

OBESITY AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

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DEVELOPING A WHOLE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO OBESITY

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Obesity is recognized as a major public health problem. Despite awareness of the significant increases in obesity levels and the major individual and societal consequences, there is limited evidence that efforts to tackle the problem have been successful. The limited impacts of actions to date have led to new thinking about how to best tackle obesity. Obesity is a result of a complex and adaptive system, therefore the chance of a silver bullet solution is small and naïve. It is recognized that traditional linear solutions to complex problems are unlikely to be impactful due to the changing and complex nature of the system. Therefore, systems thinking has been proposed to overcome the weakness of traditional methods. We worked with 11 local authorities in England to develop a relevant and usable whole systems approach to obesity on behalf of Public Health England. Through an overarching action research methodology, we used and developed a variety of tools to assess the impact of the process on local authorities. We co-produced with these local authorities a six-step process to implement a whole systems approach. We will outline the proposed six step process, the lessons learnt as part of the co-productive process and some outcomes to date.

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