



Pennine Lancashire Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme:

Healthy Place, Health Future

Discovery Phase: Insight Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 2019

**Report prepared by Alex Holt, Beth Bradshaw and Richard
Glendinning on behalf of Food Active**

HEALTH
EQUALITIES
GROUP



**FOOD
ACTIVE**



Pennine Lancashire Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme – Discovery Phase Insight Report Executive Summary

Background

As part of the Childhood Obesity Plan: Chapter 2, in 2018 the Government announced a three-year Trailblazer Programme to work with council-led projects in England to help develop local solutions for tackling obesity, with a particular focus on health inequalities. Led by Blackburn with Darwen Council, Pennine Lancashire (hereafter PL) has been successful in making the shortlist for the Government's Childhood Obesity Trailblazer Programme with a project that aims to address the lack of diversity across local high streets and shop parades in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods across PL, meaning that healthier food and drink isn't a default for children and families. The trailblazer will also attempt to identify and explore current unused or underutilised levers, particularly around the accessibility and consumption of unhealthy food, which can be utilised to positively impact on childhood obesity.

Access to fast food outlets (hereafter FFOs) and frequent consumption of takeaway food has been highlighted as one of the key drivers of the obesity epidemic. Whilst the prevalence of fast food outlets has remained stable in some parts of PL, others have experienced an increase ranging from 8-24% in the last three years ¹. As part of the funded discovery phase, the project consulted with a range of stakeholders across all the districts, including planners, elected members, community leaders, local A3 and A5 businesses owners and families and young people. This document is an executive summary of the discovery phase findings, which were carried out by Food Active.

Methods

The insight work aimed to investigate four key levers relating to FFOs. These included system leadership, planning policy, business incentives and community support. Consultations with elected members, planners, FFOs business owners, parents, carers and grandparents, children and young people and finally community leaders were carried out through a range of different research methods.

Online and paper-based questionnaires were developed and disseminated to elected members, community leaders and teachers, parents, carers and grandparents and children and young people across all districts of Pennine Lancashire.

Face-to-face consultations were also carried out in four pre-determined locations (central Blackburn including Audley and Queens Park ward, Blackburn with Darwen; Trinity Ward, Burnley; Oswaldtwistle in Hyndburn; Nelson/Pendle and Primrose and Littlemoor, Ribble Valley;) with business owners, parents, carers and grandparents and children and young people (under 19s). These consultations included interviews with business owners, focus groups with parents, carers and grandparents and for the children and young people and a range of creative engagement activities were developed which aimed to tease out their opinions on their local food environment and what action and changes they would like to see in a fun and interactive way.

Another focus group session was held at a planners event, which was attended by planners from all district councils in Pennine Lancashire to ascertain their views on planners role is in tackling childhood obesity, barriers and opportunities for change.



Results

Elected Members (n=22)

- All respondents thought tackling childhood obesity was within their roles and responsibilities
- Just two felt fully equipped in meeting these roles and responsibilities, they held the health portfolios
- Many felt there were knowledge gaps around children and young people's health
- Open to active long-term engagement around the subject of healthy weight and peer-to-peer to support across PL

Planners (n=6)

- Recognition of planning and health
- Strong support for 'Healthy Place'
- Keen to explore new tools and policies within planning to restrict and regulate A5s/A3s and moving away from reliance on exclusion zones

Adults - parents, carers and grandparents

Questionnaire (n=290):

- Frequent consumption of takeaways (ever, 80%, weekly, 33%) and majority purchased for the whole family
- 86% thought there is a problem with overweight and obesity in children and young people locally
- Poor choice and availability (59%), marketing and promotions (44%) and the cost (36%) were the top three most frequently reported barriers for consuming healthier food
- 83% thought the food in local FFOs is not healthy and a further 91% stated they wanted to see more healthier options – healthier options alongside standard meals (77%), reformulation of meals to contain less fat, sugar and salt (62%) and more fruit and veg (58%)

Focus groups (n=40)

- Convenience and accessibility of FFOs was a reoccurring theme when asked the reasons for consuming FFO.
- Many reported they felt there were too many FFOs in their local area
- Many recognised that the local food environment, and in particular the number of take-aways in the area contributes to childhood obesity

Children and young people

Questionnaire (n=107):

- Almost all (95%) eat takeaways and the majority consumed takeaways weekly (51%) with most purchased by their parents
- Most (75%) said that the local takeaway food wasn't healthy and a further 84% wanted to see more healthier options - including reformulation of meals (54%), healthier meals (55%) and snacks and more fruit and veg (39%)



- Tastes good (71%), it's easy/quick (51%) and cheap (28%) were the top three most frequently reported reasons for consuming FFO.

Creative consultation (n=~136)

- Using A3/A5 outlets was frequently suggested as social venues for young people, particularly dessert bars. Such venues were also viewed as a trendy place to go that young people like to post pictures on social media of the meals they are having
- A reoccurring theme was concerns around the density of FFOs locally in PL – with many stating that there doesn't need to be so many and more healthier options should be placed in between FFOs. Many students emphasised that there was a concentration of FFOs near their homes and schools – but advised FFOs should not be banned so there is still choice, but restrictions on the density of them near schools and in towns.
- Recognition that meals prepared at home were much healthier for you than those purchased outside of the home

Community leaders (n=50)

- Availability, cost, advertising, education and community demand were recognised as key drivers of FFO consumption for children and young people.
- Many saw the importance in improving the food and drink available in FFOs, with some suggesting calorie labelling and restrictions on the number of outlets as potential routes.

Conclusions – what we found

- Untapped power of PL Elected Members in tackling healthy weight – decision makers
- Districts are keen to tackle unhealthy weight and sharing learning will be important
- Opportunity to link EMs as drivers of place-based prevention and ensuring CYP are at the heart of this
- Applying planning tools that are traditionally used for other types of applications which can bring a positive spin on planning regulations – no saying 'no' but to have a yes you must provide a majority healthy menu
- Pleasant surprise to see the willingness to work collaboratively despite financial challenges being faced
- Business engagement has been hardest but opportunity to work with a small number of different types of food businesses to develop and test support packages
- Evidence of strong support for healthier food options from across a range of stakeholders – EMs, parents, children and young people and business owners themselves. Opportunities to link a number of initiatives and campaigns to build the Big Junk Food Debate

Next steps

- Await outcome of final stage of Trailblazer application, following submission on the 30th April and presentation to LGA/DHSC/PHE on 14th May
- Contingency planning: explore other areas of funding should the application be unsuccessful

¹ CEDAR (2017) Fast food England: how many takeaways are in your area? [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/ng-interactive/2017/jul/25/fast-food-england-how-many-takeaways-are-near-you> [Accessed: 18th February 2019]