

Slough Borough Council

Report To: Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee

Date: 25 March 2025

Subject: A Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight in Slough

Lead Member: Cllr Shah

Chief Officer: Tessa Lindfield, Director of Public Health and Public Protection

Contact Officer: Sarah Rayfield, Consultant in Public Health

Ward(s): All

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of a Whole-System Approach programme to Healthy Weight that is being shaped in Slough.
- 1.2. The report outlines the current challenges for healthy weight in Slough, the background to the healthy weight work and updates on progress of the four task and finish groups asked with developing this approach Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight in Slough.
- 1.3. This report aims to provide an increased awareness of the importance of healthy weight and an overview of the work being undertaken to develop a Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight in Slough.

Recommendation/s

- 1.4 **Committee members are recommended to:**
 - a. Provide their insight from a local community perspective regarding the challenges of maintaining a healthy weight.
 - b. Consider the approach to take in prioritising actions to implement as part of the whole system approach
 - c. Provide their reflections of how we can support councillors to be role models in promoting healthy weight across Slough and within our communities
 - d. Provide any other comments and/or recommendations they consider appropriate.

Commissioners review: A whole system approach to Healthy Weight seeks to address multiple interconnected factors. The Council will need to work with communities and stakeholders to both understand the challenges and to support the identification and testing of solutions and policies. System change is a long-term programme, often delivered through small steps and in collaboration with many partners. It will require utilisation of the assets across the local area to support a community-centred approach, and developing transferable knowledge, workforce skills and capacity.

The Commissioners are content with this report being considered.

2. Report

2.1 Introduction

Excess weight is one of the leading causes of ill health in England. Supporting individuals to achieve or maintain a healthy weight is a complex problem with no single solution. The causes of overweight and obesity are widespread, with the food and built environment often making it challenging for individuals to make healthier lifestyle choices. There is opportunity for local governments to work with communities and partners to tackle some of the underlying causes, supporting individuals and communities by tailoring a lifecourse approach to local needs.

In 2019, Public Health England, The Association of Directors of Public Health and the Local Government Association commissioned a “Whole System Approach to Obesity” programme. This led to a number of resources, including a “How to guide” to support local systems and encourage alignment with a Health in all Policies approach. In essence, a whole system approach enables local stakeholders to come together, share an understanding of the challenge, consider where the greatest opportunities for change are and collectively decide how to work together to bring about sustained change. This work recognises that complex issues, such as healthy weight, require sustained and systemic action from all partners and stakeholders across the system.

2.2 Background

Obesity and excess weight are significant public health issues due to their impact on health and healthcare needs. Living with obesity is linked to conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some concerns. These contribute to higher healthcare usage and costs, estimated at £51 billion annually in the UK. For children, excess weight can lead to immediate and long term health impacts, including an increased risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular conditions. Contributing factors include dietary habits, physical inactivity and socioeconomic influences, highlighting the need for comprehensive public health interventions.

3.0 Summary of main findings

3.1 Healthy weight needs assessment.

The Healthy weight Needs Assessment (HNA) (Appendix A) was presented to the Slough Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2024 and included key data on the prevalence of adults and children living with excess weight in Slough.

Approximately 66% of adults were living with excess weight, with 23.8% living with obesity, figures that exceeded the regional average. Additionally, hospital admissions related to obesity were significantly higher than in the broader South East region.

Among children, the prevalence of living with excess weight increased markedly by Year 6, where 42.5% were affected, with 27.4% living with obesity—both figures being the highest in the region. Disparities were also observed between different wards within Slough. The HNA highlighted physical inactivity and suboptimal dietary habits as contributing factors, underscoring the complex interplay of lifestyle, environmental, and socioeconomic aspects influencing healthy weight.

Figures 1-2, from the [NHS England, National Child Measurement Programme](#), provides a snapshot of data on excess weight and obesity among children. Figure 3 provides adult data from the Active Lives Adult Survey.

Fig 1. Reception prevalence of overweight (including obesity) (4-5 years) for Slough (%) (2023/24)

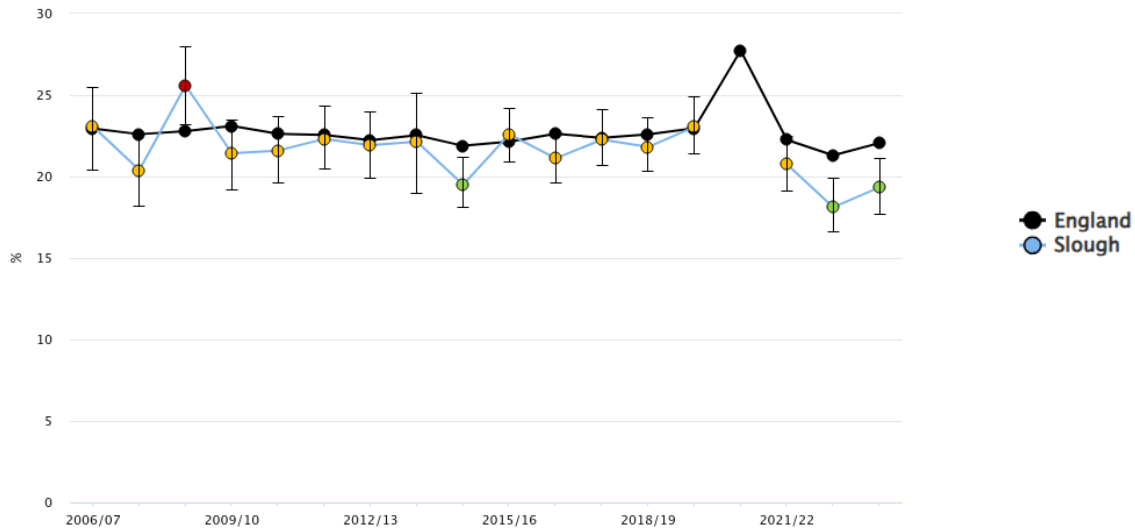


Fig. 2. Year 6 prevalence of overweight (including obesity) (10-11 yrs) for Slough (%) (2023/24)

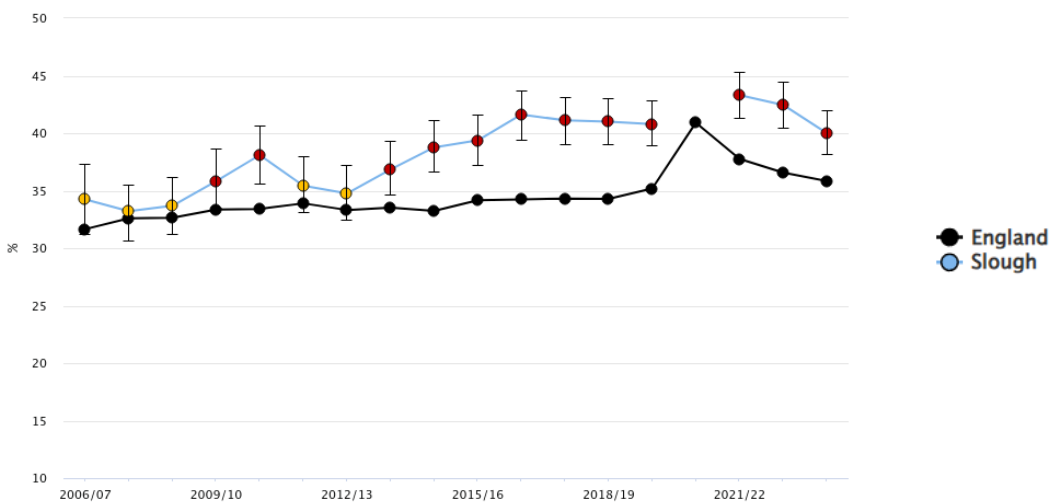
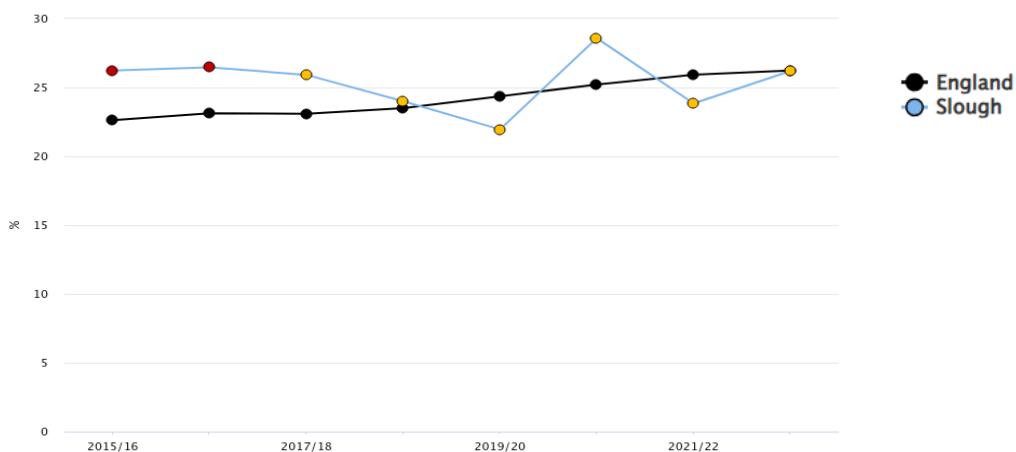


Fig. 3 Obesity prevalence in adults (using adjusted self-reported height and weight) (18+ yrs) for Slough (2022/23)



3.2 Healthy weight Summit

The Healthy Weight Summit was held in February 2024 and attended by over 60 stakeholders. This summit provided a platform for discussing the HNA findings and exploring potential strategies. The summit focused on developing a coordinated, whole-system approach to address the issues identified in the HNA. Stakeholders emphasised the need for improving access to healthy foods, creating opportunities for physical activity, and ensuring culturally sensitive health interventions. The summit fostered collaboration and a shared understanding of the necessity for integrated actions to promote healthier weight outcomes in Slough.

Following the summit, the Health and Wellbeing Board in March 2024 reviewed the findings and discussions and endorsed the decision to implement a whole-system approach. The board approved the formation of task and finish (T&F) groups to focus on four areas:

- Children and Young People (CYP),
- Pathway development,
- Physical activity, and
- Creating a healthier eating environment.

These groups were established to coordinate efforts across sectors and support targeted actions to address the factors influencing healthy weight in Slough. A summary of the objectives of each task group is provided in Appendix B.

3.3 Progress of the Whole System Approach to date

Four task and finish groups have been set up, with the Core Working Group providing oversight and ensuring strategic alignment, as follows:

- The Physical Activity and Active Travel group;
- The Creating a Healthy Eating Environment group;
- The Pathway Development group; and
- The Children and Young People's group;

Each task and finish group has an external co-chair working alongside the Public Health team to ensure a broader system perspective and to raise the profile of the work. Each of the groups is working towards the development of an action plan, guided by the Public Health England's Whole System Approach to Obesity framework. The development of the action plan is being facilitated through workshops involving key stakeholders.

Each task and finish group has committed to holding at least one workshop, by early April 2025. The initial draft of the system-wide action plan will be produced by May 2025. The plan is for each task and finish group to develop into a healthy weight stakeholder network, to ensure implementation of the action plan and to maintain focus and direction to this work.

The Physical Activity and Active Travel group is co-chaired with between Public Health and Get Berkshire Active. The first workshop was held on 3rd October 2024 and attended by over 40 stakeholders from various sectors. This provided key insights into existing challenges and opportunities within the system. Discussions highlighted the need to enhance communication about physical activity opportunities, make better use of community assets like the Community Directory, promote workplace Health initiatives and address language barriers that may limit engagement. A follow up workshop with practitioners was held on 25th February 2025 with a focus on cross sector working practice and policy/strategy as well as infrastructure and environment.

The Creating a Healthy Eating Environment group is co-chaired between Public Health and the Planning team at Slough Borough Council. They ran their workshop on 13th November 2024, attended by around a dozen stakeholders. Initial system mapping has begun with the identification of early opportunities particularly in enhancing communications and collaborating with food businesses. The resultant action plan will focus on promoting a supportive food environment and is including both the promotion of public health messages and mapping out of community food sources.

The Pathway Development group is co-chaired between Public Health and Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB). The first workshop is planned for 3rd April 2025 and is focusing on exploring opportunities around current pathways to better support residents to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. While this will include health pathways and access to healthcare services, it will also take a broad approach in considering other opportunities such as community pathways of support and so encompasses a range of stakeholders to reflect different pathways experienced by individuals and communities in achieving a healthy weight.

The Children and Young People's group is co-chaired by Public Health and the Education team at Slough Borough Council. The first workshop will have been held on 17th March 2025 with a range of stakeholders working with children and young people, including Early Years, Early Help providers, Education, Children's Social Services, health and wellbeing services, healthcare professions, Community and Voluntary sector services. The workshop will aim to map the current system for children and young people and healthy weight, identify local barriers and develop actions for how we can work together to develop long term solutions that promote better health outcomes for children, young people and families. In parallel to this group's development, the HENRY (Health Exercise Nutrition for the Really Young) programme has been launched in Slough. This evidence based intervention supports childhood obesity prevention and health improvement through a multi-layered approach which includes workforce training to build skills and confidence, multi-week family programmes and peer led community support.

Each of these task and finish groups is making constructive progress towards an overarching action plan which will drive ongoing work in the system wide approach to healthy weight in Slough. Ongoing stakeholder engagement and careful analysis of workshop outcomes will be important for informing and refining the actions plans. In addition, as the whole system approach develops, there is an active process of learning lessons and sharing across the four task and finish groups. This is to support both the current whole system approach and to collate to inform future work, beyond healthy weight.

3.4 Ambition and intended outcomes of the Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight

The long-term ambition of the Whole System Approach is to embed a sustainable approach to healthy weight for Slough, supporting individuals to have and maintain a healthy weight, thereby reducing rates of overweight and obesity for all ages across the life-course. This will be done by capacity building, establishing relationships, developing leadership across the system and embedding action and policies within and across organisations.

This approach seeks to establish long term change and so will take time to demonstrate results. In the short to medium term, our success will be measured through the process we follow, including the workshops, the number of stakeholders we engage with and the development of our action plan.

There are a number of outcome measures that can be used to track our progress over a longer term, including:

- National Child Measurement Programme data:
 - Reception prevalence of overweight, including obesity (age 4- 5 years)
 - Year 6 prevalence of overweight, including obesity (10 – 11 years)
- Overweight (including obesity) prevalence in adults (self-reported data via the Active Lives Adult Survey)
- Obesity (QOF prevalence, NHS England)
- Percentage of physically active adults (self-reported data via the Active Lives Adult Survey)
- Percentage of physically active children and young people (Active Lives Children and Young People Survey).

Slough data is currently worse than the average for England for most of these measures. Our ambition is that over the next 5-10 years, there will be an improvement in the trend of weight for Slough populations with the rates for each of these measures moving closer to the average for England.

3.5 Detail/elaboration of what you are seeking from the committee

Through the process of scrutiny, it is hoped that the following will be achieved:

- Further awareness of the importance of healthy weight, the challenges facing our local communities and the opportunities presented through taking a whole system approach
- A committee perspective of how we could develop an approach to prioritising actions to take forward as part of the whole system approach
- An increased understanding of the Health in all Policies approach and an awareness of how the work of the council in departments beyond public health has an impact on achieving healthy weight and how collaboration on priorities could support efficiencies and effectiveness in progressing the whole system approach
- An increased awareness of how we can support councillors to be role models in promoting healthy weight across Slough and within our communities.

4. Implications

Financial implications

- 1.1.** There are no direct financial implications of this report. There is a small budget attached to this workstream to support the workshops, funded through the Public Health grant.
- 1.2.** The Public Health grant has also funded a number of elements that will contribute to the Whole System Approach. These include the Henry programme and our Integrated Wellness Service, along with our support for Health in All Policies.
- 1.3.** The Whole System Approach involves shared responsibility among the Health and Wellbeing Board, it's partners and wider stakeholders. Our focus to date has been on actively building a collaboration between partners to develop a shared sense of purpose for the work. Ongoing support and active engagement with partners and

stakeholders is key to aligning strategies and ensuring that the approach effectively supports Slough residents.

- 1.4.** Overweight and Obesity is estimated to cost the UK economy £51 billion annually through both direct health care costs and through wider societal costs including loss of productivity and social care costs along with the loss of quality adjusted life years for individuals. Reducing overweight and obesity could lead to significant cost savings, both to the NHS, social care and through workplace productivity.

Legal implications

- 1.5.** There are no legal implications of this work.

Equalities

- 1.6.** The Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight builds on the understanding of inequalities identified in the previous health needs assessment and the Healthy Weight summit. The current efforts are focused on addressing these disparities through targeted actions and inclusive strategies within the work stream.

Corporate Parenting

- 1.7.** While there are no direct implications for Corporate Parenting with this workstream, Looked after children and care leavers are an important group to be considered and will benefit from system wide actions to promote healthy weight, along with more focused work on reducing inequalities.

Environmental implications

- 1.8.** Implementing the Whole System Approach to Healthy Weight is anticipated to lead to environmental benefits. Increased physical activity and active travel can reduce reliance on light vehicles, while promoting healthier food choices, such as reduced takeaway consumption, may decrease litter and use of single-use packaging.

Risk management implications

4.9	Risks	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
a.	Poor stakeholder engagement	Limited impact of whole systems approach	Extensive stakeholder mapping to ensure a comprehensive approach. Stakeholder engagement throughout process and in planning workshops Having co-chairs for each task and finish group extends reach beyond public health team
b.	Process loses momentum	Limited buy in from stakeholders to implement actions, limiting overall impact of approach	Workshops being held to build on momentum and engagement through the healthy weight summit. Development of stakeholder network and working groups will ensure focus on action plan implementation

Appendices

A: Healthy Weight Needs Assessment. March 2024

B: Summary of Objectives for each of the Task and Finish groups