


<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee</p> <p style="text-align: center;">9th May 2024</p>	
<p>Report of: Robin Beattie, Director of Strategy, Transformation and Improvement</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Scrutiny Challenge Session on Child Healthy Weight</p>	

Executive Summary

This report sets out the findings and recommendations from the Scrutiny Challenge Session on child healthy weight. The report makes eight recommendations for agreement by the Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Recommendations:

The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee (CESSC) is recommended to:

1. Note the attached CESSC Scrutiny Review Report and agree the recommendations;
2. Agree to submit the attached report to the Mayor and Cabinet for executive response to the recommendations;

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This paper submits the report and recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session on child healthy weight in the borough.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 To take no action. This is not recommended as the scrutiny report brings together a wide range of evidence to put forward robust recommendations strengthening the boroughs whole systems approach to healthy weight.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Tower Hamlets has high rates of excess weight, with 42.7% of children aged 10-11 classed as overweight. Having excess weight in childhood has a range of negative consequences on both mental and physical health, it increases the risk of becoming an overweight adult which in turn leads to an increased

risk of premature mortality. There are also correlations between excess weight and poverty, as such work to promote healthy weight for all children in Tower Hamlets should be a key priority.

3.2 Nationally child excess weight is a serious Public Health concern, health problems associated with being overweight cost the NHS in excess of £6.1 billion every year. The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) has been mandated in response to this since 2006-7 measuring and recording the height and weight of children in reception and year 6, to provide local intelligence. Locally, Tower Hamlets has piloted two projects which may reduce levels of excess weight: introducing universal free school meals in secondary schools and improving communication letters for the NCMP.

3.3 The Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee undertook a challenge session on the 21st November 2023. The Sub-Committee was keen to scrutinise Tower Hamlets' whole systems approach to supporting child healthy weight, by:

- Understanding the current picture of child healthy weight in Tower Hamlets, through existing data
- Understanding what progress the borough has made to reduce levels of child excess weight
- Identify what other actions can be taken to reduce rates of child excess weight in Tower Hamlets
- Identify why children from some population groups may be less likely to be a healthy weight and any potential interventions

3.4 To inform the review, evidence was gathered through the challenge session with committee members, co-optees and partners across the council including, Public Health, Childrens and Leisure services. Further several site visits were carried out at schools across the borough with visits to the Town Hall from a key youth ambassadors forum. The challenge session involved a range of stakeholders including:

- CESSC Members
- HASSC Members
- Council officers (Public Health, Leisure, Education and Scrutiny)
- A Headteacher

3.5 The Scrutiny review resulted in the committee making the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

Monitor the uptake of Free School Meals to identify and remove barriers and ensure *all children* can access these.

Recommendation 2:

Ensure that youth services meet our aims around healthy eating, including through their food offer, inclusion of physical activity and training for youth workers.

Recommendation 3:

Ensure children are engaged in food production from growing to cooking to eating, for example by co-ordinating work across schools and sharing best practice from the Healthy Families Programme.

Recommendation 4:

Work in partnership across the council and externally i.e., with schools to maximise children's access to green spaces, exercise and sports facilities. Consider any opportunities which may arise through the in-sourcing of leisure services.

Recommendation 5:

Consider using food ambassadors to promote healthy eating and provide information on recipes which are culturally relevant.

Understand that food and eating are individually and culturally specific and sensitive.

Recommendation 6:

Review existing social spaces for young people in the borough and investigate any levers the council has to provide or encourage the provision of social spaces for young people that are not food outlets. Continue efforts to make fast food outlets healthier.

Recommendation 7:

Ensure that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities can benefit from healthy food provision and access sports and exercise where there are additional barriers. Utilising tools such as EIAs to identify potential risks and barriers to this group.

Recommendation 8:

Research the needs of underweight children and those who may have eating disorders, especially being conscious of the potential impact of messaging on these groups.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The report considers inequalities issues for those with a disability, those of racial and religious groups, and different sexes. Making recommendations to ensure that those with different needs due to their protected characteristics can benefit from a range of positive interventions in Tower Hamlets including Free School Meals and exercise provision.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 NONE

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report asks for the recommendations from the CESSC Scrutiny Report to be agreed.
- 6.2 Costing regarding the implementation of the recommendations have not been provided. These will need to be met from existing resources or where unable to do so, gain approval for existing funding through the appropriate governance arrangements.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 Section 2B of the National Health Service Act 2006 requires each local authority to take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of people in its area. These steps may include providing information and advice and providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living.
- 7.2 This report demonstrates the Council's compliance with the above duties in relation to healthy weight for children.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

- State NONE if none.

Appendices

- Scrutiny Report on Child Healthy Weight

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of "Background Papers" used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Or state N/A