



Merton Child Healthy Weight Action Plan Summary 2016 - 2018

Introduction

Reducing Childhood Obesity in Merton is a key priority of the Health and Well-being Strategy (2015-2018) as part of theme 1 - Best Start in Life. The Child Healthy Weight Action plan provides the framework for taking forward actions which will support achieving theme 1. The Action Plan reflects the major influence of 'place' (where we live, work and play) on health and wellbeing, as well as individual behaviours and choices.

The action plan aims to:

- Establish a sustainable whole systems approach to addressing childhood obesity locally, focusing on food and physical environments
- Increase proportion of children and families who are a healthy weight
- Reduce the 'gain' in excess weight between reception (4-5 year olds) and Year 6 (10 – 11 year olds)
- Reduce the gap in obesity between the east and the west of Merton, by improving the east

The Child Healthy Weight Action plan is complemented by the Director of Public Health's Annual Public Health Report (APHR) 2016-17 which is available on the following link <http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/publichealth/annualpublichealthreport.htm>. The APHR sets out the challenge of childhood obesity in Merton and is a call to action to partners to work together on the solutions provides. It brings together data and information from a range of sources and provides evidence about what works as well as examples of actions to tackle obesity at the population, community and individual level, to provide a local reference and resource to support our joint effort. It recognises the good work already taking place across the borough and highlights some examples underway.

The starting point for developing this action plan was Merton's participation in a 'Childhood Obesity Peer Review' with other boroughs across London. This assessed our progress against an evidence based framework on work to tackle childhood obesity locally. This provided a benchmark for Merton's position against 13 key areas, highlighting areas where good progress had been made and areas requiring further action. The peer review, the national childhood obesity plan and the Annual Public Health Report have been used to develop this local plan for Merton.

Merton context

- In Merton an estimated 4,500 children aged 4-11 years are overweight or obese– equivalent to 150 primary school classes.
- One in five children entering Reception year are overweight or obese and this increases to one in three children leaving primary school in Year 6.
- Childhood obesity contributes to health inequalities - the gap in overweight and obesity between the east and west of the borough is widening in both Reception and Year 6 and is nearly 10% in Year 6.
- There are a number of primary schools in Merton where over 50% of children in year 6 are classed as overweight or obese.
- Overweight and obese children are more likely to experience bullying and stigma. This can affect their self-esteem and may in turn affect their performance at school.
- Children who are obese are more likely to become obese adults and they risk the early development of obesity related problems associated with middle age, including diabetes, and have reduced life chances such as employment opportunities.

Priorities for 2016/17

The action plan is being delivered over three years (2016/17 -2018/19) and this is reflected in timescales. Priorities for 2016/17 include:

- Establish child healthy weight steering group
- Promote awareness and feedback through the London 'Great Weight Debate'
- Develop a communications plan and make better use of national resources
- Engage with young people and local communities in the east of the borough and with black and minority ethnic groups
- Promote 'health in all policies' programme as a means of tackling childhood obesity through Council business
- Extend Healthy Catering Commitment
- Explore opportunities to address childhood obesity through the development of the Wilson/east Merton Model of Health and wellbeing
- Support schools to sign up to Healthy Schools London awards
- Pilot All England Lawn Tennis Club early years activation programme in nursery schools
- Support community and staff champions with training on healthy weight
- Develop our framework for child healthy weight support and develop pathways for overweight children and families

Monitoring the Action Plan

- The Children's Trust Board (CTB) are responsible for monitoring the delivery of theme 1 of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Best Start in Life. This action plan will be monitored through the CTB and the Child Healthy Weight Steering Group will lead on ensuring it is operationally delivered. Metrics will be developed for actions as they are implemented. New and emerging actions will be incorporated into the action plan over time, building on the evolving evidence base.
- It is recognised that many activities and initiatives are already underway across Merton which have a positive impact on child healthy weight. This action plan does not aim to map all activity across the borough, rather it focuses on actions that are additional or enhance existing activity.

1. Leadership, communication and engagement

- **Leadership** – Increase engagement and commitment to tackling childhood obesity among partners in all sectors.
- **Knowledge and awareness** – Improve children and families' understanding of, and feeling of control over their own health and well-being.
- **Engage with families**, children and young people to promote healthy eating and physical activity and conversations on obesity/healthy weight.
- **Listen to residents and children and young people** including BAME groups and residents in east Merton, to ensure the actions we take are co-produced and make a positive impact.
- Develop a '**Health in All Policies**' approach to positively influence council policies and commissioned services to support children, young people and families to lead healthier lifestyles.
- **Identify opportunities** to bring additional investment to support tackling childhood obesity in Merton.

2. Food environment – Increasing availability of healthy food

- Increase the reach of **Merton Food Charter** to maintain and grow the local food partnership and roll out the **Healthy Catering Commitment**.
- Increase **availability of affordable healthier food and drinks** in Merton to help make the healthier choice the easier choice.
- Ensure that all food and drink available within local authority maintained establishments is in line with relevant **government standards/guidelines** for good nutrition.
- Develop effective ways to **monitor and reduce** the number of food outlets selling predominately foods high in fat, salt and sugar.

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3. Physical environment – increasing levels of physical activity and health promoting physical environment

- Increase opportunities for **active travel and physical activity** through the use of existing best practice and guidance.
- Ensure that key **planning policies** help to create healthy, sustainable communities and that new developments are planned with health in mind
- Increase number of children and young people that **travel to and from school actively**.
- Improve the **school sport offer**, to ensure that children and young people have the physical literacy to be enthused and able to lead active lifestyles later in life.
- Increase the number of children and young people, and their families, who are **regular users of parks, open spaces, leisure centres, informal recreation space, allotments and outdoor activities**.
- Maximise opportunities to **promote physical activity, health and social engagement** in estates regeneration or new developments including access to active travel opportunities and open spaces

4. Early Years and school aged settings and pathways

- Increase the number of babies that are **breastfed**.
- **Support parents and carers** to establish a healthy diet for their children from a very early age through Children's Centres and other Early Years settings and services.
- **Maximise the role of schools** as settings promoting healthy eating, physical activity and healthy weight e.g. through promotion of Healthy Schools London (HSL) programme and schools achieving Bronze, Silver and Gold awards.
- Ensure the delivery of the new **schools meals contract** achieves required nutrition standards and healthy choices.
- Use local **data and intelligence** on childhood obesity to inform services and support children and families identified as obese to help them achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Develop clear **pathways and support for health and other professionals** working with parents, children and young people to feel confident about talking about weight and supporting and signposting families.

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