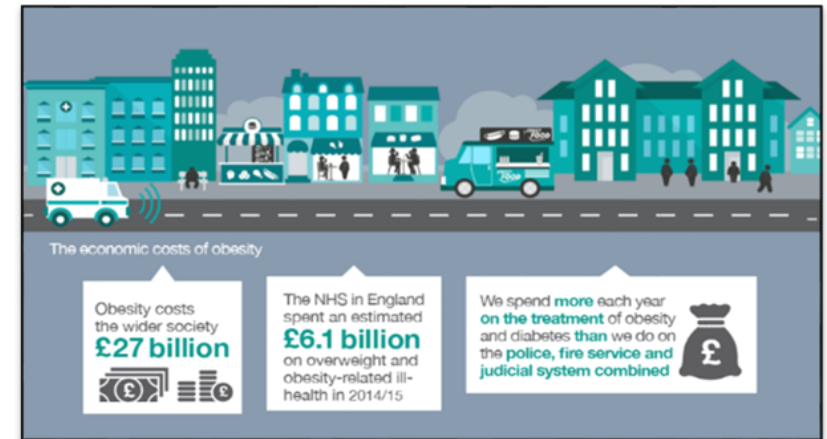
In Halton:

- 4.3% of Halton residents are unemployed which is higher than both the regional (2.9%) and national average (2.2%).
- 27.5% of adults have NVQ qualifications level 4+ compared to 34.5% for the North West and 38.3% for England.
- Between October 2017 and October 2018 the number of 18-24 year olds claiming unemployment benefits rose by 24% to 760.
- Average weekly earnings are lower in Halton: £396.50 compared to £440.20 in England<sup>7</sup>.

**Focus for Action:** *Work with local businesses to promote a healthy workforce and remove the barriers to employment*

### Key Actions

- Introduce improved work health initiatives including Healthy living guidance for shift workers on healthier lifestyles
- Continue to rollout the workplace health offer and attract SME to become involved
- Develop a workplace health charter that can be rolled out across local businesses
- Increase awareness of childcare opportunities that are available to enable residents to access employment
- Upskill local community to improve prospects of employment



# Food Knowledge and Environment

## Why is it important?

As we know unbalanced and unhealthy eating patterns have a major role to play in the obesity epidemic. Therefore, overweight and obesity can be prevented if effective actions are taken to achieve a balance in energy intake-and-expenditure<sup>8</sup>. Improving dietary knowledge helps people adjust their eating and exercise behaviours to attain balance and is an important component of effective obesity prevention programmes<sup>9</sup>.

## In Halton:

- A recent local food access study concluded that:
  - There is good availability of a standard healthy weekly shop locally to 77% of households in Halton (within 500m of home). However, only 57% of households lived within 500m of an adequate weekly supply of fruit and vegetables.
  - Halton has one of the lowest densities of takeaways in the North West. The local survey suggested that most people do not habitually use a takeaway as an alternative to food purchased from shops and prepared at home.
- Residents generally had good food knowledge and a strong desire to eat healthy food. The main barrier to accessing healthy and affordable food was income, transport and mobility.
- Just over half (51.5%) of adults eat their '5-a-day' in Halton, which is significantly lower than the national average (57.4%)<sup>10</sup>. At age 15, just 40% meet the recommended '5-a-day' in Halton, compared to 52.4% in England<sup>11</sup>.



**Focus for action:** *Improve food knowledge and understanding and improve the food environment to enable people to make healthier choices*

### Key Actions

- Explore the potential for developing a young cookery school
- Create a system of providing consistent messages on healthier lifestyles to schools and communities
- Consider health literacy in all areas of communication around healthier lifestyles
- Develop, implement and deliver a Making Every Contact Count training programme (MECC)
- Explore opportunities to introduce a community shop in Halton to improve food access and affordability
- Consider sign up to the Food Active, Local Authority [Declaration on Healthy Weight](#)



# Transport

## Why is it important?

The evidence base for increasing the uptake of active transport is extensive. The costs to the wider UK economy from traffic congestion, inactivity, carbon emissions and vehicle-derived local air pollution run into tens of billions of pounds every year. Many of the solutions to these problems have some kind of transport-related component. These challenges often require coordinated work between various players, as at their heart lie habitual factors, such as the steady trend towards sedentary lifestyles and a heavy reliance on the private car as a mode of transportation.

Measures to improve uptake of active transport are very often highly cost effective. The economic benefits to society are extensive, with diverse associated benefits to health and wellbeing, environment and local economies. We now need to adequately reflect these benefits in the form of policy priorities and effective delivery mechanisms for active transport<sup>12</sup>.

In Halton:

- 1 in 5 (20%) of adults walk for travel at least 3 days per week. The proportion for cycling for travel is much lower at 3%. Both of these figures are similar to the national average<sup>13</sup>.

**Focus for action:** *Improve the uptake of active transport and travel options to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour*

## Key Actions

- Work with schools and communities on school run patterns and alternatives:
- Create accessible cycling and walking routes to enable active transport
- Work with communities to alter perceptions of community and road safety to improve active travel
- Provide a directory of transport options and explore with communities the perception of availability.



# Physical Activity

## Why is it important?

Physical inactivity is responsible for one in six UK deaths (equal to smoking) and is estimated to cost the UK £7.4 billion annually (including £0.9 billion to the NHS alone). The English population is currently 20% less active than in the 1960s and if the current trends continue, it will be 35% less active by 2030<sup>14</sup>.

The magnitude of the benefits of physical activity on physical and mental health are underestimated. Physical activity can help to prevent and manage over 20 chronic conditions and diseases, including some cancers, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and depression.

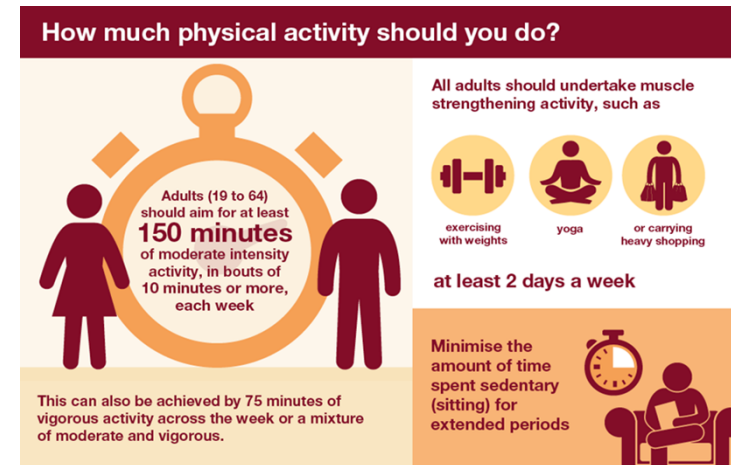
In Halton:

- 77% of 15 year olds reported they were sedentary for over 7 hours on average in a typical week; this is significantly higher than the national average of 70%. Just 12% were physically active for at least one hour per day, seven days a week<sup>15</sup>.
- Almost 2 in 3 adults report they are physically active in Halton, and 1 in 4 say they are inactive; both of which are similar to the national average<sup>16</sup>.

**Focus for action:** *Improve uptake of physical activity by promoting availability, increasing the range of activities on offer and creating the right environment for people to be able to take part*

## Key Actions

- Create a central portal or app to provide accurate information on local activities
- Create more family activities e.g. park run
- Improve links to green spaces
- Promote active play for the early years
- Involve young people in the promotion and co-design of activities, promote the schools daily mile, junior park runs etc
- Co-design suitable activities for older people that are accessible





# Built Environment

## Why is it important?

Providing opportunities for people to be active and move more throughout their day is key to achieving a healthy weight. The built environment has an important role to play in maximising the opportunities for people to be active; and if designed appropriately can impact upon physical and mental wellbeing. This doesn't just include easy access to buildings such as leisure centres and community centres, although this is important, but the design of local areas can shape people's preferences and behaviour to encourage activity.



In Halton:

- 17.6% of people in Halton reported using outdoor space for exercise or health reasons<sup>17</sup>, (the England average is 17.9%).
- Just over 1 in 5 people have access to woodland within 500m of their home, which is slightly higher than the national average<sup>18</sup>.
- The rate of violent offences increased in Halton in 2017/18 and is significantly higher than England<sup>19</sup>. The fear of crime influences people's willingness to participate in physical activity and leisure activities.

**Focus for action:** *Improve the built environment and infrastructure to enable people to access opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing*

## Key Actions

- Consider landlord accreditation scheme and how it is monitored
- Utilise development opportunities to maximise the health benefits of the build environment, for example healthy new towns.
- Protect and enhance green space and use it to encourage community use for example allotments, park run etc.
- Continue to manage play areas to make them safe, accessible, friendly venues that attract families for play.
- Implement the recommendations of the Environmental Health food mapping process
- Ensure planners implement supplementary guidance in relation to fast food outlets near schools

## How will we measure success?

### **Healthy Weight Strategy, a Whole Systems Action Plan**

As referred to earlier, this strategy sets out our approach to tackling obesity in Halton and summarises the key actions we will take towards this goal. However, a comprehensive action plan sits behind the strategy setting out the key actions in further detail together with timescales and responsibilities. Responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of the action plan will be the responsibility of the Whole Systems Obesity Core Working Group and the Whole Systems Obesity Network.

### **Public Health Outcomes Framework**

The Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) sets out a vision for Public Health, desired outcomes and the indicators that will help us understand how well public health is being improved and protected. As part of this framework, a number of indicators allow us to track progress on overweight and obesity as well as a range of associated outcome measures linked to it, such as breastfeeding initiation, 5-a-day consumption and levels of physical activity.

A list of these indicators is outlined below:

**2.02i: Breastfeeding initiation:** An increase in the percentage of all mothers who breastfeed their babies in the first 48 hours after delivery

**2.06i: Child excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 year olds- 4-5 year olds:** A reduction in the prevalence of overweight (including obese) among children in Reception

**2.06i: Child excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 years olds- 10-11 year olds:** A reduction in the prevalence of overweight (including obese) among children in Year 6

**2.11i: An increase in the proportion of population meeting the recommended “5-a-day” on a “usual day” (adults)**



**2.11iv: An increase in the proportion of the population meeting the recommended “5-a-day” at age 15**

**2.12: A decrease in the percentage of adults (aged 18+) classified as overweight or obese**

**2.13i: Percentage of physically active adults:** An increase in the percentage of adults (age 19+) that meet CMO recommendations for physical activity (150+ moderate intensity equivalent minutes per week)

**2.13ii: Percentage of physically inactive adults:** A decrease in the percentage of adults (aged 19+) that are physically inactive (<30 moderate intensity equivalent minutes per week)

**2.17: Estimated diabetes diagnosis rate:** A reduction in the estimated diagnosis rate for people with diabetes aged 17 and over

**2.19: Cancer diagnosed at early stage (experimental statistics):** A decrease in the proportion of invasive malignancies of breast, prostate, colorectal, lung, bladder, kidney, ovary and uterus, non-Hodgkin lymphomas and melanomas of the skin, diagnosed at stage 1 or 2

## Useful links

As referred to throughout this document, the causes of obesity are multi-factorial and therefore require a multi-agency approach to addressing them. It is however, important to acknowledge that there are already a wide range of services on offer across Halton that are already working towards this goal, whether directly through health improvement initiatives or by addressing the wider determinants of health (e.g. transport, planning, housing etc).

Therefore, this section of the report provides a list of these plans and strategies as well as useful links to relevant documents and websites. Please note, however, that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

### Strategies and Plans

[One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

[Halton Local Transport Plan](#)

[Halton Core Strategy Local Plan](#)

[Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026](#)

[A Housing Strategy for Halton](#)

[Infant feeding strategy 2016-2019](#)

### Websites

[Active Halton](#)

[Parks and Open Spaces](#)

[Whole Systems Approach to tackling Obesity](#)

[Reducing obesity: future choices- Foresight report](#)

[The Obesity Health Alliance](#)

[NHS Live Well](#)

[Sport England](#)

## References

---

- <sup>1</sup> [Obesity Statistics. House of Commons library. Briefing paper Number 3336](#)
- <sup>2</sup> [World Health Organisation \(2018\) Obesity and overweight Factsheets](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Sport England \(2017\) Active People Survey. sport England](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [Public Health England \(2018\) NCMP and Child Obesity Profile. PHE Online](#)
- <sup>5</sup> [Childhood Obesity - A plan for action 2016, Childhood obesity: a plan for action, chapter 2](#)
- <sup>6</sup> [The Costs of Obesity, The Obesity Health Alliance \(2018\)](#)
- <sup>7</sup> [2017 Office for National statistics, via PHE Fingertips health profiles](#)
- <sup>8</sup> [Shimokawa S. When does dietary knowledge matter to obesity and overweight prevention? Food Policy. 2013; 38\(2\): 35–46.](#)
- <sup>9</sup> [Bonaccio M, Castelnuovo AD, Costanzo S, Lucia FD, Olivieri M, Donati MB, et al. Nutrition knowledge is associated with higher adherence to Mediterranean diet and lower prevalence of obesity. Results from the Moli-sani study. Appetite. 2013; 68\(1\): 139–146.](#)
- <sup>10</sup> [2016/17 Sport England via PHE fingertips](#)
- <sup>11</sup> [What About YOUth survey 2014/15 via PHE Fingertips](#)
- <sup>12</sup> [The Case for Action by the Active Transport for Healthy Living Coalition, ADPH, 2014](#)
- <sup>13</sup> [Department for Transport & Sport England via PHE Fingertips](#)
- <sup>14</sup> [Physical activity: applying All Our Health, Gov.uk, 2018](#)
- <sup>15</sup> [What About YOUth \(WAY\) survey, 2014/15 via Fingertips](#)
- <sup>16</sup> [Public Health England \(based on Active Lives, Sport England\) via Fingertips](#)
- <sup>17</sup> [2015/16 Source: Natural England via Public Health England Fingertips](#)
- <sup>18</sup> [2015 Woodland Trust via PHE Fingertips](#)
- <sup>19</sup> [PHE Fingertips](#)