



Healthy Weight

1. Introduction

Obesity and overweight can be defined as the accumulation of excess body fat to the extent that it increases the likelihood of poor health and developing life-threatening illnesses. Being overweight or obese can put a person at risk of hypertension, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and several cancers. Within the UK, rates of overweight and obese children are increasing. In 2009/10, around one in ten children aged 4-5 years and about one in five children aged 10-11 years were obese. Based on current trends, it is anticipated that by 2050 around two-thirds of children in the UK will be above a healthy weight, and that one-quarter will be obese.¹ Due to this rising trend and its implications for adverse health, obesity in children is now recognised as a serious public health concern.

Childhood obesity is an outcome of a myriad of risk factors, including biological and lifestyle factors, environment, culture and social structures. Although it is recognised that some people are more genetically susceptible to being overweight or obese than others, the direct cause of obesity in an individual is an excess of energy intake compared with expenditure. The increase in obese and overweight children in the UK over the past 20 years is attributed to changes in this balance between energy input and output. This is due to a combination of factors, including: an increase in consumption of snacks and drinks containing high levels of sugar and fat, portion sizes and time spent in front of television and computers; and a reduction in the nutritional standards of school meals, outdoor play, independent travel (due to parental fears of strangers) and school sports facilities and allocated sports and game time in school curriculums.

Levels of obesity vary by gender, age, social class and ethnicity. According to the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP), Black minority groups have the highest levels of obesity. Obesity is more likely to occur in urban areas and in households with low income. The prevalence of obesity in children living in the most deprived 10% of the Borough of Hounslow is almost double that of children living in the least deprived 10% of local areas.

2. The Local Picture

In Hounslow, the proportion of children that are obese is significantly higher than the London and England averages. In 2009/10, 13.9% of Hounslow's children at Reception age (4–5 years) were obese, compared with 11.6% for London and 10% nationally. Among children in Year 6 (aged 10–11 years), 24.6% of children in Hounslow were obese – significantly higher than the 21.8% London average and the 19.3% England average. ([Table 1](#))

At Reception age, 12.4% of children in Hounslow were defined as overweight in 2009/10 – below both the London and England averages of 12.7% and 13.3% respectively. However, in Year 6, the proportion of children overweight (15.6%) in Hounslow was higher than both the London (15.1%) and national (14.7%) averages. ([Table 1](#))

In addition to having a higher proportion of children either obese or overweight, Hounslow has a higher proportion of children that are underweight. At Reception year, 1.8% of

¹ Foresight Programme (2007) Tackling Obesity: Future Choices Project.
<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bispartners/foresight/docs/obesity/17.pdf>

Hounslow's children were underweight in 2010/11 - double the England average of 0.9% and above the London figure of 1.3%. In Year 6, 1.7% of children were underweight, compared with 1.3% for England and 1.5% for London. ([Table 1](#))

Levels of physical activity among school children in Hounslow (as measured by the proportion of children participating in at least three hours of sport or physical education at school) are higher than the England average. In 2008/09, around 60% of children aged 5-18 in Hounslow participated in at least three hours of physical activity, compared with 50% of those in England as a whole.² Data from the NCMP shows that in Year 6, rates of physical activity are slightly higher among boys than girls in Hounslow.

3. Strategic Leadership and Collaboration

Weight management and prevention of obesity is overseen by the Healthy Weight Board. This is a partnership board on a local level consisting of representatives from NHS Hounslow, the London Borough of Hounslow, Hounslow and Richmond Community Health, West Middlesex University Hospital, primary care and the voluntary and independent sectors. The Board's vision is to tackle obesity together, through an annual delivery plan which incorporates a life-course approach from maternity to adulthood and targets barriers to healthy weight (such as lack of access to green space). The plan consists of a combination of weight management and preventative interventions, and the Board monitors all interventions as they are progressing with the aim to identify what is working and what needs to be improved. Performance reports go to the Children's Trust and Health and Well-Being Board.

Key targets for the 2011/12 delivery plan are to:

- Reduce obese children in Reception year from 14% in 2009/10 to 12% in 2012/13;
- Reduce obese children in Year 6 from 24% in 2009/10 to 23% in 2012/13;
- Increase Year 1-13 children partaking in at least 3 hours of physical exercise in school per week by 5% from 64% in 2009/10; and
- Continue the decline in the proportion of obese adults to the 2006 level of 20% (as measured by modelled estimates from Health Survey England).

In October 2011, the Government released its obesity strategy for England – [Healthy Lives, Healthy People – A Call for Action on Obesity](#). The Children and Young People's Health and Well-Being Board (sub-group of the Children's Trust and Health and Well-Being Board) is responsible for adapting this strategy locally for Hounslow. Delivery of the strategy will be done by the Healthy Weight Board.

4. Priorities

The 2011/12 priorities for tackling childhood obesity in the Borough are to:

- Ensure a children and young people's healthy weight pathway specific to Hounslow Borough with evidence-based, cost effective and appropriate interventions is commissioned and implemented;

² Child and Maternity Health Observatory (2011) Child Health Profile for Hounslow



- Ensure good partnership working across all partners with the aim of addressing prevention and treatment of childhood obesity via the Healthy Weight Board;
- Ensure support is provided for the development and implementation of school health plans;
- Prevent children from becoming overweight and obese by encouraging healthy lifestyles at home, school and in the community;
- Provide specific interventions for overweight and obese children by enabling access to healthy eating and physical activity programmes;
- Improve access to healthy food choices in eateries in Hounslow via the Heartbeat Awards Scheme;
- Identify areas of food poverty and improve provision of healthier food choices in those areas; and
- Influence planning for safer communities, green spaces, more accessible and affordable leisure facilities and healthier food outlets.

5. Summary of Need

The following table summarises the needs in Children’s Healthy Weight in the London Borough of Hounslow.

SUMMARY OF NEED: CHECKLIST	
Is need increasing over time?	Yes
Is need greater than the London average?	Yes
Is there qualitative intelligence indicating that need is substantially unmet?	Yes
Is there an external inspection or report suggesting need is unmet?	Yes
Are quality indicators worsening over time?	Yes
Are quality indicators worse than the London average?	Yes
Is there an intervention of proven effectiveness to address the need which is not currently delivered in Hounslow (or not delivered enough)?	Yes