

Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: Tackling overweight and obesity in North Yorkshire 2016 – 2026

Strategy Summary, November 2016

Introduction

The Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy has been developed by North Yorkshire County Council to help deliver the aims and ambitions of the North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board - that 'People in all communities in North Yorkshire have equal opportunities to live long healthy lives'.

The vision of the Health Weight, Healthy Lives strategy is to help achieve this and "To inspire a healthy weight population". The Strategy details the issue of obesity in North Yorkshire. It describes why and where action is needed and explores how different stakeholders can contribute to tackling the obesity problem.

Our challenge in North Yorkshire is to create the environment to develop and sustain healthy eating and physical activity habits. This is not simply a health issue, nor a matter of individual choice. This Strategy must align with other policy goals and aspirations such as climate change, transport, planning, rural issues, education and employment. We need work in partnership, through the leadership of the North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board, to inspire a healthy weight population and achieve our ambition to reduce the number of people who are overweight and obese at all ages. Together we can be successful in supporting more people to eat more healthily and be more active so they can live longer, happier lives.

Background

Nationally, almost seven out of ten men, six out of ten women, a quarter of two to ten year olds and one third of 11-15 year olds are overweight or obese. By 2050 obesity is predicted to affect 60% of adult men, 50% of adult women and 25% of children.

The challenge in North Yorkshire is very real with over 66% of adults being overweight and obese, which is higher than the England average. Over 21% of four to five year olds and over 30% of 10-11 year olds in our local communities are measured as having excess weight.

An adult Body Mass Index (BMI) of between 25 and 29.9 is classified as overweight; the term obese is used for any adult with a (BMI) of 30 or above. Assessing the BMI of children is more complicated; the British 1990 growth reference charts are used to classify the weight status of children according to their age and sex.

The causes of excess weight

Much more needs to be done to enable people to achieve an optimal weight. Many people find it hard to maintain a healthy weight and unfortunately there is no easy fix to losing excess weight and keeping it off. Our biology, the environment we live in, influences from our society and cultures, and the choices we make about the foods we eat and the activity we do all affect our weight. We all live in a world today that promotes unhealthy rather than healthy eating, and fosters sedentary activities more than physical activities.

Excess weight occurs when the energy intake from food and drink consumption is greater than energy expenditure through the body's metabolism and physical activity over a prolonged period, resulting in the build-up of excess body fat.

There are many complex reasons that combine to cause obesity, which differ between population groups and across different ages. Tackling the prevention and management of excess weight, should be linked to periods of significant change such as:

- pregnancy and the first year of life
- early years (one to four years)
- childhood (five to ten years and 11-16 years)
- adulthood (17-59 years) especially leaving home, becoming a parent, ill health
- older people (60+ years)

Factors affecting excess weight include:

- biology (physiology) – the influence of genetics and ill health
- environment – how this influences activity behaviour
- physical activity – type, how much and intensity
- the influence of the media, education, peer pressure or culture
- individual mental make-up (psychology) – urge for particular foods, eating patterns
- food environment – availability and quality near home
- food consumption – quality, quantity and frequency.

The impact of excess weight

The impact of excess weight affects both physical and mental health. It reduces life expectancy by an average of three years, or eight to ten years in the case of severe obesity (BMI over 40). This eight to ten year loss of life is equivalent to the effects of lifelong smoking.

Estimates of the direct costs to the NHS in England for treating people with associated illnesses range from £479.3 million in 1998 to £4.2 billion in 2007. Estimates of the indirect costs from the impact of obesity on the wider economy such as unemployment, early retirement and welfare benefits over the same time period range between £2.6 billion and £15.8 billion.

Losing weight can reduce the risk of some potentially serious health problems. Health benefits result from losing 5% of weight if kept off – even a moderate weight loss of 3% that is kept off can improve or prevent health problems.

Physical health:

Being overweight or obese in childhood impacts on the short and longer term. Obese children are more likely to be ill, absent from school, have health-related limitations and require more medical care. Potential consequences are type 2 diabetes, asthma, sleep apnoea, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and musculoskeletal problems.

An obese man is:

- five times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes;
- three times more likely to develop cancer of the colon;
- more than two and a half times more likely to develop high blood pressure — a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease

An obese woman is:

- almost thirteen times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes;
- more than four times more likely to develop high blood pressure;
- more than three times more likely to have a heart attack.

Risks of other diseases, including angina, gall bladder disease, liver disease, ovarian cancer, osteoarthritis and stroke, are also increased for those who are obese compared with those who are not.

Mental health:

People who suffer from both obesity and mental health disorders may also face particular risks to health and wellbeing, as it is likely the conditions may perpetuate each other.

Being overweight or obese as a child or adolescent has adverse effects on self-esteem, self-image and self-concept, and has been associated with depression in adolescents. Factors linked to mental health disorders contribute to obesity in children and young people. The impact of obesity on mental wellbeing increases with age and is greater in girls than boys.

In adults evidence suggests an obese person has a 55% increased risk of developing depression and a depressed person has a 58% increased risk of becoming obese.

Opportunities to change lifestyle and behaviour

Changing individual lifestyle and behaviour around eating and physical activity are two critical factors – improving nutrition, reducing sugar and fat intake, reducing alcohol consumption and increasing physical activity are opportunities to influence behaviour change. Nationally, one in four women and one in five men are classed as physically inactive (doing less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per week).

Other opportunities also need to be included to support behaviour change – improved access to evidence based treatment services, changing the environment we live in to create a more active society and increasing access to healthy and competitively priced food.

Changes to our environment such as transport infrastructure and urban design are more likely to have an effect on obesity in a sustainable way. Access to healthy food options, safe open spaces for play and physical activity, an infrastructure that supports active travel (walking and cycling) are all vital in allowing the local population to make positive lifestyle changes. The design, layout and space between buildings can support physical activity. Creating a more active society where it is

easier and more natural for people to be active will require action by a huge range of bodies over a significant period of time. Increased reliance on the car over the last 50 years and the focus on the car in planning and transport has resulted in less walking and cycling. This decline in active travel has mirrored the increase in the proportion of overweight, obese and inactive people.

Early years settings (nurseries and pre-schools), schools and workplaces are all crucial in helping to address obesity. Workplaces can sign up to the national Workplace Health Charter so good practice can be recognised and shared with others. Schools can support children and young people to develop life-long healthy eating and physical activity practices, and full participation in the National Child measurement Programme means that families and carers can be given guidance to help with weight management.

The availability of and access to food on the go is an important consideration. During the past ten years the consumption of food away from the home has increased by 29% and the number of fast food outlets has increased dramatically. Foods consumed away from the home are typically less healthy than those consumed at home and data shows more deprived areas have a higher proportion of fast food outlets per head of population.

There is opportunity to work with local business and key stakeholders to develop a North Yorkshire food partnership and join the Sustainable Food City network to develop local action to promote healthy and sustainable food to the public.

The Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy

The vision of the Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy is to inspire a healthy weight population.

The aim by 2026 is to reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity across the population and six key priorities have been identified:

- supporting children's healthy growth and healthy weight
- promoting healthier food choices
- building physical activity into peoples' daily lives
- providing the right personalised accessible weight management services
- ensuring people have access to the right information and resources to make healthy choices that support weight loss
- building healthier workplaces that support employees to manage their weight.

Examples of proposed actions include:

- supporting local organisations, including health care providers to implement the UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative standards and achieve Baby Friendly accreditation
- increasing markets for local food producers
- develop a county-wide food poverty plan
- restrict planning permission for takeaways and other food retail outlets in specific areas, i.e. walking distance from schools
- make sure a network of routes for walking, cycling and using other modes of transport involving physical activity that is safe and attractive and accessible from the workplace, home, school and other public facilities
- make sure services that prevent or treat conditions such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke, or improve mental health, incorporate brief advice on physical activity into their care pathway
- make sure children and young people, and their parents or carers have access to a publicly available up-to-date list of local lifestyle weight management programmes. provide and

promote family friendly environments that enable opportunities for active play and planned physical activity

- make sure local employers and public sector organisations receive co-ordinated, consistent levels of support for the development of workplace health policy, infrastructure and planned interventions
- increase the number of local employers and public sector organisations achieving the Workplace Wellbeing Charter accreditation.

There are ten proposed strategic outcomes to be achieved over the lifetime of the Strategy:

- reduce health inequalities that arise from overweight and obesity
- reduce demand on health and social care that arise from conditions/issues related to being overweight or obese
- fewer people with longer term conditions as a result of excess weight
- more employers with evidence based workplace health schemes
- improved offer of healthy food provision/options in public sector settings
- improved provision of physical activity for children and young people cross all sectors
- changes in the local activity and food related environment such as changes in transport infrastructure or town planning which address the obesogenic environment
- wider use of technology to support healthy behaviours
- less discrimination and bullying associated with overweight and obesity
- more access and support for those wishing to take action to address their weight.

Partner and specialist organisations will work with North Yorkshire County Council to deliver the Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy, reporting to the North Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

The full Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy can be downloaded from www.nypartnerships.org.uk/healthylives