

# HEALTHY WEIGHT

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# ABERDEEN CITY



**30 AUGUST  
2024**

@ TOWN & COUNTY HALL

Prepared by

**PUBLIC HEALTH,  
ABERDEEN CITY  
HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE  
PARTNERSHIP**

# We will commit to Healthy Weight Aberdeen by ...



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights the launch event of Healthy Weight Aberdeen City and raises awareness on the Whole Systems Approach (WSA) to Obesity. It emphasises the importance of range of stakeholders and systems coming together at a platform, discussing the issue collectively and avoiding silo working. The event is a means to plant seeds for potential early intervention and prevention for Aberdeen City and recommendations to future stakeholder engagement.

### AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- Introduce and increase understanding on the WSA and start developing a shared vision to WSA to obesity
- Establish senior level and stakeholder support
- To understand the local picture- including obesity prevalence and the local impact,
- To understand the local assets, local drivers and facilitators to the WSA

## BACKGROUND

On 30th August a Healthy Weight Aberdeen launch event at Town House was launched. The morning session having a focus on Understanding Population Health and Data in Aberdeen City. The event was attended by 110 people. This involved representation from range of sectors as described below. Of which 62 people completed evaluation. The event was appreciated and considered as thought provoking receiving optimistic feedback, with an average rating of 8.7.



**43 Local Authority  
Attendees**



**39 NHS  
Grampian**



**24 Education,  
University &  
Research sector**



**5 Other  
organisations**



# SPEAKER SUMMARY

“Given the complexity of the problem, we cannot take a simplistic solution”

## Introducing Healthy Weight Aberdeen



## ELEANOR SHEPPARD

Executive Director for Families & Communities @ Aberdeen City Council

The presentation highlights the beginning of journey for Children’s services. Education and Children Services Committee report agrees to implement a Whole systems approach to addressing obesity. Its involving those who are in the system to generate solutions, focus on relationships, experiment and learn, and have ‘good enough’ plans to refine over time

The presentation concludes by emphasizing that the Whole systems Approach is not a money thing! But it’s a collaboration thing! Outcomes in people’s lives aren’t delivered by organisations (or projects or programmes, etc) but created by the hundreds of different factors in the uniquely complex system present in a person’s life.

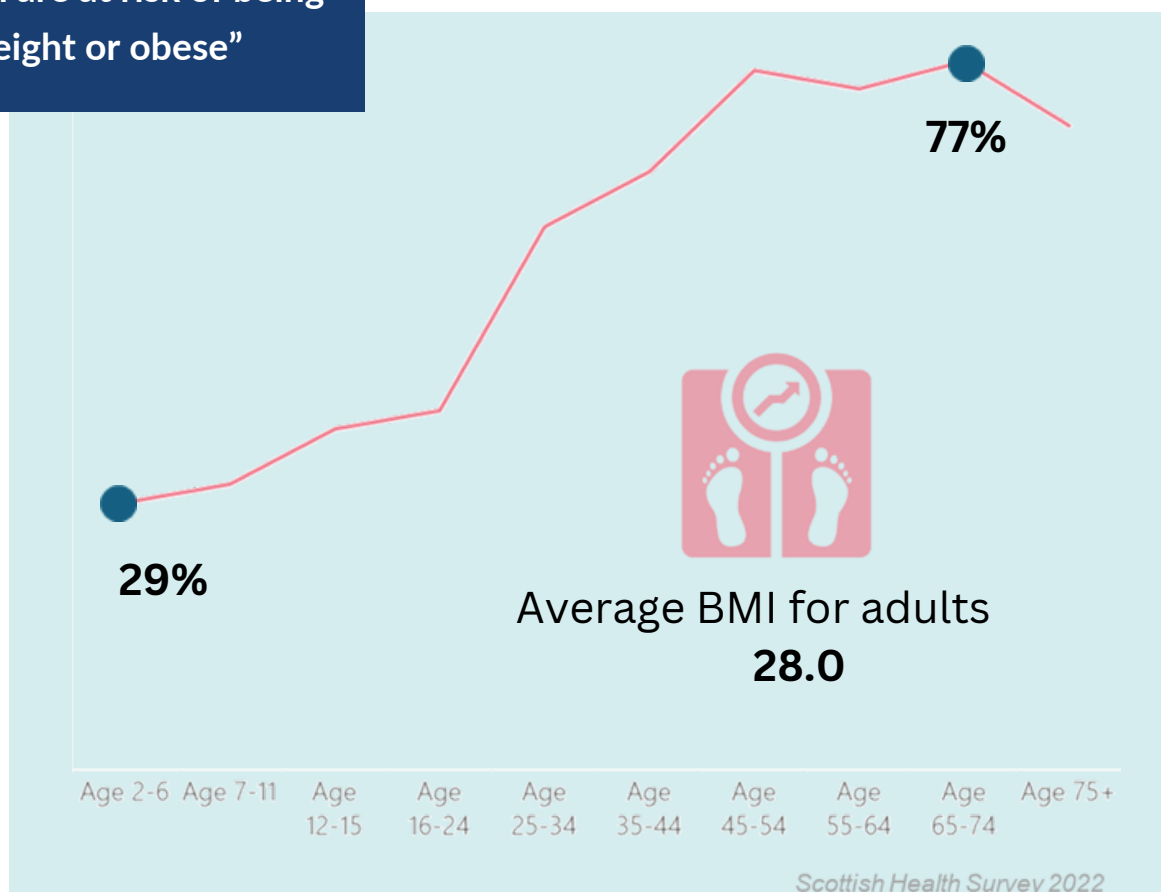


## Child & Adult Obesity Data & Trends

The presentation addresses the increasing obesity trends in both children and adults in Aberdeen and Scotland. Currently, 1 in 5 primary 1 aged children in Aberdeen are at risk of being overweight or obese, with higher rates in more deprived areas. Among children aged 2-15 in Scotland, one third are at risk of overweight or obesity. For adults, 67% are either overweight or obese, with 29% being classified as obese. Half of the pregnant women in Aberdeen were overweight or obese in 2022, and obesity continues to rise year-on-year.

Deprivation plays a significant role, with those in the most deprived areas nearly twice as likely to be at risk. Trends also show disparities based on gender, age, and ethnicity, with men and boys showing higher obesity rates compared to women and girls. Poor diets, low physical activity, and the severe health and economic consequences of obesity highlight the need for urgent, comprehensive public health interventions. With the financial cost of obesity in Scotland projected to reach £5.9 billion by 2030, it is crucial to address both individual behaviours and broader social causes.

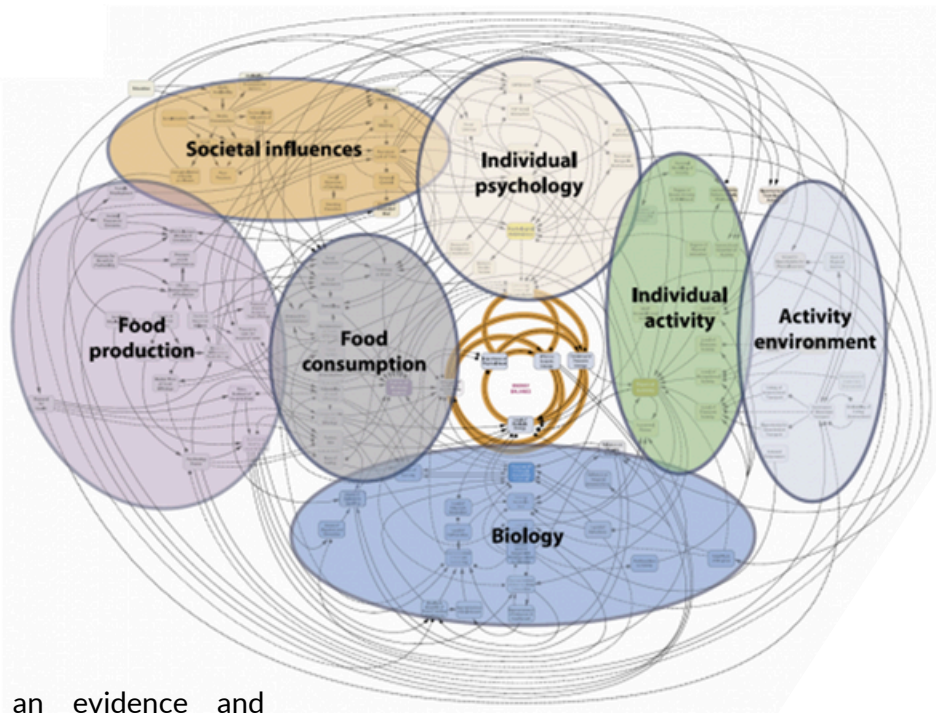
**“1 in 5 primary 1 aged children  
in Aberdeen are at risk of being  
overweight or obese”**



# PHIL MACKIE

Consultant in Public Health, Prevention Lead  
ACHSCP

## Whole System Approach (WSA) to Obesity



The presentation emphasized an evidence and research based Whole systems approach to obesity and developing this as Healthy Weight Aberdeen drive. Phil explains the energy balance phenomenon, that is what we eat and how active we are is influenced by range of factors in the environment that we live, work, play and grow.

Phils talk makes everyone think that, it isn't "how can we change the whole system?" but "why aren't we?" In a whole system approach, we are aiming not only to help people manage the energy-balance in their lives better, but also changing the wider interconnected factors supporting to maintain a healthy weight. By working together we can have shared understanding of actions impacting others within the wider system and to ensure we have joined up approach.

**“Whole Systems approach is not about doing different things but doing things differently in new ways”**

The presentation concludes by explaining various phases of WSA and Healthy Weight Aberdeen City on stage-2 of Building local picture. Having Children services on board, the way in which Aberdeen City's Community Planning Partnership functions, the approach to City's Health and Social Care Partnership service planning and delivery, we are already ahead with stage 1.

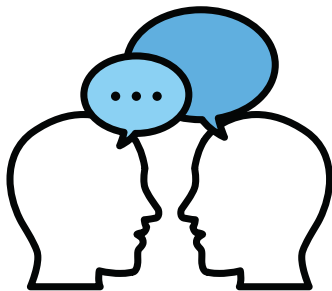




# EVALUATION RESULTS

**62 people completed the evaluation**

**51 people would like to be informed and involved in further communications**



**36 people would like to be a part of the project**



**8 people would like to lead a piece of work**



It was a really interesting day and I learnt a lot. I feel positive about the future of improving the health and wellbeing of children and families across Aberdeen City!

“ It was the first opportunity to meet with colleagues across the system, all of whom have a part to play in addressing the challenges we face around healthy weight “

“ I have struggled with weight and mental health all my life and want to help the future generation of Aberdeen “

It has been refreshing to take time to reflect, discuss and look to the future. There seems to be a real energy here...



# INFLUENCES ON A HEALTHY WEIGHT

76 people responded. There were 414 influences highlighted of which most popular influences were mental health, environment, exercise followed by poverty, diet, money, time, trauma, social norms and family.







# DISCUSSION

Following the presentations, those in attendance discussed a number of questions. The discussion responses provide insights into how these topics could shape future work and policies.

## 1 WHAT ARE THE MAIN OR BIGGEST BARRIERS IN YOUR AREA IN ACHIEVING WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO HEALTHY WEIGHT ABERDEEN CITY?

### Education and Awareness

- To share consistent messaging at all levels, increase Universal understanding Aberdeen Citywide (staff and community members) on the topic.
- Wider staff training and food knowledge. update staff training and curriculum as per research. Taking into consideration literacy barrier and numeracy skills
- To build support, education and engagement on range of healthy choices, breastfeeding and peer support, weaning classes.
- Child Education versus family education- influencing family choices and challenging behaviours, Maternal education-regular feeding patterns

- Use older adults, retired workforce knowledge
- To include curriculum on nutrition and human body in schools, early years and increase understanding

### Individual behaviours:

Time availability- in complex conditions, people with disabilities, working and lone parents

### School Setting

- Healthier School Meals- low percent of pupils accessing meals particularly secondary school age.
- To have kids on site in addressing food cultural differences.
- Healthy snacks
- Community meals- underutilised

## **Policy & Legislation**

- Food packaging and portion sizes
- Marketing and deals of high fat sugar salt food, baby food, infant formula etc and its influence on society.
- Advertising of energy drinks
- Policies to ban high fat sugar and salt products (and its impact on revenue)
- To have local policies that promote healthy eating and active living like food zoning, safe accessible public spaces.
- Implications of radical changes on the economy.

## **Food & food environment**

- Access to supermarket food versus local produce, corporate food companies, pricing of healthy food
- Food banks- often people don't know what to do with it
- Malnourishment & Underweight- looking at other side
- Fast food prevalence in priority areas
- Food outlets near schools- to have parental and community buy-in to reduce
- Manufactured and processed food more cheaper than fresh fruit and veg. Involvement of retailers and producers in the process

## **Culture**

- Family culture having challenging conversation. To develop relationship with priority families.
- Cultural norms are different- lack of access to food from own culture. Different eating/cultural routines don't fit with health guidance
- Culture in Grampian influenced- car is dominant, need shift to active travel. support and access to active travel
- Changing dietary habits & physical activity levels involves addressing deeply ingrained behaviours

- Cultural influence-% taking up free meals is low
- Culture consideration in school meals.
- Intergenerational family culture
- Family cooking skills and family meal times

## **Health behaviour**

- Time and cost of cooking and storing food
- Understanding cooking in bulk- and cost savings
- Parents using school meal vouchers and spending on junk food
- High levels of takeaways.
- Seen individual behaviour issue and to shift society from

## **Mental health and Trauma**

- Trauma and adversity underlying causes of increasing obesity levels
- Increase staff awareness and understanding on the topic
- Domestic abuse, maternal stress. Impact on parenting and maternity stages
- Trauma informed assessments
- Midwives, Health visitor and early years staff addressing parental eating habits to support child's growth.

## **Physical activity and environment**

- To have Place plan, green space- Lack of planning consideration to support
- Resource constraints- Financial constraints resources, need plenty funding, staff training, sustained efforts over time.

## **Communication**

- Maintaining the cross communication- words instead of action.
- Way we share it with others, whether this was a lack of it or not using shared positive language (eg. BMI)
- Social media influences- misinformation and using media positively.

### Infrastructure

- ACC Planning & Transport- Town design around active travel. Public transport may not support active commuting. Loosing green spaces in high deprived areas. Location of supermarkets (Northfield).
- To have dedicated school lunch hall spaces rather than sharing a common purpose hall.
- To work around fast food outlets
- Shared community spaces

### Evidence and monitoring

The impact of actions and outcomes we achieve. As difficulty in measuring prevention outcomes and impact. Support partners/organisations to evidence projects to support policy change

### Cost of living

- Teachers buy school kids lunches. Assume people don't have store cupboard ingredients.
- Cost of healthier food is high
- Inequalities- High deprived areas have less access to affordable healthy foods and safe spaces for physical activity.
- Hidden poverty such as families with one working adult

### Collaboration

- Understanding of each others role. Helpful to have a directory
- collaboration between NHS, education, urban planning, food industry, local businesses, community. No silo working
- Planning Decisions need to deal with unhealthy environment

## 2

## WHAT ARE THE FACILITATORS OR ENABLERS IN ACHIEVING WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO HEALTHY WEIGHT IN ABERDEEN CITY?

### Communication

- A usable method of communication for all. Raise more awareness on the ALISS system. It's a platform already existing which could be utilised more.
- Knowledge exchange amongst partners/ systems, more awareness on resources, transparent accessibility. Promoting positive language on physical activity amenities and making it appealing
- Capitalize existing relationships –partners aware of this as an issue and using consistent messaging
- Look for opportunities (meetings/ groups etc) to raise awareness/ highlight the importance of the healthy eating and weight agenda. More time spent to improve communication and relationships, organising events like this.

### Community Engagement

- Involve families, communities for peer support, those with lived experience, they are a valuable asset.
- Working with community groups already active in promoting health.
- Considering the health literacy levels of different populations groups.
- Public awareness and education

### Food and Food environment

- To have food industry on board in the design of healthier and less processed food. Replanning food outlets near schools and deprived areas
- Resources for people to get to a supermarket rather than corner shop. Review and revise the healthy option foods within dining space. Breastfeeding friendly scheme.
- Consistent community kitchens. confidence to cook, home science and cooking in schools.



### **Policy & Legislation**

Policies that promote healthy environments eg- active transportation, regulating food environment.

### **Data**

- Using data to identify needs, monitor progress, evaluate outcomes.
- Data on any strategies/practices that have worked in other areas.

### **Funding & Resources**

- Funding enables implementation, sustainability of initiatives.
- Sharing existing facilities or initiatives

### **Systemic & Sector Discussion:**

- University and Academics as an asset in sharing evidence based recommendation & intervention, research and support evaluation
- Having Healthy weight champions in all organisations and sectors.
- Sharing cross sectors assets and complementing each other resources
- Aberdeen City Council as an asset to Public Health as priority.
- Every part of the system needs to be on board. Having clear strategy and clear roles for organisations.
- Business & employers- workplace wellness plan

- Awareness on accessing Child Healthy weight services.
- Sports Village- can facilitate HE classes but wider environment may not support
- Integrate Healthy Weight in Schools and Health policies in workplaces and schools
- Demonstrate cost savings and benefits on having Healthy Weight Aberdeen- Whole systems approach

### **Health behaviour**

- Understanding underlying causes for example - eating as coping mechanisms and awareness on healthy coping mechanisms.
- Sedentary behaviours- and its impact on mental health

### **Physical activity**

- Scalability of resources, building capacity and accessibility. Gym schemes
- National strategies to support.
- Schemes to improve child access to sport, societal environment.
- Affordability and accessibility in accessibility in rural areas
- Skills to interact outside and feeling safe

## **3 WHAT ARE THE THINGS YOUR ORGANISATION CAN INFLUENCE?**

- Design services that are accessible and stigma free
- Everyone (Individuals/organisations) taking responsibility in taking this as Aberdeen City level drive and make changes
- Access to healthier food for early years families 0-5s
- Access to affordable and healthy food across life course
- Eating well and being active in workplaces
- Eating well and being active in schools
- Healthier advertising and marketing
- Supporting local businesses and communities to offer healthier options

## SHARED VISION AND ALIGNED ACTIONS



Reference:

## LEADERSHIP BUY-IN AND ONGOING RESOURCE

### Common areas of obesity activity identified as part of a whole systems approach to obesity



Reference:

# KEY THEMES





## KEY ACTIONS

1. Restrict food marketing
2. Utilise planning to improve food environments
3. Strengthen public food procurement and provision standards
4. Work with the out of home sector to reduce calories on the menu
5. Improve uptake of school meals
6. Promote and support physical activity
7. Protect, promote, and support breastfeeding and healthy diets for children



## CONCLUSION

- Members in attendance will start conversations about whole systems approach to healthy weight Aberdeen and steps they can take in addressing obesity within their own organisations, partners and groups they work with
- Some of the group discussions were around behaviour change, this needs to shape around systemic or organisational changes. Evolving conversations and reflecting on the way a system or sector is inter-linked with other sectors.
- Community at the start and heart of this work
- Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership along with Families and Communities Services and Community Planning Partners will progress and further scope areas and issues addressed through this engagement activity.
- We will further develop relationship with partners who expressed their interest to be involved with the work.
- To follow-up with other key partner who were not able to make this event
- It is everyone's business and everyone has a role to play

# NEXT STEPS



**Q3**  
2024

## PHASES 1 & 2

Set up and build local picture

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Establish Core Working & Operational Group

Local system asset mapping

Good Governance & Reporting



**Q4**

## PHASES 3 & 4

Map the local system and action

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Develop Aberdeen City Action Plan 2025-2026

Embed seven local levers for diet and healthy weight in Scotland

Develop shared vision



**Q1**  
2025

## PHASE 5

Managing the system network

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Develop the structure of the system network

Deliver systematic and local changes as a whole system

Monitor and measure framework



**Q2**

## PHASE 6

Reflect and refresh

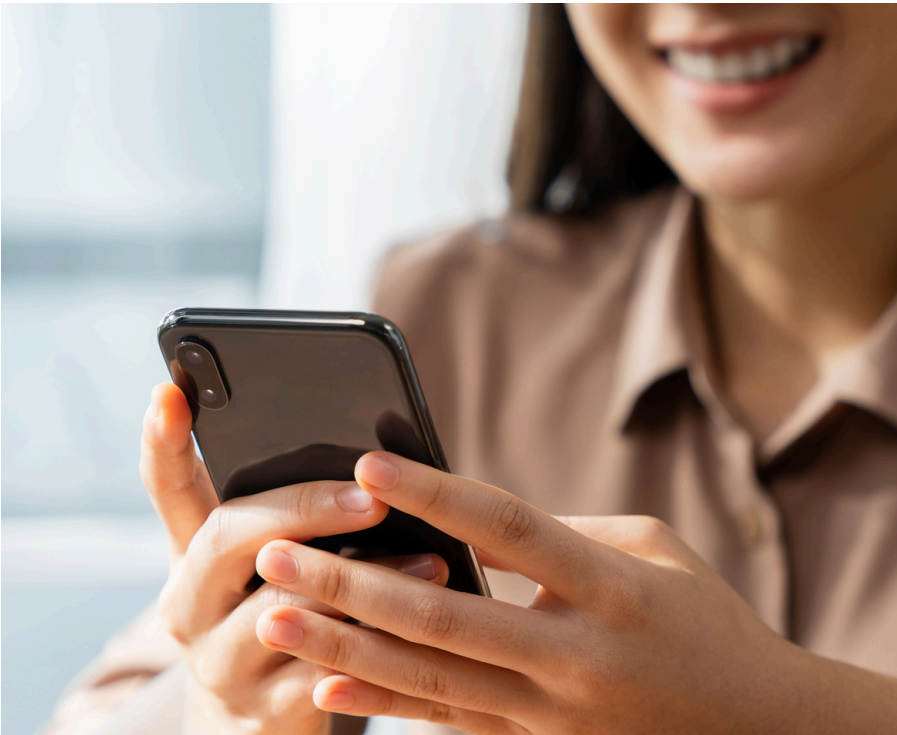
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Evaluate

Review

Learn and share networking opportunity

# GET INVOLVED



## CONTACT US

To get involved and to know more about the Healthy Weight Aberdeen work please get in touch with the Public Health, Aberdeen City HSCP

Email: [healthimprovement@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:healthimprovement@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

Website: <https://www.aberdeencityhscp.scot/our-delivery/communities-new/FH/>

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