

# Phase 3 of a whole systems approach to obesity

## **Background**

Phase 3 of the whole systems approach to obesity is based around a workshop where stakeholders are invited to develop a local system map of the causes of obesity.

In East Herts, the primary learning was this facilitated stakeholder engagement and increased understanding of the range of different factors that impact obesity locally, and how these factors relate and can be linked together.

Phase 3 of the 6-phase whole systems approach to obesity entails:

- preparing for workshop 1 – identifying and engaging wider stakeholders, preparing presentation slides and adding local information, and preparing facilitators to undertake system mapping
- holding the workshop – conducting the system mapping exercise
- beginning to develop a shared vision

## **What was involved**

Stakeholders from across the local system collectively mapped out the local causes of obesity during a half-day system mapping event (workshop 1). The system maps were then produced by the team who managed the approach (the core working team).

The workshop provided stakeholders with a real insight into why obesity is considered a highly complex issue and why all of the different components need to be considered, to better understand the issue as a whole. The workshop took into account the human, societal and environmental factors contributing to obesity.

Collectively, these new insights could potentially be used to help shift the system in the right direction to reduce the impact of the obesogenic environment.

Main stakeholders included councillors from community wellbeing champion areas and the portfolio holder for health and wellbeing.

Service managers and officers from council departments including:

- health and community wellbeing
- housing
- parks and open spaces
- environmental health
- licensing

- Hertfordshire County Council Public Health

Partners from the local voluntary sector including:

- children's centres
- nutritionists
- physical activity community interest company
- NHS community service
- individuals with a personal interest in planning and active travel

East Herts stakeholders identified green space and the healthy eating environment as priority areas to address.

Collaborative partner work resulted in a high-level green spaces strategic action plan, focused on increasing participation and accessibility to green space.

## **Working well**

The workshops created an opportunity to discuss obesity and engage stakeholders in the importance of the issue, as well as give adequate time and space to understand the complexities and system factors that contribute to obesity.

Stakeholders were also able to consider using the approach to give insight, understanding and application to other complex public health issues.

## **Next steps**

To change the local system, the next phase involves translating this action plan – with its short, medium and longer-term objectives – into specific actions. The whole systems approach is intended to create the conditions to generate system shift in the East Herts District area.

Momentum for achieving tangible outcomes has to be considered against the backdrop of realising that system shift is something that will take time to happen.

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