



# **FOOD ACTIVE**

ANNUAL REPORT: 2016/2017

# WELCOME

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the fourth Annual Report from Food Active.

This year has been another eventful year for the programme with significant national successes including confirmation of the sugary drinks industry levy in 2018, further action on sugary drinks including the NHS consultation and significant progress in terms of manufacturer reformulation, and the announcement of new rules for online junk food marketing to children.

The sugary drinks industry levy is already having an impact ahead of its adoption in April 2018, with many manufacturers reformulating their products to avoid the cost implications. However more needs to be done, and with the launch of the weaker than anticipated Childhood Obesity Plan, it is more important than ever that programmes of work such as Food Active continue to advocate for change.

On a local level, we are delighted to report that four local authorities have now adopted Food Active's Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight, aligning and driving healthy weight policy across their regions. We have also significantly added to the portfolio of GULP resources which have been pilot tested and rolled out in schools across three boroughs. We are delighted by the recognition GULP is receiving and will be evaluating the campaign in due course.

Our priorities in 2017/2018 will include working with local authorities to ensure healthy weight is considered in all policy areas, something that will support continued work around the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight. We will also continue to develop local GULP campaigns and launch a new element to the programme later this year, this will be decided in consultation with our local authority commissioners. In addition we will support shared learning through communications such as the Food Active Supporters E-bulletin and through the ongoing development of both the Food Active and GULP websites. Of particular priority will be to continue to foster relationships with other national organisations to consider the viability and sustainability of the programme over the next few years.

Once again your support has been invaluable in taking the programme forward and we hope you enjoy the opportunity to appreciate some of the successes achieved. Food Active continues to strive to bring about change to the food and physical activity environments that have a significant impact on obesity within our region as well as nationally.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew Ashton

Director of Public Health, Knowsley and Sefton

Lead Director of Public Health, Food Active



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food Active is a regional healthy weight programme, commissioned in 2016/17 by 12 local authorities across the North West of England.

The programme has enjoyed some significant successes in 2016/17 including confirmation of the Sugary Drinks Industry Levy in 2018, tighter regulations on junk food marketing to children and locally, the adoption of the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight by a number of North West authorities.

The Local Authority Declaration has grown in momentum over the past year with four North West local authorities pledging to take a whole-systems approach to tackling obesity. It will be interesting to see how each authority takes the work forward and we are currently evaluating the work undertaken by Blackpool.

Our sugary drinks awareness campaign, GULP (Give Up Loving Pop) has continued to grow in recognition both locally and nationally. Additional resources to support the campaign in schools and communities have been developed and we are delighted they are being utilised by a number of local authorities across the region.

The addition of a fourth priority to the programme 'Healthy Weight in all Policies' ties together what the Food Active programme is aiming to achieve – a whole-systems approach to tackling obesity and promoting healthy weight, in the North West. We look forward to taking this priority forward in the coming year.

With the launch of the childhood obesity plan - which was much weaker than anticipated - it is more important than ever for collaborative approaches to talking obesity continue to influence at a local, regional and national level. This is why we are delighted to be supported by so many North West Directors of Public Health and their teams, and look forward to addressing the challenges that 2017/18 will bring.

# BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE FOOD ACTIVE PROGRAMME

Food Active is a regional healthy weight programme, commissioned in 2016/17 by 12 local authorities across the North West of England. The programme was initiated in 2012 as a collaborative commitment by Directors of Public Health to consider population level policies to address obesity that add value to local programmes and services. The Food Active brand was successfully launched in late 2013 using a website, e-bulletin and social media and continues to grow in recognition. Food Active is often invited to speak at a national level and provide a North West perspective on national boards and campaigns.

Since the programme's launch, the evidence base and rationale for the focus on population level policies that are effective in addressing unhealthy weight has grown substantially:

- ❖ Top Ten for Number Ten, A Public Health Manifesto from the North West Directors of Public Health. ADPH North West DPH Group. July 2014.
- ❖ Carbohydrates and Health. Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. July 2015.
- ❖ Sugar Reduction, The evidence for action. Public Health England. October 2015.
- ❖ Childhood Obesity— brave and bold action. House of Commons Health Committee, First Report of Session 2015–16. November 2015.
- ❖ Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. World Health Organisation. 2016.

However, despite the rate of increase in obesity slowing in men, and for the first time decreasing in women, obesity continues to rise overall. Obesity prevalence remains higher for women, but the gap between men and women has narrowed over time. The prevalence of excess weight rose substantially between 1993 and 2002, but has remained relatively stable since that time for both men and women. Unlike for obesity, prevalence of excess weight is higher for men than women.<sup>i</sup>

The prevalence of child excess weight and child obesity increased between 1995 and 2004. Since 2004 there is some evidence of a levelling of both child obesity and excess weight prevalence for 2-15 year-olds. In more recent years, prevalence appears to be increasing (although this data needs to be treated with caution and until subsequent data give a more statistically robust indication of any consistent trend).<sup>2</sup>

Over time obesity prevalence among boys and girls in Year 6 (10-11 year-olds) shows an upward trend, with a higher average increase in Year 6 girls than boys. However, over the last five years obesity prevalence among Year 6 boys and girls has been relatively stable.<sup>2</sup>

The future however is looking less promising for certain demographics. Modelling by the UK Health Forum has identified a looming significant weight gap between the poorest and wealthiest primary-school aged boys living in England. Three in five (60%) of the most deprived boys aged 5-11 are predicted to be overweight or obese by 2020, compared to about one in six (16%) of boys in the most affluent group<sup>3</sup>. A clear indication that more needs to be done to tackle health inequalities, especially in a region such as ours where we suffer significant disparities.

Further evidence that childhood obesity prevalence is strongly correlated with socioeconomic status and is highest among children living in the most deprived local authorities has been published by Public Health England. The obesity prevalence among reception year children living in the most deprived areas was 12.1% compared with 5.7 % among those living in the least deprived areas.<sup>4</sup>

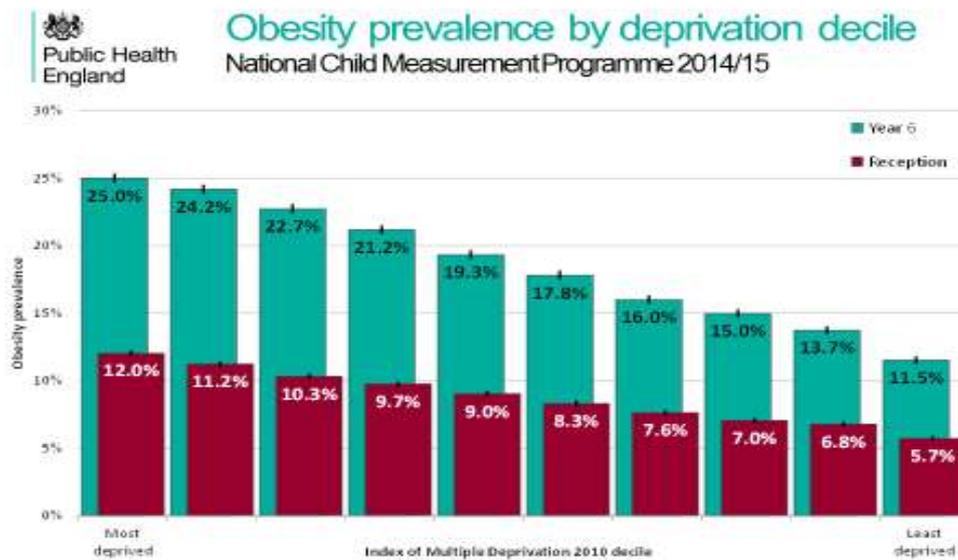


Figure 1. PHE (March 2016). Obesity prevalence by deprivation decile.

In support of the recommendations made within the reports referenced on the previous page, in taking a multi-faceted approach to addressing obesity, despite the challenges faced by the ongoing austerity measures, the Food Active programme aims to continue to add value locally to tackling obesity through a collaborative approach, with a specific focus on population level policies that will have an impact on excess weight.

The original Food Active priorities were jointly decided by North West Directors of Public Health when Food Active launched in 2013. They were to:

1. Advocate for the use of price and availability of sugar sweetened beverages to change consumption behaviour to impact on obesity rates
2. Advocate for stronger national regulatory controls on the advertising of junk food to children
3. Advocate for spatial planning measures locally to increase physical activity e.g. 20mph zones.

Due to successes such as the forthcoming sugar tax and the importance of addressing healthy weight in all policies, the priorities for 2017/18 have been updated through consultation with stakeholders to:

1. Advocate for healthy weight in all policies and support measures to tackle obesity at local, regional and national levels
2. Continue to advocate for the use of fiscal measures and supply restrictions to change consumption behaviour of sugar-sweetened beverages
3. Advocate for stronger national regulatory controls on the advertising of junk food to children
4. Advocate for measures to increase active travel, specifically walking and cycling, and improved spatial planning measures e.g. 20mph zones

A stakeholder group, chaired by Matthew Ashton on behalf of the Directors of Public Health in the North West, supports the governance of the Food Active programme. Stakeholder membership of this group includes representation from the public health community including local authority officers, academic researchers, and other regional and national public health bodies and third sector organisations. The stakeholder group meets twice per year, to support the delivery of Food Active and assess progress against agreed targets.

Annual conferences or events are also facilitated to engage stakeholders and in addition a network of 350 plus stakeholders has been established with an interest in the programme, receiving regular e-bulletins. We engage with up to 1500 followers on the Food Active Twitter account and 700 followers on the Give Up Loving Pop Twitter account.

# SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES 2016/17

1. To develop resources and provide support to local authorities in reducing consumption of sugary drinks within their populations
2. To further develop and encourage adoption of a framework that will support local authorities to deliver local healthy weight policies and plans
3. To build capacity within the region through knowledge exchange on effective policies and interventions that promote healthy weight
4. Continue to develop partnerships with external organisations to support advocacy objectives
5. Continue to advocate and support national and international policies which support the programme objectives
6. Seek further sustainability of the programme past 2017/18.

## OUTPUTS

### 1. SUGARY DRINKS CAMPAIGN

#### MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

The GULP 'Give Up Loving Pop' Campaign was originally launched during 2014/15 across the North West with a strong visual campaign, factual information and social media to demonstrate the harm associated with excessive consumption of sugary drinks.

In 2016 we received a small amount of funding to develop a Year 9 PSHE resource for use in secondary schools. After pilot testing this was launched in January 2017. We also developed a Key Stage 2 resource for use with Year 5 and 6 primary school children which was piloted and launched in March 2017. Both resources have been utilised in North West schools and the feedback so far has been positive.

A number of local authorities have committed to running their own GULP campaigns during 2017, with Tameside, Knowsley, Sefton, Blackpool and Salford all taking different approaches. This has led to the development of a number of additional resources, the majority of which are freely available to use. Along with school delivery of the PSHE lessons, we have worked with Everton in the Community to train a number of their community coaches to deliver sessions to primary school pupils in 2017/18.

A full evaluation report will be produced for each local authority on completion of their campaigns.



Figure 2. Drawings by pupils at Much Woolton School following delivery of Key Stage 2 PSHE lessons.

## 2. FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT HEALTHY WEIGHT POLICIES

In August 2014, Food Active, invited Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) to give a presentation in Manchester on their Local Authority Declaration on Tobacco Control to consider if this approach would work for overweight and obesity. Following a period of stakeholder engagement the declaration was launched in late 2015.



*Figure 3. Blackpool Council become the first Local Authority to sign up to Food Active's Declaration on Health Weight.*

In January 2016 Blackpool Council became the first Authority to adopt the Local Government Declaration receiving significant media coverage.

St Helens MB Council soon followed suit, adopting the declaration in May 2016, with Knowsley Council in November 2016. In the meantime we worked closely with Lancashire County Council who were the first two-tier authority to adopt the declaration, in January 2017.

In July 2016 we were part of a bid by Sustain to develop a Greater London declaration. The Greater London version took a great deal of learning from the Food Active declaration and was launched in March 2017.

Throughout the year we continued to support local authorities in developing their declaration and background papers, and anticipate a number of further adoptees in 2017/18.

An evaluation report of the Blackpool declaration – one year on – was commissioned and will be completed by June 2017, along with a support pack for local authorities who wish to consider the declaration.

### 3. KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

During 2016/17 food Active facilitated a number of engagement and best practice events including:

Event: Junk Food Marketing to Children.

On Friday 15th July, supported by Lancashire County Council, Association of Directors of Public Health (NW) and The Association for the Study of Obesity (NW), Food Active held an event ahead of the CAP Consultation on restricting advertising of unhealthy food and soft drink products in non-broadcast media. The event was attended by 42 colleagues including academics, Directors of Public Health, public health professionals, nutritionists, students and community group members.

The event was opened by Cllr Beavers (Cabinet Member for Public Health, Lancashire County Council) and chaired by Dr Sakthi Karunanithi (Director of Public Health, Lancashire County Council). Two powerful and insightful presentations were given by leaders in the field of junk food marketing, Dr Emma Boyland (Lecturer, University of Liverpool) and Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden (Child Psychologist and Researcher, University College Dublin).

The event assisted Food Active in their response to the CAP consultation. The consultation report is available, along with an event report below. Presentations and the CAP response can be found on the Food Active website.



*Figure 4. Junk Food Marketing to Children (left to right) Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden, Dr Emma Boyland and Robin Ireland.*

Event: Department of Health: learning from the North West

On Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 Food Active hosted a visit from Department of Health at our offices in Liverpool. Interested in finding out what is happening to tackle obesity at a local level, Emma Reed and Sharon Egan from DH decided to visit Food Active in the North West.

In turn, we were keen for our partners in our commissioning local authorities, some of our academic collaborators and our colleagues in the voluntary and community sector to have the opportunity to discuss their work.

With the meeting was planned well in advance and we did not expect the much delayed Childhood Obesity Plan (COP) to be published in the meantime. The agenda for the day therefore took a slight turn and following a welcome from the chair, Matt Ashton (DPH Sefton and Knowsley, Lead DPH Food Active) – who stressed the importance of working together and the strength of partnerships – Emma Reed and Sharon Egan gave their views on the COP.

There was time for questions and answers from the audience before the scheduled presentations. These essentially presented some examples of the food and obesity work taking place in the North West; in research, targeted interventions and policy development.

Dr Martin O’Flaherty (University of Liverpool) talked about the role of diet in cardiovascular disease and recent research into the area.

Dr Emma Boyland (University of Liverpool) presented on junk food marketing to children on television and the internet.

Dr Scott Murray (Royal Liverpool University Hospital) talked in depth about the negative effects a poor diet can have on heart health and the importance of Making Every Contact Count.

Robin Ireland talked about the role of Food Active in advocating for upstream public health policy and the importance of working in partnership.

Nicky Dennison (Blackpool Public Health) presented the great work Blackpool has been doing with Food Active including the GULP Challenge and the Local Authority Declaration. Nicky talked about the steps they were taking to continually improve the health of the community, keeping food a priority for public health.

Questions were answered throughout and there was time for networking over lunch. There was discussion around local authority powers, local planning, the 'Healthy Towns' project and the role of physical activity in addressing obesity (important but much less so than food).

Matt Ashton concluded the session by asking the delegates to agree on some take home actions:

1. Talk positive – feedback the great work done at a local level; don't underestimate the effect local initiatives can have – if they are done properly they can reach far and wide
2. Use your networks – work together, form partnerships and share good practice, we are all striving for the same goal.



*Figure 5. Department of Health: Learning from the North West (left to right) Dr Scott Murray, Matthew Ashton, Emma Reed, Sharon Egan and Robin Ireland.*

## 4. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

Food Active continued to work closely with a number of partner organisations including the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA), Children’s Food Campaign and the Children’s Health Fund, to name a few.

Partnerships have been developed with The Food Foundation, where we have inputted into their Peas Please project; Everton in the Community in terms of delivery of school based resources to primary schools, and PHE – the North West and national branch.

We see partnerships as an important part of the Food Active work programme, lining the North West with the national agenda and representing our commissioners with a united voice.

## 5. ADVOCACY TO SUPPORT LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLICY

Food active has been involved in advocacy efforts to tackle unhealthy weight. Examples include a joint letter (coordinated by the Obesity Health Alliance) to various members of parliament including Theresa May, Jeremy Hunt and Nicola Blackwood calling for a comprehensive childhood obesity strategy (July 2016); and a joint letter to The Times (coordinated by the Obesity Health Alliance) to raise concerns about the new Cadburys sponsorship deal with the Premier League (February 2017).

A letter signed by over 100 local academics, GPs, Directors of Public Health and members of the public was sent to the local press to raise concerns about the Coca-Cola truck once again visiting Liverpool. The letter also led to an editorial in the BMJ 'Happy Corporate Holidays', authored by Professor John Ashton and Robin Ireland. <http://www.bmj.com/content/356/bmj.i6833>. The article received coverage in over 60 national and local newspapers and impressive stats on Twitter. The support for this across the North West very much showcased our collective voice.

Letters were written to all Metro-Mayoral candidates for Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region (March 2017) to request they consider healthy weight in all policy areas. Where we offered support. We will follow up with letters to the successful candidates.

Members of the Food Active team have spoken on a number of issues, some highlights include Robin Ireland's appearance on the Sunday Politics Show where he talked about the importance of public health budgets (May 16) and interviews on World Obesity Day with The Telegraph and Talk Radio, discussing modelling work carried out by UKHF on the impending disparity between boys and girls, in particular boys from disadvantaged backgrounds and an increased rate of obesity.

A key part of Food Active's advocacy work is to collectively inform national and local consultations which fit under the Food Active remit. Consultations we have

responded to this year include the Government's Sugary Drinks Industry Levy; CAP restrictions on junk food marketing to children; the NHS consultation on sale of sugary drinks; and the Liverpool local plan.

## 6. SUSTAINABILITY

Funding has been secured from 11 North West Local Authorities in 17/18, reflecting further reductions generally in Local Authority budgets. However we are delighted to maintain the number of local authorities we have and look forward to working on collective priorities next year.

Further funding was received in 2016/17 from Sustain in terms of work on the Greater London Declaration, and for targeted GULP campaigns across four local authority areas.

## PROGRESS AGAINST OBJECTIVES

To continue to deliver a public facing campaign that supports the local evidence base on sugary drinks

**Key outputs achieved:** ongoing development of the Give up Loving Pop campaign, production of both PSHE Key Stage 2 and 3 resources, plus additional school based tools, development of an online #GulpChallenge sign-up page.

Support for local authorities deliver local healthy weight policies and plans

**Key outputs achieved:** a further four North West local authorities have adopted the local authority declaration with a further five working towards this next year. An evaluation report has been commissioned for the Blackpool declaration, one year on. Knowledge has been shared with London colleagues in the development of the Greater London declaration.

To build capacity within the region through knowledge exchange on effective policies and interventions that promote healthy weight

**Key outputs achieved:** two events have been facilitated addressing local and national policy relating to healthy weight. International, national and local experts have contributed to the agendas and learning has been used to develop the capacity of the Food Active programme and support stakeholders locally.

To continue to develop partnerships with external organisations to support advocacy objectives

**Key outputs achieved:** in addition to existing links with national organisations, further relationships have been developed with others including (the Children's Health fund, The Obesity Health Alliance and the Association for the Study of Obesity).

Continue to advocate and support national and international policies which support the programme objectives

**Key outputs achieved:** Advocacy and policy support undertaken as agreed.

# NEXT STEPS

## Important next steps for the programme include:

- ❖ A bold and ambitious programme of work for 2017/18 with greater focus on healthy weight in all policies, an area of work which will include further development and implementation of the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight, and supporting events.
- ❖ To continue to provide support for further stakeholders to adopt the Local Authority declaration on healthy weight, to evaluate the declaration and provide funding for an independent evaluation, and develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for those authorities signed up to the declaration.
- ❖ To continue to support authorities to deliver local GULP campaigns, evaluation of the PSHE resource in schools and its wider dissemination.
- ❖ Continued advocacy to support the implementation of the proposed government sugary drinks levy, future consultations and activity to protect children and young people from unhealthy food and drink marketing and to promote healthy food and physical activity environments.
- ❖ Ongoing circulations of the Food Active Supporter's E-bulletin and to host and facilitate a minimum of one event per year.
- ❖ Although funding has been secured for the programme into 17/18 the overall amount is reduced compared to previous years as a result of continued local authority budget cuts. The programme is now funded by 12 local authorities in the North West. As in previous years securing funding from other sources and considering other models of working in 17/18 will be pivotal to the programme's sustainability in 18/19.

# CONCLUSIONS

2016/17 has seen a number of national successes including confirmation of the sugary drinks levy in 2018, and the announcement of the new CAP rules on online advertising of junk food to children.

At a local level we have hosted two successful events, been involved in range of advocacy activities and worked to support a number of local authorities around policy and targeted interventions.

Although budgets have been cut we are delighted to have maintained so many of our commissioners for next year, and we look forward to 2017/18 with our revamped priorities and focus on 'healthy weight in all policies'.

The Food Active programme continues to grow in profile and the outcomes achieved demonstrate what can be achieved on a regional basis where collaborative working is considered key.

# FOOD ACTIVE!

FOODACTIVE.ORG.UK

@FOOD\_ACTIVE

INFO@FOODACTIVE.ORG.UK

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c/o Health Equalities Group, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 151 Dale Street, Liverpool, L2 2JH

0151 237 2686

This report has been authored by Alex Holt, Food & Nutrition Lead at Health Equalities Group. (Published May 2017).

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<sup>i</sup> Published Health Survey for England data available from: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB16077> original source NOO slide set for Adult Obesity. Accessed on 07/04/16, available at: [https://www.noo.org.uk/slide\\_sets](https://www.noo.org.uk/slide_sets)

<sup>2</sup> Health Survey for England data available from: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB19295> original source NOO slide set for child obesity. Accessed on 7/04/16, available at: [https://www.noo.org.uk/slide\\_sets](https://www.noo.org.uk/slide_sets)

<sup>3</sup> <http://obesityhealthalliance.org.uk/2016/10/11/3-5-englands-deprived-boys-will-overweight-obese-2020/>

<sup>4</sup> National Child Measurement Programme 14/15 data. Accessed on 09.02.16 from: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/searchcatalogue?productid=19405&q=title%3a%22national+child+measurement+programme>