

Health Scrutiny Committee

19 April 2023

Final report of the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Tackling Childhood Obesity

Summary

1. On 6 April 2022, the Health Scrutiny Committee considered the work taking place in Suffolk to tackle the issue of childhood weight and obesity. Members of the Education and Children's Services were invited to take part in this discussion. It became evident from this review that the issues surrounding the topic are complex, and a whole systems approach is essential to co-ordinate action across a wide range of organisations.
2. In light of this, it was agreed a Joint Task and Finish Group should be established to examine the output from the meeting and to feed ideas into a refresh of the Council's Children's Healthy Weight Strategy which is due to take place in Spring 2023.

Objective

3. The Committee is invited to receive the findings and recommendations of the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on Tackling Childhood Obesity.
4. The Committee will be joined by members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration of this item.

Scrutiny Focus

5. From the initial areas identified by the Committees in April 2022, the Group agreed to focus the review on the following key lines of enquiry:
 - a) What are the opportunities for promoting and increasing the level of physical activity within Suffolk's schools?
 - i) To what extent are Suffolk schools participating in the Daily Mile? What are the barriers to participation and how might more schools be encouraged to take part?
 - ii) To what extent do schools get involved with parkrun? Could more be done to link schools to parkrun initiatives?
 - iii) Are there opportunities for District and Borough Councils to support schools to participate in activities such as the Daily Mile and parkrun?
 - iv) How can we incentivise walking to school? Are there initiatives which have been successful elsewhere which could be replicated in Suffolk?
 - v) Why are schools not promoting the benefits of walking to school?
 - vi) What channels are available (other than official/authority messages) to influence children about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle?
 - vii) What role could ambassadors play in helping to promote these messages?

- b) To what extent can the data gathered under the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) be used to target activities to reduce childhood obesity?
 - i) How is the data gathered under the NCMP used in Suffolk?
 - ii) Do other authorities use the data differently?
 - iii) What are the legal restrictions on how this data can be used and shared?
 - iv) Do schools have an understanding of the data relating to their school?
 - v) Do professionals who come into contact with parents and children have access to this information?
 - vi) What information is communicated to parents?
 - c) What opportunities exist to promote and encourage healthy eating in schools?
 - i) What work has taken place to date with school meal providers to promote healthier and lower sugar options and increase the uptake of school meals (particularly free school meals) and how successful has this been?
 - ii) What work has taken place to increase access to drinking water and reduce unhealthy vending machine options in schools and how successful has this been?
 - iii) What barriers have been identified to improving the standard of nutrition in schools?
6. The Committee is invited to:
- a) receive the findings and recommendations from the Task and Finish Group;
 - b) endorse the recommendations as set out in the report.

Contact details

Theresa Harden, Business Manager (Democratic Services), Email: Theresa.harden@suffolk.gov.uk; Tel: 01473 260866

Background

- 7. Childhood obesity is recognised as a widespread and urgent public health issue. In Suffolk, childhood obesity is a growing concern, with National Childhood Measurement Programme data indicating that the numbers of children who are overweight or obese is continuing to rise. Evidence suggests that obese children and adolescents are not only more likely to become obese adults but are also at increased risk of developing associated physical health problems and psychosocial conditions from an early age. Obesity can have a negative effect on children's emotional health and wellbeing through stigmatisation and low self-esteem which can also lead to poorer levels of educational attainment and impact upon life chances.
- 8. As the Group set out on this task, work was already underway, led by the County Council's Public Health Team, to assess future needs and develop options for

future service provision. This review has sought to align with this work, with a view to providing recommendations to help inform the development of a refreshed strategy in Spring 2023.

9. The Group was established on a task and finish basis, and the review ran from September 2022 to April 2023. The work took place over the course of 7 meetings held on 21 September, 30 September, 1 November and 29 November 2022 and 31 January, 17 February and 17 March 2023.
10. Members who took part in the Task and Finish Group were Councillors Joanna Spicer, Edward Back, Inga Lockington, Sandy Martin and Christine Shaw (Ipswich Borough Council) and the late Councillor Graham Newman.

Main body of evidence

The report of the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group is attached as Appendix 1.

Supporting information

Health Scrutiny Committee (6 April 2022), Agenda Item 5 Childhood Obesity Strategy; Available from:

[https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=\(06-04-2022\),%20Health%20Scrutiny%20Committee](https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk/DocSetPage.aspx?MeetingTitle=(06-04-2022),%20Health%20Scrutiny%20Committee)

This page is intentionally blank.