

Summary of consultation of Wiltshire's draft obesity strategy

The purpose of the public consultation (01/02/2016 to 30/04/2016) following presentation in January 2016 to the Health and Wellbeing Board was to continue to include the population in decision-making processes regarding their health and wellbeing. We wanted to hear residents and stakeholder's views on the appropriateness and relevance of the strategic priorities, aims and objectives set out in the Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group joint draft Wiltshire Obesity Strategy.

Over 300 views have been gathered from an online survey (188 responses) and a range of group engagement events with leisure staff, Health Watch, obesity working groups for professionals working in the obesity field and a disabilities and low income service user focus group workshop, facilitated by Wiltshire Swindon users group network (WSUN). Comments were also compiled from the health select committee and the poverty and childhood obesity task group.

The views represent individuals, groups of people with Obesity related issues and organisations that provide services, support and care for overweight and obese people as well as those supporting maintainance of a healthy weight.. Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group would like to thank all those who participated.

An evaluation of the responses indicate that people are generally supportive of the Strategic direction that is being set and agree with the approach of Wiltshire Council and NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group's four strategic priorities:

1. A focus on prevention for everyone of all ages
2. A focus on giving children the best start in life
3. A focus on effective self-care, getting involved earlier and treatment for those who are overweight or obese.
4. Changing the environment we live in to ensure healthy food and activity choices are the easy and preferred choice

Of these four strategic priorities over half of respondents think the top priority should be priority four, changing our environment and the large majority of respondents agreed that priority groups to work with were Children and people living on a low income.

Looking separately at each priority responses indicated where action should be focused first.

Within Priority one this focus should be in providing services that support healthy choices and targeting support to disadvantaged groups at high risk of obesity in our communities. Key was the consistency of preventative messages.

Within priority two this focus should be in providing healthy lifestyle initiatives and maximising the number of children starting school with a healthy weight.

Within priority three the focus should be in providing a range of self-care support for individuals to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Within priority four the focus should be in improving Wiltshire's Food culture – accessibility, affordability and skills and working with communities to support changes to their local food and activity environments.

In identifying comments consultees have made of a strategic nature four main themes arise:

- Universal activity - accessibility and affordability
- Food culture – accessibility, affordability and skills
- Education
- Mental and emotional wellbeing

These comments support the first strategic priority which focuses on maximising universal prevention for everyone, and the fourth strategic priority which focuses on changing the environment to enable healthy choices to become the easy and preferred choice.

Comments relating to the important role education plays in empowering individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices were also highlighted. This related to both educating children, to embed healthy lifestyle choices at the very start of life, as well as supporting adults to make wise food and activity choices.

Comments relating to psychological distress caused by weight related stigma and discrimination were highlighted and this bi-directional association between common mental health disorders and obesity is recognised within the mental and emotional wellbeing cross cutting theme in the strategy. Comments from those with long term limiting illnesses, about the impact of medication on weight status and feeling stigmatized supports the approach of developing an holistic integrated pathway to weight management for individuals.

The strategy has been reviewed to ensure the consultation feedback and themes are reflected and work identified in the draft implementation plan to strengthen them where necessary.

Selected Quotes from comments made by residents-

Universal activity - accessibility and affordability: “I work full time, and it's very hard to fit any sort of exercise into my commuter lifestyle, especially as, as a woman, I'm reluctant to walk round Trowbridge on my own after dark, making getting to any sort of exercise class in winter pretty much impossible. Boost ways for everyone in the community to have fun being active” - Resident

“If people felt safer walking and cycling, individuals would obtain healthier lifestyles during the course of their routines. What I would really like to see is significant improvement in cycle paths”- Resident

Food culture – accessibility, affordability and skills: “Gaining confidence in shopping and cooking is vital to this - and can help keep living costs down”

“The proliferation of fast/junk food outlets (such as at the Spitfire Park) has surely contributed significantly to the problem, particularly in the young. Could consideration be given to penalising these businesses say through large rate increases unless they can

show they have in place programs to reduce sugar and saturated fat content within their products and to actively encourage consumption of healthier products”- Resident

Education: *“I think education is the biggest area that needs to be worked on and really believe that nutrition should be taught in schools so that children grow up equipped with the knowledge they need to make the right choices” – Resident*

“Need to start early and use education to benefit all as kids (as we have found with recycling) are powerful and perhaps sometimes nagging asset” – Resident

“Giving people the power to change includes giving them the right information to make that change” - Resident

Mental and emotional health: *“Find ways of appealing to everyone - don't make overweight people feel like they are part of a category and can only go to groups with other people who are the same as them. I think it can leave a feeling of exclusion from the wider community and will put some people off going to groups and classes”- Resident*

“People can be very judgemental and always assume a person eats too much and doesn't exercise. There are two sides to a story when talking about obesity; I would love more than anything to be able to walk without getting out of breath and in pain or get into the clothes I have in my wardrobe but steroids are a lifesaver and there can be other reasons than overeating and a lack of exercise that cause someone to be fat”