

Tackling Childhood Obesity

The PHA's work on obesity prevention is based on, '*A Fitter Future for All, , the regional framework for preventing and addressing overweight and obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022*' -

www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/obesity-fitter-future-framework-ni-2012-22.pdf

The framework sets the strategic direction to tackle this important public health challenge with the aim to “empower the population of Northern Ireland to make healthy choices, reduce the risk of overweight and obesity related diseases and improve health and well being, by creating an environment that supports and promotes a physically active lifestyle and a healthy diet”.

The overarching objectives of the framework are to increase the percentage of people eating a healthy, nutritionally balanced diet, and to increase the percentage of the population meeting the Chief Medical Officer's guidelines on physical activity.

A Fitter Future for All' reflects a life course approach. Three life course stages have been developed within which key outcomes and interventions can be delivered:

- pre-conception, antenatal, maternal and early years;
- children and young people;
- adults and the general population.

Timebound, short, medium and long-term outcomes have been developed through the work of advisory groups. The PHA is responsible for leading on the health-related aspects of the framework through a multi-agency Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group (ROPIG) made up of a range of key statutory and voluntary sector organisations.

Actions

The ROPIG action plan is regularly updated. The current plan sets out the priority actions to be taken forward in 2018-2019, and is structured under four key settings for interventions: schools, workplaces, community and HSC Key areas of work focus on weight management, healthy eating, physical activity and public information.

ROPIG will continue to work to identify, validate and develop the most cost-effective programmes to be delivered across the various settings, ensuring that outcomes in terms of obesity prevention are maximised. This requires collaboration by all partners to avoid duplication of effort, and to pool resources and expertise.

Some examples of childhood related programmes include:

- Improving nutrition knowledge of childcare providers through delivery of Nutrition Matters for the early years training;
- Food in Schools programme which supports schools to promote healthy eating at meal times and throughout the school day. Nutritional Standards for school lunches and other food and drink in schools have been revised and consulted on and are now awaiting ministerial approval from the Department of Education before implementation can commence;
- The Active School Travel programme which encourages and supports school children to walk, cycle or scoot to school. For more information please visit www.sustrans.org.uk/NIschools

Future developments

The PHA is currently in the planning stage of developing an early years obesity prevention programme to help reduce levels of childhood obesity by empowering parents and upskilling practitioners.

Starting well

work in progress

Living well

work in progress

Ageing well

work in progress

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