

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY REPORT

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

18th July 2022

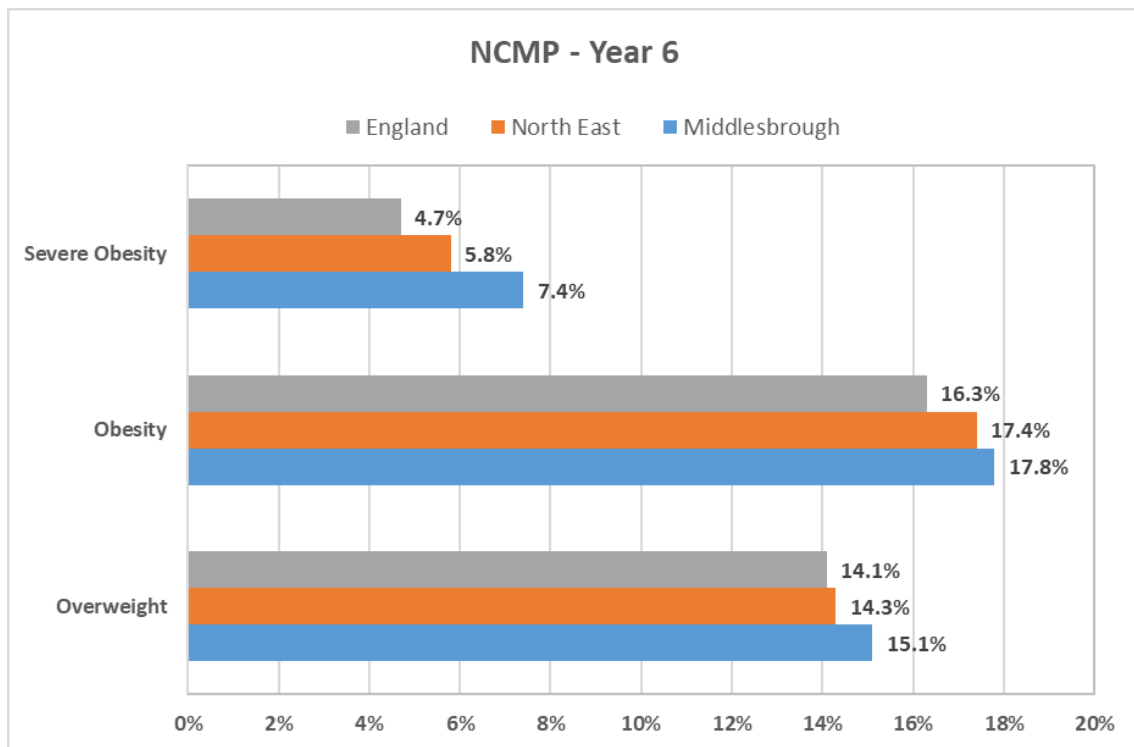
MEALS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS IN MIDDLESBROUGH

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Summary

Introduction

1. The health of children in Middlesbrough is a significant concern. Data shows that by the time that they start primary school (aged 4/5 years), around one in ten children in the Borough are living with obesity and that this increases to one in five by the time that they are in Year Six (10/11 year olds). This is significantly higher than the England average as demonstrated in the graph below.



2. Children living with overweight or obesity suffer from worse physical and mental health outcomes. They achieve poorer educational results than

their normal weight peers. In experiments with primary school pupils, investigators found the children voiced negative views about a fictional book character called 'fat Alfie' – they were less likely to invite him to parties or want to be his friend.

3. Physical inactivity and a poor diet are the main cause of unhealthy weight gain; however, they should be considered outcomes independently of weight status. An individual with a healthy weight may still be physically inactive or eating a poor diet, which are risk factors for a variety of health issues – for example, physical activity during childhood is vitally important for the prevention of osteoporosis later in life. However, only four out of ten children in Middlesbrough are physically active.
4. Child poverty is on the rise. There are over 4 million children living in poverty in the UK, and the Institute for Fiscal Studies expected this to rise to 5 million in 2020. The Social Metrics Commission recently estimated that 2.3 million children are affected by persistent poverty, that is, they have been living in poverty for at least two of the previous three years. The profile of child poverty has also changed over time, with almost three-quarters of children in poverty now living in households where at least one adult is working.
5. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families. In Middlesbrough 32.7% of children are living in income deprived families in comparison with the England average of 17.1%.

Evidence/Discussion

6. School is an important setting for improving health. Children spend a significant proportion of their waking hours in education.

Food and Nutrition

7. Children living with obesity are five times more likely to become adults living with obesity. Research evidence shows:
 - Around 55% of children living with obesity go on to be adolescents living with obesity;
 - Around 80% of adolescents living with obesity will be still be living with obesity in adulthood;
 - And; around 70% will be living with obesity after age 30.

8. The data shows that a child will have a better chance of healthy weight throughout their life if they are of a healthy weight before school – this means that healthy weight is often dictated by parental lifestyle and behaviour (exercise, food provide at meal times etc) in early years. To support this, Middlesbrough families have access to the Healthy Exercise and Nutrition for the Really Young (HENRY) programme, which is programme focused on developing good role modelling and healthy habits around exercise and nutrition. The programme is delivered by the Middlesbrough Healthy Child Programme (Health Visiting Service).
9. Good nutrition supports children to have the best start in life. Ensuring that children have access to high quality nutritious school meals not only supports them to develop healthy habits that can last a life time but can be linked to behaviour, concentration and cognitive ability therefore improving educational outcomes.
10. The School Food Standards are designed to ensure that all children receive the energy and nutrients they need to get the most from their school day whilst developing healthy habits in relation to food. The standards are compulsory for all maintained schools including academies and free schools as detailed in The Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014 and set out the number of foods from each food group that must be included (or restricted in the case of foods high in fat and sugar) on the menu each week.
11. Children living in low income families have poorer diets than those living in higher income families and eat less vegetables, less wholemeal bread, more processed meats and more sugar.
12. Free school meals ensure that children in low income families have access to a healthy school meal at no charge. Children aged 5-16 whose family are in receipt of certain benefits are eligible for free school meals.
13. Eligibility for free school meals

| School Type | Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals in Middlesbrough | National Average |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Primary Schools | 38.8% | 23.1% |
| Secondary School | 39.1% | 20.9% |
| Special School | 58.1% | 44.7% |

14. Middlesbrough's schools are also well above the national average for eligibility for Pupil Premium. The national average for Pupil Premium in

primary schools is 23%. Only 12 primary schools have numbers lower than the national average. The highest percentage of pupil premium in a Middlesbrough primary school is 75% eligibility. The national average for Pupil Premium in secondary schools is 28%; all schools are above national average, as are all Special Schools.

15. Healthy school meals have the capacity to decrease some dietary and health inequalities by providing at least one decent, hot meal a day to school age young people growing up in low income households.

Eat Well Schools

16. The Eat Well Schools Award is currently in development which will support schools to adopt a whole setting approach to food and nutrition. The award is due to launch in September 2022.
17. The programme will include training and resources for catering staff to ensure they develop nutritionally balanced menus that not only meet 100% of school food standards but go above and beyond to provide healthy nutritious school meals. Additional criteria will include reducing sugar in desserts by 30%, increasing access to fruit and vegetables and introducing more meat free meals.
18. The programme will also provide training and resources to all staff on the importance of eating well, how to create a positive food environment and how to educate children about food and wellbeing to support schools to create a health promoting culture throughout the whole setting.

Middlesbrough School Meals

19. Middlesbrough Council Catering Services cater for 30 schools in the Borough and are currently working to rebrand and revitalise school meals to encourage children to make healthier choices. In 2021/22, the Service served a total of 1,498,807 meals within our schools.
20. As well as exploring new menus over the next few months catering services have recently run a competition where over 300 pupils entered and designed a new mascot for the rebranded service and plan to introduce educational resources and posters both in the kitchens for staff and dining halls for children. This was to raise awareness of healthier meal options and assist in promoting healthy campaigns within the schools.

21. Catering Services are working collaboratively with Public Health South Tees, Middlesbrough Environment City and other local providers to ensure that children have access to healthy nutritious meals, optimise local food and reduce food waste as set out in the Council's Poverty Proofing Action Plan and reported to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny panel in July 2021.
22. A new menu that exceeds School Food Standards is going to be created and will go live in April 2023. The menu will be consistent (where possible) throughout our 30 schools and will consist of a four week seasonal menu.
23. The teams will be working with various catering food providers, partners, schools, reaching out to the pupils and parents to create a menu that is tasted and chosen by the pupils; it will be healthy, more nutritious and different to what has been done in Middlesbrough schools previously.

Physical Activity

24. The Chief Medical Officers' guidelines are for children aged 5-18 years old to take part in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on average each day. Moderate to vigorous physical activity is when the child starts to breathe faster, warm up and their heart rate is increasing. These guidelines are linked to the prevention of many long-term health conditions, not just obesity levels.
25. Starting in the new academic year, Public Health South Tees are introducing three new physical activity programmes into schools in Middlesbrough; specifically, the Creating Active Schools Framework, the Schools Pedometer Programme and a School Air Quality Action Zones initiative. Additionally, the Holiday Activities & Food Programme continues to develop, delivering 1,000s of free holiday activity places and meals.

The Creating Active Schools Framework

26. You've Got This (YGT), is one of twelve Sport England funded Local Delivery Pilots nationally. YGT is working across South Tees to increase physical activity at a population level, with the vision of "Active Lives as a Way of Life". One of the workstreams currently being developed by YGT's community partners is utilising the national "Creating Active Schools Framework" (CAS) to build physical activity into the school day. The CAS approach recognises that traditional physical education is only a small

part of the physical activity that can take place during the school day to help achieve these targets.

27. Insight work has been carried out by one of YGT's community partners, Redcar & Eston School Sport Partnership, at a school in Redcar & Cleveland to see how active the children are daily. Activity trackers used in one Year 6 class showed that, on average, the children in a games-based PE lesson only spent 19 minutes in levels of moderate to vigorous physical activity. A Year 4 class in the same school took part in the study and only 30% of the class were achieving 60 active minutes each day.
28. CAS looks at embedding a culture of physical activity within schools through four areas: Policy Environment, Stakeholders and Opportunities and is led by a management committee in the school. This is called a whole system approach. It encourages activity amongst the whole school community (governors, staff, students and parents), for example through introducing active lessons, active travel to school and making the most of break times.
29. The plan is to trial CAS in South Tees with around four schools, starting the main body of the work in the Autumn. If successful, phase two will roll out in September 2023.
30. The CASF Framework is included in appendix one.

Schools Pedometer Programme

31. Over the past eight years, colleagues in Redcar & Cleveland have been developing a schools pedometer programme. During this period, all primary schools in the area have been given access to research grade (accurate) pedometers (worth £15 each), which the children then use to collect their levels of physical activity in the form of steps.
32. This data is collected over a period of time and then used in a variety of lessons to teach not only about physical activity and healthy lifestyles but also mathematics (e.g. to draw bar charts) and geography (e.g. a virtual walk to famous places).
33. A research study evaluating the impact of the programme showed that not only did it increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour, but that the impact was the greatest in those who were least active at the start.

34. Starting from September 2022, the pedometer programme will be offered to all Middlesbrough Primary Schools. Initially there will be 100 pedometers available for loan, with more potentially bought if demand is higher. Work will commence in August to plan this.

School Air Quality Action Zones

35. As part the Green Strategy work in Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough Environment City, Groundwork North East and the Redcar & Eston School Sport Partnership have been commissioned to develop a School Air Quality Action Zones programme.
36. Similar to the pedometer programme, this will collect data (in this instance, air quality data) which will then be used in school to change behaviour.
37. For example, the data will be (1) used in class to educate pupils during science, mathematics and other lessons, (2) influence the behaviour of parents and (3) support the schools and Local Authority to consider policy and environmental changes.
38. This programme will be trialled in two Middlesbrough and two Redcar & Cleveland Primary Schools from September 2022 onwards; this initial work will focus on developing the intervention and whether the schools engage and follow the process. Future plans will be confirmed after this initial stage.

Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) Programme

39. School holidays can be pressure points for families because of increased costs and reduced incomes. Many families are already under significant financial pressure and this is only increasing.
40. Broadly, the requirements of the HAF programme are to deliver a holiday programme for all school aged children and young people in receipt of free school meal (FSM) related-benefits that provides (1) healthy meals to School Food Standards, (2) physical activity, nutrition education and wider enrichment and (3) signposting and referrals to services and support.
41. The offer should be that participants can access this provision for at least four hours for four days a week – for four weeks in the summer, and for a week at Easter and a week at Christmas. Half term holidays are not covered by the HAF funding.

42. Through the grants programme, 1,000s of HAF places have been commissioned and filled, providing local children the opportunity to try new activities and experiences including outdoor pursuits, new sports and activities and learning new musical instruments and acting skills. When asked about their experiences, the children have said:

“Awesome, sensational, exciting, amazing, spectacular,”

“Fun, I’ve had a great time”

“Entertaining and fun to learn new things.”

43. The number of individual children accessing the programme have varied across the delivery periods as shown below; Easter 2021 included remote delivery but since then all provision has been face-to-face in line with DfE requirements.

| | Easter 2021 | Summer 2021 | Christmas 2021 | Easter 2022 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Middlesbrough | 937 | 1,816 | 1,161 | 866 |
| Redcar & Cleveland | 901 | 586 | 572 | 701 |

44. With the funding now confirmed to the end of 2024, recruitment is underway to appoint:

- A HAF Programme Manager to strategically drive the programme;
- Two x Officers to deliver operational developments and provide quality assurance;
- One x Apprentice to provide the team with important support capacity.

45. This team will manage and develop the Programme to:

- Work with our frontline providers to maximise the places available on the programme for local children;
- Effectively market the programme so that uptake increases;
- Link with partners to maximise potential opportunities in delivering system wide outcomes (e.g. reducing holiday learning loss, reducing antisocial behaviour during the holidays).

Beat the Street

46. Beat the Street (BtS) is a mass participation behaviour change programme which transforms activity levels and improves mental and

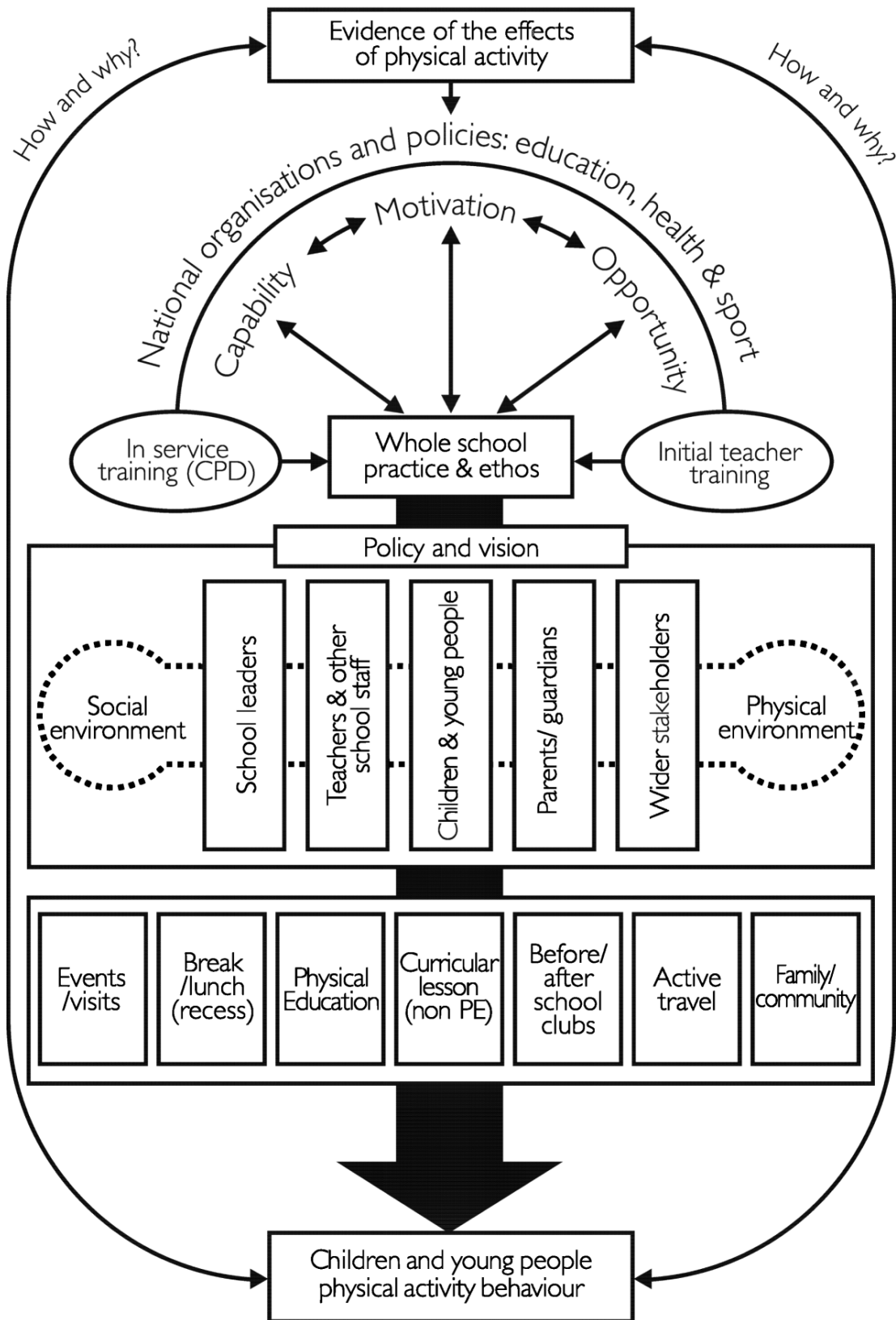
physical well-being across a community. It covers a local population, targeting priority groups and has a simple game at its heart. The game incentivises people to get active together with their community and shows people how making small changes to every-day life can have big benefits.

47. The game is at the core and is enclosed by a planning stage and post-game support for partners and residents to help deliver long-term change. This takes place over a 6-week period across an entire town. Using radio-frequency identification (RFID) game cards, adults and children tap RFID card readers placed on street furniture to get points for physically active journeys. The game is displayed on a website where leader boards contain school, workplace and community teams all on a journey together.
48. Adults and children provide health and demographic data via online registration which also allows them to join a team. Social media and newsletters keep players updated on progress and engaged with local events and activities. Surveys conducted post game and 6 and 12 months later provide evidence of sustained behaviour and attitudinal change.
49. A game of BtS was run in Middlesbrough in September 2021; all local primary schools participated in this, with a total of 14,528 local residents (10.3% of the local population) joining in. Collectively, they travelled 11,724 miles during the six week game.
50. A list of the winning schools is included in appendix two.
51. During registration, 34% of adults were inactive – but following the six week game, 53% of these had become physically active.
52. During registration, 52% of children were less active – but following the six week game, 38% of these had become physically active.
53. Importantly, the behaviour change was greatest in the least affluent areas, contributing to efforts to reduce inequalities.
54. Since the end of the game, local partners have been working together to sign post residents to ongoing activities and support residents to remain active. The BtS communication platforms remain active for 6-12 months post game which provides a trusted brand to signpost and motivate residents.

Conclusion

55. There are a number of programmes that will be offered to schools starting from September 2022 to improve the diets and physical activity levels of our children and their families (as highlighted above).
56. However, schools alone cannot tackle the issues highlighted above. Individuals and their health do not exist in isolation; they are impacted by a complex web of intertwined factors that contribute to a living system. Addressing obesity, nutrition and physical activity requires action across this system from influencing the individual to changing the environment in which they live – for example, there's little point encouraging an individual to go out walking if their local environment discourages this (e.g. because of high levels of crime or road traffic or lack of paths).
57. Therefore it is critical that any work in school links with other programmes such as You've Got This and Eat Well Schools which take a whole systems approach to physical activity and diet (by changing not only individual behaviour but also policy and the physical environment).

#CreatingActiveSchools



Appendix Two – Winners of Beat the Street Middlesbrough



Schools - Total Points

- 1st - Green Lane Primary Academy
- 2nd - Acklam Whin Primary School
- 3rd - Linthorpe Community Primary School
- 4th - Newham Bridge Primary School
- 5th - Rose Wood Academy
- 6th - Thorntree Academy

Special Schools - Total Points

- 1st - Beverley School

Community & Workplace Teams - Total Points

- 1st - BridgeHill Day Service
- 2nd - We are ABLE!
- 3rd - Acklam Grange
- 4th - MyPlace Ladies

Small Teams - Total Points

- 1st - Middlesbrough Community Learning - MMX

Individual Leaderboard - Total Points

- 1st - Alan2021

Schools - Average Points

- 1st - Acklam Whin Primary School
- 2nd - Green Lane Primary Academ
- 3rd - Rose Wood Academy
- 4th - Thorntree Academy
- 5th - Newham Bridge Primary School
- 6th - St Edward's Catholic Primary School

Special Schools - Average Points

- 1st - Holmwood School

Community & Workplace Teams - Average Points

- 1st - We are ABLE!
- 2nd - BridgeHill Day Service
- 3rd - Acklam Grange
- 4th - MyPlace Ladies

Charity

- 1st - Middlesbrough Foodbank