

# Healthy weight, healthy futures

Local government action  
to tackle childhood obesity





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# Foreword

Childhood obesity has been described as one of the most serious public health challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by the World Health Organization, while NHS England chief executive Simon Stevens has dubbed it “the new smoking”.

There are signs the rise in obesity rates has started levelling off. But the fact remains: too many children are obese and overweight. Data from the National Child Measurement Programme, carried out in schools, shows one in five 10 and 11-year-olds are obese and one in 10 four and five-year-olds are obese. If you include those who are overweight, the rates rise to a third and a fifth respectively.

Being overweight or obese in childhood has consequences for health in both the short and long term. Emotional and psychological wellbeing can be affected – children can often find themselves being teased and suffering from low self-esteem and anxiety.

But of course obese children are more likely to become obese adults – and that leads to a higher risk of a whole host of health problems including diabetes, cancer and heart disease. In fact, type 2 diabetes, previously thought of as a disease of adults, is increasingly being found in children.

So what can be done about the problem? The Government has been setting out its plans in its child obesity strategy. But local government has already been very active.

The transfer of responsibility for public health in 2013 to councils has sparked a surge in innovative programmes. Some are featured in these case studies. They include councils spread across England, covering both rural and urban environments and with varying levels of deprivation and affluence.

From working with children who are obese and overweight to encouraging children to cut their consumption of sugary drinks, local authorities are showing how child obesity can be tackled.

We must now build on this to make sure the health and wellbeing of children is protected from now on and we look forward to seeing many more such examples of local energy and innovation in the months and years to come, and seeing the measurable impact it will have.

The challenge for us all is not just to develop good practice but to champion and share it.



**Councillor Izzi Seccombe**

Chair, LGA Community Wellbeing Board

# Case studies

## Blackpool Council getting kids to give up fizzy drinks

Blackpool has run a Stoptober-style campaign to get kids to give up fizzy drinks.

- Children commit to stopping drinking pop for 21 days in an attempt to break the habit.
- Focus groups showed half of those who took part were confident they could remain fizzy drink-free in the future.

Reducing consumption of fizzy drinks has become a key part of the fight against obesity – as the whole debate about a sugar tax shows.

But Blackpool has looked to get children to cut their consumption by running a social marketing campaign.

Last autumn the council worked with two schools and two colleges to get pupils aged 11 to 18 to give up fizzy drinks for 21 days and drink water or milk instead. It was based on a programme called Give Up Loving Pop (GULP), which was designed by the north west-based charity Food Active.

Council public health specialist Lynn Donkin says: “The evidence which shows that stopping for this long helps to break a habit. It’s a similar concept to Dry January or Stoptober. You get people to come together and try to make a change en masse.

“We know sugary drinks are not good for you, in term of obesity and also tooth decay. But they are very popular among teenagers. A recent survey of secondary school children in the town found 25 per cent of boys and 16 per cent of girls are having fizzy drinks on most days.

“It’s just something they have got into the habit of doing, which was why we thought this campaign was a great way of getting people talking about how much sugar is in some of these drinks and encouraging them to swap to healthier alternatives.”

The campaign was promoted via social media and through teaching sessions and road shows delivered by school nurses and health staff. To take part students were encouraged to sign up to an online pledge and share “healthy selfies” of them drinking alternative drinks with their friends to try to win tickets to a theme park. One pupil who participated even kept a video diary.

Overall more than 80 young people signed up – although the nature of these campaigns means that it is likely many more people took part.

One of those who did was 11-year-old Lucy Tickle. She was full of praise for how it was organised. She says she was inspired to participate as she felt it would help her to stay fit and health – she loves running.

She completed the challenge, swapping fizzy drinks for water, and even said she did not miss sugary drinks “at all like I thought I would”.

The campaign also received support from teachers. Chris Ibbotson, assistant head teacher at St George’s School, where eight in 10 pupils who signed up managed to complete the challenge, says it was a great way to get children to think about their what they drink. “We’ve got influences from advertising and marketing that overwhelm adults as well as children,” she says. “It’s a hard nut to crack, but we do have to change.”

A post campaign survey is being carried out to find out more detail about the impact, but if a focus group carried out is anything to go by it seems like it was a real success.

Half of the students who took part in the focus group completed the 21-day challenge and afterwards said they felt confident they would be able to carry on not drinking pop. What is more, all of them also reported that they would now look at sugar content when buying drinks.

Ms Donkin says the council is already looking to repeat it. "Other schools have shown an interest so we will definitely do it again. We were really pleased with how it worked out. "The pupils were enthusiastic about it. I guess it came at a great time when there was a lot of debate about sugar in the media. We were fortunate in that sense but I think it was a concept that grabbed their imagination."

But as well as repeating the GULP challenge, the council has also made a statement of intent by signing up to Food Active's Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight. In doing so, it has committed to reducing the amount of sugary drinks available in vending machines at local authority controlled sites, considering financial support for healthier retailers and working with commercial outlets within NHS premises to develop a healthy food and drink policy.

Blackpool Public Health Director Dr Arif Rajpura says the declaration is a "clear commitment" of the council's intent. "We need to change our approach as a society to food, drink and physical activity. This needs strong leadership and bold action both locally and nationally."

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## 'Re-fresh' programme

Blackburn with Darwen Council's 're-fresh' programme started in 2005 and is a partnership between leisure and health, offering people the opportunity to access a huge range of free or subsidised community leisure, health and wellbeing activities, and health and dietary advice. Key achievements included 96 per cent of clients reporting a positive change in their general health and as a result more people are accessing more paid activities.



## London Borough of Haringey creating healthy fast food

- A shop offering healthy fast food has been opened with the help of Haringey Council.
- It offers fried chicken with a difference.
- The service is part of a wider approach which has seen the council bring in partners from across the community.

Fried chicken is one of the most popular fast foods. But the way it is cooked makes it highly calorific and the quality of ingredients is often poor.

In response, Haringey Council is supporting local youngsters to choose a better option by investing in a not-for-profit social enterprise that offers a tasty alternative.

Chicken Town, which is operating from the old fire station in Tottenham Green, serves up high-quality free range chicken which is steamed before being flash-fried and served alongside healthier sides like roast corn, baked sweet potato wedges and coconut rice.

The sugar, fat and salt content of the food is monitored and is significantly less than the high street average. Seasonal vegetables are also provided with every meal and this spring a food growing project with a local primary school will begin where herbs and salad for the restaurant will be produced at school and made with the children.

What is more, it is sold at fast food prices. For example, the restaurant offers £2 daytime 'junior specials' to young people, subsidised by evening trade with customers knowing they are supporting local young people to make positive food choices.

Hadrian Garrard, director of London arts charity Create, says the response from local teenagers has been great. "I am really pleased to see young people coming into the restaurant and choosing to eat food that is better for them."

The initiative has also received the backing of London Food's chair Rosie Boycott. She says: "It's absolutely crucial that we encourage our children to develop healthy food habits so that they can lead happy and fulfilling lives. Chicken Town proves that it is possible to have tasty, succulent chicken, cooked in a wholesome and nutritious way without costing the earth."

The project was supported by £300,000 in loans and grants from the council's Opportunity Investment Fund, which is run in partnership with the Mayor of London's Office. Hundreds of individuals also made contributions totalling £55,000 through a crowd-funding website Kickstarter.

This is just one of a number of ways Haringey is aiming to drive down obesity levels. Key to much of its work – as Chicken Town demonstrates – is the importance of involving the wider community. A major reason for this is the obesity conference, which the council ran last summer to galvanise the support for a collective approach to tackle obesity – across council departments, schools, local NHS, housing associations, the voluntary sector and local businesses. Over 200 people attended.

Councillor Peter Morton, Haringey's Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, says: "What's clear is that the council can't do this alone. We have to work with our partners. The conference was an opportunity to do this, get them engaged and thinking about what needed to be done. It really galvanised local action."

After the conference the Haringey Obesity Alliance was established to put partnership working on a more formal footing. There are now 65 members – all of whom have pledged to play their part in tackling obesity.

This work has helped pave the way for several projects. The Tottenham Hotspur Foundation has set up a 10-week exercise programme for obese and overweight children, while Homes for Haringey, the council's housing management organisation, has reviewed all its 'no ball game' signs and started consulting with residents about taking these down along with investing in play facilities.

Meanwhile, St Mungo's Broadway, which provides support to 200 homeless people in Haringey, has also been active. It ran a Healthy Living Fair last year where it invited council and NHS representatives and the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation to exhibit local services. Among the schemes promoted were the council's Fakeaway project, which teaches people to make healthier versions of their favourite takeaways, such as using healthier pizza bases and sauces with less sugar and fat.

Work has also continued to get outlets signed up to the London-wide Healthier Catering Commitment. This involves food businesses committing to certain standards, including frying food for shorter periods, reducing salt, using lighter mayonnaise and making salad the default option. More than 70 local restaurants and takeaways are taking part.

But the council has not been afraid to get tough either. It is in the process of agreeing new planning rules which will see takeaways banned within 400 metres of a school. Councillor Morton says they decided to act after schools started saying it was "undermining" what they were doing. "As our work with existing outlets shows we are looking to work with businesses to make the healthier choice the easier choice," he adds.

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## SportsLinx

SportsLinx is a Liverpool City council sports development initiative. The project takes a holistic approach towards children's health and wellbeing by assessing the health, fitness and nutritional status of young people in Liverpool. In addition to recording children's weight and height SportLinx uses a variety of methods to measure both health related fitness and skill related fitness.

## Telford and Wrekin Council getting in early

- Telford and Wrekin intervenes early on obesity – one of its schemes even works with pregnant women.
- Mums who have been helped report it has helped them gain control of their weight as well as ensuring they provide a healthy start for their babies.
- There are four separate services for mothers and children.

There has been a weight management scheme running in Telford and Wrekin for over a decade.

In 2005 Healthy Kids for children aged eight to 13 was launched. But as the years have gone by public health officials have sought to help children at an ever earlier stage. So much so that now one of its programmes even works with pregnant women.

Healthy Mums was piloted in 2009 and has since become a crucial part of the Telford and Wrekin Council's approach to tackling obesity.

Midwives refer women with a BMI of over 30 on to the scheme at their first assessment. Currently 50 referrals are being made each month with between a third and half of them accepting the offer of support.

The scheme works with them through the rest of pregnancy and on to when the baby is six months old.

Healthy families team leader Helen Pittson says: "The first scheme worked really well so it has just evolved from there. We first extended it to children aged four and up and then the under fives and then pregnant women. Clearly, the earlier you can intervene the better – so that is what we have tried to do."

Healthy Mums is mainly about providing regular advice and support. A healthy lifestyle's adviser visits them at home once a month. The first session normally starts by discussing diet and by the second goals are set.

Physical activity is also discussed although as pregnancy is not the time for strenuous exercise it often involves walking activities.

The course aims to limit a pregnant woman's weight gain to 10kg and the latest figures show two thirds of women achieve that, while post birth three quarters lose at least 5 per cent of their weight.

"We're pleased with how it has been going," says Ms Pittson. "It's not just about the mothers, it's about them becoming role-models for their children. If they are living healthily that will of course be good for their children."

The experience of Nicola (not her real name) is proof of this. She says she found pregnancy overwhelming and had got into some bad habits, but with the support of her adviser she kept to the 10kg weight gain limit.

She says the support has had a lasting impact on her. "As a result I'm now a more active person and ensure I take part in some form of activity each day. This could be a walk to the shops, playing at the park or jumping around playing with my little girl. "As a family we're a lot healthier and mealtimes are more considered rather than rushed and thrown together."

However, for new mums who do need more help there is the option of joining Henry (Health Exercise and Nutrition in the Really Young). The scheme – part of a national programme – focuses on 0 to five year olds and their parents. It is an eight-week programme delivered in groups at community venues.

During the programme parents learn about everything from how to read food labels and what constitutes healthy portion sizes and snacks to how to juggle life with a toddler. A crèche is provided, but some of the sessions also involve playing games with the children. Telford and Wrekin runs nine courses a year with 10 to 12 families on each with referrals also coming from other sources, including dieticians, children's centre staff and health visitors.

These schemes complement the support provided to older children. Healthy Juniors is for children aged four to seven, while Healthy Kids is the original one. Parents are expected to attend and both last nine weeks with the sessions split into two. The first part is a family fun education sessions – arts and craft-based for the younger kids and quizzes for the older ones. Then in the second part the children take part in exercise, while the parents complete a parenting workshop.

Follow-up reviews take place at three, six and 12 months. The aim is to help the children control their weight – and it seems to be working.

Over half of participants in the past year have seen their position on the BMI centile scale fall, while a third have stayed the same. "We think that is a real success. When they come to us their weight has been increasing so by stopping that we are helping them gain control so that as they continue to grow they keep their weight down," adds Ms Pittson.

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## Healthy Doorstep Club

Stoke on Trent City Council Sport and Leisure Services have been involved with the StreetGames programme since 2008 and they now deliver approximately 40 sessions per week in community settings such as parks and greenspace areas. The partnership also deliver ten very successful Doorstep Sports Clubs some of which target specific groups such as girls and women, disability groups and they also have a Healthy Doorstep Club that is delivered with the support of our Public Health team and local schools.

## London Borough of Croydon changing the food culture

- Croydon is one of the Mayor of London's Food Flagship boroughs.
- It has an ambitious programme which involves working with schools, businesses and residents to change the way they think about food.
- Edible playgrounds for schools and healthy fast food shops are just two of the initiatives being supported.

Meridian High School and Fairchildes Primary School in the London borough of Croydon are getting a new, shared classroom. But, unlike the rest of the classrooms at these neighbouring academies, this one will be outside – it's being built in the centre of a new edible playground.

The project, supported by charity Trees for Cities, includes the creation of raised beds, allotment-style food-growing areas, greenhouses and a complete irrigation system. The aim is to create an environment to educate, engage and inspire pupils about the food they eat.

Alongside the edible playground, both schools will be encouraging more children to eat school meals, offering more opportunities for cookery and making sure food becomes an intrinsic part of the curriculum. This is being made possible as Croydon – along with Lambeth – is one of the Mayor of London's two Food Flagship Boroughs.

The Mayor of London and Department For Education is supporting the programme in Croydon with two years' grant funding which has been matched locally. The ambition, however, is to deliver a five-year plan taking the message about healthy eating from schools, into families and, through businesses and workplaces, into the community.

Meridian and Fairchildes are two of three flagship schools in the borough, alongside Rockmount Primary, that are being used to

showcase and pilot the work on food.

"They will be inviting other schools to show them what they have done and then help them to transform their approach," says Ashley Gordon, the council's Food Flagship programme manager. "We want to inspire pupils to think differently about the food they eat and, we hope, increase the amount of fruit and vegetables they eat, which in turn will improve their health and attainment."

Grants of between £300 and £3,000 have been made available to other schools in the borough to help them create or improve their own food growing areas. This is being done in tandem with a range of other initiatives to change the culture around food. Those initiatives include themed training days with contract caterers and in-house cooks, in-school curriculum support, and increasing opportunities to share 'what works well'.

Ms Gordon says: "One of the things that has become clear in recent years is that we can do better in the way we are promoting food in schools. For example, breakfast clubs have become very popular, but not all schools are providing healthy food as much as they should.

"So we have been supporting them to improve their menus and provide healthier alternatives to their current high-fat, high-sugar products." Croydon has been just as active in working with local businesses as well. Fifteen start-ups began an eight-week free training course at the start of 2016 that covers the basics of running a food business.

All are small independent businesses that will be providing healthy alternatives to the normal fast-food takeaways. Ms Gordon says: "They will be providing a whole range of healthy foods from sandwiches and wraps to salads, pasta and vegetarian food. We hope the support we are giving them will help them make a real success of it." But we are also working with existing takeaways. It's not about trying to demonise them. We currently have 16 signed up that have committed to making improvements, such as using better oils and reducing salt in food."

The council has also been working hard to promote healthy food at a series of public events. Last autumn, a healthy harvest festival was held in the town centre's main market in Surrey Street, it included a healthy eating and cooking display, free smoothie testing and food sampling along with arts and crafts and children's activities.

And earlier in the year, Croydon's Community Food Learning Centre held an open day. The centre, which includes an allotment, beehive and full kitchen facilities and runs a variety of courses, put on a day of cookery demonstrations. This is coinciding with the creation of a network of 'master gardeners'. These gardeners are given training in how to grow fresh produce and encouraged to maintain the community gardens in the borough with the aim of encouraging friends and families to get involved.

Acting Public Health Director Steve Morton says this promises to be just the start. "We really want to help the residents of Croydon look at food differently. We see it as an essential part of our approach to tackling childhood obesity. "We were already working with schools, supporting weight management and promoting physical activity, but this work to transform the local food culture will help us take it on to another level."

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## Most active council

Building Suffolk as the Most Active County (MAC) is the council's 2012 legacy programme for sport, physical activity and health. The MAC is a strategic partnership framework developed to maximise the contribution of sport and physical activity to improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities. It has two core elements.

Firstly, building on the inspiration and the momentum of the 2012 Games, the MAC will embed a long-term campaign to promote healthy active lifestyles, shift sedentary or inactive behaviours and address any barriers to participating in physical activity, particularly through the influence of the built and natural environment and socio-economic issues.

Secondly, the MAC provides a framework for partners to work together, designing, promoting and commissioning sport, recreational and physical activity opportunities for Suffolk. The Most Active County provides the connectivity, interface and advice around physical activity and sport between local authorities and strategic partners—including schools, and Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing Board and commissioning groups.



## Medway working with community partners

- Medway Council has set up a local obesity network to bring the public, private and voluntary sectors together.
- An annual summit is held to encourage ideas to be shared and contacts to be made.
- The partnership has led to successful projects being run with organisations as diverse as Tesco and local early years providers.

Like many councils, Medway has a comprehensive package of support services in place to help children deal with weight issues.

From its three family weight management programmes for children aged two to 13 to Fit Fix for teenagers, the council has made sure it caters for all ages.

But the Kent-based local authority has also sought to encourage its partners in the community to get involved.

This really got kick-started in the summer of 2014 with an obesity summit. Over 70 representatives from partner organisations attended including organisations from the public, private, academic and voluntary sectors.

The event, held at Gillingham Football Club, led to the creation of the local obesity network, which has allowed partners to share ideas and support each other in the drive to reduce obesity rates.

A second summit was held in the summer of 2015 and this is now accompanied by mid-term reviews at the turn of each year.

Senior public health manager Scott Elliott, who coordinates the network, says: "It is clear you cannot tackle obesity alone so we wanted to reach out to the local community.

"We haven't made it arduous, we don't bombard them with information, but by having these summits we get different people mixing and it's really starting to work."

A prime example of this is the work Medway has done with local nurseries, childminders and other early years providers in partnership with the Children's Food Trust.

The two-year Eat Better Start Better programme provides training and support to staff on planning healthier menus and helping children to use mealtime to learn social skills. Some cooking sessions have also been held with parents.

A total of 60 settings were given help in the first year of the programme with an evaluation finding a 'significant' improvement in the food being offered. This included a number moving to low and medium-sugar cereals for breakfast, avoiding sweet foods as snacks and cutting out dried fruit between meals. Oily fish has even been introduced at some, while staff are also starting to monitor the salt content of bread. Nutritionist Laura Whiting, who has been helping to organise the programme, says the response has been 'encouraging'. "Childcare providers are working really hard to give children great food and to help them build good habits, setting them up for a lifetime of enjoying healthy eating and cooking. We're looking forward to building on this success."

Another key partner has been Tesco. It runs the Farm to Fork initiative where local children get the opportunity to visit the store and the supermarket's suppliers to learn about how food is produced.

The local store, in Strood, is the best performing in the group nationally with more than 6,000 children taking part in the trails over the past year.

But in another sign of how the partnership work is having an impact, the scheme has been developed even further in Medway.

Tesco community champion Gillian Davies, who runs the Medway scheme, has now started delivering cooking from scratch courses in schools and community venues.

“It’s amazing the difference it makes to children,” she says. “It really benefits them and by working in partnership with Medway we are reaching more and more children.”

To illustrate the point, she cites the case of Hannah [not her real name], who came to the Tesco store on a trail with her class. She had a food phobia and would only eat bread and cakes.

“I had never seen anything like it before in my life, she was terrified, but then something amazing happened. As the trail progressed Hannah started to touch some of the fruit and to become more familiar with its feel and smell. Eventually, she tried a tiny piece of pineapple and discovered she loved it.”

Ms Davies says when Hannah came back the following week for the second part of the trail the change was incredible – with the schoolgirl tasting a whole range of different foods.

Medway is now looking to build on this strong partnership base by trying to make the most of grants that are going.

It has recently been awarded £2.5m from the Local Growth Fund to promote cycling. The funding is flowing in over a three-year period and will be used to build on its cycling network, bikeability schemes in schools and to invest in local cycling groups.

But this is just the start, Mr Elliott hopes. “We are ambitious, we want to do more and exploit these opportunities for grants. But to get them you need to demonstrate you are working together. Our partnership should certainly help us with that.”

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## Stockport getting children active

- The council runs a Schools Sport Partnership which aims to get all children enjoying PE, sport and physical activity.
- Primary school teachers get support delivering PE lessons, while ‘development days’ are held to introduce pupils to different sports.
- There is a dedicated programme for the least active so they can try out alternative activities such as boxfit and roller-skating.

School sport is normally something children either love or hate. But in Stockport it is different – thanks to a partnership between the council, schools and community clubs.

Through an innovative range of projects, the Stockport Schools Sport Partnership has tried to make sure everyone can enjoy physical activity as part of its approach to tackling obesity.

It does this through a variety of measures from prioritising PE lessons to holding ‘development days’ so pupils can try a wide range of sports and physical activity.

The partnership is a legacy of the national initiative started back in 2003, but kept going by the council since 2010 after funding was cut. There are already encouraging signs it is having an impact: the proportion of year six children being recorded as overweight and obese through the National Child Measurement Programme has shown a drop of between 3-4 per cent over the past three years compared to the three-year period before that.

Russ Boaler, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council’s physical education, sport and physical activity consultant, says: “We just felt it was something we wanted to keep going as we could see the positive impact it was starting to have for pupils.

Although we have never just focussed on sport and those that excel, we decided to shift the emphasis still further to prioritise the least active pupils.

“To enjoy and be successful in sport or any physical activity you need to have the basics – agility, balance and coordination – just as you need to be able to read and write to learn Shakespeare or add up before you attempt trigonometry. So that’s where it starts – physical literacy.”

Underpinning the work is the investment in PE lessons. A network of school sport coordinators, all experienced PE teachers, work with primary school teachers to ensure children are provided with high quality, fulfilling and varied lessons. They help plan and deliver the lessons working with teachers for a number of weeks before gradually handing over responsibility to them.

Over 80 per cent of the local primary schools are involved and teachers who have been helped say they value the support immensely – in feedback they have praised the coordinators as “excellent” and for having “great ideas”.

But this support is just one part of a wider pathway into sports and physical activity that is promoted by the partnership. For example, for pupils in year one and two a series of ‘infant festivals’ have been held where children rotate around various activities – many based on athletic events – to try out a range of different sports. Over 600 pupils took part in these last year.

Meanwhile, for older primary school children, local secondary schools and sports clubs host ‘development days’. During these, pupils get to come and try out new activities and learn the basic skills. These have been provided for a whole range of sports from hockey and lacrosse to rugby, tennis and cricket. Those that show an interest are encouraged to join local clubs.

The partnership has also run one-off events to boost participation. This year there are going to be a series of Olympic-themed events to coincide with the Rio Games. Schools are being encouraged to compete against each other by measuring activity levels for which they earn points. There is also a version targeting families.

Stockport is also piloting the ‘Mile a Day’ project, the 15-minute running challenge that was pioneered by a school in Stirling, Scotland.

Three schools have got involved so far by ensuring pupils take part in regular runs. And last year Stockport ran a skipping challenge where it got 3,000 pupils to take part in a mass skipathon.

Pupils were encouraged to complete three minutes of continuous skipping with schools sharing their participation on social media and local radio station Pure FM promoting it via ‘shout outs’.

But to ensure those that are still turned off by sport do not miss out there are two dedicated schemes. Girls Active and Boys Active are aimed at the least active pupils in years five, six and nine. Participants get to try activities such as zumba, boxfit, dodgeball, roller-skating and martial arts. Schools are then given grants to ensure these events can become part of the after-school offer.

“It is important to provide high quality alternative opportunities for these pupils,” says partnership manager Jude Riddings. “Even with everything we offer some will still need additional encouragement. The whole approach is about finding the right activity for everyone.”

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## West Sussex getting children talking about sugar

- West Sussex is using a popular end-of-primary-school debate to ignite interest about the risk of too much sugar.
- Nine schools took part in the debates last year with teachers praising the initiative.
- The council is also creating a sugar reduction champions network to raise awareness.

Each year Arun District Council's Youth Council holds school debates for pupils finishing primary school. It is always a popular part of the final months before their new life at secondary school starts. With that in mind, West Sussex County Council's public health team identified it as an opportunity to raise awareness about sugar consumption, making it the topic of debate last year.

Approximately 150 children from nine primary schools took part, debating the house question: "Children should be able to buy whatever sugary drink or snack they like from local shops to and from school."

"Sugar reduction is a key priority at the moment so we just thought this would be a great way to get children thinking about the issue," says Sue Carmichael, West Sussex's public health lead for healthy lifestyles. "When children start secondary school they tend to get a lot more freedom. They can call in to shops on the way to and from school and the temptation for many are the sweets and sugary drinks."

The debates were held over two days in July at Arun's council chamber and were chaired by the Youth Council with the public health team acting as moderators.

During the debates a mix of views were put forward. Many argued against giving children free rein in purchasing sweets saying it can make you hyper, rots teeth, is unhealthy and causes diabetes.

But some argued for it, saying sugar was needed for energy, children could burn it off quickly and it stops you being tired.

Mrs Carmichael says: "We wanted to make sure the debates were informed and children didn't take away mixed messages so beforehand the schools were provided with briefing resources explaining about sugar. "Then, at the end of the debate each pupil was provided with a sugar information leaflet. But the really pleasing thing was that the children really challenged each other and explored the issue."

This was confirmed by an evaluation of the debates that was carried out by the council's public health team.

It concluded they had been a success with pupils developing an increased understanding about the negative effects of sugar and, largely, understanding that there are alternatives to eating it.

Public Health Project Officer Alison Thomson, who carried out the evaluation, says: "It worked really well and already other schools have expressed an interest in holding something similar so we will look to do that. "But the debates also highlighted the need for more work on sugar and diet. It showed there was a degree of misinformation and that young people were coming to school without eating breakfast and instead grabbing sugary drinks and snacks."

Feedback from school staff has also been positive. Janet Llewelyn, head teacher at St Mary's Church of England Primary School, says: "I think this debate is the most useful one we've had so far and I will be working with staff to take the messages from it and run with them."

These are all things West Sussex is now planning to work on. But there are also a number of other initiatives the council is already involved with.

These include a network of sugar reduction champions. So far a GP, dentist, councillor, catering manager and local mum have got involved.

The aim is for them to promote clear messages about sugar in the contact they have with people and through social media and on blogs. The public health team hope this network will grow in the coming months and that school pupils will also become part of it.

The amount of sugar in primary school meals has also been cut significantly over the past year – and with more than 30,000 children regularly eating them this promises to have a significant impact. Caterers worked with the council to reformulate meals and reduce portion sizes of sugary puddings as well as making sure yoghurts and fruit are on the menu more often.

West Sussex County Council Cabinet Member for Education and Skills Jeremy Hunt believes the changes will make a big difference – a child who eats a school meal every day during the academic year will now consume half a kilo of sugar less. “Ensuring our children have a nutritionally balanced school lunch is very important,” he says. “Our school meals team must be congratulated on the hard work they have undertaken to ensure the meals we provide are both healthy and nutritious.”

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**Courtesy of Institute of Health Visiting**

## Norfolk and Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services tackling child obesity

- Fire crews in Norfolk and Suffolk are working in partnership with local NHS teams to help overweight teenagers become more active.
- The teenagers get to take part in eight-week activity and nutrition courses at two local fire stations with the firefighters acting as role models.
- Those who have taken part have reported it has helped them change their lifestyles. Child obesity is a growing problem that is proving difficult to tackle. But in Norfolk and Suffolk progress is being made thanks to the help of firefighters.

The Fire Fighting Fit and Healthy Programme offers children aged 13 to 17 who are overweight access to weekly healthy lifestyle sessions. These are run by firefighters themselves and allow teenagers take part in a range of activities based around what firefighters do in their day-to-day jobs. This can include everything from hose running to climbing towers. The sessions, which take part over the course of eight weeks, are run by the firefighters who have been given specialist gym instruction and nutrition training.

Each session lasts two hours and combines 30 to 40 minutes on nutrition with over an hour of physical activity. The aim is to help develop the youngsters' understanding of the importance of staying healthy and how it can be achieved so when they are finished they are able to incorporate the new regimens into their everyday lives.

The scheme was launched four years ago in partnership with East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH), which runs the Childhood Healthy Weight Service for the two county councils, and the two Fire and Rescue Services. It started at Suffolk's Lowestoft fire station before it was expanded to the Great Yarmouth fire station in the Norfolk region two years ago.

ECCH Childhood Healthy Weight Services Manager Steph Edrich says: “It is a difficult age to get health messages across so what we have tried to do is use the standing that firefighters have to encourage these teenagers to adopt healthier lifestyles. “They bring something a little different to what we offer “.

They are role models and therefore are able to motivate youngsters in a way traditional health and local government services cannot. Those who have completed the programme have made great improvements to their lifestyles and feel much more confident. A number have also reported they even want to become firefighters afterwards, which can't be a bad thing.”

The sessions are held after school and are normally attended by between five and 10 teenagers. Three courses are run at each fire station every year with referrals coming from a variety of sources, including GPs, school nurses and via self-referral. They are structured to gradually build up the participants' knowledge, skills and confidence. The youngsters are also encouraged to keep a diary throughout. The first week is a meet and greet session and then in the following weeks they learn about everything from what a healthy plate looks like to how to read food labels before a cooking demonstration is held in week six.

Alongside the firefighter-related activities, the youngsters also play games, such as unihockey, and get to work out in the fire station gyms. The final session is set aside for a 'passing out parade' to recognise and celebrate the journey the youngsters have been on. ECCH then follow up with the children who have taken part, to help them keep up the good habits they have learnt. Neil Henderson, Watch Commander at the Lowestoft fire station, says: “It is great to see the progress they make. These kids often come from quite difficult backgrounds, but they really respond to the course. Most will lose a significant amount of weight during the course and that normally continues”.

But it is not just about losing weight and getting fit. You can see with many of them that their whole approach to life and their attitude changes. They gain confidence by being part of a group and learning about health. “We have one lad who is 18 now and volunteers as a student instructor and we are hoping we can get him trained as an on-call firefighter soon. He came to us when he was 15 and has become so dedicated.”

Thaine Hacon, Watch Manager at the Great Yarmouth fire station, agrees. “We are delighted to be involved in such an innovative and worthwhile programme. Fire Fighting Fit is a fantastic opportunity for youngsters to learn about being healthy and have fun while also getting fit. A young person may feel self-conscious going to a typical club but here everyone will be in the same boat. They all get to exercise with firefighters, use firefighting equipment and take part in sessions including basic first aid and fire safety in the home.” Feedback from those who have taken part also shows the impact the scheme has. One recent participant reported that they had “changed their lifestyle by eating less and eating more fruit”, while another said they were “eating better, smaller portions”.

The programme has also started to be promoted through a new mobile web app that ECCH has just launched. The app includes a body mass index calculator so parents can assess whether their child is a healthy weight. It also has health and fitness advice, recipes and information on the programmes run by ECCH.

As well as the Fire Fighting Fit and Healthy scheme, these include the national MEND programme for seven to 13-year-olds, Health, Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY) for 0-5 year-olds and Better Life, Achieve and Succeed Together (BLAST), an eight-week after-school healthy lifestyle club.

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## Nottingham City Council a more personal touch to weight management

- Nottingham has a new weight management service which provides one-to-one support.
- Key to the service has been the creation of a new post – a healthy weight coordinator.
- Those who have been helped are full of praise for the personal touch provided by staff.

Nottingham City Council used to have a fairly traditional weight management service for children.

The 12-week course offered a structured timetable of support to get children eating healthily and to become more active in group classes. But amid growing concern it was not engaging children and their families as well as it should, the council decided to try something different – and created a new role of healthy weight co-ordinator to provide a more personal touch.

The move led to the creation a three-tier weight management service. Level one deals with brief interventions, while level two provides dedicated support for overweight and obese children. Both are run by Nottingham City Care Partnership for children aged five to 16.

Meanwhile, the level three service – for children with complex needs – is run by paediatricians and commissioned by the local clinical commissioning group. The co-ordinator – Sharon Sipple – is involved with the level two service, which is partly delivered in the child's own home.

Ms Sipple, who was appointed to the position in September 2014, says one of the most important elements is that they only work with families who want to make changes. "Once we get a referral I make an appointment to go and see the child with their parents. We normally do it in their own home – although it can be at the school or a neutral venue too.

"We talk to them about the importance of being healthy. We can show them images of what a blocked artery looks like or a fatty heart – we tailor that to the age of the child.

"We also discuss what they are eating. The most common issue is portion size so we go through that and I show them what is the right portion size. They are often really surprised.

"And physical activity is also discussed. This is crucial – most children and young people do not move about enough."

The visit, which can last anything up to two hours, is followed by a letter from Ms Sipple setting out what they have discussed and the changes identified that could help their child gain a more healthy weight.

Ms Sipple says: "That personal touch is important I think. For example, I saw a girl recently who said she used to enjoy playing netball but couldn't now as she was too heavy. I used that to motivate her in the letter."

But the visit by Ms Sipple is just the first part of the three-month programme. Another three interventions are then made by school health team to offer advice and support. After that they can be given help by the level one service.

The approach has proved popular. As the programme has become established, the number of referrals has been rising. It now gets about 25 to 30 new cases every quarter.

But what has been particularly impressive is the completion rate. All but two or three of those finish the programme, whereas before the drop-out rate was around a third.

"I think the fact that we aren't doing it in a group helps," says Ms Sipple. "A lot of children feel self-conscious in that environment whereas this way they get to do it in their home where they are comfortable. It's much better.

“Another factor I believe is important is the fact we are not asking them to travel somewhere. We come to them. You have to remember that for many of these families having to find the money to catch the bus across town with the whole family is asking a lot.”

One of those who has benefited is 10-year-old Brooke Clarke. She was referred by her school nurse as she weighed 10st 1lb. But within three months she had lost a stone and a half.

Brooke’s mum Melanie says she was overwhelmed by the help and support given. “She is like a completely different person now. She’s full of energy, full of life and always smiling – whereas before she would be quiet and down about herself.”

Nottingham City Council’s Public Health Consultant Lynne McNiven says stories like this are becoming more and more common as the service beds in. “It’s so pleasing to see the impact it has had. It had really become clear that the old system wasn’t working and so we talked to the school nurses and developed this model. “We’re delighted with how it has gone. Sharon is having great success engaging young people and making a real difference to their lives.”

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**Hillingdon Council** passed a resolution prohibiting ice cream vans from trading in the vicinity of schools.

[www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/19042/Itinerant-ice-cream-sales](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/19042/Itinerant-ice-cream-sales)

## Brighton and Hove becoming a sugar smart city

- Brighton and Hove has set an ambitious goal to become a ‘sugar smart city’.
- To kick-start the process, it started a conversation with schools, local residents and businesses last year through surveys, focus groups and a youth debate.
- TV chef Jamie Oliver has praised the council’s approach, saying it’s “leading the way”.

Changing behaviour is, in part, about getting people on side and open to change. Brighton and Hove City Council has done this by starting a conversation with its local community about tackling sugar consumption and making Brighton and Hove a ‘sugar smart city’.

It started last autumn when the council launched a survey of local residents and one of businesses. This was followed by a youth debate with a panel of experts including head teachers, health professionals and business owners and a number of focus groups. Throughout it all, the local community was encouraged to take part on social media via the hashtag #SugarSmartCity.

“We have run these sort of things before on alcohol, on smoke-free places and parenting so following the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition report in July 2015 we thought the time was right to think about sugar,” says Dr Kate Cuming, Brighton’s public health consultant.

“The idea is to start a debate and use the findings, suggestions and enthusiasm to introduce a series of measures and projects to get people to reduce sugar intake. From that point of view, it has worked really well. We had a fantastic response and we are now well on our way.”

More than 1,100 people responded to the survey and another 120 businesses took part in their poll. Eight in 10 people said they were concerned about the amount of sugar in food and drink and seven in 10 said they wanted to reduce sugar consumption.

In terms of taking action, there was widespread support among the public for food outlets making healthier food more available and attractive and schools, leisure and shopping centres making high sugar products less available.

With such a clear appetite for action, the council has wasted not time in moving forward.

Already a series of steps it wants to take have been identified from introducing a voluntary levy on sugary drinks to getting cafes, restaurants and takeaways to sign up to healthy commitments, including promoting water more, using better ingredients and offering healthy deals.

Over 70 food businesses have expressed an interest from big chains to small independent outlets with 30 making firm commitments – a handful which have even agreed to a 10p levy on sugary drinks based on step taken by Jamie Oliver in his restaurants.

In fact, the TV chef has become an active supporter of Brighton's approach – the youth debate was held in one of his restaurants.

Mr Oliver says: "This is exactly what we need to try to tackle the rise in obesity and diet-related disease. Brighton is leading the way and I hope that we can see real and significant change across the city, giving children a healthier future. This should inspire other councils to follow Brighton's lead."

But the public health team has also been active in other ways. Talks are under way to reduce the number of high sugar products in vending machines in all council and NHS settings, while progress has been made with schools.

The work on the latter includes:

- 'sugar smart' assemblies being held at 30 schools, which have led on to pupils agreeing to swap sugary drinks for healthier alternatives
- the Kitchen Garden Project, which the council is running in partnership with the Jamie Oliver Foundation, to provide lesson-based support to schools on cooking and growing food. Nineteen schools have so far signed up
- a sugar detectives film produced by pupils at one school – and shown in others – where children are seen exploring the school kitchen and discovering how much sugar lurks in popular foods
- eatwell workshops for parents to tackle fussy eating, cooking on a budget and healthy lunchboxes
- a Healthy Choice Awards for breakfast clubs in the city – half are so far taking part
- a Healthy Snacks for Healthy Teeth project, which has involved competitions, parent information stalls and healthy snack events at a number of schools.

Dr Cuming says: "We live in a world where it is actually quite hard not to eat sugar. The way shops promote it around their tills and even swimming pools with their vending machines does not help.

"We want to get to the point where it is easier for people to choose the healthier option. You have to take it step by step, but in the coming months and years we think we can make a difference."

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## St Helens Council pirates, pop and pupils

- The council has adopted a multi-pronged approach to obesity incorporating a healthy living superhero, a sugary drinks campaign and creating a network of governor health champions.
- The superhero, Captain Tuck and his nemesis Captain Snack Barrell, are now touring schools and early years settings after holding events in parks last summer.
- Schools have benefited from the health and wellbeing governors with projects under way to provide healthy breakfasts and encourage more physical activity.

Tackling obesity requires a multi-pronged approach. Nowhere is that clearer than in the Merseyside borough of St Helens where a combination of 'pirates, pop and pupils' is helping to make a difference.

The initiative incorporates three very different projects that have been developed by St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council over recent years.

The pirates element refers to the Pirates in the Park events that have been developed over the previous two summer holidays.

The weekly summer sessions, which reached more than 300 people, involved healthy eating and physical activity messages being delivered in a fun and creative way by food superhero Captain Tuck and his nemesis Captain Snack Barrel.

During the events, children got to try out different foods and watch the comedy show performed by Captain Tuck. The character has proved so popular that he has now started to visit schools and early years settings and is well on his way to becoming a local celebrity.

Last summer also saw St Helens start to target the consumption of sugary drinks. The scheme, based on north west-based charity Food Active's Give Up Loving Pop campaign (see Blackpool case study), encourages

children and families to swap pop for a healthier option. More than 1,800 people have taken part in the project.

One of them, mother-of-two Laura Jones, says it has created a real movement across the borough. Her whole family has cut back. She says: "It is easier than we first thought and it is great that the children are all encouraging each other."

Meanwhile, the third strand refers to the network of health and wellbeing governors that have been created over the past three years.

Nine in 10 schools now have governor whose role it is to champion healthy lifestyles across the school community. They ensure their school is aligned with the work of the public health team as well as looking to create their own projects within the school.

For example Broad Oak Primary School has introduced an 'early bird' breakfast club specifically aimed at children who are persistently absent or late and also to tackle what the school had identified as a problem with hungry children becoming restless or lethargic during the morning classes.

The club had an immediate effect: attendance increased from 94 per cent to 98 per cent, while rising levels of attainment have also been noted.

Another example can be seen at one of the colleges – Cowley International – where a governor helped to improve participation in PE. The kit for girls was changed following a consultation with pupils, who reported that the previous kit had made them feel uncomfortable – while an activity session dedicated to female students was introduced on a Friday morning, which has proved to be extremely popular.

What is more, the public health team has also worked closely with schools to change the way the National Child Measurement Programme is run. As well as receiving a letter informing them of the results, the parents of obese children get a call from school nurses prior to it being sent so they

are fully-prepared and already thinking about what help they are willing to accept.

Public Health Director Liz Gaulton says: “They are all very different schemes, underpinned by our healthy weight strategy, Healthy Balance. What we have tried to do is look at a variety of ways to engage families and children. You have to do that if you want to tackle obesity. There’s no single solution.

“Working with the community is a key part of that. We partnered the local newspaper with the ‘swap the pop’ campaign – they ran stories each fortnight and I think that really had an impact.”

But there are also other ways the council has looked to innovate beyond the ‘pirates, pop and pupils’ projects. For a number of years the council had run a Healthy Early Years Awards (HEYS) system for early years providers, which rewarded those that were providing healthy environments for the children they were looking after.

This has now been extended to local child minders – and already a quarter have signed up to take part. They are being supported by environmental health staff to ensure the care they provide promotes active play, emotional health and wellbeing, and healthy food.

Lynne Fairhurst, who was one of the first child minders to become recognised, says she wanted to get involved with it straight away. “Nurseries and other settings have had this available for a very long time so it’s great to have had the opportunity to gain it.”

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**Courtesy of St Helens Council**

## Calderdale working with schools

- Calderdale has made working with schools a priority
- The council has integrated its weight management and physical activity services, which has helped it work more closely with schools
- For the past three years it has been running a food programme in partnership with schools to promote healthy eating

Child obesity cannot be tackled without working with schools – so Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council has made that a top priority. This can be seen through a variety of projects the public health team is involved in with the 82 primary schools and 14 secondary schools in the area.

This has been helped by the integration of the weight management and physical activity services into one system – the Better Living Service – last year. The move has allowed the council, which runs the service, to work with schools much more effectively in delivering the National Child Measurement Programme.

Ahead of the weighing and measuring day, schools promote the programme and endeavour to get parents involved.

The council has looked to build on this further by starting to run dedicated health days at schools where it puts on special health assemblies with parents and children and provides training for staff.

By the end of 2015 eight had been held, reaching over 2,200 pupils, 146 parents, and 250 staff. These are continuing to be rolled out and by the end of the school year another 60 to 70 are expected to have taken place.

Karen Beazley, the family health and fitness officer is helping run the days, says they have been very well received.

She says the children are very interested to find out more about healthy eating with children pledging to give up fizzy drinks when they realise how much sugar is in them and others wanting to know how to make a healthy breakfast.

She says some schools have even ended up basing a whole week of learning around the health day “so they can keep the messages going”. “I think the plans for the future are going to bigger and better. Schools are excited to be involved.”

Of course, children who need more help are referred to the new weight loss programme – a 12-week programme which they attend along with their families. The results so far have been extremely promising. Two thirds of those who have completed the programme have lost at least 5 per cent of their starting weight and over 80 per cent have lost some weight. Meanwhile, Calderdale has been working with schools for the past three years on a food project.

Food for Life is a universal programme which works to engage school through network events, one-to-one visits and training courses provided by the scheme’s staff. Initially funded through lottery money, it has now been taken on by the local clinical commissioning group and the council.

Schools are invited to take part in an awards programme whereby they are given gold, silver or bronze accreditation for meeting certain standards. These include steps such as holding cooking lessons, caterers using free range and organic ingredients and providing space to grow fruit and vegetables.

Three quarters of local schools have engaged with the process with a fifth achieving an award so far. To help, a cooks’ network has also been established. Over half of schools are taking part in that.

Feedback from those involved illustrates the impact it has had. Some 85 per cent report their knowledge of what constitutes healthy meals has improved.

Tony Mulgrew, the catering manager at Ravenscliffe High School, who is part of the network, says the support has helped him immensely. He has even taken part in a visit to Sweden to share ideas with school cooks there and now uses more sustainable and oil fish in the meals he prepares.

He says the network has provided the “catalyst to help me keep on improving to provide the highest quality food”.

An independent evaluation of the programme has also illustrated the impact it has had. Pupils in Food for Life schools consume nearly a third more fruit and vegetables than pupils in other schools.

Schools have also been urged to help keep track of their children’s health and wellbeing through an e-survey, which has been running since 2010. Half of primary schools and all mainstream secondary schools are currently taking part.

It focuses on healthy behaviours, avoiding harms and emotional health and wellbeing.

Calderdale public health consultant Dean Wallace says the data is “invaluable” in helping keep track of what needs to be addressed.

For example, in the past it has highlighted consumption of unhealthy snacks, pupils going without breakfast and the numbers doing exercise and sport. “We realise no one service alone can tackle child obesity, but by working together with schools we believe we can have a real impact. The momentum is gathering,” he adds.

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## Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service getting people active

- The Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has been encouraging people to keep active and healthy through its Fire Fit programme for the past five years.
- The scheme is for the whole community, but is particularly aimed at schools.
- Firefighters go to schools each week and conduct 60 to 90-minute sessions, which include activities such as football and running.

Firefighters in Merseyside are tackling social and health inequalities in the community by educating people about the benefits of fitness, healthy eating and living a healthy lifestyle.

The initiative – Fire Fit – was launched by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in 2010 after it identified a strong link between the threat of a fire and lower levels of education, income and housing. The need for a social programme of this type was first conceived when Liverpool hosted the World Firefighter Games as part of the larger celebration of Liverpool as the European Capital of Culture in 2008.

The Fire Fit programme uses the expertise and social status of the Fire and Rescue Service to educate people about the benefits of fitness and healthy eating. Firefighters are used as role models to help encourage people to take part in sporting activities.

The programme is rolled out across the whole community, supporting more than 40 community events a year, but particularly targets children by visiting junior and senior schools across Merseyside.

Twelve schools are currently taking part in the programme. Firefighters go to these schools each week and conduct 60 to 90-minute sessions with children, which includes activities such as football and running. There is also access to a climbing wall.

The firefighters and other service staff volunteer their time for this role. Some have specialist qualifications such as FA coaching level one, while others have expertise in nutrition. All have a passion for sport and wellbeing and for the communities they serve.

The Fire Fit programme also includes a rewards-based system, where volunteers earn points for the time they spend delivering the programme. These points are translated into a 'bursary fund' that is spent at the school on sporting resources such as basketball hoops and footballs. Merseyside Deputy Fire Chief Phil Garrigan says: "The work we do is quite special.

Engagement through sport is really effective. Each Fire Fit delivery team member who provides support for a community-based activity does so not for any financial reward but for the reward of knowing that they have personally put something back into the community."

"The model only works because we have excellent highly motivated people who want to make a positive difference to our community." Mr Garrigan, who is also a member of the Chief Fire Officers Association and is their Lead Officer on Children and Young People, says: "It's about building up a relationship – with a school and with the children. We find that with the prolonged relationship, it allows us to deliver safety messages throughout the year. So around times like bonfire night we can be getting the fire safe message out.

"The programme helps to kick start a healthy lifestyle. Young people clearly value it, and the schools value the programme, particularly having the firefighters as role models. Schools have said that's a good thing."

One of the schools that benefited was Blueberry Park Primary, where the programme ran for 12 months ending in autumn 2013. The children, mostly year five, took part in monthly sessions. Headteacher Kath Honey says: "We are delighted that our school was part of the Fire Fit programme. It was highly engaging and the children looked forward to the sessions with enthusiasm.

The Fire and Rescue Service added real value to our school.” The most visible element of the Fire Fit brand is the £5.2 million Toxteth Fire Fit Hub, which opened in 2013.

The Hub is a brand new purpose-built youth centre with facilities that include a sports hall, martial arts studio, a gym and dance studio and four five-a-side football pitches. Every evening from 5pm to 10pm the facilities are dedicated to young people. Jennifer Van Der Merwe, the Fire Fit Hub manager, says: “The Hub is still only just over a year old, so we’re still quite new, and still evolving.” But already the Hub has more than 1,500 young members and about 400 adult or corporate members. Each night between 70 and 150 young people come in to the Hub to use the facilities and take part in supervised activities ranging from golf and hockey to netball and karate. “You name it; we’ve probably got it going on here. There’s the gym, boxing, aerobics, Zumba... the list goes on.” said Ms Van Der Merwe.

Memberships is £5 a year for children aged six to 10 plus 50p per visit and £10 a year for those aged 11 to 19 plus £1 per visit. Adults who wish to hire venues must pay membership fee of £10 a year plus the hire costs. The Fire Fit Hub was built with funding from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, the Department for Education and Liverpool City Council. It comes under Myplace, a government initiative backed by the Department for Education.

The Fire Fit Hub as well as the Fire Fit programme have been recognised by the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) Sport for All initiative and have been included in the IOC guide to managing Sport For All programmes. The programme has also been used nationally as a model for other fire and rescue services to develop their own health and fitness programmes.

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## Box Chicken

Box Chicken is a healthy street food campaign aimed at children in low income areas to tackle childhood obesity.

The project sells peri-peri or Caribbean chicken as a low fat alternative to fried chicken to school children via mobile kitchens, in an effort to balance the predominance of junk food outlets in deprived areas.

Young unemployed people and catering students are also encouraged to work on the vans to gain a City & Guilds qualification in catering.

Box Chicken is a project by Shift (formerly We Are What We Do) – a not-for-profit behaviour change company that aims to shift the everyday behaviours of individuals by tackling a series of major social and environmental issues, such as mental health, youth obesity and domestic food and energy waste.

Following a successful pilot with Newham Council, other London boroughs are set to benefit from the Box Chicken model, including Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Camden.

[www.shiftdesign.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/11/Shifts-Healthy-Fast-Food-Evaluation\\_November-2015-V2.pdf](http://www.shiftdesign.org.uk/content/uploads/2015/11/Shifts-Healthy-Fast-Food-Evaluation_November-2015-V2.pdf)

## Wigan the benefits of an integrated service

- By integrating it healthy lifestyles work, Wigan has been able to improve services and launch innovative new ones.
- The new service has helped to increase uptake of the National Child Measurement Programme.
- A school-based healthy lifestyle programme has been launched to give pupils advice about everything from healthy eating to getting active.

Wigan Council has responded to the obesity challenge by integrating its support service under one umbrella. Three years ago leisure provider Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles was awarded the contract for the children's 0-17 integrated weight management service.

Known locally as Let's Get Movin' – Healthy Habits for Life, it has allowed the service to better link-up existing services as well as launching new ones.

Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles undertakes the National Children Measurement Programme (NCMP), the specialist weight management service, health promotion work and the healthy lifestyles early intervention and prevention education programme provided to schools and nurseries.

Leisure and wellbeing programme manager Emma Edwards says: "Before the integrated system we had five or six providers delivering different elements. They were all delivering good services and achieving positive outcomes, but having this integrated service means we have been able to join up the services much more and increase uptake."

"I think this is because it has enabled the service provider to build trust and positive relationships with parents, children and schools. They get to know the service and the staff and it is a consistent service that is contacting them throughout and that gives them reassurance."

The clearest indication of this is the confidence parents now have in NCMP. Eight years ago when the programme started Wigan was struggling to get parents to agree to let their children take part, particularly in year six where only 77 per cent were weighed and measured. But since then uptake has increased with record numbers taking part last year – 93 per cent of year six children and 96 per cent of those in reception.

But efforts have also been made to make sure those who need help are able to access it. One step has been to alter the wording of the NCMP feedback letter sent to parents of overweight children. Using behavioural insight techniques known as nudge theory, the letters were tweaked to sound more positive.

Those children and young people that need help are referred to the specialist weight management treatment service, which accepts referrals for children aged two to 17. Parents are also encouraged to get involved to ensure that the family make collective changes in support of the child's weight loss journey. The service provides an intensive intervention for 12 weeks with on-going support provided afterwards, which can involve anything from regular contact with the advisers to family membership for swimming and local gyms to encourage them to continue to lead a healthier lifestyle. Longer, more tailored support is also provided where appropriate. One of the people who has been given specialist help is Erica, who had a BMI of over 40 when she was referred to the scheme.

The team spent a year working with her, starting with short walks to build up her fitness, before moving on to help her with shopping for food and cooking meals. She was then encouraged to take up more activities and has now turned her life around. She is doing some voluntary work and pursuing her interest in art. She says the staff that helped her have given her a "second chance in life" and are her "guardian angels".

“The changes I’ve experienced aren’t only physical but mental too. For a long time I avoided mirrors, hating the way I looked but with losing the weight I see more and more of the girl I used to be and that gives me so much hope for me and my future.”

But integrating the service has also allowed the council to seek new and innovative ways to improve health and tackle obesity. A six-week healthy lifestyles programme has been launched. It has been delivered to children in pre-school, reception and year four. All the primary schools in Wigan are taking part. The sessions are run during PE and include advice on healthy eating, cooking and physical activity. Over the last two years 10,000 pupils have taken part.

A pilot with year nine secondary school pupils has also been delivered, while work has taken place in early year’s settings with staff given advice and information about how to provide healthy lifestyle messages to both children, parents and carers.

Public Health Director Professor Kate Arden says Wigan has even started seeing levels of childhood obesity declining.

“Let’s Get Movin’ – Healthy Habits for Life exemplifies how our borough is delivering better outcomes and better life chances for our children who are the future.”

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## Bikeright!

Manchester and Warrington councils have worked with commercial providers such as BikeRight! on a range of cycling initiatives such as Bikeability cycle training for children, cycling development initiatives as well as equipment procurement and bike fleet management and Instructor training (Bikeability, National Standards, Ride Leader).

In the last few years, 3,725 Manchester schoolchildren have been trained to level 1, 2 and 3 of Bikeability, these from 120 schools across the city and 2,357 young people from schools in Warrington.



Courtesy of Institute of Health Visiting

## North Tyneside keeping children and families engaged

- North Tyneside has increased the completion rate for its weight management service, Healthy4Life.
- Eight in 10 families who start the course now finish it – up from six in 10 in 2011.
- The council has achieved this by offering incentives to participants, such as discounts to local leisure services, and being prepared to adapt the course.

Getting families with overweight and obese children on to weight management schemes is difficult, but keeping them engaged in a process which can last many weeks and months is even trickier.

However North Tyneside Council has achieved just that. The service – Healthy4Life – is a 10-week programme commissioned by the public health team and managed by the Sport and Leisure Service, in partnership with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

It is for children aged between five and 18 years old who have a BMI on or above the 91st centile. Priority is given to those on or above the 98th centile.

The programme is delivered by a multi-disciplinary team, which combines healthy eating and lifestyle sessions for the whole family.

It has been running since 2010 and aims to engage at least 120 families a year across six courses – evenly split between younger and older children.

In the early years, only 60 per cent of those who started the courses were completing them. Last year, 78 per cent did.

The secret of North Tyneside's success? Listening, learning and incentivising.

Public health nurse lead Helen Fenwick says: "We are always looking to improve. I think probably each time we have started a new course something has been changed.

"Sometimes it is little things like pushing the start time back a little bit to give families more time after school to get here, or putting on more of the activities they enjoy. "But we have also really tried to think about what would make them want to keep going and how you can motivate them. People are busy so you have to try to make it easy for them to come and give them an incentive to keep coming."

Perhaps the most notable change in this area has been the decision to offer heavily-discounted entry to local leisure facilities, such as gyms, swimming pools and soft play centres for completing the course.

This is done through the local Ease EXTRA cards that provide discounted access to local leisure facilities.

All families who complete Healthy4Life get free Ease EXTRA cards and are given an additional discount on the activity cost. It means children and adults pay half price for entry to many places, with the cost of swimming as low as £1.15 per person.

The extra discount lasts three months, but is extended by another three if the family is using the leisure services regularly.

A party and prize draw on week 10, the final session, has also been introduced to celebrate the end of the course. Participants are entered into the raffle with prizes including a slow cooker or healthy grill up for grabs. They also get a certificate and medal.

"We really try to make it special and give them a reward for finishing and those who have been to eight of the 10 sessions can 'graduate'," Ms Fenwick says.

"We wanted to make sure we were firm and insist it is something they have to commit to – and that certainly seems to be what is happening."

But, of course, the content of the programme is also important. Over time the team has increased the number of food and cookery sessions as they have proved popular, while the physical activity sections of the course are carefully planned.

A variety of sports are incorporated including everything from dodgeball to trampolining, while for adults there are sessions in the gym, spinning and zumba. On some weeks, whole family activities are organised. One mother, Laura (not her real name), says the team delivering the programme always made the sessions fun – and that helps keep people motivated. “Everyone in our household has benefited from the things we have learnt. My son more than we could have imagined. His dad is also so much healthier and when you put all of it together our family is healthier and happier.”

Laura’s story is not unique. Six-month follow-ups show that the majority of those who take part see a long-term benefit. The checks look at whether the lifestyle changes made have been maintained – or even improved further.

The results from last year show two thirds had improved in terms of spending less time sitting in front of a TV, computer or on a mobile phone, 80 per cent had in terms of physical activity levels and 100 per cent had in terms of fruit and vegetable consumption.

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## Healthier Options Takeaway

Broxtowe Borough Council is working with and encouraging businesses to provide healthier food options on their menus and help customers manage their weight.

The council has implemented a Healthier Options Takeaway (HOT) Merit scheme in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council and the other district Council’s within Nottinghamshire, where you can apply for a Merit award if you are a take away business that has a food hygiene rating of 3 or above.

The HOT Merit aims to increase accessibility and awareness of healthier options in takeaway outlets and forms part of our approach to reduce obesity within Nottinghamshire.



## Leeds helping children with learning disabilities

- Leeds runs a bespoke weight management programme for children with learning disabilities.
- It works with children with moderate disabilities offering 20-minute support sessions for a period of 10 weeks.
- The scheme sits alongside the two established services for children aged five to 18.

Leeds has been running its Watch It weight management service for children for over a decade.

It started with Classic programme for secondary age school children in 2005, before the Healthy Families programme was launched for the under 11s.

But as the years went by it became clear there was a gap in provision.

Watch It service manager Carolyn Wellings says: "A greater proportion of children with learning disabilities are overweight and obese and while the other programmes could cater for such children with mild conditions there was really nothing for those with more complex needs so we decided to do something about it."

Choices, a dedicated programme for children with learning disabilities was launched in 2011, after a successful pilot. Like the Classic and Healthy Families programmes, the service is provided by a team of health trainers. Leeds was one of the first areas of the country to use health trainers to deliver weight programmes.

All three programmes, which are run by Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, focus on eating and nutrition, physical activity and emotional wellbeing and have been specifically tailored towards the needs of this group of children and their families.

In the Classic scheme the health trainers work with children and their parents one-to-one using motivation enhancing techniques to enable them to make healthy lifestyle changes.

The sessions take place every week for a period of 16 weeks. The children also get the opportunity to take part in physical activity sessions with other children on the programme which are held at local leisure services with the idea they will continue using those services once the sessions have finished.

By comparison, the Healthy Families programme is more focussed on the parents. Group workshops are run for 10 weeks covering everything from how to decrease screen time to cutting down on sugary drinks.

The Choices scheme is different again. The health trainers work with the children one-on-one at their school and then after each session phone the parents to discuss what has been learnt. "This was done at the suggestion of the parents," says Ms Wellings. "Having a child with learning disabilities often means they have a lot of appointments with various professionals so they felt it was the best way to manage this support.

"They get an information pack and the phone calls – it seems to work well."

The sessions are shorter than the other Watch It ones. They last just 20 minutes and again they cover activity alongside issues such as sugar drinks, healthy snacks and portion sizes.

"I think one of the common issues with this group of children is that food and drinks are often used as a reward. Parents feel guilty denying their children treats when they feel that their options for enjoyment are limited, so you see a pattern developing whereby they consume a lot of treats.

"Although, of course, some of the weight issues seen are linked to the conditions they have. Children with Down's syndrome have propensity to put on weight for example."

The service provides support to 28 children each year with conditions ranging from autism and Asperger's syndrome to Down's syndrome and Prader-Willi, a rare disorder which causes growth abnormalities and excessive eating.

This compares to the 285 referrals for the Classic programme and just over 100 to Healthy Families.

While there are the added difficulties that children with learning disabilities face, the results achieved by the programme are still impressive. Over two thirds of the children who took part in the programme last year achieved the goal of getting their weight gain under control by either maintaining their BMI measurement or reducing it.

One of those who has been helped is Sam, an 11-year-old with global development delay. During the programme the health trainers worked with him and his grandparents, who care for him, on portion sizes. He was given a smaller plate and encouraged to eat more slowly – so by the time he finished he would feel more full and not want extra portions.

His grandparents changed their cooking habits, using more vegetables and salad and reducing the number of desserts they have. One of his favourite foods is now Pink Lady apples. He has also become more active, enjoying walking, riding his bike and dance.

And the support has in turn improved his behaviour in school, teachers have reported. Whereas in the past he would have fairly regular bouts of bad behaviour and outbursts of anger, he is now much more “happy and chirpy”, they say.

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## StreetGames Young Volunteers

Swindon Borough Council runs youth targeted community sports events to increase participation by the most vulnerable young people.

The aims include reducing ASB, improving health and wellbeing and building cohesion between different ethnic groups. The StreetGames Swindon project was launched in 2013 and has become an integral part of Swindon's community services. The StreetGames Swindon team have run a series of free events including; Skate Jams, Sports Festivals and Sports tournaments. Since the project began over 1,000 different young people have participate this sports provision.

They also run the StreetGames Young Volunteers program, which provides opportunity for 16-25 year olds to support their local community, gain employability skills and improve their wellbeing. Since the project was launched over 60 young volunteers have participated in this program. The Swindon project itself was also crowned Project of The Year in March 2015.

## Lambeth training up the front-line

- Lambeth has trained over 900 of its local front-line staff in how to identify and deal with weight problems in children.
- Children's centre staff have been given nutrition training to help the youngest children.
- The borough is also part of the Mayor of London's Food Flagship programme – aimed at helping residents grow, buy, cook and enjoy healthy and sustainable food.

The public health team at the London Borough of Lambeth has made sure it has extended its reach on obesity by training up a whole host of staff in how to help.

The half-day children's healthy weight training workshop teaches staff how to identify, raise and refer children with weight problems.

Over the last three years more than 900 people have taken part, including school nurses, health visitors, GPs, practice nurses, community workers, environmental health officers and councillors.

Afterwards they are given practical tools, including leaflets, a BMI wheel and growth charts which they can refer back to. Those that have taken part feel it has made a big difference. Participants have described the training as "very useful" and something which has "enhanced my knowledge".

Meanwhile, nutrition training has been offered to children's centre staff and those working in early years settings. It has included tips on common issues, such as dealing with fussy eaters and how to promote healthy eating. Food workers linked to children centres also run cook-and-eat sessions to give parents and staff ideas about how to provide tasty, health snacks and meals on a budget.

One mother who has taken part in them says: "My child was a fussy eater and apart from drinking milk tended only to eat bread. Surprisingly, at the cook and eat session, he joined the other children in nibbling at the cut vegetables.

"The next time we went shopping, he pointed to the carrots and peppers and told me to put them in the trolley. To my utter amazement these were the first things he asked for when we got home. We finished the cook-and-eat course and with the help of the team there, I started introducing different foods and he now enjoys a healthy varied balanced diet."

For schools, there is a healthy weight programme which has helped 400 staff, including head teachers and governors. It includes training for teachers on how to deliver healthy lifestyle messages effectively, what food policies should look like and online resources to help incorporate health messages in lessons, such as how weights and measures and calories can be part of Maths teaching.

Schools are also supported by a specialist healthy weight school nurse who proactively follows up overweight and obese children identified in the National Child Measurement Programme. The nurse also works closely with and refers families to the two weight management services that are run.

Lambeth public health consultant Bimpe Oki says: "What we have tried to do is knit everything together. Nothing is done in isolation. So by training the wider workforce we make sure consistent messages are being given and that the people who need help get it.

"These are people who have a lot of contact with children and are really in a position to influence behaviour. "But you then need the correct support in place in schools and through the weight management service to compliment that."

Lambeth is now building on this work as it has become part of the Mayor of London's Food Flagship Borough programme along with Croydon (see separate case study).

Under this flagship project, which got under way last year, the council has match-funded the £500,000 provided by the Mayor's office.

The plans involve helping residents to gain the knowledge, passion and skills to grow, buy, cook and enjoy healthy and sustainable food.

The money will be spent on providing extra training to schools and extending Lambeth's Natural Thinkers programme. The latter is aimed at early years providers and has helped create outdoor areas at 20 sites across the borough that children can learn and play in. It includes allotment areas for food growing and wooded areas where children can be active in a natural environment.

Vouchers are also being offered to families at children's centres at risk of food poverty, which can be exchanged for fruit and vegetables.

But Lambeth is also looking to launch a number of new projects. These include a social marketing campaign which is being co-designed with a group of young people and the Village Food Hub which is being launched in a particularly deprived ward in Lambeth home to 14,000 families.

The project, which is being consulted on at the moment, will involve investment in sustainable food enterprises, improving cooking skills, increasing the consumption of healthy food and reducing food waste.

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After being approached by head teachers, **Leicester City Council** introduced a new street trading policy to prevent burger vans trading outside school gates.

[www.leicester.gov.uk/media/179171/street-trading-policy-code-of-practice-june-2015.pdf](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/media/179171/street-trading-policy-code-of-practice-june-2015.pdf)



Courtesy of Lambeth Food Flagship Programme

## Rochdale Borough Council making chips healthier

- Diet has been identified as a key issue in Rochdale – one in four people eat unhealthily, according to the Health Survey for England.
- The Council is working with local takeaways to encourage healthier choices when it comes to chips.
- 39 outlets are on board taking steps such as using healthier thick cut chips to offering smaller portion sizes.

Rochdale Borough Council did not need to look far to recognise that the local population needed help in becoming healthier. On a whole host of indicators, there are worrying results. The borough ranks 140th out of 150 local authorities for premature mortality, while obesity rates are above the national average.

The council's public health team runs a comprehensive health lifestyles service offering people support and advice on everything from increasing physical activity to reducing smoking and alcohol consumption.

But it has also sought to engage local takeaways in its drive to improve the health of the local population through its healthier choices scheme.

The programme is funded by public health but run by the public protection team. It was launched in 2012 to encourage takeaways to adopt better practices when it comes to the way they produce chips in an attempt to reduce the levels of trans and saturated fats. There are three different levels of award – gold, silver and bronze – which shops can achieve by taking simple steps to make the chips they sell healthier.

For the bronze award, the steps include:

- banging the basket six times when chips have been fried (research shows that can reduce fat absorption by 20 per cent)
- sieving the oil after each frying to preserve the quality
- using straight-cut chips, which absorb less fat
- not giving away scraps as they have extremely high levels of oil.

For a silver award, outlets have to introduce changes like:

- cooking chips at 175°C – below that level they absorb more fat
- changing the oil regularly
- ensure chips are kept to a diameter of 12mm to 15mm – thinner chips can absorb 150 per cent the amount of fat as thick-cut ones.

And, finally, for a gold award, takeaways have to take measures such as:

- offering a wider range of portion sizes, such as chips in cones
- selling healthier options such as grilled or poached fish.

Public Protection Officer Clare McNicol says: "It is not about telling people to stop eating chips – that wouldn't work. Instead, it is much better to work with businesses to get them to make small changes. These can make a big difference."

The scheme is open to all types of takeaway from the traditional fish and chip shops to kebab shops and Indian and Chinese takeaways. So far 39 out of more than 200 outlets in Rochdale have signed up with six currently holding a gold award, twelve a silver and twenty-one a bronze. "Takeaway owners have said their customers have been really pleased to be offered healthier options," says Ms McNicol. "That is really important. It encourages people to start thinking more about what they eat." Ms McNicol says the success of the scheme has been down to a combination of good preparation and providing support and incentives to takeaways. Before it was launched the council carried out analysis of research into what steps make chips healthier so they had evidence to back up their suggestions. They also surveyed local residents with 81 per cent saying they wanted healthier options.

"When we visit takeaways it is important to be able to point to evidence to support the case," says Ms McNicol. "You can't just write letters and expect them to act. You need to spend time talking to them." Once a takeaway has an award, the council provides an array of promotional material from posters to window stickers. Public events and media campaigns have been run promoting the healthy takeaway outlets and the council has paid for giveaways, such as the recent vouchers published in local papers offering people free peas with their meals.

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## Cornwall Council working with early years providers

- Cornwall is working with early years' providers to improve the diets of the under-fives.
- Through support, advice and training, they have helped to ensure settings caring for the under fives are providing healthy snacks and meals.
- Those taking part also say it has helped them in being able to deal with issues such as fussy eating and – in some cases – has led to an increase in customers.

With concern about the rising rates of child obesity, Cornwall Council is trying to tackle the issue and has established a healthy eating scheme aimed at the under-fives.

The Nippers' Nutrition Programme targets nurseries, child-minders and pre-school settings. Those who sign up are asked to commit to improving their practices under four different criteria – providing nutritious food and drink, getting staff to attend training, compliance with food hygiene regulations and the promotion and provision of local, sustainably-sourced food.

There are five levels, allowing those that are taking part to work at their own pace. Certificates are provided when each level is achieved and are valid for two years. Settings can also display the trade-marked Nippers' Nutrition logos for use on their website and promotional literature.

The programme, which employs two members of staff part-time, supports providers by offering advice on menus from snacks to meals, how to control portion size and providing recipe suggestions. There is also a menu planning tool which allows them to plan their menus several weeks at a time, ensuring they are providing a balanced variety of food.

Leaflets aimed at the families are also handed out so the settings can encourage parents to get on board. These include tips on how to make a healthy lunchbox and what healthy snacks can be provided to children as alternatives to biscuits and crisps. Training is provided and so far more than two hundred and fifty early years staff have taken part since the scheme was launched in April 2011.

There are now 75 settings on board, including 45 day nurseries – 40 per cent of the total in the county.

An evaluation of thirty settings involved in the programme demonstrates the impact it has had. A total of 100 per cent reported very good or excellent understanding of the different food groups, compared to 30 per cent before they took part in the programme, while 97 per cent said they were comfortable planning a balanced menu, up from 11 per cent.

Respondents also reported improvements in being able to deal with fussy eating and understanding food labels, while nearly a fifth reported their customer base had increased as a result.

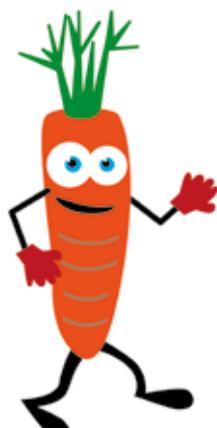
Val Willis, from Portreath Pre-school, is delighted with how it has worked out. As part of the programme, they Portreath started growing their own vegetables in raised beds. "The children planted lettuce, carrots, peas and spring onions and loved harvesting and eating them," she says. "The greatest success was the peas that we planted as the children picked and ate the pea shoots in May and June and we grew a good crop of peas that the children ate pod and all." Julie Benson, the Council's Business Innovation Consultant, who oversees the programme, says: "The Nippers' Nutrition Programme is a perfect example of innovative, effective and creative health promotion.

One of the big advantages is that it encourages engagement with parents thus having an effect on the whole family. "It takes time to work through the levels – one year to 18 months – but the providers who have signed up have shown enthusiasm and we have had a really positive response

from settings and parents alike. As well as improving the health of children, for some settings it is proving really cost effective as the menu planning tool allows them to plan their menus weeks in advance and buy in bulk. Implementing changes to menus does not have to be expensive”.

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## Derbyshire County Council working with local eateries

- Derbyshire County Council has created an awards scheme to promote local eateries that sell healthy food.
- Central to the scheme is a website that allows members of the public to search for places either geographically, by the foods they sell or the steps they have taken.
- Within two months it had recruited over 100 members.

Derbyshire County Council has sought to engage all types of local eateries from takeaways and restaurants to cafes and pubs in its healthy eating drive.

The Heart of Derbyshire campaign encourages businesses to sign up to a series of pledges and each member is given a bronze, silver or gold award depending on the number of pledges made.

The steps include things such as using less fat, salt or sugar in their products and offering smaller portion sizes or using more vegetables, fruits and whole-grains. They also need to have achieved a minimum food hygiene rating of three from their local district or borough council before qualifying.

As soon as businesses are accepted their details are put on the Heart of Derbyshire section of the council's website. Members of the public are able to search for businesses that have an award in a variety of ways from those near to them to what foods they specialise in and what pledges they have made.

Eateries that are participating are given certificates and logos to display in their windows and doors. The scheme, which was devised in partnership between public health, trading standards and environmental health, was launched in September 2014 – and had already clocked up its 100th member by the end of the year.

The rapid progress is down to a number of factors, says John Stewart, the council's Trading Standards Food Manager. "You have to make it attractive to businesses," he says. "Because we have the website and the promotional literature they can see there is something in it for them. We have tried to make it simple to use and we are already trusted because of our well-established 'Trusted Trader' scheme. So when we have sent mail outs and the PR team have promoted the scheme it has had an impact.

"But what really makes a difference is dealing with these businesses face-to-face. We have officers who go round and explain what it is about, give them advice on how they can change their menus and help them fill in the forms."

The council sees it as part of its overall drive to tackle problems such as obesity, heart disease and stroke. One in four local people are obese and two thirds overweight, while seven in 10 do not get their five-a-day.

Councillor Dave Allen, Derbyshire's Cabinet Member for Health and Communities, says: "We don't want people to stop enjoying having meals or takeaways, but we want there to be healthy options for them to choose when

they do. We believe that as well as improving the health of Derbyshire people, Heart of Derbyshire will be a real boost to local food businesses too."

These sentiments are echoed by The Bakewell Tart Shop and Coffee House, which became the schemes 100th member in early December 2014. The café, which has a five-star hygiene rating, only uses lean mince, trims excess fat off meat and offers to grill or poach food as well as not adding salt to its dishes.

Owner Zoe McBurnie says she is thrilled to be involved. "It's good for us and good for our customers to know the efforts we make to keep our food as healthy as possible. "Bakewell tart isn't particularly good for you but we have a lot of other healthier food to offer and we always serve fruit with our tarts.

"Everyone's more aware of healthy eating and we've certainly noticed in our shop that the amount of people who are looking for more nutritious food has risen lately."

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