

Wiltshire Obesity Strategy 2016-2020: Evaluation and proposal of next steps

Overview

1. Obesity is the biggest public health crisis facing the country today. In Wiltshire, 57.6% of adults are classified as overweight or obese (with a BMI ≥ 25 kg/m²), although this is now below the regional and national average, the figure is still much higher than what is expected. There are a range of health risks associated with being above the healthy weight including, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and some cancers. Amongst children in Wiltshire, 20.7%, of 4-5 year olds and a third, 28.2%, of 11 to 15 year olds are overweight or obese. Although these figures are also below the regional and national average, the percentage of people overweight/obese is increasing across the life course.
2. The Wiltshire Obesity Strategy (2016-2020)¹ is a joint strategy for Wiltshire Council and the NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Strategic objectives were produced with the aim to ensure everyone in Wiltshire is enabled to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

Strategic priority areas

3. The 2016-2020 strategy described 4 priorities which outline the structures and processes required to achieve the strategy targets:
 - Maximise universal preventative initiatives across the life course
 - Giving children the best start in life
 - Promote effective self-care, early intervention and treatment
 - Reversing the 'obesity promoting' environment

Strategic targets

4. Five strategic targets were outlined in the Obesity Strategy.
 - To halt the rise of excess weight in children by 2020 (measure: PHOF 2.06i-ii excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 year olds)
 - To halt the rise of excess weight in adults by 2020 (measure: PHOF 2.12 excess weight in adults)
 - To reduce the variation in excess weight in children between the least and most deprived areas by 2% by 2020 (measure: PHOF 2.06i-ii excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 year olds)
 - To aspire for a decrease of 1% the excess weight of children in each community area by 2020 (measure: PHOF 2.06iii excess weight in 4-5 and 10-11 year olds)
 - To achieve an increase of 10% in uptake of NHS Health Checks for eligible adults aged 40-74 years

¹ <http://www.wiltshireccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wilts-Obesity-Strategy-2016-2020.pdf>

Strategy target outcomes

5. An evaluation of the strategy has taken place. The most current data pertaining to these targets have been analysed and the outcomes are described below.
6. Halting the rise of excess weight in children has been achieved in that there has been no statistically significant increase in either reception or year 6 age children level of excess weight. However, there has also not been a significant reduction. Levels of excess weight in adults appear to be reducing in comparison to 2015/16. Adulthood obesity has decreased and is now 7% less than the regional and national average.
7. There has been a reduction in the inequalities gap for year 6 age children. Furthermore, this appears to be with decreased prevalence in both the least and most deprived areas, rather than a narrowing of the gap due to increased prevalence in the least deprived areas. The inequality gap increased in reception-age children. Increased prevalence occurred in both the least and most deprived area, with a greater increase in the most deprived areas accounting for the increasing inequality gap (rather than decreased prevalence in least deprived areas).
8. Five community areas (Mere, Tidworth, Trowbridge, Wilton, Bradford-on-Avon, Corsham) achieved a decrease of 1% or more in prevalence of excess weight of children in both Reception and Year 6 aged children. However, of all the community areas for both Reception and Year 6 aged children, only Melksham and Trowbridge community areas saw a statistically significant reduction. It is important to note that many of these community areas have very small populations of interest (e.g. Mere, 20 reception-aged children in 2015/16-2017/18). Therefore, a difference of very few individuals could cause substantial decrease or increase in reported prevalence of excess weight.
9. An increase of people receiving NHS Health Checks was observed, from 42.43% to 49.7%. However, this did not meet the target of 10% increase.

Moving forward

10. The current Wiltshire Obesity Strategy is due to complete in 2020. This has provided an opportune moment to review what has been achieved, and to carefully consider what should be developed for 2020 onwards to address obesity in Wiltshire.
11. Three broad categories should be considered going forward: continuing good practice; addressing gaps in current service; and considered selection of outcome measurements. These include the following key areas of focus:
 - Continue the trend in reducing adult obesity by promoting and delivering current health improvement services
 - Continue to promote NHS Health Checks to ensure sustained increase in uptake
 - Share learning and experience between Community Areas which have achieved reductions in childhood obesity and those which have not

- Targeted support of complications of obesity (primarily type 2 diabetes)
- Focus on children and adolescents reducing inequality gap.
- Further work on obesogenic environment required & promoting effective self-care, early intervention and treatment.

12. The way in which these factors could be delivered have been discussed through the Obesity Strategy Implementation Group (OSIG). Options discussed include but not limited to:

1. Renewal of the current strategy:

- The current strategy covers an extremely broad area, with outcomes achieved in some areas whilst gaps in service are present in others.
- A renewed strategy could emphasise the continuation of current good practice, whilst highlighting and focussing on the identified gaps
- Whilst this has the benefit of continuing a systems-wide approach to tackling obesity, it could create inflexibility in the obesity programme, and blurs the boundaries between general health improvement programme and specialised specific approaches to targeting obesity. Furthermore, this would be more resource intensive to create, manage and monitor.

2. Revision of the strategy remit and focus:

- A revised obesity strategy could be focussed much more on the identified gaps and areas not currently meeting intended outcomes (e.g. reducing the obesogenic environment). This would allow a stronger, clearer message to emerge to address key issues, in addition to the general health improvement work which would still be ongoing outside of the strategy remit. Possible additional measures include the Healthy Weight Declaration
- Focussed specific areas of work could also allow for the selection of more meaningful and detailed outcomes and process indicators, rather than broader higher-level end outcomes (e.g. closer scrutiny of targeted interventions addressing inequality gap, rather than the percentage change in obesity level gap between highest and lowest deprivation areas)
- This could be more adaptable to emerging identified trends in obesity levels in specific groups/locations.
- However, there is a risk with not including broader general health improvement programmes, that those areas which are currently achieving positive change may begin to reduce impact due to lack of emphasis within an obesity strategy

3. 'Legacy' development:

- This option considers not having a new strategy after 2020. However, the overall aims and ongoing needs to address obesity could be highlighted and strengthened as legacy statements. These should then subsequently be considered within all aspects of the wider Council (e.g. planning, children's services).

- Whilst this could provide a broader ongoing commitment to addressing obesity, the inflexibility of this system, the lack of specific actions, and possible reduced drive and direction may lead to less impact
13. The OSIG propose a revised focus on the current strategy with a legacy programme of work but with a narrower but stronger remit, based on what has and has not been achieved by the current strategy form. The future direction of obesity prevention and management will focus on the overarching principle of a whole systems approach to obesity² engaging with key stakeholders across the system. The proposed next steps will entail developing a Healthy Weight Legacy Programme where we will implement 4-8 core innovative and preventative programmes of work over the next 5 years with the aim of being more impactful. The projects will sit under the current 4 strategic priority areas with ‘business as usual’ workstreams continuing as normal. It is proposed that the legacy programme will no longer be exclusively jointly owned by Local Authority and the CCG but will take a wider ownership approach. Public Health at the Council will lead on the legacy programme, with the CCG and wider stakeholders as partners.
14. A key project Public Health are proposing is adopting the Healthy Weight Declaration³(HWD). Food Active⁴ have designed the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight to support local government to exercise their responsibility in developing and implementing policies which promote healthy weight. The declaration which requires senior level local authority commitment encapsulates a vision to promote healthy weight and improve the health and well-being of the local population. Adopting the HWD will involve Wiltshire Council committing to 14 healthy weight commitments⁵, some of which we are already successfully achieving as a local authority (LA). The declaration has been successfully adopted by many LA’s, including Devon and Swindon.

Next steps

15. Pending approval of the overall concept of the strategy legacy, the OSIG will agree on the core projects for the strategy legacy and develop a legacy document to be reviewed annually.
16. This proposed new way of working puts prevention, innovation and collaboration at the heart of tackling obesity, which contributes to the priorities set out in the sustainability transformation plan (STP), Wiltshire Council business plan, NHS 5 year forward plan and the green paper ‘Advancing our health: Prevention in the 2020’s’⁶.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whole-systems-approach-to-obesity>

³ <http://www.foodactive.org.uk/projects/local-authority-declaration/>

⁴ <http://www.foodactive.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/>

⁵ <http://www.foodactive.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Food-Active-Declaration-Support-Pack-FINAL.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s/advancing-our-health-prevention-in-the-2020s-consultation-document>

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