

# Whole City Healthy Weight –

## Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2024





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**Councillor Mitchie Alexander**  
Cabinet Member for Communities, Equalities,  
Public Health, and Adult Social Care

I welcome this report with its focus on food and healthy weight for all our city's residents. Our work in Brighton and Hove exemplifies an innovative approach working with multiple partners, including the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, and has been developed over many years. As a city proud to be one of the most physically active in the country, we know that there are still many opportunities to develop work to influence our physical and commercial environments, from food growing to healthier advertising to work with food businesses and our transport partners. This report and series of recommendations provide a useful guide for the next steps for all our city and community partners.



**Councillor Faiza Baghoth**  
Chair of Health & Wellbeing Board

As the chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board I'm delighted to support this partnership approach to addressing an important health and wellbeing issue for our city. Brighton and Hove has a long-standing collaborative commitment to working on healthy weight and food. Although we recognise some good progress, we know that there is still some way to go before every child growing up in the city lives in an environment that makes the healthy choice an easy choice.

# Foreward

Director of Public Health for Brighton & Hove City Council, Caroline Vass

Each year the Director of Public Health (DPH) writes an annual report that highlights an important issue for Brighton & Hove.

Last year, the then Director of Public Health, Alistair Hill, delivered a report focussed on the learning we took from the management and experience of the Covid 19 pandemic.

This year the Annual Report of the DPH explores a whole systems approach to healthy weight and makes recommendations that continue to develop this work and the achievements of the whole council and city-wide approach to a healthy weight.

This report recognises the complex and interconnected factors which influence people's ability to maintain a healthy weight. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is about far more than individual willpower. It is about the environment that we live in, the opportunities we have, and the elements which shape our daily lives – from what we

learn about healthy eating in schools, to the food available on our high streets, and includes the ways we can be active in our day to day lives.

The whole systems approach described here embodies the approach of the council and the report clearly shows how we are embedding our **5 pillars of support to create a better Brighton & Hove for all:**



across the council, with the public, with the business and voluntary sector is helping to make Brighton & Hove a city where it is easy for everyone to be a healthy weight.

## **Be connected –**

The whole systems approach highlights our connectedness as a council and city where partnership working



**Be confident –** Obesity is a complex issue: we are constantly learning how to improve our approach to tackling this challenge.

Over the past 20 years we have shared what works and embedded learning to continue to develop our approach to a healthy weight.



## **Be innovative and creative –**

In Brighton & Hove some of our innovative approaches are now commonplace. Our Sugar Smart initiative

established in 2015 is now replicated by many other areas and influenced the national sugar drinks levy in 2016.



## **Be diverse and inclusive –**

Our approach is data-led, and the report highlights groups of people who are less likely to be

a healthy weight, and in the particular

importance of inequalities of outcomes by deprivation, and the disparity between the most and least deprived communities. In the report we describe our inclusive partnership working with our vision of a city that provides inclusive services to everyone who needs them.



**Be healthy and psychologically safe**  
– The report makes the case for the benefits of a healthy weight: the risk of long term

preventable physical and mental health conditions that are reduced with a healthy weight, including some cancers, and cardiovascular disease. It looks at some of the financial impacts of obesity and trends in data for healthy weight in our population.

The report shows that for residents of every age there are many opportunities for our whole city environment to support a healthier lifestyle, from accessing green and blue spaces, to the buildings where we spend our learning and work time, the roads that we travel around our city and the spaces where we relax and enjoy.

The report concludes with recommendations that continue to deliver our city-wide healthy weight ambitions:

- Supporting healthy weight opportunities in early years
- Taking a schools-based approach
- Working with business and workplaces to encourage access to healthy food
- A whole city approach looking at opportunities for urban planning, marketing, access for employees, residents, and visitors to healthy food options, and the Let's Get Moving physical activity offer.



Brighton & Hove has a long tradition of progressive, community-led action to support health and wellbeing. By continuing to work together, across sectors and with our communities, we can make our city a place where everyone – regardless of age, income, or background – has the opportunity to live well and achieve a healthy weight in a supportive environment.

I would like to thank everyone across the council and in the city who enables a whole city approach to our healthy weight programmes. We have included many people in the list of contributors but there are many more who have contributed, and I hope they feel proud to see the achievements outlined in this report.

I also hope this report supports further understanding, ambition and collaboration as we take the next steps in our journey towards a healthier, more equitable Brighton & Hove.



**Caroline Vass**  
Director of Public Health

# Introduction

## A whole city approach to healthy weight



This report describes how we work together to make Brighton & Hove a city where it is easy for everyone of every age to be a healthy weight.

In Brighton & Hove, only two out of three children are a healthy weight by the time they leave primary school aged 11. In some schools as few as one in three children are a healthy weight. Being a healthy weight throughout childhood has long lasting impacts for children's physical health, mental health and social wellbeing, and reduces the risk of becoming overweight or obese in adulthood.

More than one in two adults in the city are obese or overweight, increasing the risk of diet and weight related diseases including diabetes, some cancer, heart disease, joint problems and so much more. This impacts on the health and social care system, quality of life, economy and everyday life in the city.

The impact of Covid (COVID-19) on our lifestyles and weight, alongside a cost-of-living crisis, brought challenges to Brighton & Hove where levels of healthy weight have been better than many other areas in England in recent years.

Chapter 1 contains data describing the residents and the city's healthy weight environment.

Obesity is a complex issue, with no single solution.<sup>1</sup> Public Health England and the Local Government Association introduced a model of a whole systems approach to healthy weight in 2015,<sup>2</sup> providing useful guidance on a whole city approach to tackling this challenge. In our city there is already so much positive work going on that we can build on, with multiple benefits for physical and mental wellbeing and for the living environment.





Traditionally, much of the discussion about weight or obesity has focussed on individual responsibility. However, as nationally, two thirds of adults are overweight and obese, with this increasing over the last few decades, we know that individual behaviour change is not working and that we need to make systemic changes to provide a healthier environment for everyone, in a compassionate and supportive way.

Chapter 2 describes the Brighton & Hove story outlining some of the successes and achievements to date.

Chapter 3 outlines the approach to whole systems working to support healthy weight and local activities. to date. This work is based on partnerships, relationships, shared goals and activities with partners who work on food; health; transport and travel; education; in business; planning; sports and activity; events; and with residents from across the life course. Whole city healthy weight partners contributed to work over many years and provided the examples in this report and are listed in acknowledgements.

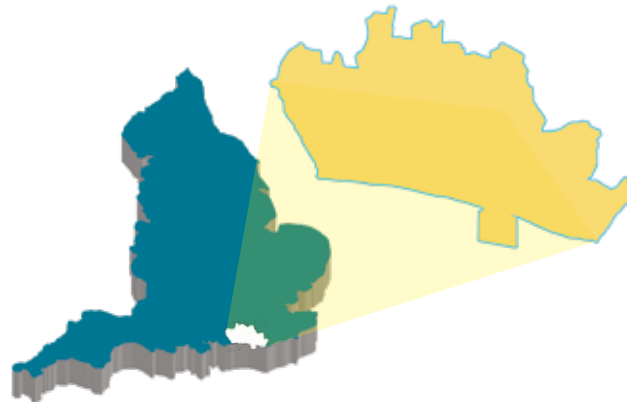
Chapter 4 highlights the sorts of changes we can and are already making at different stages of the life course, from pregnancy through to early childhood, into preschool, primary and secondary schools, further education, the working environment and older age. For residents of every age there are many opportunities for our whole city environment to support a healthier lifestyle, from green and blue spaces to the buildings where we spend our learning and work time, the roads that we travel around our city and the spaces where we relax and enjoy.

# 1. Why healthy weight is important



This chapter outlines some of the key data and trends in healthy weight in Brighton & Hove, the benefits of improving healthy weight and shows some of the environmental drivers that support a healthy weight.

Being a healthy weight is not just about what an individual chooses to eat or how much physical activity they participate in. It is far more complicated, with social, economic, and environmental factors playing a significant role. There isn't one single thing that can solve this problem; we need a whole systems approach to healthy weight.



## Brighton & Hove



A woman in the most deprived area will live around 7.7 years less than a woman in the least deprived area and have around 12.5 fewer years in good health.



A man in the most deprived area will live around 9.1 years less than a man in the least deprived area and have around 14 fewer years in good health.






## Benefits of a healthy weight

There are a wealth of benefits of healthy weight at an individual, population, and societal level.

Evidence suggests that maintaining a healthy weight through staying physically active and eating well provides many benefits:

### ✓ Reduced risk of preventable long-term conditions - Including:

- Type 2 diabetes 
- Musculoskeletal issues 
- Cardiovascular disease 
- Respiratory diseases
- Liver disease

### ✓ Reduced risk of some cancers - Including:

- Breast cancer 
- Bowel cancer
- Liver cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Oesophageal cancer

### ✓ Improved mental wellbeing

- Improved mood and resilience
- Reduced risk of depression and anxiety\*



### ✓ Improved productivity and reduced sickness in the workplace

\*It should be noted that the relationship between being above a healthy weight and poor mental health is complex and bi-directional.

## Financial impacts of obesity

Supporting healthy weight for all is good for our economy.

Recent analysis considering the direct and indirect costs of obesity estimated that obesity costs **£58bn in the UK**

annually, including **£6.5bn in NHS costs** for treating obesity-related diseases and **£7.5bn in wider costs** (including loss of productivity and social care costs).<sup>3</sup>



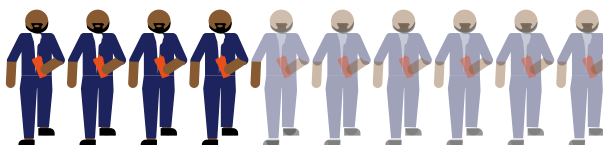
## Healthy weight prevalence %<sup>4</sup>



**80% of 4 to 5 year olds** are a healthy weight



**70% of 10 to 11 year olds** are a healthy weight



**43% of adults** are a healthy weight\*\*

Compared to England, relatively **more children, young people and adults are a healthy weight in Brighton & Hove.**

However, there are a large number of **people in the city above a healthy weight.**



There are an estimated **11,000<sup>5</sup>** children and young people aged 2-15, and **131,500** adults **in the city** above a healthy weight.

\*\*Note that for adults, figures are not published for healthy weight, the figure presented here includes underweight and healthy weight.

Sadly we are seeing a worsening trend in healthy weight for young people and for adults, and we are moving closer to the poorer national picture.<sup>5</sup>

**Age 4 to 5 years (not shown on chart):**  
Healthy weight has remained similar since 2016/17 to 2023/24

**10 to 11 year olds:**  
The prevalence of healthy weight in Brighton & Hove fell from 73% to 70% from 2016/17 to 2023/24, but remained similar across England, (64% in 2016/17 and 63% in 2023/24)

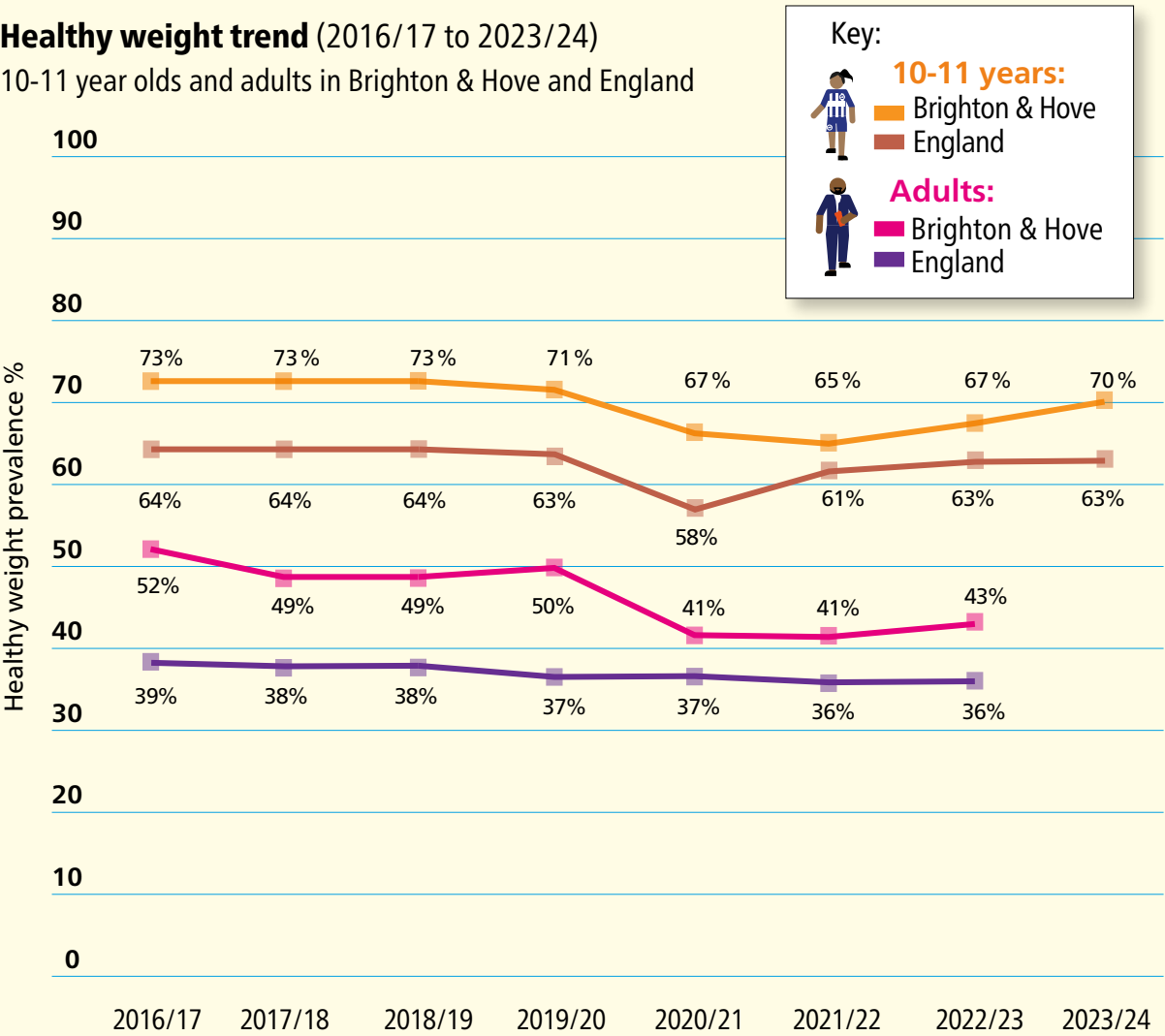
**Adults:**  
The prevalence in Brighton & Hove fell from 52% (2016/17) to 43% (2022/23), and fell less sharply for England from 39% (2016/17) to 36% (2022/23)

\*Note that for adults, figures are not published for healthy weight, the figure presented here includes underweight and healthy weight

The gap between England and Brighton & Hove healthy weight prevalence has reduced for both children and adults.

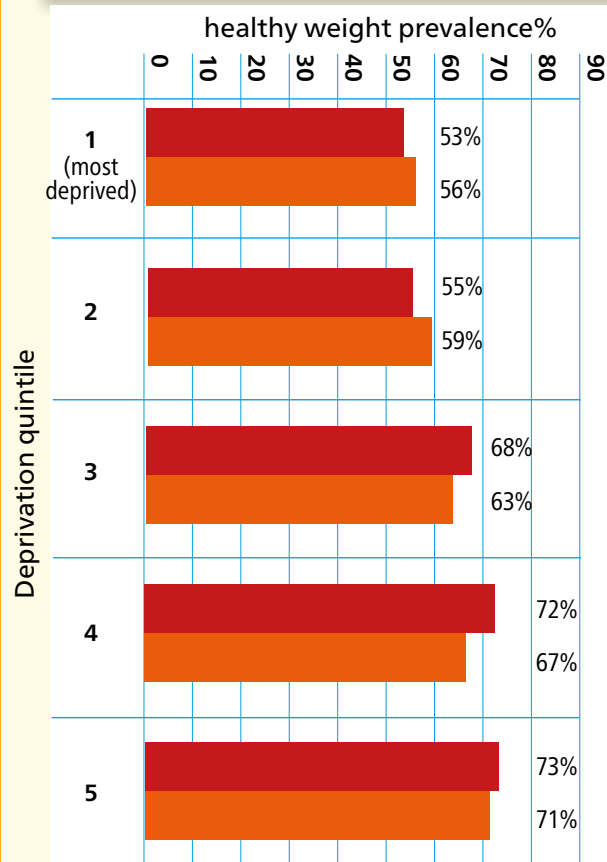
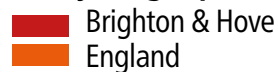
**Healthy weight trend (2016/17 to 2023/24)**

10-11 year olds and adults in Brighton & Hove and England



## % of children aged 10-11 years (Year 6) who are a healthy weight, by deprivation quintile, Brighton & Hove, 2023/24

### Healthy weight prevalence % - Year 6:

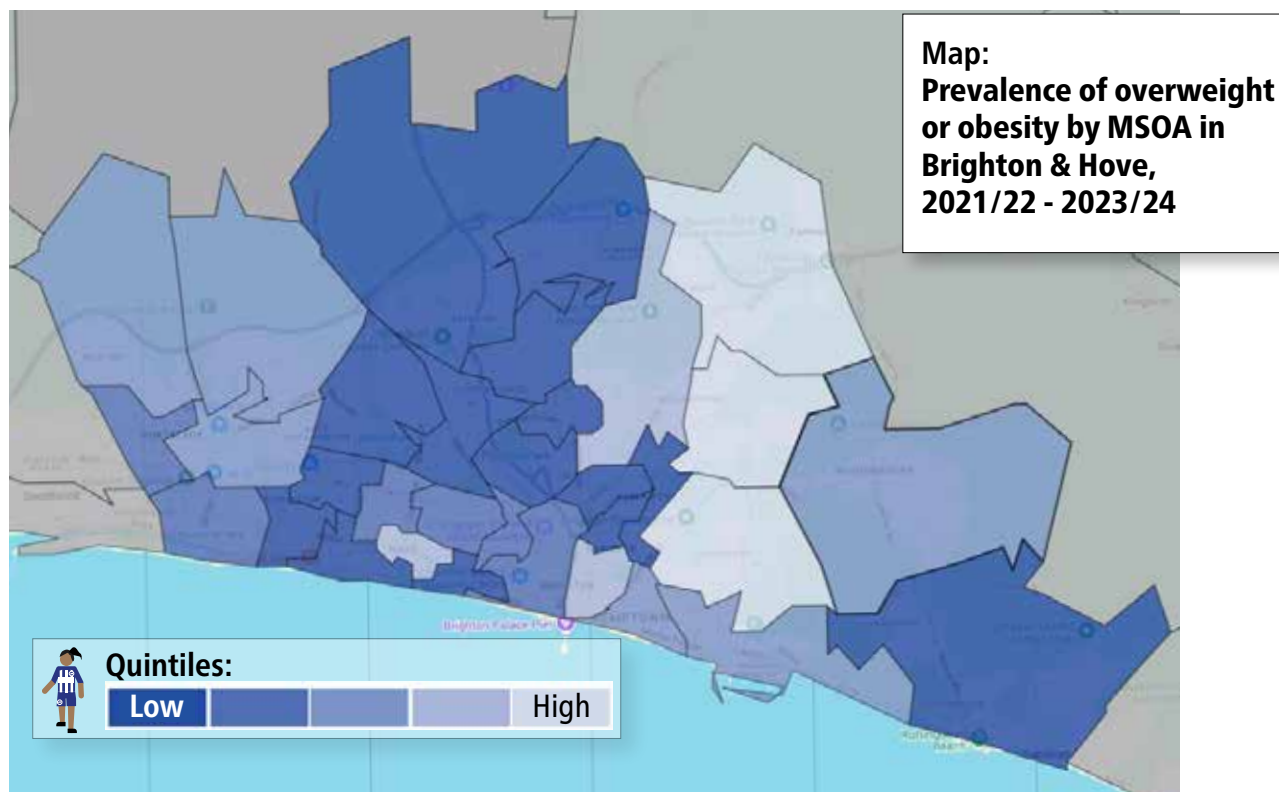


Source: Brighton & Hove Public Health Intelligence team, from National Child Measurement Programme data NCMP 2023/24 by Brighton & Hove City Council - Infogram<sup>6</sup>

**There are significant inequalities across the city.** Our insights show how the most deprived areas (20% of the city) compare to the least deprived areas (20% of the city), and how particular groups of people are more or less likely to be a healthy weight.

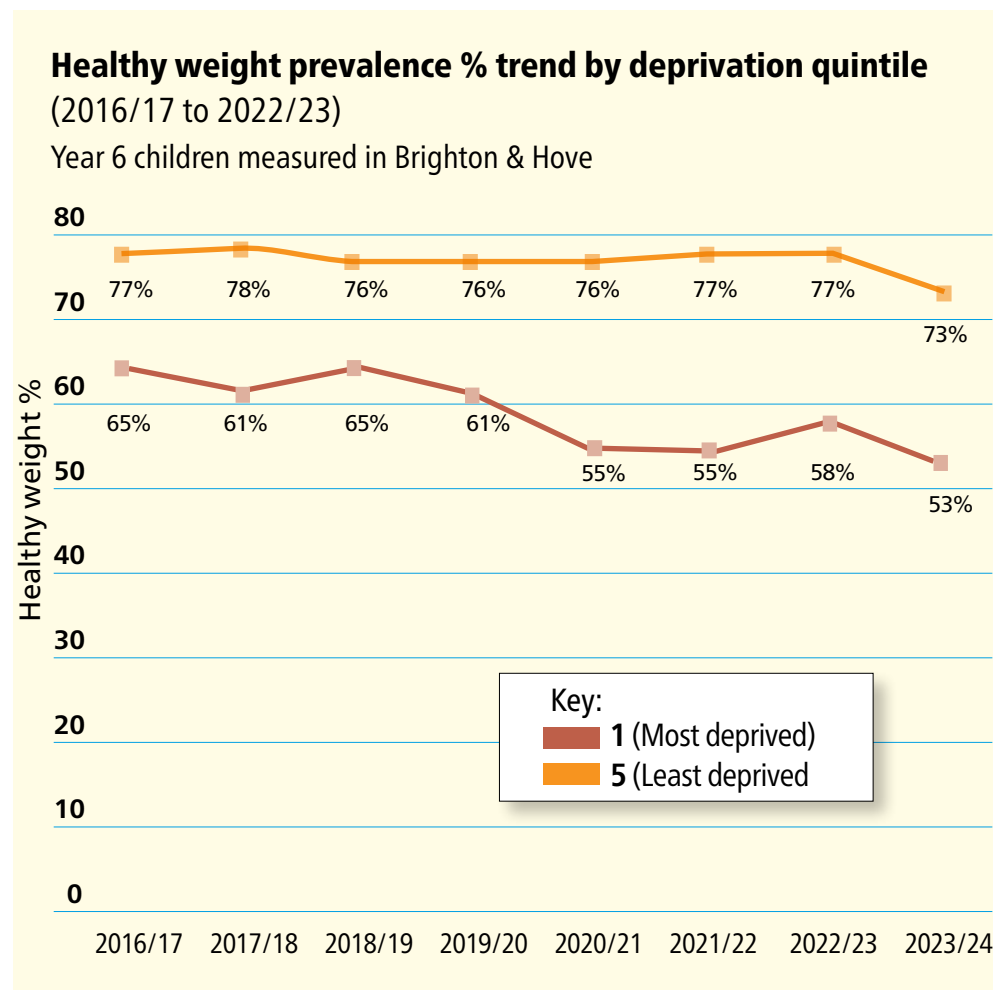
### For 10 to 11 year olds:

- 53% of those living in the most deprived areas in the city are a healthy weight compared to 73% of those living in the least deprived areas
- The lowest levels of healthy weight are in Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, Whitehawk and in Hollingdean and Coldean
- Those from Asian or Asian British, Black, or Black British, Mixed, or other ethnicity than White are significantly less likely to be a healthy weight
- Boys are less likely to be a healthy weight than girls (68% boys, 73% girls).



Source: Obesity Profile - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care<sup>7</sup>

There is evidence that these inequalities are also widening across the city



Between 2016/17 and 2022/23 the prevalence of healthy weight in 10 -11 year olds fell to 73% for those living in the least deprived areas, and fell from 63% to 58% in the most deprived areas – thus widening inequalities across the city.

## Health Counts 2024 – evidence of inequalities<sup>8</sup>

- In 2012, the percentage of adults eating five or more fruits or vegetables per day was 46% for residents in the most deprived areas (based on England quintile), and this fell to 42% in 2024. Whereas in the least deprived areas, it increased from 54% to 56%, so we have seen a widening of inequality.
- In 2012 the rate of healthy weight was 45% for residents in the most deprived areas (based on England quintile) and fell to 34% in 2024. Whereas in the least deprived areas, it fell from 51% to 38%. There is now less difference between the most and least deprived areas, but inequality persists.
- Groups who are **less likely** to be a healthy weight in 2024, compared to all respondents (37%) include:
  - Older adults (aged 45-84 years) – 33% for 45-54 year olds falling to 29% for 75-84 year olds
  - Black, Black British, Caribbean or African residents (17%)
  - Males (33%)
  - Adults with a disability (31%)
  - Unpaid carers (31%)
  - Adults with –
    - developmental conditions (24%),
    - sensory impairments (25%),
    - a physical or visible difference with a disabling or discriminatory impact (24% and 25% respectively),
    - Autism (29%),
    - physical health conditions (29%),
    - mental health conditions (33%) and
    - learning disability (35%).



## Drivers of healthy weight

Although, fundamentally, excess weight gain occurs when energy intake exceeds energy expended on a regular basis, the factors influencing this are multi-faceted and often interact.

People on lower incomes are more likely to experience food insecurity and have less disposable income for food, presenting a barrier to eating a healthy diet. Additionally, deprivation can impact on mental wellbeing and increase stress levels, which in turn, can influence the ability to choose or prepare healthy food.

Whole systems thinking around health in local areas such as around food and healthy weight can improve health and reduce inequalities.

Some of these areas are outlined here.

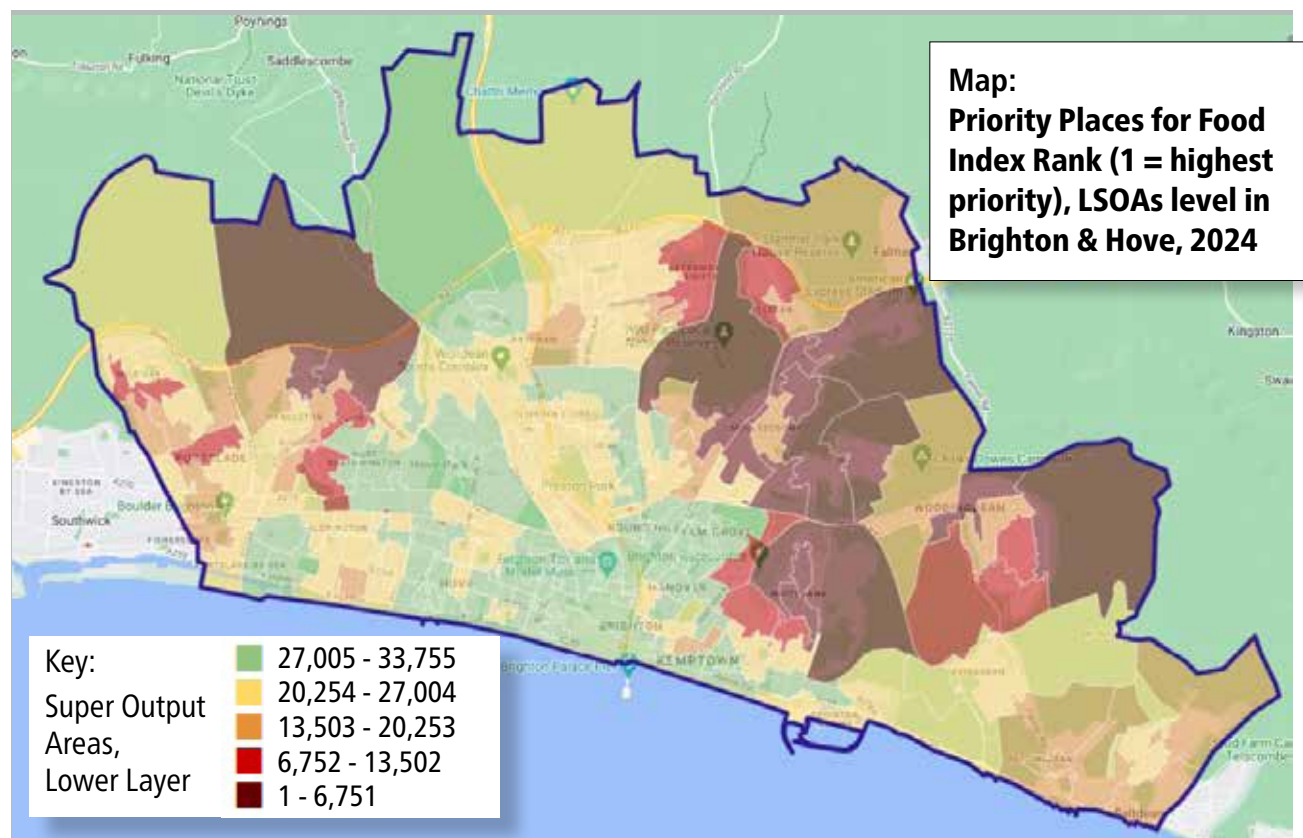
### Our surroundings and communities

The places and communities where people grow up, live, work and socialise also influence weight. Healthy food environments, where people have access to affordable and healthy food, can support people to maintain a healthy weight. On the other hand, where people are surrounded by foods high in fat, sugar,

or salt, can lead to these foods becoming the default choice. This tends to be disproportionately the case for lower socio-economic groups. For example, the density of fast-food outlets is greater in more deprived compared to less deprived areas.<sup>9</sup>

The Priority Places for Food Index shows areas where poverty, poor public transport

and a lack of big supermarkets severely limit access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables. Areas in Whitehawk, Hangleton and Bevendean, Hollingdean, Queens Park and Woodingdean are in the top 20% of areas in England for the greatest food desert like characteristics.



Source: Map | Local Insight<sup>10</sup>

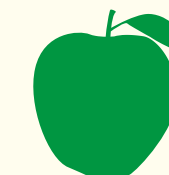
## The food environment

Good nutrition is vital for living a healthy life. People tend to think of eating healthily as being an individual's choice, but food environments are a combination of the spaces in which people make decisions about food, and the foods and drinks that are made available, accessible, affordable, and desirable in those spaces. Creating sustainable food systems, with a focus on increasing local outdoor spaces for growing food and developing local supply chains are important ways to enable people to be able to easily access affordable healthy food and eat well.

Adults in Brighton & Hove are significantly more likely to consume five or more portions of fruit and vegetables per day compared to the England average (38% compared to 33% in 2022/23), but this has fallen from 43% in 2020/21).

For children and young people in the city, meeting these recommendations falls with age, but the figures have also been falling since 2018, with the biggest change seen in 14-16 year olds (from 60% in 2018 to 51% in 2023).<sup>11</sup>

**The % of pupils eating the recommended 5 or more portions of fruit and vegetables falls with age from the last year of primary (Year 6, 10-11 year olds) to Year 11 (15-16 year olds):**



**69% in Year 6**



**53% in Year 11**



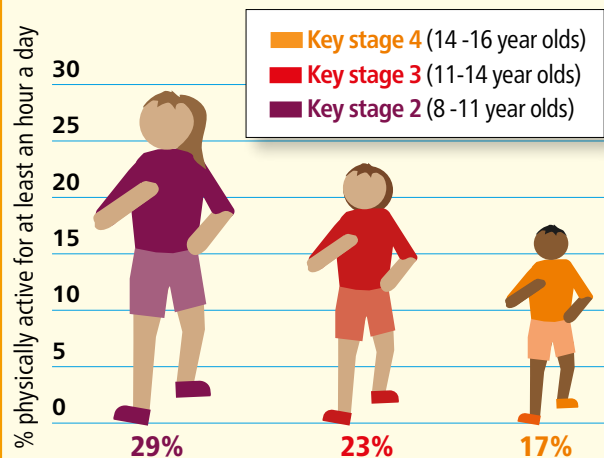
## Physical activity

Physical activity is a key factor in maintaining a healthy weight. In Brighton & Hove, adults are more physically active compared to England (80% compared to 67% in England).<sup>12</sup>

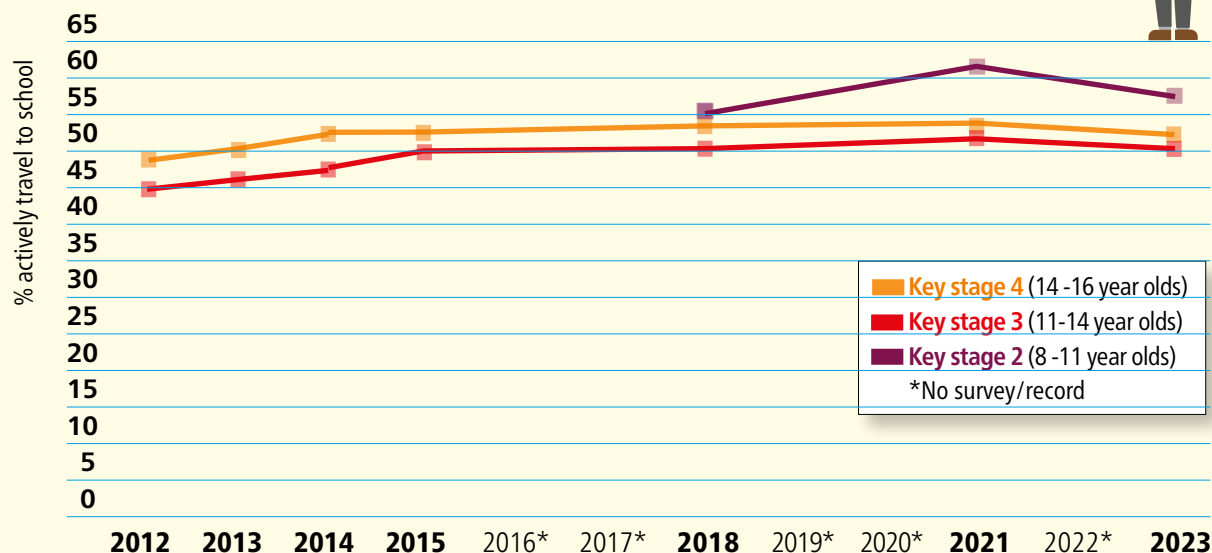
We had seen reductions in physical activity in adults between 2016/17 to 2020/21, but since then they have increased and are at the highest level since this data was available.

Our local school survey data suggests that children and young people become less physically active as they get older. In addition, girls, LGBTQ+ pupils, those who did not identify with their gender at birth and Asian or Asian British pupils are all significantly less likely to meet physically activity recommendations.

### Proportion of children who are physically active for at least an hour a day (SAWSS 2023)



### Percentage of pupils travelling to school (walk, cycle, skateboard/scooter): (2016/17 to 2022/23) Year 6 children measured in Brighton & Hove



## Active travel

The built environment also has a role to play in encouraging active travel which supports people to be more physically active and a healthy weight.

One third (34%) of adults are estimated to walk or cycle as a form of transport at least three times a week in Brighton & Hove, compared to 20% in England.<sup>13</sup>

Younger school pupils in the city are more likely to travel actively to school, but active

travel has fallen in the latest schools' survey for primary and secondary school pupils.<sup>14</sup>

Whilst these behaviours are important to monitor and aim to influence, they are strongly influenced by socio-economic factors, societal and cultural influences, and the food environment.

The next chapter tells the Brighton & Hove story bringing some of this data and the achievements to life.



## 2. Achievements in healthy weight



This section of the report describes the whole systems journey over the past 20 years in the city

Food systems and partnership working have been embedded in Brighton & Hove since 2003, when the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership was established. This partnership brings together the community and voluntary sector, Brighton & Hove City Council, and public health partners.

In 2004, Brighton & Hove became a World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy City, with a focus on healthy urban planning. This included joint working between our council's public health and planning teams on healthy weight issues, such as the regulation of hot food takeaways. Health and wellbeing are integral themes in the city plan and are embedded across planning and transport policy agendas.

In 2008, the city introduced the national free swimming programme for younger residents and has continued to support it to this day. That same year, the Healthy Choice

Award was developed to incentivise local food providers – including cafés, restaurants, caterers, school breakfast clubs and nurseries – to improve the healthier options they offer.

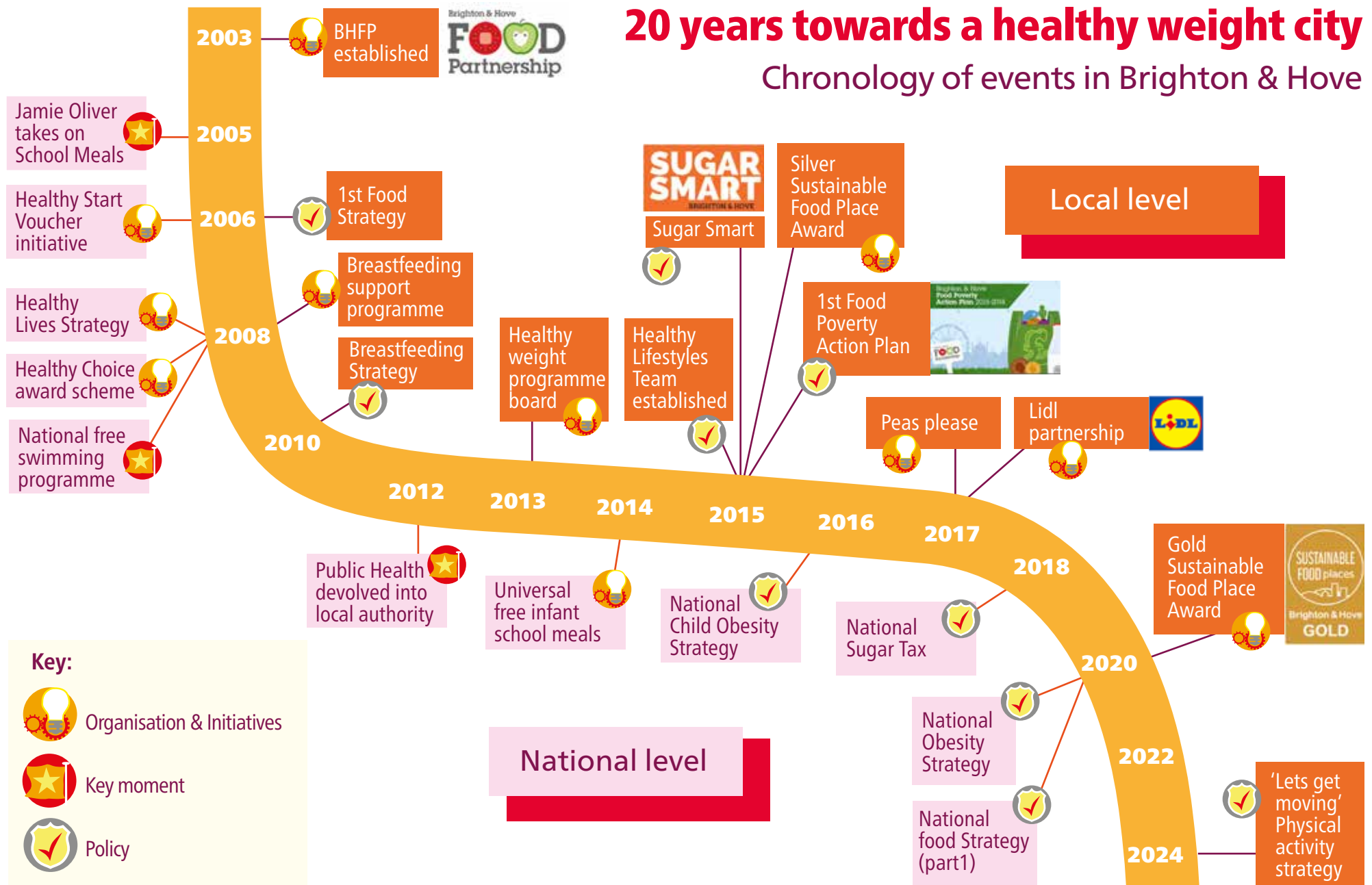
The national Healthy Start voucher scheme was introduced while infant feeding continued to be prioritised locally. Under the city's breastfeeding strategy, strategic leadership and peer support programmes contributed to maintaining one of the highest breastfeeding rates in the country - 20% above the national average.

In 2013, a collaborative Healthy Weight Programme Board was established. It brings together partners from the Council, Food Partnership, NHS, planning and transport, sport and leisure, workplace wellbeing, and other organisations. This has laid the foundation for a whole systems approach involving many partners, which continues to grow.



# 20 years towards a healthy weight city

Chronology of events in Brighton & Hove



Brighton & Hove has developed successive food strategies and taken an innovative approach to tackling food poverty, underpinned by a dedicated action plan that continues to galvanise partner organisations. The city achieved Silver Sustainable Food Place status in 2015 and went on to become the first city to achieve Gold status in 2020.

In 2015, the Brighton & Hove Public Health Team developed the concept of 'Sugar Smart' — a campaign to raise awareness of the sugar content in food and drinks, its impact on weight and diet-related health conditions, and how to make healthier choices easier for residents. Working with key partners, including the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation and the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, the team introduced the first local voluntary sugar tax. This influenced national thinking and helped pave the way for the Soft Drinks Industry Levy.

The 'Sugar Smart' concept has now been adopted by many other local authority areas and is a great example of how a local low-cost idea can influence the national policy agenda and improve the public's health.

### Headlines from the 2015 'Sugar Smart' campaign



As the Local Government Association (LGA) / Public Health England approach on Whole Systems Approaches to Obesity was released, Brighton & Hove was pleased to present and share the developing 'systems approach' at several different fora.

Initiatives included work on vegetables, and 'Peas Please' in 2017 (the latter being a Food Foundation coordinated initiative in partnership with LIDL) aimed to increase the number of different vegetables on the plate. These projects were informed by research with families on a low income in East Brighton.

The national obesity strategy and childhood obesity plans published during 2015, 2016, 2018 and 2019 provided the driver for increased action at a local level.

In 2024, Brighton & Hove published 'Let's Get Moving', a physical activity strategy for the city developed during the covid years. This focusses on further developing the whole systems approach to make 'moving a bit more every day' easier for all, complementing the approach to healthy weight. The vision – to make Brighton & Hove the most active city in the country over the course of the next 10 years is being achieved as the strategy launches, with the latest Active Lives data showing Brighton & Hove to have amongst the most active and least inactive adult residents in the country.

## What have we achieved:

- **Lower childhood obesity rates than many areas around the country over a number of years** – in 2023, our year 6 children had the sixth highest levels of healthy weight in the country (70% compared to 63% nationally)
- **The highest levels of physical activity and lowest levels of physical inactivity** in the country for adults and the highest levels of physical activity for children according to the Active Lives Survey (2023)
- **Silver and Gold Sustainable Food City award** (the first in the country at both levels)
- **Developed Sugar Smart as a concept in 2015**, introducing a local voluntary sugary drinks tax, which influenced the introduction of the national sugar drinks industry levy, announced in 2016



- **High levels of active travel**, with one in three adults the highest proportion of residents travelling actively to work on at least three days a week nationally in 2019/20.
- **One of the highest breastfeeding rates in the country** with 75% of babies breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks, compared to 53% nationally in 2023/4.



### 3. A whole systems approach



This chapter describes the model for whole systems working and our local approach.

Obesity and its causes are complicated and involve many interrelated factors. The Foresight Tackling Obesities Future Choices Project Report<sup>15</sup> explains that each of these areas play a role

- culture
- food production
- eating habits
- biology
- personal choices
- activity levels,
- and the environment.

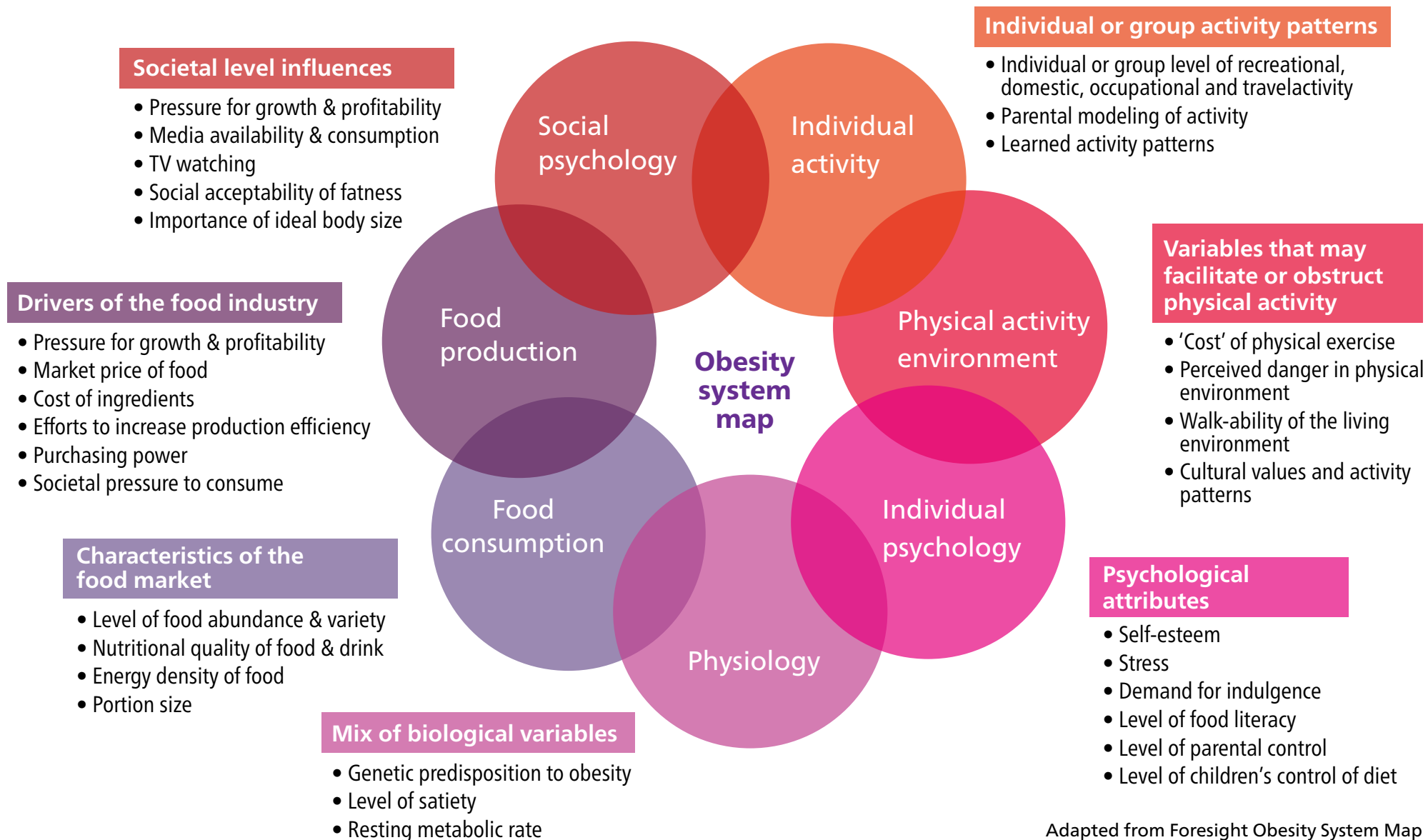
It shows that society is complex and hard to predict, so addressing obesity needs long-term, overall solutions.

Public Health England (now the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) and the LGA, published the whole systems approach to obesity guide to support local authorities and partners to develop and deliver a local approach.

They advise that “a local whole systems approach responds to complexity through an ongoing, dynamic and flexible way of working. It enables local stakeholders, including communities, to come together, share an understanding of the reality of the challenge, consider how the local system is operating and where there are the greatest opportunities for change. Stakeholders agree actions and decide as a network how to work together in an integrated way to bring about sustainable, long-term systems change.”<sup>16</sup>



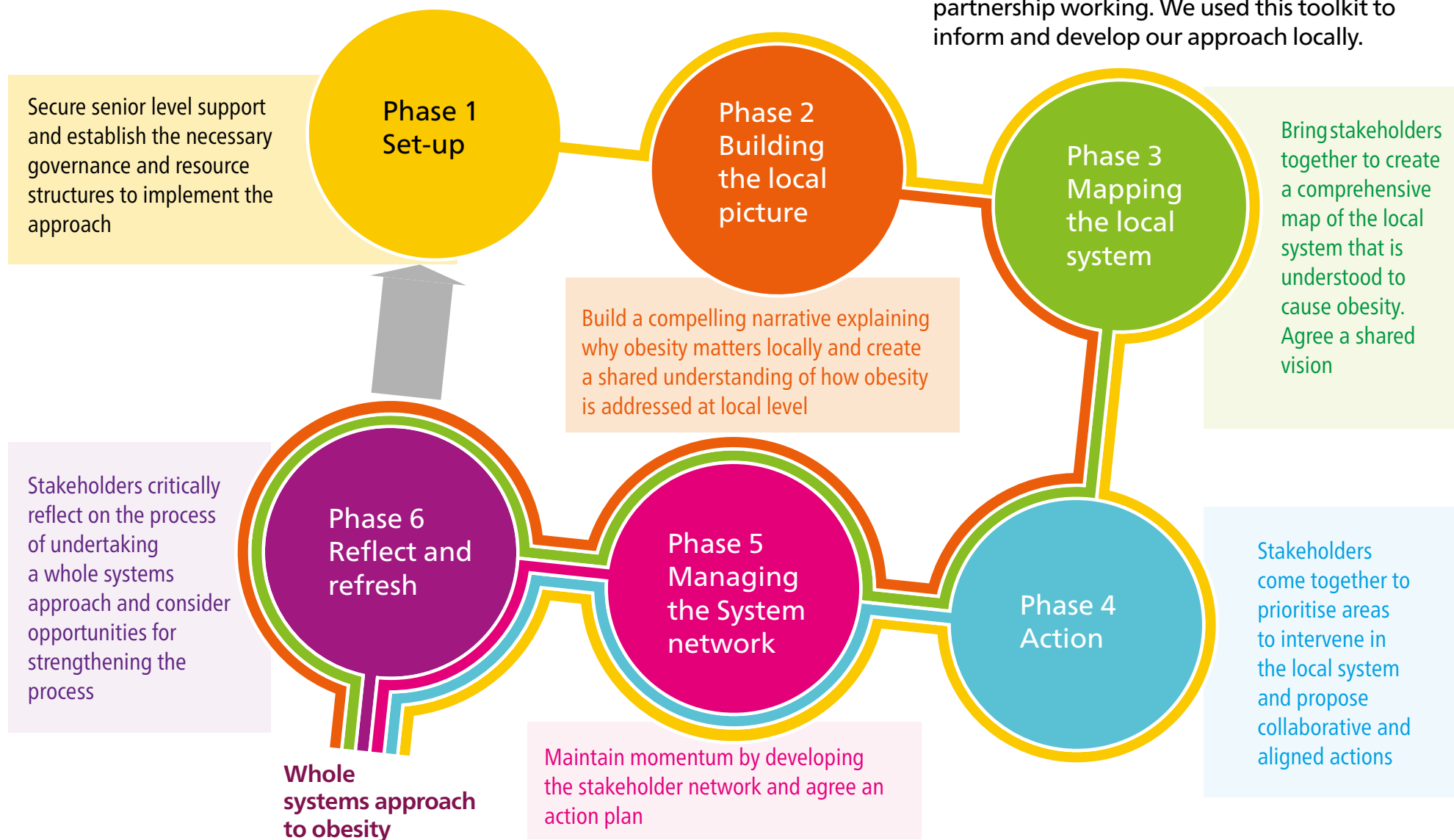
# Multiple interacting and dynamic 'factors' that compose what is termed as an obesity system



Adapted from Foresight Obesity System Map

## Process for implementing whole systems approach to healthy weight <sup>17</sup>

The PHE toolkit describes six stages, with a set of systems behaviours to support inclusive partnership working. We used this toolkit to inform and develop our approach locally.



## Our approach so far

Brighton & Hove has worked on developing a whole systems approach to healthy weight for over ten years through the Healthy Weight Programme Board, and multiple interventions and innovations previously described.

As the city emerged from the pandemic lockdown, the Brighton & Hove Public Health team started mapping key stakeholders, relevant city strategies and coordinated a visioning workshop.

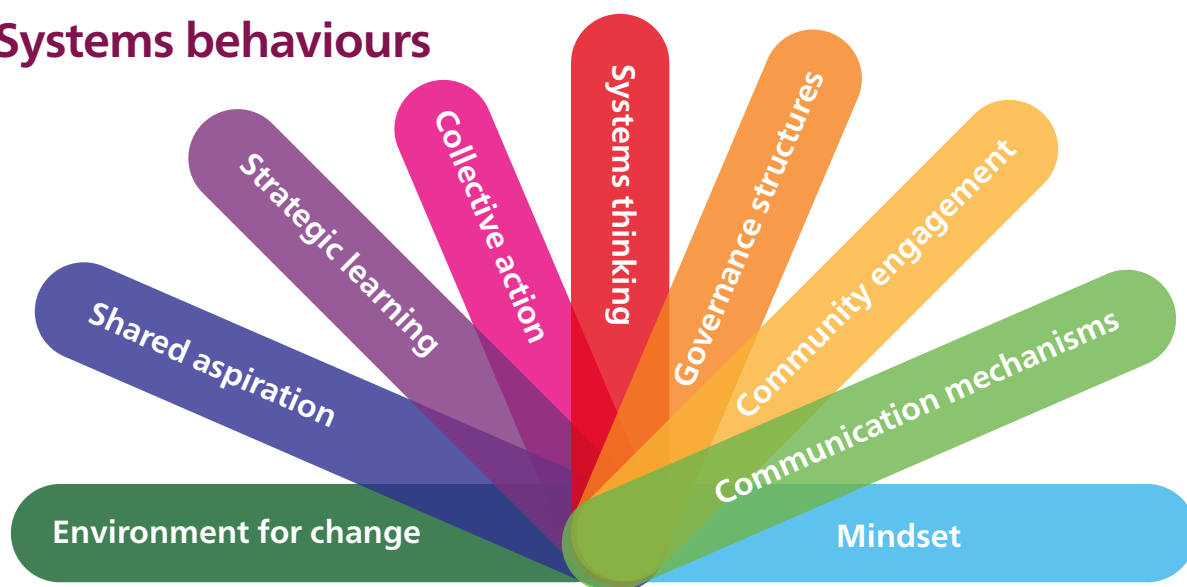
From this workshop, the following next steps emerged:

- Agree a vision
- Make the healthy weight agenda everyone's business
- Collaborate with partners
- Focus on the city as a whole
- Trial ideas without fear of failure
- Review what works and share good practice
- Prioritise the actions that have the greatest impact

**Vision:** A city that puts the wellbeing of residents at the heart of everything it does, by making eating well and moving more, a natural, accessible and easy choice and provides inclusive services to everyone who needs them.

Vision emerged from the 2023 workshops

### Systems behaviours



Item: March 2023	Objective
Arriving	For a 9.30 start time
Welcome	
Icebreaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speed dating – speak to x 3 people – name, what do you do?</li> </ul>
Introduction to Healthy Weight agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of Health in All Policies</li> <li>• Headline data</li> <li>• Common outcomes</li> <li>• Integrate case study examples</li> </ul>
Case Studies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Inspiring events</li> <li>2. Food partnership</li> <li>3. Healthy Choice Award and Food Business</li> <li>4. A Physically Active City</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opportunities and challenges events in the City pose</li> <li>• Nutrition, healthy weight, sustainability &amp; FILM</li> <li>• Overview of both initiatives</li> <li>• Overview of strategy and pathway to an active city</li> </ul>
Break- teas/ coffees	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Engaging residents in need</li> <li>6. Children &amp; Young People</li> <li>7. The impact of local businesses</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellsbourne engaging residents and Beezees commission</li> <li>• eg breakfast clubs and initiatives schools are delivering</li> <li>• What are local businesses doing to support the agenda</li> </ul>
Table discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider determinants model utilised to stimulate discussions</li> <li>• Challenges, Opportunities, Actions</li> </ul>
Final thoughts	

### Face to face workshops in March and October 2023:

In March and October of 2023, two face to face workshops were attended by a range of organisations,<sup>18</sup> included in the list of contributors.

These workshops aimed to

- explore whole systems healthy weight approaches
- identify gaps and opportunities to work together, identifying the multiple co-benefits from this work
- outline examples of work in the city.

The information gathered during these sessions was examined using thematic analysis – a process of identifying categories and grouping them into themes. These themes now inform the workstreams of the whole systems working groups: starting well and healthy environments.

Research from the institute for Development Studies shared research findings focused on Brighton & Hove's approach to whole systems work – A whole system approach to childhood obesity: how a supportive environment was created in the city of Brighton & Hove, United Kingdom<sup>19</sup>.

Key stakeholders from the Brighton & Hove Healthy Weight Programme Board and partners were interviewed as part of the research. A group activity focused on children and how to support a holistic, healthy environment, produced rich information and ideas to inform the next steps and recommendations as highlighted at the end of this report.



## Key themes from the workshops

### Starting well

- Education setting and learning
- Psychological wellbeing
- Social/Community networks
- Exercise/Transport/Infrastructure
- Family networks
- Lifestyle
- Food culture
- Sustainability
- Information sharing
- Life course



### Healthy environments

- Food industry
- Health and social care industry
- Cultural assets
- Natural capital
- Accessible exercise
- Economically disadvantaged
- Transport
- Cost of living crisis
- Working conditions
- Housing



As the whole system healthy weight agenda develops, strategic work on relevant areas has progressed. Some of these include the 'Let's Get Moving... physical activity and sports strategy', urban planning projects and the review of the Brighton & Hove food strategy action plan.



# 4. Delivering a whole city approach to healthy weight in Brighton & Hove

This section covers where we spend our time in Brighton & Hove, highlighting some of the changes that we have made and that can make it easier to maintain a healthy weight. Starting with pregnancy and childhood, through education and into working age, with the final section considering older adults as well as whole city elements.





## Pregnancy and Baby

### Why it's important

**Being a healthy weight during pregnancy is good for a healthy pregnancy for both parent and baby.** Healthy eating and moving more can benefit both mother and baby.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, over 1,000 pregnant people attending the Royal Sussex County Hospital were overweight or obese. Being overweight can increase the risk of having a miscarriage or a still birth, giving birth early, having a big baby, diabetes, high blood pressure, having a caesarian or a longer stay in hospital.

Breastfeeding is the starting point for a life course approach to healthy weight, it protects against obesity, which can further reduce long-term negative health outcomes for both women and children.<sup>20</sup>

## Case study: Specialist Infant Feeding team

### Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust Health Visiting Team

Practical support is available across the city for all new mums to feed their babies. We provide families with evidenced based information to enable fully informed infant feeding choices. We offer accessible and non-judgemental support to women and their families, however they choose to feed their babies. We support women to breastfeed as much as or for as long as they would like. The Specialist Infant Feeding Team includes lactation consultants, breastfeeding specialists and breastfeeding peer support coordinators.

The Specialist Infant Feeding team gained Stage 2 Baby Friendly Initiative status in 2023 and was due to be assessed for Stage 3 in 2024. This has increased staff confidence and promoted a system wide common language, supporting continuity of care.



### The Specialist Infant Feeding team

Support includes:

- Brighton Breastfeeding Drop-In providing parent-to-parent support
- Peer support programme providing mother-to-mother support from the postnatal ward and into the MILK groups
- Regular MILK Infant Feeding Groups for common challenges like returning to work, starting solids and feeding in public
- A specialist 1-1 service for persistent and complex feeding challenges.

Brighton & Hove has one of the highest breastfeeding rates in the country with 75% of babies breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks, compared to 53% in England in 2023/24.

In Brighton & Hove, there is:

- Free weight management support available for pregnant people
- Free physical activity programmes.
- Healthy Start vouchers have been available for families since 2006. Healthy Start vouchers are prepaid cards that help eligible families and pregnant people buy healthy food and vitamins.
- Infant feeding support (see case study) Specialist Infant Feeding Team

### Food for thought

#### Is your workplace baby friendly?

Follow the steps listed on the World Health Organisation website: [bit.ly/4huO2ZY](https://bit.ly/4huO2ZY)

## Early Years

### Why it's important

**Good nutrition for babies and young children is a key element of providing the best start in life, establishing a firm foundation for a child's development which in turn promotes and supports lifelong health and wellbeing.**

One in five children in the city are already an unhealthy weight by the time they start school, so the early years period is a critical time for prevention and laying down good habits for life. There are significant health inequalities across the city with higher rates among children of overweight parents, those in deprived areas and some ethnic groups. Over time, these disparities can contribute to wider social and economic inequalities, as poor health impacts education, employment opportunities, and overall quality of life.

Children living with obesity are at increased risk of poor health outcomes such as type 2 diabetes, poor mental health and tooth decay.

## Family Hubs

Family Hubs were launched in 2023 and there are currently four across the city that support families with children and young people 0-19 years and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) up to the age of 25 years. The hubs in the city are: Tarner, Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb and Hangleton.

### Case study: TastEd

Addressing health inequalities in the early years.



**TastEd** provides lively and fun introductions to fresh foods and toothbrushing which is free for families. The intention of the programme is to make small changes to have a lasting impact on children and families across the city.



## Play areas

Playgrounds provide free access for young children and their families to play and be active in outdoor spaces. This is good for physical and mental wellbeing, for socialising and development.

With over 50 playgrounds across the city and recent investments for improvements and new builds, there are many opportunities for families to engage with safe outdoor public spaces.

There has been a £4.3 million programme to improve park play areas across the city. The Whitehawk Way play area is an example of this (see case study).

## Case Study: Level Up

'Level Up' your play at Withdean Sports Complex. Level Up is an innovative and exciting new soft play facility which opened at Withdean Sports Complex at the end of April 2024. Providing opportunities for active play at one of the council run leisure centres, with areas for ages from 0 up to 12 years, and dedicated SEND sessions.



## Case Study: Playground in Whitehawk Way



### Playground in Whitehawk Way brings joy for Noah

In 2023, the council completed an exciting playground refurbishment at Top Park in Whitehawk Way, pictured here. As well as wildlife themed zones to represent local Whitehawk buildings, the playground includes fantastic accessible play equipment for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The council asked parents and carers to help shape their local play areas for children and young people. All the

feedback was carefully considered to help shape the future of play provision.

#### Noah's seat

Noah, who lives in Whitehawk, loves visiting parks with hammock swings and has special educational needs and disabilities. We included a hammock swing named 'Noah's seat' as part of the refurbishment. Noah was the first child to enter the park and try out the swing.



## Primary schools

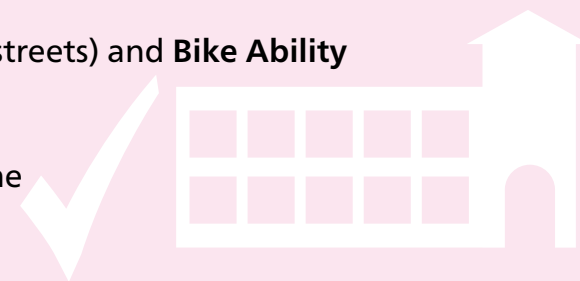
### Why it's important

Schools are a key setting for influencing and supporting children to maintain a healthy weight through the taught curriculum, policies and leadership, and the environment in which they spend their time during the school day. This includes the journey to and from school, the classroom, the playground, lunchtime and breaks, school trips, fairs and celebrations.

Every year, children in reception and year 6 are weighed and measured by the School Nurse team as part of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP). Our local data shows us that during the primary school years overweight and obesity increases from one in five in reception to one in three in Year 6, providing a great opportunity in primary schools to help reverse this trend.

### A Recipe for a Healthy Weight School:

- ✓ **Leadership** from senior leadership team
- ✓ **Active travel** to and from school (school streets) and **Bike Ability**
- ✓ **Active 60**
- ✓ **Active lessons**, learning and teaching time
- ✓ **Daily mile** or equivalent
- ✓ **Optimal school lunch environment** – high free school meal take-up
- ✓ **Water bottles and water fountains**
- ✓ **Healthy lunchbox and snacks policy** – including after school clubs
- ✓ **Healthy choice breakfast club** with activities
- ✓ **Play, playground equipment and activities** including green spaces and gardens
- ✓ **Policies** including fundraising and Parent Teachers Association (PTA)
- ✓ Consider the **shops and businesses** on the way home (include ice-cream vans outside school gates)



**In Brighton & Hove, one in three young people aged 5-16 years do less than 30 minutes of physical activity every day.**

Secondary school pupils who said they often felt happy recently, were more likely to get an hour of physical activity every day, than those who said that they had not felt happy.

## Parks

### Why it's important

**Parks are free, close to where many of our residents live and a local green space for all, but are especially important for those who don't have their own garden.** They are places where people of all ages and abilities can move more, play, relax and be social.

There are opportunities for park cafes to provide a healthier offer, provide tap water to drink, and for customers to connect with others.

**Did you know that Brighton & Hove has 147 parks and green spaces and eight Green Flag parks?**

In Brighton & Hove 91% of primary school pupils said they regularly spent time in at least one place outdoors outside of school. The most common place pupils spent time in both secondary and primary schools was parks/playing fields/playgrounds.<sup>21</sup>

Brighton & Hove respondents to the 2024 Health Counts survey of adults were more likely to spend time in nature daily (22% for Brighton & Hove compared to 16% for England).<sup>22</sup>



## Free swimming

### Why it's important

**Brighton & Hove is one of the only local authorities in the country to provide free swimming for children and young people aged 18 and under since 2008.** As a coastal city, free swimming allows people to stay active and keep safe by the sea.

Children can swim for free at:

- King Alfred Leisure Centre
- Prince Regent Swimming Complex
- St Luke's Community Swimming Pool
- Saltdean Lido (between May and August)





## Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

HAF is a government funded programme (2021 - 2024) that can be delivered locally in a way that supports healthy weight habits for the children attending. The programme provides support to school aged children in Reception to Year 11 who receive benefits-related free school meals (FSM), by providing healthy meals and enriching activities over the school Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays.

The aim of the programme is to benefit the health, wellbeing, and learning of children from low-income families, who we know are at higher risk of becoming an unhealthy weight. At each session they receive a nutritious meal, healthy snack taste test, and take part in everything from sport, music, drama, coding, a variety of playschemes, family cookery workshops and more. Most importantly, the children and young people have fun meeting new friends in safe and secure settings.

In the city, 45 different activity providers have supported the HAF programme, ranging from schools, private providers, charities, and youth clubs and the programme has benefitted from working closely with Social Workers and Family Hubs, to reach children and young people known to them. In 2023, 1,672 children (one in five of all the children who are eligible for free school meals) attended 13,587 HAF sessions.

“ We are very fortunate as my daughter is adopted, we can access HAF activities, it is a blessing, it's very intense being a single parent, but being a single parent with an adopted child can at times be overwhelming. One thing that always bonds us together and really helps her to relax is cooking. It is a way for us to build confidence with other children and build up our relationship.... it's a really good time for us to connect and bond over our love of food ... ”



(Brighton & Hove Food Partnership, 2024 available at [bit.ly/4kG6di8](https://bit.ly/4kG6di8))



## Food poverty work

Food poverty affects families in a wide range of ways including missing meals, less access to healthy foods and more restricted food choices.

In recognition that families are facing increasing financial pressures, the Public Health team have undertaken a number of initiatives to support healthy eating on a budget.

For example, in 2023/24, we worked with Wholesome Kitchen to produce budget-friendly recipe books for families and distributed over 3,500 throughout the city.



Food poverty grants were made available to schools to support initiatives tackling food poverty. Twenty schools received grants for projects including cooking classes for parents, food banks, equipment for cooking, purchasing healthier food options for students who were hungry at school and growing projects.



## Healthy Choice Breakfast Club Award

### Why it's important

Primary schools are offered the opportunity to join the Healthy Choice Breakfast Club Award.

To achieve the award, breakfast clubs must demonstrate how they provide a range of healthy foods for breakfast and limit sugar. Gold awards are awarded to schools who also offer physical activity, this year we introduced a platinum award for schools who also provide a toothbrushing station. In 2023/24, six primary schools achieved a gold award and ten achieved a platinum award.

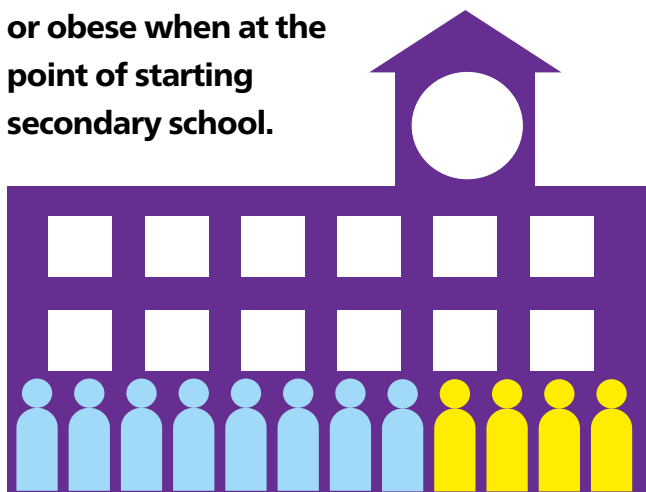
The 2024 National autumn budget announced funding for school breakfast clubs, providing opportunities to roll out healthy options for children from families on a low income.



## Secondary school

### Why it's important

**In some schools in the city, two thirds of Year 6 children (aged 10-11 years) are already overweight or obese when at the point of starting secondary school.**



Secondary schools provide great opportunities to influence the choices that young people make in terms of the food they eat and whether and how they continue to be active through sport, PE and active travel. Between the ages of 11 and 16, young people in the city will be developing many of the habits that stay with them for life.

There are opportunities for a much healthier and more sustainable food offer for secondary schools across the city:

- One secondary school in the city used food poverty funding to buy a fridge to store healthy breakfast snacks prepared by food technology students. These were then available for pupils coming to school without having had breakfast
- Secondary schools in the city promote refillable water bottles and water fountain use, reducing single use plastic drink bottle purchase – great for health and for the environment too, linked to Our City our World
- Encouraging and enabling pupils to travel actively to school
- Including additional healthy lifestyles and nutrition content in PHSE lessons
- Working with secondary schools' caterers and business managers on a healthier more sustainable offer, that's good for business too.

There is more that can be done collectively to influence the food offer on route to and from school, during lunch and break times (see case study).

### Focus on fast food & young people

Brighton & Hove has one of the highest numbers of fast food outlets per head of population in the South East.<sup>23</sup> Planning and public health teams mapped fast food takeaways around secondary schools in 2010 and showed that despite a high number of these outlets in some areas of the city there was a low number and density within 400m (5 mins walk) and 800m of schools. Some local areas have introduced planning policies called Supplementary Planning Directive (SPD)s to limit fast food outlets opening on the basis of number, density and proximity of the food businesses to places where children spend time, particularly schools.

The local approach has included working with fast food outlets to support healthier choice menu options, and the introduction of healthier cooking methods. However, as habits change and some areas of high streets become dominated by fast food businesses there is potential for restricting or managing fast food businesses with benefits for health and the local economy.



## Case study: This Girl Can

### This Girl Can - Be Inspired by

An event for secondary school pupils in Brighton & Hove:

- Only 15% of secondary school aged girls in the city said they got **1 hour of physical activity** every day in the past 7 days, compared with 27% of boys
- 17% of girls agreed that '**Nothing stops me**' from taking part in physical activity, compared with 44% of boys
- 45% of girls agreed one reason for not taking part was '**I don't like other people watching me**' compared with 16% of boys.<sup>24</sup>



The Active for Life and Schools Games team worked in partnership with Active Sussex and the Sussex Cricket Foundation to develop an event for secondary schools in Brighton & Hove to inspire girls about physical activity and create an open and safe space to discuss barriers around girls' participation. The event was open to each school in the city to bring along 10 female, including transgender and non-binary students, some who participate in PE and school sport and some who are disengaged with physical activity at school.

Inspirational women from various backgrounds in sport and physical activity spoke to the students about their own personal journeys and the importance of sport and physical activity for women's health and wellbeing. Students then took part in three workshops themed around menstrual health and being active, knowing more about sports bras, and a student voice activity which gave them the opportunity to speak openly about the issues affecting them from taking part in physical activity at school.

## Local research:

### Policies for transforming the UK's food system

Local people told us there was too much **advertising of unhealthy food** (high in sugar, salt and fat), particularly around schools and school routes home, and they wanted to see an end to supermarkets pushing deals of unhealthy food such as 2-for-1 offers.

Parents told us they wanted **schools to teach children and young people skills around food** and increase opportunities for them to learn where food came from and how to feed themselves well.







## Further & Higher Education

### Why it's important

Brighton & Hove has a large population of young people. From 16 years old there are further opportunities and challenges in supporting a healthy weight environment for young people to help them adopt life long healthier habits, as they are making more independent choices.

In the city, there are higher rates of young people with poor mental health which may contribute to overeating as a way of coping with difficult emotions.<sup>25</sup> PE and sport are no longer compulsory in these settings which coincides with the age when a higher proportion of young people are not achieving recommended levels of physical activity.<sup>26</sup>



For the academic year 2021/2022 there were 37,700 students at the University of Sussex and University of Brighton. There are also in the region of a thousand Higher Education students at smaller institutions including those for music and dance.

Opportunities for improving the healthy weight environment in further and higher education:

- Providing healthier, affordable and more sustainable food options
- Developing skills to prepare healthy, affordable meals
- Introducing opportunities for physical activity and moving more for all students
- Enabling accessible and affordable active travel.

### Case study: University of Brighton

To support healthy weight, Brighton university has introduced the following policies:

- **Sugar tax**
  - 10p tax added to drinks with higher sugar levels
- **Meal deal**
  - in the cafes the meal deal includes a piece of fruit as the free option



- **Food Hub**
  - when purchasing a main meal, a side salad is offered as an alternative to fries
  - menu includes dishes where protein such as chicken is chargrilled or steamed
  - salads are offered all year round.



## Leisure centres

There are currently seven council run leisure centres and four paddling pools/water features in the city, along with two school sports facilities. The Council has a ten-year plan to improve leisure facilities in the city, to encourage everybody to be more active more often, including ensuring they are fully accessible and inclusive.<sup>27</sup>



## Food for thought

**How healthy is the food at your 6th form or further education college?**

## Youth centres

Youth centres are vital spaces for young people and play a crucial role in empowering young individuals to make informed choices about their health and wellbeing.

They:

- Provide a supportive environment where young people can engage in physical activities, such as sports and fitness programs, which encourage regular exercise and active lifestyles

- Offer educational workshops on nutrition and healthy eating habits, helping to instil lifelong practices

- Foster a sense of community and belonging, address social isolation.

The major redevelopment of the Brighton Youth Centre is underway. It will be fully accessible with upgrades to all existing facilities as well as a cafe space, counselling and GP rooms.

On the top floor there will be an extension to the skatepark which will provide a larger seating area overlooking the city.

Based on Edward Street, it's important to acknowledge that people from other parts of the city, especially those in disadvantaged areas, may find it difficult to access services due to distance, financial constraints and the potential lack of awareness.



## Water fountains

The ability to refill a water bottle with local tap water, rather than buying a processed drink in a single use plastic bottle, is an example of the way that we can make it easier to make a healthier free choice that is better for the environment.

Water fountains in the city make it easier for everyone to refill water bottles out and about. Many food business and cafes will refill customers' water bottles.



# Working age



## Work places

### Why it's important

**Workplaces are a crucial setting for promoting health and wellbeing, providing a unique environment where individuals spend a significant portion of their time and can access resources, support, and community.**

A healthy workplace supports employees and impacts positively on their physical and emotional wellbeing. While some aspects of the workplace may have an impact on healthy weight (for example, shift work, sitting for long periods of the day and the psychosocial environment), workplaces can offer opportunities for people to adopt healthy behaviours and access healthy information/advice.



## Making health your business

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health  
Brighton & Hove 2019

### Food

Are healthy fresh affordable options available at the time when workers need to eat (standard working hours and antisocial shifts)?

- Is there somewhere to sit and eat and time to eat?
- Do any vending machines contain healthy options?
- Are food heating and fridge storage options available?
- Are healthy refreshments available at events or meetings?



### Physical activity

Do you encourage, facilitate and reward active travel (travel by bicycle, on foot or public transport) by providing cycle to work schemes, on-site showers and cycle storage, subsidising public transport costs and active travel challenges?

You can reduce inactivity or sedentary behaviour during the working day with active breaks, walking meetings and standing desks, and encourage physical activity in and around the working day through workplace initiatives like lunchtime yoga, walks or 'Couch to 5k'.



### Food for thought

**Is your workplace good for your health?**

### Support healthy weight

You could subsidise or provide time for workers to attend weight management classes, gym or wellness sessions as part of their working week. Great for health and the productivity of the workforce.

## Healthcare settings

### Why it's important

**These are important settings for patients, their families and the staff who work in them.**

Healthy and affordable food is important for prevention, to speed recovery and keep the workforce happy and healthy. It is also critical that the organisations that are treating and advising on health problems, provide a food offer in line with their recommendations.

Maintaining a physically active environment and supporting patients to keep activity and independence before, during and following a hospital stay, supports better outcomes for patients and reduces costs for the healthcare economy. Green spaces and active travel infrastructure around healthcare buildings supports staying active and cleaner air. Making healthy options more accessible than unhealthy options is effective. A study in an Aberdeen hospital demonstrated that only when 75% of the food offer was healthy, did more than half of study participants select a healthy option.<sup>28</sup>

## Case study: Wairau Hospital

### Wairau Hospital

**A hospital in New Zealand (Wairau Hospital) hit the headlines when the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board stopped selling sugary drinks in 2014.**

Hospitals ban sugary drinks - Maintenance and Operations (healthcarefacilities.today.com)



### Hospitals ban sugary drinks

New Zealand healthcare facilities will phase out soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks and flavoured milk.

Hospital visitors craving a soft drink won't find any in Nelson and Marlborough, New Zealand, according to an article on the NZ City news website.

## Anchor Institutions

Anchor institutions is a term for large organisations, for example hospitals, colleges and universities, GP practices, community centres and religious buildings, that are invested in their local area and are unlikely to relocate.

They can support their local community's health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities, for example, through employment, professional development, buildings, relationships and the services that they deliver.

They hold a significant interest in the health and wellbeing of Brighton & Hove residents and are well placed to influence positive health outcomes for the local population. Examples of their work to support healthy weight are included throughout the report.



## Businesses / Retailers

### Why it's important

**It is estimated that one in six adults and one in five children consume foods out of the home at least once a week.<sup>29</sup>**

Meals eaten outside homes are often higher in calories and have a poorer nutritional value. Working with these businesses to encourage healthier food provision is one of several recommendations to improve healthy weight in the city.<sup>30</sup> Public Health England produced a toolkit ([bit.ly/4bMCnV5](https://bit.ly/4bMCnV5)) for local councils working with small food businesses.

The council's Healthy Choice catering scheme is one of several business initiatives run by the council, which supports and awards businesses that prepare, cook and serve healthy meals. A fifth of businesses say that they are interested to hear more about healthy choice catering in the city and caterers involved in the scheme often support health and wellbeing projects within the community.

## Case study: The Community Hub

### Brighton & Hove Albion Foundation Community Hub

The community Hub is a place for local people to meet, have a coffee, and enjoy some great healthy food. The sales support the BHAFC Foundation, allowing them to run community projects across Sussex.



### Food for thought

**Did you know that there are currently 3,115 food businesses registered in Brighton & Hove?**

The city is known for its vibrant food scene so working with businesses on a range of health and wellbeing initiatives is a key aspect of our healthy weight work.

**It is three times more expensive to get the energy we need from healthy foods than unhealthy foods**





## Events and festivals

In Brighton & Hove, the vibrant food businesses, bustling visitor economy, and numerous events and festivals, play a significant role in shaping dietary habits.



The abundance of easily accessible fast-food outlets and indulgent festival treats can encourage unhealthy eating patterns, especially during events. This can create environments where high-calorie, low-nutrient foods are often the norm. The social aspect of dining out and indulging during festivities may lead to overconsumption.

Balancing these enjoyable offerings with healthier options and promoting physical activity, could be key to mitigating this issue. In Brighton & Hove all events are now mandated to have a healthy option, priced in line with other food options, that meet the healthy food guidelines.



## Community gardens

### Why it's important

**We know from the 2021 Census that in the city 50% of residents live in flats with limited access to green space; therefore, outdoor spaces that people can freely access are key to accessing nature and moving more outdoors.<sup>32</sup>**

There are over 70 community gardens, orchards and outdoor projects across the city where people come together to grow food, learn new skills, volunteer and socialise with others. The **Land Use Plus project** and the **Soil in the City project** are positive examples of food initiatives that have positive impacts on physical and mental wellbeing.

## Case study

### Community composting scheme

Over 1,200 households use the scheme at 56 locations across the city.

Compost produced from these schemes is offered to members, with leftovers donated to parks, community gardens and food growing projects in local schools.



### Adults with learning disabilities

People with a learning disability are at greater risk of being obese than the general population: 37% of people with learning disabilities are obese compared to 30% of people without learning disabilities. This leads to a higher risk of obesity related physical and mental health problems.<sup>32</sup>

People with learning disabilities are invited for an annual health check which is an opportunity to review BMI, levels of activity, healthy eating and other lifestyle choice within the context that the younger person or adult is living.<sup>33</sup>

**The Compass Card** is a free leisure discount card for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities in Brighton & Hove. The card can be used at many places, including restaurants, sports and activities, and family days out.

There is a specialist weight management service for people with learning disabilities in the city provided by Gloji.





## Parents and parenting – Healthy weight in the home

### Why it's important

**The environment our young children grow up in, and the way that they are parented or cared for, has a significant impact on the likelihood of maintaining a healthy weight through childhood and into adulthood.**

Aspects of parenting, including language, habits, education, values, and cultural influences, play a crucial role in shaping children's healthy weight throughout their lives. Parents are often primary role models, demonstrating dietary choices and physical activity levels that children are likely to emulate. As such, a child's BMI is strongly related to their parents BMI: <sup>34</sup>

The language used around food, whether it focuses on health, enjoyment, or guilt, can significantly impact a child's relationship with eating. Instilling positive habits, such as regular mealtimes and family cooking, fosters a sense of routine and encourages nutritious choices. Cultural values and traditions surrounding food can further influence dietary patterns, while peer pressure can sway children's attitudes toward health and body image. By nurturing a supportive environment that emphasises balanced nutrition and active lifestyles, parents can support their children toward achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

**7% of children**

whose mothers are a healthy weight are obese, compared with



**27% of children**

whose mothers are obese

**8% of children**

with fathers who are a healthy weight are obese compared to



**23% of children**

with fathers who are obese

### Case study: TripleP

**The Triple P Positive Parenting Programme was developed at the University of Queensland. The programme can help parents to develop skills, strategies and confidence to handle any parenting situation.**

The council's parenting team provides free Triple P courses and workshops for Brighton & Hove residents. Courses are for parents of children and young people of different ages, or for parent carers who are separated. For information visit: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/families-children-and-learning/childcare-and-family-support/triple-p-courses-and-talks>



There are also free courses for parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), co-facilitated by Amaze. **Amaze** is a charity that gives information, advice and support to families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Brighton & Hove.



## Menopause

### Why it's important

Weight gain is one of the most common side effects of perimenopause and menopause affecting at least half of women. Most of this weight accumulates around the abdomen and upper body which increases risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

It is important for individuals to live a healthy lifestyle to reduce this risk and eating well and exercising can reduce severity and frequency of some symptoms during this transition. Over a third of women aged 45-54 years do not meet the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommended levels of physical activity, and almost a quarter are inactive.<sup>35</sup> Due to stigma and lack of awareness about the menopause, individuals may withdraw from being active. A reduction in confidence and self-esteem can impact on an individual's motivation and ability to either continue or become more active.

### Case study: Menopause at work project



The Public Health team delivered free monthly menopause healthwalks.

A menopause specialist

attended to answer questions and our healthwalks volunteer leads a walk along the seafront/Hove Park to encourage women to be more active during and for the menopause.

Other menopause programme elements are:

- Training for physical activity workers, personal trainers, dance teachers and sport coaches by health professionals, to educate them on the menopause transition and how to create a menopause friendly environment for individuals to be more active.

- Menopause physical activity sessions with Freedom Leisure available from Autumn 2024.
- Online videos from the Active for Life team: Brighton & Hove Healthy Lifestyles Team - YouTube ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3UDPP981RoXR5\\_EUUhmsRQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3UDPP981RoXR5_EUUhmsRQ))







## Community/Third Sector

### Why it's important

#### Food and community: Making an impact

Brighton & Hove's inclusive and welcoming nature is reflected in its sense of community. The city is home to many third sector organisations which connect, inspire and work together to help improve people's wellbeing whilst contributing to the city's economic growth.

Brighton & Hove

**FOOD**  
Partnership

access a healthy diet, grow their own food and waste less food. It is a key leader in the city on whole systems food work.

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership is a non-profit organisation helping people to learn to cook,

Supported by a panel of experts from the public, business and voluntary sector, the Food Partnership recently refreshed the city's Food Strategy Action Plan (2025-2030), that aims for a sustainable, healthy and fair food system. At the time of writing, the food strategy action plan was still in draft.

Across this section of the report, the contribution of the third sector is clear. Other important examples for the Whole Systems Healthy Weight work from the community and voluntary sector include:



**THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN** has cooked with over 5,000 different people over five years, and 140 people have given over 10,000 hours of volunteer time to support the work



**THE SURPLUS FOOD NETWORK** data shows that in 2023 Brighton & Hove saved 1,626 tonnes of food from being wasted (equivalent to 46 elephants), feeding 6,400 people per week and saving our planet from 6,146 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

### Sustainable food city gold award



In 2020, Brighton & Hove became the first place to receive the gold sustainable food places award recognising achievements on a range of key food issues.

**In 2023, THE EMERGENCY FOOD NETWORK** comprised of 51 member projects operating out of more than 60 locations. Over 1,300 emergency food parcels were provided and Affordable food providers gave out 632 shops to members.



## Advertising, marketing and promotion

### Advertising, marketing, and promotion affect many of the choices and actions people make.

Food advertising and promotion of unhealthy foods is a risk factor for less healthy food purchases, food consumption and the development of overweight and obesity.<sup>36</sup> Advertising and promotions are more common in more deprived areas, where the risk of obesity is higher. In these areas, the high cost of living makes cheap, processed foods seem like a more appealing option.<sup>37</sup>

Evaluation of a high fat salt sugar advertising ban on the Transport for London (TfL) system showed a reduction in weekly purchases of unhealthy foods, with a particular reduction in chocolate and confectionary.<sup>38</sup> Concerns raised regarding the restrictions on advertising associated revenue were allayed as the introduction of the policy on TfL and in other local authority areas has not resulted in a negative impact on



revenue from advertising space. Associated economic modelling demonstrated a reduction in obesity and costs to the NHS from the TfL intervention.<sup>39</sup>

### Case study: BHCC

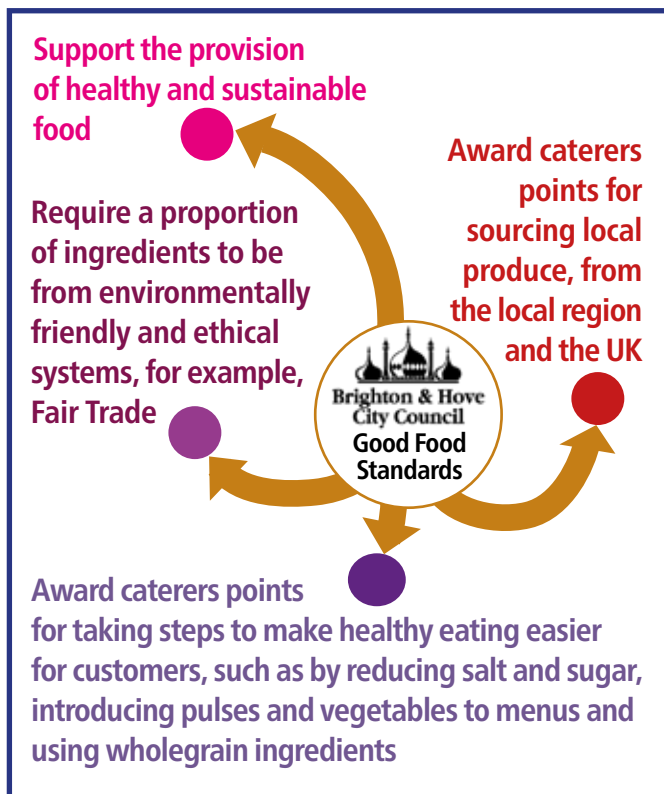
#### A ban on advertising high energy drinks and fast food

on council owned advertising space was voted on by council leaders in an all-party notice of motion in 2022. In December 2023, the council approved the introduction of a restriction on advertising of high fat salt sugar items on council bus stop and other advertising spaces.



## Good Food Standards

Procurement, Public Health and the Food Partnership worked together to develop the Brighton & Hove City Council Good Food Standards.<sup>40</sup> These are the Council's standards for purchasing food and catering services.



These standards support improved nutritional value of food and a reduction in the environmental impact of food and catering, with benefits for healthy weight and sustainability.

## Allotments

### Why it's important

Allotments provide residents with opportunities to cultivate and manage a small plot of land to grow vegetables, fruit, and flowers. They support mental and physical wellbeing as well as providing environmental benefits.

Across the city there are **37 allotment sites with over 3,000 plots, covering an area of 166 acres.** These are available to any Brighton & Hove resident to rent from the council for a yearly fee.

While allotments can be a valuable resource for healthy living, their benefits may not be equally accessible to everyone, further contributing to health and social inequalities in the community. Programmes that make allotments more affordable and accessible, or that provide community gardens in under-resourced areas, could help bridge this gap and support healthier lifestyles for all residents.



### Value and benefits of allotments

Recent findings of research commissioned by Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation on the value of benefits allotments (<https://www.bhaf.org.uk/content/about/issues/the-financial-value-benefits-of-allotments>) show that

### City allotments...



...provide 481 tons of produce, with a value of £1.12 million



...support up to **54** times more bees & pollinators than other types of council managed land

...reduce levels of self-reported stress, depression, and loneliness in those using allotments.<sup>41</sup>



## Green spaces

### Why it's important

Greenspace, such as parks, woodland, fields and allotments as well as natural elements including green walls, roofs and incidental vegetation, are increasingly being recognised as an important asset for supporting health and wellbeing. This 'natural capital' can help local authorities address local issues that they face, including improving health and wellbeing, managing health and social care costs, reducing health inequalities, improving social cohesion and taking positive action to address climate change.<sup>42</sup>

**With a focus on healthy weight, the fantastic green spaces available for residents and visitors in Brighton & Hove provide space to play, stay active, grow food or just spend time which is so good for our mental health and wellbeing.**



## Case study: Healthwalks

**Pheonix identifies as non-binary and heard about the Healthwalks through our social media and would like to attend more walks, regularly.**

“Thank you, I really enjoyed today, was so good for my anxiety and important that it was an LGBTQ walk as well. Very much what I needed, manageable, friendly socialising by the sea.”

Pheonix, age 40



In addition to the city's parks, community gardens and allotments, the City Downland Estate is in the South Downs National Park and is made up of over 5,200 hectares of farmland, nature reserve, and recreational space owned by the council. An estimated 3.8 million people visit each year to enjoy public rights of way, heritage sites and nature reserves. The council is working to make this landscape more accessible for everyone in the city.





## Sports pitches

Did you know  
that throughout  
the city, there are



**50** grass football pitches,  
**4** cricket squares,  
**8** tennis courts,  
**3** hockey pitches, and  
**3** multipurpose  
3G pitches



managed by the  
council and available  
for public use?



By reducing barriers, such as costs and accessibility, we can encourage greater community use of these facilities. The council is currently undertaking a **Play Pitch Strategy** to understand the demand for sports pitches in the city and understand how we can develop these facilities to meet the needs of local people.

## Blue spaces

### Why it's important

Brighton & Hove beaches and seafront welcomes residents and visitors of every age to walk, cycle, scoot, swim and enjoy water sports. The seafront food and drink options, including cafes, kiosks and the pier, could provide great opportunities for a healthy choice alongside seaside visit treats.



Benefits of green and blue space research has shown that people who have good access to blue space are 24% more likely to be active.<sup>43</sup> Brighton & Hove has seen recent improvements to increase accessibility ramps onto shingle areas along the seafront for wheelchair users, as well as the instalment of new beach huts at Saltdean.

Commitments such as Carbon Neutral by 2030 highlight the importance of preserving our natural resources as well as promoting them as areas for leisure and play.

## Case study: The Living Coast

The mission of The Living Coast is to protect wildlife and habitats, promote sustainable economy and communities, and encourage environmental education, training and research.

2024 marks the first decade of The Living Coast UNESCO Biosphere. The journey so far has been marked by significant achievements, from rejuvenating marine life with a trawling ban, water

preservation, to

introducing the ground-breaking City Downland Estate Plan's sustainable management of Brighton & Hove's rural estate which impacts the quality of blue spaces in the city.



## Planning and healthy weight

Local authority planning teams play a critical role in whole systems health weight by creating environments that support healthy behaviors, such as access to nutritious food, safe spaces for physical activity, and infrastructure that promotes active living.<sup>44</sup> Their strategic decisions around land use, zoning, and community services are key to fostering long-term public health improvements and addressing the root causes of obesity and related conditions.



How planning can help support healthy weight environments:

- Proximity to services influences how people travel to access those services
- Mitigate any impacts from national changes to the planning system - which allow change of use from commercial, business and service uses to residential uses without the need for planning permission, which can have a knock on effect to the loss of these services and facilities across the city
- The Planning Policy team undertook work to remove this permitted development right in a number of locations across the city, focused on the designated retail and employment centres. This includes Brighton City Centre; town centres such as Hove and London Road; district centres such as Lewes Road, Boundary Road and St James Street; as well as the many local centres and important local parades that exist across the city.



## Safe and active travel

### Why it's important

In 2019/20, one in three adults in the city (33%, 15% for England) walk for travel at least three days a week, the highest level in the country, and 5% cycle (England 2%).<sup>45</sup>

A road network has to work for those who want to walk, cycle and wheel, for public transport vehicles as well as cars. Safe roads and the perception of safe roads, is so important people of all ages travelling actively around the city. There are a number of recent and proposed active travel schemes in the city, including Valley Gardens, A23; A259; Western Road; Bus Service Improvement Plan Schemes, including dementia friendly training for bus drivers and; the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.



Roads, railways and hills in the city can act as barriers to connecting communities, and for residents to access services and green and blue spaces. Crossing and bridges are essential to address these barriers, providing safe crossing points and can enable active travel, accessible for all residents as well as providing wildlife corridors.

Brighton & Hove Buses provide a safe and reliable transport service that helps residents stay active by promoting easy access to walking and cycling opportunities, contributing to healthier lifestyles and supporting the maintenance of a healthy weight.

### Case study: Betterpoints



People in Brighton & Hove can get rewards when they choose active and sustainable travel through the 'Move for Change' initiative, powered by the BetterPoints app.

Ruth lives in Fiveways with her partner and three children. She is a GP in Peacehaven and since buying a bike through the cycle to work scheme last year, has been an advocate for active travel to her colleagues and patients.

“ I heard about the campaign through our Green Team in my surgery and through council outreach to help local businesses become greener. I was keen to get cycling to work and the app has helped encourage me to make the change... ”





## Case study: **School Streets** programme

### **School Streets programme**

The School Streets programme is an initiative aimed at creating safer and healthier environments for children and families around schools in Brighton & Hove. It involves closing certain streets to motor vehicles during school drop-off and pick-up times, making the area more pedestrian-friendly and reducing traffic-related air pollution. This initiative is part of a wider effort to encourage active travel, such as walking and cycling, while improving the local environment and promoting healthier lifestyles.



The programme has multiple positive impacts:

#### **1. Increased physical activity:**

With safer streets, children and parents/carers are more likely to walk or cycle to school, increasing daily physical activity, which is crucial for maintaining a healthy weight

#### **2. Reduced air pollution:**

Less traffic means cleaner air, reducing the health risks associated with air pollution, which disproportionately affect children's respiratory health

#### **3. Community wellbeing:**

By prioritising public space for walking and playing, the programme fosters a sense of community, reduces stress, and promotes mental well-being, all of which are associated with healthy weight outcomes.

# 5. Recommendations



## Supporting healthy weight in the early years

- Support for all pregnant parents around a healthy diet and to remain active to maintain a healthy weight.
- WHO baby friendly approach to support infant feeding across the city, maintaining our high breastfeeding rates with a focus on addressing inequalities.

Support for a healthy weight approach for all early year's settings with a focus on a healthy food offer and active play.



## Whole school healthy weight approach

- Work with schools to implement a whole school food policy for every school in the city including snacks, lunchboxes, fundraising and celebrations, drinks and breakfast clubs/after school clubs.
- Healthy, affordable, sustainable school meals available for all school children in the city.
- Increase free school meal uptake.
- Support every school to be an active school through active travel, play, learning and curriculum and PE and sports.



## Business and Workplaces

- To work with the Chambers of Commerce and other business networks and workplace health champions to support any Brighton & Hove business to become a healthy workplace.
- To support businesses to enable their employees and customers to access a healthy, affordable food offer during working hours.
- To support businesses to encourage employees and customers to move more, through an active workday, active travel and active design principles.



## Planning for healthy weight environments

- To integrate healthy food environments into urban planning and public spaces. Exploring planning mechanisms for restricting the density of less healthy food businesses while encouraging the provision of affordable healthier options more equitably across the city.
- Ensuring active design principles (e.g., walkability, cycling) are part of the city's overall design to support healthy weight and reduce inactivity.



## Action on advertising, marketing and promotion

- Build on the High Fat Salt Sugar (HFSS) advertising restrictions in Brighton & Hove, to reduce further the exposure of children and young people to unhealthy food and drink advertising.
- To influence policy, map the unhealthy food advertisement environment in the city with a focus on areas of deprivation where levels of unhealthy weight are higher.
- Support national government action on developing more responsible policies for advertising, social media, and outdoor media, particularly that which influences or targets children and young people.

## Healthy, Affordable, Accessible Food Offer in Public Sector Premises

- Implement Good Food Standards in public sector food procurement.
- Support public sector premises to provide healthy affordable meals with healthier choices promoted through price and placement
- Support healthy vending and catering

## Healthier Food Offer in the Out-of-Home Setting

- To support the out-of-home (OOH) food sector (e.g., restaurants, cafes, takeaways) in offering healthier choices to customers, recognised through a local accreditation scheme, such as Healthy Choice.
- Continue to promote City-wide adoption of food labelling to help customers make healthier choices
- Support and incentivise event organisers and food businesses to make a healthier food offer available at all events where the target audience includes families and young people.

## "Let's Get Moving" Integrated into Everything

- Promoting moving more for all through the lifecourse and with a particular focus on groups with a higher level of inactivity. (add link)
- Embedding the 5 pillars of the Let's Get Moving strategy into partnership work across the city (link to the strategy)



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