

6.1 Obesity

Obesity is one of the greatest public health challenges facing Walsall today. The Foresight Report¹ predicts that by 2015, 36% of men and 28% of women aged 21-60 living in England will be very overweight (clinically obese); it is likely that rates in Walsall will be even higher. Obesity is a very significant contributor to illness and premature death in the borough. Serious health consequences include Type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, liver disease, musculoskeletal disorders such as osteoarthritis, and certain cancers. Without action, overweight and obesity-related diseases will cost NHS Walsall an estimated £82 million per year by 2015. It is estimated that obesity-related illness will result in the loss of 43,000 working days, £9m-£14.5m in lost earnings and a £40m loss to the wider economy in Walsall².

Indicators:

In 2011, around 1 in 4 adults in England were classed as obese (25% men and 26% women (Health Survey for England)). By 2050 obesity is predicted to affect 60% of adult men, 50% of adult women and 25% of children (Foresight 2007).

It is estimated that in Walsall around 55,000 adults (26%) are obese and around 130,000 (62%) are overweight or obese (Health Survey for England 2008 prevalence estimates applied to locally registered population).

It is proposed that the local indicator for adult obesity would be the number of referrals to healthy weight services and community physical activity interventions from front life staff across the borough through the Making Every Contact Counts initiative.

Priorities for action:

- *Utilise the 'Your place, your wellbeing: Walsall household and lifestyle survey 2012' to establish robust baseline information to enable targeted and effective commissioning and delivery of weight management and physical activity interventions*
- *Improve identification, delivery of brief interventions and referrals from GPs and other frontline staff from a range of organisations and agencies through implementation of the 'Every Contact Counts' initiative*
- *Create and maintain an environment that promotes physical activity through planning mechanisms and policy development*
- *Implement robust pathways with key partners to identify and refer patients who will benefit most from specialist weight management services*

¹ Foresight Report (2007): Tackling Obesities: Future Choices.

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=8267926>

² Modelled from figures reported in: Select Committee on Health, 3rd Report obesity.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmhealth/23/23.pdf>

- *Work through planning mechanisms to limit the number of fast food outlets in Walsall, particularly in the vicinity of schools*
- *Develop a 'Healthy Retailers Award' for local businesses in Walsall*
- *Review the street trading policy and local conditions to determine if additional controls can be placed on the number and location of mobile catering units supplying 'fast food'*