



To: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board

Date: 11 November 2020

Subject: Coventry's response to obesity in light of national concerns around COVID-19

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 This paper provides information on Coventry's response to obesity in light of national concerns around COVID-19. It covers why obesity is an important issue; the current local and national figures; factors affecting obesity; the national, regional and local direction; and current work to support the population of Coventry in achieving a healthy weight. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown has the potential to increase population risk of obesity and we know that obesity increases the risk of adverse outcomes of COVID-19. The paper outlines the Coventry Health Challenge, which is targeting those at highest risk of adverse outcomes from COVID-19, and describes some of the work supporting healthy weight across the city with a focus on children and families.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) is asked to:

- Note this paper's findings;
- Consider how all Scrutiny members and Cabinet members can identify and strengthen their portfolio contribution to reducing obesity in the city; and
- Support the Coventry Health Challenge and act as Member Champions within the council and wider community.

3 Background on obesity and health

- 3.1 Health outcomes – Living with obesity reduces life expectancy by an average of 9 years and increases the chance of serious diseases such as certain cancers (e.g. 3x more likely to develop colon cancer), high blood pressure (a risk factor for heart disease), and diabetes (5x more likely to develop type 2 diabetes).
- 3.2 COVID-19 – Being overweight or living with obesity is associated with an increased risk of hospitalisation, severe symptoms, and death from COVID-19. These risks increase as an individual's body mass index (BMI) increases. PHE states that having a BMI of 35 to 40 may increase the risk of death from COVID-19 by 40%, while a BMI of over 40 could increase the risk by 90%.

4 Local and national figures on overweight and obesity

- 4.1 Adult overweight and obesity – 62.9% of Coventry adults (aged 18+) were classified as overweight or obese in 2018/19. This is not statistically significantly different to England average (62.3%) and West Midlands regional average (65.6%). This figure has remained approximately stable since 2015.
- 4.2 Childhood overweight and obesity – 38% of Coventry's Year 6 pupils were overweight or obese in 2018/19. This is not statistically different to the West Midlands regional average but is higher than the England average of 35%. There does appear to be a gradual small

rise in the percentage of Year 6 pupils who are overweight or obese over time at local, regional and national level, with the percentage rising from 34% in Coventry in 2007/08 to the current 38%. Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to become adults who are overweight or obese.

5 Factors affecting obesity

- 5.1 **Deprivation** – Obesity is more common in people living in deprived areas. This is linked to a range of associated factors including local lack of availability of healthier food choices, cost of healthier food choices, time pressures, lack of cooking knowledge, and peer influence. A child living in the 10% most deprived areas in England is more than twice as likely to be obese than a child living in the least deprived 10% of areas in England. Data over the years suggests that, for children aged 10 to 11, obesity figures have tended to improve or remain relatively stable for those in less deprived communities, but have increased for those living in the most deprived communities.
- 5.2 **Familial** – Children with two overweight parents are 2.2 times more likely to be obese. Children with two obese parents are 12 times more likely to be obese. This means childhood obesity is not a separate problem to adult obesity. A holistic approach that benefits families, adults, and children is necessary.
- 5.3 **Ethnic background** – Black adults are the ethnic group with the highest levels of overweight and obesity. Adults from the Chinese ethnic group are the least likely to be overweight or obese. People from certain ethnic groups, such as south Asians, have a higher susceptibility to some diseases linked to excess weight, such as type 2 diabetes. Children from most minority ethnic groups – particularly Black African, Caribbean, and Pakistani children – in England are more likely to be obese than White British children.
- 5.4 **Gender** – The prevalence of obesity is similar among men and women, but men are more likely to be overweight.
- 5.5 **Work stress** – The likelihood of obesity in an individual increases as periods of work stress increase.
- 5.6 **Effects of lockdown** – During lockdown, respondents reported that they were cooking food from scratch and eating healthy foods, but snacking on cakes, biscuits, confectionery, and savoury snacks more often.¹ In the West Midlands, a survey by Sport England found that 34.5% of respondents were doing more physical activity than before the lockdown restrictions, and 35.0% were doing the same amount. This is compared with 35.9% of respondents in England doing more physical activity, and 29.5% doing the same amount. Sport England reported that, nationally, while ‘a third of adults [in England did] 30 minutes or more of physical activity (at a level that raised their breathing rate) on five or more days a week’², inequalities were still replicated or even exacerbated. Groups who found it harder to be active before lockdown, such as women, older adults, people of BAME background, and people from lower-socio-economic groups, still found it more difficult than others to be active. It is anticipated that, on balance, COVID-19 and lockdown will result in increased levels of overweight and obesity across England.

6 National direction

- 6.1 The Government published ‘Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives’ in late July 2020. The strategy acknowledges that a combination of the following is required to tackle obesity:
 - The environment we live in
 - The information we are given to inform our choices

¹ PHE Insight Excess weight and COVID-19

² Sport England (2020) Coronavirus: The story so far http://www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/coronavirus#the_story_so_far

- The choices we are offered
- The influences that shape these choices; and
- Individual effort.

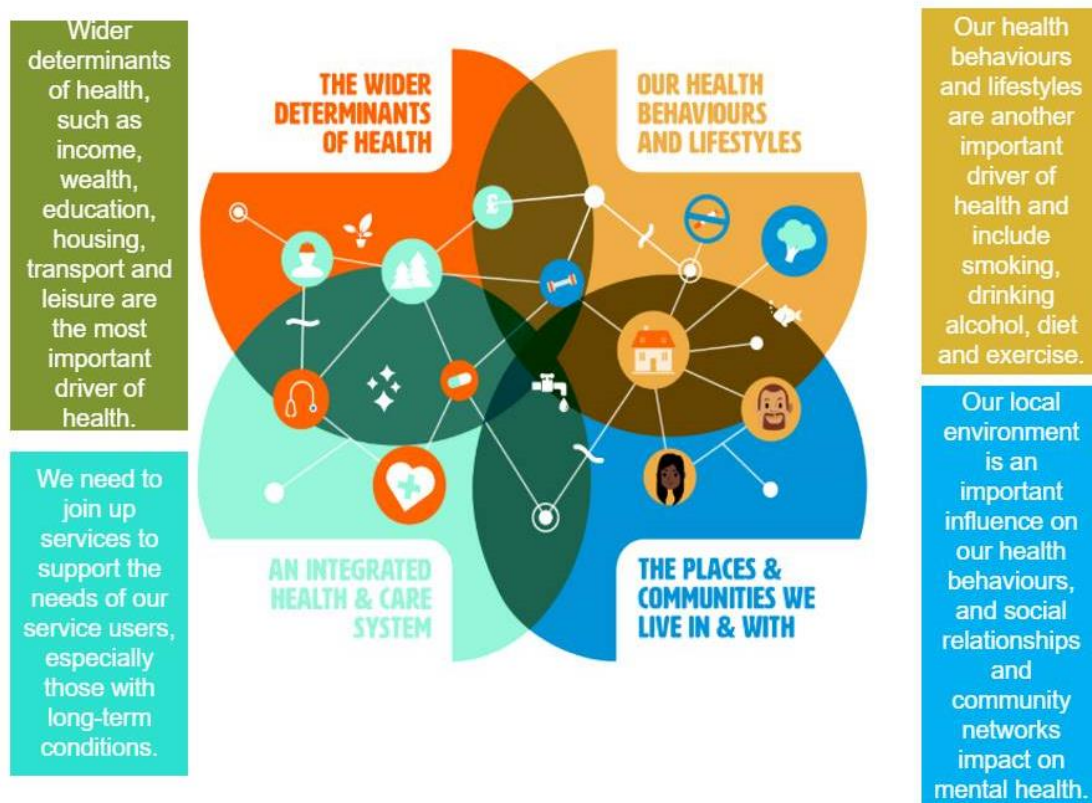
- 6.2 The strategy sets out plans to deliver the Better Health campaign; promise of expansion of weight management services and the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme; carry out consultation on front of pack nutritional labelling and calorie labelling for alcohol; introduce calorie labelling for large food outlets; legislate on multi-buy and location promotions of high fat, salt and sugar foods (HFSS); legislate on high fat, salt and sugar food advertising on television and online, including a ban on television and online advertisements for HFSS foods before 9 pm; and consult on online advertising of HFSS foods. NHS weight management services will be expanded to reach more people, and GPs will be encouraged to prescribe exercise and more social activities to help people keep fit as part of the plans.
- 6.3 In response to the Government's strategy, the Obesity Health Alliance, a coalition of 45 organisations aiming to influence national policy, called for more treatment and support for people living with obesity; reformulation of food (including infant food); working with employers to improve the workplace wellbeing offer; and global action on the international brands that are behind our food brands.

7 Regional direction

- 7.1 Coventry is part of the WMCA Wellbeing Board, sharing the ambition to promote healthy weight and wellbeing as the norm and make it easier for people to choose healthier diets and active lifestyles, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, culture or socio-economic group.
- 7.2 The board outlines three main outcome areas, namely healthy weight, physical activity, and mental health and wellbeing. Five pillars of actions have been identified, addressing five areas:
- System leadership;
 - Community engagement;
 - Collection of evidence;
 - Supporting delivery pathways; and
 - The long-term reshaping of the current obesogenic environment.

8 Local direction

- 8.1 The focus in Coventry is on a system-wide effort to support our population in achieving a healthier weight. The Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2017, 'Shape Up Coventry' emphasised the need to "**change our environment, our behaviour as organisations, as well as changing community, family and individual behaviour.**" Importantly, it is recognised that weight loss campaigns alone are far from sufficient to support this change.



8.2 **Coventry’s Childhood Obesity Alliance** was formed in 2016 to support the publication of the ‘Shape Up Coventry’ report. The Alliance brought together partners from across the city who met last year to review progress and refresh their focus on Early Years and schools. In addition, The Coventry and Warwickshire Place Forum, made up of the two Health and Wellbeing Boards, designated 2019 as the **Year of Wellbeing** to significantly raise the profile of health and wellbeing opportunities for everyone. The mission was to reach every person in Coventry and Warwickshire with a positive wellbeing message that inspires action. The campaign reached more than a million people through activity online and more than 2,000 people made pledges to improve their wellbeing.

9 Coventry’s system-wide response to obesity

9.1 The Coventry Health Challenge

9.1.1 The Coventry Health Challenge is a current community health campaign supported by the Public Health team, focussing on disseminating simple, clear, actionable health messages to key target groups: people who are overweight, over 55s, people with pre-existing health conditions, smokers and BAME groups. These groups were selected as target groups for the campaign based on evidence that they are at greatest risk of serious illness / mortality from Covid-19. The Coventry Health Challenge is based on the [Government’s Better Health campaign](#).

9.1.2 The focus of the campaign is on diet and nutrition, physical activity, smoking cessation and immunisations. We are creating and disseminating new toolkits each month with a different area of focus within these key themes, including links to resources to support residents in improving their health. Materials have also been translated into community languages.

9.1.3 We are challenging residents to work to make improvements to their health in manageable stages. This includes advice and tips, checklists, case studies and signposting to local

services like Coventry Healthy Lifestyles service on social media. These themes are also being echoed in local media coverage, via the Coventry Telegraph paper and several BBC CWR programmes, as well as our seasonal Citivision magazines to reach those groups in our communities that are not online. The Coventry Health Challenge has a dedicated website: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/coventryhealthchallenge>.

9.1.4 We are also disseminating the toolkit is via a range of 'health champions' or 'messengers', i.e. individuals with broad networks and influence within our target groups in the community. These groups include:

- Diabetes Champions;
- Adult Social Care;
- Social Prescribers via Health Exchange;
- Community Messengers; and
- Migrant Health Champions.

9.1.5 Campaign Calendar 2020-2021

- September themes: Campaign Launch: Press and media coverage on 23 September 'national fitness day' with a BBC article to highlight a local case study - a resident's weight management journey with the Healthy Lifestyle Service. Themes: Diet and nutrition, physical activity, flu campaign
- October themes: Stoptober, diet and nutrition, physical activity - flu reminder
- November themes: Long Term Conditions self-care (diet/exercise) and public reassurance that primary care and acute services are Covid secure and open for business. Link to World Diabetes day and our local diabetes prevention programme registration - Healthier You: NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, flu reminder
- December themes: Diet and nutrition – food swaps over the festive season, alcohol awareness, flu reminder
- January themes: Diet and nutrition, physical activity and smoking, flu reminder
- February themes: Immunisations, Diet and nutrition, physical activity and smoking. Link to National Heart Month
- March themes: Health challenge health check! How have the public engaged with the campaign? What have been our key learning points in terms of approaches to health inequalities and culturally competent messaging? How well were we able to maximise the use of champions to build reach and impact?

9.2 Active travel

9.2.1 This is in line with the Government's strategy of influencing the environment we live in, using 'planning policies to ensure it is easy to walk, cycle, or take transport to shops and markets that sell a diverse food offer.'

9.2.2 To promote active travel, the Council is using Government funding to **reallocate road space** in some parts of the city to pedestrians and cyclists. This is done by creating new pedestrian and cycle zones and by installing pop-up cycle lanes and 'modal filters', such as bus gates, to remove through traffic from some roads.

9.2.3 Consultation on **Coundon cycleway** has been completed and work is about to commence. It will be Coventry's first segregated two-way cycle lane, and potentially the start of developing a cycle route network in the city.

9.2.4 Work is under way to help Coventry's local businesses, schools, hospital, and communication organisations to install **cycle parking spaces** on their premises for free.

9.2.5 Public health, sports development, community resilience and transport teams have collaborated with cycling organisations to offer targeted cycling activity in the community over the summer and autumn. **Go Ride summer activities** for children were provided at, and promoted by, family hubs and food banks over the holidays to target areas of health needs, in addition to open access sessions at leisure centres. The sessions were well received and focussed on learning to ride and developing cycle skills to help build confidence in cycling on roads. The British Cycling coach captured case studies on teaching young people living with long-term conditions how to ride too.

9.2.6 **Free cycle training** has also been provided for adults (aged 16+) over the summer and autumn to support people to learn to cycle, improve their skills and confidence. There were over 400 registrations for children's and adults cycling activities at 10 venues from August – October. Further Go Ride coaching activity is being delivered in schools by British Cycling in term time, which complements the Bikeability offer provided by the Council in primary schools. Public health is also supporting the development of **community cycle clubs** with Cycling UK and Wheels for All Inclusive cycling opportunities with CV Life and Cycling Projects.

9.3 Sport

9.3.1 Over £100m was invested in **new sports and leisure facilities** in Coventry in 2019, including new facilities at The Alan Higgs Centre and a new waterpark and fitness destination, The Wave.

9.3.2 The **Go CV scheme**, which was set up to offer discounts to Coventry residents for the city's arts and sports venues had over 45,000 registrations. Additional discounts are available for families with low income and qualifying benefits, helping to remove some of the financial barriers of taking part in sports and cultural activities. A membership data analysis tool has been built. This will help us to identify gaps in take up and usage across the City that could be overlaid with health data to target promotion more effectively. It is recommended that the data being collected via Go CV membership is further developed to target physical activity promotion in areas of low take up.

9.3.3 Tier 2 and 3 rules provide some exceptions for physical activity and organised sport for children and people living with disabilities, protecting the ability for these to continue once national lockdown is lifted.

9.4 Planning

9.4.1 Planning can help to encourage healthier lifestyle choices. The **Hot Food Takeaway Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)** supports planning policy to limit and apply restrictions to new hot food takeaways. Permission will not be granted if the hot food takeaway falls within a 5-minute walk from the gate(s) of any primary or secondary school in Coventry, or if the neighbourhood has become over concentrated by hot food takeaways. Since the SPD's publication in August 2019, X hot food takeaway applications have been declined.

9.5 Schools and early years

- 9.5.1 **Coventry School nurses** - who are part of the Family Health and Lifestyles Service for Coventry - deliver the **National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP)** and offer a consistent approach to the management of lifestyle concerns related to the (NCMP) results. They offer individual support to parents and families to manage lifestyle concerns and support them to change behaviours (BMI above the 98th centile or when classed as clinically underweight or having shown a dramatic weight loss). They also support schools to meet statutory duties to promote children's health and well-being through the delivery of health and wellbeing sessions in school in order to help children understand how to keep themselves healthy.
- 9.5.2 Coventry School nurses also promote the use of the **Change4Life Food Scanner** app, an interactive resource to encourage children and parents to make healthy food choices by reducing the amount of sugar, fat and salt in the foods they buy, and promote the recommended levels of physical activity. School nurse service forms part of the whole system approach to tackling obesity by supporting children and their families to make healthier choices in order to reduce the risk of preventable ill-health.
- 9.5.3 **Working with school nurses using The Lancaster Model** health needs assessment. 85% of Coventry's primary schools (76 schools) took part in this health needs assessment. The needs assessment asked Year 6 pupils about their habits and concerns. 18% of surveyed pupils said they had major concerns or worries about their weight. School nurses use data from the needs assessment to create plans for schools to support their students. Schools have the option of choosing to use the plan created. The Lancaster Model has run for two years now, in 2018/19 and 2019/20. The Council is picking up on trends and will use the findings to target resources. It would be beneficial if the relevant Scrutiny members could encourage schools to impl the plans created by school nurses.
- 9.5.4 The **Be Active Be Healthy (BABH)** team, which is also part of the Family Health and Lifestyles Service for Coventry, aims to reduce the risk of obesity among children by supporting families to reduce weight and adopt healthier long-term behaviours. The programmes delivered are open to all but targeted to children at risk of putting on excess weight – generally either because the child is overweight or one or both parents are overweight. The service targets those in greater relative deprivation – primarily by working with schools in deprived areas or with higher proportions of children who are obese / overweight (identified by the NCMP programme). The team work across the 0-19 year age range, delivering practical interventions that are underpinned by behaviour change techniques to help ensure sustainable positive change. Following COVID-19 healthy Lifestyle workshops for families have been redesigned into a webinar format and continue to be delivered weekly. The **Start Active Stay Active** early years training has also been redesigned into a webinar format to support to early years practitioners in understanding and helping to implement the Chief Medical Officer guidelines around physical activity for under 5's. In line with COVID compliant guidelines published by the National Governing Body for Group Exercise, the team have been able to continue to deliver weekly pre and post-natal exercise for new mums in a COVID secure environment.
- 9.5.5 Before the pandemic, the **Family Health and Lifestyles Service** delivered weekly workshops in schools, teaching pupils about physical activity, diet, and nutrition. During lockdown, they created webinars for parents on diet and nutrition.
- 9.5.6 **Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education** became compulsory for all schools from September 2020. As part of the curriculum, resources are provided to help schools teach about the characteristics and benefits of an active lifestyle; body image; and eating problems. There is acknowledgement that 'food, weight, and shape may be used as ways of coping with, or communicating about, difficult thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.' A holistic approach is necessary to address our relationship with food. It would be helpful if

the relevant Scrutiny members could review implementation of the new compulsory curriculum on Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and health education from September 2020 in readiness for the delivery deadline of the summer term 2021.

9.5.7 **Normal school sports provision** would have included 21 standalone county events as well as two festivals: Winter & Summer Games. Of the 21 planned standalone events only six went ahead before the covid-19 national lockdown. Alternative provision has been put in place despite Covid-19. There was an A-Z activity which took place every day until the Easter holidays. This was followed by 9 weeklong virtual competitions. For Coventry specifically the participation rates were:

Competition	Number of participants	Number of schools
Athletics	390	33
Cricket	397	36
Tennis	403	31
Dance	185	23
Basketball	387	27
Olymp-mix	1310	31

In the Autumn Term, inter-school competitions are taking place with Coventry Solihull & Warwickshire during September to November 2020, these are for primary and secondary schools across 3 sports: athletics, football and dance. The winning schools in each SGO area will then be forward for county virtual events which will be taking place beginning of December.

9.5.8 Based on the available evidence, breastfeeding appears to provide some level of protection against childhood overweight and obesity. Exclusively breastfed babies had a 34% reduced risk of being overweight during childhood, compared to children exclusively formula-fed. There is also some evidence that babies fed formula have higher insulin levels in their blood which can stimulate fat deposition. All staff members of the Coventry Family Health and Lifestyles Service are trained to UNICEF Baby Friendly standards and audits are performed on a yearly basis. The breastfeeding rates in Coventry are above the National average and increasing. Initiation is above 80% and the prevalence is at above 50%. The following NICE recommendations are implemented in Coventry: education and support of mothers throughout pregnancy and beyond; support and protection of breastfeeding in the workplace; implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative; and implementation of and adherence to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. Various online approaches have been implemented to adapt to the current Covid-19 situation.

9.6 Other offers

9.6.1 **Healthy Lifestyles Coventry** provides support with weight management, healthy diet, giving up smoking, getting more active, cutting down on alcohol and/or improving overall wellbeing.

9.6.2 **Best You** is an app that provides personalised health and wellbeing recommendations regarding healthy eating, healthy weight, and physical activity.

9.6.3 Foleshill is one of the **Priority Places benefitting from Sport England funding**. A programme is in development to address obesity.

Name: Jane Fowles

Job Title: Consultant in Public Health, Coventry City Council

Contact Details: jane.fowles@coventry.gov.uk

Appendices: N/A