

READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Date of Meeting	14 March 2025
Title	Healthy Weight Needs Assessment for Adults in Reading
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report author	Nina Crispin
Job title	Public Health Programme Officer
Organisation	Reading Borough Council
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes the publication of the Healthy Weight Needs Assessment for Adults in Reading 2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board endorses a whole systems approach to healthy weight for Reading and the formation of a task and finish group to oversee the development of a strategy with an implementation plan 3. That by adopting a whole systems approach to healthy weight, all partners and professional disciplines in the system play their part and commit to systems changes 4. That the Health and Wellbeing Board partners commit to the development of the whole systems approach to healthy weight strategy by nominating representative(s) to join the task and finish group

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Overweight and obesity are defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health. Obesity is one side of the double burden of malnutrition. Health risks related to obesity are many and well known with the WHO highlighting that overweight and obesity (and poor diet) are major risk factors for many chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (which is the main cause of premature death in the UK) and some cancers, in addition to joint and mobility issues, depression, low mood and fertility issues.
- 1.2. Evidence suggests that a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight is needed to influence changes at systems levels and policies in the areas that have an impact on the population's health. These areas of influence include social and economic conditions, food production, agriculture, environment and planning, tax and levies, education and schools, industry practice and innovation, media and advertising (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities OHID)
- 1.3. A Healthy Weight Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2023 to better understand the needs of Reading's population regarding effective provision that promotes healthy weight. The needs assessment interrogated the evidence-base around nutrition, physical activity, and weight to better understand the health inequalities

around excess weight, including wider and commercial determinants that impact people's weight. The focus of this Healthy Weight Needs Assessment is on excess weight and reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, and the ability of the Local Authority and partners to drive and influence change.

- 1.4. It needs to be acknowledged that working on the recommendations from the needs assessment will require prioritisation as we won't be able to address them all at once. The prioritisation work will need to be driven by local needs and Council priorities.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. To address the issue of obesity across the population, national and local action is required by many organisations and stakeholders. In Reading, a long-term, system-wide approach is needed that makes healthy weight everybody's business. This approach needs to be tailored to local needs and works across the life course. It is not just for public health professionals to act; all Council departments, the NHS, the wider public sector, the third sector and businesses all have an important role to play, working together and with their communities.
- 2.2. In Reading, there are over 85,000 adults who are overweight. In 2022/2023, 28.2% of adults 18 and over were obese (England 26.2%), whilst 61.2% were overweight or obese (England 64%). Levels of obesity and excess weight in Reading were (statistically) similar to England. The prevalence of obesity and excess weight (overweight and obese) continues to increase nationally.
- 2.3. Children are heavily exposed to television advertising for food and drinks high in salt, fat or sugar; fast food shops are a growing presence on high streets and increasingly cluster around schools. The government has pledged to halve childhood obesity and significantly reduce the gap in obesity between children from the most and least deprived areas by 2030¹.
- 2.4. [The Advertising \(Less Healthy Food Definitions and Exemptions\) Regulations 2024](#) were laid before Parliament on 3 December 2024 and will come into force UK-wide on 1 October 2025.
- 2.5. Core20Plus5 is an NHS England approach to reduce health inequalities of adults, children and young people of the most deprived 20% of the population across the UK, in 5 focus areas. For children and young people, the 5 focus areas are asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, oral health and mental health – mental health is a co-morbidity linked to obesity. For adults, the 5 focus areas are maternity, severe mental illness, chronic respiratory disease, early cancer diagnosis, hypertension / lipid optimal management – which can all be linked as co-morbidities to obesity.
- 2.6. In the [NHS Long Term Plan \(2019\)](#), obesity is one of the focus areas for 'targeted support offer and access to weight management services' in order to generate 'a significant impact on improving health, reducing health inequalities and reducing costs'¹.
- 2.7. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) (updated 2022) makes 'anti-obesity drive' a focus of its health prevention and improvement agenda².

¹ <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

² <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2022-0015/CDP-2022-0015.pdf>

- 2.8. The Childhood Obesity Action Plan (2016)³ sets out a number of key initiatives across the system to alleviate obesity levels in children and young people, such as introducing a soft drinks industry levy, taking out 20% of sugar in products, supporting innovation to help businesses to make their products healthier, helping all children to enjoy an hour of physical activity every day.
- 2.9. The National Institute for Health and Care and Excellence (NICE) [NG246] (updated 2025) reviewed their guidelines on the prevention and management of overweight, obesity and central adiposity in children, young people and adults⁴.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. An effective way to addressing the complex issue of healthy weight is to consider a whole systems multi-level approach through a Health in All Policies lens. This ranges from upstream efforts to build health-promoting environments to the provision of services for those who need support to manage their weight. It will also consider all available policy levers across the system: legislation, regulation, fiscal measures, environmental and planning, communications and marketing and service provision.
- 3.2. The Healthy Weight Needs Assessment has identified recommendations to support systems-wide change in Reading for addressing healthy weight issues (See Executive Summary – Appendix 1)
- 3.3. It is proposed that the recommendations from the Healthy Weight Needs Assessment informs the development of a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight in Reading, covering the life course of an individual.
- 3.4. It is also proposed that a Whole Systems Approach Task and Finish Group is set up to oversee the development of a Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight Strategy for Reading. The task and finish group membership would include representatives from the Integrated Care Board, the NHS, Transport and Planning Department, Voluntary Sector partners, Active Reading colleagues, Advertising Team, and colleagues from Children and Young People's services.
- 3.5. Due the very low response received from the needs assessment survey targeted at educational settings (children and young people), a separate needs assessment will need to be conducted to gather insights on the pathways available to children and young people in Reading who are obese or overweight and identify recommendations to address the issue.

³ file:///C:/Users/crisnin/OneDrive%20-%20reading.gov.uk/WSA/Childhood_obesity_2016_2_acc.pdf

⁴ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng246>

4. Contribution to Reading's Health and Wellbeing Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The proposals in this report are in line with the overall direction of the [Berkshire West Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2021-30](#) by contributing to all of the Strategy's five priorities;

1. Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
2. Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
3. Help children and families in early years
4. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
5. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

- 4.2. In addition, the proposals support the Reading Borough Council Corporate Plan's vision for Thriving communities:

We will support families and ensure that vulnerable children in Reading are protected and supported to be well and healthy.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

- 5.2. There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the decision

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The healthy weight needs assessment was conducted between 5th May 2023 to 16th June 2023. Extensive engagement with local communities and partners was conducted during the consultation period of 5th May 2023 to 16th June 2023. A multiple-pronged approach was taken, firstly with three surveys – Public facing aimed at parents, carers and general public who lived in Reading, Healthcare professionals including those within the community voluntary sector and with those in educational settings – ranging from early years to further education (18 years and under).
- 6.2. The survey targeted at adults aged 18+ and families contained 33 questions and the total number of people who responded was 208.
- 6.3. The survey that targeted professionals working with people who may experience excess weight contained 19 questions and received 77 responses.
- 6.4. Due to the very low level of response on the survey that targeted educational settings (only 7), it was not possible to incorporate the results and finding in the Healthy Weight Needs Assessment report.
- 6.5. In addition to the three surveys, 12 focus groups / professional interviews were conducted, using a range of media including online forums, TEAMs meetings and in person interviews/ discussions. Interview followed the same theme as the questionnaires; however, they were more fluid in approach to navigating, leading with the area of most concern/pressing for the audience
- 6.6. For a full consultation report, see the full Healthy Weight Needs Assessment Full Report December 2024 (Appendix 2)

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not applicable to this decision.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. Not applicable

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. Not applicable.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. Not applicable.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 The timeline for the development of the strategy is as follows:

Activity	Expected Timeline
Set up a core task and finish group to oversee the development of a whole systems approach to healthy weight strategy	May 2025
Whole systems approach to healthy weight strategy development with partners	May 2025 – October 2025
First draft of strategy ready	November 2025

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices –

- 1. Healthy Weight Needs Assessment Executive Summary Report (March 2025)**
- 2. Healthy Weight Needs Assessment Full Report (March 2025)**