



Briefing Report to Health and Adult Social Care Committee

Date:	30 th September 2021
Title:	Whole Systems Approach to Obesity
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr. Angela Macpherson and Cllr. Carl Jackson
Contact officer:	Sally Hone (Public Health Principal)
Ward(s) affected:	County wide approach
Recommendations:	For information only
Reason for decision:	For information only

1. Executive summary

A whole systems approach to obesity is a long-term and sustainable way of working to address obesity across the life-course, with the approach developing and evolving over time. The whole systems approach is being implemented in Buckinghamshire, utilising Public Health England's evidence-based approach, which in recent years has been adopted across many Local Authorities, whilst acknowledging, enhancing, and learning from historic actions and plans.

2. Content of report

A whole systems approach to obesity is a long-term and sustainable way of working to address obesity across Buckinghamshire, that will continue to develop and evolve over time. As a key action of the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Recovery Plan, Buckinghamshire Council have recently commenced the process to adopt the approach across the county.

In Buckinghamshire 61.1% of adults and 29.4% Year 6 children are classified as overweight or obese. Obesity rates also tend to be higher in the most deprived parts of the county. Obesity is the result of a complex web of interlinking interactions and influences across the entire system. Living with excess weight is a risk factor for a range of chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, many cancers, liver, and respiratory disease. Obesity is also associated with reduced life expectancy, and lower quality of life. In order to tackle obesity effectively we need an approach that involves the whole system, with action at the individual, environmental and societal level.

The Buckinghamshire Coronavirus Health and Wellbeing Survey highlighted 25% of respondents said their physical health had deteriorated during lockdown and this was higher in more deprived areas and younger people. 20% of respondents said they ate less healthy and nutritious food during lockdown, with females, under 50's from BAME population groups and those from more deprived areas being most impacted. Additionally, nearly half of respondents reporting less healthy diets, had children U18 in the households. And 38% of residents said they were exercising less.

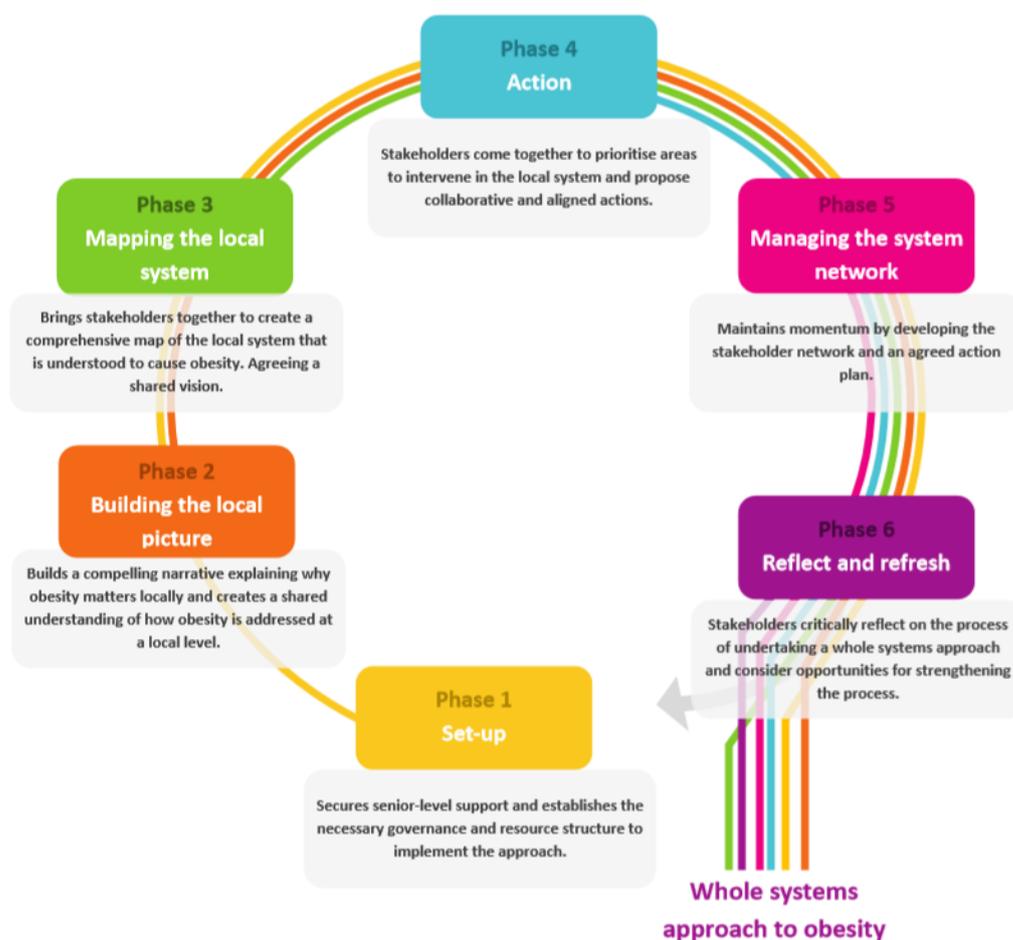
A recent Public Health England survey found that more than 40% of adults in England have gained weight during the pandemic, with the average gain being half a stone (just over 3kg.). The survey found Covid lockdowns and disrupted daily routines have made it challenging for people to eat healthy and keep fit. Living with excess weight puts people at greater risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19, with risk growing substantially as body mass index (BMI) increases. Additionally, it is well documented that obesity and associated long-term conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease increase the risk of adverse outcomes from COVID. In many cases these conditions are preventable.

The whole systems approach, developed and tested by Public Health England (PHE) and adopted by a number of Local Authorities, brings stakeholders together in partnership to develop and agree on a shared action plan, with assigned responsibilities across a range of partners. In order to achieve the defined actions, it is imperative strong partnerships are developed and key organisations take ownership of the actions.

Collaboration with partners and the community is vital to the success of the obesity strategy across Buckinghamshire. Multiple sectors including health, social care, the community and voluntary sector, planning, housing, transport, regeneration, and environment all have a role to play. As do local businesses, workplaces, and the wider community themselves all by jointly making better use of resources, seeking opportunities for change, and working towards a vision of better health and wellbeing.



The process is iterative as highlighted below.



A key element of this piece of work is to reflect on historic actions and plans undertaken to address obesity across the life-course. This would build on lessons learned and develop this evidence-based approach and ensuring proposed actions are targeting priority groups around the county. Full consideration will be taken of the historic HASC child obesity report, recommendations, and Child Healthy Eating Action Plan, with progress in implementing the recommendations updated and incorporated where appropriate into future action plans. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic delivery and monitoring of recommendations has not progressed as we would have liked. This new approach will help to address priority areas identified 'post-COVID' and ensure measures taken are reflective of and aligned to the current picture of obesity in Buckinghamshire.

To initiate the approach, Buckinghamshire Council, in February 2021, commissioned Leeds Beckett University, who were instrumental in developing the approach with PHE, to undertake an obesity health needs assessment and system mapping exercise. This piece of work helped to identify:

- Impact of obesity on the community
- Identify assets that can contribute to positive health and wellbeing, helping to address the overweight and obesity issue across Buckinghamshire
- Local actions currently being delivered to address obesity in Buckinghamshire
- Community members views on what works well and not so well

The final report of the health needs assessment and systems mapping exercise is due to be published mid-September, in time for the workshop highlighted below.

The next phase in the PHE approach is to bring stakeholders together at a workshop (September 29th, 2021, 9am-12pm) to create a comprehensive map of the local system and issues that contribute to obesity and agree a shared vision. The aim is to enable stakeholders to see where, and how, they can help to prevent and manage obesity and what can be achieved by working collaboratively. This event will be followed by another workshop in November where we will present the current system map and work collaboratively to prioritise actions before a draft whole systems action plan is presented towards the end of 2021/early 2022.

By taking this county-wide, life-course approach to tackling obesity in Buckinghamshire, the expected outcomes are:

- Development of collective actions, shared vision, with assigned accountability to organisations or groups
- Greater collaboration across the obesity agenda, with more stakeholders taking a ‘Health in All Policies’¹ approach
- A more joined up approach to tackling obesity, avoiding duplication, and ensuring effective and efficient use of all resources available
- Support services being put in place across Buckinghamshire and joined up across the healthy weight pathway

3. Appendix

3.1 Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Workshop Flyer

4. Background papers

4.1 [Whole systems approach to obesity: A guide to support local approaches \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101212/whole-systems-approach-to-obesity-a-guide-to-support-local-approaches.pdf)

5. Your questions

5.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report.

¹ A ‘Health in All Policies’ (HiAP) is a collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas. It recognises just one government sector will not have all the tools, knowledge, capacity to address the complexity.