

National Assembly for Wales

Children and Young People Committee

CO 46

Inquiry into Childhood Obesity

Evidence from : Denbighshire Healthy Schools Scheme

1. The extent of childhood obesity in Wales and any effects from factors such as geographical location or social background;

I feel that this is a question for Public Health professionals to address.

2. The measurement, evaluation and effectiveness of the Welsh of obesity in children in Wales specifically:

Health related programmes including Change4Life, MEND, Programmes related to nutrition in schools including Appetite for Life, Cross cutting programmes for example leisure and sport related programmes (Creating an Active Wales); planning policy; and

Evaluation and monitoring of health promotion type programmes is generally weak. When programmes are developed, they should have clear outcome measures that are measurable. They should include standardised evaluation tools, which are integrated in to them so that all partners are evaluating / monitoring in the same way.

I am unaware of how Change4Life, MEND are measured, evaluated. Although, I do not feel that MEND is not implemented in a consistent or fair way across Wales and that there are huge challenges in attracting families to engage in what could be a very beneficial programme.

Appetite for Life will be successfully implemented once it has been passed as statutory. When something becomes legislation, people are more likely to take note and make the necessary changes. In terms of measurement, evaluation and effectiveness of Appetite for Life from an obesity perspective, I am not aware of how this is being done. It is possible to measure whether the necessary changes have been made by using the nutritional analysis data and conducting school audits, but how do we know that Appetite for Life is making a difference to the extent of obesity?

With the Strategies such as creating an active Wales a clear evaluation framework including clear population indicators based on an outcome focussed approach should be adopted and communicated strongly from the offset. Where data is unavailable, a data development agenda should be identified and pushed forward at a national level.

3. The barriers to reducing the level of childhood obesity in Wales;

Barriers typically include short term funding streams or late notification of funding. For example we were presented with a prime opportunity to develop a Big Lottery Fund project a number of years ago, but received only a few weeks notice to develop a project proposal worth over £300,000. Good projects can be developed, but funding ends with little or no sustainability.

I feel that there are too many different approaches to reducing/preventing and combating obesity. There perhaps needs to be a more consistent approach across Wales rather than each county develop their own plan / strategy or interventions.

4. Whether any improvements are needed to current Welsh Government programmes and schemes and any additional actions that could be explored.

The childhood measurement programme (CMP) is a positive way of gaining data about our children and young people, but is this going to be extended beyond the age groups that they currently measure? Whilst this does provide us with a national picture it is only actually a reflection of children's BMI and not their lifestyles, physical activity participation etc.

Nationally (and locally) there seems to be an overload of questionnaires for pupils in schools to complete about lifestyles, well being, physical activity participation etc. I personally feel that WG or PHW need to develop a tool that can be used with children from primary school through to secondary school (e.g. at year 3, 6, 9) to help assess lifestyle and well being in general. This could be an on-line survey with questions similar to that of the Health Behaviour in School Aged Children. This would help at a national and local level in painting a clearer picture of children's lifestyle behaviours, attitudes and knowledge and understanding about being healthy. This data could be married up to the CMP? Locally partners and schools would have a clearer picture about the health behaviours etc of their children. With such data available could children be targeted for support?

A consistent approach to recognising Physical activity and nutrition as a priority in terms of preventing long term limiting illness and it's implications is necessary. Both are fundamental to a move towards a preventative agenda. As the impact of such preventative activity is difficult to measure and outcomes are often achieved over a far longer term period, longer term planning is essential.

When new programmes are developed, that greater consideration is given to their sustainability.

Paula Roberts, Health Schools Coordinator