

**FOOD
ACTIVE**

LOCAL AUTHORITY
DECLARATION ON

**healthy
weight**

**FOOD ACTIVE
LOCAL AUTHORITY DECLARATION
ON HEALTHY WEIGHT
SUPPORT PACK: Executive Summary**

**SECOND EDITION (UPDATED)
SUMMER 2020**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why consider a Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight?

Unhealthy weight is a significant public health issue which can have a significant impact on our physical, psychological and emotional health and wellbeing. Obesity can reduce life expectancy on average by three years, with severe obesity shown to shorten lives by eight-10 years. It can increase the risk of poor health and hospital stays, and individuals affected are less likely to be in employment.

Obesity is a complex problem. Factors that significantly influence obesity include genetics, behaviour, culture and the environment. The environment in which we live is considered to be obesogenic; unhealthy food and drink choices are readily available and affordable, and there are insufficient opportunities for physical activity, leading to sedentary lifestyles which do not support a healthy weight.

Yet, despite the widespread recognition of the health, social and economic costs of unhealthy weight and efforts to promote healthier lifestyles, unhealthy weight persists with data from 2020 showing that 61.3% of adults in England are classed as overweight or obese.

In recent years however, as the government has returned responsibility for public health to local authorities, this has offered a unique opportunity to consider the wider social determinants of health and population measures which can have a significant impact on the well-being of local communities.

Local political leadership, public engagement and cross-system working with departments such as housing, economic and environmental regeneration, planning, education, transport, and children and young people's services can present real opportunities to take an innovative approach to addressing unhealthy weight.

The aim of the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight (hereafter HWD) is to achieve a local authority commitment to promote healthy weight and improve the health and well-being of the local population; and to recognise and support local authorities to exercise their responsibility in developing and implementing policies which promote healthy weight.

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How this support pack can help you

This pack has been designed to provide local authorities with a step-by-step guide to adopting the HWD. We recognise that not all councils are the same, some may be unitary, some may be upper-tier and others may be district. In addition, councils may not all have the same procedures, hence there will be variations in how the HWD is adopted. There are, however, significant and helpful examples of learning that have been collated and can be applied across any given local authority.

Within this pack we have included a pathway for the adoption process, suggestions for local priorities, along with a number of case studies which provide experiences from the perspective of colleagues who have driven the HWD from within local government. You will also find links to the evidence base behind the 16 commitments included in the HWD, FAQs, a template press release and sources of additional information prepared by Food Active to share best practice, and to support adoption and monitoring of the HWD.

This document is a second updated edition of the original support pack developed by Food Active. The document has been revised to take into account greater shared learning, as a response to further commissioning and support for the HWD beyond the North West and as part of a review and re-refresh of the HWD commitments.

Regions including Yorkshire and Humber, the South West, and a number of local authorities in the North East of England are now taking this work forward. The shared learning and thus updates to the support pack are part of an iterative process, further versions will be produced as more authorities sign up and support Food Active's HWD.



Above: Chief Executive of Kirklees Council, Jacqui Gedman, supports Kirklees HWD, March 2019

Introduction from the Lead Director of Food Active; Matthew Ashton, Director of Public Health, Liverpool City Council

When Food Active first devised the HWD we consulted extensively with a range of key informers.

In August 2014 we held a very well attended consultation event in Manchester drawing on the example of Action on Smoking and Health's Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control as a starting point to consider local authority approaches to addressing healthy weight. We then held workshops through the summer of 2015 with four authorities to discuss the feasibility of adopting a Declaration on Healthy Weight.

Blackpool Council were the first to adopt the HWD in January 2016, with over 20 authorities following suit in the subsequent years. The timeline and process to adopt the HWD is described in this Support Pack, with practical examples and learning - with each local authority (and partner) that takes similar action our learning grows and we are able to share experiences.

Subsequently, I am delighted to be able to introduce the revised HWD commitments, recently launched following consultation with our Local Authority colleagues. In addition, the 'Whole Systems Approach to Obesity and HWD: a joint narrative' co-produced by Public Health England and Food Active, outlines how the HWD and Whole Systems Approach to Obesity can work in synergy

There is no single or correct path as you will see, and different authorities will determine their approach according to their circumstances and settings. Unitary and metropolitan authorities are likely to be very different from two-tier councils for example, as urban may be from rural.

The key unifying feature is the local leadership shown and the desire for councils to support their local communities in developing and delivering policies to support healthier environments.

As you progress from planning and adoption to driving action and monitoring impact you will come across challenges and opportunities – some expected but some may come as a surprise. Hearing about your experience helps us to share learning across the network, to co-develop support materials and to feed into future updates of the HWD. So please do keep us in the loop.

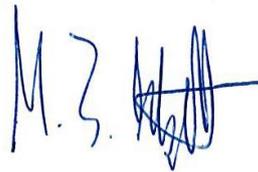



Introduction to Food Active from Matthew Philpott; Executive Director, Health Equalities Group

Food Active is a healthy weight programme delivered by the Health Equalities Group, and commissioned by local authority public health teams, NHS organisations, and Public Health England teams at both regional and national level.

Set up in 2013 by the North West Directors of Public Health, the 'North West Obesity Task Force' was officially launched as Food Active in 2014. Delivered by public health charity, Health Equalities Group, the programme focusses on advocacy, targeted interventions, research and strategic partnerships to drive forward policy calls. Food Active supports local authorities across the region both on an individual level but also in taking a collaborative approach to promoting healthy weight

Interest in adopting Food Active's Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight has grown exponentially since 2017, and we are now commissioned by many public health teams from outside the North West of England, as local leadership is increasingly recognised as playing a key role in developing healthier places and spaces.



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