

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item No 8.

21 February 2023

Childhood Obesity

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Flint – Health and Wellbeing

Executive Summary and Aim:

The prevalence of overweight and very overweight children is increasing both nationally and in Walsall. In Reception in Walsall 2020/21, 24.7% of children at age 4 or 5 were overweight or very overweight, which is significantly higher than the English average of 22.3%. In Year 6, 46.9% of Walsall children were overweight or very overweight which is a further increase on previous years. (English average is 37.8%.)

There is a range of action happening across the borough, however this position is likely to continue to get worse unless we collectively take a different approach through creating an environment to support healthier, sustainable and affordable choices.

Recommendations

That the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Recognises that childhood obesity reduction cannot be tackled by one organisation alone and that a strong partnership of key organisations is needed to implement a successful integrated wider system solution including within and outside the borough.
- b) To note a range of suggestions will be presented for discussion for Scrutiny to consider.

1. The Report

The Issue

- 1.1 Reducing obesity is one of the greatest long-term health challenges currently facing England and Walsall. Around two-thirds (63%) of adults are above a healthy weight, and of these half are living with obesity. In Walsall almost half of children leaving primary school are overweight or very overweight.

- 1.2 Obesity prevalence is highest amongst the most deprived groups in society. Children resident in the most deprived parts of the Borough are more than twice as likely to be living with obesity than those in the least deprived areas.

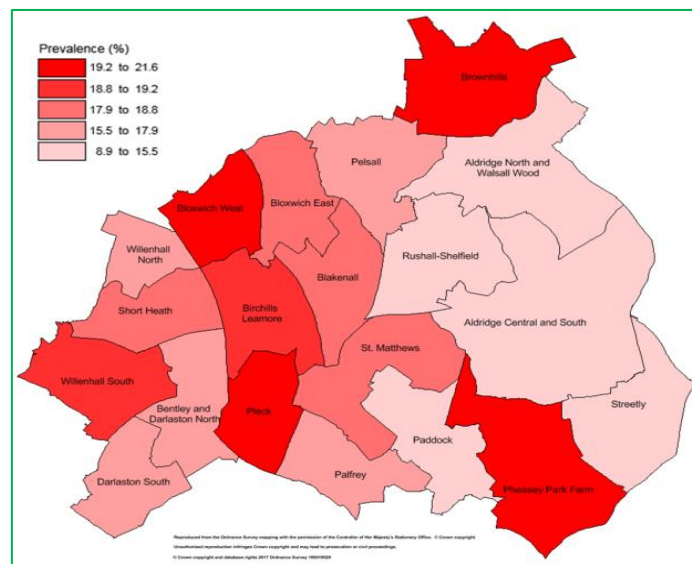
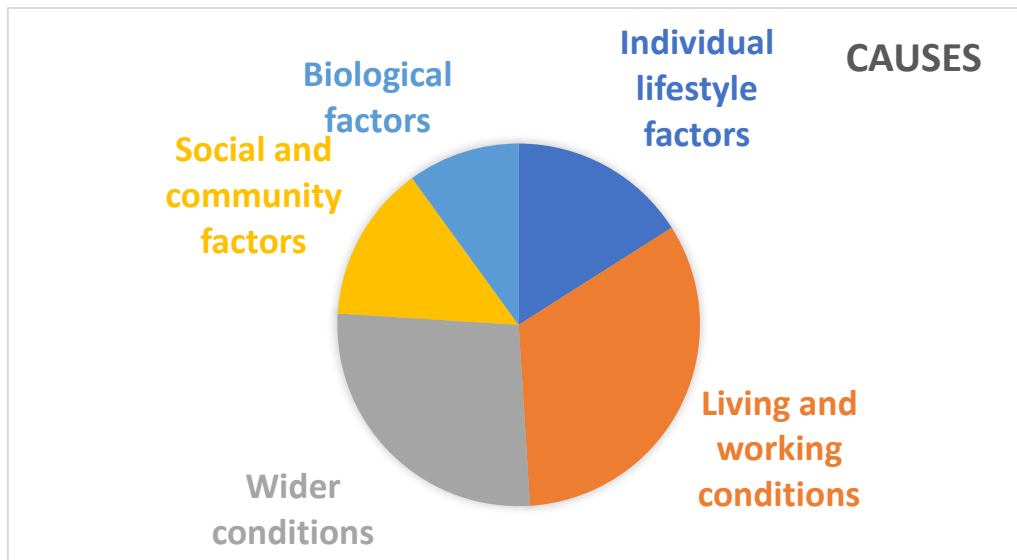


Table 1 Prevalence of obesity mapped by ward

- 1.3 Obesity is associated with reduced life expectancy and a range of health conditions including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, liver and respiratory disease and cancer. Obesity can also have an impact on mental health. Evidence shows that if children and young people are able to maintain a healthy weight then they tend to be fitter, healthier, better able to learn, and have more self-confidence. The link between child dental decay and obesity is also marked.
- 1.4 This is a population issue and not just one of individual behaviour change. In the past there has been a focus on supporting individuals to make individual lifestyle changes but we need to focus more on the other causes.



- 1.5 We know that typically children do not make their own food decisions; parents make the food choices for them (Savage, 2007). Research exploring parent's choices for their children are strongly influenced by the physical (built) and social environments in which they live eg access to fresh food and green space.
- 1.6 It is known that children's chances of accessing healthy and nutritious food depends strongly on where they grow up. In London, work has been done to visualise a schoolchild's bus journey from home to school and track the number of unhealthy food outlets and advertising they are exposed to along the way.

Bus stops, junk food, and children's health - Impact on Urban Health



- 1.7 The work found that those living in areas with the highest rates of both deprivation and obesity in London also had the most exposure to junk food. Anecdotal evidence in Walsall suggests that the issue is similar within the borough.

2. Decide and Next Steps

- 2.1 Recognise that childhood obesity reduction cannot be tackled by one organisation alone and that a strong partnership of key organisations is needed to implement a successful integrated wider system solution.
- 2.2 To consider action in which Walsall Council and its partners uses their powers to promote healthy weight in the population through actions such as;
- Reducing advertising of high fat, sugar, salt foods in areas accessible to children.
 - Utilising planning policy to limit the density of fast food takeaways in areas where overweight and obesity is high.
 - Using Council procurement and wider partnership influence to engage partners across the borough including health, business, education and child care, sport and recreation, community groups and charities to put policies in place to promote healthier lifestyles.
 - Promote breastfeeding and healthier weaning.
 - Walsall Council should work with local partner agencies and other councils, to explore the potential to set procurement standards for food.
 - Walsall Council should promote diets with more wholegrains, fruit, vegetables and pulses, to maximise the health and sustainability of the food served both within its premises and by providers and suppliers with whom it contracts.
 - Use our regeneration opportunity and investment to encourage more local food growing and spaces that encourage physical activity.

Annexes

Appendix 1 What is currently on offer in Walsall to support child healthy weight

Author

Christine Williams, Specialist Project Manager

☐ 07423 789 383

☐ christine.williams2@walsall.gov.uk

Background papers

Appendix 1. What is currently on offer in Walsall to support child healthy weight

Active Travel

- **A*STARS** - a programme of walking, cycling, scooting and road safety initiatives, that gives training, and support to schools to help them to develop and promote safer, healthier lifestyle choices for all.
- Walsall had increased walking rates of compared to the national average
- Walsall had higher cycling rates of 1.2% compared to the national average (2.2% vs 1.0%)
- <https://www.astarswalsall.co.uk/>

Healthy Eating in Early Years and Schools / Cooking and Growing in the community

- **Food For Life** - is about making good food the easy choice for everyone – making healthy, tasty and sustainable meals the norm for all to enjoy, reconnecting people with where their food comes from, teaching them how it's grown and cooked, and championing the importance of well-sourced ingredients. This programme is currently being rolled out to early year's settings and schools in Walsall. Also Walsall Food for Life schools can access the resources from Jamie Oliver's Kitchen Garden Project.
- Community settings can access free cook and eat training to allow them to deliver sessions in their own venue
- www.foodforlife.org.uk

School Nursing Service

- The School Nursing Service works in partnership with children, young people and their families to ensure that children's and young people's health needs are supported within their school and their community.
- Every school in Walsall has access to a named school nurse and the school has been provided with posters to display which have the name, a picture and the contact details of their school nurse.
- <https://www.walsallhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services/school-nursing/>

Family Weight Management Programmes

- **'Super Wiggles'** – a recently launched family programme for children aged 2–7 at local children's and community centres. Activities include singing, dancing and games. Children are actively encouraged to try out a wide range of new foods. Parents are also given help and support on how to shop on a budget and prepare healthy meals.
- <https://www.oneyouwalsall.com>
- **Fun4Life** Fun 4 Life is a weight management programme for young people in Walsall between the ages of 8 and 16. The programme is aimed at individuals

who are wish to increase levels of physical activity as well as making lifestyle changes in order to prevent an increase in weight.

- <https://fun4life.org.uk/>

Green Spaces / Parks / Allotments

- Walsall is recognised as being a particularly green borough and its green spaces are an asset that the borough residents are justifiably proud of.
- Wherever you are in Walsall you're never far from a countryside site or green open space. We have a 30 countryside sites in Walsall, including 11 Local Nature Reserves, Green Flag Sites and a brand new Country Park, which includes the former Grange Golf Course at the Arboretum Extension
- To help increase physical activity levels you can visit up to 30 countryside sites in Walsall, including 11 Local Nature Reserves, Green Flag Sites and a brand new Country Park, which includes the former Grange Golf Course at the Arboretum Extension.
- Walsall council currently provides 1373 allotment plots on 34 sites in the borough. Allotments have far wider benefits than simply providing a place to grow fresh food. The physical and mental health stimulated by growing, and social activities are widely recognised.

For more information [https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Parks and Green Spaces](https://go.walsall.gov.uk/Parks_and_Green_Spaces)

Parkrun / Junior Parkrun

- It is a 2k run for juniors only (4-14 year olds) and is held every Sunday at 9:00am at King George V Memorial Playing Fields, Stafford Road, Walsall, WS3 3NT.
- It is free to enter but requires registration before the first run.

Walsall Council Environmental Health / Public Health

- **Walsall Health Switch:** Working with hot food takeaway businesses to look at simple innovative ways to offer a healthier choice of food to Walsall residents.
- This is currently being updated to include an award scheme for soft play centres

Walsall Active Living Centres

- Walsall Council's **Move It Scheme** offers a discount membership scheme for families at all of our active living centres.
- **Walsall Active Living Centres** - Offer Family membership which is an all inclusive price and covers all activities for all members of the household (two adults & up to four children) Children must be aged 11-15 years (14-15 year at the Gala and Darlaston) to use the gym and must be accompanied by a paying adult.
- **Oak Park Active Living Centre**
- 11-15 years young people are able to use the gym at anytime. They must be accompanied by an adult (over 16 years) who is an inducted member of Walsall Leisure. The adults take full responsibility for the young person and must be working out in the gym with them.

- 11-15 years 4:00-5:00pm Monday-Fridays – able to use the gym under the supervision of the fitness instructor on shift.
- Classes on offer on the studio timetable include: Streetdance 4-16yrs, Kids Boxercise 6-15yrs, Kids Glow (Clubbercise) 4-16yrs.
- **Bloxwich Active Living Centre**
- 11-15 years young people are able to use the gym at anytime. They must be accompanied by an adult (over 16 years) who is an inducted member of Walsall Leisure. The adults take full responsibility for the young person and must be working out in the gym with them.
- Acti-Kids Classes led by the Fitness Instructor on shift within the gym: Circuits 4-4:45pm Monday & Tuesday, 4:30-5pm Thursday and Saturday 10:30-11:15am, 12:15-1pm, 1:30-2:15pm. Box 5-5:45pm Monday and 4:45-5:30 on Tuesday. (8-15 years)
- Classes on offer in the studio include: family clubbercise (7yrs +)
- **Active Gym Tots** At Oak Park Active Living Centre on Tuesdays 1.45pm, 2.30pm, 3.30pm, 4.30pm, 5.30pm (please contact active gym tots on 07825216496 to find the right class for you) Active Gym welcomes all children, parents, and guardians!

Health In Pregnancy Service

- **The Health in Pregnancy Service** (launched June 2017)
- All pregnant women in Walsall have the chance to meet programme workers a minimum of three times as their pregnancy progress, as well as receive more intensive support where required.
- Programme workers will work alongside midwives and other maternity staff to advise pregnant women on a range of health issues. They will focus on supporting pregnant women to stay as healthy as they can and to ensure that the first few weeks of a child's life are as healthy as possible
- This is seen as a collaborative step towards improving health outcomes for pregnant women and providing Walsall families with an enhanced support network
- http://healthywalsall.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Walsall_Health-in-Pregnancy-Leaflet_June-2017.pdf

Healthy Child Programme 0 – 5 (Health Visitors)

- The Healthy Child Programme is for the early life stages focuses on a universal preventative service, providing families with a programme of screening, immunisation, health and development reviews, supplemented by advice around health, wellbeing and parenting.
- Walsall Health visitors have an important role in providing advice and support as part of the healthy child programme. They work on the 4 5 6 model (4 levels of service, **5 universal health reviews**, **6 high impact areas**) and discuss breastfeeding and how children can be a healthy weight at each review.

NHS Dental Services

- Walsall has various **NHS dental practices** which are accepting families as new patients visit www.nhs.uk to find your nearest. You do not necessarily need to see your dentist every six months and they will recommend how often you should come to see them, based on your current dental health.

UNICEF baby friendly initiative

- Walsall NHS Healthcare Trust have recently been awarded the UNICEF baby friendly initiative which recognises the excellent support in infant feeding and parent-infant relationships including infant feeding policies to promote breastfeeding

School Games Organisers

- There are three School Games Organisers (SGOs) in Walsall. The SGOs have several key roles: to coordinate appropriate competitive opportunities for all young people from Key Stage 2-4, to recruit, train and deploy a suitable workforce, and to support the development of club opportunities for all young people. Schools can find out the contact details of their local SGO by [registering with the School Games website](#)

Other

- Walsall Council have developed a successful partnership with whg community health officers They also offer family fitness and fun sessions which encourage young people and their families to live an active lifestyle and eat healthily.
<https://www.whg.uk.com/customers/health-and-wellbeing/community-health/>
- In addition, a wide range of family fitness activities are delivered through Walsall Council key partners through the voluntary sector and community hubs.