



Healthier behaviour outcome:

Healthy Weight

This information sheet provides your school with suggestions to support your work on South West Healthy Schools Plus. It includes background information about healthy weight, helps you select actions which will bring about healthier behaviour outcomes, identifies early success indicators and signposts to key resources.

Background Information

South West Healthy Schools Plus can help your school make a useful contribution to tackling obesity by encouraging children and young people to adopt healthier behaviour with regard to healthy eating and increasing levels of physical activity.

In Britain today it is estimated that a third of children and young people are overweight or obese and without action this figure is predicted to rise to two thirds by 2050¹. This means that the majority of schools in the South West have significant numbers of children and young people who are already overweight or obese, or are likely to become so in the future.

These children and young people are more likely to suffer from chronic disease and long-term ill health. This might include diabetes, heart problems, breathing difficulties, cancers, joint and movement problems, depression and low self-esteem. Also, obese children are more likely to become obese adults, resulting in an escalation of their health problems as they get older.

At the same time, there are a number of children and young people in our schools who are underweight and there are other groups of children and young people with eating disorders. Therefore the focus of activity should be on increasing the number of children and young people who have a healthy weight. There are clear links between this topic and Emotional Health and Well-being.

The following facts and figures also help illustrate some of the key issues a school should consider in helping children and young people to maintain a healthy weight:

- 52% of primary aged children walk to school and this figure drops to 41% once they reach secondary school²
- Nationally, less than half of all children and young people have a school lunch. (41% have a school lunch in primary and 38% in secondary)
- Not all children and young people with known Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) take up this option (in primary, of the 16% entitled to FSME, there is 13% take-up and in secondary, of the 13% entitled to FSME, there is a 9.5% take-up).

Possible Actions (Evidence Based or Good Practice Principle led)

South West Healthy Schools Plus can help your school make a useful contribution to tackling issues around healthy weight. It focuses on bringing about actual changes in behaviour through increased knowledge, skill development and in some cases, attitudinal change. Actions that address these three elements could feature in your school's plans and should result in healthier behaviour outcomes.

Evidence Based Practice

Your school should follow, where possible, activities which have been proven to work. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) aims to ensure that the promotion of good health and patient care in local health communities is in line with the best available evidence of effectiveness. Schools are recommended to look at the site for details. NICE has reviewed all the available research about what works on the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight children.

¹Department of Health (2008) Healthy weight, healthy lives: a cross Government strategy for England.

²Department for Transport (2006) National Travel Survey www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/statistics/datatablespublications/personal/mainresults/nis2006/

It highlights the need to:

“... ensure children and young people regularly take part in physical activities that they enjoy – and can also do outside school – as well as encouraging them to walk or cycle to school. Healthy foods and drinks should be promoted and children should eat meals (including packed lunches) in a pleasant, sociable environment.”³

Follow Good Practice Led Principles

As explained in the information sheet **Selecting Actions and Carrying Out Baseline Surveys**, schools will sometimes develop their own actions where evidence based actions do not exist. In such cases, it is essential that your school develops a rationale which clearly shows the steps from action to behaviour change, leading to a healthier behaviour outcome.

Example

Healthier Behaviour Outcome:

Increase in the number of children and young people who have a school meal, eat more fruit and vegetables or eat a healthier packed lunch.

Action:

Involve children and young people in the development of a programme of activities that co-ordinate, raise awareness of, and enhance the food culture within the school.

Rationale:

Healthier food consumption plays an important part in supporting children and young people to achieve a healthy weight. A Whole School Approach, involving children and young people and catering and teaching staff, will transform the school food culture, by providing access to healthy food, growing and cooking. By developing an appropriate healthy food policy and implementing an action plan with dedicated champions, the school will see an increase in school meal take-up and healthier eating at lunchtimes and break times.

Note:

When following an action that follows good practice led principles it is important that it is evaluated carefully. If successful the action will be added to the evidence base of what works.

Baseline Survey

Before taking any action, your school will carry out a baseline survey to establish current levels of behaviour. This will be the starting point from which to plot progress. After an action has been completed, a follow up survey will take place to show how well actions have worked. This will enable your school to build up its own evidence base. Over a period of time, this approach will provide your school with a clearer picture of what actions are most successful.

When you plan a baseline survey remember that you are not starting from scratch. Try to use any information already available in your school, such as data from the Ofsted reporting system or from your previous Healthy Schools work. You can supplement this by asking questions in a written format (questionnaires) and/or by talking to groups to hear their views (interviews or focus groups).

Sources of Baseline Information

- data from Reception and Year 6 weighing and measuring⁴
- school meal uptake data
- data from the South West Public Health Observatory on weight
- uptake of meals from children and young people eligible for free school meals
- information provided in physical activity diaries
- school Travel Plan surveys
- PE & Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) data
- modes of travel to school
- amount of Physical Activity offered (within curriculum)
- amount of Physical Activity offered (before and after school).

Healthier Behaviour Outcomes and Early Success Indicators

Schools will need time to bring about healthier behaviour and you will need to monitor how your actions are working. You will do this by focusing on early success indicators, which will help you capture data along this path. The first early success indicators are likely to be process indicators.

³ National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2006) Obesity Guidance on the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children.

New policies, curriculum innovations and staff training are examples of actions that are necessary in order to bring about healthier behaviour but do not themselves show healthier behaviour – hence they are ‘process’ indicators. Later there will be impact indicators, such as changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, all of which lead, in time, to the final healthier behaviour outcomes.

Examples of Healthier Behaviour Outcomes

This work could focus on increasing the number of children and young people who:

- walk/cycle to school
- take part in ‘take 10’ / ‘wake and shake’ or similar programmes
- take part in physical activity within the curriculum

- take part in physical activity (with all children and targeting certain children)
- take part in physical activity before and after school
- have a school meal
- have a free school meal if eligible
- eat more fruit and vegetables
- eat a healthier packed lunch
- increase participation in growing activities
- increase participation in cooking activities.

You should identify school healthier behaviour outcomes which will be the main targets you will work towards to gain South West Healthy School Plus Status. You are encouraged to be ambitious but you will also need to be clear about what your school can realistically achieve.

Examples of Early Success Indicators

Process indicators

Increased levels of parent/carer participation in cooking activities

Increased levels of parent/carer participation in physical activity

Development of a better dining room environment

Provision of cycle sheds

Increased numbers of children, young people, staff and parent/carers who are involved in the development of a programme of food related activities

Lunchbox policy development

School meal supervisor training

Provision of additional physical activity clubs

Impact indicators – signs of healthier behaviours

Uptake of school meals

Increase in cycling to school

Increase in walking to school

Increased knowledge of what constitutes a healthy balanced diet

Increased participation in physical activity clubs

Increase in healthier packed lunches

Resources

The following are a selection of information sources which your school can draw on when choosing and developing your actions. The list should be used as a starting point rather than considered as a definitive list of recommended resources.

National Healthy Schools Programme Resources

The NHSP has a range of resources on its website - www.healthyschools.gov.uk/Resources

- NHSP (2008) Guidance for Schools on Healthy Eating
- NHSP (2008) Healthy Eating Criteria Map
- NHSP (2007) Physical Activity Guidance Documents (booklet A and booklet B)
- NHSP (2008) Physical Activity Criteria Map
- NHSP Additional Materials to support PA Booklets.

Government Resources

NICE

www.nice.org.uk

NICE (2006) Obesity Guidance on the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children.

NICE (2008) Schools and evidence based action Lightening the Load: Tackling Overweight and Obesity, National Heart Forum 2007.

Change 4 Life

www.nhs.uk/Change4Life/Pages/default.aspx

DCSF

Teachernet Tackling the Growth in Childhood Obesity 20 October 2008.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/healthyliving/obesity

Department of Health

www.dh.gov.uk

There are a number of publications produced by the Department of Health and available from:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/index.htm

DCSF and DH (2008) Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives:

A Cross-Government Strategy for England. Chapter 3 Achieving the New Ambition sets out the role schools can play.

DH (2004) At least five a week: Evidence of the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health.

A report from the Chief Medical Officer.

DH (2008) National Child Measurement Programme Guidance for Schools 2008/09.

The NHS Information Centre has produced a report and statistical tables on obesity, diet and physical activity (2009).

www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/health-and-lifestyles/obesity/statistics-on-obesity-physical-activity-and-diet:-england-february-2009

Extended Schools

www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools

The Extended Schools Programme provides many avenues for exploring physical activity initiatives.

Food Standards Agency

www.foodstandards.gov.uk

Gives the Government's nutritional and food safety advice. See especially the Eatwell Plate.

South West Public Health Observatory

www.healthyweight4children.org.uk

An information network and evidence base for anyone involved in child weight issues in the South West.

Other Websites

British Heart Foundation

www.bhf.org.uk/publications

Includes facts, figures and practical advice about physical activity and young people, including the Active Schools Pack For Primary Schools.

Safe Routes to School

www.sustrans.org.uk

Provides information on travel plans to tackle local issues, including information on 'walking buses', secure cycle storage, locker provision and incentives for walking or cycling.

School Food Trust (SFT)

www.schoolfoodtrust.org.uk

Provides practical examples of how the whole school meal experience can be improved whilst ensuring that minimum food standards are met, including information on the Let's Get Cooking initiative.

Soil Association

www.soilassociation.org

Has a range of education resources and includes information about the Food For Life school meals project.

Sport England

www.sportengland.org

Provides details of initiatives.

Youth Sport Trust (YST)

www.youthsporttrust.org.uk

Provides programmes and resources to increase physical activity in schools.