



Review of the City & Hackney 'whole system' response to tackling obesity - including findings from the healthy weight Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

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Relevance to City of London's Health & Wellbeing Board



Overweight and obesity - 2nd most important risk factor for poor health, major driver of health inequalities and demand for health and care services.

Relevant to all three of City of London's Health and Wellbeing Board's strategic priorities (both as causes and consequences of obesity)

Our focus areas for partnership action over the next four years are:

**improving mental
health**

**increasing social
connection**

**supporting greater
financial security**

City and Hackney's Healthy Weight JSNA



The aim of the healthy weight JSNA is to:

- explore the evidence related to whole system approaches to excess weight
- identify local unmet needs related to weight, diet and physical activity
- identify areas of good practice in the delivery and offer of services and any gaps
- develop a set of recommendations for system partners related to healthy weight in City and Hackney.

The scope of the JSNA includes **children, young people and adults**.

During the process of developing this JSNA, we spoke to many residents and those working with residents during the process of developing this assessment. These insights complement the detailed data analysis and evidence review undertaken for this report, and have helped us understand the local picture and inform our recommendations, and can be seen throughout the report.

Context



The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines overweight and obesity as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health. Body Mass Index (BMI) is a commonly used measure of how much fat a person is storing in their body. dividing a person's weight in kilograms by their height in meters squared. The higher the figure, the more overweight a person is and the greater the health risks. BMI is only one way of assessing the health-related risks of overweight/obesity and it is not universally appropriate.

Obesity is a significant driver of poor health and increases the risk of many physical and mental health conditions.

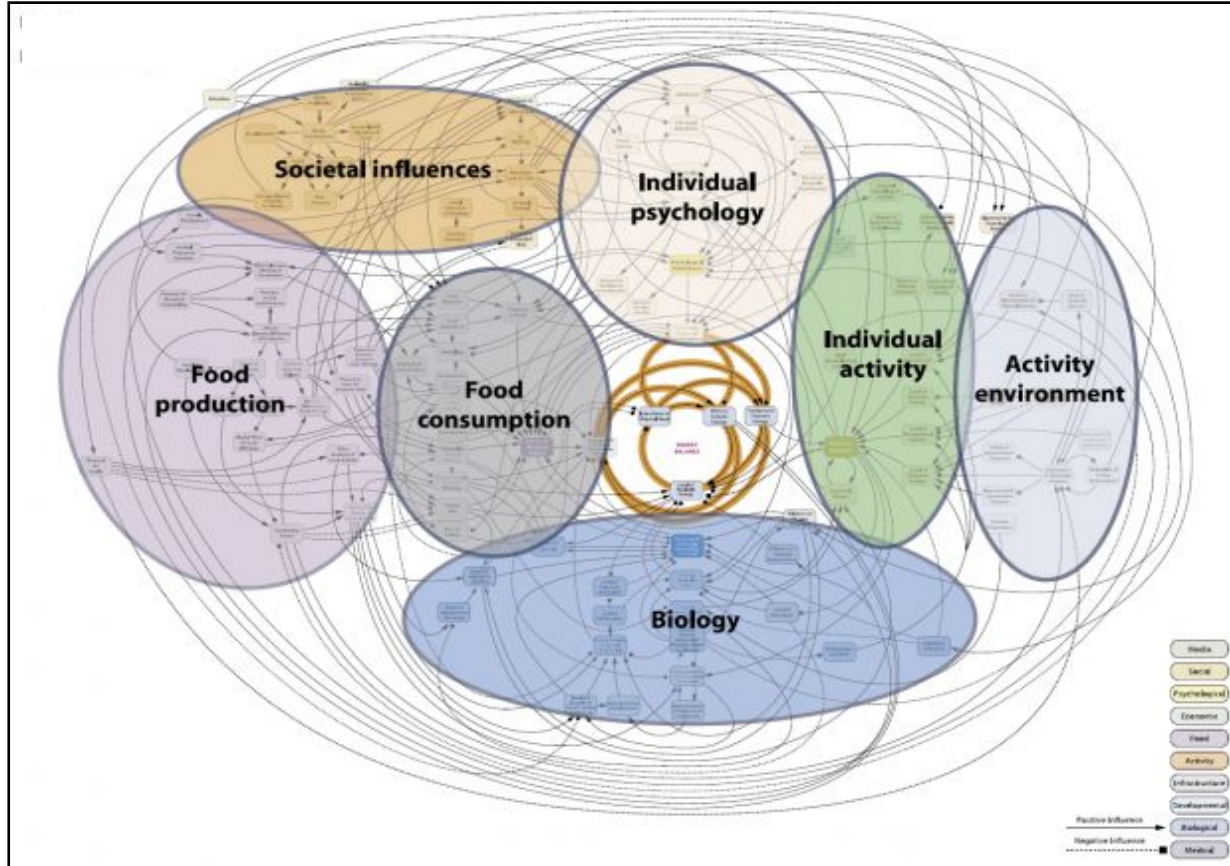
There are significant inequalities in relation to obesity in children, young people and adults, including higher levels of obesity in the most deprived communities, those from certain ethnic backgrounds, older adults and among people with disabilities.

Obesity is a complex matter to address - there are many influences that contribute to a healthy weight including biology, food consumption, individual activity, individual psychology, food production, the activity environment and societal influences.

Locally, we understand that preventing and reducing the harms from obesity requires the development of a sustained whole system approach – addressing individual, environmental and societal influences – and this requires the participation of a broad partnership of stakeholders. We have been working on a whole system approach to obesity since 2016.

We refer to this whole system approach throughout the JSNA, and apply this 'whole system' lens when appraising the evidence for healthy weight interventions and policies in this document.

Why take a whole system approach to obesity?



The benefits of a whole systems approach to obesity



health-promoting food
and built environment



healthier and
more productive
communities

reducing
the demand
for social care

Positive actions



Benefits
of tackling obesity



Policy context

National and regional context



There is action being taken nationally, regionally and locally to shift the dial on obesity.

- In 2020, the Government published [*Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives*](#), which sets out actions to decrease obesity. This strategy promised action to restrict advertising and point of sale/volume promotions of unhealthy food, and extend calorie labelling to restaurants and takeaways. However, many of these actions have not progressed since the strategy was published in 2020.
- There are also a number of London policies and strategies that focus on actions to increase healthy diets across the population, reduce food poverty and prevent excess weight:
 - [**Healthy Place Healthy Weight recovery mission**](#)
 - [**Every Child A Healthy Weight, Ten Ambitions For London**](#)
 - [**London Food Strategy**](#)

City and Hackney's healthy weight priorities

Our ambition: to improve health and wellbeing for all by making City and Hackney a place where everyone can be a healthy weight

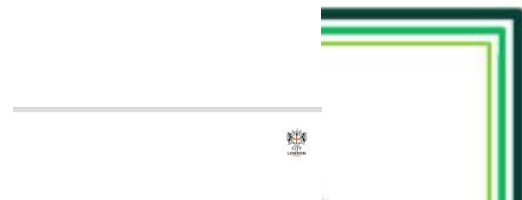
Our priorities:

- *Working together.* We will support the development of a social movement for healthy weight. We will build on the strengths and resources in our local communities and existing partnerships.
- *Targeted help for those who need it most.* We will ensure that individuals, families and communities at greatest risk of obesity-related harm receive the support they need to live a healthy life.
- *Easy access to affordable healthy food.* We will make it easier for people to buy and prepare affordable healthy food.
- *A healthy environment that makes it easy for people to be active.* We will continue to work to improve the design of local spaces and places so more people can be active as part of their everyday lives.
- *Easy access to information.* We will make it easy for everyone in City and Hackney to find information about what action they can take, and what help they can get, to live a healthy life.

Local strategic context

This work contributes to, and is influenced by, a number of local priorities, strategies and plans including:

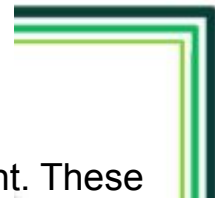
- City of London Corporate Plan
- Local Plans - City Plan 2036
- Transport Strategies - City Streets
- Climate Action Strategy
- City of London Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- North East London Integrated Care Strategy





Evidence base and good practice

Evidence base and good practice



Certain interventions have a good evidence base for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. These include:

- supporting women to breastfeed for longer
- making changes to primary school environments to increase healthy eating/reduce unhealthy eating and increase physical activity
- weight loss drugs combined with behaviour change interventions, as part of a specialist weight management service
- making changes to the built environment to increase physical activity

Evidence is positive, but still emerging, on a number of other initiatives that contribute to preventing/reducing obesity-related harms, such as: **‘whole system’ approaches; the removal/restriction of advertising of HFSS food/drinks; early years interventions that address healthy eating and/or physical activity; health promoting planning policies; School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods; Healthy Start schemes; Healthy Early Years and Healthy Schools award schemes and the Daily Mile.** Some of these approaches can be very difficult to evaluate; lack of evidence does not necessarily mean that they are not effective.

Evidence base and good practice



Evidence on longer term impacts of weight management programmes is mixed; follow-up data is lacking.

Specialist weight management programmes are showing some promise of sustained health benefits for eligible cohorts.

Lack of evidence on the effectiveness of weight management programmes in general for culturally diverse and socially deprived communities.

Locally, there are wider opportunities to continue to influence the parts of the system that are likely to impact healthy diets and physical activity - through **local healthier food advertising, working with local food businesses and developing healthier food environments in early years, schools and through our planning system and wider built environment.**

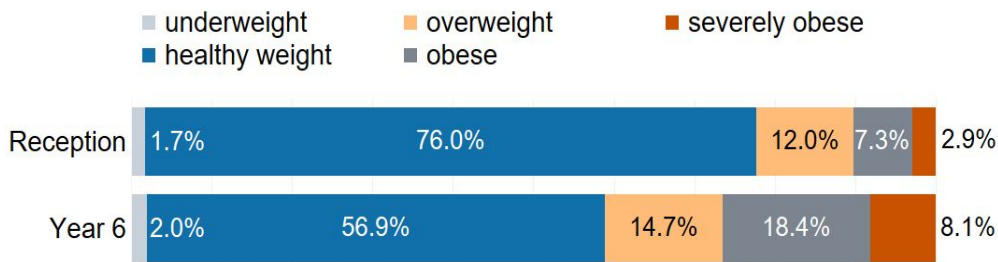


Local Picture

1 in 5 in Reception and 2 in 5 in Year 6 were above healthy weight in 2022/23



Proportion of children by weight category, City and Hackney 2022/23

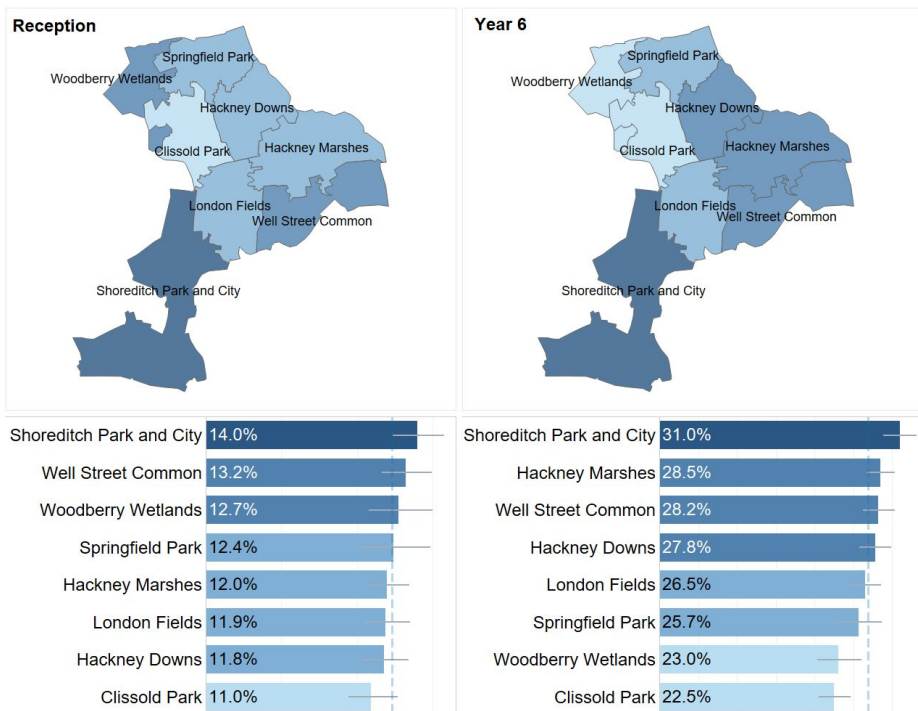


Data source: OHID, National Child Measurement Programme local data, November 2023

- The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) measures all Reception and Year 6 pupils annually.
- 1 in 5 children in Reception and 2 in 5 children in Year 6 were above healthy weight in 2022/23.
- Overall, the proportion of obese children increased during the pandemic and returned to pre-pandemic levels after that.

Boys, those living in areas of higher deprivation & certain ethnicities are associated with higher levels of obesity, mainly in Year 6

Proportion of obese (including severely obese) children by Primary Care Network, City & Hackney 2017/18 to 2022/23

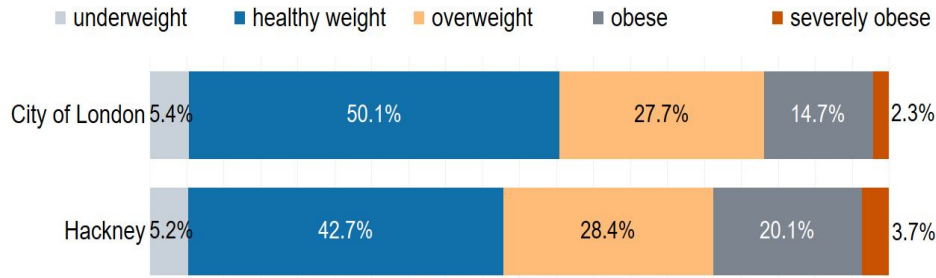


Data source: National Child Measurement Programme local data, November 2023

- Male pupils & those living in more deprived areas have higher obesity prevalence
- Using ethnicity-adjusted data, Reception boys and girls from all South Asian ethnicities combined and boys from white non-British backgrounds had a higher than average prevalence
- In Year 6, boys from Bangladeshi, Indian/Pakistani, & white non-British backgrounds and girls from Bangladeshi and mixed white and black backgrounds had a higher than average prevalence of obesity.
- These differences were not the same when non-ethnicity-adjusted data were used.
- **Shoreditch Park and the City neighbourhood** had the highest levels of obesity among Reception & Year 6 children.

Around 1 in 2 City & Hackney adults with a BMI recorded were above a healthy weight in 2023

Proportion of NEL GP registered adults (18+) with valid BMI by weight category, City and Hackney, 2022/23



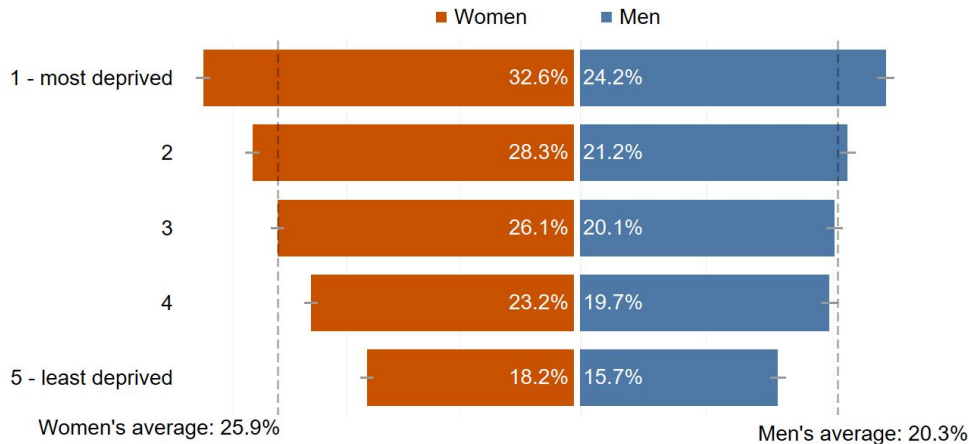
Data sources: Clinical Effectiveness Group, East London Database, 2022; Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)

- In 2023, around **45% of City residents (18+)** and around 50% Hackney residents (18+) with a BMI recording in the last 5 years were either overweight or obese.
- In the same year, **17% of adults in the City** and 24% in Hackney were recorded as obese or severely obese.

Sex, ethnicity & deprivation were associated with higher obesity in adults



Obese prevalence in adults (18+) by local deprivation quintile and sex, City of London and Hackney, 2023



Data source: Clinical Effectiveness Group, East London Database, 2023

- Overall, more women than men were recorded as obese in GP data.
- However, there is variation across different age groups: obesity prevalence was similar for men and women among those aged 18-24, but significantly higher among women than men from the age of 25. Obesity prevalence increased up to age 50-64 age group for women and 65-74 for men and then declines with age.
- A higher than average prevalence of obesity was observed among adults from Pakistani and all black ethnicities.
- Similar to the patterns observed for children, the prevalence of obesity among adults in City and Hackney increase with levels of area deprivation. The gap between the least and most deprived areas was greater among women.

Almost 1 in 2 pregnant women are above a healthy weight at booking appointment, and inequalities exist



Nearly half of those attending their first antenatal appointments were above a healthy weight, 20% of whom were obese.

Combining the data from 2019/20 to 2023/24, a significantly higher prevalence of overweight/obesity at first antenatal appointment is observed among the following groups:

- those from black ethnicities (varying from 38% to 41%), mixed white and black ethnicities (from 32% to 39%) and Bangladeshi patients (27%)
- those with recorded physical and/or learning disabilities (31%)
- current smokers (29%).

Data source: Homerton, 2024

Note: These data only include City and Hackney women delivering at Homerton Hospital only.

Summary: key messages



1 in 5 children in Reception and 2 in 5 in Year 6 were above a healthy weight in 2022/23 in City and Hackney.

Boys, those living in areas of higher deprivation & children from certain ethnic groups were associated with higher levels of childhood obesity, mainly in Year 6.

1 in 2 City and Hackney adults with a BMI recorded were above a healthy weight in 2023.

Sex, ethnicity and deprivation were associated with higher obesity prevalence among City and Hackney adults in 2022.

1 in 2 pregnant women were obese at their first antenatal appointment and inequalities exist.

Obesity prevalence was higher than average among City and Hackney adults with a recorded learning disability or severe mental illness diagnosis.

The data on diet and physical activity behaviour is limited, notably for CYP.

Local response



There are a number of wider local strategies, plans and interventions across City and Hackney that make an important contribution towards local action to prevent and/or reduce obesity.

However, we know there is more that we can do to prevent obesity and support our residents to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

We need to take coordinated, sustained action at multiple levels across the system to have a lasting impact.

A suite of services and interventions



Food support

Cookery classes

Starting solids support

Food vouchers

Health visiting
(breastfeeding & diet)

Physical activity programmes

Transport strategies that encourage active travel

Green spaces

Planning policy

Climate action plans on food

Healthy schools & early years programmes

Targeted group interventions for those above a healthy weight

Digital weight management interventions

Community champions

MECC

Key messages from the JSNA (1)



There is broad consensus among experts and policy makers on what is driving obesity and the harm it is causing. However, evidence around what works for preventing and treating obesity needs to be strengthened.

A large number of local residents (both children and adults) are above a healthy weight and stark inequalities exist. Many residents have told us that they struggle to eat a healthy affordable diet and to be active. There are many barriers and enablers to eating healthy food and being active.

There is no 'quick fix' to reduce obesity prevalence and related harms. Certain interventions have a good evidence base for achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. These include:

- supporting women to breastfeed for longer
- making changes to school environments to increase healthy eating/reduce unhealthy eating
- pharmacotherapy* combined with behaviour change interventions to help people lose weight
- making changes to the built environment to increase physical activity

Key messages from the JSNA (2)



Evidence is positive, but still emerging, on a number of other initiatives, such as: the removal of HFSS advertising; 'whole system' approaches; health promoting planning policies; School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods; Healthy Start schemes; Healthy Early Years and Healthy Schools award schemes and the Daily Mile. Some of these approaches can be very difficult to evaluate, this does not necessarily mean that they are not effective.

The evidence on the longer term impacts of weight management programmes is mixed.

Key messages from the JSNA (3)



National government holds many of the levers to influence the social and economic drivers of obesity.

However, at local level there are many opportunities to influence dietary and physical activity behaviours through changes to the food, physical activity and social environment.

Opportunities for local action include: **healthier food advertising; working with local food businesses; increasing access to food voucher schemes; creating more active environments; developing healthier food environments in early years and schools settings, and through our planning system and wider built environment. There is also a need to improve care pathways and develop integrated approaches which respond to need and focus on inequalities.**



Review of the City & Hackney 'whole system' response to tackling obesity - recommendations

The Review



- **Stakeholder engagement:**
 - A Task and Finish Group was established to contribute to and oversee the review process
 - Stakeholder engagement to consider the range of gaps, opportunities and actions required to promote and support healthy weight and enable the system to maximise opportunities and impact.
- **Understanding the Local Picture:**
 - Finalising the Healthy Weight JSNA
 - Completed a mapping exercise to build on and update what we know exists across the 'healthy weight system'
- **Prioritising Action:**
 - Through the Task and Finish Group we collaboratively identified effective actions, both new and existing, to help shape recommendations and a whole system healthy weight plan.
- **Disseminating findings and recommendations:**
 - Findings and recommendations will be shared widely with key stakeholders, co-design participants and relevant strategic partnerships.

Findings - at a glance



	System Leadership	Evidence and data	Healthy environments	Training and capacity building	Tackling inequality, inequity and stigma	Settings and life course	Cross sector collaboration	Communications and engagement
Working Together	✓	✓					✓	
Targeted support for those who need it most		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Easy access to affordable healthy food		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
A healthy environment that makes it easy for people to be active		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Easy Access to Information				✓	✓			✓

Summary of Recommendations (draft)



Theme	Sub-theme	Recommendations
System Leadership	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with senior leaders to champion and prioritise the healthy weight agenda • Re-establish the Healthy Weight Strategic Partnership (or similar)
	Governance / structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a clear governance structure • Refresh and relaunch the Healthier City and Hackney framework • Develop a delivery plan to support the framework
	Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprioritise resources including funding and investment to address recommendations raised through the review.
Evidence and Data	Data collection and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve data collection and analysis on the environmental determinants of obesity
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understand uptake and health outcomes for local healthy weight services, where appropriate and relevant.
	Evidence and Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with communities to better understand barriers to people being active, culturally specific support and what information residents need and how they would like to access it. • Explore partnerships to help address the gaps in evidence and insight around these areas.
	Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a framework for evaluating actions and approaches taken forward within the action plan and associated activity

Theme	Sub-theme	Recommendations
Training and Capacity Building	Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a comprehensive training and capacity-building plan to build the knowledge, skills and confidence of the workforce in relation to healthy weight, nutrition and physical activity
	Harness the knowledge and connections of the VCS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a training needs analysis to inform a tailored training programme • Develop training and resources for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations • Co-design a peer support model to support communities to make changes to their behaviour and sustain changes in the longer term
	Nutritional Standards and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify spaces and settings where access to affordable healthy food is limited • Develop healthy catering guidelines and training for providers to improve the food provided and the food environment. • Support community food distribution initiatives such as food banks, food pantries and community food shops to ensure they provide balanced and nutritious food options as part of their offer to communities.

Theme	Sub-theme	Recommendations
Healthy environments	Active Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritise physical activity in the planning and development process ● Champion community spaces that are examples of a healthy environment ● Ensure that early years, youth and schools settings prioritise play and physical activity ● Increase the number of schools participating in the Daily Mile ● Analyse the impact of local interventions, such as School Streets and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods on active travel
	Supporting long-term behaviour change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shift focus towards long-term behaviour change by integrating complementary strategies that address social and environmental factors.
	Food Environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of community spaces to develop food growing spaces and enable people to shop locally ● Explore opportunities to incentivise convenience stores, supermarkets and market traders to provide affordable, healthy foods in underserved areas. ● Develop an approach to create 'fast food buffer zones' around schools to restrict street traders such as ice cream vans, ensuring consistency with planning applications on hot food takeaways. ● improve the food environment in early years settings and schools ● Support more families in need to be able to purchase fresh food and vegetables ● Increase food growing in schools ● Explore opportunities to decrease unhealthy food advertising

Theme	Sub-theme	Recommendations
Tackling inequality, inequity and stigma	Focus on health inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen partnerships with key services who are well placed to engage key at risk populations e.g. people on a low-income, people with disabilities or learning disabilities and global majority communities. ● Develop targeted support for people with more complex needs ● Work closely with stakeholders to ensure obesity related inequalities are at the heart of service planning and delivery.
	'Proportionate universalism' approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider how resources are allocated and interventions are delivered to meet the needs of populations that are disproportionately affected by obesity and related health issues e.g. people on a low-income, people with disabilities or learning disabilities and global majority communities
	Addressing weight stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a comprehensive programme of work to tackle weight stigma
Settings and life course	Life course approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage stakeholders working with people at key life stages to ensure they are actively involved and opportunities are maximised to support the healthy weight agenda. ● Ensure access to affordable healthy food starts from the beginning of the life course working with and through programmes such as Healthy Early Years and Healthy Schools ● Continue to support new mothers to breastfeed for longer
	Intergenerational approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore with partners the opportunities for intergenerational approaches to improving access to food and physical activity uptake.
	Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work across the anchor institutions and other employers to develop workplace health charter/support for employees



Theme	Sub-theme	Recommendations
Cross-Sector Collaboration	Networking and sharing good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop opportunities to facilitate networking, sharing of good practice and collaboration.
	Integrated pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve care pathways and develop integrated approaches which respond to need and focus on inequalities.
	Partnership building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders to further develop the shared objectives of the programme and create a true 'whole system approach'
Communications and engagement	Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leverage local knowledge and resources by working collaboratively with community leaders and community members in planning and implementing the Healthy Weight Action Plan.
	Communications Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a coordinated communications plan based on insight to ensure clear, consistent and accessible messages are given around healthy weight and support available locally.
	Health literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a streamlined approach to support residents to access information and services about nutrition, physical activity and weight management which they can find, understand and use to support them to make decisions and take action.

Question for the Board



Q How can the Health and Wellbeing Board - *as a collective body and as leaders within your organisations* - use your influence to implement the emerging recommendations?