

Merton Council

Child Healthy Weight Action Plan (2022 – 2025)

Introduction

Childhood obesity is one of the greatest public health challenges facing the UK population today, with prevalence and inequalities increasing in Merton over the last decades (see “Merton Context” below). Since the COVID-19 pandemic poorer mental health and wellbeing have been reported in children and young people, particularly those in care or disadvantaged financially.¹ Poor mental health has a marked effect on obesity.

The Young resident’s survey in Merton showed that over a third of young residents worried about their mental health during lockdown. Feeling bored and isolated, they spent a lot more time on screens during lockdown, with habits that might continue and additionally different groups disproportionately are impacted by food poverty.

The importance of this issue is reflected in Merton’s [Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2024](#), which includes tackling childhood obesity and promoting healthy weight as a key priority. Tackling childhood obesity is also included as a priority in the [Children and Young People’s Plan](#), with children and young people in Merton telling us clearly that childhood obesity is an important issue to them.

The Action Plan

In support of these strategies, Merton’s Child Healthy Weight Action Plan (2022 – 2025) lays out the actions that will be taken to support children, young people and families in Merton to achieve healthy weight. Previous versions of this action plan have had a real impact, with many successes achieved despite the disruption and changing priorities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (see celebrating successes below).

The Child Healthy Weight Action Plan (2022-2025) has been refreshed through a process of engaging partners through the Child Healthy Weight steering group, reviewing evidence and best practice regarding what works, listening to feedback from local residents and families and reviewing the successes and challenges of the previous plan. The action plan also builds on regional and national work, supporting the actions included in the National Childhood Obesity Action Plan, Chapter 2.²

The Child Healthy Weight action plan does not seek to duplicate work already ongoing, rather it sets out a number of specific, additional actions to promote child healthy weight. In recognition of the synergies between the Child Healthy Weight, Diabetes and Food Poverty action plans, all three have been refreshed together. Each action plan within this package covers the same period, January 2022 to March

¹ Source: COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing surveillance report. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. November 2021.

² HM Government: Childhood obesity: a plan for action, Chapter 2
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718903/childhood-obesity-a-plan-for-action-chapter-2.pdf

2025. The overarching themes for these action plans have been retained from previous versions; however, actions and tasks have been updated.

There are several reasons for packaging these 3 action plans together. First, there are similarities across these issues in terms of root causes, inequalities, and the impact of COVID-19. Second, the principles taken in these action plans are similar, as follows:

- **Whole systems approach** - all three issues are complex and tackling them requires a “whole systems approach”, recognising the influence of the places we live, work and play on our health and well-being. For this reason, the Child Healthy Weight and Diabetes action plans also have a shared theme; “Healthy Place”
- **Think Family** - this recognises the importance of tackling these issues within the context of a family network, rather than considering individuals in isolation. Without this approach, we often miss the bigger picture of an individual’s life, resulting in missed opportunities for support and prevention.
- **Life-course approach** – this approach recognises that evidence-based interventions at key stages of life, such as in the early years, can generate the greatest impact on health throughout the life course. For example, reducing childhood obesity and tackling food poverty will reduce the prevalence of diabetes in adulthood, highlighting the importance of taking an integrated approach.

The Child Healthy Weight Action Plan is split into 3 key themes:

1. ***Making Child Healthy Weight everyone’s business***
2. ***Supporting Children and Young People and Their Families***
3. ***Healthy Place***

Merton Child Healthy Weight Action Plan (CHWAP) 2022-2025 – Summary Plan on a Page

Theme 1: Making Child Healthy Weight Everyone's Business

Vision: *We have a joined-up approach to tackling childhood child healthy weight in Merton with partners taking a coordinated, whole systems approach with a focus on effective communication and engagement.*

In order to deliver this vision, we will achieve the following actions:-

Action 1) Refresh the Merton communication & engagement strategy recognising link between healthy weight, mental health and stigma associated with obesity. Take a universal as well as targeted approach to ensure campaigns and messaging are coordinated, consistent and evidence-based and tackle inequalities across partners.

Action 2) Train and educate front-line stakeholders in Merton to provide brief intervention advice and signposting on CHW making every contact count

Action 3) Work in partnership across and beyond the Council to embed healthy weight and a "Think Family" approach into work including identifying opportunities to source additional funding

Theme 2: Supporting children, young people and their families

Vision: *Schools and early year's settings support all families to live healthily and children that need additional help are offered high quality and effective support by services.*

In order to deliver this vision, we will achieve the following actions:-

Action 4) Improve Merton's service offer for children and families that need support with healthy weight e.g. enhancing Family Start, reviewing needs and CHW pathways

Action 5) Develop and implement a Social Prescribing pilot offer for CYP and families that need support with Healthy Weight targeted in east Merton

Action 6) Enhance the support children and families receive in schools and early years settings to live healthily through e.g. promotion of breastfeeding. Healthy Early Years and Healthy Schools

Theme 3: Healthy Place

Vision: *Merton as a place to live, study and/or work encourages people to be more active and make healthier choices.*

In order to deliver this vision, we will achieve the following actions:-

Action 7) Support changes in key settings to ensure they support healthy lifestyles e.g. promoting the Healthy Workplaces Award scheme, refreshing and implementing the School Neighbourhood Approach Pilot, expanding the School Streets and evaluating Green and Healthy Primary Care Network (PCN pilot)

Action 8) Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers to enable pregnant women & young children in low-income families to access fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, milk and vitamins

Action 9) Create a healthier food environment in Merton by working with partners and businesses to e.g. continue to manage new fast food takeaways near schools, organisational sign up to local Sugar Smart campaign and managing unhealthy food advertising on bus shelters and stand-alone advertising

Action 10) Increase the promotion and provision of free drinking water in Merton to encourage drinking water instead of unhealthy alternatives

Action 11) Increase and promote opportunities to be physically active for children, young people and their families e.g. through promoting a developing and promoting a physical activity campaign, increasing schools engaged in Daily/Active Mile and School Travel Plans encouraging cycling/scooting/walking

Action 12) Work in partnership across Merton Council to tackle the obesogenic environment for children and young people for example by ensuring Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are undertaken according to Local Plan on developments and procuring nature based Green Social Prescribing including

Theme 1: Making Child Healthy Weight Everyone's Business

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
1.Refresh the communication & engagement strategy to ensure campaigns and messaging are coordinated, consistent and evidence-based.	1.1 Refresh and reframe the communication and engagement strategy, recognising the link between healthy weight and mental wellbeing as well as the stigma associated with obesity. The plan will take both a universal and targeted approach, with specific actions for the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (B.A.M.E) groups • Those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) • East Merton wards • Young people (Aged 14-17) • Families with children <5 	PH CHW Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of communication and engagement evidence based toolkit • Measure impact by increasing the number of partners who are actively promoting CHW communications from baseline 	July 2022 October 2022
	1.2 Understand and respond to the impact of COVID and emerging needs	PH CHW Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCMP data • Healthy schools initiative feedback 	Ongoing
2.Train and educate front-line stakeholders in Merton to provide brief intervention and signposting on CHW.	2.1 Commission a training provider for front-line partners. Training package to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of CHW and the whole systems/ family approach • Services & pathways available in Merton for signposting • Training on making every contact count through brief intervention 	PH CHW Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of procurement process and award of contract to provider • Number of stakeholders trained • Evaluation of training - impact 	February 2022 March 2023 March 2023

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
	Training on handling difficult conversations			
3. Work in partnership across and beyond the Council to embed healthy weight and a “Think Family” approach into all our work and to make best use of available resources.	3.1 Explore opportunities for additional funding to support CHW activity in Merton and produce a prioritised menu of interventions for partners to draw upon where funding is identified.	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report of funding status including opportunities identified, bids made and funding secured • Menu of interventions produced • Measure of successful inward investment to Merton for CHW • Child Healthy Weight included as a social value outcome/ indicator in Merton’s Social Value Toolkit³ • Measure of how it has been used 	February 2023
	3.2 Review and improve the utilisation of social value clauses in commissioning and procurement to ensure that the processes include due consideration for how contracts can promote child healthy weight.	PH LBM Procurement		July 2022

³ London Borough of Merton: [Social Value \(sharepoint.com\)](https://www.sharepoint.com)

Theme 2: Supporting Children and Young People and Their Families

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicator	Timelines
4. Improve Merton's service offer for children and families that need support with healthy weight	4.1 Enhance the "Family Start" tier 2 weight management service offer taking account of insight from the evaluation report and new evidence ⁴ . Build in data collection methods for evaluation of service ⁵ .	CLCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of an evaluation plan for the Family Start programme Implementation of updated service specification for Family Start 	March 2023
		SWL CCG PH PH SWL CCG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-production of report including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of gaps in local clinical service offer recommendations for Tier 3 service development GP pathway for CHW developed Number of GP surgeries in Merton adopting updated pathway Number of referrals made by GP practices using the pathway 	May 2022
		CLCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and variety of services achieving Level 1 and Level 2 accreditation 	March 2023
		CLCH CSF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of collaboration at a strategic level Training and sharing resources with services Extended Breastfeeding Support available 	

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740151/tier2_child_weight_management_services_guide.pdf

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-weight-management-services-collect-and-record-data>

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicator	Timelines
	<p>4.2 Review the need for a local Tier 3 service for childhood obesity weight management in Merton.⁶</p> <p>4.3 Update GP clinical pathways for child healthy weight. Embed integration with relevant local services, including the dietetics service, to ensure that families in Merton can be efficiently signposted to the most appropriate local services available.</p> <p>4.4 Support services in Merton to achieve UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity and health visiting • Children’s Centres • Other community services <p>This will support more babies to be breastfed and will ultimately help the effort to reduce rising obesity rates</p>			

⁶ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/appndx-9-serv-spec-ccg-guid.pdf>

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicator	Timelines
5. Develop and pilot a social prescribing offer for children and families that need support with Healthy Weight that will also provide emotional and well being support	5.1 Procure the development, pilot and evaluation of a social prescribing pathway, connecting families with local opportunities to increase physical activity, improve healthy eating and emotional and mental wellbeing, for example leisure centres and cooking classes taking a more holistic approach to support. Targeted in the east of the borough	PH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a service specification for a pilot CYP social prescribing service Implementation of pilot service in a limited number of Merton GP practices or PCNs in the east of the borough Initial report of evaluation of the social prescribing service End evaluation Number of incentives offered to families in Merton 	December 2021
	5.2 Explore opportunities for incentives such as vouchers to encourage families to utilise local assets such as leisure centres, swimming pools and other organisations that promote physical activity and healthy eating	Leisure GLL CLCH		February 2022
				September 2022
				February 2023
				March 2024

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicator	Timelines
6. Enhance the support children and families receive in schools and early years setting to live healthily	6.1 Breastfeeding support and education provision in order to provide early intervention against childhood overweight and obesity	CLCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased percentage of babies breastfed 	Ongoing
	6.2 Support all Early Years settings in Merton to register for the Healthy Early Years Programme and to achieve year on year increases in bronze, silver and gold accreditation from baseline year	CSF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Gold, Silver and Bronze awards Target: year on year increase from baseline year 	March 2024
	6.3 Support all schools in Merton to register for the Healthy Schools London Programme and to achieve year on year increases in bronze, silver and gold accreditation from baseline year	MSSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Gold, Silver and Bronze awards Target: year on year increase from baseline year 	December 2022

Theme 3: Healthy Place

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
8. Increase the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers in Merton	8.1 Work with partners to promote awareness of Healthy Start scheme and the providers that accept Healthy Start vouchers	PH Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring data for Healthy Start e.g. % of those eligible accessing HS Scheme Number and variety of food retailers engaged with the Healthy Start programme Number and variety of outlets where Healthy Start vitamin vouchers can be redeemed 	Ongoing
	8.2 Increase the number of food retailers engaged with the Healthy Start programme	PH Principal		December 2022
	8.3 Increase the number of outlets where Healthy Start vitamin vouchers can be redeemed	PH Principal		Ongoing

<p>9. Create a healthier food environment in Merton by working with partners and businesses</p>	<p>9.1 Promote Merton’s Sugar Smart campaign through the communication and engagement plan and increase the number of schools and wider organisations signed-up</p> <p>9.2 The impact of Merton’s New Local Plan expected to be adopted in 2022 on new fast food takeaways (A5 uses) located within 400 metres of primary or secondary schools</p> <p>9.3 Support local businesses to improve their healthy food offer by; (A) Expanding the number of businesses signed up to the Healthier Catering Commitment⁷ (B) Promoting the Government’s Standards for Food and Catering Services⁸ in order to adopt healthier and more sustainable ‘out of home’ food provision in Merton</p> <p>9.4 Respond to breaches which are highlighted in JC Decaux owned advertising sites (bus shelter and free-standing units), which have adopted Transport for London (TfL) ‘no unhealthy food’ advertising approach</p>	<p>MSSP</p> <p>Senior/PH Principal Future Merton Ann Maria Clarke/ PH Healthy Places Officer Environmen tal Health</p> <p>Public Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of schools pledged to become Sugar Smart in Merton • Number of wider organisations pledged to become Sugar Smart in Merton • The number of new hot food takeaway (A5) approved each year reported in Merton Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) • Number of local businesses signed up to the Healthier Catering Commitment • Number of local food businesses adopting Government Buying Standards • Annual audit of advertising sites near schools. 	<p>March 2023 February 2023 March 2023</p>
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Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
10. Increase the promotion and provision of free drinking water in Merton	10.1 Work with the Mayor of London, Thames Water, businesses and stakeholders to increase the provision of free water fountains installed in in Merton's town centres	Future Merton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of free public drinking water fountains in Merton's town centres. 	December 2024
	10.2 Promote and encourage local businesses to provide free access to drinking water by signing up to and promoting the "Refill London" programme	Future Merton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of businesses in Merton that have signed up to the Refill London programme. 	January 2025

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
<p>11. Increase and promote opportunities to be physically active</p>	<p>11.1 Develop a “Try 22 in 2022” campaign, building on previous year’s campaign. Ensure there is a focus on opportunities on activities for families to be physically active together.</p> <p>11.2 Continue to provide school and adult cycle training programme and explore opportunities for funding to expand cycle training offer.</p> <p>11.3 Promote the “Daily/active Mile” initiative locally, for example through School Travel Plans, to ensure that all primary schools in the borough are delivering the programme.</p> <p>11.4 Use School Travel Plans to encourage cycling training and walking to school initiatives.</p>	<p>PH Public Health Principal/ Health Improvement Officer Future Merton MSSP Future Merton Future Merton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign developed and promotion included in the communication and engagement plan • Number of training sessions held • Number of attendees • Number of schools delivering the “Daily Mile” programme • Proportion of children and young people and their families walking or cycling to school 	<p>December 2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>December 2023</p> <p>October 2022</p>

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
<p>12. Work in partnership across Merton Council to tackle the obesogenic environment for children and young people</p>	<p>Work with planning teams to ensure Health Impact Assessments are undertaken in accordance with Merton's new Local plan (expected to be adopted in 2022), health and wellbeing policies. A HIA will be required for the following developments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative impact of development where proposed development is in an area with 2 other developments planned or started. • Significant developments in areas of poor air quality for example Air Quality Focus Areas • Developments in an area of deprivation • If one or more hot foods takeaways are proposed. • New educational, health facilities or publicly accessible open space are proposed 	<p>Future Merton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of HIAs submitted with planning applications in accordance with Local Plan health and wellbeing policies each year. 	<p>July 2023</p>

Action	Task	Lead	Monitoring Indicators	Timeline
13. Green social prescribing	<p>13.1 Procure a scheme to expand nature-based provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardening • Food growing projects • Biodiversity / conservation projects • Walking for health schemes <p>Target those who have been socially isolated due to the pandemic or COVID vulnerable groups</p> <p>Prioritise intergenerational interventions</p>	PH, PCN, Existing social prescribers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of projects developed 	February 2022
	<p>13.2 Use of public spaces for food growing</p> <p>Council directive Mapping Incredible edible High streets Vertical gardens School gardens</p>	Healthy places officer		

Governance arrangements - Monitoring the Action Plan

The Children's Trust Board (CTB) is responsible for monitoring the delivery of "Start Well" childhood obesity priority of the Health and Wellbeing (HWB) Strategy with escalation and reporting to HWB Board as appropriate.

The Child Healthy Weight Steering Group, which includes a range of partners in Merton, will lead on ensuring this plan is operationally delivered. Monitoring metrics are included and others will be developed during implementation. New and emerging actions will be incorporated into the action plan over time, building on the evolving evidence base as agreed through the steering group.

It is recognised that many activities and initiatives are already underway across Merton that have a positive impact on child healthy weight. This action plan does not aim to map all activity across the borough, rather it focuses on actions that are additional or enhance existing priority activities and which are not featured in other plans.

Appendix A

1. Definition of Child Healthy Weight

A child is a healthy weight if their BMI for age and sex is between the 2nd and 91st centiles. A child's BMI is expressed as a "centile" to show how their BMI compares with children who took part in national surveys⁹.

Calculating BMI works out if a child or young person is:

- underweight – on the 2nd centile or below
- healthy weight – between the 2nd and 91st centiles
- overweight – 91st centile or above
- very overweight – 98th centile or above

⁹ Guidance: Childhood obesity: applying All Our Health. PHE. Updated 1 May 2020.