

Scrutiny Board :	Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board
Report Title	Tackling Obesity in Sandwell
Date of Meeting	19 th January 2026
Report Author	Liann Brookes-Smith, Consultant Public Health
Lead Officer	Frances Howie – Interim Director Public health
Wards Affected	All (All Wards);
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Choose an item. N/A
Appendices (if any)	1. Healthy weight and physical activity Needs Assessment 2026

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The needs assessment attached to the report provides Scrutiny Board a comprehensive overview of obesity data and trends in Sandwell, and to critically assess all available information with the aim of improving health outcomes

1.2. The report outlines how Sandwell Council, through its Public Health Team is responding to this challenge with early intervention and a place-based approach to healthy weight.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To note the programme of work within Public Health and across the system.

2.2 To support the work ongoing in local areas as leaders within our community.

3. Background and Context

3.1. Adults: 71.6% of adults are overweight or obese, well above the national average (64.5%). Approximately 82,000 adults are living with obesity, almost 14,000 more than expected if local prevalence matched national rates.

3.2. Children: By Reception year, 24.2% of children are overweight or obese. By Year 6 this rises sharply to 44.6%, the second highest prevalence in England. Severe obesity is almost double the national average.

- 3.3. Physical activity: Only 50.7% of adults in Sandwell are active, compared with 67.4% nationally. Among children, 59.6% of children are active which is 9th of all local authorities nationally.
- 3.4. New data from the Active Lives Survey shows that Sandwell is performing strongly when it comes to children's physical activity, with the borough now ranked among the top ten local authorities nationally. In 2024/25, 59.6 per cent of children aged 5 to 16 in Sandwell, around 31,500 children, are achieving the recommended 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day. This places Sandwell 9th out of 247 local authorities in England.
- 3.5. Sandwell Public Health are planning to co-produce, develop and adopt a whole-system Healthy Weight Strategy (2026–2031) under the governance of the Health and Wellbeing Board which has identified obesity as a one of three priorities for delivery in the next 5 years, as set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026-2031.
- 3.6. Based on best practice, the Healthy Weight Strategy will outline strategic priorities such as:
- Reduce childhood obesity through early intervention and family support.
 - Increase physical activity levels across all age groups.
 - Ensure equitable access to healthy weight and activity support.
 - Integrate prevention and healthy weight pathways across the system.
 - Use data and insight to drive change and empower communities

Programmes currently running within the department.

3.7 **NHS health checks**, this is a 5 year screening programme for adults aged 40-74, which focuses on identifying and reducing cardiovascular risks. High BMI is identified and where appropriate adults are referred into relevant healthy weight activities.

3.7. **Physical Activity Initiatives:** encouraging movement through play and everyday routines contributes to a healthy weight.

- PlayZones: Activating parks and outdoor play spaces for under-5s.
- Free Swimming: Access for all under-18s during school holidays.
- Family Hub Activities: Play, buggy walks, and physical sessions.
- Active Tots: Movement-based learning in early years settings.
- Cycle More: Family and toddler cycling sessions.
- Street Tag: Walking rewards app used in schools and communities.

3.8. **Programmes within the Community:** Using community settings like parks, libraries, leisure centres and supermarkets enables delivery of public health messages and support in accessible, familiar environments, increasing uptake and engagement.

- Shop Tours: Healthy food education in local supermarkets.
- PlayZones and park activation: Bringing physical activity to green spaces.

- Healthy Start Voucher Promotion: Delivered via libraries, children's centres.
- Public Health Dietitians (PHDOs): Outreach in community locations.
- Cycle More & Active Travel Promotion: Use of roads, parks, and walking routes to embed movement into daily life.
- The team work closely with Kore Leisure trust and Places who deliver our leisure assets providing concessionary passes for those eligible, children in care and children with disabilities. We also provide free swimming for all children.

3.9. Workplace competency and training: Early years professionals and frontline staff influence child and family health directly. Supporting their wellbeing improves service delivery, modelling of behaviours, and retention.

- Early Years Workforce Training: Improving staff knowledge and confidence in healthy eating and activity.
- PHDOs and Family Hub Teams: Embedding wellbeing principles and reflective practice.

3.10. Partnerships to Tackle Inactivity: Tackling inactivity requires coordinated efforts across local government, education, health, and the voluntary sector. Shared goals and joint delivery improve reach and sustainability.

- Get Set Go: Cross-sector delivery in target neighbourhoods.
- Cycle More: Partner-led delivery with local transport and leisure services.
- PlayZones: Funded in partnership with Sport England.
- Active Travel Routes: Delivered in collaboration with schools and highways.
- We are undergoing a place based expansion programme with Active Black Country who have secured a Development Grant to tackle inactivity and help develop our Place ask.

3.11. Weight Management and Targeting: A growing number of children in Sandwell are entering Reception overweight. Early years weight management includes preventing excess weight gain and offering structured help to families needing additional support.

- Healthy Pregnancy Service: Reducing risk before birth by supporting women to have a healthy lifestyle, during pregnancy, after birth.
- Weaning Support and Feeding Advice: Helping families adopt healthy patterns.
- HENRY and Choices Team: Supporting family-level change. As part of working with NHS partners around children who are severely obese, the choices team receive referrals from children who are part of the higher Tier NHS interventions.

- NAP SACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care): Setting-level programme to promote healthy weight environments.
- Cultural Insights Work: Understanding barriers to healthy behaviour in diverse cultures.

3.12. **Community and Cultural Insights:** Cultural beliefs, language, and lived experience shape health behaviours. Services need to reflect the communities they serve to ensure uptake and effectiveness.

- Cultural Insights and Co-Design: Embedding local voices in programme design.
- Choices Team: Delivering culturally tailored cooking, eating, and family support.
- PHDOs and Peer Networks: Responsive to cultural values and norms.
- Breastfeeding Peer Support: Delivered with cultural and language awareness.

3.13 **Food environment:** the team are also working on policies around food environment such as fast food density (planning vs health outcomes), vending machine policies and, to start, food available through council assets and educational settings.

3.14 **Programmes from Public Health:** We report on the outcomes on our programmes, however in the view of more town targeted programmes, identifying gaps, looking for community champions and co-producing solutions the team are moving to a borough and town reporting system in January 2026. Public Health have a vast array of programs which support the community from the individual to the family to maintain:

- A healthy diet
- A maintain active lifestyle.
- Knowledge on good healthy promoting nutrition

Area	Programme	Outcome 2024/25
Physical Activity	Sandwell Stride	19 walks/week, 5350 visits, 34 walk leaders trained
	Go-Jauntly (app)	44 recorded as complete (not all walkers will record their walk), 88 users, however 5900 walk views, and 34,000 connections in 6 months.
	Street Tag	Starts Summer 2025
	WOW (Walk Once a Week)	30 schools engaged, plans for expansion, schools on national leaderboard
	Daily mile	Not currently recorded
	Cycle More (Bikability)	77 schools engaged, expanded led rides in all towns
	Cycle more (led rides)	65 participants (via British Cycling led rides programme)
	Adaptive Cycling	492 individuals engaged over 40 sessions, 120 hours delivered
Utilising the community infrastructure	Family hubs/ Changes	Across all 6 towns in the 6 family hubs. Around 3 activities per week per town (more are being added - also include weaning.
	Leisure Centre Offer	57,095 subsidised swims (under 18s & over 60s), 129,724 concessionary memberships
	Active Green Spaces	51 sessions, Q1, 244 attendances Q2 136 attendances
	PlayZones	9 sites developed with 50k PH and 150k bid to Sport England
Targeted programmes	Exercise referral pathway	Due to be piloted 2025
	Choices Team	581 total engaged (253 children, 198 adults), 90 family waiting list
	Cancer Kickers	There have been 30 participants who have attending since the programme started March 2025
	HENRY 5-11	16 trained on Henry approach and 8 trained to deliver the programme across Sandwell.
	50+ Bowls	Starts Summer 2025
Community interventions	Health visiting/ Breast feeding	Universal for all parents (baby groups for parents)
	Get Set Go! Friar Park	1379 attendances across 19 activity types
	Lunch time supervisor	782 Playground Leaders trained in 36 schools
	Shop Tours	Ongoing no specific figures given
	Vision 2030 SCVO Grants	32 projects funded, split across Healthy Lives and Social Connections
	Workplace Health	2,219 total activity attendances across football, badminton, pilates, etc.
Weight management	Weight Management Tier2	1,411 referrals, 85 completed programme (7.4%)
	Fit Baggies	150 participants planned, evidence of weight loss and improved health
	Healthy Pregnancy Service	From May to July 2025 there have been 325 referrals and 105 have taken up the service across Sandwell

From January 2026 all these programmes of work will be broken down by town, participants and impact.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 The physical activity framework is currently being developed for spring 2026, this is identifying priorities by age group to ensure that there is a appropriate and utilisable offer for all ages.
- 4.2 The strategy which will develop until the health and wellbeing board will be shaped by community insight already gathered through Get Set Go, Healthy Weight cultural research, and evaluation of local programmes. However future areas for consultation will also be developed.
- 4.3 The strategy itself will require consultation, such as engagement with schools, families, community groups and elected members to shape priorities.
- 4.4 Public Health is committed to ongoing co-production.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Delivery is funded through the ring-fenced Public Health Grant. Whereby around £1.72m is invested into physical activity and healthy weight. Key investments include:
 - Tier 2 Weight Management Service: £200k p. a.
 - Free swimming and concessions on leisure access: £823k p.a.
 - Public Health Development Officer (PHDO) capacity building and training: £700k p.a. (2024/25 Healthy Towns budget)
 - Future delivery will depend on sustained grant funding and external bids (e.g., Sport England). We are expecting over £1m in funding from this source.

5. Legal and Governance Implications

- 5.1. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires local authorities to take steps to improve public health.
- 5.2. The Council must also act under the Children Act 2004 to promote the welfare of children. The NCMP is a statutory duty. The strategy aligns with these duties and NICE guidance.

6. Risks

- 6.1. Key risks include:
 - Inability to reduce obesity prevalence due to systemic determinants (e.g., poverty, food environment conflict with planning)
 - Insufficient reach into high-risk or marginalised communities
 - Reduced funding for prevention
 - Underperformance of commissioned providers

These are mitigated through working closely with partners, focus on equity, and embedded evaluation and contract management.

7. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

7.1. Obesity disproportionately affects children from deprived and ethnically diverse backgrounds. The strategy includes targeted actions for high-prevalence wards, inclusive programme design, and co-production with communities. Interventions are tailored to reduce health inequalities

8. Other Relevant Implications

8.1. Health and Wellbeing: This work directly supports improvements in child and population health and reduces future demand on NHS and care services.

8.2. Climate Change: Promotion of active travel contributes to reduced emissions and healthier environments.

8.3. Social Value: Community-led delivery and commissioning supports local employment and skills.

9. Background Documents

9.1 NCMP Data 2024/25

9.2 Healthy Weight and physical activity Needs Assessment

10. How does this deliver the Outcomes in the Council Plan?

10.1 Growing up in Sandwell: Supports early years and school-age health, resilience, and development. Being a healthy weight and being physically active contributes to good mental health and attainment.

10.2 Healthy in Sandwell: Tackles a major driver of poor health and life expectancy.

10.3 Living in Sandwell: Creates healthier, safer neighbourhoods through active travel and planning.

10.4 Thriving Economy in Sandwell: Creates a healthier workforce and improves attainment and maintaining work.

10.5 One Council One Team: Embeds partnership working across directorates and with communities.