



The Welsh Government's Healthy Weight : Healthy Wales Strategy 2019

Response to the HSC Committee Report - Prevention of Ill Health – Obesity

19/11/2025

In October 2025, the Health and Social Care Committee submitted its report on the Welsh Government's Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Strategy 2019. The report includes 18 recommendations. This is the Welsh Government's response to those recommendations.

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Introduction

Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales is our 10-year strategy to prevent and reduce obesity and is supported by a series of delivery plans. The third Delivery Plan for 2025-27 was published on 30 September 2025. It builds on action taken to date and sets out a series of themes, goals and actions to help focus on where we can collectively effect change for most impact and, in doing so, support key government objectives. The plan places support for children and young people at the heart of the actions and goals.

Living with overweight and obesity is one of the leading causes of years lived in poor health and is projected to overtake smoking as the biggest cause of preventable illnesses, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers, in Wales. Levels of obesity in Wales, and across the world, have been rising steadily over many years. These trends have contributed to over 60% of adults in Wales living with overweight or obesity. Almost a quarter of reception age children are living with overweight or obesity, highlighting the importance of ensuring children and their families are supported from an early age.

The causes of obesity are multi-faceted. Our food environment has developed to prioritise convenience over health with energy dense foods high in fat or sugar. We are increasingly less active as a nation due to a daily work and travel patterns, and we are the first generation that need to make a conscious decision to build physical activity into our daily lives.

The new Delivery Plan therefore also has a focus on a cross government and cross societal whole system approach, to put in place the environmental and structural changes needed to tackle our obesogenic environments.

I thank the members of the Health and Social Care Committee for their report on Ill-Health Prevention - Obesity. I have set out my response to the Report’s individual recommendations below.

Response to 18 recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Welsh Government should consider the methods used elsewhere, particularly in England and Scotland, to apply adjustments to self-reported height and weight data, with a view to introducing adjusted data in Wales to more accurately reflect levels of overweight or obesity

Response: Accept.

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 published on 30 September sets out strengthened governance and reporting structures to enable clear accountability for progress towards our collective outcomes, supported by a new Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales framework of goals and indicators.

Through the development of the outcome and measurement framework, which will be finalised in the first year of the delivery plan, Welsh Government will consider the merits and resource implications of the methods used elsewhere to apply adjustments to self-reported height and weight data. Being consistent with the method used within each survey is important to ensure data for Wales can be compared over time to assess trends.

Financial implications – N/A

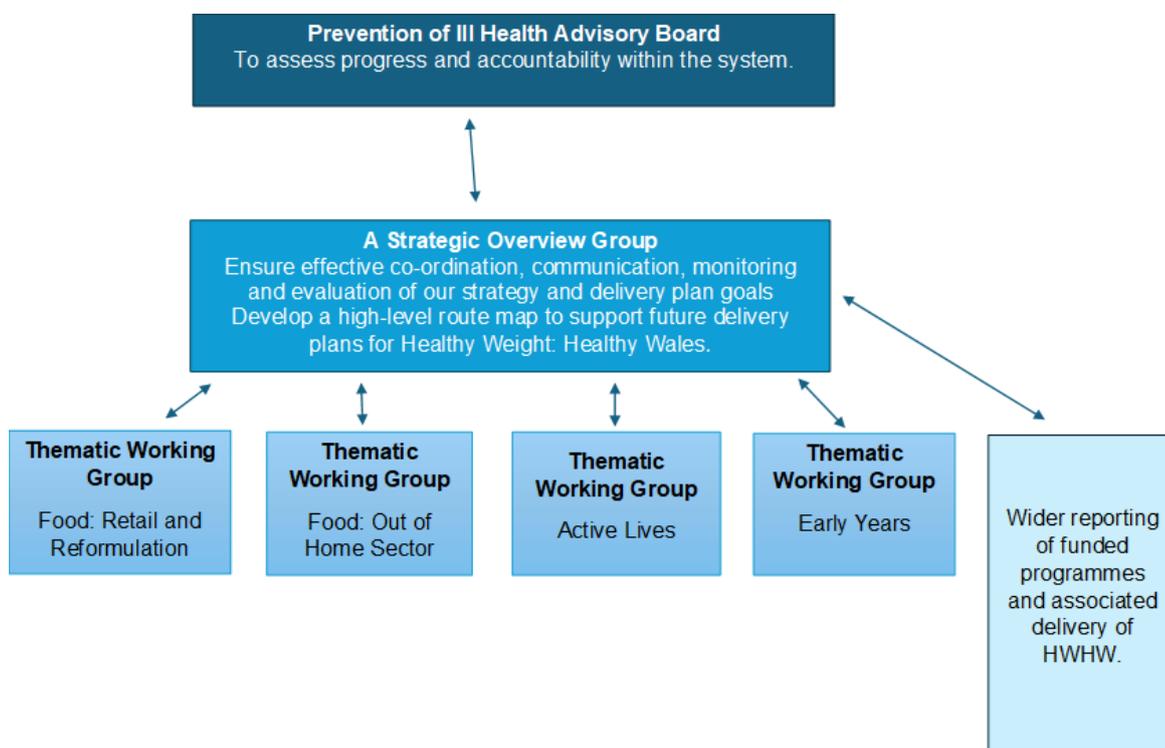
Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government must demonstrate stronger leadership in driving the changes needed to ensure services are in place to support people living with overweight and obesity in Wales. This requires a cross-Government, whole-systems approach. In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should outline how its approach sets out:

- clear lines of responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales delivery plan;
- how its partners should collaborate across Wales to reduce obesity; and
- how its partners will be held to account for delivering their responsibilities in this area.

Response: Accept.

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets out new and clearer governance and accountability arrangements and commitments to strengthen and embed further whole system approaches at both a community and national level, as set out below:



These new arrangements will enable clear accountability for progress towards our collective outcomes, supported by a new Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales framework of goals and indicators. New thematic working groups will be established, to include national and local partners, to help inform how we take forward the goals and actions in this delivery plan.

In addition to the thematic working groups, a new strategic overview group will ensure effective co-ordination, communication, monitoring and evaluation of our strategy and delivery plan goals. A national board will assess progress and accountability within the system. We will use the five ways of working set out in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to guide our approach.

On a regional level, support will be provided for local public health teams within health boards to further develop and deliver action plans, co-produced with their partners. The action plans will be informed by an understanding of the evidence base for different interventions to optimise their likely impact and measure and evaluate outcomes.

Throughout the plan, each theme also focusses on actions to embed whole system approaches at national level, ensuring that all parts of the system join up and respond collectively to our shared goals.

Financial implications – this work will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 3

The Welsh Government should:

- provide an annual update to the Senedd on progress in implementing the *Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales* delivery plan;
- publish the outcomes and achievements of the *Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales* delivery plan at the end of each two year cycle.

Response: Accept in principle

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27, published on 30 September 2025, sets out a commitment to publish and report against a new framework of goals and indicators. We will finalise this framework during this first year of our new delivery plan and consider the reporting methods back to the Senedd.

The development of an outcome and measurement framework aims to better understand and monitor the progress we are making. This is particularly important because of the range of factors which influence healthy weight and the long-term nature of the changes we are seeking to make. A series of goals, based around population groups and sub-systems, support each theme in this delivery plan will provide focus of the changes needed. Associated indicators will be developed to enable us to measure if we are moving in the right direction.

Financial implications – this work will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Recommendation 4

The Welsh Government should commission an audit of the provision of adult weight management services in each health board to determine future provision needs across all health boards. This should include:

- details of the waiting times for weight management services, for both adults and children;

- the number of people waiting for weight management services in each health board;
- details of the make-up of the weight management teams, e.g. the number of available psychologists and dietitians.

The results of this audit should be used to determine the sufficiency of level 2 services within each health board to meet its respective population needs

Response: Accept

Welsh Government will explore the development of a new clinical pathway for the treatment and management of obesity as a chronic condition, including the role of weight loss drugs. The development of the new pathway seeks to both increase capacity and capability for the equitable access of services across the healthcare system, including primary care and community settings, and to respond to the scale of the challenge of managing and treating obesity.

This work will review of the provision and capacity of current services within specialist weight management services, including within the multi-disciplinary teams. It will

- Undertake a delivery landscape review of the current capacity of services outside the specialised weight management services, such as from the National Exercise Referral Scheme and approaches in place for the All-Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme in primary care settings
- Draw on best practice approaches across Wales, including the evaluation of the PIPYN children and family pilots, ensuring those with lived experience are front and centre.
- Review wider models of implementation across the UK for applicability in the Welsh context
- Establish a clinical review of the current weight management pathway for specialised weight management services in light the new quality standards for the clinical assessment and management of obesity published by NICE on 5 August 2025.
- Take into consideration any proposal put forward by Public Health Wales and/or Health Boards in relation to the Obesity Pathway Innovation Programme.
- Consider the wider market economics emerging around weight loss drugs.
- Review and make recommendations for any new policy position emerging as a result of moving from a model of care based of risk to one for lifelong management of a chronic condition.

Financial implications – to be determined during the scoping phase of the work.

Recommendation 5

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should provide a timescale for the development of a national pathway for maternity weight management.

Response: Accept.

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27, sets out a commitment to take a continuous improvement approach to the All-Wales Weight Management Pathway. This includes an action to publish guidance to support weight management during pregnancy by the end of the delivery plan.

Financial implications – N/A

Recommendation 6

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should confirm whether stigma training has been made available to all health boards. It should also provide details of the level of uptake of this training and how this is monitored

Response: Accept in principle

Stigma training is made available to all health boards through Public Health Wales’ programme 'Making Every Contact Count'.

There are two 'Having Healthy Weight Conversations' online courses available at level 1 and level 2. This training has been developed to support people in health services and partner organisations to have compassionate conversations about healthy weight. The bilingual training is available to all health boards.

Making Every Contact Count uptake is monitored by the newly developed interactive Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Performance Monitoring Dashboard, which was developed to support the National MECC Programme and MECC partners across Wales. The dashboard enables key stakeholders, including regional MECC leads within Health Boards, and Allied Health Professional leads, to assess take up of the training.

Financial implications – N/A

Recommendation 7

The Welsh Government should update the Committee on the findings of the Public Health Wales review of the Child Measurement Programme and whether it plans to make any changes as a result of that review.

Response: Accept in principle

The Child Measurement Programme is now re-established following COVID 19. We recognise the importance of continuing to track cohorts through primary school and evaluate interventions. Welsh Government will continue to work with Public Health Wales to explore the merit and resource implications of a second measurement point, when pupils are several years older.

This will be taken forward as part of a new approach to governance, accountability and monitoring set out in the new Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan, which sets out a commitment to develop an outcome and measurement framework, based around a series of goals. It will be finalised in the first year of the delivery plan.

In addition to tracking cohorts through primary school, a key focus of the plan is enabling more children to start school a healthy weight. The early years are a crucial time for healthy growth and highlight the importance of ensuring children and their families are supported at an early age. Available evidence indicates many UK infants are exceeding their calorie requirements, and overweight in infancy tracks into childhood and later life. The Scientific Advisory Commission on Nutrition (SACN) has advised governments to consider ways to monitor the prevalence of overweight and overfeeding in infants, and ways to address high energy intakes. A new infant feeding action plan will set out a commitment to support steady growth in young children, including by:

- Increasing breastfeeding rates, ensuring more babies benefit from breastmilk and establish breastfeeding as the cultural norm
- Empowering and enabling parents to provide nutritious diets for their children by making healthy feeding the easy choice in the places where families live, work, and spend time.
- Nationally collating Healthy Child Wales weight and length measurements and exploring opportunities for additional measurements through the Flying Start enhanced health visitor offer. This provides opportunities for early identification of unhealthy weight gain and early intervention to support healthier behaviours in line with SACN recommendations to governments.

Financial implications – there will be a cost implication if a second measurement point is taken forward.

Recommendation 8

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should set out the timescales for the publication of the Infant Feeding Action Plan, the priorities for the plan and details of how it will be monitored.

Response: Accept.

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets out a commitment to develop and deliver a new infant feeding action plan which will support our babies and children from birth to school age. It will:

- build on the 2019 to 2024 All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan to continue to increase the number of babies who benefit from breastfeeding
- support formula-fed babies by actioning the appropriate Competition and Market Authority report recommendations
- support the introduction of solid foods to establish healthy food preferences, dietary patterns and growth, and
- embed these, and actions to maximise physical activity, into our family support programmes, such as Flying Start

Financial implications – to be determined during the scoping phase of the work.

Recommendation 9

The Welsh Government should commission an audit of the provision of children’s weight management services in each health board to determine future provision needs across all health boards. This should include details of the make-up of the weight management teams, e.g. the number of available psychologists and dietitians. The results should be used to determine the sufficiency of children’s weight management services within each health board to meet its respective population needs.

Response: Accept

Welsh Government will explore the development of a new clinical pathway for the treatment and management of obesity as a chronic condition, including the role of weight loss drugs. This will include the provision of services for children. The development of the new pathway seeks to both increase capacity and capability for the equitable access of services across the healthcare system, including primary care and community settings, and to respond to the scale of the challenge of managing and treating obesity.

This work will review of the provision and capacity of current services within specialist weight management services, including within the multi-disciplinary teams. It will

- Undertake a delivery landscape review of the current capacity of services outside the specialised weight management services, such as from the National Exercise Referral Scheme and approaches in place for the All-Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme in primary care settings.
- Draw on best practice approaches across Wales, including the evaluation of the PIPYN children and family pilots, ensuring those with lived experience are front and centre.
- Review wider models of implementation across the UK for applicability in the Welsh context.
- Establish a clinical review of the current weight management pathway for specialised weight management services in light the new quality standards for the clinical assessment and management of obesity published by NICE on 5 August 2025.
- Take into consideration any proposal put forward by Public Health Wales and/or Health Boards in relation to the Obesity Pathway Innovation Programme.
- Consider the wider market economics emerging around weight loss drugs.
- Review and make recommendations for any new policy position emerging as a result of moving from a model of care based of risk to one for lifelong management of a chronic condition.

Financial implications – to be determined during the scoping phase of the work

Recommendation 10

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should set out its plans for the evaluation of the Children and Family Pilots (PIPYN), as well as any possible wider roll-out of these pilots.

Response: Accept.

Public Health Wales have undertaken an evaluation of the Children and Family Pilots, which will be published in the next 3 months .

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets out a commitment to, following the evaluation of the PIPYN model, roll out an updated model across Wales, prioritising areas with the greatest levels of childhood obesity.

Financial implications – to be determined during the scoping phase of the work

Recommendation 11

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should provide details of how the £3 million provided to health boards to develop and deliver services that encompass psychological support for people living with overweight and obesity has been spent. This should include a breakdown of the number of psychologists across each health board and the stage of the pathway at which they work.

Response: Accept in Principle

The Welsh Government provides £2.9 million to health boards’ core allocations to support the development and delivery of specialised weight management services in accordance with the guidance set out within the All-Wales Weight Management Pathways, which encompasses psychological support.

The provision of weight management services, including the number of psychologists in Wales, are determined by local health boards in response to the needs of the local population.

In developing the new clinical pathway for treatment and management of obesity Welsh Government will be working with health boards and other partners on capacity and capability across the system to deliver on the different stages of the pathway

This includes the provision of psychological support.

Financial implications – N/A

Recommendation 12

In its response to this report, the Welsh Government should set out how the Wales Community Food Strategy will support Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales.

Response: Accept

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets out that the Community Food Strategy will underpin the actions within the Healthy Weight:

Healthy Wales delivery plan, particularly around improving the provision and access to locally sourced, healthier food. Engagement on the community food strategy has stressed the unique opportunity to support growth in community growing and horticulture, utilising green spaces and encouraging farm diversification, to promote the local supply of nutrient dense fresh food produce.

Financial implications: N/A

Recommendation 13

The Welsh Government should explore options for developing a programme similar to the Scottish Government’s Reformulation for Health programme, which supports smaller, Welsh businesses to develop healthier options in line with public health goals.

Response: Accept in Principle

We are supportive of working with businesses to develop for healthier options. This is a key priority for us. Instead of emulating Scottish Government’s Reformulation for Health Programme, we have committed within our newly published Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales delivery plan to continue existing work with the food and drink sector in Wales to support reformulations for healthier options through a combination of working with our cluster networks, our Market Insight work, and through technical support from the food technology centres we support.

Financial implications - N/A

Recommendation 14

The Welsh Government should look at the changes made to the Healthy Start Scheme in Scotland, which increased the value of vouchers in line with inflation, expanded eligibility to all families receiving universal credit and introduced auto-enrolment, to assess whether these changes would further increase uptake of the scheme in Wales.

Response: Reject

The Healthy Start Scheme is not devolved to Wales; therefore, the Welsh Government cannot change the value of support provided, expand the eligibility criteria, or change the mechanism of enrolment.

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets out that Welsh Government will review the Healthy Start Scheme and evaluate opportunities to further support families on low incomes in Wales to access healthier food.

Building on the findings of this evaluation, the new Infant Feeding Action Plan will be a vehicle for taking forward Welsh-specific actions on Healthy Start, including how we can maximise effectiveness of the programme through existing Welsh policies such as Flying Start.

The value of monetary support provided by the Scheme will increase from April 2026 to £4.65 per week for eligible pregnant women and children from their first until their fourth birthday and £9.30 per week for babies up to one year of age.

Financial implications – N/A

Recommendation 15

The Welsh Government should, within two years of their introduction, provide an update on the impact the Food (Promotion and Presentation) (Wales) Regulations 2025 have had in helping to treat obesity in Wales.

Response: Accept in principle

Welsh Government has committed to undertake a full evaluation of the impact of The Food (Promotion and Presentation) (Wales) Regulations 2025. This evaluation will consider both how successful the regulations have been in meeting their intended public health aims and whether there have been any unintended impacts arising from the measures. In line with our statutory responsibilities, and as set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment we published as part of the Explanatory Memorandum for the regulations, the first evaluation report will be published within five years of the regulations’ coming into force date (26 March 2026). We do not consider it appropriate to provide an update on our assessments within a shorter timeframe as this would be unlikely to provide an accurate view of the policy’s impacts. However, we will ensure we provide the Committee with an update as soon as the first evaluation report is available.

Financial implications - N/A

Recommendation 16

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government should set out how it currently monitors compliance by local authorities with the Healthy Eating in Schools regulations and whether it has any plans to strengthen this process once the updated regulations come into force.

Response: Accept

The duty to ensure compliance with Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations sits with local authorities and governing bodies, depending on who is responsible for the catering provision within the school. Similarly, local authorities and governing bodies have a duty to take action to promote healthy eating and drinking among registered pupils. A further duty requires the governing body of a maintained school to include in their annual report information on the action taken to promote healthy eating and drinking by pupils of the school. There is also a duty on the Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales to keep the Welsh Ministers informed about actions taken at maintained schools to promote healthy eating and drinking.

The ongoing review of Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations is being undertaken with the current focus on co-development, testing, and the introduction of new Regulations that will govern what food and drink can or cannot be offered in schools.

Strengthened and updated statutory guidance will support those with a responsibility to comply with new Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations, and the Welsh Local Government Association will continue to work closely with local authorities and schools, offering support alongside voluntary certificates of compliance. This will be supported by cross-government support to strengthen a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities within the system.

Financial Implications: N/A

Recommendation 17

The Welsh Government should review the appropriateness of the funding provided per head for its universal free school meals policy.

Response: Accept in Principle

We continue to listen to work in close partnership with local authorities. Their views informed an independent review of the universal primary free school meals unit rate and the subsequent decision to increase it from £2.90 to £3.20 from January 2024 along with the release of an additional £3.3m of funding to support delivering the UPFSM offer at pace during the second phase of delivery.

This equated to an additional local government investment of over £10m during 2023/24 and 2024/25 and represented a significantly more favourable offer than the funding rate of £2.53 per meal provided by the Department of Education in England during that same period.

As part of our ongoing commitment to supporting healthy eating in schools, we recently consulted on proposals to review the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations as they apply to maintained nursery and primary schools. The written summary of responses has now been published. Consultation responses will help inform longer terms plans in this space and will be considered alongside any emerging findings identified through the ongoing independent evaluation of the universal offer.

Financial Implications: - None at this point - any future increase to the UPFSM unit rate if agreed, would need to be met from within existing budgets

Recommendation 18

The Welsh Government should work with relevant stakeholders to examine the feasibility of creating a directory of accessible community facilities.

Response: Reject

The Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Delivery Plan for 2025-27 sets a range of actions to create lasting change, through a whole system approach which ensures movement is embedded into the fabric of our daily lives across Wales. This includes removing barriers to participation, especially for underrepresented groups such as those with disabilities.

Local partners are best placed to effectively signpost relevant community facilities, based on comprehensive local knowledge, suitability, and population need, to ensure the best use of community assets.

Financial implications – N/A