

The National Child Measurement Programme: *Update from Cross-Government Obesity Unit*

June/July 2009

Update from Cross-Government Obesity Unit

1. *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: One Year On* report
2. Results of the 2007/08 NCMP
3. Routine feedback to parents – our perspective so far
4. Our preparations for 2009/10.

Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives - One Year On Report

Tackling obesity is primarily an issue of personal responsibility: what people choose to eat and how active they choose to be.

However, government plays a significant role in helping support individuals and families in making those choices.

It does this by:

- helping people make healthier choices;
- creating an environment that promotes healthy weight;
- providing effective services for those at risk; and by
- strengthening delivery.

The NCMP is an important part of this strategy because it provides:

- local intelligence on obesity prevalence
- informs national picture on obesity prevalence
- an opportunity for engaging with parents.



NCMP results from 2007/08

Participation

- Nearly 1 million (973,073, 88%) eligible children measured

National prevalence

	Reception	Year 6
Obese	9.6%	18.3%
Overweight and obese	22.6%	32.6%

- No significant difference in national prevalence of overweight and obese in either age-group, compared with 2006/07
- Encouraging, but too early to be confident that obesity and overweight among children has stabilised, and prevalence of obesity still too high

Routine feedback – a national perspective

- Around 50% of PCTs implementing routine feedback to parents in all or a sample of their eligible NCMP population in 2008/09.
- Not mandatory for 2009/10
 - Still a locally led decision, but strong expectation that areas will now be implementing routine feedback, since they have had over a year to get plans and services in place.
- A reminder of why it is important to share results with parents ...
 - Only 17% of parents with an obese child able to correctly tell their child's weight status
 - Parents overestimate activity levels and underestimate the amount of high-fat, high-sugar foods the family eats
 - Parents have said that they want to receive this information – they expect it to be sent to them and to be followed-up if there is a problem.
 - Obesity rates too high – now is the time to act.

Routine feedback – a national perspective

- **Some angry parents**
 - Numbers seem to be small compared with number of letters sent out – eg, 40 contacts out of 12,000 letters in one PCT (less than 0.5%).
 - Some common themes: child just over threshold; parent says child is just big boned, puppy fat, will grow out of it; and parent insist child is very active and eats healthily.
- **Media interest - Oxfordshire**
 - Child was just into overweight category
 - Need to provide positive comments to media and defend approach.
- **GPs' / PNs' / health visitors' reactions**
 - Need to engage these groups with NCMP.
- **Change4Life**
 - We know some areas are making good use of the Change4Life campaign to help support feedback.

**So where's the fat?
Mother sent warning
letter as health police
say son is just 1lb
overweight**

By Julie Moulton
Last updated at 11:19 AM on 15th May 2009

Routine feedback – a national perspective

Some positive contacts from parents:

“I have received your letter stating that my son [NAME] is **very overweight**. I am very concerned about this and **would be grateful of any help or advice** you can give me. [NAME] does however, get **regular exercise** as he plays for the local hockey team as well as participate in exercise at school and roller skating every Saturday, which all the family do. I do feed my children a healthy diet but I feel my **portion sizes** are probably a problem.”

Routine feedback – a national perspective

“Thanks for your letter regarding my son [NAME] weight. To be honest, I had **acknowledged myself that his weight was becoming a problem** so we have made some positive changes as a family. As a single Mum working full time, I think because I'm not able to spend as much time with my kids as I would like, I buy **treats like chocolate and their favourite crisps to make me feel better** and less guilty. I do cook really healthy family meals but I know **it's the snacks and lack of exercise that have contributed to the gradual weight gain**. I haven't made a big deal out of it, I have made it a family 'getting healthy' for all of us.

As a family, we are now trying to **take more exercise together**. We go walking, swimming and bike riding and I am not buying the chocolate any more. The kids have a choice of fruit and yoghurt for dessert and fruit for snacks. I haven't cut out all the treats as gradual changes are better as we are aware. I just hope we can maintain it!”

Monitoring implementation

RFB evaluation (Institute of Education, University of London)

- **Aim**
 - explore local implementation issues for PCTs
 - assess parental views
 - use the research to inform existing practice.
- **Findings so far are positive, in that:**
 - Few parents disagreed with weight category, of those who did, likely to be “overweight”
 - Almost all parents supportive of NCMP and welcome routine feedback in this way
 - Small number had difficulties understanding letter or found tone too harsh
 - Most found health promotion material sent with letter useful (usually Top Tips leaflet).
- **Next stage:**
 - Follow-up interviews with parents to provide more detail on changes needed to letter
 - Interviews with PCTs and schools.
 - Final results published in **September**.

Monitoring implementation

- **UCL Health Behaviour Unit – published research**
 - to examine psychological impact of a school-based, weight-screening intervention that included feedback to parents
 - most parents were positive about receiving feedback
 - found that restrictive dietary changes were actions such as reducing unhealthy snacks and soft drinks, which as more likely to be beneficial than harmful
 - the researchers said that the numbers of upset parents or children might be reduced if weight feedback became more routine.
- **PCT questionnaire – sent out by regional leads**
 - PCTs' experiences of routine feedback
 - will be invaluable in helping us to gauge the response to parental feedback and learn more about how PCTs are implementing it.
- **Parental questionnaire (via NCMP newsletter)**
 - To evaluate parental responses to letter.
- **Log of contacts**

Our next steps

July

- 2009/10 NCMP guidance for PCTs and for schools
 - Key change is to encourage more proactive follow-up of children following measurement

August

- Revised editable feedback letter and Feedback Tool
- Revised pre-measurement leaflet

September

- Results of RFB evaluation published with media release
 - With regional press release and lines to take
 - Deadline for upload of 2008/09 data to NHS IC (Sept 4)
- Upload Tool for 2009/10 released

December

- 2008/09 results published.

Resources to support feedback to parents and wider NCMP

- NCMP resources
 - Guidance (www.dh.gov.uk/healthyliving)
 - Feedback tool and editable results letter (www.icweb.nhs.uk/ncmp/)
 - Change4Life Top tips leaflet (new order number: **C4LO34**, Prolog 0300 123 1002)
 - Script and conversation guide (from your regional obesity lead)
- Healthy Weight Healthy Lives resources www.dh.gov.uk/obesity
 - Commissioning guidance
 - Toolkit for local areas
 - Training directory
 - NHS Choices Healthy weight calculator (www.nhs.uk).

Any questions?

Contact details

ncmp@dh.gsi.gov.uk

(Remember to contact your regional lead in the first instance)

Relevant links

www.dh.gov.uk/healthyliving