

Suffolk Children’s Healthy Weight Strategy 2023-2027



Foreword

Supporting Suffolk’s children, young people and their families to achieve a healthy weight throughout the life course requires a whole system approach. Tackling this challenge is a Public Health priority and requires effective partnership working to deliver cross-cutting actions. Following the new national ambition to halve childhood obesity rates by 2030 this strategy and its predecessor (Tackling Childhood Obesity in Suffolk 2019-2023) provides a framework for all organisations and groups in Suffolk to contribute to and identify their role in the healthy weight agenda; to come together and tackle the challenge as one.

Talking to families across Suffolk has helped shape this strategy. Many families shared their concerns about increasing costs and the pressure this places on families. This includes weighing up the cost of a weekly shop to eat a healthy varied diet. Understanding these challenges and barriers gives us the foundation to shape this strategy and help guide our future plans.



Cllr Andrew Reid,
Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Public Health and Public Protection, and Chair of the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board:



Cllr James Reeder,
Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services

This Strategy underpins the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority: Wellbeing of Children and Young People, and the ‘Call to Action’ All our children and young people should be able to live happy, healthy, and fulfilled lives in communities where they feel safe.

From Sugar Smart campaigns and the reduction of sugar in our school meals, oral health campaigns in Early Years settings, cookery classes online and in person and a new breastfeeding support app, we can also celebrate walking to school week and children taking part in the Daily Mile during their school day, there have been many really positive changes and actions completed. It is now time to build on the previous strategy and develop further actions based on this experience.

“ A whole system approach focused on the wellbeing of families & support for children’s healthy weight. To achieve the long term aim of reducing the prevalence of children and young people living with underweight, overweight or obesity in Suffolk. ”

Eat well To improve knowledge of and access to affordable, healthy food and drink both in and out of home.

Move well To improve access to opportunities for everyday movement and physical activity, including active travel.

Sleep well To improve knowledge and support for good health and wellbeing, including sleep.

The World Around Us To improve the environment we live in, reduce unhealthy influences and to enable healthy choices to be an easy choice.



The Vision

This strategy is for everyone working across the system, for we all have the opportunity to positively influence the outcome for children.

Tackling this challenge requires a sustained approach. We need to link together the influencing factors, coordinate our actions and build integration across health, education, social care, planning, housing, transport and business to bring about major change.

Working together we must identify and support children, young people and their families at key points; starting at pre conception, during pregnancy, infant feeding, through childhood and adolescence. To help reduce the number of children living with underweight, overweight and obesity and for all children to maintain a healthy weight throughout their lifecourse.



The Challenge

Why healthy weight should be everyone's business

Childhood obesity and excess weight create significant health issues for children and their families. There can be serious implications for a child's physical and mental health, which can continue into adulthood. Action across a child's life course is essential to enable positive behaviour change around eating and activity. We can identify four stages from:

- Preconception and pregnancy
- Infancy and early childhood
- Older childhood and adolescence
- Transition into independent adulthood

“Obesity is associated with poor psychological and emotional health, and many children experience bullying linked to their weight. Children living with obesity are more likely to become adults living with obesity and have a higher risk of morbidity, disability and premature mortality in adulthood.”



*Ref. Childhood obesity: applying All Our Health

*Ref. Health matters: obesity and the food environment

“ We know there is no one single solution, we can only tackle obesity if it becomes everybody’s business and is prioritised in everything we do ”

One of the main drivers of obesity is our food and drink environment. It can be a challenge to eat well when foods high in sugar, salt and fat (HSSF) are increasingly more common in supermarkets, in work, education and leisure environment, as well as within restaurants and takeaways. In addition, ultra processed foods (UPF) are becoming an increasing part of our every day diet, from industrialised bread and reconstituted meat products and many of our children’s snacks, breakfast cereals and pre-packaged meals. UPF are made by industrial processing and contain ingredients that are not found when cooking homemade food including colourings, flavours, emulsifiers and preservatives. Ultra processing changes the structure of the food, reducing the fibre and making it more palatable and tastier. The convenience, price and marketing of UPF can encourage us to eat more often and without thought, which can lead to more snacking, less chewing and faster eating.

The food environment is not the same everywhere: Those living in the most deprived areas have less access to healthier food retail options, and often have a greater density of hot food takeaway. We are also influenced by advertising, evidence shows exposure to advertising can affect when children eat and what they eat. Advertising foods high in sugar, salt and fat and ultra processed foods is concentrated in town centres and in many of the more deprived areas of Suffolk.

Our local neighbourhoods can promote health by proactively reducing these unhealthy influences. A healthier food environment is one where healthier food options are the default and families can buy, make, and grow healthy food.

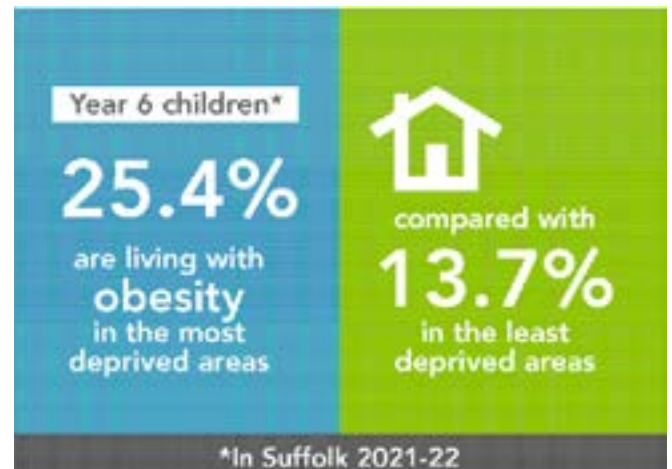
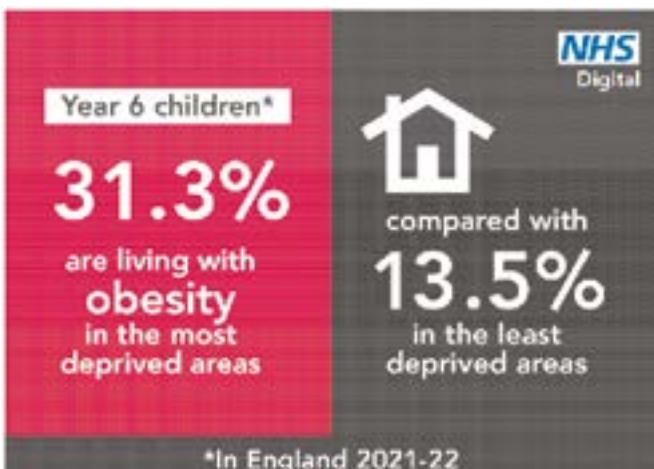
Alongside high quality design we need access to green spaces and transport connections that supports the use of non-motorised transport to places of work, study, and play. In this way we enable people to stay active through routine and incidental movement.

“ To address the wider factors that cause obesity we need to tackle its root cause. It is time to shift our focus from individual behaviours in isolation, to the structural or wider factors that underpin a healthy weight. Society today does not make it easy to be healthy, too often favouring convenience and sedentary behaviour. Many people, through no fault of their own, are disproportionately affected by our obesogenic environment. Where we live, work and play has an impact on our choices and ability. ”

Ref. [Health matters: whole system approach to obesity](#)

Obesity figures for England show a strong link between children living with obesity and deprivation:

Suffolk follows this trend.



Ref. [Suffolk JSNA Joint strategic needs assessment](#)

Ref. [Obesity figures for England show a strong link between children living with obesity and deprivation: statistical press release - NDRS \(digital.nhs.uk\)](#)

Core20PLUS5 – An approach to reducing health inequalities for children and young people



[Ref.CORE20PLUS5 Reducing Healthcare Inequalities for Children and Young People](#)

Core20PLUS5 is a national NHS England approach to support the reduction of health inequalities at both national and system level. The approach defines a target population cohort and identifies '5' focus clinical areas requiring accelerated improvement.

The approach, which initially focused on healthcare inequalities experienced by adults, has now been adapted to apply to children and young people.

Core20 is the most deprived 20% of the national population as identified by the national Index of multiple deprivation (IMD).

PLUS population groups include ethnic minority communities; inclusion health groups; people with a learning disability and autistic people; coastal communities with pockets of deprivation hidden amongst relative affluence; people with multi-morbidities; and protected characteristic groups; amongst others. Specific consideration should be taken for the inclusion of young carers, looked after children/care leavers and those in contact with the justice system.

Inclusion health groups include: people experiencing homelessness, drug and alcohol dependence, vulnerable migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, sex workers, people in contact with the justice system, victims of modern slavery and other socially excluded groups.

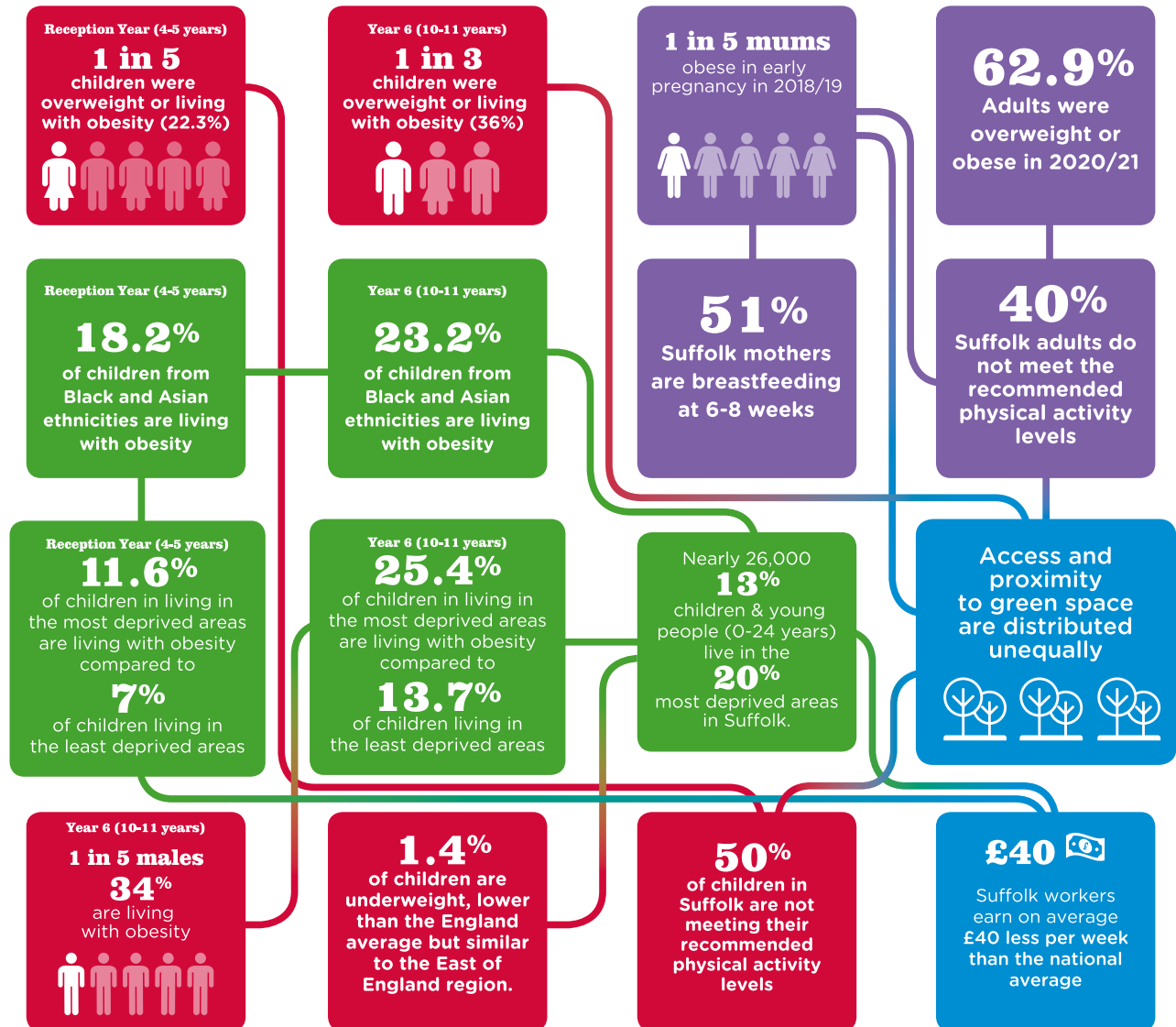
5 is the five clinical areas of focus, part of wider actions for Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care Partnerships to achieve system change and improve care for children and young people.

Suffolk Data



Colour key:

- Children and young people
- Adults
- Wider determinants of health
- Inequalities



Source Suffolk Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA): The State of Suffolk 2022, National Child Measurement Programme 2021-2022, Fingertips (2023) Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. Office National Statistics Census (2021)



The Building Blocks of Health... in a society where everyone can thrive we need all the right building blocks in place. These wider determinants have an influence on all aspects of our children's health.

How we have developed the strategy

Listening to local voices

The development of the strategy has been led by **focus groups and purposeful conversations** with families across Suffolk. These included families from different backgrounds and financial situations, families with children with additional needs who may need added support. Building on trusted relationships, Family Hub teams have also carried out one-to-one conversations with parents and carers, gathering knowledge to feed into the strategy, exploring parents and carers experience of making healthy choices. They have also explored the barriers and support received and held an open discussion about what would improve the health and wellbeing of families in their area.



The “**My Health, Our Future**” program and survey lead by Health Watch Suffolk, explores the well-being of young people in Suffolk. Working with schools and colleges, the project has informed the strategy with key information about young people’s mental health and well-being. Additional questions were incorporated into the 2023 survey to build the voice of young people into the strategy and action plan.

Interactive sessions have been held with partners, stakeholders and operational teams in groups, meetings and workshops to share thinking, review the vision and priorities, and gather new ideas. Menti has been successfully used as an engagement tool recording views and opinions.

The Joint Health and Education Scrutiny Committee created a **Councillor led Task & Finish Group** who followed lines of enquiry regarding the level of physical activity within Suffolk’s schools, how the data gathered under the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is used to target activities to reduce childhood obesity and what opportunities exist to promote and encourage healthy eating in schools.

What makes it harder for children to be healthier in 2023?

‘Comments from discussion with families and professionals their thoughts when asked’

“ Everything is more expensive and there no money left for healthy food ”

“ I work long hours and we’re too tired to think about healthy eating ”

“ We walk past lots places selling fast food on our way home ”

“ My local shop is all crisps and chocolate and no decent fruit & veg ”

“ I get confused by packets and labels for ‘healthy foods’ for children ”

“ It’s so easy to get food delivered now ”

“ Staying at home over lockdown ”

- The challenge people face is wider than personal responsibility, recognising just how hard it can be to make healthy choices.
- How can the whole system work together to change this lived experience?



Opportunities

A healthy community is everybody's business, we all have an important role in creating communities and environments which make it easier for children and families to achieve and sustain a healthy weight.

- Simple, clear and consistent communication.
- Health built into all planning decisions.
- Normalising and creating everyday opportunities for physical activity, movement & active travel
- Available and affordable good quality healthy food options.
- Reducing advertising of foods high in sugar, salt & fat.
- Healthy weight and nutrition discussion across the lifecycle.
- Link between diet, behaviour & sleep.
- Support around the emotional connection to food.
- Healthy food and drink environment in early years, primary, secondary schools and further education.
- Facilitating discussions on decision making with families to support healthy habits.
- Focusing on people and populations most at risk.
- Ensuring support and services are culturally appropriate and sensitive.



Childhood Obesity: A Plan For Action

The government's plan to reduce England's rate of childhood obesity within the next 10 years includes:

- Sugar & Calorie reduction, industry to reduce both in a range of everyday foods
- Advertising and promotion, including a ban on Buy One Get One Free and product placement of products that are high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS)
- Clearer food labelling & nutrient profile of foods
- Support for children to be more active
- Support for local communities to create healthy food environments.

*Ref: [Childhood Obesity: A Plan For Action](#)



Pre-conception and antenatal



Infant feeding



Movement & Activity



Healthy Options



Family meal times



School environment

Priorities for action

There has been continued widespread support for the original three priorities. The wording been updated to recognise the role of the family, include general movement and a focus on sleep to support health and wellbeing. A fourth priority has been added to recognise the link between health and where you live.

Eat well

To improve knowledge of and access to affordable, healthy food and drink both in and out of home.

Adopting healthy eating patterns as a family helps children reach and maintain a healthy weight as they grow. From preconception and pregnancy to infant feeding and introducing solids, childhood and through adolescence, eating a varied and healthy diet sets the whole family up for optimal health.

Move well

To improve access to opportunities for everyday movement and physical activity, including active travel.

Enjoying time being active and moving as a family helps children to be more physically active, have stronger muscles and bones, better cardiovascular fitness, and lower body fat than those who are inactive. Support for children to move more and meet the Physical Activity Guidelines as a family; walking to school, riding bikes, and playing outside all count toward physical activity.

Sleep well

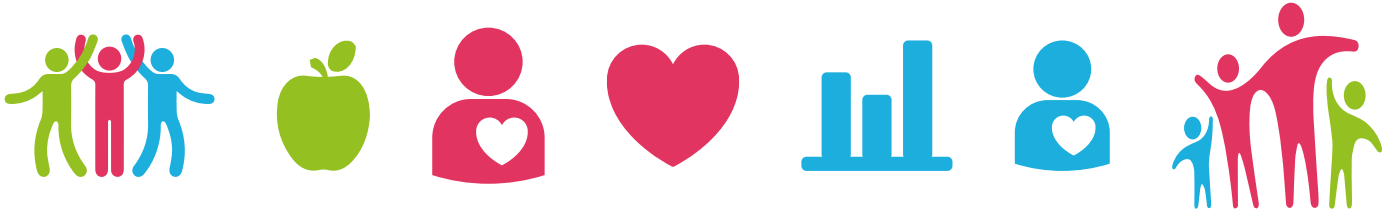
To improve knowledge and support for good health and wellbeing, including sleep.

Good health and wellbeing leads to good sleep, and quality sleep is important for everyone. Sleep directly impacts on children’s emotional wellbeing, mental and physical development. It is easier for children to stay a healthy weight if they sleep well. It’s been shown children who don’t have the recommended amount of sleep are more likely to be overweight. Good sleep helps to improve attention, behaviour, learning and memory.

The World Around Us

To improve the environment we live in, reduce unhealthy influences and to enable healthy choices to be an easy choice.

Where we live, work and play has an impact on our choices and abilities. Health promoting environments enable communities to engage in positive change. Recognising where you live has an influence on your weight and health. The basis of a whole system approach.



Measuring Success

Childhood Healthy Weight is a ‘wicked’ issue and no single organisation or group in Suffolk can reverse trends in overweight and obesity alone. To drive change we need to be brave, take risks and challenge the system. There are opportunities and system level actions that require confidence in the outcome and take years to evidence.

However, with clear actions and goals there are opportunities to measure success by,

- Completing actions in the Action Plan as a process measure
- Trends in National Childhood Measurement Programme
- % of children who are physically active

There is a commitment the Action Plan stays ‘live’ with an ongoing 6 month review and update based on local need and data.



The world around us

Appendix I

System and stakeholder engagement

Local Voice

Suffolk Families
[Suffolk Parent Carers Forum](#)
[Suffolk SENDIASS](#)
[Young People: Health Watch My Health, Our Future](#)
[Engaged Communities Group](#)

Eat Well

[Foodbanks](#)
[HomeStart in Suffolk](#)
[Vertas](#)
[Family Hubs](#)
[Early Years & Childcare settings](#)
[Primary & Secondary Schools](#)
Further Education

Move Well

[Family Hubs](#)
[Early Years & Childcare settings](#)
[Primary & Secondary Schools](#)
Further Education
Growth Highways & Infrastructure Green Spaces and
Active Travel Teams
[Active Suffolk](#)
[Abbeycroft Leisure](#)
[Everyone Active](#)

System Voice

[Suffolk Health & Wellbeing Board](#)
Suffolk Children & Young Peoples Committee
Suffolk Children & Young Peoples Leadership Team
[Health Scrutiny Committee](#)
Public Health & Communities Wider Leadership Forum
[Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board](#)

Sleep Well, Health & Wellbeing

[Family Hubs](#)
[Best Start to Life working Group](#)
[HomeStart in Suffolk](#)
[Early Years & Childcare settings](#)
[Primary & Secondary Schools](#)
Further Education
Primary Care

The World Around Us

District & Borough Planning Teams
Public Health in Planning Group
Public Health Wider Place Team
Best Health in Work Partnerships delivering Good
Health & Work Priority
[Trading Standards](#)



The world around us

Appendix II

Data sources and strategies linked to and supported by the Suffolk Children's Healthy Weight Strategy.

National Policy

[Childhood Obesity: A plan For Action Aug 2016](#)
[Childhood Obesity: A Plan For Action, Chapter 2 June 2018](#)
[National Planning Framework](#)
[Food Sustainability Plan](#)
[School Food Plan](#)
[Healthy Start](#)
[Healthy Child Programme](#)
[Physical activity guidelines: early years \(under 5s\)](#)
[Holiday activities and food programme 2023](#)

Suffolk System

[Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027](#)
[Health & Wellbeing Board Priority: Wellbeing of Children & Young People 2022 - 2027](#)
[Start Well](#)
[Physical Activity Strategy \(in progress\)](#)
[Public Health Mental Health Strategy \(in progress\)](#)
[Green Access Strategy 2020-2030](#)
[Tackling Poverty in Suffolk 2022](#)
[Discover Suffolk](#)
[Pre conception Plan \(Local Maternity and Neonatal System Strategy\) & Infant Feeding Strategy \(in progress\)](#)

Suffolk County Council Public Health & Communities

[Suffolk Public Health & Communities Healthier People, Healthier Places, Healthier Futures Plan 2023](#)
Suffolk Public Health advice on Planning and Wellbeing

Integrated Care

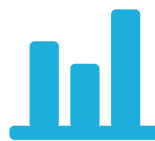
[Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance Strategy 2018-2023](#)
[West Suffolk Alliance Strategy 2018-2023](#)
[Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care System Strategy 2022-2027](#)
[Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System Clinical Strategy 2022-2027](#)
[ICB Transformation Plan CYP \(Mental Health\) 2023](#)

Planning

[Local Plans](#) (search geographical area)
[Neighbourhood Plans](#)
Neighbourhood Priority Statements
[Suffolk Design Manual](#)
[Supplementary Planning Documents](#)

Data

[Suffolk Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\): The State of Suffolk 2022](#)
[National Childhood Measurement Programme 2021-2022](#)
[Fingertips \(2023\) Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.](#)
[Office National Statistics Census \(2021\)](#)
[Physical Activity Data](#)



Hyperlinks shown in [blue](#)

This is a 'live' documents and all comments, additions welcome.
Contact healthandwellbeing@suffolk.gov.uk