



Russell George MS
Chair
Health and Social Care Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
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Dear Russell

Re: Obesity Alliance Cymru

Thank you and the wider Health and Social Care Committee staff for meeting with the OAC on the 1st February. It was useful to hear that the key themes underpinning the Committees work are inequalities and prevention as socio-economic factors play a key role in driving obesity and poor health.

In Wales 66% of men, 56% of women, and 27% of children are above a healthy weight, and obesity among adults in the most deprived groups in Wales is 32% compared with 20% in the least deprived groups. For example, 17.2% of children aged 4-5 in the Merthyr Tydfil had obesity in 2018/19 compared to 7.8% in the Vale of Glamorgan. It has also been projected that obesity and excess weight will cost the NHS in Wales £465 million per year by 2050.¹ The Kings Fund also says that deprived areas have higher concentrations of fast-food outlets and more limited availability of affordable healthy food.

In 2019, the Welsh Government launched Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales, its first ever strategy to tackle obesity. This ten-year plan included commitments to improve the food environment, support children, schools and families, and develop a new obesity treatment pathway. Whilst we welcomed the publication of the recent Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales 2022 to 2024 delivery plan, we do have some concerns that implementation is not as far ahead as we would like. We acknowledge that the pandemic has disrupted/ had an impact on the pace of progress but given the above statistics tackling obesity needs to remain a priority. We would therefore welcome a Health and Social Care Scrutiny Session on the delivery of Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales.

¹ Welsh Government National Survey for Wales population health
<https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-population-health> Public Health Wales
Child Measurement Programme for Wales
<https://publichealthwales.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/child-measurement-programme/>
Public Health Wales 2020 'National Survey for Wales 2019-20'
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-07/adult-lifestyle-national-survey-wales-april-2019-march-2020-390.pdf>

OAC members would like to see the following areas strengthened in order to reduce health inequalities and obesity rates:

1. Implementation of updated school food standards regulations and healthy campuses.
2. Ensure that appropriate data is accessible to tailor services to the needs of the population and to inform future service planning.
3. Continue to maintain multi-year funding to health boards and other partners to deliver sustainable services.
4. Increase the uptake of weight management services, particularly amongst socio-economic groups that are most under-represented in these services. These should include targeted outreach campaigns to encourage uptake from under-represented demographic groups and encouraging healthcare professionals to take-up training and development opportunities about discussing weight and health with patients.

For example, the Diabetes Remission Programme that was rolled out as part of HWHW has saved approximately £23,000 on treating type 2 diabetes, we would like clarification that services such as this will continue over the long term.

Also, the 'All Wales Nutrition Skills for Life Program', led by NHS Wales dietitians, has the potential to do more in deprived communities, however service leads are concerned about the short-term funding of services. They would like to see more permanent funding or at least longer than 1 year at a time, as recruitment is becoming extremely difficult without more certainty.

Dietitians delivering the Nutrition Skills for Life programme, would also be well placed to provide training to enable to wider health and social care workforce to raise the topic of weight in a sensitive and non-stigmatising way, and to integrate nutrition into their work with communities and in early years settings.

I hope this information is helpful, and we look forward to you working with you in the future.

Kind regards,

The Obesity Alliance Cymru

The Obesity Alliance Cymru is a forum for organisations to collaborate, and influence policy on preventing and reducing obesity in Wales.

Current OAC members are: Cancer Research UK, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Diabetes UK, British Dietetic Association and dietitians from LHB's, British Medical Association, British Heart Foundation, Royal College of Physicians, Bowel Cancer UK, Tenovus Cancer Care, Welsh NHS Confederation, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Royal College of Surgeons of England, Nesta, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Occupational Therapists, Royal College of Podiatry, British Psychological Society, Royal College of Psychiatrists.