

PLEDGE FOR A

healthy &
active future

**THE PLEDGE FOR A
HEALTHY AND ACTIVE
FUTURE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**FOOD
ACTIVE**

HEALTH
EQUALITIES
GROUP



Promoting healthier weight in children and the role of schools

Data from the National Child Measurement Programme indicates that nationally, the prevalence of Reception children living with obesity is 10.1%. This figure rises to 23.4% by the time children leave school in Year 6.

Obesity in childhood can result in longer term impacts on children’s physical health and can have a significant impact on children’s mental well-being due to the stigma and bullying associated they may experience from their peers. Early action is important as this can prevent the onset of these long-term health problems which is beneficial for population health and the sustainability of the NHS.

The good news is that there are many opportunities across society to support children to maintain a healthier weight.

In 2019 Public Health England mapped common areas for action as part of a whole systems approach to obesity (see Figure 1). This includes schools and childcare settings, which can play an important role by creating an environment that promotes healthier choices to their pupils, their families and own staff members. The Pledge for a Healthy and Active Future (PHAF), a prevention framework developed by Food Active, can be used as a tool to support school settings and promote wider partnership working across the system.

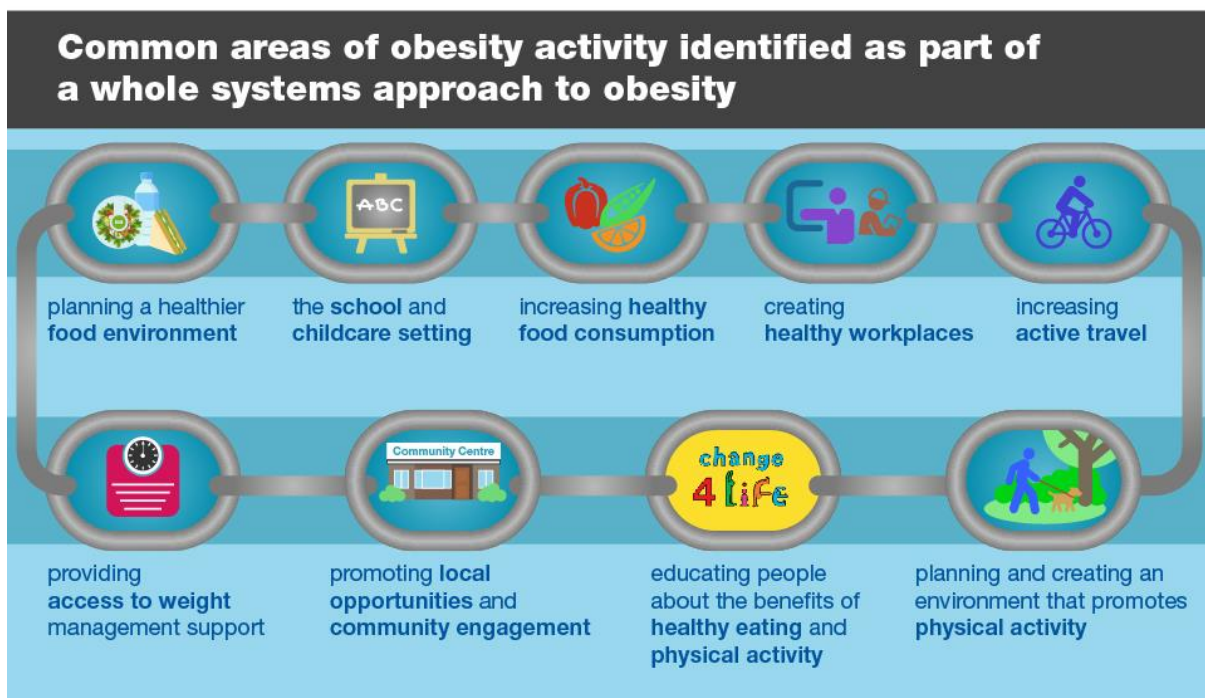


Figure 1: Public Health England (2019) Health matters: whole systems approach to obesity.

What is the Pledge for a Healthy and Active Future?

The PHAF is designed to support system-wide approaches to healthier weight, as schools will be pledging to support their local authority's Healthy Weight Declaration, in addition to working towards a set of 12 commitments which are designed to make it easier for pupils to eat healthy and be active during the school day.

The commitments were co-developed with a group of schools and designed to be high-level and achievable, but also impactful.

The PHAF is backed by a Support Pack, which includes:

- Step by step guidance
- Consultation resources; including staff and parent workshop plans and consultation surveys
- Communication resources; including template letters, assemblies,
- Case study.

The PHAF aims to bring people together for a common vision. It can help explain to parents why schools have adopted certain policies to promote healthier weight. For example: why schools have adopted a healthy birthday policy; why schools have challenged ice cream vans parking outside the school gates; or, why schools have introduced more physically active learning as part of the school day. It can also be an opportunity to build on, highlight and celebrate existing work already taking place in a school that is supportive of health, such as participation in sport or engagement with the Healthy Schools Programme.

The initial concept of the Pledge was how can local authorities engage schools in the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight. Food Active and the Health and Wellbeing Service at Leeds City Council set out to develop a schools-version of the Declaration, initially co-developing a range of commitments with a group of schools.

One school successfully adopted the pledge last year, hosting a fantastic launch event with a market stall of school meal tasters, DIY fruit skewer station, games and activities and much more (pictured below). You can read more about the launch [here](#).



Benefits of adopting the Pledge for a Healthy and Active Future

There are lots of benefits of signing up to the PHAF, including:

- a clear commitment and direction in taking a whole school approach to promoting healthy weight.
- aligning of policy and practice to support pupils, staff and wider community members to eat well and be physically active.
- removing barriers to healthy weight and creating a levelling of the playing field for all pupils; driving down inequalities.
- a platform to consider the wider determinants of overweight and obesity, for example corporate sponsorship, marketing and advertising and food insecurity.
- an opportunity to address other priorities where there are converging agendas, for example sustainability/ climate change.
- providing a link between the National Child Measurement Programme and your school's role in offering support for families.
- an opportunity to learn from other education settings and to share good practice.

Feedback from the PHAF Pilot also suggested further benefits, including:

The biggest thing I'd say is that it's just easy now, it is just easy... there's no room for arguments or discussions, especially for new staff...When your reason is to ensure that children are physically physical, physically active and healthy, you can't really argue with that. The reasoning behind it is so sound and why we're doing it

The big thing we changed is the school ethos...We've changed the school badge, we've changed the school motto, and that all started from the PHAF, and thinking actually what kind of school do we want to be? That all came from the start of PHAF.

The Core Commitments

1. **Leadership:** Ensure commitment across school from leadership level downwards, identifying champion(s) to embed a preventative approach to unhealthy weight, using sensitive, inclusive, evidence-based messages. Offering appropriate training and/or support to address behavioural, environmental and cultural risk factors in a non-stigmatising manner.
2. **Community:** Work with and engage the whole school community to ensure that the environment and local area is supportive of a healthy weight. This may include working with shops, food/ice cream vans or supporting a safe environment for active travel.
3. **Overall wellbeing:** Support the health and wellbeing of our staff, pupils and parents by increasing knowledge and understanding the benefits of a healthy weight by challenging attitudes to food and drink to create a culture that promotes healthy weight, eating well and being active.
4. **Healthy Schools:** To engage with the Healthy Schools Programme (or similar) to assess all areas of health and wellbeing and work towards good or outstanding for the healthy eating and physical activity sections.
5. **Policies:** Ensure policies and guidance in relation to physical activity, food choices* and behaviours (to include healthy packed lunches) are effectively communicated and shared with the whole school community. The school is able to demonstrate that policies* are reflected in everyday practice.
6. **Active travel:** Commit to developing environments and interventions promoting physically active lifestyles, including active travel (such as cycling, scooting, and walking) to school/work, in support of our school travel plan.



7. **Campaigns:** Support relevant local and national public health campaigns such as Change4life, Health Week, the British Nutrition Foundation's Healthy Eating Week, Walk to School Week, Living Street Scootember and National School Meals Week.
8. **30 active minutes:** Support the government ambition of ensuring that all children achieve 30 active minutes within the school day and to proactively encourage parental engagement to achieve the additional 30 minutes outside of the timetabled school day.
9. **Food provision:** Through engaging and supporting our school catering service, ensure that healthier choices are available, appealing, affordable and encouraged, with limited access to high calorie, low-nutrient foods and drinks. This applies to breakfast, break time, vending machines, lunch, afterschool, in the staff room, special occasions, birthdays and fund raising events.
10. **Water:** Promote and provide access to free drinking water for all staff and pupils. Encourage staff to model drinking water in lessons to encourage pupils.
11. **Curriculum:** To ensure that healthy eating, food, growing, cooking physical activity and physical education are delivered robustly in-line with the National Curriculum but also used as a vehicle for learning and in other subject areas.
12. **Data:** The school monitors and uses data to evaluate the impact of work that promotes a healthy weight of the whole school community. This could include National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP), school meal take up data, health behaviours surveys (My Health My School) or other local health data.



What support is available?

The PHAF support pack has been designed to provide schools with all the resources and support they need to adopt the PHAF. These resources for schools are listed below, and the Support Pack is also accompanied by a guide for Local Authority to engage and support schools in adoption of the PHAF.

These resources are available as editable Word and PowerPoint documents, so they can be customised with school logos and other useful information. The support pack and materials can be purchased by local authorities on an annual license basis. For more information, see the final page of this summary.

Supporting resources include:

- Step by step guide
- PHAF checklist
- Action planning and monitoring tool
- Template press release
- Staff and governor's consultation survey
- Staff engagement workshop
- Parents and carers consultation survey
- Parents and carers engagement workshop
- Primary assembly
- Secondary assembly
- Social media resources
- Letters to local businesses
- Draft artwork
- And much more!

What are schools' experiences of adopting the Pledge for a Healthy and Active Future?

In 2021-22, three schools across Leeds were involved in the pilot of the PHAF. This included support from Food Active and the Health and Wellbeing Service at Leeds City Council, which included catch up meetings every 6-8 weeks to track progress and share learning across the pilot schools.

In March 2022, St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School successfully adopted the PHAF and hosted a fantastic launch event. This case study aims to share their learning and experiences of adoption, and any advice for schools who are considering the PHAF.



St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Jack Waddell, Year 1&2 teacher and PSHE Lead

What are the benefits of adopting the PHAF?

- Adopting the PHAF has helped us tackle areas where we have previously struggled with, such as packed lunches and drinking water.
- It's also given us an excuse to make change – we can say now 'we've adopted the PHAF so we need to explore xyz'. It has also meant changes are easier to implement – there is no room for arguments or discussions. When your reason is to ensure that children are physically physical, physically active and healthy, you can't really argue with that.
- It has given us a leg up to go for Healthy Schools, which is not something we have ever thought achievable before. The PHAF helps to break it down much more than Healthy Schools does and makes it much more manageable.
- Going through the process of adoption is really simple, its made very easy with all the resources and support your given. It's not onerous or hard, its actually quite enjoyable because you feel like you are making a difference.
- The PHAF has helped us to identify some easy fixes that we never knew were easy fixes – which means you start to see the difference very quickly.

What are some of the biggest changes you've seen at your school?

- One of the biggest things we've changed is our school ethos. We've changed the school badge, we've changed the school motto, and that all started from the PHAF, and thinking actually what kind of school do we want to be?
- It has helped changed staff culture. There are no fizzy drinks, eating or drinking in front of kids, we all drink water, there's no food consumed in front of kids, apart from if it's the fruit the kids are allowed at break time. We also brought in that when teachers are outside at breaktime and dinnertime, they're encouraged now to play games with the kids. I think it's the same in most schools; they would just stand and watch, but now they're involved.

How much resource did you have to allocate to drive the PHAF forward?

There was some resistance from staff initially, however with time this eased and again when the reasoning behind adopting the PHAF is so sound, its hard to argue against prioritising pupil's health and wellbeing.

What were some of the biggest barriers you experienced?

Get everyone involved at the start of your action planning process, collect a wide range of options through a staff survey so they feel involved and can share their ideas or concerns. You could even hold this as a meeting item at weekly or monthly staff meetings to continually hear feedback and involve staff in the process. This is a marathon, not a sprint, so try to see even small steps as progress.

What are your key pieces of advice for schools considering the PHAF?

- ✓ Ensure you secure support from headteachers on the PHAF before progressing; not just their support but get them involved in the process, too.
- ✓ Set aside time to dedicate to progressing the PHAF, and monitoring. This could be somewhere between 30 mins to one hour in the first instance and following adoption this may become a fortnightly task or less time needed. Try your best to ensure this time is protected, as otherwise it can slip down priority lists in favour of time sensitive jobs!
- ✓ Utilise the Action Planning and Monitoring Tool; this was identified as a really useful tool to compile notes and reflect on progress and highlight action plans going forward.
- ✓ Designating a PHAF coordinator and ensuring staff know about it as early as possible in the process can help to hold you accountable – this can help with preventing it going down your list of priorities or getting lost in the chaos of daily school life.

PLEDGE FOR A

healthy & active future

Summer 2023

For more information on how local authorities can access the PHAF and supporting materials, please email info@foodactive.org.uk

To find out more about the local authority declaration on healthy weight, [please click here](#).

**FOOD
ACTIVE**

HEALTH
EQUALITIES
GROUP

